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Similarities and Differences of Word Order in English and German Languages

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Abstract:

The article demonstrates several differences and similarities of two languages, German and English. Moreover, it shows some differences between the two languages on parts of speech and word order.

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INTRODUCTION

Language can be considered as a mirror of a nation since it can demonstrate every part of the nation, like culture, history, sport and all spheres of life. Language is a tool to communicate with intelligent creature. Humans differ from other living creatures with firstly intelligence, secondly communication tool, a language. Nowadays, learning and teaching a foreign language becoming common all around the world. Nations exchange experiences about education, technology, science, literature and other spheres of life with the help of their language whether it can be body language, oral or written one. So learning a foreign language is absolutely essential for the country and its improvement. During learning a foreign language, its differences and similarities are seen and compared. According to Collins dictionary a language is a system of communication which consists of a set of sounds and written symbols which are used by the people of a particular country or region for talking or writing. Moreover, language is the use of a system of communication which consists of a set of sounds or written symbols. [5.1]

Many definitions of language have been proposed. Henry Sweet, an English phonetician and language scholar, stated: "Language is the expression of ideas by means of speech-sounds combined into words.

Words are combined into sentences, this combination answering to that of ideas into thoughts.” The American linguists Bernard Bloch and George L. Trager formulated the following definition: “A language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group cooperates.” Any succinct definition of language makes a number of presuppositions and begs a number of questions. The first, for example, puts excessive weight on “thought,” and the second uses “arbitrary” in a specialized, though legitimate, way.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

The languages around the world have some differences and similarities as well. There are some differences because there are different nations and different mentalities as well as different theories according to the population of the country. On the other hand there are some similarities because of the item or activity. For example some roots of the words can be the same as another language. The parts of speech and word order are studied in the sphere of syntax in both English and German languages. Whereas, scholars find out several differences as well as similarities between these two languages. According to Merriam Webster English dictionary Syntax is:

1 a: the way in which linguistic elements (such as words) are put together to form constituents (such as phrases or clauses)

b: the part of grammar dealing with this

2: a connected or orderly system: harmonious arrangement of parts or elements the *syntax* of classical architecture

3: syntactics especially as dealing with the formal properties of languages or calculi

There are several differences between two mentioned languages, English and German, in all parts of linguistics like phonetics, phonology, syntax, lexicology, tenses, connectors and many others. First of all, let's look at the alphabet, like English, German language has 26 letters, but it also has a set of unlauded characters, such as “ö, ü and ä”, as well as the double “S” or scharfes “S”, represented by “ß”. Germans learning English for the first time often make mistake “E” or “R” and write them as “A” or “I” when it is spelled out.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

For verb tenses, the continuous verb tense form is not used in German. It opts to use the present simple when the English counterpart will be using the future tense. Instead of the past tense, the present perfect is commonly used. German tenses are simpler. For example, the verb “to go” only has two tenses in German, the present and the past.

Thus, in English, people say, “I go”; in German language, it is mentioned as “Ich gehe” and “I went” in English, “Ich bin gegangen” in German. The future tense can be indicated by adding a word that shows time in the future, such as tomorrow, next week and so on.

In German language, verbs have a fixed place in the sentence. In a main clause, it always comes in second place, even if what comes in first place is a secondary clause. For example:

Ich arbeite zu Hause.

(I work at home)

Donnerstags arbeite ich zu Hause.

(On Thursdays, I work at home.)

Weil ich auf meine Kinder aufpassen muß, arbeite ich zu Hause.

(Because I have to watch my children, I work at home.)

In a subordinate clause, the verb comes at the end. For instance:

Ich kann meine Arbeitszeiten bestimmen, weil ich zu Hause arbeite.

(I can choose my own work hours because I work at home.)

In tenses with auxiliary verbs, the auxiliary takes the “verb slot”: the infinitive or participle comes at the end of the sentence, and the auxiliary either in second place (main clause) or at the very end (subordinate clause):

Letztes Jahr habe ich Donnerstags zu Hause gearbeitet.

(Last year I worked at home on Thursdays.)

Wusstest du eigentlich, dass ich letztes Jahr zu Hause gearbeitet habe?

(Did you know that last year I worked at home?)

It can easily be understood by listeners that the word order in these two languages, English and German basically the same as in the first place subject exists and predicate follows the subject. However, the word order of the two languages is different. English has an S-O-V word order. German, on the other hand has three-word order features.

- In an independent clause, the primary verb should be the featured second, meaning the subject and the verb will have to be reversed. Germans say, “Manchmal komme ich mit dem Bus in die Schule,” which means *Sometimes I come to school by bus*.
- In an independent clause, the past participle should come in last. *I have not seen him* is “Ich habe ihn nicht gesehen” in German.
- When it’s a dependent clause, the primary verb should be in the last position in the sentence. It’s shown in this example – “Sie fragte mich, ob ich den Film schon gesehen hätte” that translates into *She asked me if I had already seen the film* in English.

The two languages share a number of cognates, such as drink / trinken, house / haus and winter / winter. However, there are also several cognates that are dissimilar in meaning.

Here are some examples:

- *aktuell* (sounds like actual) – current
- *groß* (sounds like disgusting, gross) – big
- *fahrt* – ride, drive
- *das Handy* (sounds like useful, handy) – mobile, cellphone

- *der Chef* – boss, chief
- *Hell* – bright
- *das Gift* (sounds like present or gift) – poison

CONCLUSION

German sentence structure is both more rigid and more fluid than in English, depending on the sentence type. German word order is different from English, as the different parts of speech have different places in the sentence.

All in all, many differences as well as similarities can be occurred in both German and English languages. Speakers can analyze the differences during learning process and analyzing the differences makes the learning process easier.

In morphological processing, research has repeatedly found different priming effects by English and German native speakers in the overt priming paradigm. In English, priming effects were found for word pairs with a morphological and semantic relation (SUCCESSFUL-success), but not for pairs without a semantic relation (SUCCESSOR-success). By contrast, morphological priming effects in German occurred for pairs both with a semantic relation (AUFSTEHEN-stehen, ‘stand up’-‘stand’) and without (VERSTEHEN-stehen, ‘understand’-‘stand’). These behavioural differences have been taken to indicate differential language processing and memory representations in these languages.

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