



ISSN: 0976-3031

Available Online at <http://www.recentscientific.com>

CODEN: IJRSFP (USA)

International Journal of Recent Scientific Research
Vol. 10, Issue, 04(E), pp. 31993-31996, April, 2019

**International Journal of
Recent Scientific
Research**

DOI: 10.24327/IJRSR

Research Article

WORD ORDER IN GERMAN AND ARABIC SENTENCES

Ali Jamal Arafeh

Department of Foreign Languages, University of Nizwa, Sultanate of Oman

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24327/ijrsr.2019.1004.3327>

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 4th January, 2019
Received in revised form 25th
February, 2019
Accepted 23rd March, 2019
Published online 28th April, 2019

Key Words:

(subject or object) following the patterns
SVO or VSO.

ABSTRACT

Word order in Arabic and German is characterized by being flexible due to the high inflections in both languages. This similarity makes it easier for learners and translators of Arabic/German to make various structures of sentences that are acceptable in both languages. It is common in Arabic, for example, to start a statement with a verb or a noun (subject or object) following the patterns SVO or VSO. It is also possible to start a sentence in German with the subject, object, adverbial phrase or prepositional phrase. Arabic gives more freedom than German in word order due to the fact that Arabic is very rich in its structures and inflections making use of the separable and inseparable pronouns as well as the diacritics (fatha, kasra, dhamma, sukoon). What is fixed in German is that the verb always takes the second position in main clauses and last position in subordinate clauses. Most of the other elements of the sentence are flexible. Hence, translators and learners of both languages find more than one structure to render the meaning.

Copyright © Ali Jamal Arafeh, 2019, this is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

INTRODUCTION

Although they come from completely two different language family trees, German and Arabic share the feature of flexibility in sentence word order. This flexibility can make it easier for learners of German/Arabic to comprehend the meaning intended from the sentence in Arabic/German. The verb in main sentences in German has a fixed position. It always takes the second position “*Verben haben eine feste Position im Satz. Im Hauptsatz steht Verb immer auf Position 2*” (Hueber, Grammatik ganz Klar, P. 138). In the subordinate sentences, the verb in the German sentence comes at the end of the sentence. The other elements of the sentence (subject, object, adjective phrase, adverb phrase, prepositional phrase) are flexible. For example, the sentence can start with the subject or object or adverb. Arabic has more flexibility due to the fact that it is not necessarily that the verb takes a fixed position in main or subordinate sentences. The verb in the Arabic sentence takes usually the first position, then it is followed by the subject, but the subject can also precede the verb in Arabic and in this case the sentence changes from a verbal sentence into a nominal sentence (الانطباكي: المنهاج في القواعد والأعراب).

Some patterns of word order in German and Arabic

The word order in German can be of various patterns. A common word order is that which follows the pattern SVO/OVS:

SVO

- Der Löwe hat den Büffel gefressen.
- Der Löwe (S) hat (V) den Büffel (O) gefressen.

This sentence can have at least three variations in Arabic as

1. الأسدُ قد أكلَ الجاموسَ
2. أكلَ الأسدُ الجاموسَ
3. أكلَ الجاموسَ الأسدُ

The first Variation Contains an Emphatic word (qad), which is a Common and natural Translation in Arabic.

- الأسدُ قد أكلَ الجاموسَ
- 'alasadu qad 'akala alġāmusa.
- 'alasadu (S) qad (emphatic word) 'akala (V) alġāmusa (O).

In the Second Variation, the Sentence can Also Be Written Without the Emphatic word “qad”

- أكلَ الأسدُ الجاموسَ
- 'akala 'alasadu alġāmusa.
- 'akala (V) 'alasadu (S) alġāmusa (O).

OVS

Another variation of writing this sentence in German is OVS

*Corresponding author: Ali Jamal Arafeh

Department of Foreign Languages, University of Nizwa, Sultanate of Oman

- Den Büffel hat der Löwe gefressen.
- Den Büffel (O) hat (V) der Löwe (S) gefressen.

The object/patient came before the subject/agent in this variation, and this can also be used in Arabic as in the third variation:

- أَكَلَ الْجَامُوسَ الْأَسَدُ
- 'akalaalğāmusa' alasadu.
- 'akala (V) alğāmusa (O) ' alasadu (S).

This example shows that both German and Arabic can have various patterns of ordering words in simple sentences. A sentence where the subject/agent (S) precedes the object/patient (O) can also be written with the object/patient(O) preceding the subject/agent (S).

When the sentence contains more than one object, one of the objects is considered in German dative case/indirect object and the other object accusative case/direct object. On the other hand, Arabic considers them as first object, second object or even third object. There is no direct or indirect object terminology in Arabic.

Subject + verb +indirect object (Dative) + direct object (Accusative)

- Ich gab dem Jungen einen Ball.
- Ich (S) gab (V) dem Jungen (IO) einen Ball (DO).

In Arabic, this sentence will be translated as

- أَعْطَيْتُ الْوَلَدَ الْكَرَّةَ
- 'a'tytu alwalada alkurata
- 'a'tytu (V+S) alwalada (O1) alkurata (O2).

In Arabic, there is no direct or indirect object, instead, what is common is to have more than one object. This can reach to three objects for the same verb and subject. In the aforementioned sentence, there are two objects. The word "alwalada" is the first object and the word "alkurata" is the second object.

Another structure in Arabic for such sentences is to use the preposition and prepositional complement/phrase rather than a second subject.

- أَعْطَيْتُ الْكَرَّةَ إِلَى الْوَلَدِ
- 'a'tytu alkurata ilā alwaladi
- 'a'tytu (V+ S) alkurata (O1) ilā(Prep) alwaladi (Prep Comp).

This Sentence can also in German be Written Starting with the direct Object as Follows

Direct Object (Accusative) + Verb + Subject + Indirect Object (Dative)

- Einen Ball gab ich dem Jungen.
- Einen Ball (DO) gab(V) ich(S) dem Jungen (IO).

In Arabic and under Certain Circumstances, it is also possible to Start the sentence with the direct object as in

- الْكَرَّةَ أَعْطَيْتُهَا إِلَى الْوَلَدِ
- Alkurata 'a'tyuhā ilā alwaladi.
- Alkurata (DO1) 'a'tyuhā (V+DO2) ilā (Prep) alwaladi. (Prep Comp)

This sentence in Arabic is possible because the subject (agent) is embedded in the verb and the verb ('a'tyuhā) contains an attached pronoun (hā) that refers to the previously mentioned object (Alkurata).

It is also possible in German to start the sentence with the indirect object as follows:

Indirect Object (Dative) + Verb + Subject + Direct Object (Accusative)

- Dem Jungen (IO) gab (V) ich (S) einen Ball (DO).
To give a close equivalent of this sentence into Arabic, the sentence will start with a prepositional phrase as in:
إِلَى الْوَلَدِ أَعْطَيْتُ الْكَرَّةَ
- ilāalwaladi (Prep + Prep Comp) 'a'tytu (V+S) Alkurata (O).

Sentences with modal verbs

In German, when there is a modal verb in the sentence, the modal verb takes the second position, and the main verb goes at the end of the sentence.

- Ich werde das Buch bald lesen.
Ich (S) werde (Modal/Helping verb) das Buch (O) bald (Adv.) lesen (Part two of the M. verb).

This Sentence can be rendered into Arabic as follows

- سَوْفَ أَقْرَأُ الْكِتَابَ قَرِيْبًا
- Sawfa 'aqra' ualkitabaqarīban.
- Sawfa (introductory word indicating the future) 'aqra' u (V+S)) alkitaba (Object) qarīban (adverb).

The helping verb/modal in German is rendered into Arabic in this sentence through the introductory word (Sawfa).

Subordinate clauses word order

The verb in the subordinate clause in German is placed in the last position.

- Ich weiß nicht, ob er dir hilft.
- Ich (S) weiß nicht (V), ob (Conj.) er (S) dir (IO) hilft (V).

This sentence is translated into Arabic as

- لَا أَعْلَمُ إِذَا كَانَ يَسَاعِدُكَ
- Lā 'lamu mā idākānāsayusā'iduk
- Lā 'lamu (NV + S) mā (Relative Word) idā(Conditional word) kānā(Helping Verb) sayusā'iduk. (V + S + O)

These examples show that the verb in the subordinate clause is placed at the end in both German and Arabic sentences.

Word Order in relative clauses

- Das ist der Film, den ich mir ansehen will.
- Das (P) ist (V) der Film (N), den (Relative Pronoun/O) ich (S) mir (IO) ansehen (Part. II) will (Modal).
- هَذَا هُوَ الْفِيلْمُ الَّذِي أَرِيدُ مُشَاهَدَاتُهُ
- hādāhuwa alfilmu alđī uridu mušāhadatuh
- hādā (P) huwa (P+S) alfilmu (O) alđī (Relative Pronoun) uridu (V+S) mušāhadatuh (O)

The difference between the German sentence and the Arabic translation is that the relative sentence in German ends with the verb, whereas the Arabic sentence ends with the object and preceded by subject and verb.

Word order in questions

The verb in Wh-questions in German takes the second position; the subject takes the third position.

- Wo wohnst du?
- Wo (Adv.) wohnst (V) du (S)?

In Arabic this sentence is translated as

- أين تسكن؟
- 'aynataskuni?
- 'ayna (Adv.) taskuni (V+S)?

The verb in Arabic takes the second position after the question word (adverb), and the subject is in this sentence embedded in the verb. In other words, it also takes the second position.

Word order in Imperatives

The German imperative starts with the verb. The subject/agent who is addressed is omitted. It is also common to use the subject when the imperative is addressed to a person in an official manner. The subject in this case is the pronoun “Sie”.

- Schreib mir eine E-mail.
- Schreib (V) mir (OD) eine E-mail (O).

The addressee is embedded in the imperative verb and this is the case in Arabic also where the addressee is embedded in the imperative verb.

- اكتب لي ايميل
- 'uktub līmel
- 'uktub (V) lī (Prep. Ph.) īmel (O)

When the Imperative is Addressed in an Official Manner, the Addressee is Mentioned as in

- Kommen Sie bitte schnell!
- Kommen (V) Sie (S) bitte schnell (Adv).
- تعال بسرعة رجاء
- ta'alabisur'atinraġa'an.
- ta'ala(S+V) bisur'atin(Prep. Ph) raġa'an (gerund).

This example shows an interesting difference between Arabic and German with regards to the use of the imperative in a formal manner. It is necessary to use the pronoun “Sie” in German whereas standard Arabic does not require using this pronoun in the equivalent translation.

Sometimes the formal pronoun “Sie” is translated in some Arabic dialects such as Egyptian dialect with the word “ḥaḍratuka”. This word shows respect for the other person. So the following example shows how the word is used.

- Bitte nehmen Sie Platz.
- تفضل حضرتك بالجلوس.
- tafāḍal ḥaḍratuka biljulūs.

The word “Sie” in German is equivalent in Arabic to the word “ḥaḍratuka”. However, this is common only in the Egyptian dialect whereas in other Arabic dialects the word “ḥaḍratuka”

is usually not used, and it is enough to translate the German sentence as:

- tafāḍal ḥaḍratuka biljulūs.

CONCLUSION

The various structures show that Arabic and German are flexible in word order. The same sentence can be written in more than one way. It depends on which part of the sentence one wants to emphasize. The object/patient can precede the subject/agent and vice versa.

The verb takes position 2 in the main sentence in German, whereas in the subordinate sentence it takes the last position. One might say that this is a fixed rule in German word order. For example, if any element is used in the German sentence, the other elements change their positions except the verb (<https://www.bbc.com/bitesize/guides/z9jfbk7/revision/1>).

In contrast, in Arabic it usually takes the first position in both the main clause and subordinate clause. However, there is flexibility in Arabic to have various positions for the verb.

In Arabic, it is common to have the subject/agent embedded in the verb. In this case, it is considered in Arabic “hidden agent”. It is represented through a letter/pronoun that refers to the subject/agent or object/patient. This does not exist in German as the subject should be identified in words in the sentence.

Rather than English, Arabic and German translators have flexibility in translation of German/Arabic sentences due to the word order variation in both languages. This variation can be attributed to the fact that both German and Arabic are highly inflectional languages.

List of Abbreviations

- S: Subject
- V: Verb
- O: Object
- DO: Direct Object
- IO: Indirect Object
- Prep: Preposition
- Prep Comp: Prepositional Complement
- Conj: Conjunction
- NV: Negative Verb
- P: Pronoun

Transliteration of Arabic Letters

The Deutsches Institut für Normung (DIN) style is used for the transliteration of the Arabic alphabet.

Arabic letters	ا	ب	ت	ث	ج	ح	خ	د	ذ	ر	ز	س	ش	ص	ض	ط	ظ	ع	غ	ف	ق	ك	ل	م	ن	ه	و	ي	الي
DIN 31635	ʾ / ā	b	t	th	ǧ	h	dh	d	z	s	sh	s	ṣ	ḍ	t	ẓ	ʿ	gh	f	q	k	l	m	n	h	w / ū	y / ī		
ALA-LC	ʾ / ā	b	t	th	ǧ	h	kh	d	dh	r	z	s	sh	s	ṣ	ḍ	t	ẓ	ʿ	gh	f	q	k	l	m	n	h	w / ū	y / ī
IPA (MSA)	ʔ, a:	b	t	θ	ǧ	ħ	x	d	ð	r	z	s	ʃ	ʕ	ṣ	ḍ	t̤	ẓ	ʕ	ɣ	f	q	k	l	m	n	h	w, u:	j, i:

Source: http://www.wikiwand.com/en/DIN_31635

References

1. لوشر، رناته وشيبرز، رولاند (1979). قواعد اللغة الألمانية الحديثة. ميونخ: هوبر فيرلاغ
2. الانطاكى، محمد. المناهج في القواعد والإعراب. بيروت: مكتبة دار الشرق
3. <http://germanforenglishspeakers.com/basics/sentence-structure/>
4. Hueber(2011), Grammatik ganz Klar,
5. Fandrych, Christian and Ulrike Tallowitz (2000). Klipp und Klar. Stuttgart: Klett.
6. Schmitt, Dreyer (2009). Lehr – und Übungsbuch der deutschen Grammatik. Deutschland: Hüber Verlag.

How to cite this article:

Ali Jamal Arafeh., 2019, Word Order in German and Arabic Sentences. *Int J Recent Sci Res.* 10(04), pp. 31993-31996. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24327/ijrsr.2019.1004.3377>
