

RESEARCH ARTICLE



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

2395-2636 (Print);2321-3108 (online)

RECTIFICATION OF COMMITTING ERRORS WHILE TRANSLATING A TEXT FROM GERMAN TO ENGLISH IN THE WORD ORDER

ADAIKALAM.A*, Dr. RAMANI. N

*Ph.D-CB-JUL2013-0025



ABSTRACT

Insofar as there are distinct differences in word order at the syntactic level of German and English, the Indian learners of German as Foreign Language, coming from an ESL background, tend to commit repetitive errors in word order while writing sentences in German and such difficulties can be traced and used to advantage in a GFL context in the ESL background. This article is confined to patterns of sentences in German taught at the basic course in German. The items to be taught are listed out and correlated with English sentences as translated from German. This article focuses only on the ability to identify correct word order in German while translating a text from English to German. The findings of the article are likely to help in the process of translating material relevant to learning tasks with reference to sentence construction and word order.

INTRODUCTION

To learn a language is not an easy task because there are variations at the syntactic and sentence formation level between languages. Errors occur when we learn a new language through another language. The students having an ESL background commit errors when they learn German as a foreign language. It is because of their thinking pattern of either in their mother tongue or in English. Since they learn German through the medium of English, the mistakes occur usually in the word order. There are some similarities between English and German in word order. There are also dissimilarities in word order between English and German. In this article, the main focus is on the translation of a text from English to German or vice versa. Due to the change of word order in both languages the students have often problems in the translation process.

1. The word order while translating a statement

When we translate a sentence from German to English the word order is changed. For

instance, Er kann gut Lieder singen (he can sing songs well). When it is translated into English, it has really a different sentence order. The subject comes first like in English. If there is only one verb, that comes immediately after the subject. But if there is more than one verb, the first auxiliary verb comes after the subject and other verbs go at the end of the sentence. We need to note down the changes carefully otherwise the whole meaning will be lost. Sometimes the software translation does not translate properly. Here the students having English background write both verbs together like in English. When it is so, it does not sound like a good German sentence.

2. The usage of separable verbs in German

In a separable verb there are a prefix and a main verb. While making a sentence, the prefix is to be written at the end of the sentence and the main verb is to be conjugated for the subject in German. When we translate such sentences we need to be careful to see the whole verb otherwise the whole meaning is changed. For example, 'einladen' means

in English 'to invite'. The actual meaning of 'ein' is 'a or an' and 'laden' meaning 'load'. But here 'einladen' is one word which has entirely different meaning. When we make a sentence with this verb, the prefix and the main verb are separated (Wir laden dich zum Abendessen **ein**- the translation in English is : we invite you for the dinner). This is another complication which the beginners always face while translating from German to English. The translator has to look at meaning of the whole separable verb; otherwise it does not give a proper meaning. If the prefix is not written at the end, the meaning of the whole sentence will be misunderstood. It is absolutely different from other languages.

3. The word order of questions

There are two types of questions in English as well as in German. The first kind is 'Wh question or W-Fragen'. The second kind is 'Yes/ No or Ja/ Nein Fragen'. First we look at the 'Wh' questions. The question starts with Wh words like in German. The question formation is different from English. In English we use an auxiliary verb after 'Wh' word and the subject comes followed by main verb whereas in German the 'wh' word comes first and then the main verb comes immediately after the 'Wh' word. We do not use any auxiliary verb to make a 'Wh' question. The word order in English is like this: where do you stay? - the question formation in German is this: Wo wohnen Sie?. In English we conjugate the auxiliary verb for the subject and the main verb is to be written in the infinitive form immediately after the subject whereas in German we conjugate the main verb directly for the subject. This major change is to be taken into account. Otherwise the translator can misplace the main verb and can confuse the word order that will lead to errors. We should follow the concept of the sentence order in English and German as well. (In English: 'Wh' word / auxiliary verb(do, does, did)/ Subject/ main verb/ other words/ question mark) (In German: W-Fragewort/ main Verb/ Subject/ other words/ question mark).

To make a question by using a modal verb either in German or in English the word order is slightly changed. For instance, the order in English is: ' Wh' word/ modal verb (to be conjugated for the

subject)/ subject/ main verb in the infinitive form/ other words/ the question mark. The order in German is: 'Wh' word/ modal verb (to be conjugated for the subject)/ subject/ other words/ main verb in the infinitive form/ question mark. (English: how can you work without hands? – In German: Wie kannst du ohne Haende arbeiten? – How can you work without hands?)

The second type is Yes/No or Ja/Nein questions. In German we use directly the main verb before the subject and it is to be conjugated for the subject. The other words follow later and the question mark is to be written at the end. We do not use any auxiliary verb before the subject in English. The question order in German is: Main verb/ subject/ other words/ question mark- Kommen Sie aus Indien? – do you come from India? If we use the modal verb, the order is slightly changed. The order is: modal verb (to be conjugated)/ subject/ other words/ main verb in the infinitive form/ question mark – Kannst du Klavier spielen? – can you play piano?

4. No usage of continuous tense form in German

There is no continuous tense in German. The simple present tense itself indicates of continuous tense. For instance, Ich lerne Deutsch in Deutschland – this can be translated as I learn German or I am learning German. The beginners, having English as their background, tend to commit errors while writing in German. They normally use 'am' followed by gerund form for making continuous sentence in English. If they use the same word order in German, it will be wrong. While writing in German their error is like this: Ich bin lernen Deutsch in Deutschland. 'Ich' stands for 'I', 'bin' stands for 'am', and 'lernen' stands for 'learn'. The correct sentence is like this: Ich lerne Deutsch in Deutschland. We do not use any auxiliary verb to make continuous form. They also commit different error such as Er ist in Bonn Detusch lernen (he is in Bonn German learning). This sentence is wrong because the students being influenced by English use gerund form in the word order. The correct sentence is: Er lernt Deutsch in Bonn

5. Usage of modal verbs

In German there are only six modal verbs which are: können – can, möchten –would like to,

dürfen- may or to be allowed, wollen –will or want, müssen- must and sollen – should. They indicate of likes, dislikes and ability in the sentence. The modal verb has to be conjugated for the subject. There is also a main verb that is to be written at the end of the sentence. The main verb should be written in the infinitive form. It indicates the action in the sentence. The word order in German is as follows: subject/ conjugated form of modal verb/ other words/ main verb in the infinitive form. For instance, Ich kann in Deutschland meine Doktorarbeit machen (I can do my doctoral work in Germany). In this sentence, subject 'I' comes in the beginning of the sentence, then the modal verb follows and it has to be conjugated according to the subject. Then other elements have to be written. At the end of the sentence the main verb should be written in the infinitive form. Being influenced by English, the students commit errors when they translate from German to English or vice versa. In English all verbs follow after the subject together whereas in German the auxiliary or the modal verb comes in the second place of the sentence and other verbs should be written at the end of the sentence. In this regard, the students write all verbs together when they translate from English to German. For instance, I will go to Germany on Monday (Ich will gehen nach Deutschland am Montag), this sentence in German is wrong because the person has translated 'will gehen' together. Whereas the correct sentence is ' Ich will nach Deutschland am Montag gehen'. This is the problem that is encountered by the students while translating a sentence from English to German.

6. Article declination

The article plays a great role in German language. There are three genders which have three kinds of articles. We also have definite and indefinite articles in German. The definite (bestimmter Artikel) ones are : der for masculine gender, die for feminine gender and das for neutral gender. The indefinite article (Unbestimmter Artikel) has ein for masculine, eine –feminine and ein for neutral. Plurals of all three genders use die as an article.

Conclusion

This is definitely useful for the German learners at the basic level. They are mostly perplexed to make a good German sentence because they misplace the word order. If they learn the appropriate word order in German, they will definitely master the language at the basic level. The basic level is the foundation on which they can construct the higher grammatical sentences that will enable them to communicate effectively.

Work cited

1. Jutta Mueller & Thomas Storz. *Lagune (Kursbuch 1)*. 2006. Huebnerverlag, Deutschland
2. Mittins, W.H. 1962. *A Grammar of Modern English*. Methuen & Co.Ltd, Great Britain.