

Analysis of Verbstellung Errors in A2-B1 German Language Students Podcast Assignments in the Mündliche Kommunikation Course

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze *Verbstellung* (verb order) errors in German verbal communication made by A2-B1 level students through podcast assignments in the *Mündliche Kommunikation* course. The analysis was conducted using Pit Corder's error analysis theory approach, which provided the researcher with the opportunity to identify the types and characteristics of the errors. *Verbstellung* is an important aspect of German sentence structure that is often a source of errors due to mother tongue interference and lack of understanding of grammatical structures. Data was collected from the transcription of student podcasts, then analyzed to find the dominant error patterns. This study found that verb position errors, especially in subordinate clauses, are a major challenge for beginner learners. Most of the errors indicate that learners do not fully understand German sentence structure, so a teaching approach that focuses more on practice and error correction is needed.

Keywords: *Verbstellung, error analysis, German syntax*

Introduction

German, one of the most widely studied languages in the world, has a complex structure and grammar, in which verb order or *Verbstellung* plays a crucial role in a sentence (Baker, 2011). According to Ondráková & Tauchmanová (2019), *Verbstellung* refers to the position of the verb in a sentence, which often poses a challenge for many learners of German as a foreign language, particularly at the A2 to B1 levels. At this stage, students begin to learn more complex sentence structures and attempt to apply these basic rules in both spoken and written production.

Sentence structure in German can vary, especially in simple and complex sentences, with the main focus on the position of the verb, which is often in the second position (V2) (Bingku & Lendo, 2023). Research by Bingku & Lendo (2023) shows that simple sentences in German generally follow the pattern S + P/V + O (subject + predicate/verb + object), but can also vary by rearranging the positions of the subject and object, as long as the verb remains in the second position. In a broader syntactic analysis, research by Collard et al. (2019) states that in German subordinate clauses, word order follows the Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) structure, distinguishing it from English and indicating different processing characteristics in translation between the two languages. This underscores the functional nature of verb placement in subordinate clauses, indicating a higher level of syntactic complexity in German (Jing et al., 2023).

In comparison, sentence structure in Indonesian is generally free in terms of predicate position, but its characteristics generally follow the S-V-O (Subject-Verb-Object) pattern to

emphasize sentence meaning (Yuniza et al., 2022). Verbs in Indonesian are not dependent on a specific position like in German. This can cause interference when Indonesian speakers learn German, as they are accustomed to the flexibility of predicate position in sentences. This is in line with research by Kokomaking et al. (2023), which verified that German learners often carry over the sentence structure of their first language, Indonesian, when using their second language, even though the structures of the two languages differ significantly. Based on this, German learners with an Indonesian language background often face challenges in internalizing the stricter and more systematic *Verbstellung* pattern.

In German, verb position (*Verbstellung*) is a rigid yet systematic grammatical aspect, in which the placement of verbs varies based on the type of sentence and accompanying syntactic elements (Duden, 2023). This system includes three main patterns: (1) *Verb-Zweitstellung* (second position) in the main clause (*Hauptsatz*), (2) *Verb-Endstellung* (final position) in the subordinate clause (*Nebensatz*), and (3) *Verb-Erststellung* (first position) in interrogative and imperative sentences (Lingolia, 2022). For example, in the main clause “*Ich lese ein Buch*” (S-V-O), the verb occupies the second position, whereas in subordinate clauses such as “*..., weil ich ein Buch lese*” (conjunction-S-O-V), the verb must be at the end (Hoberg & Hoberg, 2020). Meanwhile, Lingolia (2022) distinguishes two types of interrogative sentences in German: closed questions (*Entscheidungsfragen*) and open questions (*Ergänzungsfragen*), each with a different structure. Closed questions begin with the verb in the first position, followed by the subject and other elements, as in the sentence “*Habe ich das Buch gegeben?*” (V-S-O). Conversely, open questions begin with an interrogative word (*W-Frage*) such as *wann*, *wo*, or *warum*, followed by the verb in the second position and other elements thereafter, for example in the sentence “*Wann habe ich dir das Buch gegeben?*” (*W-Frage*-V-S-O). In addition to interrogative sentences, the principle of *Verb-Erststellung* also applies to imperative sentences. For example, in the sentence “*Lies das Buch!*” (V-O), the verb appears in the first position to express a command.

The complexity of *Verbstellung* increases when involving auxiliary verbs (*Hilfsverben*) or modal verbs (*Modalverben*). In the *Perfekt* construction, the main verb is in the participle form and occupies the final position, while the auxiliary verb is in the second position (example: “*Ich habe das Buch gelesen*”) (Hammer, 2021). A similar pattern applies to sentences with modal verbs, where the infinitive of the main verb must be at the end (e.g., “*Sie kann Deutsch sprechen*”) (Durrell, 2020). This phenomenon shows that verb placement rules depend not only on the type of sentence but also on the category of verb used.

This error also becomes more complex when learning at the A2-B1 level, which is the stage where students begin to engage in more in-depth learning in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Permana, 2022). Errors in verb placement frequently occur among German language learners at the A2-B1 level, primarily due to interference from the native language (e.g., the application of Indonesian SVO structure) or overgeneralization of rules (e.g., consistently placing the verb in the second position) (Klein & Perdue, 2020). Research by Diehl et al. (2021) demonstrated that 65% of syntactic errors made by beginner learners are related to verb placement. Therefore, a contrastive teaching approach and error analysis-based methodology (Corder, 1981) are necessary to help learners internalize these patterns.

Based on Pit Corder's theory of error analysis, Corder (1981) categorizes these errors into three main categories: Lapses, which are language errors caused by speakers switching ways of expressing something before the entire utterance (sentence) is fully expressed; Errors, which are language errors caused by speakers violating grammar rules (breaches of code);

and Mistakes, which are language errors caused by speakers choosing the wrong words or expressions for a particular situation. These three types of errors are important indicators when analyzing how learners process and use the target language in real-life contexts. According to Pinontoan et al. (2023), Corder also emphasizes that errors made by language learners are not a sign of weakness but provide insight into how learners understand and construct the target language. Through error analysis, teachers can identify patterns of errors that frequently appear in the use of *Verbstellung* and design appropriate teaching strategies to help students overcome these difficulties (Andriyanto et al., 2023). This is also in line with Mantasiah et al. (2019), who explain that error analysis plays a crucial role in improving teaching methods and curricula, particularly as the identification of common errors made by students can serve as a basis for modifying learning content more effectively.

Method

In line with this urgency, this study uses a qualitative approach with error analysis based on Pit Corder's theory (1981). The data were obtained from the transcripts of German podcasts of A2-B1 level students at the State University of Malang in the *Mündliche Kommunikation* course. This analysis was carried out based on the results of the Mid-Semester Test (UTS) in the form of making German-language podcasts with selected topics about daily life. This podcast is a form of evaluation of verbal communication skills at the A2-B1 level which also reflects the application of sentence structure in authentic contexts. By analyzing *Verbstellung* errors in this assignment, it is hoped that a real overview of the areas of grammatical difficulties that students still face can be obtained and can provide input for the development of more effective teaching methods.

Results

Documentation Results

Table 1. *Verbstellung* Errors Documentation

Group Member	<i>Verbstellung</i> Errors
A & J	"Ach so, ich habe gehört, dass du hat eine projekte von Schreibe auf Deutsch machen, oder?"
	"Ja... weil das projekt braucht einige Illustration, so muss ich es zeichnen"
	"Natürlich das ist meine Hobby."
	"Genauso wie du bekommen selten überhaupt Geld."
	"Für mich Gesundheit bedeutet , dass ..."
	"Heute das Wetter ist sonnig, oder?"
H & M	"Aber konnte ich schwimme als 10 Jahre alt war."

“Von der Uni gibt es Fastfood und ja zwar sehr lecker **ist**, aber vielleicht nicht so gut für unsere Gesundheit **ist**.”

“Wenn der ... weit weg ist, ich **bin** Urlaubsplan machen.”

N & F

“Wenn ich **gehe** an den ... Ort, ist es so langweilig.”

In this study, the research focused on verb grammatical errors (*Verbstellung*) found in German sentences written by several groups of students in their podcasts. The errors showed common syntax challenges faced by Indonesian speakers in learning sentence structure in German.

As a result, it is important to systematically understand the types of errors that arise, especially in terms of *Verbstellung* or verb order in sentences. Based on the results of the documentation that has been done, it is found that the errors that occur can be categorized into four main categories. Each category is coded to simplify identification and further analysis. Here are the four main categories used:

- K1: *Verb-Endstellung* errors in subordinate clauses (*Nebensatz*)
- K2: *Verb-Zweitstellung* errors in the main sentence (*Hauptsatz*)
- K3: Verb conjugation errors
- K4: Verb order errors in coordinative clauses

The documentation of the learners' sentence excerpts shows various forms of errors in verb order (*Verbstellung*) in German sentences. These errors are not only related to verb position, but also to conjugation, word order, and the use of modal verbs. The results of the documentation are presented in the following table:

Table 2. Documentation of Errors in Quotations

No.	Quotations	Error Code	Corder Categories	Description
1	“dass du hat eine projekte ...machen”	K1, K3	Errors	The verb “ <i>hat</i> ” is not at the end of the clause (K1) and is not conjugated correctly (<i>hat</i> → <i>hast</i>) (K3).
2	“weil das projekt braucht einige Illustration”	K1	Errors	The verb “ <i>braucht</i> ” should be at the end of the clause.
3	“..., wie du bekommen selten überhaupt Geld”	K1, K3	Errors	The verb “ <i>bekommen</i> ” is not at the end of the clause (K1) and is not conjugated (<i>bekommst</i>) (K3).

4	"Heute das Wetter <i>ist</i> sonnig"	K2	Mistakes	The verb " <i>ist</i> " is not in the second position (<i>Heute ist das Wetter sonnig</i>).
5	"und ja zwar sehr lecker <i>ist</i> "	K4	Mistakes	The verb " <i>ist</i> " is not in second position after the coordinating conjunction <i>und</i> .

Based on the results of all documented quotations, it can be found that error K1 (*Verb-Endstellung*) occurred 3 times, making it the most frequent error. Then error K2 (*Verb-Zweitstellung*) appeared 1 time, error K3 (Verb Conjugation) occurred 2 times, and finally error K4 (Coordinative Structure), which also appeared 1 time.

Discussion

Based on these analysis, it can be seen that the most dominant errors occur in subordinate clauses that require the verb to be placed at the end (K1). This is in line with the findings of Diehl et al. (2021), who state that the *Verb-Endstellung* structure is one of the most complex and challenging aspects for beginner learners of German. If K1 errors are analyzed using Corder's (1974) error analysis approach, they can generally be categorized as Errors, which are violations of grammatical rules due to ignorance or because the target language system has not yet fully developed in learners. This indicates that learners have not yet fully internalized the verb position pattern in subordinate clauses. The high frequency of errors in the K1 category indicates that learners tend to have difficulty understanding and applying the *Verb-Endstellung* rule, especially in subordinate clauses that do not have a direct equivalent in Indonesian language structure.

In addition, the verb conjugation errors (K3) that appear twice also reflect errors due to inconsistencies between verb forms and subjects, indicating a lack of mastery of the German morphological system. This is reinforced by Durrell's (2020) observation regarding the importance of explicitly studying verb paradigms at the beginner level, indicating that mastery of verb conjugation patterns in German is still limited. The lack of practice in applying verb forms according to subject and context also contributes to these errors, as explained by Durrell (2020).

On the other hand, the mistakes in categories K2 and K4 show interference from the SVO (Subject-Verb-Object) sentence pattern in Indonesian. Errors such as "*Heute das Wetter ist sonnig*" and "*und ja zwar sehr lecker ist*" are mistakes because in Indonesian, there are no strict requirements regarding the position of the verb in the main clause or after a subordinating conjunction, which tends to cause German language learners to apply a similar pattern in German sentence structure, which is actually inappropriate (Klein & Perdue, 2020).

Conclusion

Based on analysis of the data, the most dominant *Verbstellung* error occurred in the application of *Verb-Endstellung* (K1) in subordinate clauses, with a frequency of three times. This fact shows that subordinate clause structure is still a challenge for beginners, especially

because its structure is different from Indonesian. Verb conjugation errors (K3), which occurred twice, indicate that some learners have not yet mastered verb form changes depending on the subject. Meanwhile, *Verb-Zweitstellung* (K2) and coordinative structure (K4) errors each occurred once, possibly due to the influence of more flexible sentence patterns in the native language. Overall, the results of this study indicate that continuous practice in subordinate clause formation, recognition of conjugation patterns, and contrastive learning are necessary to help learners distinguish between German and Indonesian language structures.

According to Pit Corder's theory (1981), most of the errors found fall into the Errors category, which are errors that occur because students do not yet understand the rules of the language correctly. This is evident from errors in sentence structure and verb placement. However, there is also the possibility of Mistakes, which are errors that occur due to carelessness or spontaneous speech, such as in coordinative structures that seem rushed. Thus, these findings emphasize the importance of teaching that focuses on error analysis.

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