

## *Hierarchy of Elements in the German “Sentence Field”*

The German sentence consists of a potential of four fields:



The fore-field is allowed to contain a single syntactic unit. (1) No more than one syntactic unit may fill the fore-field.

The conjugated verb field holds one word, the conjugated verb. No other words are allowed in this field.

The sentence field is allowed to contain any number of syntactic units. The sentence field may also be empty.

The final field contains any verb elements that are not conjugated. (2) This field may hold multiple elements of the verb or be empty.

Elements appearing in the sentence field are typically arranged according to the following hierarchy:

nom	acc	dat	NOM	DAT	temp	cause	manner	ACC	loc	prep	vb-comp
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nom = subject pronoun

acc = direct object pronoun (3)

dat = dative pronoun (4)

NOM = subject noun

DAT = dative noun (5)

temp = time element

cause = (due to, because of)

manner = (6)

ACC = direct object noun

loc = place or destination

prep = misc preposition (7)

vb-comp = verb completer (8)

- 1 A single syntactic unit consists of a word or group of words that can not be separated to express their meaning. Single syntactic units are often preposition phrases such as *on the street* or time elements such as *yesterday morning*.
- 2 Non conjugated verb elements include participles, separable prefixes, infinitives, and marked infinitives (infinitive plus *zu*).
- 3 Reflexive particles count as *acc* unless they are in the dative, in which case they count as *dat*.
- 4 & 5 Dative pronouns and nouns are those elements that appear in the dative without a preposition. These include the beneficiary (indirect object), dative locator, object of a dative verb, etc.
- 6 Manner elements include such things as mode of transportation, emotion, adverbs describing the action of the verb, “*gern*” and “*nicht*.” Caution, “*nicht*” typically precedes the element it negates so may appear outside of the manner field.
- 7 Prepositional phrases that can not be accounted for (such as time, manner and place elements) tend to come late in the sentence field.
- 8 The most common verb completers are predicate nouns and adjectives. Any element that is necessary to complete the meaning of the verb is considered a verbal complement or verb completer.