

## Besprechungen

**Dorian Roehrs and Christopher Sapp:** *Quantifying Expressions in the History of German*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins 2016, xvii, 299 pp.

Besprochen von **Prof. Dr. Giuliana Giusti:** Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Dipartimento di Studi Linguistici e Culturali Comparati, Dorsoduro 1075, Fondamenta Tofetti, 30123, Venezia, E-Mail: giusti@unive.it

DOI 10.1515/bgsl-2017-0031

This volume provides a stimulating blend of theoretically driven research questions and corpus study, of qualitative and quantitative methodology. It focuses on the morphosyntactic variation displayed by the most common lexical items expressing quantity and their dependents in the history of German, from 700 to the present day. The topic is sufficiently restricted to be comprehensively dealt with in the size of a volume. Nevertheless, it is also potentially relevant to broad linguistic research on the categorial nature of quantity items, the organization of nominal structure, the structural relation between the quantity item and the element on which it quantifies and, ultimately, on the general possibilities of variation and change that are available to language.

The corpus search is theoretically driven and provides a systematic description of the variation occurring in the inflectional properties of the quantity item, the position of the dependent, and the variation between genitive case assignment vs. concord with the dependent. The theoretical aim is to offer a novel analysis of diachronic change in the minimalist framework. The proposals are shaped in the recent developments of minimalist syntax, without being too technical. This makes the analysis accessible to a broader public of historical and general linguists who may not be directly interested in the theory-internal issues. In fact, the empirical data resulting from the theory-driven corpus search are stated in a pre-theoretical fashion and can certainly be considered as a milestone in our knowledge of this empirical field, which is usually quite controversial in all languages.

Quantity items are known to display inconsistent properties as regards their categorial status, being sometimes nominal, sometimes adverbial, sometimes adjectival, and most times a mix of these. Linguists of all theoretical persuasions acknowledge that such an unstable status is the major source of synchronic variation at given stages of the language and of change from one stage to another. It is debated how to diagnose categorial status and what relational properties different categories can have. The debate not only regards competing frameworks, but it is most lively theory-internally, as witnessed for the generative framework by Cardinaletti/Giusti (2006). Dorian Roehrs and Christopher Sapp develop their own

original view on the structure of quantified phrases, which combines different features of previous proposals.

The volume is structured as follows. Apart from the first and last chapters setting the methodology and drawing the conclusions, each of the six chapters constituting the bulk of the volume addresses one type of semantically cognate lexical items. Chapter 2 is devoted to *viel* ›much/many‹. Chapter 3 deals with *wenig* ›few/little‹. Chapter 4 compares *all* ›all‹ and *jeder* ›each‹. Chapter 5 addresses complex indefinite pronouns such as *jemand* ›somebody‹, *niemand* ›nobody‹ and *nichts* ›nothing‹. Chapter 6 focusses on *etwas* ›something‹. Chapter 7 gives an overview of what the authors call exceptional adjectives; namely, *ander* ›other‹, *folgend* ›following/subsequent‹ and *solch* ›such‹. Each chapter is structured in a parallel fashion. The introduction anticipates the theoretical proposal for the given item, which regards the variation and change in categorial status directly related to the inflectional properties displayed by the item, the position the item fills in the nominal structure, and the relation the item entertains with the dependent. The rest of the chapter presents the corpus data organized in the four stages generally accepted for the history of the German language: Old High German (700-1100), Middle High German (1100-1350), Early New High German (1350-1700) and New High German (1700 to present). The final part of the chapter argues for the proposed analysis of the variation and change based on quantitative and qualitative data and often making parallels with other Germanic languages.

The texts from which the corpus is built are representative of the different diachronic stages of the language and, where possible, of different regional varieties. Old High German (OHG) is represented by ›Tatian‹, ›Isidor‹, ›Otfrid‹, ›Notker‹, ›Williram‹, ›Wiener Notker‹, consulted through ›TITUS‹ (›Thesaurus Indogermanischer Text- und Sprachmaterialien‹<sup>1</sup>), and the Bochumer ›Korpus der Mittelhochdeutschen Grammatik‹<sup>2</sup>. Middle High German (MHG) is represented by 51 prose texts of the Bochumer ›Korpus der Mittelhochdeutschen Grammatik‹. Early New High German (ENHG) is represented by 40 texts of the Bonner ›Frühneuhochdeutsch-Korpus‹<sup>3</sup> one from each of ten dialects in each of the three centuries. New High German is represented by qualitative data provided by the ›DUDEN‹ grammar (1959, 1995, 2007: vol 4) and checked by the native speaker judgment of one of the two authors, as is typical to the generative tradition. Qualitative examples are also considered for the earlier stages and provided by

---

1 URL: <http://titus.fkidg1.uni-frankfurt.de/framee.htm?/search/query.htm> (Aufrufdatum: 31.05.2017)

2 URL: <http://www.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/wegera/MiGraKo/#> (Aufrufdatum: 31.05.2017)

3 URL: <https://korpora.zim.uni-duisburg-essen.de/Fnhd/> (Aufrufdatum: 31.05.2017)

authoritative grammars such as Behagel's (1923), Paul's (2007, 25<sup>th</sup> ed.) and/or historical dictionaries such as the Grimm brothers' ›Deutsches Wörterbuch‹. This is to ensure that the non-existence of certain possibilities in the quantitative results is not due to chance.

It is important to consider that the nominal structures found in written corpora are usually quite simple, being made of a bare noun with at most one modifier or complement. The difficulty to find attestations of such structures is apparent from the raw number of examples. Out of the total 6000 items collected, 5000 regard the quantifier *all*, which most consistently behaves as a concord-ing element. What is left is a corpus of 1000 items to cover all the other types of quantifiers that are the ones displaying variation and subject to change. More so, due to the controversial nature of quantifiers, it is quite difficult to obtain reliable results from tagged corpora. Particularly significant is therefore the work of the authors who have automatically searched for relevant lemmas preceded or followed by relevant categories (noun, adjective, determiner, pronoun) but have then verified the resulting items in the context to ensure that they were part of the same quantified phrase. It is unfortunate that the authors have not ventured to include distant quantifiers in their corpus, as this is a reliable diagnostics to decide whether a quantifier has a selection or a modification relation with the dependent and it is known that genitive dependents can be split from the selecting nouns, especially in ENHG (cf. Demske 2001, pp. 268–296).

Occurrences of a quantifier and an adjacent dependent provide other types of diagnostics such as the inflectional properties of the quantity item, the position of the dependent, and whether the dependent is assigned genitive case or concurs with the quantifier. The whole volume provides this type of information in an interesting blend of quantitative and qualitative perspective, whose analysis is the ground for the theoretical proposals.

In my opinion, the theoretical advance is less strong than the empirical results. The authors assume a hierarchy of functional projections (Card > Agr > Num) without really arguing for it or dismissing competing analyses. This could be acceptable in view of space limits and considering the fact that alternative hypotheses have not been formulated to account for change. The authors propose a path of development attributed to all quantity items at different degrees at different stages. They assume four general stages, for simplex quantifying words: N → Card → Spec-CardP → SpecDP. Complex quantifying words only differ in the initial stage: Card+X → Card → Spec-CardP → SpecDP. No special category Q external to DP is assumed. This leads the authors to the additional assumption that genitive case is assigned by N or Card to a dependent, presumably of category DP. The prenominal position of a genitive dependent is considered in both cases as the first merge position, while the post-nominal position is derived in both cases by remerge of the

genitive right-adjoined to NP or CardP respectively, as in (1a) and (1b). Note that in (1b) the authors must assume an empty NP whose nature is hard to characterize:

- (1) a.  $[_{NP} [thero\ liuto]_{GEN}\ filu] / [_{NP} [_{NP} [t_i]\ filu] [thero\ liuto]_{GEN}]$  (OHG, p. 69)  
 that.GEN people.GEN much
- b.  $[_{CardP} [volkis]_{GEN}\ [vil\ [_{NP}\ e]]] / [_{CardP} [_{CardP}\ [t_i]\ [vil\ [_{NP}\ e]]] [volkis]_{GEN}]$   
 (MHG, p. 73, 283)  
 people.GEN much

Reanalysis of N to Card is not detectable from change of word order but only from change of inflectional properties, from *filu*, which inflects as a noun, to uninflected *vil*. Note that Card in (1b) is immediately higher than NP. Since at this stage of the language Num and Agr are projected in the nominal structure in the presence of *all*, we need a motivation for the missing structure when Card is filled by *vil*.

In MHG a shift is assumed to account for the fact that at some point the post-nominal position of the genitive becomes the less marked order. The genitive dependent (presumably a DP) in (1b) is reanalyzed as the NP heading the lexical projection of the quantified phrase, as in (2a). Further change leads to (2b) where the quantifier is a DegP in the Specifier of a silent Card head (SOME), again with no detectable change in morphology or word order, apart from the fact that *vil* can be preceded by a degree adverbial:

- (2) a.  $[_{CardP} [vil\ [_{NP}\ volkis]_{GEN}]]$  (MHG, p. 74, 283)  
 b.  $[_{CardP} [_{DegP}\ (so)\ vil] [SOME\ [_{NP}\ volkis]_{GEN}]]$  (p. 76)

I find this style of analysis unsatisfactory. It puts together bits of assumptions that do not belong to the same tradition. The null heads (the empty NP in (1b) and silent SOME in (2b)) and the hierarchy of functional projections are in the cartographic tradition, especially the work on silent heads by Kayne (a.o. cf. Kayne 2005). This line of generative tradition is strongly against rightward movement and adjunction, which is liberally assumed in (1), and parametrization of the hierarchy, which is a major ingredient of the analysis in (1)–(3).

I also find the bare assumption that genitive can appear on maximal or minimal projections (DP or NP) quite disturbing and even problematic for the very framework adopted by the authors since the different structures are assumed to coexist and be the unmarked choice for different quantifiers at the same stage of the language. Remind that *all* displays unmarked concord from the very beginning.

In order to capture the final stage in which genitive assignment shifts to concord, they propose that SOME disappears in Card and for this reason NP in (2b) projects further functional structure comprising AgrP, which is supposedly the source of Concord, as in (3):

- (3) [<sub>CardP</sub> [<sub>InflP</sub> (so) *vi*] Card [<sub>AgrP</sub> *unschuldig Blut*]<sub>CON</sub>]  
 So much innocent.ACC blood.ACC

In brief, the theoretical proposal put forth in the volume does not really motivate the changes observed in inflectional morphology, word order, and case assignment vs. concord. It does not provide a convincing trigger for the changes. It does not explain what makes the functional hierarchy reduced to NP under Card in (1)–(2) as opposed to AgrP > NumP in (3). It does not provide a motivated theory of genitive assignment. However, despite my objections to the theoretical proposal, I certainly consider the proposed methodology a successful enterprise, resulting in an unquestionable empirical advance, which in my opinion represents the most valuable and durable aspect of any linguistic work.

## References

- Behagel, Otto 1923: *Deutsche Syntax. Eine geschichtliche Darstellung*, Bd. 1, Heidelberg.
- Cardinaletti, Anna and Giuliana Giusti 2006. The syntax of quantified phrases and quantitative clitics, in: Martin Everaert and Henk van Riemsdijk (eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Syntax*, vol. V, Oxford, S. 23–93.
- Demske, Ulrike 2001: *Merkmale und Relationen. Diachrone Studien zur Nominalphrase des Deutschen*, New York.
- Kayne, Richard 2005: *Movement and Silence*, Oxford.
- Paul, Hermann 2007: *Mittelhochdeutsche Grammatik*. 25. Auflage, Tübingen.