Editorial:

Recent advances in Germanic syntax across syntactic domains

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Abstract

In this brief editorial, we provide an overview of this special issue on a diverse set of phenomena in Germanic syntax, and we summarize the individual chapters on both clause-level (aka 'CP-level') data and empirical phenomena below the clausal level.

0. General structure of the volume

This collection provides a fresh look at a variety of empirical phenomena from the Germanic languages in the domain of morphosyntax. The volume originated in the *34th Comparative Germanic Syntax Workshop* (*CGSW 34*), held at the University of Konstanz in June 2019. *CGSW* is a renowned and well-established forum for dealing with all aspects of comparative Germanic syntax (for more on the history of CGSW, see: `http://www.let.rug.nl/~zwart/cgsw/history.htm`), and in the 2019 edition we placed a premium on contributions that focused on unconventional sources of evidence for syntactic theory such as experimental/psycholinguistic evidence, evidence from corpora, including historical corpora, and evidence from non-standardized and/or extraterritorial Germanic varieties. This empirical focus is clearly reflected in many of the contributions to the present proceedings volume, which is divided into two parts: Part I contains recent theoretical and empirical work focusing on syntactic domains below the clausal (i.e. 'CP') level. Part II, on the other hand, deals with clauses, complementizers, and their categorial properties, thus focusing on CP-level phenomena.

Before we now sketch the individual chapters of the volume, we would like to thank all scholars who reviewed the contributions to this volume and who provided extremely helpful feedback – a big THANK YOU to you all! Thanks also to Peter Svenonius, to the *Nordlyd* editorial team, and to Laura Weißhaar for their support during the editing and production process. Last not least, we would also like to thank the German Research Foundation (DFG grant WA 4528/2-1) and the Karst-Stiftung/University of Konstanz for financial support.

1. Part I

Elly van Gelderen's chapter looks at the emergence of new modals in English, explaining the development of new classes of functional elements in terms of a cyclical development. The chapter by **Alexander Pfaff** is also diachronic in focus: Pfaff argues for a category of adjectival article – inside the adjective phrase – in the history of Icelandic, developing out of an original demonstrative. This article has the function of rescuing 'defective' weak adjectives by enabling them to function adjectivally.

The other two chapters in Part I address the interaction between lexical and functional categories in the domain of argument structure. Focusing on zero-derived nominals in English, **Gianina Iordăchioaia** uses corpus evidence to show that these may have argument structure. She analyses such zero-derived nominals (in Distributed Morphology terms) as involving a lexical root immediately dominated by a verbal functional head *v*, contra, e.g., Borer (2013). **Vera Lee-Schoenfeld & Nicholas Twiner**, meanwhile, argue that data from the German *kriegen* 'get'-passive and English benefactive verbs (e.g., *I*

baked John a cake) motivate the presence of an applicative ('affectee') functional head that bears non-canonical accusative case features.

2. Part II

Part II zooms in on clauses and complementizers. **Lutz Gunkel & Jutta Hartmann** address prepositional object clauses across Germanic, which interact in intricate ways with prepositional pro-forms (e.g., German *darüber*); they analyse their findings in terms of the availability or absence of a covert P element. The next two papers both deal with 'the category formerly known as COMP' and how it relates to case. **Julia Bacskai-Atkari** addresses the distribution of relativization strategies across Germanic from a historical and dialectal perspective, arguing that the loss of overt expression of case and gender is a crucial factor facilitating reanalysis of moved relative pronouns as a lexicalized C head. **Ankelien Schippers, Margreet Vogelzang & David Öwerdieck** deal with differences in COMP-trace effects between English and German, assessing a 'good-enough' processing account (Kiziak 2010) for the subject-object asymmetry. Here again, case ambiguity plays a crucial role, since it diminishes the asymmetry – suggesting that the COMP-trace effect is not a categorical constraint ruling out subject extraction in German.

The remaining three papers all have implications for the fine structure of the C-domain in Germanic languages and the particles that may occur there. For the first two of them, the distinction between central and peripheral adverbial clauses plays a major role. **Sigríður Sæunn Sigurðardóttir** investigates V3 orders with temporal adverbial clauses in Icelandic, comparing this to the data on West Flemish and Dutch presented by Haegeman & Greco (2018); she shows experimentally that prosodic breaks may disambiguate readings in cases where there is syntactic ambiguity. Also on adverbial clauses, **Anne Breitbarth** addresses the changing status of the adversative particle *aber* in the history of German: *aber* originally served to separate the rhematic from the thematic domain, but became reanalysed upward as adjoined to a 'MoodIrrealis' projection. Finally, **Elisabeth Witzenhausen** shows that two phenomena that have previously been treated together – West Germanic *ne/en* in complement clauses and in adverbial clauses – must be acknowledged as distinct: in complement clauses, *ne/en* is truly paratactic in the sense of being an agreement marker, whereas in adverbial clauses it contributes exceptive or adversative semantics.

3. Summary and outlook

Taken together, the papers in this volume show that Germanic languages still have much to tell us about the nature of the human language faculty. The range of sources of evidence used – from Twitter to runic inscriptions to processing experiments – underlines the importance of methodological pluralism in the science of language, and the range of phenomena investigated and theories put to the test – from the depths of word-internal syntax to the lofty heights of the outermost layers of the CP – suggests that the Germanic gold mine is unlikely to be exhausted any time soon.

References

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