

Constructionalization and productivity: an exploration of the constructional diversity of German *hin-/her*-adverbials

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Productivity remains a much-debated topic in research on syntactic and morphological constructions (e.g. Hilpert 2018, Kempf & Hartmann 2018, Perek 2018, Jackendoff & Audring 2020). Since a constructionist approach allows for different degrees of productivity to co-exist on different levels of abstraction within a constructional family, the relation between generality and productivity of constructional schemas is of central interest.

This paper discusses a case where full productivity on the most general level might be expected (see Smirnova & Mortelmans 2022). We investigate the family of German constructions with deictic directional adverbs of the type [*hin-/her*-P]. These words commonly form alliances with verbs (examples (1), (2) and (3)) and/or with prepositional phrases (examples (2) and (4)).

- (1) *Plötzlich kam er heraus.*
'Suddenly he came out.'
- (2) *Plötzlich kam er aus dem Wald heraus.*
'Suddenly he came out of the forest.'
- (3) *Das Buch kommt bald heraus.*
'The book will appear soon.'
- (4) *Aus unserer heutigen Sachkenntnis heraus ist diese Deutung nicht mehr zu rechtfertigen.*
'Based on our current expertise, this interpretation can no longer be justified.'

These structures are particularly interesting because of their multiple structural ambiguities. In (1), *heraus* is ambiguous between a free directional adverb and a verb particle. In (2), *heraus* may be read as an adverb, as a verb particle or as part of the circumposition *aus...heraus*. In (3), by contrast, only the verb particle reading of *heraus* is available. In (4), only the circumpositional reading *aus...heraus* is possible. In our study, we focus on cases such as (1)-(3), i.e., alliances involving a verb and optionally a PP.

We conducted a corpus study based on data from present-day German (DWDS-Kernkorpus, www.dwds.de/d/korpora/kern). Five pairs of *hin-/her*-adverbs (*hinaus-heraus*, *hinein-herein*, *hinauf-herauf*, *hinab-herab*, *hinunter-herunter*) were analyzed with respect to their combinatorial potential. For the verbs, we limited our investigation to eight change-of-location verbs (*gehen* 'go', *laufen* 'run', *kommen* 'come', *treten* 'step', *führen* 'lead', *stellen* 'put', *bringen* 'bring' and *ziehen* 'pull').

The most striking observation is that the individual verb-adverb combinations differ markedly in their behaviour. The combinatorial space is unevenly populated. Constructions differ in size and specificity, varying along three parameters:

1. whether or not they preferentially include a PP,
2. whether or not the PP typically encodes a certain semantic role (source, path and/or goal),
3. whether or not a particular P is involved.

In addition, we find many clusters of idiomatic uses.

Our findings support previous studies reporting tendencies for chunking and idiomatization, i.e. for constructionalization at lower, more specific levels of the hierarchy. This has consequences for productivity: free combinatoriality does not appear to be a priority. Instead, we see productive use shifting from more general to more specific constructional (sub-)schemas.

References

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