
Nominal augmentatives between creativity and lexicalisation

A micro-diachronic corpus-based investigation of German

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Formations with so-called prefixoids, such as *Höllengelächter* in (1), rely on a frequently used intensification strategy in German, similar to other Germanic languages.

- (1) Wieder setzte ein **Höllengelächter** ein. (Traven 1926)
Again set a hell.laughter in.
'Once again, a tremendous laughter began.'

The theoretical status of these elements, however, is highly controversial (e.g. Schmidt 1987). Productivity, which is often proclaimed without any empirical evidence (e.g. Elsen 2009), is of key importance in this regard. Yet, Werth (2022) provides the only corpus-based study on the development of augmentatives. Nonetheless, a systematic examination of their morphological productivity is lacking. This talk aims to fill this gap by investigating the diachrony as well as exemplariness of such elements using a quantitative and qualitative approach.

In doing so, a corpus study for the 20th and 21st century was conducted using the DWDS Core Corpus 20 and WebXI corpus. Drawing on more than 4.200 attestations and combining different methods of productivity measures based on (first) attestations, vocabulary growth curves, semantic features and hapax legomena, the productivity of selected augmentatives was thoroughly examined. In contrast to some authors' opinions, the data show that not all of the elements investigated are characterized by a high level of productivity.

In my talk, I will reject the categorical status of augmentatives from a diachronic perspective. Along with e.g. Meibauer (2013), I will argue that the productivity and functionality of an intensifying augmentative depend on the semantic features of its lexical source. The semantics of sources like *Riese* 'giant' which are predestined for comparisons are particularly notable for their vivid pattern.

References: • BBAW. (2025). *DWDS-Kernkorpus 20*. • BBAW. (2024). *WebXL*. • Elsen, H. (2009). Affixe: Nur was benannt wird, kann auch verstanden werden. *Deutsche Sprache: Zeitschrift für Theorie, Praxis, Dokumentation* 37, 316–333. • Meibauer, J. (2013). Expressive compounds in German. *Word Structure* 6(1), 21–42. • Schmidt, G. D. (1987). Das Affixoid. Zur Notwendigkeit und Brauchbarkeit eines beliebten Zwischenbegriffs der Wortbildung. In: G. Hoppe et al. (eds.), *Deutsche Lehnwortbildung. Beiträge zur Erforschung der Wortbildung mit entlehnten WB-Einheiten im Deutschen*. Tübingen: Narr, 53–101. • Werth, A. (2022). Vom Heidentempel zum Heidenlärm, vom Mordgeschrei zum Mordgeschrei. Entstehung und Entwicklung nominaler Augmentative im Deutschen. *Sprachwissenschaft* 47, 379–418.