
Mit tonnenweise Abwechslung – [N+weise] derivations as intensifiers

Daniela Elsner

Pädagogische Hochschule Vorarlberg

daniela.elsner@ph-vorarlberg.ac.at

The talk aims at discussing semantic and pragmatic aspects of a German intensifier strategy that has been neglected in the literature so far: derivations with *-weise* ‘wise’ and a nominal base (e.g. *eimer-weise* ‘by the bucket’, *haufen-weise* ‘heaps of/in heaps’, *reihen-weise* ‘in a row’). [N+weise] derivations are a very heterogeneous group and we begin with segregating those lexemes that have the potential to develop an intensifying function. Typically, a classifier (e.g. *Korb* ‘basket’, *Eimer* ‘bucket’, *Berg* ‘mountain’, *Container* ‘container’) or a measure noun (e.g. *Tonne* ‘ton’, *Kilo* ‘kilo’, *Liter* ‘liter’, *Pfund* ‘pound’) is used as their base. Initially, those derivations functioned as process adverbials licensing a manner reading (*etwas reihenweise pflanzen* ‘to plant something in rows’) before they developed a purely quantifying function appearing with bare mass or plural nouns (*reihenweise Hits produzieren* ‘to produce many hits’). The adjacency of the derivation and the noun is the vantage point for another development: *-weise* derivations that have a quantifying reading can readily be used with an intensifying function when accompanying a deverbal noun (1, 2):

- (1) IGN nannte es ein “wunderbares Plattform-Abenteuer” mit “tonnenweise Abschwelung in seinem Level- und Charakterdesign” [...]. (‘IGN called it a “wonderful platform adventure” with “a lot of variety in its level and character design” [...].’) (Wikipedia, Shantae)
- (2) Durch die Bevorzugung kürzerer Gräser und deren massenweises Abgrasen entsteht ein typischer, räumlich eng begrenzter “Hippo-Rasen”. (‘Due to the preference of shorter grasses and their grazing en masse a typical, areal restricted “hippo lawn” develops.’) (Wikipedia, Flusspferd)

The *-weise* derivations in (1, 2) function as boosters (Bolinger 1972) aiming at the upper end of a scale. The grazing in (2) is exceptionally intense and in the end, the grass is very short. But the derivations also have an affective component: The variety in (1) is not only very diverse, but also much more diverse than the speaker expected.

Reference: • Bolinger, D. L. (1972). *Degree Words*. The Hague: Mouton.