

---

## Does register influence the selection of syntactic (dis-)continuity in German(ic)? A study based on texts by Martin Luther

---

**Jürg Fleischer**

*Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin*

juerg.fleischer@hu-berlin.de

As discussed in the workshop description, all Germanic languages display “split” patterns “in which two components of a constituent interpreted as a semantic complex surface in a discontinuous syntactic configuration.” Relevant examples are complex predicates, as exemplified by the German “verbal bracket” (*sie hat das gesagt* ‘she has said that’), preposition stranding (*what are you talking about?*), split local adverbs (German *wo gehst du hin?* ‘where are you going (to)?’), verbal particles, split *what-for*-phrases, etc. Discontinuous patterns seem to contradict Behaghel’s (1932: 4) first law, which states “daß das geistig eng Zusammengehörige auch eng zusammengestellt wird”. The conditions enabling discontinuity therefore merit examination.

This paper focuses on non-obligatory “split” constructions in Early New High German texts by Martin Luther (1483–1546). Specifically, I will investigate whether and if so to what extent register differences are responsible for the use of split constructions or their non-split alternatives. Martin Luther is the author of various text genres: In addition to his well-known Bible translation, hymns, theological and polemic prints, fable translations, letters (some of them private) and even “table talks” make part of the record. The following pair of examples displays the pronominal adverb *dafür* (Modern German *davor*) selected by the verb *behüten* ‘to protect’. While it appears unsplit in Luther’s Bible translation, a split version (well-known from modern dialects; Fleischer 2002) surfaces in a table talk:

- (1) Wer aber vberbleibt vnd dafür behüt ist / wird Hungers sterben  
*and he that remaineth and is besieged shall die by the  
famine* (Ezekiel 6;12; King James Version)
- (2) Da behüt euch Gott für (TR 2: 1751)  
*there protect you Got for*  
‘God protect you from that!’

In the presentation, after a more general survey of split constructions in Germanic relevant examples in texts authored by Martin Luther will be examined with respect to potential register differences. The main question is whether register is a relevant factor when it comes to the selection of (dis-)continuous syntactic structures.

**References:** • Behaghel, O. (1932). *Deutsche Syntax: eine geschichtliche Darstellung. Band IV: Wortstellung, Periodenbau*. Heidelberg: Winter. • Fleischer, J. (2002). *Die Syntax von Pronominaladverbien in den Dialekten des Deutschen. Eine Untersuchung zu Preposition Stranding und verwandten Phänomenen*. Stuttgart: Steiner.