

Anti-Passive and Stilistic Fronting in German Verbless Directives

A Case Study in Rules vs. Constructions

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Overview

Background

Verbless Directives

Data

Problems for a Rule-Based Approach

Analysis

References

Constructions

(1) **Construction:**

A linguistic expression Γ is a construction if (a) and (b) hold.

- a. There is evidence that Γ is composed of smaller parts $\alpha_1 - \alpha_n$.
- b. The formal or functional properties of Γ cannot be determined on the basis of the properties of $\alpha_1 - \alpha_n$.

Prototypical constructions: **idioms**

Standard assumption in rule-based grammars:

1 Γ s that are constructions belong in the **lexicon**.

- The unpredictable properties of constructions must be captured by special lexical rules (Chomsky (1980)), or by postulating listed syntactic objects (Di Sciullo & Williams (1987), Jackendoff (1997)).

2 Γ s that are not constructions are generated in a **rule-based part of a grammar**.

- If the properties of a linguistic expression are fully predictable on the basis of the properties of its components, the linguistic expression does not exist in the lexicon but is derived by grammatical rules (in the structure-building components morphology and syntax).

State of Affairs

Conceptual problem: an inhomogeneous theory, with two possible sources for complex linguistic expressions: lexicon vs. grammatical rules.

Radical ways out:

- The **role of constructions is strengthened** (Jackendoff (1997, 2002), Culicover & Jackendoff (2005)), such that constructions may cover most, or even all, of what is traditionally derived by rule-based systems (Ackerman & Webelhuth (1998), Goldberg (2003, 2006), Tomasello (2003), among many others).
- The **role of rules is strengthened**, such that rules may cover most, or even all, of what is usually accounted for by invoking constructions.

Claim:

- Closer inspection of apparent constructions often reveals that rule-based accounts can and should be given after all, provided that grammatical rules are of a highly abstract nature.
- If this result can be generalized, the role of constructions may be minimal: Only **morphemes** are constructions (and need to be stored in the lexicon); all other linguistic expressions are derived by grammatical rules in morphology or syntax.

Double Articulation: Morphemes as Constructions

One of the defining properties of natural language (next to **recursion**; cf. Chomsky (1957), Hauser et al. (2002), Friederici et al. (2006)):

- (2) **Double Articulation** (Martinet (1964), Eisenberg (2000), Williams (2005)): Linguistic expressions can be encoded at two different levels: They can be separated into minimal units that **bear** meaning (morphemes) and into minimal units that **distinguish** meaning (phonemes).

Double articulation ensures that discrete infinity can be gained on the basis of a very small inventory of primitive items.


Conclusion:

All morphemes (that consist of more than one phoneme) are constructions because although grammatical rules **restrict** the combination of phonemes into morphemes (phonology), the properties of a morpheme cannot be **predicted** on the basis of the properties of its parts, and morphemes must thus be stored.

Hypothesis (also see Marantz (1998), with “root” instead of “morpheme”): Only morphemes are constructions.

Caveat

- To prove such an approach viable, one must argue that both **formal** and **interpretational** properties of seemingly irregular linguistic expressions can be shown to be systematic after all.
 - I will have nothing interesting to say about the latter issue.
- (3) Techniques for a **compositional interpretation of idioms** (see Ruhl (1975), Chomsky (1980), Pesetsky (1985), Gazdar et al. (1985), Everaert (1991), Nunberg et al. (1994), Sailer (2003), Wunderlich (2004) for various versions and complications):
- a. **spill the beans**:
 - (i) **spill** means 'divulge' in the context of **beans**
 - (ii) **beans** means 'information' in the context of **spill**.
 - b. **kick the bucket**:
 - (i) **kick** can mean 'die' in the context of **bucket**.
 - (ii) **bucket** is an expletive in the context of such a **die** (or the identity function).
 - (iii) **the** is an expletive in the context of an expletive (other cases of expletive articles: nominal predicates).

My main focus is on **formal properties of complex linguistic expressions** in the morphology and syntax of German that seem to resist rule-based accounts. 

Basic Assumptions

Assumption:

- **derivational, minimalist grammar** (Chomsky (1995, 2001, 2008))
- with **local optimization** procedures (Heck & Müller (2000, 2003, 2007)) and
- a **post-syntactic morphological realization** of syntactic heads (distributed morphology; Halle & Marantz (1993, 1994), Noyer (1992), Halle (1997), Harley & Noyer (2003), Embick & Noyer (2001)).

(4) Organization of Grammar:

- a. lexicon: list of morphemes, no rules
- b. numeration: selection of morphemes, enrichment of morphemes with non-inherent features, derivational morphology, composition
- c. syntactic derivation: Merge, Move, Agree plus optimization of all XPs (XPs as cyclic nodes); perhaps also parts of derivational morphology, composition
- d. inflectional morphology
- e. (phonological realization, semantic interpretation)

Features and Derivations

- (5) **Two types of features that drive operations** (Heck & Müller (2006); based on Adger (2003), Roberts & Roussou (2002), Sternefeld (2006)):
- Structure-building features (edge features, subcategorization features) trigger (external or internal) Merge: [**•F•**]
 - Probe features trigger Agree: [***F***].
- (6) **Last Resort** (LR):
Every syntactic operation must discharge either [**•F•**] or [***F***].
- (7) **Feature Condition** (FC):
A feature [**•F•**] or [***F***] on X must be discharged before XP can be embedded (or become a final root).

The Phenomenon

Observation (Jacobs (2008)):

Verbless directives in German (which instantiate “directional-resultative predication”) have properties that seem to resist a rule-based approach; at least at first sight, they look like clear cases of syntactic constructions.

(8) **Adverb-‘mit’-directive construction:**

- a. Her mit {dem Geld / dem gestohlenen Geld / dem Geld, das du mir gestohlen hast}!
- b. Weg mit dem {Krempel / dem alten Krempel / dem alten Krempel auf dem Speicher}!
- c. Nieder mit {den Studiengebühren / den sozialfeindlichen Studiengebühren / den sozialfeindlichen Studiengebühren für Erstsemester}!

(9) **PP-‘mit’-directive construction:**

- a. In den Müll mit {diesen Klamotten / diesen geschmacklosen Klamotten / diesen Klamotten von H&M}!
- b. Zur Hölle mit {dieser Regierung / dieser unfähigen Regierung / dieser Regierung, die keines ihrer Versprechen gehalten hat}!

A Similar Construction

(10) **Adverb-PP-directive construction:**

- a. Raus aus {meinem Haus / meinem frisch renovierten Haus}!
- b. Hinein ins {Vergnügen / große Badevergnügen / große Badevergnügen in der Kurtherme Bad Sassendorf}!

Note:

I will ignore this case because it can be analyzed in terms of ellipsis without too much ado.

- (11) a. Geh raus aus meinem Haus!
 b. Spring hinein ins Vergnügen!

Problems for a Rule-Based Approach

Dilemma (Jacobs (2008)):

- 1 An approach to **mit**-directive constructions in terms of **ellipsis** does not seem viable because the source is ungrammatical.
- 2 An approach to **mit**-directive constructions in terms of **structure-building rules** does not seem viable because it would require implausible assumptions.

(12) **'mit'-directive construction:**

- a. Her mit {dem Geld / dem gestohlenen Geld / dem Geld, das du mir gestohlen hast}!
- b. In den Müll mit {diesen Klamotten / diesen geschmacklosen Klamotten / diesen Klamotten von H&M}!

The Ellipsis Approach and Its Failure

Jacobs (2008, 26):

“Diese Probleme lassen sich übrigens nicht dadurch aus der Welt schaffen, dass man verblose Direktiva auf zugrundeliegende vollständige Sätze zurückführt, indem man ein unhörbares Imperativ-Verb postuliert. Dagegen spricht unter anderem die Inkompatibilität aller in Frage kommenden Verben mit als Thema-Argument interpretierten *mit*-Phrasen.”

(13) **Ellipsis analysis of adverb-‘mit’-directives:**

- a. *Gib (geh, trag, bring, ...) her mit dem Geld!
- b. *Bring (...) weg mit dem Kreppe!
- c. *Mach (...) nieder mit den Studiengebühren!

(14) **Ellipsis analysis of PP-‘mit’-directives:**

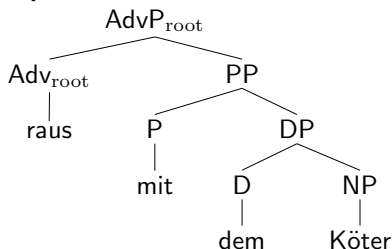
- a. *Schmeiß (...) in den Müll mit diesen Klamotten!
- b. *Schick (...) zur Hölle mit dieser Regierung!

The Structure-Building Approach

(15) **Lexical entries:**

- a. *raus*: {[Adv], [root], [•P:mit•]}
- b. *mit*: {[P], [•D•], [*dat*]}
- c. *dem*: {[D], [dat], [•N•], [*dat*]}
- d. *Köter*: {[N], [dat]}

(16) **A possible structure for 'mit'-directives:**



Failure of the Structure-Building Approach 1

Four problems identified by Jacobs:

- 1 irregular behaviour of adverbs with respect to subcategorization
- 2 problems with illocutionary force
- 3 irregular meaning assignment to adverbs
- 4 problems with required head status of adverbs

Problem 1:

Normally, adverbs do not subcategorize other items (incl. PPs). In (17), choice of P is free, which shows that the adverb does not carry out subcategorization/selection.

(17) dass Peter {raus auf die Wiese / in den Garten / zur Haltestelle} lief

Problem 2:

In a compositional interpretation, it must be the adverb that contributes the **directive operator** DIR that encodes illocutionary force. However, this is incompatible with the assumption that one and the same lexical item cannot have both lexical meaning and be the locus of illocutionary force. (If there were a C head, this problem would disappear, but there isn't.)

Failure of the Structure-Building Approach 2

Problem 3:

The interpretation that needs to be assigned to the adverbial (viz., $\lambda w.[\text{RAUS}(w)]$) differs from the one that it normally needs to have, even though it intuitively seems to carry its old meaning in relation to the 'mit'-phrase.

Problem 4:

Adverbs do not typically have head status. (At least, clausal projections are not normally projections of adverbial heads.)

Conclusion:

A construction-based analysis of 'mit'-directives is called for.

Jacobs' Construction Analysis of 'mit'-Directives

(18) raus mit dem Köter

- a. Phon: /X mit Y/
- b. Cat: [U X_{Adv,dir} [PP *mit*_P Y_{NP,dat}]]
- c. Sem: DIR_{ill}(sp, adr, [GO-END(x,w) & Y'(x) & X'(w)])

(19) in den Müll mit den Klamotten

- a. Phon: /X mit Y/
- b. Cat: [U X_{PP,dir} [PP *mit*_P Y_{NP,dat}]]
- c. Sem: DIR_{ill}(sp, adr, [GO-END(x,w) & Y'(x) & X'(w)])

Note:

This analysis evades the problems in 1–4: The (otherwise peculiar) properties are properties of the **construction**, not properties of **lexical items**.

Towards a Rule-Based Approach

Claim:

An ellipsis approach is readily available after all once a slightly more abstract approach to syntax is adopted: One must give up the naive idea that a simple addition of lexical items to 'mit'-directives will produce a well-formed string.

Proposal:

The verb-based paraphrases that one has to look for with 'mit'-directives like those in (a) are not those in (b), but those in (c).

- (20) a. Nieder mit den Studiengebühren!
 b. *Mach(t) (...) nieder mit den Studiengebühren!
 c. Macht(t) (...) die Studiengebühren nieder!
- (21) a. In den Müll mit diesen Klamotten!
 b. *Schmeiß(t) (...) in den Müll mit diesen Klamotten!
 c. Schmeiß(t) (...) die Klamotten in den Müll!
- (22) a. Zum Teufel mit dir!
 b. *Scher zum Teufel mit dir!
 c. Scher dich zum Teufel!

Hypothesis:

'mit'-directives are the product of a **grammatical-function changing** operation that results from the addition of an **antipassive**-like head to v.

Antipassive

(23) **Antipassive alternation in Chukchee** (Paleosibirian; Comrie (1979)):

- a. Yemronə-na qərir-ərkən-in ekək
 Yemron-ERG₁ search-PRS-3.SG₁.3.SG₂ son-ABS₂
 'Yemron is searching for his son.'
- b. Yemron ine-lqərir-ərkən (akka-gtə)
 Yemron-ABS₁ APASS-search-PRS.3SG₁ (son-DAT)
 'Yemron is searching (for his son).'

Generalizations (Baker (1988), Bittner & Hale (1996))

- An APASS (antipassive) morpheme can be attached to the verb.
- APASS makes assignment of structural case to the direct object (the absolutive in ergative systems) impossible; the verb becomes intransitive.
- The direct object is demoted; it is either left out or realized as an oblique phrase.
- The subject is typically unaffected, but it changes its case in ergative systems: It bears absolutive case (due to the lack of a direct object receiving structural case).

Argument Demotion in 'mit'-directives

Prediction:

If 'mit'-directives are antipassive-like constructions, it should be possible to leave out the demoted direct object (i.e., the 'mit'-phrase). This prediction is confirmed.

(24) Lack of 'mit'-phrase realization in adverb contexts:

- a. (i) Weg mit dem Krempel!
- (ii) Weg!
- (iii) *Mit dem Krempel!
- b. (i) Nieder mit den Studiengebühren!
- (ii) Nieder!
- (iii) *Mit den Studiengebühren!

(25) Lack of 'mit'-phrase realization in PP contexts:

- a. (i) In den Müll mit diesen Klamotten!
- (ii) In den Müll!
- (iii) *Mit diesen Klamotten!
- b. (i) Zur Hölle mit dieser Regierung!
- (ii) Zur Hölle!
- (iii) *Mit dieser Regierung!

Note:

The construction approach has nothing to say about these asymmetries; and it needs to stipulate additional constructions for the (ii)-examples.

Analysis 1

Outline:

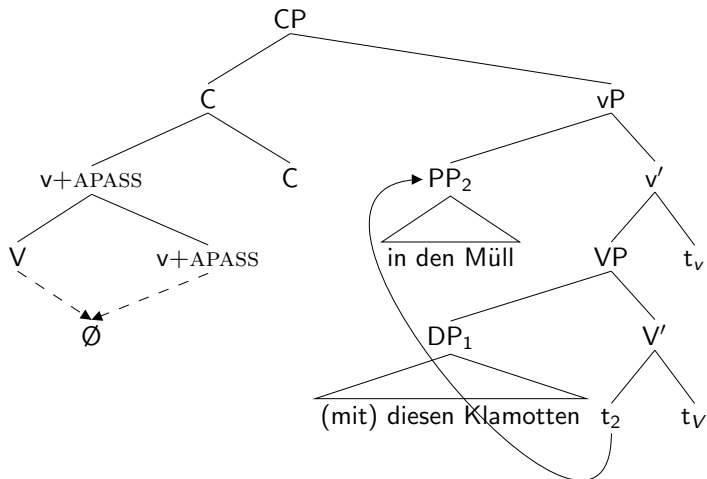
- An abstract **antipassive-like morpheme** $APASS$ optionally shows up in the numeration; if present, it attaches to v .
(Alternative: There is an $APASS$ -phrase with $V+v$ -to- $APASS$ movement in the syntax.)
- $APASS$ on v removes v 's ability to assign structural case; it **absorbs** [***acc***].
- The object must therefore be realized as an **oblique** (or not at all); the preposition that fits the directional-resultative meaning of the verbs involved is *mit*.
- In accusative-type languages, Burzio's Generalization then implies that a normal external argument cannot be selected anymore by v either (a passive-like effect). Suggestion: As a consequence of $APASS$ on v , impoverishment of the subcategorization feature on v applies – [**•D•**] on v becomes a **defective** [**•X•**] (a general EPP property) that is insufficient to trigger external Merge; the external argument cannot be realized syntactically anymore.
- Morphological realization of all categories (functional and lexical) takes place post-syntactically (Marantz (1995, 1998)). Vocabulary items like *geben*, *bringen*, *machen*, *schmeißen*, *schicken*, etc. cannot be inserted in $V+v+APASS$ because the $APASS$ morpheme has created a feature context that is incompatible (given the Subset Principle). As a result, only a **zero verb** can be inserted (or none at all).

Analysis cont'd

- Little *v*'s EPP property [**•X•**] triggers movement. The lower item moves (despite the MLC); if the higher item (the demoted object) moves, the defective subcategorization feature of *v* is still sufficient to create a violation of the θ -criterion.
(Alternative: Object demotion is in fact phrase-structural, as in Larson's (1988) approach to double object constructions. On both approaches, it is ensured that the object cannot move to Spec_v; therefore it cannot acquire nominative case by T, as in real passives.)
Movement of the adverb/PP is very much like stylistic fronting in Icelandic, under Holmberg's (2000) analysis.
- APASS induces obligatory verb-second (V-to-C) movement in German.
- Topicalization cannot apply because this operation requires a overt verb form in C in German (unless we are dealing with gapping contexts.)
- Consequently, the resulting structures must be verb-first, which can be interpreted as an imperative or as a yes-/no question.

The Structure of 'mit'-directives

(26) A new structure for 'mit'-directives:



Problems for Structure-Building Analyses Solved

Problem 1:

Normally, adverbs do not subcategorize other items (incl. PPs).

Solution:

Under the present analysis, adverbs do not subcategorize anything.

Problem 2:

One and the same lexical item cannot have both lexical meaning and be the locus of illocutionary force.

Solution:

Lexical meaning is carried by the adverb/PP; illocutionary force is on C.

Problem 3:

The interpretation that needs to be assigned to the adverbial (viz., $\lambda w.[\text{RAUS}(w)]$) differs from the one that it normally needs to have, even though it intuitively seems to carry its old meaning in relation to the 'mit'-phrase.

Solution:

The interpretation of the adverb/PP is the same as it is in other clauses.

Problem 4:

Clausal projections are not normally projections of adverbial heads.

Solution:

The adverb/PP does not project a clause.

Consequences: External Arguments

Prediction:

In 'mit'-directive constructions, external arguments cannot be realized at all, even though external arguments can optionally be realized in imperatives.

This prediction is confirmed.

- (27) a. Macht (ihr) die Studiengebühren nieder!
 b. *Nieder ihr mit den Studiengebühren!
 c. *Nieder mit den Studiengebühren von euch!
- (28) a. Schmeiß (du) die Klamotten in den Müll!
 b. *In den Müll du die Klamotten!
 c. *In den Müll die Klamotten von dir!

Consequences: Sentence Mood

Observation:

Nothing in the present analysis specifically requires an imperative interpretation. The only thing that is required is that the resulting sentence is verb-first.

Prediction:

Unless further restrictions are imposed, 'mit'-directives should be compatible with both an **imperative** and a (yes/no) **interrogative** interpretation of the sentence. This prediction is borne out.

- (29) a. In den Müll mit den Klamotten? (Oder was soll ich damit machen?)
 b. Auf zum Fest?
 c. Also zur Hölle mit ihm?
 d. Also was jetzt: Nieder mit den Studiengebühren oder nicht?

In the present rule-based approach, this follows from the fact that 'mit'-directives are verb-first clauses. In the construction-based approach, one has to basically duplicate the existing constructions, and minimally change imperative semantics to interrogative semantics in one of the two sets.

Consequences: Syntactic Activity of 'mit'-Directives

Prediction:

- The rule-based approach predicts that, where all restrictions that follow from the analysis are satisfied, 'mit'-directives should behave just like all other sentential objects. In particular, they should be accessible for further external and internal Merge.
- The construction-based approach predicts that the 'mit'-directive construction is inaccessible for further syntactic rules (unless extensions are stipulated that bring the approach closer to a rule-based approach).

Observation:

The internal structure of 'mit'-directives is accessible by further syntactic rules. (Also cf. Müller, St. (2006) on resultative constructions.)

Modification

Observation (Jacobs (2006)):

Modification of 'mit'-directives works exactly as it does in regular transitive sentences; the restrictions are identical. This is a problem for the construction-based approach, but it follows directly from the rule-based approach.

(30) **Modification in transitive clauses:**

- a. Schmeiß den Krempel weg!
- b. Schmeiß den Krempel schnell weg!
- c.?*Schmeiß den Krempel sorgfältig weg!

(31) **Modification in 'mit'-directives:**

- a. Weg mit dem Krempel!
- b. Schnell weg mit dem Krempel!
- c.?*Sorgfältig weg mit dem Krempel!

Movement

Observation:

In varieties that permit P stranding, 'mit'-directives can (marginally) involve P stranding, too. This is expected under the rule-based approach, and unexpected under the construction-based approach (which would seem to need to postulate yet another construction in each case).

(32) **P-stranding in transitive clauses:**

- a. Wirf die Klötze da rein!
- b. Wirf da die Klötze rein!

(33) **P-stranding in 'mit'-directives:**

- a. Da rein mit den Klötzen!
- b. Da mit den Klötzen rein!

- ### (34)
- a. Bring den Krempel dahin!
 - b. Bring da den Krempel hin!
 - c. Dahin mit dem Krempel!
 - d. Da mit dem Krempel hin!

Conclusion

A rule-based approach to 'mit'-directives is problematic only as long as one assumes that an ellipsis approach must be naive (such adding lexical material results in a regular sentences). In contrast, a rule-based approach is straightforward if 'mit'-directives are analyzed as full CPs that are headed by a verb with an attached anti-passive morpheme whose PF-realization is zero, and that triggers **object demotion**. This evades all pieces of counter-evidence (Jacobs' four problems) against a rule-based approach, and it covers further effects that the construction-based approach has little to say about.

Main point:

- 1 There is evidence that 'mit'-directives in German are composed of smaller parts: **word status, accessibility for syntactic rules that access the internal structure.**
- 2 However, the properties of 'mit'-directives can be determined on the basis of the properties of the individual lexical items: A **rule-based approach is possible**, and well motivated because (a) it makes a compositional approach to semantic interpretation possible, and (b) it predicts syntactic effects that must remain a mystery under the construction-based approach.
- 3 Conclusion: 'mit'-directives in German are **not syntactic constructions.**

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