

## **Pathways from verb to noun and back again: Categorical shifts in English -ing- and German -ung forms**

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### **Abstract**

The English suffix -ing and the German suffix -ung can be traced back to the same root, but have taken remarkably different paths of development in both languages (Dal 1952). Both English -ing-derivation and German -ung-nominalization have been studied extensively in recent years (for overviews, cf. Fonteyn 2014 for English -ing and Hartmann 2014 for German -ung). As Demske (1999) has already pointed out, a cross-linguistic comparison of the development of both patterns can yield valuable insights for a theory of word-formation and word-formation change.

English nominal and verbal gerunds in -ing as well as German -ung-nominalizations have been perceived as a challenge for word-formation theory (cf. Fonteyn 2014; Hartmann *forthc.*). In this paper, I will discuss theoretical and methodological approaches that allow for a straightforward account of both the synchronic productivity and the diachronic dynamics of these patterns as well as other word-formation constructions. I will argue that German -ung-nominals have not only undergone significant changes in productivity (cf. Demske 2000) but have also experienced categorical shifts: In the Early New High German period (c. 1350-1650), the use of -ung-nominals was extended from abstract concepts to progressive and highly “verby” constructions. Today, by contrast, the word-formation products of this pattern tend to exhibit a high degree of “nouniness” (Ross 1973; Sasse 2002), as they can also denote objects and persons (cf. Demske 2000). In the case of English -ing forms, the shift in functional behavior has gone much further (De Smet 2008; Fonteyn, De Smet, & Heyvaert 2015), to the extent that the suffix -ing is productive not only in derivation but also in inflection (Demske 2000). Both patterns have taken different pathways of constructionalization (Traugott & Trousdale 2013). Many highly frequent German -ung-nominals have undergone lexical constructionalization, i.e. they have become independent form-meaning pairings detached from their respective constituents. The development of English -ing, by contrast, can be seen as an instance of procedural constructionalization (Traugott 2014: 10), i.e. the development of a more schematic and more general construction with abstract meaning.

On a more practical level, I will argue that studying complex phenomena such as the diachronic development of morphological patterns requires a multidimensional methodological approach. Converging evidence from multiple case studies employing a variety of well-established quantitative methods and drawing on data from the Mainz Early New High German Corpus (cf. Hartmann 2014) and the GerManC corpus (Durrell et al. 2007) lends support to the theoretical considerations outlined above. In addition to previously suggested statistical approaches, I propose morphological cross-tabulation analysis, an extension of collocation analysis (Stefanowitsch & Gries 2003), as an appropriate method for assessing the schema salience (Taylor 2002) of morphological constructions in a usage-based perspective. This method adopts the logic of traditional cross-tabulation tests to determine the degree of ‘attraction’ or ‘repulsion’ between a derivative and its base. The association strength thus calculated can then give important clues to a derivative’s degree of lexical autonomy (Bybee 1985, 1995), which in turn can be seen as an important determinant of morphological productivity.

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