

Grammaticalization of Aspect in German and its diachronic parallels in English

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German is commonly not viewed as a typical aspect language, for in German the perfective and imperfective aspectual distinctions are not marked morphologically on the verb, as it is common in the Slavic languages, particularly in Russian (Comrie, 1976; Forsyth, 1970; Leiss, 1992). However, aspect is a grammatical category that is currently being discussed as grammaticalizing in German (Gárgyán, 2014; Krause, 2002). While in Old English and Old High German participial constructions with *beon/wesan* and *sin/wesan* respectively exhibited the primary function of creating internal temporal constituency (Reimann, 1997), upholding the aspectual function and gradually extending their combinability with certain verb classes, in their subsequent stages the initial similarities between the two languages developed apart: In Early Modern English the progressive form gradually became an obligatory member in the English verbal paradigm, whereas in Early New High German the durative function of the construction eventually ceased to exist, this development leading to the disappearance of the form in the German language after the 15th century (Reichmann & Wegera, 1993).

In view of the historical developments, the present work endeavours to define the similarities between the two languages German and English in the way they grammaticalize the category of aspect by acquiring progressive aspect forms. While the English progressive is fully grammaticalized, German progressive constructions are lagging behind, but – as stated by Reimann (1997) (and many others) - German is on its way towards developing obligatory, i.e. fully grammaticalized progressive aspect marking. The study strives to uncover the similarities and differences between the progressives in the two languages in the way they emerged. It will be investigated whether the grammaticalization process in the English language resembles the supposedly presently emerging, presumably similar process in Modern Standard German. For instance, a striking parallel exists between the German *am-* and *beim-*progressives and the Early Modern English locative constructions of the type ‘be in hunting’, built also with the prepositions ‘on’, ‘at’, or ‘upon’ (Núñez-Pertejo, 2004), showing a close formal parallel to the Modern German prepositional progressive forms.

To this end, a comparative corpus study of the progressive in Early/Late Modern English as well as of the progressive forms in Present-Day German is conducted that draws on grammaticalization theory (Lehmann, 2015; Diewald & Smirnova, 2012) as well as on aspectual theory (Comrie, 1976; Leiss, 1992; Bache, 1985). For the English part, the current version of the ARCHER corpus is used, and for the investigation of Present-Day German, DWDS corpus data are analyzed, with a focus on conceptually near-spoken register.

The analysis of corpus data indicates that the internal temporal constituency of a situation is increasingly expressed obligatorily by the *am*-Progressive of the type “Gitarrenmusik *ist am aussterben*”. Furthermore, my research shows that this obligatory expression can particularly be associated with certain lexical aspect classes. In my ongoing research, I investigate the extent to which the *am*-Progressive behaves syntactically as well as semantically similar to the English Progressive before its complete grammaticalization in the Late Modern English period, such that it may be concluded that both Germanic languages within their relevant stages of diachronic development undergo or underwent a very similar process of grammaticalization of progressive markers, yet at different times in their individual histories.

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