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Guido Oebel, ed. (2012). *Intensivierungskonzepte bei Adjektiven und Adverbien im Sprachvergleich/Crosslinguistic Comparison of Intensified Adjectives and Adverbs*. Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač.

Crosslinguistic Comparison of Intensified Adjectives and Adverbs is a follow up to a previous publication in supplement of the *Wörterbuch der Volkssuperlative/Dictionary of Volkssuperlatives* (Verlag Dr Kovač, 2011). The bilingual (German-English) anthology focuses on different aspects of this intensifying phenomenon in the case of adjectives and adverbs. It consists of two main theoretical parts, with the first providing a short language-historical overview of the topic, and the second, a more extensive part introducing seven substantial articles on problems of the dissemination and frequency of intensifying adjectival compounds. The anthology also contains a third, for the scholarly interest no less important section: it provides a quadrilingual (German-English-Dutch-Swedish) lexical appendix; bibliographic references on adjectival and adverbial intensification in general; a list of printed dictionaries, encyclopedias and lexicons arranged alphabetically according to authors and editors as well as according to titles; and a list of online sources. The fourth part introduces the authors themselves.

The title promises crosslinguistic comparison concerning the topic, and the volume truly lives up to its promise: the selection of papers offers a wide coverage of languages. Hoeksema concentrates on Dutch, Klara on German and Oebel on Swedish. Apart from analyses focusing on one language, there are papers with a decisively crosslinguistic-comparative viewpoint: Pintarić compares Croatian and German examples for the intensification of adjectives used in the language of fashion. The most extensive crosslinguistic contribution is provided by Brdar and Brdar-Szabó, who survey the phenomena of intensification by means of reduplication in four major groups of languages: Germanic, Romance, Slavic and Finno-Ugric languages.

Although only the first part of the volume claims to employ predominantly diachronic aspects, still, diachronic reasons are often postulated in the language-practical papers as well, e.g. in Oebel's analysis of the loss of prefix-like meanings (p. 186). What connects these papers besides the main topic is their reflection on problems concerning categorisational/classificational principles. In their analysis of the different types of reduplications, Brdar and Brdar-Szabó explicitly claim the ex-



istence of a continuum ranging from clear cases of syntactic reduplication to clear cases of morphological reduplication, with numerous borderline cases in-between. A second link between the selection of papers is the emphasis on the semantic considerations and the semantic analysis playing a crucial part in the coverage of their topics. A third link, possibly less influential but also relevant, is the introduction of certain cultural aspects, which are often intertwined with postulated contacts between languages.

The initial language-historical part contains six shorter essays, in certain cases excerpts from larger works, providing for a diachronic introduction to many aspects of the topics later dealt with in the language-practical second part. Eugen Borst compares adjectival intensification in three different periods of English: Old, Middle and Modern English. He identifies several different methods for intensification in English. Besides drawing attention to the several possible reasons behind a change in meaning (be it intensification or a loss in intensity of meaning) he identifies the tendency for hyperbolic constructions, abundant in common language use, as the main reason for changes in meaning. He deals extensively with the notion of litotes, whereby *pretty*, *little*, *rather* as well as the adjectives *decent*, *proper* or *tidy* might acquire emphatic meaning. In his view, even the negative prefixations of Middle English (*unfew*, *unlittle*, *uneath*) serve as a second form litotes, as the result of the process is an affirmation of a positive notion. Besides litotes, he deals with several different possible methods of intensification: superlative expressions, the absolute superlative, comparison and different types of compounding. James A. Murray's essay on Scottish adjectives provides an overview of the intensification phenomenon in a dialect spoken in the Southern Counties of Scotland. The dialect seems to have retained several of its old forms as it remained quite intact from influence. In a similar vein Louise Pound examines 15th–16th century English, namely the elative (absolute) use of the comparative and superlative. The elative construction of the comparative was used in the period to indicate the existence of a certain quality, without expressing definite comparison. The diachronic importance of the examined period lies in its marking a shift from Middle to Modern English. The historical tradition also plays a crucial role in Emmy Sachs' essay, in which she examines a specific morphological category, the intensified noun-adjective compounds in Germanic languages (called *Volkssuperlativ* in German) e.g. *steinalt* or *stockstill*. The diachronic aspects often draw attention to tendencies in language change (see Bauer's 2003 postulation of a typological shift in English: from prefixation towards compounding). Sachs' findings, besides stating that Germanic languages use this construction to increase the emotional force of an adjective by prefixing a noun to it, support this postulation. The phenomenon exemplifies the

general preference of Germanic languages for compounds, as compounds seem to be more suitable for emotional language. Sachs also sets up categories for the description of the phenomenon. The largest category contains abbreviated comparisons, but there are also ellipsis-based constructions, where the semantic relation is vague or missing. The excerpt from Cornelius Stoffel's book focuses on tendencies of semantic change concerning intensive adverbs. Though most of them used to express completeness, in the course of the time they develop the tendency to be used with a weakened sense. The reason for this change lies in the general tendency of speakers to use hyperbolic language. Good examples for this process would be *gewiss* in German, and *immediately* in English, referring in actual use to probability in case of *gewiss*, and to the notion of near instead of instant futurity in case of *immediately*. Stoffel's analysis is a goldmine for scholars of literature as well: he provides a compilation of literary examples of specific instances of language use, relying heavily on Dickens, Ben Jonson, Chaucer and Shakespeare. In this sense it might even have cross-disciplinary relevance as well, providing thought-provoking insights into specific aspects of language-use (especially in interpreting Shakespeare).

The second, more substantial part of the book contains papers on dissemination and frequency of intensifying adjectival compounds. Jack Hoeksema's paper examines relative compounds in Dutch. He states that although relative compounds e.g. *pitch dark* belong to the expressive component of the lexicon, in the strict sense - as a grammatical category - they are absolutely superfluous. The reason for their existence - together with other morphological phenomena with expressive/evaluative flavour like diminutives, augmentatives and pejoratives - lies in their expressive nature. "Relative compounds are intuitively livelier creatures than modified adjectives such as *very dark*, and at the same time more compact than corresponding idioms." (p. 97) Hoeksema defines relative compounds, lists their most striking properties as well as provides a very detailed analysis of their semantics. The papers of this second section in general, and that of Hoeksema in particular attaches utmost importance to semantic considerations, as, according to him, the class is primarily defined by its interpretation. This reasoning is amply documented by examples, just to mention one: the difference between *zoutarm* 'salt-poor' and *straatarm* 'street-poor = very poor' does not lie in their structure, but their meaning. The enumeration of the different types of relative compounds strongly resonates with some cultural aspects as well, especially in cases of idiomatic and stereotypical comparisons. Hoeksema reflects upon the categorisational ambiguities mentioned before, as relative adjectives are not always compounds. In certain cases prefixes also function in a similar way, just as there is a blurred borderline between



adverb plus adjective combinations and relative compounds (p.112). This is the point where degrammaticalization enters the picture, as e.g. the use of *super* as an adverb of degree instead of as a prefix.

Ludmila Klara provides engaging insight into adjectival intensification in present-day German. Her goal is to analyze the morphological structure of these intensifying adjectives, attaining a systematic typology through the process. Terminological clarification (*Steigerungsbildung - adjektivisches Steigerungskompositum*) is therefore admittedly one of her aims, which she achieves through the identification of specific semantic character. She raises important categorisational questions concerning the morphological status of the first elements of intensifying adjectives. Besides categorisational and functional considerations, Klara postulates a three-stage process in the creation of intensifying adjectives.

Ricarda Liver's analysis of a number of Romansch idioms is also centred around semantic considerations on the one hand and categorisational problems based on syntactic structure on the other. Introducing diachronic aspects, a transition is supposed to exist from word combination to prefixed lexemes.

The volume's editor Guido Oebel's contribution is an abridged, German-language variant of a more extended article concerning the topic of elation in the Swedish language. The paper provides us with a reference-book-like list of the examined first elements. It is admittedly his aim to differentiate these first elements from prefixes (see Oebel's definition, p. 245) classifying them as prefix-like words. These prefix-like first elements are claimed to have either intensifying or evaluative semantic content, with the intensifying ones being further divided into comparative, consecutive and direct categories. Every prefix-like first element is analyzed according to six different aspects, which results in the above-mentioned reference-book quality, providing valuable source material. Taking several aspects into consideration, Oebel suggests treating the prefix-like meaning of these first elements as an extension of their original meaning, often introducing playful or we might even say creative semantic aspects. The creative aspects of word formation processes - especially within the framework of Cognitive Linguistics - is a field gaining more and more scholarly interest (Benczes 2006; Munat 2007), these "playful formations" might also pave the way for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of linguistic creativity. Oebel also introduces the —in this volume unique— aspect of the difference of influence between spoken and written language.

Elizabeth Piirainen examines "folk-superlatives" spread across a large number of European languages, proving that the motivation behind this phenomenon is

rooted in a common cultural background, which background can be traced back to different components: texts of classical antiquity, the Bible and widely known pieces of early literature. Piirainen's contribution is perhaps the best example of cultural factors playing a part in the formation of language, proving how inextricably intertwined they are. The language of fashion is also loaded with cultural connotations, as Anita Pavić Pintarić insightfully proves. Although Pintarić also examines intensifying adjectives, we can also identify patterns of persuasion behind the respective phrases.

The last paper of the second section is the contribution of Mario Brdar and Rita Brdar-Szabó, who provide us with a cross-linguistic view of the phenomenon of reduplication. They examine four major groups of languages (with numerous examples for each group) to provide an inventory of different reduplicative constructions. The large number of examples from different languages draws attention to the fact that languages far from each other (genetically or areally) might still use fairly similar constructions to express highly similar semantic, pragmatic and discoursal functions. When considering reduplication, within a whole range of functions, two 'endpoints' can be identified: the clearly syntactic structures (repetition at the level of clause element or phrase) and the clearly morphological structures (repetition at or below the level of word). Brdar and Brdar-Szabó point out (p.295) that functional criteria do not prove to be very helpful in differentiating the two types, as reduplications which formally look like syntactic ones might still feature some functions typical of morphological ones. The issue of categorization is a recurring topic, within morphological reduplication e.g. it is possible to distinguish between total and partial reduplication. Within the framework of intensification the authors identify (and amply illustrate with examples) a whole range of possible functions for reduplication, expressing plurality, collectivity, iteration, continuity, diminution, attenuation, change of word-class. This spectacular versatility though can be classified under two general headings: reduplication either functions within the framework of inflectional morphology or derivational morphology. The fact that reduplication can express both intensification and attenuation with adjectives and adverbs may pose - as the authors claim - the biggest theoretical problem. The authors approach this and several related problems with the use of different metonymies, thereby reflecting upon as well as extending previous crosslinguistic studies in the field.

The volume gives a very thorough overview of the topic of intensification in adjectives and adverbs with a crosslinguistic lookout. This also accounts for its possible inventory-like usage, where the contributions of Hoeksema, Oebel, Brdar and Brdar-Szabó gain special importance. The balance between the language-historical



and language-practical parts is ideal; the first section raises questions of which several are reflected upon in the second part. The lexical appendix is an invaluable help for scholarly interest. Although it is obviously first and foremost intended for linguists, some of the articles attain a cross-disciplinary relevance as well, possibly generating interest from other fields. The last remark is stating the obvious: the volume is bilingual, which might pose problems for linguists not having the necessary level of German.

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