

## “Links klicken, große Hallen spielen und Economy fliegen” –Cases of syntactic borrowing from English?

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This paper examines changes in the argument structure of German verbs which may have emerged under the influence of English. Borrowings in the syntactic domain are only mentioned sporadically in the published literature on German-English language contact. Schelper (1995) mentions an increasing transitive use of intransitive verbs (*einen Wagen fahren*, *einen Angriff fliegen*), Eisenberg (2004: 127) states that *denken* is now more used as a transitive verb.

The first set of examples are verbs that have taken on new meanings due to semantic extension (‘Lehnbedeutungen’), e.g. *klicken* (‘click’) as in *die rechte Maustaste/einen Linkklicken*, *brennen* (‘burn’), e.g. *eine CD brennen*, and *rocken* (‘rock’) as in *grosse Hallen/Festivals rocken* (see Herberg et al. 2004). It appears that lexical borrowing has resulted here in the simultaneous adaptation of the verb’s argument structure, resulting in transitivity alternations.

Changes in the selection of objects can be observed for instance in the usage of the German verbs *fliegen* (‘fly’) as in *Economy/Concorde fliegen*, and *spielen* (‘play’), e.g. *grosse Festivals/Hallen spielen*. INSTRUMENTS and LOCATIONS are untypical as direct objects with these verbs, but seem to occur due to pattern transfer from English. This may be interpreted in terms of a semantic widening of the object function. Such instances occur rather frequently, but they sound somewhat non-natural to native speakers of German, and are thus often criticised as stylistically awkward or even grammatically wrong in the popular press (e.g. Sick 2006).

We hypothesize that these recent innovations in German can be considered cases of contact-induced syntactic change, triggered and mediated by lexical borrowing (Thomason 2001, Winford 2005). We will argue that these syntactic changes in the argument realization of German verbs might even be seen in the context of a wider on-going change in which the selectional restrictions of German verbs are becoming increasingly relaxed due to the influence of English. This can be explained by making reference to argument realization and the mapping from semantics to syntax in the two languages. While English has expanded the semantics of the subject and object function considerably (mostly for reasons of information structure resulting from the fixed SVO word order), this is more restricted in German: Non-agentive subjects (and some objects) are usually not allowed (Hawkins 1981, 1986).

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