

Morphological Productivity in Spoken and Written Learner German

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This talk will investigate qualitative and quantitative aspects of morphological productivity in written and spoken learner corpora of German as a Foreign Language (GFL).

Native speakers of a language are able to form new words in order to fill lexical gaps or condense information (see, among many others, Baayen 1992, Plag 1999, Bauer 2001, Lüdeling & Evert 2005). Such productively formed new words follow regular word formation patterns. These can be constrained on many linguistic levels (phonology, argument structure, part of speech, semantics, pragmatics, etc.). Since the constraints are often difficult to analyze and formulate, they cannot be taught categorially. Moreover, morphological productivity is a quantitative phenomenon: A given pattern is more or less likely to form a new word. There are different measures that deal with different aspects of productivity. Most of them rely on the observation that productive patterns – since they form new words – have rare types. This is modelled by type token distribution in corpora (cf. Baayen 2001, see Zeldes 2012 for a comprehensive overview of productivity measures). Morphological productivity must therefore be acquired primarily through the linguistic input, and learners of a language obviously have less linguistic experience of that language than native speakers. The (very few) previous studies on the acquisition of morphological productivity (Zeldes 2013, Lüdeling, Hirschmann & Shadrova, submitted) suggest that learners understand that there are productive patterns but have problems acquiring the constraints.

I will look at qualitative and quantitative aspects of different word formation patterns in learner corpora produced by advanced learners of GFL in order to understand whether learners are able to see how the productivity of word formation patterns are acquired.

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