



Short Visit Report

Overabundance: theoretical and empirical approaches

Purpose

The main purpose of my stay at the University of L'Aquila was to discuss several points of my PhD with Anna Thornton and to work on a proposal for a scholarship of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNF).

My PhD is on competing dative forms of the indefinite article in Zurich German. In this variety of German, there are two dative forms of the indefinite article each: masc./neutr. *eme* and *emene*, fem. *ere* and *enere*. According to my previous research, these forms can be used interchangeably without being affected by their syntactic context (cf. HASSE 2012).

Recently, Anna Thornton has suggested a canonical approach to this phenomenon of several inflectional forms in one cell of a paradigm, cf. THORNTON (2010, 2010/2011, 2011a, 2011b, 2012a, 2012b). In her articles, she has elaborated the concept of *Overabundance*, its parameters of canonicity and made first case studies of *Overabundance* in Italian. In my PhD thesis, I test this theory against empirical spoken data of Zurich German. So far, the analyses of *Overabundance* are concerned with written language. Testing it against spoken data might reveal new theoretical questions. Furthermore, it is the first time the theory is applied to data of a Germanic language.

The next step of my PhD is to complete my data acquisition. For that purpose, I wanted to discuss some methodological issues with Anna Thornton.

Work carried out

During my stay, Anna and I talked on a great many details of the concept of *Overabundance* and the Zurich German data, among them:

- (1) Is frequency of the cell-mates possibly a further factor of canonicity? Is *Overabundance* still canonical if the cell-mates, e.g. *eme* and *emene*, are completely interchangeable but one is used more frequently than the other?
- (2) Which sociolinguistic factors favour *overabundance*? DORIAN (2010) has found *overabundance* on different linguistic levels in a small and very non-hierarchical speech community. The canton of Zurich, however, is the most densely populated region of Switzerland with a heterogenous speech community (rural and urban inhabitants, a lot of dialect contact, considerably social differences etc.).
- (3) Under which circumstances can *overabundance* persist? The case of *Overabundance* of the dative forms of the indefinite article in Zurich German can at least be traced back to STALDER (1819). What contributes to the persistence of it?

- (4) How should the Zurich German article forms be analysed and which differences are there between the masculine/neuter and the feminine overabundant paradigms? The feminine forms can be described as a full (*enere*) and a phonological reduced form (*ere*). On the contrary, the masculine/neuter forms *eme* and *emene* are built on two different stems. Besides, the etymology of *emene* is still unclear. Comparatively, it seems to be a rather new form. What does this tell us about the development of Overabundance in Zurich German? If Overabundance is preserved in one paradigm (the feminine one) and reintroduced to another one (the masculine/neuter one), what does this mean for theories about persistence of Overabundance?
- (5) The neighbouring dialects of Zurich German show cell-mates, too. These, however, are strictly syntactically conditioned: masc./neutr. *eme* and fem. *ere* do only occur post-prepositionally. In which theoretical terms can the difference between these dialects and Zurich German (with interchangeable forms) be described? Do they show different degrees of canonicity of Overabundance?

Furthermore, Anna Thornton and I defined minimal requirements for the corpus I am currently building. I am going to test a large set of syntactic, semantic and phonological factors which might condition the distribution of the cell-mates in Zurich German. However, not all of them occur equally frequent in spoken language. Therefore, the size of the corpus has to be sufficient to use both qualitative tests for the infrequent factors and quantitative tests for the more frequent ones.

Besides, I worked on my proposal for a *Doc.Mobility* fellowship by the SNF. This fellowship would allow me to spend another four months in L'Aquila and ten months in Guildford in 2016. For this, I defined the ideal period of my PhD in discussions with Anna Thornton.

Finally, I have collected articles recommended by Anna Thornton and read a number of them.

- BAERMAN, Matthew / CORBETT, Greville (2012): Stem alternations and multiple exponence. In: *Word Structure* 5(1), 52–68.
- CARSTAIRS-MCCARTHY, Andrew (1994): Inflection Classes, Gender, and the Principle of Contrast. In: *Language* 70(4), 737–788.
- DORIAN, Nancy (1978): The Fate of Morphological Complexity in Language Death. Evidence from East Sutherland Gaelic. In: *Language* 54(3), 590–609.
- (1994): Varieties of Variation in a Very Small Place: Social Homogeneity, Prestige Norms, and Linguistic Variation. In: *Language* 70(4), 631–696.
 - (2001): Surprises in Sutherland: linguistic variability amidst social uniformity. In: NEWMAN, Paul (ed.): *Linguistic fieldwork*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 133–151.
 - (2010): *Investigating variation: the effects of social organization and social setting*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- MILIZIA, Paolo (2013): *L'equilibrio nella codifica morfologica*. Roma: Carocci.
- PINKER, Steven (1996): *Language learnability and language development*. 2nd edition. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- STEWART, Thomas (2004): *Mutation as Morphology. Bases, Stems, and Shapes in Scottish Gaelic*. Dissertation, Ohio State University.
- STEWART, Thomas / STUMP, Gregory (2007): Paradigm Function Morphology and the Morphology-Syntax Interface. In: RAMCHAND, Gillian (ed.): *The Oxford Handbook of Linguistic Interfaces*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 383–421.

Results

In the following section, I respond to the questions listed above.

- (1) Frequency has to be included in the canonical approach to Overabundance. With regards to Overabundance in Zurich German, we first need the results of the empirical study to be able to estimate the role of frequency.
- (2-4) At the moment, it is hardly possible to say anything about why Overabundance has arisen in Zurich German and why and how long it has persisted. Therefore, I need historical data on the one hand and include sociolinguistic theories of linguistic variation on the other hand. The comparison between the work of DORIAN (xxx) and mine indicates that Overabundance is not dependent on one sociolinguistic scenario.
- (5) Anna Thornton has suggested considering the variation in dialects where the distribution of the cell-mates is strictly conditioned by the syntactic context rather as shape conditioning, cf. STEWART (2004), STEWART/STUMP (2007), than as an instance of very uncanonical Overabundance.

Future

In March 2015, I will apply for a scholarship of the Swiss National Science Foundation to spend four more months in L'Aquila in 2016. By that time, I will have collected all my data and have analysed them. I will discuss them and their theoretical implications with Anna Thornton and write the corresponding chapters of my PhD thesis on this.

In order to decide which methods to apply to my data. I would like to invite Anna Thornton for a short-visit to Zurich at the end of this year to discuss this together with the statistic consultation service offered by the PhD program linguistics at the University of Zurich.

Projected publications

My PhD on Overabundance in Zurich German and a talk at the 17th International Morphology Meeting in Vienna in 2016.

Others

Thanks for the support.

Further References

- HASSE, Anja (2012): Mit enem Mah oder mit anamu Ma. Variation des schweizerdeutschen Indefinitartikels im Dativ. Unpublished master thesis, University of Zurich.
- STALDER, FRANZ JOSEPH (1819): Die Landessprachen der Schweiz oder Schweizerische Dialektologie mit kritischen Sprachbemerkungen beleuchtet. Aarau: Heinrich Remigius Sauerländer.
- THORNTON, Anna M. (2010): Towards a Typology of Overabundance. Unpublished talk, Décembrettes 7, 3.12.2010, Toulouse.
- (2010/2011): La non canonicità del tipo it. braccio // braccia / bracci: sovrabbondanza, difettività o iperdifferenziazione? In: Studi di grammatica italiana 29-30, 419-477.
 - (2011a): Overabundance (Multiple Forms Realizing the Same Cell): A Non-canonical Phenomenon in Italian Verb Morphology. In MAIDEN, Martin et al. (eds.): Morphological Autonomy: Perspectives from Romance Inflectional Morphology. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 358–381.

- (2011*b*): Shape conditions and paradigms. Unpublished talk, South East Morphology Meeting, 8.4.2011, Guildford.
- (2012*a*): Overabundance in Italian verb morphology and its interactions with other non-canonical phenomena. In STOLZ, Thomas et al. (eds.): *Irregularity in Morphology (and beyond)*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 251–269.
- (2012*b*): Reduction and maintenance of overabundance. A case study on Italian verb paradigms. In: *Word Structure* 5(2), 183–207.