

Conceptualization, Mental Scanning, and Derivational Morphology: A Construal Approach to Word-Formation Change

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Until recently, the study of word-formation has been a rather neglected area in Cognitive Linguistics (cf. Onysko & Michel 2010). However, the investigation of word-formational topics promises valuable insights as to the key question how language is organized and structured in the mind. Employing the notions of construal (e.g. Verhagen 2007) and mental scanning (e.g. Langacker 1987a) and adopting a usage-based perspective (e.g. Bybee 2010), this paper aims at accounting for diachronic changes in German derivational morphology from a Cognitive-Linguistic point of view. Specifically, the development of nominalization in the suffix *-ung* is traced on the basis of an extensive corpus study of Middle High German (MHG, 1050-1350), Early New High German (ENHG, 1350-1650), and New High German (NHG, 1650-today) texts.

As Demske (2000) has shown, this word-formation pattern, which derives nominals from verbs, is subject to a significant increase in word-formation constraints. Derivatives in *-ung* widely attested in MHG and ENHG texts are ungrammatical in NHG (e.g. *swigunge* 'silence', *murmelunge* 'muttering'), and the coinage of new formations is heavily restricted. On the other hand, the competing word-formation pattern of Infinitival Nominalization is subject to a loss of word-formation constraints, thus gradually superseding nominalization in *-ung* (Barz 1998). The question as to the cognitive basis of such constraints as well as their emergence or loss is of great importance to any linguistic theory (cf. e.g. Taylor 2012). The account offered in this paper is highly compatible with recent usage-based approaches to morphology in that it emphasizes the role of frequency and patterns of use in the emergence or loss of word-formation constraints. As the corpus data show, the restriction changes affecting *ung*-nominalization can be attributed to changes in construal. These first affect some highly frequent word-formation products, but eventually modify the schematic construal (cf. Ungerer 2007) of the word-formation pattern itself. With regard to these changes, Langacker's (e.g. 1987) notion of summary vs. sequential scanning can be employed as a heuristic tool to account for the development of the word-formation pattern's default construal towards a more "nouny" conceptualization.

The construal approach outlined in this paper proves to be a powerful account capable to clarify some of the inconsistencies in previous research on German *ung*-nominalization attested by Knobloch (2002). What is more, the scope of the theory is not limited to nominalization, but applicable cross-linguistically to a broad variety of word-formation phenomena.

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