

Guest Editors' Preface

This volume brings together five studies on newly emerging aspectual expressions in West Germanic languages.¹ Compared to other Indo-European languages, the verbal systems of early Germanic languages were poorly stocked with grammatical aspect forms that only developed over time (for instance, *ing*-progressive in English, the double perfect constructions in German, pseudo-coordination with posture verbs *sit* and *stand* in Mainland Scandinavian languages). This makes modern Germanic languages a promising field of research when it comes to exploring the evolution of aspectual distinctions.

Previous research has focused on a particular set of—mainly verbal—constructions, such as progressives and present perfect constructions. The papers collected in this special issue offer a fresh look at aspectuality in Germanic languages. Ranging in topics from verbal and prepositional constructions to lexical means of expression, they deal with a variety of aspectual forms, all of which have received none or only little attention up to now. The articles focus on standard languages (Dutch, German), nonstandardized varieties (Middle Low German) as well as written and spoken languages (German), and offer new insights into the following central issues: i) sources of aspectual expressions, ii) properties of early-stage aspectual markers, and iii) new methods for analyzing aspectual constructions.

When it comes to sources of aspectual expressions and areal clustering of marker types, progressive pseudo-coordinations with posture verbs are well-known from Scandinavian languages (for example, Kinn et al. 2018). Proske shows that similar constructions with pseudo-coordinated *sitzen* 'sit' and *stehen* 'stand' are currently emerging in spoken German, whilst being characterized by a lower degree of grammaticalization than their Scandinavian counterparts. Posture verbs may also serve as a basis for

¹ The contributions are based on papers presented at the workshop *Encoding Aspectuality in Germanic Languages: Empirical and theoretical approaches*, which took place during the 43rd Annual Conference of the *German Linguistic Society (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Sprachwissenschaft, DGfS)* held in Freiburg (Germany) in February 2021.



expressing other aspectual distinctions, as shown by Fleischhauer, who investigates the German construction with the light verb *stehen* ‘stand’ and the preposition *vor* ‘before’ [*stehen vor* NP]. This construction expresses prospective aspect. For older Germanic varieties, aspectual meanings of present participle constructions have been observed (for example, Eroms 1997). Drawing on the *Reference Corpus Middle Low German / Low Rhinish (1200–1650)*, Ihden describes the functional spectrum of *wērdēn/wēsen* + present participle constructions and provides corpus-based evidence for inchoative and durative meanings. Whereas most studies focus on verbal aspect, Ellsäßer, who combines a diachronic and a diatopic approach, sketches the development of habitual adverbs in German dialects, especially *als*, that emerged from an indefinite quantifier, and examines their usage in corpora of spoken German. The phenomenon appears to be locally restricted, with West Central German and western Upper German dialects as core areas.

In their analysis of properties of early-stage aspectual markers, the studies presented here support former accounts (such as Anthonissen et al. 2016) pointing to the fact that aspectual markers in early stages of their development, in addition to expressing aspectuality, often have temporal and/or modal meanings and pragmatic functions. Ihden, for example, shows that inchoative expressions may convey future meaning, thereby blurring the boundaries between tense and aspectuality.

Fleischhauer, in contrast, stresses that even though there is an overlap between future tense and prospectivity, the two categories should be kept apart. The reason is that prospective constructions may express prospectivity even in past tense contexts, which sets them apart from future tense constructions. Given that the prospective aspect is the mirror image of the perfect aspect, Fleischhauer applies the notion *current relevance* introduced in the context of present perfect constructions to prospective constructions. Tying in with previous studies on progressives (for example, Brisard 2022), Proske and Ellsäßer show that aspectual expressions often convey additional pragmatic information such as subjectivity, evaluative meaning, and stance. This suggests that nonobligatory aspectual constructions may be used for language-external purposes, for example, in order to negatively evaluate an event or an action.

Finally, new methods for analyzing aspectual constructions are being explored. All contributions are characterized by having a solid empirical basis. The authors access relevant corpora and base their analyses on

representative samples. In addition to the reference corpora of written language (SoNaR corpus, DeReKo), historical data (ReN corpus) and oral varieties (FOLK corpus, Zwirner corpus) are used. Those corpora allow us to gain specific insights into nonstandardized language use across different regions and time periods. Dealing with the question of which empirical methods are suitable to identify particular aspectual functions, Bogaards suggests a form-driven (bottom-up) approach. In his analysis of Dutch *aan* constructions, he shows that what has previously been described as *aan-het*-progressive is part of a larger constructional family of aspectual expressions that comprises the usually unconsidered constructions [*aan de* Vstem] and [*aan D N*], both of which express progressive and ingressive aspectuality. In the following table we provide an overview of the studied languages, aspectual categories and data sets in the papers presented in this volume.

Author	Language	Construction(s)	Aspectual categories	Empirical data
Bogaards	Dutch	<i>aan</i> -constructions: [<i>aan het</i> Vinf], [<i>aan de</i> Vstem], [<i>aan D N</i>]	progressive, habitual	SoNaR corpus (written Dutch, contemporary)
Fleischhauer	German	light verb construction [<i>stehen vor</i> + NP]	prospective, current relevance	DeReKo (written German, contemporary)
Proske	German	pseudo-coordination [<i>sitzen und</i> + V], [<i>stehen und</i> + V]	progressive	FOLK corpus (spoken German, contemporary)
Ihden	Middle Low German	[<i>wērdēn</i> + PRS PTCP], [<i>wēsen</i> + PRS PTCP]	durative, inchoative	ReN corpus (Middle Low German/Low Rhenish, 13th-17th century)
Ellsäßer	German	<i>als</i> (ADV)	habitual, iterative	Zwirner corpus (spoken German dialects, 1950–1970), Pfeffer corpus (spoken German regiolects, 1960s)

From the papers it becomes clear that even in Germanic languages that do not have a grammaticalized aspectual system, there are a number of constructions with aspectual functions that up to now have received little attention in research. It is particularly interesting how in early stages of grammaticalization, aspectual functions are linked with other categories. The fact that most papers focus on imperfective aspect suggests that these constructions are characterized by particularly high dynamics.

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