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Typological Analysis of Prefix Usage in Modern German

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Abstract: The aim of this research was to uncover the peculiarities of hybrid prefixation of German verbs that have entered the German language from other languages, with a particular focus on verbs that have entered German from English in the last ten years. The main aspect of the study in this article was hybrid prefixation following the model of "endogenous prefix/half-prefix + exogenous base/exogenous verb." Methods employed for analysis included purposive sampling, componential analysis, comparative, and descriptive methods. The findings of the study indicated that, in most cases, borrowed verbs could combine with German prefixes and half-prefixes, thus opening possibilities for hybrid word formation. Some German prefixes play atypical roles, contributing to the existence of endogenous verb bases as independent lexemes. The active involvement of exogenous verbs and verb bases in hybrid word formation confirms the hypothesis of the heterogeneous nature of the word-formation system and the potential development of a semi-autonomous subsystem of hybrid word formation in contemporary German. The obtained results can contribute to a better understanding of word-formation processes in the German language and open up new perspectives for further research in this area.

Keywords: hybrid prefixation, verb formation, borrowing, exogenous verb, word formation system.

Introduction

At present, the lexical composition of the German language largely consists of foreign and international lexemes. The history of the infiltration of foreign lexemes into the German language has repeatedly been the subject of research, and although some aspects of this process still require clarification, it can be said that the German language gradually assimilates words that enter it.

A less studied issue is the participation of foreign and international elements in the word formation of the German language. According to the concept of Iseni & Rexhepi (2023), the entire lexical system of the German language can be divided into three independent systems: Basissystem (basic system, which includes endogenous vocabulary), Ergänzungssystem (additional system, which includes borrowed vocabulary), and periphere Systeme (peripheral systems, which include foreign vocabulary).

At the same time, a number of researchers note that assimilation occurs at another level - the morphological level (Rothstein, Staubach, Ripp, Waldeyer & Roelle, 2023). The assimilation at the morphological level means the integration of lexemes into the word-formation system. The problem of the participation of foreign and international elements in the word formation of the German language includes the investigation of how these elements combine with German morphemes and prefixes to form new words. Such a typological analysis helps to understand the processes that occur in the word formation of the German language and the peculiarities of this process in the context of cross-linguistic influence and assimilation of foreign elements.

The research aimed to identify the typological features of hybrid prefixation in German verbs. Verbs that have entered the German language from other languages were chosen as the object of study, with particular interest in Anglicism. The main methods during the investigation were the method of complete selection, the method of analysis by components, and comparative and descriptive analysis. In most cases, borrowed verbs demonstrate the ability to be combined with German prefixes and semi-prefixes, thereby opening up possibilities for hybrid word formation. Some German prefixes perform atypical roles, ensuring the existence of endogenous verbal roots as independent lexemes (Weber & Kopf, 2023). The active participation of exogenous verbs and verbal roots in hybrid word formation confirms the hypothesis of the heterogeneity of the word formation system and the potential development of a semi-autonomous subsystem of hybrid word formation in modern German. The compatibility of German prefixes and semi-prefixes with other roots and later with other affixes enables the creation of new lexemes, including hybrids, i.e., lexemes composed of foreign, exogenous roots and endogenous affixes (hybride Wörter) (Weber, 2023). In indigenous scholarship, such lexemes are referred to as neologisms of the second order. This phenomenon underscores the dynamic nature of language evolution and the ongoing interplay between native and borrowed elements in linguistic development.

Research results

For research in the German language, the cases where the semi-prefix *aus-* is used to convey the English *out-* in verbs such as *ausknocken* (to knock out), *auschecken* (to check out), *ausloggen* (to log out), *aussourcen* (to source out) are of particular interest. The mentioned verbs are not used without the semi-prefix, except for the verb *checken*, which is used either in colloquial speech meaning "to understand," or in special sports (meaning "to obstruct") or technical jargon (meaning "to check").

Thus, one can speak of the auxiliary role of the semi-prefix *aus-* in these lexemes: without it or, as in the case of *ausloggen*, without its antonymous semi-prefix *ein-*, the use of these exogenous roots in the German language is impossible; it is precisely the presence of the German semi-prefix that allows them to exist in the German language. It is worth emphasizing that German speakers notice the "divisiveness" of the foreign verb (possibly due to separate spelling in English and due to pauses in pronunciation) and replace the English *out* with the analogous German semi-prefix *aus*, but in doing so, the carrier of meaning is not the root or the base of foreign origin, but the entire hybrid lexeme consisting of an unmotivated base for the German speaker and the German semi-prefix. Additionally, the presence of the German semi-prefix, especially with a relatively "obvious" meaning like *aus-*, simplifies the use of hybrid

verbs in everyday language because German speakers who do not speak English have a kind of "hint" in the form of the semi-prefix.

In this regard, it is worth noting the presence of a parallel trend towards the use of English word-forming elements to form German verbs, for example, *outsourcen* (*aussourcen*). This verb, despite the absence of a German semi-prefix, is also integrated into the conjugation paradigm and even forms the Partizip II form as a weak verb with a semi-prefix (*outgesourcet*). However, it seems that this phenomenon will gradually lose its frequency due to the fact that the German language has a developed system of prefixes and semi-prefixes capable of conveying the meaning of foreign morphemes and lexemes.

In addition to the aforementioned trend, it's noteworthy to highlight a parallel development involving the adoption of English word-forming elements to create German verbs. For instance, the verb "*outsourcen*" (*aussourcen*) exemplifies this trend. Despite lacking a German semi-prefix, this verb seamlessly integrates into the conjugation paradigm and even forms the Partizip II form as a weak verb with a semi-prefix (*outgesourcet*). However, it appears that this trend may gradually decline in frequency. This is attributable to the well-established system of prefixes and semi-prefixes within the German language, which are adept at conveying the meanings of foreign morphemes and lexemes, thereby rendering the direct adoption of English word-forming elements less necessary over time.

When discussing the semi-prefix *aus-*, a particular example is the verb *auspowern*, formed from the English word *power* (Ger. *powern*), however, the meaning of the German verb does not correspond to the respective English verb but to the English noun. It could be assumed that the German verb *auspowern* was formed as a calque of the English verb "to power out", however, even in this case, there is a difference in meanings: in German, it refers to "becoming exhausted", while the English "to outpower" means "to be stronger than someone". Therefore, the German verb is derived from the English phrase "to be out of power". Thus, it can be said that there is a reinterpretation by German speakers of the English phrase, its abbreviation and simplification, where the semi-prefix *aus-* takes the place not of the English prefix but of the preposition *out*. It can be assumed that this is possible due to the etymology of the semi-prefix *aus-*, derived from the preposition.

Moreover, it can be inferred that German speakers reinterpret the English phrase, abbreviating and simplifying it, wherein the semi-prefix *aus-* replaces not the English prefix but the preposition *out*. This reinterpretation is likely facilitated by the etymology of the semi-prefix *aus-*, which originates from the preposition.

The aforementioned semi-prefix *ein-* is also actively used in hybrid verb formation in German, mainly in meanings opposite to the semi-prefix *aus-* and associated with movement from outside to inside. Verbs like *eingravieren*, *einmassieren*, *einprogrammieren*, *einquartieren*, *eintätowieren* realise the meaning of penetration from the outside into something. This is also reflected in the meaning that this semi-prefix provides in verbs like *einstudieren*, *einexerzieren*, where it imparts the sense of deep penetration, delving into the essence of a phenomenon.

It is worth noting that the semi-prefix *ein-* has the ability to alter the logical combinations of a range of verbs. For instance, while the verb *massieren* implies subject-object relations, where the object is most likely an animate person or a body part of an animate being, the verb *einmassieren* involves a substance such as cream or lotion as the object. Other semi-prefixes mostly realize only two meanings in hybrid word formation, with one being predominant in most cases, while the other is encountered separately.

Other semi-prefixes mostly realise only two meanings in hybrid word formation, with one being predominant in most cases, while the other is encountered separately. A similar situation can be observed when considering semi-prefixes like *durch-*, *vor-*, *unter-*, *zu-* (*durchkalkulieren*, *durchtrainieren* - "to carry through logically", *durchmarschieren* - the meaning of thorough coverage or passing through is rare; *vorfinanzieren*, *vormontieren*, *vorprämiieren* - the meaning of anticipation, *vormarschieren* - the meaning of advancing is rare; *unterfinanzieren* - insufficiency of action, *unterminieren* - spatial meaning of "placement from below" is rare). Some of these examples indicate that certain hybrid verbs with these semi-prefixes are military in nature (*marschieren*, *minieren*) and thus are less frequently used in everyday language.

Some semi-prefixes do not participate in hybrid word formation; in particular, we have not found cases of combining the semi-prefixes *bei-*, *hinter-*, *wider-* with borrowed verbs. The conducted research demonstrates the active involvement of verbs in hybrid word formation, primarily in the domain of prefixation and semi-prefixation. Furthermore, it's noteworthy that certain semi-prefixes do not engage in the formation of hybrid words. Specifically, we have not identified instances of combining the semi-prefixes *bei-*, *hinter-*, *wider-* with borrowed verbs. The conducted research underscores the significant role played by verbs in hybrid word formation, particularly in the realm of prefixation and semi-prefixation. One of the main questions in the study of hybrid verb formation is the question of the suffixes *-(e)n* and *-ier-*: whether these suffixes can be considered derivational or not; in other words, to what extent such verbs assimilate into the German language. In our opinion, this is a borderline case: although these verbs have undergone "zero" assimilation, being integrated into the conjugation paradigm with the suffix *-en*, they still have a borrowed character and are perceived as such, thus their combination with endogenous prefixes is a manifestation of hybrid word formation. Most German verb prefixes and semi-prefixes are combined with such borrowed roots, although there are some peculiarities. Firstly, such hybrid verbs often have a random nature and are used quite rarely compared to hybrid nouns. Secondly, when combining endogenous prefixes and semi-prefixes with borrowed roots, the meaning of the prefixes and semi-prefixes is lost, and the nuances characteristic of genuinely German verbs formed by prefixation are absent. Some semi-prefixes, which have more than five meanings, in hybrid word formation realise only one or two of them, and these meanings often derive from the semantics of the prepositions from which the semi-prefixes were formed.

Conclusions

During the study, it was found that some borrowed verbs can only be used with prefixes or semi-prefixes, mainly those that were formed without the participation of the suffix *-ier-*. Thus, in some cases, the prefix/semi-prefix plays a more significant role than in endogenous lexemes, ensuring the existence of the verb base in the German language and serving as a tool for assimilating foreign roots into the German language. This mainly applies to verbs derived from lexemes borrowed from the English language and still not fully assimilated, unlike "traditional" borrowings from Latin and French. Overall, it can be argued that endogenous prefixes successfully combine with exogenous roots, confirming the thesis put forward by German and domestic linguists about the existence of a heterogeneous word-formation system in the German language. Hybrid verb formation can be considered a separate case of the so-called mixed word-formation system, in which elements from different languages can be combined. However, it is still too early to speak of this system as fully autonomous. At least regarding verbs, it performs auxiliary functions.

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