

How to cite: Maharramova, M. (2024). Exploring Word Patterns in Modern German: A Study of Verbalisation. *The Science of Tomorrow: Innovative Approaches and Forecasts*. (pp. 134-137). Futurity Research Publishing.
<https://futurity-publishing.com/the-science-of-tomorrow-innovative-approaches-and-forecasts-archive/>

Exploring Word Patterns in Modern German: A Study of Verbalisation

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Accepted: April 9, 2024 | **Published:** April 30, 2024 | **Language:** English

Abstract: The aim of the article was to analyse word formation processes in contemporary German language. With the help of literary review method the main types and models of word formation were examined and identified in the context of societal development. The results showed the abundance of productive word formation elements in the German language and provided an overview of key concepts related to word formation, namely the methods of enriching the verbal arsenal in modern German word formation. The significance of the results lies in the identification of the most productive models and methods of verb word formation through the analysis of linguistic material.

Keywords: word formation, verb, modern German language, productive models, means of word formation.

Introduction

The objective of this article was to explore a method for enriching the modern German verb lexicon through word formation. In the context of analyzed verbalization, these phrases typically follow the most productive patterns of word formation in the language. As a result, these newly formed verbs are not immediately identified as neologisms.

During the process of word formation in modern German verbs, individual methods such as suffixation, prefixation, semi-prefixation, compounding, and conversion exhibit productivity (Mousikou, Nüesch, Hasenäcker & Schroeder, 2021). Additionally, there are combined methods of word formation, including semi-prefixation + verbalization, prefixation + verbalization, and prefixation + suffixation (Smolka & Ravid, 2019). Furthermore, a minority of the verbal lexicon is created following the telescopic model (Sommer-Lolei, Mattes, Korecky-Kröll & Dressler, 2021). In German word formation studies, there are different perspectives on the role of the first component in words consisting of two parts. Typically, word compounding, prefixes, and semi-prefixes are identified, the separation of which elements in linguistics causes debates. Prefixes that cannot be separated are usually considered non-separable elements, while semi-prefixes are considered separable or separable-non-separable (Korecky-Kröll, Sommer-Lolei, Mattes & Dressler, 2022). There is also a special group of morphemes that occupy an intermediate position between semi-prefixes and compound words.

Different scholars classify elements highlighted in word formation into different groups. For example, prefixes of modern German include *be-*, *ge-*, *ver-*, *er-*, *ent-*, *emp-*, *zer-*, *emp-*, *miß-*, which originate from prepositions and adverbs and are used in the formation of complex words (Adeyeye, 2021). Prefixes are not used as separate lexical units in modern language; they are not separated and cannot be separated from the verb. Moreover, the 2nd participle of verbs with derivational elements is formed without the prefix *ge-* (Stupak, 2020). The problem of "semi-affix" in word formation remains unresolved. These elements are in an intermediate position: they have a generalised lexical-categorical meaning related to the word formation process, and at the same time maintain a connection with the original lexemes. In addition to verbs with prefixes and semi-prefixes, there is a significant number of complex verbs in the German language where the first components meet all the criteria of semi-affixes, except for semantic shift, which is either minimal or absent. Adverbs are most commonly used as the first components in the formation of such complex verbs, such as: *auseinander-*, *hoch-*, *nieder-*, *weg-*, and others, as well as pronominal adverbs: *daneben-*, *davon-*, *herauf-*, *heraus-*, and others (Stupak & Baayen, 2022). The second components include verbs with significant usage volume, such as *-fahren*, *-gehen*, *-sitzen*, and others (Van Goethem & Koutsoukos, 2022). Due to their polysemy, these elements can function as a semi-prefix, first component of a compound word, and regular component of a compound word.

Research results

In terms of exploring word patterns in modern German compounding is the most productive method of word formation. Complex verbs make up the largest part of new formations. There are two-component and multi-component (with three or more components) models, which can be determinative or non-determinative. For example, Smolka & Ravid (2019) attributes the latter to copulative word formation, such as *grinskeuchen* or *rollrasseln*. In this study, only two-component determinative compounds were of interest, such as *fernheizen* ("to heat up") or *sich totarbeiten* ("to work until exhaustion"). The first component determines the second, who in turn provides a common characteristic of the combination: *fettfüttern* ("to feed up").

Different parts of speech can function as the first component of a complex verb. For example, complex verbs with an adverb as the first component have become widespread in modern German. The most productive of them are: *weg-* (*wegdösen* - "to drift off"), *weiter-* (*weiterverhandeln* - "to continue negotiations"), *zusammen-* (*zusammenmischen* - "to mix together"), *rein-* (*reinhämmern* - "to hammer in diligently"), *heraus-* (*herauszüchten* - "to breed, raise a new breed of animals"), *herum-* (*herumkommandieren* - "to constantly command someone"), *herunter-* (*herunterstufen* - "to downgrade").

The second most productive group comprises adjectives. For instance, "*losträllern*" means "to sing (a song) without lyrics and clear articulation of words", and "*hochhasten*" signifies "to hurry greatly". Complex verbs with a noun as the initial component are notably less frequent, such as "*mondlanden*" meaning "to land on the Moon". Additionally, it's noteworthy that verbal compounding is significantly

enhanced by the transformation of fixed phrases into complex verbs. For example, "sich heißreden" translates to "to talk oneself into frenzy (during a conversation)", and "sich querlegen" means "to oppose, resist (someone or something)".

After compound words, semi-prefixation ranks second in productivity. Verbs formed with semi-prefixes predominate in this group and slightly change the semantics of the original verb. For instance, ab- (abfilmen - "to film, colloq. (to) shoot" (filmen - "to produce (film) footage of something, to shoot something for a film"). In creating verbs, semi-prefixes of nouns can also be used, for example, zwischennutzen - "to use in the interval between something" (nutzen - "to be useful for someone/something, to be of benefit, to help someone/something"). Prefixation, suffixation, and verbalization are represented to a lesser extent in modern German. The most productive prefixes used in creating verbs through prefixation are ver-, be-, ent-, er- and zer-, for example, verchartern - "to lease a ship, plane". Prefixes of foreign origin, such as de-, kor-, re-, inter-, are only distinguished in verbs created based on a borrowed model using the suffix -ier-, and are also productive.

When studying the process of verbalisation, verbs derived from noun stems are highlighted (the most productive model). Verbs formed from noun stems have diverse meanings. In analysing such verbs formed by this model, they mostly adhere to morphological classification.

Table 1

Group of verbs according to the literary review

Formation	Examples
Verbs formed from nouns	kochen – "to cook" (Der Koch – "chef")
Verbs formed from adjectives	wickeln – "to be involved, engage in something" (wickel – "busy, occupied, involved")
Verbs formed from adverbs	schnellfahren – "to drive fast" (schnell – "fast")
Verbs formed from participles	zurechtfinden – "to orient oneself" (zurecht – "correctly, properly")
Verbs formed from pronouns	sich anstellen – "to bother, annoy" (sich – "oneself")
Verbs formed from gerunds	überführen – "to transport, deliver" (überführen – "delivered, transported")

In contemporary German, the process of suffixation is constrained by the limited number of suffixes utilised. The most productive verbal suffix in modern German is "-ier-", initially adopted along with French verbs ending in "-ier-" during the 12th century. Additionally, suffixes such as "-isier-" and "-ifizier-" have emerged from the decomposition of stems formed from this suffix. Verbal innovations following this borrowed model (from foreign elements) do not inherently imbue the mentioned suffixes with specific semantic nuances; instead, they primarily function as a mechanism for constructing verbs from nominal bases. The root forms of all examined verbs with suffixes of foreign origin have been borrowed from other languages.

Verb suffixation in the German language is characterised by the active use of foreign suffixes in combination with borrowed stems. In modern German, suffixation plays a secondary role in enriching the verb inventory. This is because suffixation does not contribute to the formation of verbs with a specific meaning - prefixes and semi-prefixes play the main role. Suffixes for verbs are primarily employed to

create weak verbs from nominal stems, frequently through the direct conversion of a word into a verb class.

Conclusions

In conclusion, it can be noted that due to the processes of word formation, the lexicon of verbs in modern German has significantly expanded over the past decades. In this process, key methods such as compounding and semi-prefixation play a crucial role. While prefixation, suffixation, and verbalisation are less productive methods of word formation. Overall, despite the substantial increase in the volume of new verbal lexicon, the modern system of verb word formation remains stable compared to previous periods of development in the German language.

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