

## Corpus and real Grammar: evidence from errors in superlative adverbs Patrick Brandt, Institut für Deutsche Sprache, Mannheim

In certain cases of adverb formation in German, the recursive property depends on the presence of the inflectional formative *-st* that expresses the superlative: modifying an adjective by means of the element *aller* 'all' depends on the presence of *-st*:

(Er spielt) schön / *allerschön / *allerschöner.	pos./comparative
(he plays) beautiful / all-beautiful/ all-beautiful-COMP	
(Er spielt) allerschönst / allerallerschönst / allerallerallerschönst.	superlative
(he plays) all-beautiful-SUP / all-all-beautiful-SUP / all-all-all-beautiful-SUP	

From a semantic point of view, *aller* expresses universal quantification, a meaning component that is arguably present in superlatives independently, and in languages like Russian transparently so (cf., e.g., Bobaljik 2012:61). Psychologically speaking, *aller* could be said to 'announce' or 'foreshadow' the upcoming superlative suffix *-st*. Similarly to *aller*, the formative *zu* may be said to announce superlative meaning in adverb formation; from Old High German on, (correspondant forms of) *zu* has been a preferred device to further emphasize or intensify superlatives, indeed often so together with *aller* (cf., e.g., current and frequent forms like *zu(aller)erst*, *zu(aller)meist*, *zu(aller)nächst*).

We present first corpuslinguistic evidence suggesting that there is a psychologically real cognitive connection between specific prefixal forms like *aller* or *zu* on the one hand and suffixal *-st* on the other hand in today's German: adverbs beginning with *aller* or *zu* that end in *-s* or *-t* tend to be erroneously completed to superlatives, while this does not seem to happen with formally parallel adverbs that begin with similar but functionally different elements (data from an 8 billion token extract of the German Reference Corpus (DeReKo)):

	erroneous <i>-st</i>	correct form	error/correct
<i>zusehends</i>	32	26.778	0,0012
<i>sonn-/spätabends, wochenends</i>	0	15.067	0
<i>allerdings</i>	17	2.075.864	0,0000082
<i>neuer-/schlechter-/platter-/leichterdings</i>	0	75.553	0

A relatively recent adverbialization operation suffixes *-ens* to superlative forms (cf. Fleischer/Barz 2012:367). Following a larger trend in Indo-European whereby prepositions get replaced by inflectional affixes (Lehmann 2002: 3.4.1), the forms are presumably related to 'absolute' superlatives introduced by specific prepositions (fused with definite articles), cf. *am Besten* - *bestens*; *zum Mindesten* - *mindestens*. Similar to the above data, we again find double marking errors in certain cases like *am bestens* or *zumindestens* but apparently not in formally comparable but functionally different cases. We discuss how comparing pertinent rates of mistakes can be brought to bear on the question whether what we see is a synchronic reflex of a diachronic development, paying special attention to the problem of controlling for the variation of the preposition in the putative source structure.

### References:

- Bobaljik, J. 2012. Universals in comparative morphology. Cambridge: MIT Press.  
 Fleischer, W. and I. Barz 2012. Wortbildung der deutschen Gegenwartssprache. Berlin /Boston: deGruyter  
 Lehmann, C. 2002. Thoughts on Grammaticalization. Arbeitspapiere des Seminars für Sprachwissenschaft der Universität Erfurt. University of Erfurt.