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Collectivizing metaphors in English, Dutch, and German: An exploration of corpus landscapes

This paper presents a corpus-based contrastive analysis of collectivizing metaphors in English, Dutch, and German. We focus on compounds with the head constituents ‘world’ and ‘landscape’, e.g. English *media world/media landscape*, Dutch *mediawereld/medialandschap*, and German *Medienlandschaft/Medienwelt*. These uses of ‘world’ and ‘landscape’ are interesting for a variety of reasons: Firstly, they experience a steep increase in frequency across all three languages. Secondly, when used as compound constituents as in the examples above, they arguably show similarities to so-called affixoids, having undergone semantic bleaching. Thirdly, the compound patterns compete with syntactic variants such as *world of the media* across all three languages. As such, a comparison between the three languages also harks back to van Haeringen’s (1956) question regarding synthetic vs. analytic patterns in the three languages.

In order to investigate these patterns in more detail, we use a number of both standard and non-standard corpora: For standard Dutch, the Corpus Hedendaags Nederlands (CHN), for English, the British National Corpus (BNC) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), and for German, the DWDS Core Corpora of the 20th and 21st centuries. In addition, the COW corpora (Schäfer & Bildhauer 2012, Schäfer 2015) are used to account for innovative, low-frequency, non-standard uses. While our analysis focuses on compound patterns, we also take the syntactic variants like *world of (the) N* and *landscape of (the) N* into account. Drawing on these data, we address the following research questions: (a) Does the frequency of the patterns develop (roughly) in parallel across the three languages? If so, could this be explained by language contact? (b) Do the patterns develop in parallel across the three languages according to their semantics, or can language-specific tendencies be identified? (c) Which formal and semantic constraints can be observed in the individual languages? (d) Which factors drive the choice between the synthetic and analytic alternatives, and how do these factors intersect across the three languages? In line with the characterization of German as a language with a strong propensity towards compounding (Schlücker 2012), can we find a tendency towards synthetic patterns in German and analytic ones in English, which is traditionally considered more analytic (Nübling 2010), with Dutch being “in-between”? – In sum, our case study can contribute to a more thorough understanding of at least three areas that are highly relevant to a comparison of the “Germanic sandwich” languages English, Dutch, and German: The distribution of synthetic vs. analytic structures, the interaction between constructional variants (alternations) within and across languages, and the question of how these languages might influence each other in the emergence and spread of new constructional patterns.

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