CO-OCCURRENCES OF DOUBLING VERBS IN SWISS GERMAN

PHILIPP STOECKLE • UNIVERSITY OF ZURICH

Introduction
One class of phenomena considered to be typical for Swiss German are the so-called verb-doubling constructions (cf. Lötischer 1993) affecting the motion verbs *gaa* (*to go*) and *choo* (*to come*) as well as the raising verbs *lao* (*to let*) and *afa* (*to begin*). In this type of construction, a reduced variant of the verb is repeated before the infinite, as illustrated in the following example:

(1) *[dann] fängt s lis afa schmelze* (then) *begins the ice begin to melt*

“[then] the ice begins to melt”

However, the different verbs differ with respect to their geographic distributions: while the doubling of *gaa* is obligatory all over German-speaking Switzerland and the doubling of *choo* in the western part, the two other verbs only show optional doubling which is restricted to western Switzerland. So far there have been a number of theoretical accounts dealing with the explanation primarily of the motion verb construction (cf. Brandner & Salzmann 2011), but apart from some smaller surveys (cf. Glaser & Frey 2011), there are still desiderata especially regarding the verb *afa*.

The Database


- Project funded by the SNF 2000-2008 (extended through 2014)
- 4 questionnaires including different syntactic phenomena
- 3187 informants at 383 locations (between 3 and 26 informants at each location)
- Different questioning techniques (translation, completion, multiple choice)

Examples

III.1 Wenn es so warm bleibt, fängt das Eis an zu schmelzen. (‘If it stays this warm, the ice will begin to melt.’)

… fängt s lis aa schmelze.

… fängt s lis afa schmelze.

III.2 Nimm die Suppe sofort weg, wenn sie zu kochen anfängt. (‘Take away the soup when it starts to boil.’)

… wenn sie anfangt choche.

… wenn sie fast afa choche.

Central questions

Under what conditions does AFA occur as a doubling element? Is there evidence for change with respect to the doubling of AFA?

Development of doubling rule for *lao* & *afa* (cf. Lötischer 1993):

- Development of a verbal preposition (for *gaa*):
- Development of a doubling rule (expansion to *choo*):
- Expansion of already existing rule to *lao* & *afa*:

“Voraussetzung ist […] dass eine solche […] Kurzform dieses Infinitivverbs lexikalisch zur Verfügung steht.” (Lötischer 1993: 193)

(‘It is required that such a reduced form of this infinitival verb is lexically available’)

Geographic Distributions of Related Phenomena

Hypotheses

1. AFA occurs as a doubling element if it is used as reduced infinitive (AFAutive → AFAinfinitive)
2. AFA occurs as a doubling element if *lao* doubling of *lao* is used (AFAlao → LAOlao)
3. AFA occurs as a doubling element if rising verb serialization is used (AFAutive → AUX+MOD+V)

Methods

1. Co-occurrences in individual speakers • 2) Co-occurrences in survey locations

Evidence for linguistic change?

1) Real-time change: Comparison of SADS data with data from the Wenker survey which took place around 1930 in Switzerland (at the moment 466 questionnaires transcribed)

2) Apparent-time change: Comparison of different age groups in the SADS informants

Results

- Hypotheses can generally be confirmed, i.e. AFA occurs (mostly) as a doubling element
- … where it is available as a reduced infinitive
- … where also doubling of LAO is found
- … where rising verb serialization is used
- However, there is still variation that has to be accounted for
- Real-time comparison between Wenker survey and SADS data and apparent-time comparison between different age groups suggest a diffusion of the doubling rule for AFA

References


phillip.stoeckle@ds.uzh.ch • MODELLING MORPHOSYNTACTIC AREA FORMATION IN SWISS GERMAN (SynMod) • www.spur.uzh.ch/synmod.html