Idiosyncrasy in Particle Verbs (in Déhé et al. 2002 eds. Verb-particle Explorations : de Gruyter)

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This study tries to bring order into the apparent semantic chaos often seen as a salient feature of the particle verbs. I aim to show that the meanings of many apparently idiosyncratic pv's are in fact derived by composition of the meanings of particle and verb, and to make some proposals for treating genuinely non-compositional pv's. Befitting its appearance in a handbook on pv's, this study has the subsidiary function of giving the reader a sense with the set of pv's with a spatial meaning, and that pv's like or of the wide range of empirical phenomena that must be treated in any complete theory of pv's. This presupposes study of large numbers of pv's. I draw on extensive research on German pv's partly reported in McIntyre (2000)b and on a list of English pv's ordered by particle from the representative collection in Cowie & Mackin (1993).

I proceed as follows. Section 1 argues for a compositional treatment of many at first sight idiosyncratic pv's, such as use up (the ink) and scrub down (the table). I argue that the particles in such pv's are propositional elements with 'construction-specific' senses, senses which are confined to the pv construction. This position has precedents in the literature. I extend it by giving independent motivation for the need for construction-specific senses, and discuss other potential problems such as syntactic correspondences or compositional variability in pv's and the problem of incomplete productivity. I also address the issue of the relatedness of the senses of a particle. Section 2 looks at more genuinely non-compositional pv's, assessing critically the idea prevalent in German research that they result from analogical modelling. I argue that the interpretations of non-compositional pv's which are not diachronic relics are licensed by idiosyncratic rules.

Throughout, I stay largely neutral on the -in my view unresolved- question of the syntactic or morphological structure of pv's. This neutrality is possible because the degree of idiosyncrasy of pv's can be seen as relevant to the question of whether pv's are morphological or syntactic creatures only if one turns a blind eye to phrasal idioms and compositionally formed morphological objects (Marantz 1997, di Sciullo & Williams 1987 and many others). Note, however, that I see 'particle' as a terminological convenience, not as a primitive of grammar, and certainly not as a distinct syntactic category. I deal only with (intransitive) prepositions, by far the largest class of Germanic particles, agreeing with e.g. Zeller (1999), Stiebels & Wunderlich (1994) and Zeller (this volume) that other categories can behave like particles, here defined theory-neutral as those X' elements appearing within the verbal complement domain which may enter into a 'close union' with the verb manifesting itself in phenomena like constructions (a picker-upper, foldable up and -in English- the ability to pushable into the hole) or a NP object without 'heavily-NP'-shift effects (cut off branches), phenomena which do not occur with comparable constructions (*pushable into the hole; *cat [off the tree] the branch, *hammer flat the metal). The nature of the 'close union' of particle and verb is to be clarified in the terms of the reader's preferred theory of pv's. 'Close union' might be substituted for instance by 'morphological union' or the ability of the particle to incorporate into or reanalyse with the verb in syntax.

1 The meaningfulness of particles

1.1 Preliminary remarks on particle meaningfulness

The commonest type of Germanic pv has a particle expressing a spatial prepositional relation (e.g. *put out a plug, walk down). If the relation is two-place, it subsists between a theme (known in other studies as a located object, figure or trajectory) and a reference object (relatum, ground, landmark). The latter is not expressed syntactically and must be inferred on the basis of context or world knowledge. For instance, I put a record on is interpreted to mean that I put it on a record player, since record players are the place where records are stereotypically located and where they can fulfill their function. McIntyre (2001b:C2; ms. 1) and Harlít Witt (1998) give examples in identifying pv reference objects. While McIntyre notes some difficulties with assuming that these strategies need not be referred to in the semantic representation of pv’s or particles, one may safely assume that the meanings of most spatial pv’s can be derived from the meanings of the parts plus some independently necessary pragmatic rules for identifying syntactically unexpressed entities.

1 ‘Particle verb’ (=verb-particle construction’, separable verb’, ‘phrasal verb’) will be abbreviated to ‘pv’. Other notational conventions used here are the use of small capitals to highlight particles in German examples, and of double quotes for literal glosses and single quotes for idiomatic glosses, e.g. *Atthören ‘up hear’, cease’.

2 McIntyre (2001b:C2) describes some pv’s where either the reference object or the theme may be realised syntactically. English examples are pour out [the water/the bucket], wash off [the dirt/the surface] and [the water/the pot] bubbled over. The alternation is more frequent in German than in English. McIntyre (2000) shows that these are not simple metonymies, but the right analysis remains unclear. I will attempt a better treatment elsewhere, asking e.g. whether the phenomenon is an instance of the locative alternation, or whether Svenonius (1996) is right in seeing particles allowing the realisation of the reference object as unaccusative elements.

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I wish to reject the intuition sometimes found in the literature that the set of compositional pv’s is coextensive with the set of pv’s with a spatial meaning, and that pv’s like use up, scrub down or read on are disqualified from a compositional analysis because their meanings are (apparently) unrelated to up, down and on in their use outside the pv construction (trips up/down a mountain, books on shelves). Let us see what is wrong with this thinking.

Spencer/Zaretskaya (1998:12) write that down in wipe down is ‘meaningless […] conveying at most a telic interpretation’ Indeed, often a pv taken in isolation will look like an idiom, especially if the particle has no clearly spatial meaning, but studying the full range of pv’s with the particle often reveals regularities. (1) shows that this use of down occurs with many verbs of surface treatment, where it consistently specifies that the action is performed on a substantial part of the entity appearing as object, and where the base verb meaning is preserved exactly. 3

(1) a. brush down, clean down, dust down, hose down, scrub down, soap down, sponge down, spray down, swab down, wash down, wipe down

The same reasoning applies to the use of up in (2), where the particle consistently indicates that the verbal event has a maximal effect on the entity appearing as direct argument. (McIntyre 2001a) states this more explicitly; see also Lindner (1983).) That the particle makes its own semantic contribution is also suggested by its ability to be modified in some cases, cf. (2)b.

(2) a. soak/dry drink up the water, chew/eat up the food, burn up the papers, buy up the houses, the boat broke up

b. roll the carpet [right back] up, load/fill the truck right up, pump the tyres right up, fold the map back

Although these uses of up and down are apparently not synchronically related to their spatial senses, the pv’s in (1) and (2) are not languishing in solitary confinement in the lexicon. In each pv, the meaning of the base verb remains intact. The contribution of the particle is not specific to one pv, a fact which becomes noticeable only after looking at an adequate data sample. Dozens of other particle uses where a particle has the same semantic effect on significant numbers of verbs could have been cited; more examples appear throughout this essay. The proper response to these groups of pv’s is that of e.g. Stiebels (1996) and Zeller (1999: 115-119), who posit a number of distinct senses for particles, only a subset of which correspond to transitive or intransitive uses of the prepositional element outside pv combinations. For pv’s like (1) and (2), we may say that the particle is an intransitive preposition with a ‘construction-specific’ meaning, a meaning which is idiosyncratically confined to the pv construction. (Lingusia giving no independent status to constructions may replace ‘construction’ with a proposal for a more primitive definition of the configuration where the proposition occurs, as Zeller does.)

1.2 Construction-specific interpretations: Independent motivation

Anticipating the objection that construction-specific meanings are merely an ad hoc device to make pv’s look compositional, I now show that they are needed elsewhere in grammar.

Firstly, there are ‘affixoids’ or ‘semi-affixes’, uses of a polysynthetic free morpheme which are uniquely licensed compound-internal. Affixoids are ignored in English research, but German research documents numerous examples (Motsch 1996 and references). English examples of affixoids are given in (3). The bracketed examples show that the affixoids do not preserve their meaning outside compounds. It is easy to find and form new compounds with these elements, making it unlikely that the compounds must be listed individually. Rather than giving theoretical reality to the label ‘affixoid’, all one need do in dealing with e.g. freak in (3)a) is to acknowledge that one of its senses (’aficionado, devotee’) is construction-specific, and requires a stipulation ensuring it is generated only when freak heads a N+N compound.

(3) a. music freak, sports freak, syntax freak, Beatles freak, video freak (but: ‘a freak of videos)
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b. music head 'person who loves music', dope head, nature head, trivia head (but: *a head of trivia)
c. mock-heroes, mock-officialse, mock-Gothic, mock-pathos, mock-androgyny (but: *my heroes were mocked)

Some uses of prepositions are idiosyncratically confined to certain syntactic environments. One is 'ethic-ative'-on.

In each sentence in (4), the contribution of on is predictable (to x's disadvantage). The PP's it heads occur with productive, adjunct-like freedom in VPs, and the VPs are evidently not idioms. However, this use of on is construction-specific, witness the logically possible, but unacceptable, NP-internal use in (b).

(4) a. he tugged up on me; the machine sized up on me; while he was fixing the wires someone turned on the power on him; my assistant took a day off on me just when I needed him; the students keep talking on him when he's teaching
b. *an accident on me, *a breakdown on me, *a trick on me (despite: they played a trick on me)

Certain adjectives have a special interpretation which is uniquely found in the resultant construction. For instance, dry has a sense 'empty of liquid', the opposite of which cannot be expressed by wet. This use is found in the resultant construction (drink (the pub) dry), but non-resultative predication with the adjective in the relevant sense is unacceptable (*the pub is dry, *a dry pub). Other uses of dry in this sense are seen in they bled us dry ('metaphorically bled all the blood out of us') and I painted the tin dry 'I used up the paint in the tin'. The latter example, heard in actual speech, shows that this use of dry is productive. German voll 'full' also has some readings which are licensed only in resultantive constructions. One such reading is 'voll', which can combine with many verbs to form resultatives, examples being jemanden vollspülen 'someone full-spray', 'spray someone dripping wet or sich mit Kaffee vollkleckern 'self with coffee full-spill', 'spill coffee on oneself'. These special readings of dry and voll do not mean we should lexically list the constructions where they occur; rather, these readings will be included in the semantic representations for the adjectives, but with the proviso that they occur only in the resultantive construction.

I conclude that the concept of a construction-specific meaning is not peculiar to particles, but is required elsewhere in the grammar.

1.3 Syntactic correlations of compositionality?

An obstacle to calling pv's compositional on the basis of the construction-specific reading of the particle is that arguably these pv's often behave syntactically more like non-compositional pv's than like pv's unilaterally recognised as compositional. Syntactic correlations of pv compositionality are discussed by Wurmbrand (2000), who advocates a small clause approach to transparent pv's and a complex predicate approach to idiomatic pv's. (Cf. similar ideas in Kratzer (1994:17-30) I now examine the phenomena discussed by Wurmbrand, asking whether they can legitimately be used as a means of discerning whether a pv is compositional and whether they are a threat to construction-specific particle readings.

Wurmbrand maintains that transparent, but not idiomatic, pv's allow topicalisation of small clauses (SC's), cf. (5). However, SC topicalisations are at best marginal, and Kratzer (1994:24) rejects them even with transparent pv's. Wurmbrand performs the test on only two pv's. In view of these difficulties, this test will not be considered further here.

(5) a. *[de Tür AUF] hat sie nicht gemaakt 'the door open she did not make', 'she did not open the door'
   b. *[den Fisch AUF] hat sie nicht gegessen 'she did not eat up the fish'

Wurmbrand suggests that a pv is transparent if the particle may be a copula predicate. By this criterion, the pv in we gulped down the beer is idiomatic because *the beer is down is bad, and the pv in the prices went down compositional because the prices are down is acceptable. However, this test is unreliable, for the distribution of intrasentential prepositions which may occur as be-predicates is idiosyncratic. For instance, out and away in their basic spatial meanings combine compositionally with any motion verb (rush, swim, move, push, snatch...), but most sentences with these pv's fail the copula test (carry the ball away out vs. *the ball is away out). The prepositional elements in she is out and she is away have specialised senses ('not at home', 'not in her home town') which occur in only three pv's (go outaway, take (someone) out). The copula test would wrongly lead us to treat these pv's as compositional and the many pv's with outaway in the less specialised sense as non-

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compositional. Readings of particles found exclusively with be (put differently: idiosyncratic readings of particle-copula combinations) are seen in be around 'be neat', be over 'be finished', be up (for something) 'want to do sth', and MINNER see 'across'-be,' 'have had it'. Further such examples can be found in the entries for particles in dictionaries, but the above evidence allows us to conclude that the ability of a particle in a particular reading to occur as a copula predicate is licensed by lexical stipulation, making it unwarranted to draw any conclusions from its impossibility in some cases. Wurmbrand suggests that only in transparent pv's do particles contrast with other particles. Illustrating with English, we might say that she walked in is compositional because in can be replaced by other particles (out, up, off), while put down 'criticise' is idiomatic because one cannot replace the particle without changing more than the particle meaning, cf. put up 'set up/*praise'. Particle contrast, and thus in Wurmbrand's view, pv compositionality, has a number of manifestations. Pv's with genuinely contrasting particles can undergo coordination reduction (i.e. coordination with elipsis of identical base verbs) or particle coordination, while other pv's do so only in a conscious manipulation of language, yielding zeugmas like (6)(b,c). Also, emphasis on non-contrasting particles is apt to sound like word play or quotation (i.e. not use) of language (cf. (6)(d)).

(6) a. they took the rubbish in, not out
   b. ??they took the opposition out, not over (take out 'disable')
   c. ??the coach psyched us out, not up
   d. ??they psyched us up, then they psyched us out

A third symptoms of contrast is topicalisation. The ability of a particle to topicalise alone is correlated with pv compositionality by Wurmbrand and by Kratzer (1994:18), who defends her distinction between 'stable prefixes' (=meaningful particles) and 'unstable prefixes' (=meaningless particles) with data like (7). As Wurmbrand, Zeller (1999:62) and Stuebels (1996:161) and others plausibly argue that a necessary condition for particle topicalisability is that the particle contrast with another, I will treat topicalisability as an epiphenomenon of contrast in Wurmbrand's sense.

(7) a. *ABNDacht schicken 'I want to send it off'
   b. WEG macht sich 'I want to send it away'

Wurmbrand's notion of contrast is important, but the correlation between transparency and contrast is problematic. An empirical problem is that there are idiomatic pv pairs which do occur in deletion-under-identity contexts. cf. (8). These examples do not strike informants as word play, and (a) was heard in speech. I assume, I cannot uncontrroversially, that the pv's in (8) are opaque. (EINladen in (8)(b) literally glosses as 'in- invite'; the particle does not contribute any meaning found with other ein-pv's, certainly not that of an interior goal. (AUSladen is calqued on einladen via a process treated in section 2.2.)

(8) a. es ist mir EINladen oder AUSgeladen, 'it is me loaded in or unloaded...
   b. es ware besser, sie gab mir nicht erst einculden, als sie eincluden und ausculden 'it would be better never to invite her than to invite and un-invite her

Secondly, one could challenge the logical necessity of Wurmbrand's correlation of particle contrast and pv compositionality. The correlation receives artificial empirical support from the fact that the best-known type of
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compositional pv is one consisting of a motion verb and a particle expressing a direction. Such particles trivially contrast with others because directions contrast with other directions by their very nature. Turning to non-spatial particles, I see no reason why a particle which does not stand in a natural contrast relation to another particle should feel unable of combining compositionally with verbs. This may be illustrated with up, which, in its use indicating a maximal effect on an entity (e.g. cut up and other pv's in (2)), fails Wurmbrand's contrast criterion. I suggest that this does not necessarily show that these up-pv's are idiosyncratic, but that English happens to lack a particle semantically contrasting with up, i.e. one indicating a minimal or slight effect on an entity. German does have such a particle, an. It can contrast with auf (a counterpart of up in (2)), as in (9), where contrast stress on the particles and deletion under identity are acceptable. If Wurmbrand's remarks on contrast are correct, we are forced to conclude that auf-gesessen 'eat up' is compositional and eat up idiomatic, but I doubt if the lack of an English particle matching German an makes eat up any less likely to be compositional.

(9) der Fisch wurde aufgegessen, nicht nur angefressen 'the fish was up-eaten', not just partly-eaten

The existence of speakers who dislike (7)a and the reformulation of (9) with topicalisation (auf wurde der Fisch gegessen, nicht angefressen), taken with my view that the particles are meaningful, forces the conclusion that compositionality is a necessary, not a sufficient condition for topicalisation, begging the question of what the precise conditions licensing particle topicalisation are. However, I claim that non-topicalisability is not always indicative of meaningfulness. Treating the pv's in (7)a and (9) as idioms does no justice to the fact that meanings can be posited for the particles which occur in significant numbers of other pv's where the meanings of the base verbs remain transparent. (10) gives a small sample of these pv's. (For explicit treatments and more data, see Stiebels (1996:78-82) and McIntyre (2001a) on an, and Stiebels (1996:91-97) on ab.) These particle uses are productive, witness occasionalisms as adhraten 'jet off' and anschnuppern 'AN-crunch', become slightly crunchy, where a speaker (talking about food in an oven) combined an with a self-created verb knuspern (backformed from knusprig 'crunchy') which is unknown to informants in the relevant sense. This productivity suggests that (10) is not a collection of memorised diachronic relics.

(10) a. anbraten 'roast partly', anbrechen 'burn partly', ankneffen 'bubble partly', ankratzen 'scratch lightly', andiskatieren begin discussing, antrocknen 'dry partly', ansägen 'cut partly with a saw', anlecken 'lick a part of', ansprechen 'warn slightly'

b. abbrechen 'travel off', ablatenterieren 'travel off', abliegen 'fly off', absegeln 'sail off', abmarschieren 'march off', ablatschen 'trudge off'

I conclude from this section that pv's which fail the tests for pv compositionality suggested by Wurmbrand are not necessarily idiomatic. This removes an important obstacle to a compositional analysis for pv's on the basis of a construction-specific meaning.

1.4 Restrictions on productivity

Some construction-specific readings of particles seem to display idiosyncratic gaps in their productivity, even if we take to heart something like Anderson's (1992:196) warning that 'once the conditions on the structural description of a rule are completely understood, apparently exceptions often turn out to be systematic'. One good case of arbitrary incomplete productivity is the construction-specific use of around in characterising an event as lacking an abstract goal (McIntyre 2001a), e.g. indicating aimlessness (fiddle around), planlessness (experiment around), inactivity (sit around) or the non-termination of an activity (play around, hammer around). Around, in this use and its other uses, has an exact counterpart in German (he)rum (cf. McIntyre (2001b:B23.3, 2001a)), with the salient difference that the use just described is far more productive with herum than with around. While around in this use forms not many more pv's than those in (15), the corpus examples in McIntyre (2001b) show that (he)rum is extremely productive. Many pv's with (he)rum cannot be translated using around. Examples are RUMprobieren 'try out various options unsystematically', RUMmeiden genuss-diskutieren 'talk/knap/discuss (instead of doing something)', RUMimprovisieren 'improvise without a plan'. Motivating the productivity difference semantically seems impossible, as there do not seem to be any significant semantic differences between herum and around. The most likely conclusion from this is that around in this sense is 'semiproducerive', by which I understand that new pv's formed with this use of the particle must be memorised.

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even if they are compositional. My use of the term 'semi productive' partly follows writers like Jackendoff (1997b:115-121) and Zeller (1999:119-124). These authors take idiosyncrasy in part of the output of a process (e.g. irregular phonology in constructions like stelleb) to be symptomatic of semiprodutivity, but I see this neither as a necessary nor a sufficient condition for semiprodutivity. If idiosyncratic forms bespeak semiprodutivity, then forms like wies, hou[s]es, dice make the English -r plural semiprodutive, calling into question the wisdom of distinguishing semiprodutivity from full productivity. There are also idiosyncratic cases of N+N compounding and -able-suffixation. (On the latter see Riehemann (1998) and Anderson (1992:186-195).) As these processes allow new formations which do not sound novel, it would be wrong to call them 'semi productive' if we mean by this that their output must be listed. Looking at pv's with around and herum in the above-mentioned use, we find both compositional and idiosyncratic pv's, cf. (15) and the herum-corpus in McIntyre 2001b. I conclude that around differs from herum only in that the former is idiosyncratically restricted to a small set of pv's, and that thus that semiprodutivity in pv's is a real phenomenon.

A second aspect of incomplete productivity is the observation of e.g. Zeller (1999:117) and Stiebels/Wunderlich (1994:950) that all productive uses of particles are sensitive to the semantic class of the base verb. I see two ways in which this observation can be true. Firstly, the meanings of the particle and verb must be able to combine without creating a semantically/pragmatically deviant structure. As this is trivially the precise conditions licensing particle topicalisation are. However, I claim that non-topicalisability is not point here. The second, less obviously correct, way in which particles are sensistive to the semantic class of the base verb is that particles may impose what I call 'input limitations', constraints on the verbs with which they combine which do not follow from independently motivated semantic contraints.5 An instance of this is German auf: in what I take to be a punctualising use with an optional inference that the event outlasts the initial point, whence the intuition that auf is an inchoative marker. From Stiebels (1996:72-75) and a dictionary (Duden 1996), I gather that auf combines freely and predictably only with sound and light emission verbs, a small sample of which are given in (11). Describing this use of auf apparently involves describing its aspectual meaning and stating the input limitation that it may only combine with light and sound emission verbs. (12) gives all pv's I found which flout the input limitation. Some are idiosyncratic and others may come from other uses of the particle: aufhüllen 'come into bloom' may be licensed by auf in the sense 'open' seen in many other pv's like aufschneiden 'cut open'. Extending the input limitations to cover any of the pv's in (12) would generate many bad pv's.

(11) heulen 'sob', jubeln 'cheer', kreischen 'scream', lachen 'laugh', seufzen 'sigh', weinen 'cry', blitzen 'flash', flackern 'flicker', flammen 'blaze', glänzen 'shine', glühen 'glow', leuchten 'shine'

(12) aufhüllen 'bloom out', aufkommen 'come into bloom', aufspielen (start playing of), aufhören 'stop', aufleben 'come alive', aufmerken 'try out various options unsystematically', aufhorchen, aufmerken 'suddenly hear/notice something and concentrate on it'

Input limitations are idiosyncratic: there is no principled reason why a punctual/inactive marker should only combine with light/sound emission verbs. Stiebels (1996:72-75) discusses a use of the prefix r- which makes an aspectual contribution similar to that of auf but, in its productive phase, attached to a wider class of verbs. The use of down in (1) (e.g. wash down) also has an input limitation; it productively combines only with cleaning verbs. New pv's like whisk/buff down seem good, unlike  

5 Ray Jackendoff (p.c.) notes that they are like Pinker's (1989) narrow-range rules.
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structures like pv's, derivations, compounds and light verb structures (have a bath) more likely to be memorised than other structures. One reason for this is that these constructions (be they morphological or syntactic) are often used in expanding the vocabulary, i.e. in providing conventional terms for memorised concepts. While formations like e.g. dishwasher or put on (robes, clothes) are compositional, they are also the standard trope for memorised objects/activities, which makes it likely that they are listed, not generated online. (Some support for this is that the standard readings block other potential uses: I worked in a restaurant as a [washer-upper/dishwasher], I took the books to a shelf and put them [on it/*on].) Consequently, interpreting the vocabulary-expanding construction types listed above involves searching the lexicon for any memorised interpretations which might fit the context (a task whose complexity is increased in pv's because particles and pv's are often polysemous). The need to search the lexicon in interpreting such constructions relativises the extent to which an online composition of such structures is more economical than listing them, and, I speculate, makes absolute productivity (even within independent phonological and semantic/pragmatic constraints) undesirable, since this would lead to an unhindered proliferation of new complex structures whose interpretation always involves them being checked against existing lexical entries. In response to this apparent conventionality, which arbitrarily limit the productivity of these structures. These include semiproductivity (basically a convention limiting the number of processes whose productivity does not entail memorisation), and input limitations (conventions which confine new formations with a particular use of a particle or affix to a small group of bases, which helps to identify quickly the sense in which a polysemous particle/affix is being used,6)

My conclusion from this section is that some uses of particles must be seen as semiproductive and/or input-limited. It appears that pv's formed with such particle uses are not necessarily idiosyncratic. Rather, the idiosyncrasy is to be localised in the lexical entry for the particle itself, in what might be a response to a desire to prevent an unchecked proliferation of vocabulary-extending processes.

1.5 The relatedness of the senses of a particle

A complete theory of pv's must deal with the question as to the extent to which senses of particles are related to each other. One position is represented by Siebels (1996), who does not relate the various uses of particles. Consider the following entries for some of the uses of German ab 'off' (from Siebels 1996:262; some primitives are translated):

(13)

a. λu BECOME(~LOC(u)PROX(Place))(abfahren 'drive off, depart')
b. λu BECOME(~LOC(u)SURFACE(ς))(abreiben 'tear off')
c. λu λs BECOME(~POS(u)ς)(abschwatzen 'get something off/from someone by talking')
d. λu λs DECREMEXT(ς,) (eine Schuld abarbeiten 'work a debt off')
e. λu λs BECOME/CLEARI(u)ς) (den Tisch abwischen 'wipe the table down/off')

While the exact range of uses of ab must probably be stipulated, Siebels' choice to posit a number of homonymous ab's (as opposed to assuming that ab is polysemous) misses generalisations. (b) and (e) differ only in that (e) shows the alternation mentioned in footnote 2, cf. pairs like [den Saubluden Mantel] abknabbern 'brush off/chop the coat off (Fleisch/den Knochen) abknabbern "meat/the bone" off (the bone') The representations in (a) and (b) could be collapsed into one entry which accepts either places or entities as reference object. The formulation of the readings in (c) and (d) makes it look accidental that these readings

6 Much more can be said on semiproductivity and input limitations and their relationship. Here I merely note some extra points. Firstly, I acknowledge that there may be other reasons for semiproductivity and input limitations. My explanation does not readily extend to other phenomena like argument alternations and metaphorical extensions, among which one may also find examples of semiproductivity and input limitations. Secondly, input limitations can refer to phonological and morphological characteristics as well as semantic ones, cf. Raffelsien's (1992:140-146) discussion of 'fossilized operations [which] have developed perfect productivity under specific circumstances', an example which is that stress-shift nominalisation is productive only with re-prefixations (rüber, rüdas). I am not aware of any particles which have non-semantic input limitations.

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also occur with other prepositional elements having readings (a) and (b), cf. e.g. ötungen "away-fish", 'take something from someone' and the time decrement use of away (sleep the day away) treated in Jackendoff (1997a). To be fair, this loss of generality is not an oversight on Siebels' part, but springs from her adherence to Two-Level semantics, where semantic transformations disallow grammatically irrelevant conceptual information (such as the unity of particle senses). Ironically, Two-Level proponents claim that collapsing semantic and conceptual levels leads to an inflation of polysemy in lexical entries (e.g. Herweg 1989:105f), but in the case of ab, failing to collapse the levels which leads to loss of generality.

Other studies of prefixes and particles (e.g. Lieber/Hauser 1993, Landner 1983, McIntyre 2001b) have sought to unity their senses, treating them in terms of monosemy or polysemy rather than homonymy. Such analyses adopt a localistic view, deriving non-spatial particle uses from spatial ones. This sometimes clarifies the semantic contribution of non-spatial particle uses. Consider an example. The attempt in McIntyre (2001a) at explaining why some event-modifying particles block verbal objects (read (*literature) on, hammer (*metal) around, eat (*cakes) away) required a correct analysis of the meaning of along in its event-modifying use (play (*the guitar) along, sing (*songs) along) in order to find out why it blocks objects while its English translational equivalent mit (Lieder mit singen "songs with-sing", 'sing along'). A solution emerged only in a localistic analysis, where along in its prepositional use (along the wall), its 'directional comitative' use (going along) and its event-modifying use (play along) all express the same relationship (one of parallelness and proximity), and differ only in terms of the ontological categories (entities, paths and events respectively) between which the relationships hold (see McIntyre 2001a for a justification and formalisation of this).

Certainly, not all particles allow this type of unified analysis. An analysis of up and down in (1) and (2) in terms of abstract vertical motion would verge on folk etymology if not carefully substantiated. Nevertheless, it seems methodologically wise to search for a unified meaning where possible, and cases like along show that this search is sometimes even a prerequisite for a correct semantic representation for a particle. This confirms an unpalatable truth implicit in section 1.1: it is mostly impossible to tell whether a pv is compositional or not and to analyse its meaning without studying a representative range of pv's formed with the particle in question.

2 Productive idiosyncrasy?

Section 1 argued against prematurely writing off a pv as non-compositional. Nevertheless, many pv's undoubtedly are idiosyncratic. There are pv's like eke out, mete out, egg on, fally forth with cranberry morphs (or 'cranberry words', Aronoff 1976:15), words which have lost their former ability to appear without a particle. There are countless pv's which must be memorised because their original metaphoric basis is obscure (chins in, throw away, turn out, pull down, tag out, rip (people) off). One might hypothesise that such lexicalised pv's were originally transparent, and that the reasons for their existence are inaccessible to synchronic analysis. Yet it is arguable that idiosyncratic pv's inherited from previous generations play a role in the expansion of the inventory of pv's, and that there is such a thing as productive idiosyncrasy', i.e. that it is possible to form new pv's which are non-compositional from the time of their formation. We now inspect two potential sources of this. The first is analogical formation, and the second is a type of idiosyncratic rule, which I suggest as a replacement for an analogical approach.

2.1 Analogy?

A persistent claim in research on German (Hundsnurscher 1968, Günther 1974, 1986, McIntyre 2001b, Becker 1993a,b) has been that new particle and prefix verbs can be formed by some type of analogical mechanism. One argument for this view was based on the observation that pv systems fall into groups (called 'niches') of pv's which share some particle and a particular meaning, but whose members often cannot be analysed compositionally. Below are some English examples of niches. For convenience, I tentatively divide the niches into (a) compositional and (b) non-compositional pv's.

(14) off in a reading similar to 'away'

a. fly off, sail off, send off, ship off, walk off, go off, carry off

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b. make off, pack (someone) off, piss off, bugger off, skive off, slope off, spirit off. In imperative(-like) contexts: I told him to [bug off, fuck off, push off, shove off, sod off]

(15) around describing events as ‘goalless’ (cf. section 1.4)

a. play around, experiment around, hamper around, joker around, fool around, potter around, laze around, fiddle around, wait around, bang around, hitch around ‘whinge’
b. mess around, bugger around, fuck around, muck around, bum around, stuff around

(16) on expressing the non-termination of an action:

a. read on, work on, fight on, linger on, ramble on, talk on, stay on, last on; redundant particle: continue on
b. carry on (talking), keep on (talking); (partly) opaque metaphors: drag on, grind on, plod on, plough on, press on; conversions licensed only with on: rabbit on, soldier on

Analysis of large numbers of pvs suggests that groups of semantically related pv’s wholly or partly consisting of idiomatic formations are pervasive (see e.g. Part B of McIntyre 2001b). While the (b)-lists above demonstrate that niches can display a near-arbitrary selection of base verbs, the fact that these formations occur in groups tempts one to look for regularities. An analogical account does so using something like the following assumptions. Once a group of pv’s with a common particle and meaning is acquired, the lexicon establishes relations between the pv’s. If some of the pv’s are idiosyncratic, the lexicon does not ascribe a meaning to the particle, but makes generalisations about the niche of the type in (17), based on the off-niche in (18). (17) is more like an explicit rule than most analogical accounts suggest, but its holistic nature is in accord with all such theories.

(17) [v, v, v] v [v, v, v] = \text{CAUSE} [\text{from}, \text{from}, \text{from}] \text{from} \text{from} [\text{to}, \text{to},\text{to}]

The Jackendoff (1990)-style semantic notation uses underlining for optionalty. I use V* for whatever V-projection one assumes for English pv’s and ([X]X)V for cases where the verb is not a verb elsewhere (e.g. sod off). The necessity of the latter piece of information is open to debate; I mention it merely as a possibility. A schema such as (17) does not analyse the internal composition of the pv, since non-compositional pv’s are included in the data over which it generalises. The analogical view holds that these schemata can be productive, yielding more pv’s which defy an analysis in compositional terms. This type of approach claims to be able to capture the unity of niches like those above where not every pv is analyzable compositionally.

Analogueal approaches make no predictions on the elements acting as pv bases, and must be supplemented with composition with verbs with construction-specific particle uses if the existence and productivity of the verbs in the (a)-lists above is not a coincidence. The problem of overgeneralisation (i.e. that (17) generates almost as many pv’s as can be imagined ‘away’ as there are free morphemes in English) means that this method must be seen as semiproductive. As the (b)-lists are memorised in any case, the analogical model differs from other imaginable approaches to such data only in saying that the (b)-lists can be increased semiproductively, rather than just being static products of diachronic fossilisation processes.

I see one major problem with this position: analogical pv formation is not necessarily supported by pointing out that idiosyncratic pv’s often coexist with other pv’s with a similar meaning and the same particle. The analogical model must demonstrate that idiosyncratic pv’s like those in the (b)-groups above were idiosyncratic from the time of their formation, and that they are not just diachronic relics which were originally formed compositionally but are now just memorised as units. In McIntyre (2001b:A1), I tried to identify classes of pv’s where this objection was invalid, but the enterprise proved difficult, and it now appears that the best evidence offered can be better captured by rules of the type discussed in the next section. Thus, clear evidence that pv’s are formed by productive analogy is lacking, although it is also unclear if there is evidence against analogy, beyond the methodological (i.e. non-empirical) idea that one should analyse compositionally when possible. I am not aware of further evidence bearing on this question, and content myself with drawing attention to the problem.

2.2 Stipulated composition rules

We now discuss ‘stipulated composition rules’, idiosyncratic rules which license the formation or interpretation of certain non-compositional structures. To exemplify and defend this notion, I firstly discuss a class of German pv’s which has been considered a good argument for analogical pv formation, but which, I argue, must be rule-generated.

The particle AUSENANDER ‘apart’ forms many compositional pv’s like AUSENANDERBauen ‘build apart’ and AUSENANDERBauen ‘fall apart’. The pv’s in (18) are less simple, as their base verbs denote processes which contradict the meaning ‘apart’. The uninterpretability of English literal glosses (*build construct apart) confirms that some special mechanism is required to license pv’s like (18) (which I call pseudoreversatives). One could suggest that auseinander has a second sense, namely the reversative sense of the prefixes in unlock or disconnect, but this is not viable, since only the two pv’s in (18) would be covered by it, and since (19) shows that various other particles can also form pseudoreversatives, suggesting that one must look beyond the lexical entry for auseinander to explain (18).

(18) a. AUSENANDERBauen ‘apart-build’, ‘dismantle’
b. AUSENANDERmontieren ‘apart-construct’, ‘dismantle’
(19) a. AUSparken ‘out-park’, ‘drive (a car) out of a parking space’
b. AUSpacken ‘out-pack’, ‘unpack (e.g. clothes)’
c. LOSbinden ‘away/free tie’, ‘untie (e.g. a horse)’
d. AUSchwellen ‘swell down’, ‘become less swollen’
e. WERGERfinden ‘away-invent’, ‘uninvent’

I have found over twenty similar pv’s. Space limitations forced me to reserve a fuller documentation and analysis of the phenomenon for another occasion. However, the data allow us to state that there are a number of pv’s in German where the result expressed or implied by the base verb gets reversed by adding a particle which contradicts this result. Thus, parken and packen (cf. (19a,b)) imply that an entity goes into an interior (e.g. a parking space, a suitcase), while aus ‘out’ denotes departure from an interior. Combining the contradictory expressions yields a pv denoting the reversal of the situation suggested by the verbs. In (19e), the result of erfinden (the coming-into-existence of a new technology) contradicts weg ‘away’, which is used in various pv’s to express an abstract passage away from (perceived) existence (e.g. wegerklären ‘explain away’). Combining the two expressions coerces into existence the meaning ‘uninvent, abolish something which was invented’.

Stiefels (1996:236f) claims that pseudoreversatives are licensed by the semantics of their base verbs. She derives abbausen ‘down-build’, ‘deconstruct/remove’ compositionally from an (otherwise unattested!) bleached use of bauen in a meaning similar to build but without the implication that something comes into existence. This solution is viable for pv’s like climb down, where there is independent evidence that the base verb itself licenses the suspension of the implication of upward motion (I climbed into the manhole; We got back down by climbing.). However, climb down is different from the pv’s discussed above, where only particles (not PPs or anything else in the context) can override the result inherent in the simplex, cf. (20).

(20) a. *vie parakte das Auto [aus einer kleinen Parklücke] ‘she parked the car out of a small parking space’ (cf. (19a))
b. *er packte seine Klamotten [aus dem Koffer] ‘he packed his clothes out of the suitcase’ (cf. (19b))
c. *Zigaretten sollten [aus der Welt] ‘cigarettes should be invented out of the world’ (cf. (19c))

Other studies treat pseudoreversatives as instances of analogical pv formation (Becker (1993a,b), Hundsnurscher (1968), McIntyre (2001b)), but this approach fails to predict that pseudoreversatives are vanishingly rare in English. Literal translations of German pseudoreversatives are unacceptable (*park a car out, *pack clothes out). The only English examples I found are warm up/down ‘perform post-athletic stretching’, (cf. warm up), butt out, buy out ‘stop being involved in something which is not one’s business’ (cf. butt/hy in). I accept swell down (cf. swell up), but other speakers do not. Thus, pseudoreversatives are truly marginal in English, while in German they are well-attested and productive. Unless this Anglo-German contrast can be motivated by other differences between the languages, which I doubt, we must conclude that German has a semiproductive rule licensing
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pseudoreversatives, such as (21):

(21) \( \text{V entails a result } R \) may be expressed by combining \( \text{V with a particle} \)

This is a ‘stipulated composition rule’, a stipulation which licenses complex structures whose interpretation cannot be predicted by independent principles. Such rules are compatible with Construction Grammar and related approaches (Goldberg 1995, Jackendoff 1990, 1997a, Boonj, this volume), two aspects of which are (a) that certain construction types (e.g. resultatives, pv’s) are not epiphenomena of general principles, and (b) that a construction is a template with a lexical entry predicting its meaning when lexical material is inserted into it. If these tenets are right, the rule in (21) can be included in the polysemous semantic representation assumed for the German pv construction. It is less clear how linguists who reject these tenets (e.g. Matusov 2001) would implement (21). Perhaps constructions can be theoretical entities in the lexicon but not in the syntax. A similar assumption is needed for those idioms whose syntactic behaviour belies the fact that they are not non-primitive units as far as the lexicon is concerned (the cat was really let out of the bag, I let the cat right out of the bag). However one implements it, the point is that (21) seems empirically necessary.

Here I can do no more than briefly mention some other potential instances of stipulated composition rules. One candidate would be schemata like (17). If they exist, such redundancy rules, whether productive or unproductive, would be like partially phonetically specified Construction Grammar lexemes, an example of which is Jackendoff’s (1997a:555) template \[ \text{[NP VP]} \] with the meaning ‘waste \[ \text{NP}\] V-ing’ for describing the pv’s in talk the hours away, sleep the day away.\(^8\)

Another type of stipulated composition rule may be proposed for a subset of the pv’s whose stems are not verbs outside the pv construction. McIntyre (1998b) discusses a large group of German pv’s where the verb stem incorporates the conceptual reference object of the particle (\text{aufhählen} ‘on-bier’, \text{put on a bier}, \text{säubnen} ‘on-leash’, \text{put a (dog) on a leash}, \text{einösen} ‘in-jar’, \text{put in a jar}). One might posit a stipulated composition rule to the effect that a noun may be interpreted as reference object of a particle in a pv with the structure \[ \text{[VP \_PN]} \]. That such pv’s exist is not automatically predicted by the existence of pv’s and N-V conversion. Hale/Keyser (1993:60) claim that such formations are impossible (*shelve the books on, *bottle the wine in), and indeed, I found only three counterexamples in English (fence in, wall in and perhaps slot in). It remains to be seen whether the existence of the German construction and its absence in English (or its presence in English only with in-pv’s) can be made to follow from independently attested differences between the languages. An account which can do so would be desirable, but it may be that a researcher who aspires to an empirically informed account of all the pv data may have to put up with some stipulations of the type suggested in this section.

3 Bibliography


\(^8\) I cite this use of away as an instance of a construction lexeme already proposed in the literature, staying neutral on whether this is the best approach for those verbs. An alternative is to give away itself a construction-specific meaning, although this approach will have to explain the restricted word order possibilities of this use of away (*sleep away the day), a problem found with other intransitive prepositions (*she liked back her admirer, *she led around the blind man) which I hope to deal with elsewhere. I maintain that unselected object phenomena (sleep the day away vs. *sleep the day) do not necessarily support a construction treatment for away. McIntyre (2001a) gives evidence that particles always license the objects of a pv and that unselected objects follow from the general principles of secondary predication. Two examples of non-construction-based accounts which can capture unselected objects of pv’s are Lexical Decomposition Grammar (Wunderlich 1997, Stiebels 1996) and syntactic approaches which base-generate the internal arguments of pv’s within a small clause or other projection not containing the verb (see the references to these approaches in the introduction).

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Boonj, A. (this volume)