Kristin Bech and **Ruth Möhlig-Falke** (eds.), *Grammar – discourse – context: Grammar and usage in language variation and change* (Diskursmuster – Discourse Patterns 23). Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2019. Pp. 375. ISBN 9783110682496.

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The collection of papers in this volume is inspired by two conference workshops, ISLE4 (Poznan 2016) and ICAME 38 (Prague 2017). Its goal is to demonstrate the relevance of context for the study of grammatical change, which in corpus studies of the past decades has often been neglected, despite it having been recognized as crucial in other subfields of linguistics, e.g. the study of L1 acquisition and language evolution. The volume focuses on English, but the research questions and approaches presented in the different contributions are easily applicable to other languages. Context as the core concept is interpreted in a fairly wide sense, covering the immediate grammatical micro-context and the socio-cultural macro-context in which a linguistic phenomenon occurs. Starting from a functional perspective which sees not only words but also grammar as symbolic and meaningful, the editors stress that a linguistic analysis needs to interpret grammar in context and not in isolated sentences, especially in historical linguistics, where the absence of native-speaker judgements makes it difficult to determine the motivation for variation. The introductory chapter by the editors, Ruth Möhlig-Falke and Kristin Bech, 'Grammar – discourse – context: Grammatical variation and change and the usage-based perspective', sets the stage with a brief overview of the volume's mission and the focus of the individual contributions. The ensuing chapters then showcase a variety of approaches, models and explanations investigating different aspects of context and their influence on variation and change.

In chapter 2, 'Contextualizing Old English noun phrases', Bech approaches a disputed topic from a new angle, arguing that NP structure interpreted in context reveals additional information on the meaning of particular structures. Against the background of the analyses proposed by Fischer (2012 and several previous publications) and Haumann (2010), she asks what properties of an adjective determine its position and its inflection within the Old English noun phrase. On the basis of a qualitative analysis of A-and-A-N and A-N-and-A constructions extracted from *Cura Pastoralis* and the *West Saxon Gospels* (*York–Toronto–Helsinki Corpus of Parsed Old English Prose*), Bech shows that neither Fischer's nor Haumann's generalizations concerning the distribution of strong and weak adjectives match the empirical data. She notes that strong postnominal adjectives are possible but rare in Old English – a fact which limits the value of a larger quantitative study of the subject matter. Individual examples of the constructions are evaluated in the light of the textual context in which they occur, which leads Bech to conclude that adjective meaning cannot adequately be determined solely on the basis of position (pre- or post-nominal) or inflection (weak or strong). An additional study on postnominal present participles includes a comparison with the Latin source texts to which the Old English translation is attributed, making the point

that not only is the immediate textual context relevant, but that textual transmission also needs to be taken into account to determine the meaning and productivity of adjectives in postposition.

Chapter 3, 'Syntax, text type, genre and authorial voice in Old English: A data-driven approach', by Bettelou Los and Thijs Lubbers, presents a methodology for visualizing genre differences and authorial style. The paper explores the Old English part of the *Helsinki Corpus* with a data-driven quantitative stylometric analysis of lexical 4-grams and morphological POS-based 3-grams, explaining how such an approach can enhance our understanding of stylistic variation. To avoid limiting the search range to pre-selected target structures, correspondence analyses are employed which can potentially detect hitherto unnoticed stylistic features responsible for variation between texts and text types. The analyses reveal nominalizations as a typical feature of Gregory's Dialogues (attributable to the Latin original) and an increased use of non-restrictive prenominal adjectives by Ælfric. The printed R plots are very small and cluttered, but footnote 7 provides a URL where they can be viewed and enlarged online. In a concluding remark the authors stress that the results of stylometric analyses need interpretation and that a merely quantitative approach without human supervision can easily lead to uninformative results. Compared to the analyses, which are described in much detail, the interpretation of the results is fairly short. This is in line with the exploratory intent of the paper, which aims to test the applicability of a stylometric approach, rather than provide an answer to a specific structural or lexical question.

Chapter 4, by Belén Méndez-Naya, 'The intensifier system of the *Ormulum* and the interplay of micro-level and macro-level contexts in linguistic change', discusses intensifiers in the section of the *Ormulum* included in the *Penn–Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Middle English* (PPCME2) and argues that they anticipate the further development of the intensifier system in Middle English. Méndez-Naya proposes that changes in the intensifier system of English can be attributed to reanalysis of the immediate context (micro-context) as well as to language contact (macro-context). She argues that adverbs develop into intensifiers through grammaticalization, needing a bridging context which allows them to combine with new collocates. Additionally, her data suggest that Orm's usage foreshadows the shift from Old English *swiþe* to Middle English *full* as the dominant intensifier. Precise research questions, clear definitions and a balance between theory and application make the paper an appealing read for anybody interested in getting an insight into the topic of intensifiers. Skilfully placed footnotes provide the novice reader with helpful basics (e.g. pointers to literature on controversial issues) and the specialist with relevant caveats (e.g. properties of subperiods of the *Helsinki Corpus*) or further information (e.g. occurrence of parallel items in other Middle English texts), all of which enriches the text without disturbing its flow.

Chapter 5, 'Constructional change across the lifespan: The nominative and infinitive in early modern writers', by Lynn Anthonissen, explores whether the use of Nominativus cum infinitivo (NCI) constructions of the type *He is said to be a sinner*, which increased during the early modern period at the expense of Accusativus cum infinitivo

(ACI) constructions, changes not only on the larger diachronic scale but also within a speaker/writer's lifetime. Anthonissen argues that the spread of the NCI construction is not only motivated by the influence of Latin and the fixing of VO word order (Fischer 1994) but also by its discourse-pragmatic function concerning evidentiality. In contrast to Noël (2008), she argues that the formal differences between a descriptive and an evidential NCI entail different semantic interpretations and hence different usage types. Anthonissen demonstrates that the proportion of modalized and evidential NCIs changes across the lifespan of four seventeenth-century authors, supporting the claim that 'constructional changes affecting syntactic constructions are possible after adolescence' (p. 151) and showing how change in individual writing style corresponds to diachronic change in the language as a whole.

In chapter 6, 'Contextualizing dual-form adverbs in the *Old Bailey Corpus*: An assessment of semantic, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic factors', Möhlig-Falke discusses reasons for variation concerning dual-form adverbs, i.e. adverbs that occur with and without the suffix *-ly* in the same syntactic context. Based on a well-conceived analysis of data from the *Old Bailey Corpus* from 1790 to 1913, the study shows that only very few dual adverbs occur in free variation, and that most often the specific orientation of the adverb in question can account for the selection of one or the other form. Then sociolinguistic factors are assessed for those few adverbs that actually appear to vary freely between the zero and the *-ly* form (*quick/ly*, *rash/ly*, *sharp/ly* and *slow/ly*). The data suggest that female speakers and speakers with a higher social class and educational background prefer the *-ly* forms. Möhlig-Falke concludes that the grammaticalization of *-ly* in English was never completed, due to the conventionalization of the zero forms, semantic and pragmatic ambiguities and 'because of the general fuzziness of the category boundary between ADJECTIVE and ADVERB in terms of orientation' (p. 186). The study is written very clearly and stimulates thought on how it could be extended diachronically (e.g. by including other texts, genres, periods) or complemented with other types of study exploring the usage of dual-form adjectives in modern varieties of English.

In chapter 7, 'Bridging contexts in the reanalysis of *naturally* as a sentence adverb: A corpus study', Dagmar Haumann and Kristin Killie propose that copular sentences with the structure *be* + *naturally* + *XP* provide the bridging context needed for the narrow-scope phrasal modifier *naturally* with the meaning 'by nature' to develop a new reading as a sentential adverb with the meaning 'of course'. Building on a cartographic approach, they assume syntax to be primary in determining the possible contexts for reanalysis and widening of scope to the sentential level. Based on data from three corpora of English fiction (*Early English Prose Fiction*, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*) spanning the period from 1550 to 1899, the authors present a manual analysis of 896 target clauses with *naturally* occurring in copular *be* sentences. As the main factor promoting reanalysis, they propose the presence of a ForceP, which presupposes the presence of left-peripheral functional projections assumed for finite clauses. In addition to the elaborate syntactic analysis, specific lexical, pragmatic and contextual factors which can either impede or promote reanalysis are addressed but not discussed in detail; footnote 2 adds that the study is

the first part of a larger project on the reanalysis of narrow-scope *-ly* adverbs, which will surely be interesting to read.

Chapter 8, 'From parataxis to amalgamation: The emergence of the sentence-final *is all* construction in the history of American English', by Reijirou Shibasaki, is a corpus-based study providing evidence that sentence-final *is all* originated in American English, and proposing that the construction is spreading from there to other varieties of English. The paper contains many references to previous works without advocating one specific theoretical foundation. The relevance of context is mentioned several times in relation to the emergence of *is all*. The discussion centres on the idea that sentence-final *is all* has developed from syntactically independent paratactic *That is all* into an 'anacoluthonic' (p. 240) amalgamation with the preceding clause, which is interpreted as subordination. The difference between written and spoken language is doubtless relevant for the development and usage of sentence-final *is all*, but the points that are mentioned would benefit from a more elaborated discussion and conclusion. It might be interesting, in my opinion, to explore the relation of the syntactically incomplete *is all* to items like general extenders (Overstreet 1999), as these are also themselves syntactically incomplete and attach to the end of syntactically complete utterances, mainly in spoken registers.

In chapter 9, 'The role of context in the entrenchment of new grammatical markers in World Englishes', Elena Seoane presents a qualitative and quantitative investigation of adverbs like *just*, *yet* and *never* as potential new perfect markers in British English and in six outer-circle (L2) varieties, based on data from the *International Corpus of English* (ICE). Taking a usage-based approach, she looks at all clauses that have a perfect meaning, in order to determine possible contextual micro-level (verbal form, verb type and polarity) and macro-level factors (type of perfect meaning, register) that favour the use of adverbs typically indicating perfective meaning and thus promote variation and consequently change. In line with usage-based approaches, Seoane interprets the higher occurrence of perfect-marking adverbs in British English as a consequence of more exposure to perfective structures in the L1 (BrE) than in the L2 (other varieties). The most surprising among a number of interesting findings might be that, according to Seoane's analysis, register appears to hold greater predictive value than mode (written vs spoken) for the occurrence of adverb perfect markers. The overall idea of the paper is well conceived and successfully integrated into the overarching topic of the volume. The results are compelling, and the discussion is presented in a way that can be enjoyed by a wide readership from different subfields of linguistics.

With chapter 10, 'Paradigms, host classes, and ancillariness: A comparison of three approaches to grammatical status', by Martin Konvička, the volume moves from methodology and case studies of individual phenomena to a theoretical engagement with one of the fundamental concepts underlying a large body of studies of language change, namely grammaticalization. Starting out from the observation that a definition of grammar is often missing from discussions of grammaticalization, and the basic assumption that grammar emerges from discourse, Konvička compares and discusses discourse-based approaches to grammatical status by Diewald (2010; deictic relations, paradigmatic ordering), Himmelmann (1992; primacy of discourse and frequency; host

classes) and Boye & Harder (2012, discourse prominence, ancillariness) with a focus on their definitions of grammatical status and their ideas concerning gradable grammaticality. Konvička concludes that the proposed criteria are insufficient for distinguishing between degrees of grammaticality. Summing up, he argues convincingly that obligatoriness of grammatical categories might be the most promising feature that distinguishes them from lexical categories.

In chapter 11, 'The motivated unmotivated: Variation, function and context', Hendrik De Smet critically discusses the relationship between form and function in the context of variation and change. He questions whether the long-standing dispute between variationist approaches (which assume that change arises from variation and is triggered by language-external factors) and functionalist approaches (which assume change to be an attempt to restore isomorphism in language) is relevant for understanding the nature of variation and change. On the example of adjectives followed by a PP, he shows that variation (and even hypervariation, i.e. the occurrence of several possible variants for expressing the same meaning) in the preposition introducing the complement can persist without converging towards one preposition. He concludes that there does not appear to be a 'drive towards functional optimization' in language and that both variation and change 'may arise from system internal reasons' (p. 326). In his view, more attention to grammatical context could help reconcile the two opposing positions and further our understanding of variation and change. Overall, the paper is very clear in all its aspects (focus, arguments, case study, conclusion) and thus is interesting as well as enjoyable to read.

In chapter 12, 'Grammar in context: On the role of hypercharacterization in language variation and change', María José López-Couso provides three case studies dealing with the phenomenon of hypercharacterization, namely double marking through adverbials, through resumptive pronouns and through existential *there*. After a very clear and focused presentation of the theoretical background, which contains helpful references to previous research as well as pointed examples, the three phenomena are illustrated and possible reasons for hypercharacterization are discussed. In this section, López-Couso connects her observations and possible interpretations with a wider context of linguistic research, which shows the value of her findings for related topics and fields. She concludes that elements which at first glance might seem superfluous serve a disambiguating function for a syntactic variant. They can eventually become grammaticalized and thus provoke diachronic change.

The appearance of the volume is both timely and relevant, as the inclusion of the immediate grammatical and the wider socio-historical context – which has been ignored in many historical corpus-based studies – holds considerable unexplored potential for usage-based explanations of variation and change. The various approaches to variation and change across different periods and varieties of English together with the range of phenomena (noun phrases, adverbs, adjectives, verbal complexes, subordination, etc.) that are presented in the collection make the book a valuable contribution to the field and will hopefully inspire many more studies acknowledging the centrality of context in our endeavour to understand possible

mechanisms behind language variation and change. The majority of the papers are well conceived, and each adds a different angle to the main theme. I particularly enjoyed reading the contributions by Mendéz-Naya, Möhlig-Falke and Seoane, which apart from their informative content are exceptionally clear, making them excellent models of how to construct a research paper. Bech and Möhlig-Falke did an exquisite job in editing and arranging the individual chapters in a way that makes the volume a cohesive and thought-provoking read for scholars interested in the development of the English language and languages in general.

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