

A corpus-based study on putative synonymous light verb constructions in German

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Keywords: light verb construction, synonymy, corpus study, aktionsart

Light verb constructions are complex predicates consisting of a semantically light verb and a phrasal element (either an NP or a PP). It is usually assumed that light verbs are semantically reduced and only contribute to the complex predicate's aktionsart (e.g., von Polenz 1987, Eisenberg 2013). German possesses different light verbs among which are the two dynamic predicates *kommen* 'come' and *geraten* 'come, get'. The two verbs are treated as inchoative light verbs expressing the inchoation of the eventuality denoted by the phrasal element (Fleischhauer & Hartmann, 2021). Thus, the two LVCs in (1) express the inchoation of a rolling event.

- (1) a. *ins Rollen kommen*
in.the rolling come
'start rolling'
b. *ins Rollen geraten*
in.the rolling get
'start rolling'

Under the common view which assumes that light verbs only contribute to the aktionsart of the LVC, the two LVCs in (1) should be synonymous. However, there are examples in which only one of the light verbs can be used. In (2) only *geraten* but not *kommen* can be used.

- (2) *Die Zuschauer sind aufgrund des unerwarteten Plot Twists in Verwirrung geraten/*
the viewers are because.of the unexpected plot twist in confusion get
#gekommen.
come
'The viewers are confused because of the unexpected plot twist.'

The asymmetry observed in (2) is not an isolated example as event denoting nouns seem generally less acceptable as the subject argument of *kommen* than of *geraten*. This suggests that LVCs differ with respect to selectional restrictions. Such differences are indicative of semantic differences between the two LVCs as they are applicable to different types of arguments. Since this is, so far, only based on intuition, we need a corpus study to validate (and probably refine) this observation. Therefore, we searched the German reference corpus DeReKo (Leibniz-Institut für Deutsche Sprache, 2021) by using the search engine COSMAS II (Leibniz-Institut für Deutsche Sprache, 2020) for all occurrence of inflected *kommen* and *geraten* in combination with the preposition *in* (the two light verbs always require a PP-complement). As the two components of an LVC are not necessarily realized adjacently, we searched for the occurrence of the two elements within the same sentence by using the search string '&geraten/kommen /s0 &in'. For both construction types, we took a randomly collected sample of 10000 sentences. Since LVCs cannot automatically be distinguished from regular predicate argument constructions because of their similar morphosyntactic structures, all hits were analyzed manually. In a first annotation step, we distinguished light from non-light uses of the verbs by e.g., substitution tests. As a second step we annotated the semantic type of the subject referent. Precisely, we differentiate between concrete (\pm animate), abstract and eventive nouns in the annotation.

Based on the analysis of some preliminary data, our initial observation seems to be confirmed: the two light verbs show a significant difference when it comes to the realization of eventive nouns in subject position. Besides presenting the results of the corpus study, we aim at accounting for the observed differences. A relevant factor for explaining the observed differences is 'control' (Kaufmann, 2004) since in its literal use *geraten* adds a sense of accidentally which is maintained in its light use (Winhart, 2002).

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