How to get into Containers.
Spatialization and the emergence of German 'Come to mind' and Light verb constructions

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This paper investigates multi-word expressions which are formed following the pattern *in* 'in' N *kommen* 'come'. This structure is encountered in German in at least three different ways with respect to its semantics and its degree of idiomaticity. The diachronically primary concrete reading (1) denotes a change of location. 'Come to mind' constructions as in (2) lack a concrete local reading and denote abstract entities like mental content. Light verb constructions as in (3) are also characterized by a certain abstraction. They consist of an asemantically light verb and an eventive noun and form lexical units (see e.g. Fillmore 1987; Fleischhauer & Hartmann 2021):

    (1)   *in das Hotel kommen* 'enter the hotel', lit. 'come into the hotel'
    (2)   *in den Sinn kommen* 'come to mind', lit. 'come into the mind'
    (3)   *in Bewegung kommen* 'come into motion'

Both 'Come to mind' constructions (2) and Light verb constructions (3) result from ontological metaphors in that they create spatialized target domain entities: STATES / MINDS ARE CONTAINERS (see Lakoff/Johnson 2003, Lakoff 2006). They differ with respect to the way that only in Light verb constructions an animated Experiencer can appear structure-internal as a subject argument, if it represents an intentionally movable entity. In 'Come to mind' constructions an animated Experiencer only appears structure-external. What is also noticeable are the differences between the two types in their diachronic development: Light verb constructions consisting of the light verb *kommen* and an eventive noun are not attested until Early New High German and still continue to find high productivity up to the present day (see Fleischhauer/Hartmann 2021). In contrast, 'Come to mind' constructions are already attested extensively in Old High German. Using data from six periods of German (Deutsch Diachron Digital: Referenzkorpus Altdeutsch, c. 750–1050; Referenzkorpus Mittelhochdeutsch, c. 1050–1350; Referenzkorpus Frühneuhochdeutsch, c. 1350–1650; and data from Deutsches Textarchiv, c. 1350–1700, 1700–1800, 1800–1900;), the study attempts to answer what semantic, formal, and structural reasons can be found for the different behavior of the two constructions in their emergence and persistence. It will be argued that the lack of agency as well as the corresponding absence of an Experiencer's ability to control the situation allows 'Come to mind' constructions to skip desemanticization processes otherwise considered necessary as in Light verb constructions (see Fleischhauer/Hartmann 2021). Furthermore, it will be shown that the availability of possible elements within newly coined structures is always exploited to the maximum unless there are impediments to the process. While the pool of new mental content nouns is already exhausted early, German Light verb constructions feed on an almost unlimited supply of new material: The establishment of different kinds of deverbal word formation opens up immense potential for the coining of appropriate nouns from Middle High German onwards. This saves Light verb constructions from an 'evaporation effect' to which constructions with lower lexical potential fall victim. The results of the study will open a 'materialistic' view on linguistic metaphorization, as it only comes to unfoldment through morpho-syntactic and lexical preconditions.

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