

On the development of *dennoch* ('nevertheless') as a discourse marker in German

Introduction In this talk, I examine the development of *dennoch* ('nevertheless') as a discourse marker in German, combining a synchronic analysis of its syntactic distribution with a diachronic, corpus-based investigation of its grammaticalization. The discourse-marker use of *dennoch* is illustrated in [1].

[1] Seine Phobie, nach draußen zu gehen, war im Vergleich zu heute Vormittag schlimmer geworden. Wann war er dem abstrusen Gedanken erlegen, dass er sich auf dem Weg der Besserung befand? **Dennoch**, er musste raus auf die Straße. Sara suchen, die immer noch nicht zu sehen war.

'His phobia of going outside had worsened compared to earlier that morning. When had he given in to the absurd idea that he was on the road to recovery? **Nevertheless**, he had to go out into the street. To look for Sara, who was still nowhere to be seen.'

(Luis Sellano (2016): *Portugiesisches Erbe*. München: Wilhelm Heyne, p. 112)

Main claims and analysis The first main claim is that when *dennoch* functions as a discourse marker, it is syntactically detached from the clause. In such uses, *dennoch* attaches outside the clause structure, irrespective of whether it precedes or follows the clause. This is reflected in its occurrence in the so-called *Nullstelle*, a prosodically and graphically separated position associated with discourse-organizational functions rather than sentence-internal modification. By contrast, clause-internal occurrences of *dennoch* pattern with its use as a concessive adverbial connector (Imo 2017). The second main claim concerns the diachronic development of *dennoch*. The data suggest that *dennoch* grammaticalized into a discourse marker during the New High German period (1650–1800). This development involved two key steps: i) the loss of obligatory movement to the left periphery of the clause and ii) a change in the type of argument linked by the connective, from propositional relations to relations between speech acts. The latter shift is evident in contexts where *dennoch* introduces questions or evaluative comments that resist a propositional concessive interpretation.

Conclusion The talk concludes by situating *dennoch* within a broader class of German discourse markers through a brief comparison with *klar* / *natürlich* ('of course') (Ørsnes 2023) and *allerdings* ('however') (Ferraresi 2008), highlighting both shared diachronic tendencies and differences in syntactic integration and discourse-pragmatic function.

References

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Word count (excl. title, English paraphrase of [1], and references): 299