

# Dokthonorium: What Wikipedia should tell about Josef

## Josef Bayer

Josef Bayer is a professor for General and Germanic linguistics in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Konstanz, an expert on Bavarian and Bangla, classical music, operas, good wines and food.

### Biography:

Josef Bayer was born on the 15<sup>th</sup> of November, 1950, in Dietfurt/Altmühl in the famous region of Oberpfalz in Bavaria. 1970 marks the beginning of his academic career when he started a Magister in German studies, Linguistics, Philosophy and Music sciences. He left his Bavarian home to Hamburg, Southern Illinois, Carbondale, and Konstanz where he got his PhD and Habilitation.

### Profession:

After cyclic movement from Aachen to Nijmegen, Düsseldorf, Vienna, Stuttgart and Jena, he checked his features with the Department of Linguistics in Konstanz, which is the terminal node of the movement chain. In Konstanz Josef c-commands some PhD-students, and they are bound by the following topics:

## Small things

YVONNE VIESEL

Research on German discourse particles (DiPs) reveals that small things matter much. An unsuspecting lexeme like *schon* (literally ‘already’) entirely changes the Force of an utterance:

- (1) aber wer weiss ja schon wo du flitzpiepe herkommst?  
but who knows JA SCHON where you nitwit come.from  
(<http://hukd.mydealz.de/deals/medimax-externe-2-5-festplatte-toshiba-stor-e-plus-2-tb-79-euro-750-gb-44-euro-397150>, 03/18/2015)

With a subtle change in meaning, *schon*, yielding a rhetorical reading in *wh*-questions, might have shown up in the dependent clause preceding the copy of the *wh*-operator in its VP-internal base position (cf. Bayer et al., to appear). It is unclear why the presumably Hessian

speaker sprinkled in *ja* (literally ‘yes’); Bavarian speakers will surely prefer *denn* (roughly ‘I wonder’) instead.

As a linguist and Bavarian, Josef has shared personal insights into the hard-wired relation between Bavarian information seeking questions and their grammatical marker *-n*, the reduced enclitic form of *denn* (cf. Bayer, 2012). This brief glimpse into his work serves to illustrate his observation of detail that deserves attention as a piece of the bigger picture, and his enthusiasm for language. His appreciation of the scholarly tradition connected to it is apparent from his regards for earliest predecessors, beginning with the Sanskrit grammarian Pāṇini.

The interface of linguistics proper and everyday working life is shaped by small things, too, specific moments in time. Years after looking forward to the next legendary example each Syntax I course as a student assistant, learning about Pretzel Logic on the side makes minimalism all the more enjoyable today. Keen observation even in minor matters enhances awareness of the brighter sides of serious business and, as shown by Josef, may enable one to predict the near future. After his comment on a student’s question (“What little do I do for just three credits?”), we are presently awaiting those from Tripsdrill<sup>1</sup> University demanding one credit only.

In sum, working with Josef has meant working with pleasure. Since my interest in DiPs was sparked in a seminar by him in 2008, he has shared his expertise, but also inspired my affection for our subject of investigation—crucially, as linguistics, really anything, thrives on joy.

## Processing of small things

LAURA DÖRRE

German discourse particles (DiPs) are not only interesting for theoretical linguists. These small words are quite interesting with regard to language processing as well; another field that Josef is well versed in. The reason is that they are ambiguous between primarily semantic and primarily pragmatic readings, depending on the context in which they occur. While scalar particles like *nur* have a fixed meaning that enters semantic composition regularly, *nur* as a DiP modifies the speech act (Bayer, 1991). Therefore, it is worth looking at how the two different meanings are processed.

Furthermore, this is interesting from a neurolinguistic point of view with regard to patients with a left vs. right brain damage, since, roughly speaking, it is assumed that semantic aspects of language are processed in the left hemisphere, while pragmatic aspects of language are processed in the right hemisphere. In his seminal study, Josef examined this question by means of neurolinguistic methods and laid the foundation for experimental research on the processing of DiPs (Bayer, 1991).

His work inspired me to enlarge upon this topic, which sometimes is an adventure. An important issue is the choice of a proper experimental technique. For instance, reading experiments with the eyetracker turned out to be problematic, since DiPs are so small that they

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<sup>1</sup> The name of an amusement park in Treffentrill, a small village in Southern Germany.

are likely to be skipped by the reader. Another point is the choice of participants: Speakers from Southern and Northern Germany differ in their usage of particles like *nur* and *bloß*. And what about disambiguation? Ambiguous sentences containing particles that can function as a scalar particle or as a DiP are read faster if they are ambiguous than if they are disambiguated by a context. This result seems to be counterintuitive, but was also observed by Josef in his work on argument ordering in German, where sentences with arguments not marked for case were read much faster than those with case-marked ones (Bayer & Marslen-Wilson, 1992).

The range of Josef's expertise in the field of psycho- and neurolinguistics is clearly broad and it is impressive how he combines this knowledge with his research on theoretical linguistics. It is a pleasure to work with him and to gain from this interdisciplinary input.

## Bavarian matters

### IRIS BRÄUNING

Since 1984 at the latest we know that Bavarian syntax reveals striking differences from Standard German (SG) and other German dialects:

Not only extraction out of finite complement clauses and partially pro-drop phenomena but also doubly filled COMP constructions place the language rather in the proximity of Romance languages than its Germanic neighbouring varieties.

- (2) Da Sepp, (de) wo fo da Oberpfalz is, sted do u dringt a bia  
the Sepp, (who) PRT from the Oberpfalz is stands there and drinks a beer  
'Josef who is originally from Oberpfalz stands there and drinks beer'

The sentence in (2) shows a typical Bavarian relative clause structure with a particle introducing a relative clause preceded by a (sometimes optional) relative pronoun in the left periphery. These left-peripheral phenomena are also found in other Southern German varieties. Josef Bayer was among the first linguists claiming a strong influence of dialect syntax to the knowledge of generative grammar and principles of syntax in particular. Many followed and now, micro variation is indispensable from present day's syntax-landscape.

Many years later, the complementizer *wo* (Bayer, 1984) and its occurrence in relative clauses as well as other types of subordinate structures was my point of entry into dialect syntax reviewing the Bavarian results for Alemannic varieties.

Working for and with Josef means merge of Bavarian and syntax into an anaphor that is bound by Josef and it means being in the scope of an excellent linguist. Sentence structure has never been taught so clearly and based on real data before:

- (3) dass ein Student aus Wallhausen einer fleißigen Studentin zuflüsterte, ihm den eng beschriebenen Spickzettel herüberzureichen

Josef's numeration is far from being monotone and seems to be inexhaustible for creative morphology. Our Lexicon has been enriched incredibly by items like *Semmelbrösel*, *Problemfinger*, *Bierbauchlosigkeit* and *Bäckerinnenclub*.

## Sündtax

ALEXANDRA REHN

In Standard German, attributive adjectives always inflect and there are two inflectional paradigms: a strong (phi features and case) and a weak one. Unlike in Standard German, attributive adjectives in Alemannic can be uninflected and since there seems to be no ‘trigger’ for zero-inflection, as an empirical study undertaken in the Alemannic area has shown. This casts doubt on the traditional morpho-syntactic analysis of adjectival agreement.

- (4) a. ALEMANNIC  
I hab an alt-Ø Rucksack  
I have an old-ZERO backpack
- b. STANDARD GERMAN  
Ich habe einen alt-en Rucksack  
I have an-ACC old-WEAK backpack

In the morpho-syntactic approach, adjectival agreement is analysed as being dependent on the inflection of the preceding article. Adjectives inflect pronominally (phi-features and case) when the preceding article is uninflected and they have weak inflection if the preceding article has a strong ending itself. Uninflected adjectives, however, do not fit into this analysis and thus a new approach is needed.

When I came to Konstanz to do my masters in linguistics I have to admit I didn’t know too much about theoretical linguistics—syntax in particular. So my first contacts with theoretical syntax are also connected with meeting Josef and his classes, which were very inspiring—and I soon found myself focussing on syntax. It always seems to me that no matter what topic, Josef can always make a contribution, often by giving examples from his Bavarian dialect which are helpful or funny or both (thank you for the *Scheißhaus* – *scheiß Haus* one!).

Josef’s way of expressing his thoughts—for example in the Syntax-Colloquium—are thus not only insightful but can also be quite amusing. A recent example had to do with the question why some people when hearing the German word *Bank* (‘bench’ or ‘bank’) first come up with *Bank* as a seat and Josef said: “...na ja, wenn sich halt gerade jemand im Dunstkreis der Sitzgelegenheiten befindet...” (Thanks for that phrase! Transl: ‘...well, if someone just happens to be in the “orbit” of seating accommodations...’). Syntax is thus not only one of the most fascinating areas in linguistics but it can also be fun, especially when working with Josef.

When I was talking to him one day in the office and the problem of students with hardly any interest in syntax, he came up with the idea of syntax as a punishment and to turn it into *Sündtax* (sin-tax). This, of course, will never happen because Josef certainly has never turned Syntax into *Sündtax*, but to me and I am sure many others (especially his (PhD-)students) he turned it into *Sinntax*! (*Sinn*: engl. ‘sense’).

## First, the second and then the test

CONSTANTIN FREITAG

When I started my PhD project about verb second phenomena Josef gave me a manuscript he wrote in the late two-thousands entitled “What is verb second?” (Bayer, 2008) to explain this very interesting property to psychologists, who—according to Josef—never read it. I on the other hand did read it and can truly say it is a very good introduction to the topic, with very smart observations about German, that did not find their way into the linguistic debate so far.

One of them is the observation that the German modal verb *brauchen* is an NPI. Since it must be licensed by a c-commanding element (e.g. negation) it provides a strong argument that verb second order must be a derived order and that the verb reconstructs into its base position, see (5). This hypothesis we were able to confirm with experimental evidence (Freitag & Bayer, 2015).

- (5) Der Josef braucht sich über einen Mangel an guten Ideen nicht zu sorgen  
the Josef have to.NPI REFL for a shortage of good ideas not to worry  
braucht.  
have to.NPI  
'Josef doesn't need to worry about a shortage of good ideas.'

But this was by far not the only observation that could find its way into the lab. Especially when it comes to the connection of grammar and processing Josef is a source of ideas that starts with something like *yeah, I've been thinking about this for a long time* and ends with an elegant minimal pair that can be directly implemented in an experiment.

So after reading the above mentioned manuscript, I made my way through a large amount of literature and ended up believing that the key to verb second phenomena is the complementizer, bringing me back to Josef's seminal article about the Bavarian COMP (Bayer, 1984), a paper that was published before I was born.

I am very grateful to have Josef as a supervisor, since he is a *Hansdampf in allen Gassen*: whenever I come with ideas about psycho-/neurolinguistics, L1/L2 acquisition, theoretical linguistics, or linguistic typology, we end up in very fruitful conversations about these ideas and many other things as well. Moreover he is never too busy to leave some notes about a phenomenon we discussed in my mailbox. For this, his entertaining anecdotes, and many other things I'm happy to call him *den Chef*.

*He Chef, alles Gute zum Geburtstag!*

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