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**Mit Hilfe von Kreativität?**  
**How German complex prepositions are shaped**

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The paper addresses the formation and the diachronic development of German complex prepositions with the general syntactic form [P N P]. Our contribution will focus on two patterns: the complex preposition *mit Hilfe/mithilfe*, exemplified in (1), and the structures with a more general pattern [*mit N auf*] ‘with N to’ and the abstract meaning of reference, see (2).

- (1) Die Familie klagte **mit Hilfe** eines Rechtsanwaltes gegen die Ablehnung. [DWDS, Welt am Sonntag, 10.06.2018]  
‘The family sued against the rejection with the help of a lawyer.’
- (2) **Mit Bezug auf** den obenerwähnten außerordentlichen Farbensinn des Persers möchte ich an dieser Stelle eine Frage aufwerfen. [DWDS, Orientalisches Archiv, 1913, Nr. 2, Bd. 3]  
‘With reference to the above-mentioned extraordinary color sense of the Persian, I would like to raise a question at this point’

Being multi-word expressions, complex prepositions are located at the interface between lexicon and syntax (see e.g. Quirk/Mulholland 1964; Seppänen et al. 1994; Lindqvist 1994). Syntactically, they display some internal complexity and some degree of internal variation (in (2), *mit Bezug* could be changed to *in Bezug*). Semantically, the meaning of the whole sequence is mostly autonomous and non-compositional. It thus appears that they are complex units, in which some internal syntactic structure can be discerned, but whose elements dispose of reduced autonomy, especially with respect to their semantics.

Using data from the Deutsches Textarchiv (DTA, c. 1600-1900), the study traces individual small-scale changes in these complex units. It will be shown that these two patterns display divergent tendencies in their diachronic development in that creativity and routine intervene at different stages in any given development and play different roles in the emergence and propagation of a particular pattern.

**References:** • Lindqvist, Christer (1994): *Zur Entstehung von Präpositionen im Deutschen und Schwedischen*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag. • Quirk, Randolph/Mulholland, Joan (1964): Complex Prepositions and Related Sequences. In: *English Studies* 45(1-6), S. 64-73. • Seppänen, Aimo/Bowen, Rhonwen/Trotta, Joe (1994): On the so-called complex prepositions. In: *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia* 24, S. 3-29.