

---

## German *so* as a discourse marker of speech-act level *explanation*

---

Maria Averintseva-Klisch

Universität Tübingen

maria.averintseva@uni-tuebingen.de

German “manner, quality and degree” (Umbach & König 2018) demonstrative adverb *so* (‘so’; ‘thus’) has a clearly non-demonstrative use like in (1), which is frequent in elaborated informative texts:

- (1) Wir hatten Garnelen und eine kleine Scholle in unserem Fangnetz. [...] Natürlich gibt es noch viel mehr Meerestiere. **So** sind über 100 Fischarten im Wattenmeer anzutreffen.  
‘We caught shrimps and a little plaice in our catchall. Of course, there are much more sea animals. *So* one meets more than 100 kinds of fish in the tidelands.’  
(from a geography school book)

I label it ‘forefield-*so*’ (*so*<sub>VF</sub>) and argue that *so*<sub>VF</sub> is a grammaticalization of the demonstrative in the sense of Traugott (1995): *so*<sub>VF</sub> loses its demonstrative features, i.e. deictic or anaphoric reference, as well as its adverbial features, i.e. its free constituent-like position in a sentence. Instead, it gets restricted to the forefield position and functions as a discourse connector, signalling overtly an *explanation of an assertion*, i.e., a causal, positive, speech-act relation in the taxonomy of Spooren & Sanders (2008).

In my talk, I address the syntactic status of the *so*<sub>VF</sub> and its semantic and discourse pragmatic features. In particular, I show that although *denn* (‘because’) and *so* both mark a non-propositional level explanation, there are important syntactic and semantic differences between these two; these differences might explain the need of a new discourse marker here and be the reason of the grammaticalization of *so*<sub>VF</sub>.

With some results of an explorative corpus study, I try to sketch the development of *so*<sub>VF</sub>. Comparing the data of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with contemporary data shows a clearly decreasing semantic and pragmatic flexibility with *so* as a syntactic clause-connecting device on the way to a discourse marker.

**References:** • Traugott, E. C. (1995). The role of the development of discourse markers in a theory of grammaticalization. Ms. ([www.researchgate.net](http://www.researchgate.net)) • Spooren, W. & T. Sanders (2008). The acquisition order of coherence relations. *Journal of Pragmatics* 40, 2003-2026 • Umbach, C. & E. König (2018). Demonstratives of manner, of quality and of degree: a neglected subclass. In: Murphy, A. et al. (ed.): *Atypical demonstratives: Syntax, semantics and pragmatics*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 285-327.