Interpretation and Structure: Conditions for Article Omission in Nominal Complements of Prepositions

Preposition Noun Combinations (PNCs) can be defined as combinations of a preposition and a determinerless nominal projection, the head of which is a singular count noun. The construction is peculiar, as many languages require singular count nouns to appear with an article. Illustrations are given in (1).

(1) *auf parlamentarische Anfrage* (after being asked in parliament), *bei absolut klarer Zielsetzung* (given a clearly present aim), *mit schwer beladenem Rucksack* (with heavily loaded backpack), *unter sanfter Androhung* (under gentle threat)

The construction has been taken to be exceptional, but recent work like Himmelmann (1998), Stvan (1998), Baldwin et al. (2006), and Kiss (2007, 2010) has shown that the construction is regular. There is, however, much uncertainty about the nature of the rules. Both Stvan (1998) and Baldwin et al. (2006) have suggested for English that the relevant conditions are to be sought in the interpretations of prepositions and nouns. Kiss (2010), however, shows that such ideas cannot be carried over to German. Moreover, they are problematic insofar as mainly introspective judgments are used to determine regularities, although speakers cannot easily produce or judge PNCs. Müller et al. (2010a, 2010b) and Kiss (2010) suggest an alternative methodology to determine regularity, viz. Annotation Mining (Chiarcos et al. 2008) as an exploratory methods to induce structural or lexeme-specific conditions. Kiss (2010) proposes a binary logistic regression analysis for the prepositions *unter* (under, below) and *ohne* (without). Interestingly, the analysis does not only show that interpretative factors are relevant for determiner omission, but that structural factors also can be identified, some of which hidden behind ostensibly semantic conditions.