Comparative constructions across the German minorities of Italy: a semasiological approach

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Abstract

Comparative constructions of inequality display a recurrent pattern throughout all Germanic languages, which is partially inherited from the Indo-European mother tongue. This common semasiological format consists in a copulative construction in which the adjective expressing the quality carries a comparative suffix and is accompanied by a particle introducing the standard. For the latter, a morpheme coming from various onomasiological domains is generally recruited. After a general overview of the construction within the Germanic family, the paper will focus on its consistency in the German linguistic islands of Northern Italy, where a remarkable variety is found, which is only partially due to the long-standing contact with Romance languages. Besides an overview of the Bavarian islands of the North-East, particular attention is devoted to the Walser German islands of the North-West, where a number of peculiar patterns are found, which partially reflect structural possibilities attested in earlier stages of the German-speaking territory, but also display unique developments such as for instance the comparative particle *ŝchu* 'so' found in Rimella.

Keywords: comparative construction; semasiology; onomasiology; language minority; linguistic island; language contact.

1. Introduction

Comparative Constructions of Inequality (= CCI) display a recurrent pattern throughout all Germanic languages, which is partially inherited from the Indo-European mother tongue and corresponds to the other cognates of the family. This generally consists in a copulative construction in which the adjective expressing the quality also carries a comparative suffix and is accompanied by a particle introducing the standard. In addition, as is also typical of other Indo-European languages, the suffixes show to be diachronically replaced by comparative adverbs preceding the adjectives. A similar trend towards the increase of analytic coding also concerns the expression of the standard, which in Proto-Germanic used to display case-marking in the absence of any comparative particle. From this perspective, it does not come out as a surprise to observe that the new analytic pattern displays a variety of particle types coming from a set of source morphemes distributed from North to South in a consistent way.

In this paper, basically relying on Stolz's (2013) impressive typological investigation on CCIs in the European languages, I will discuss in Section 2 the theoretical premises of my work suggesting a semasiological approach to CCIs as a convenient way for doing typological comparison. On this basis, I will review in Section 3 the comparative constructions as they are found throughout the Germanic family, including varieties found outside Europe. Then in Section 4, I will focus on the German linguistic islands of Northern Italy. We will see that they display interesting and partially unprecedented developments within the Germanic family. In Section 5 the systematic distinction between the semasiological and the onomasiological level will be shown to shed light on some inconsistencies emerging in Stolz's approach, especially with regard to diachronic perspective opened by grammaticalization. Section 6 draws the conclusion.

2. CCIs and the semasiological approach

One of the substantial merits of Stolz's (2013) impressive monograph on comparative constructions is the development of a clear conceptual apparatus, which allows us to investigate CCIs on safe methodological grounds. Accordingly, Stolz (2013: 9) assumes the following possible components of a constructional schema for CCIs:

(1)   [*The comparison*]_{COMPAREE} *is* [*more*]_{DEGREE} [*natural*]_{QUALITY} [*than*]_{TIE} [*the contrast*]_{STANDARD}

- the COMPAREE (= C) is the participant in a situation of comparison whose share of the QUALITY (= Q) is measured against the STANDARD (= S);
- the STANDARD is the participant in a situation of comparison which serves as yardstick for the measurement of the QUALITY with the COMPAREE;
- the QUALITY is the property in which the COMPAREE and the STANDARD partake;
- the DEGREE (= D) expresses the (in)difference of the shares the COMPAREE and the STANDARD have of the QUALITY;
- the TIE (= T) is the relation connecting the STANDARD to the COMPAREE and the QUALITY.

On this basis, we can construct what we can label as the semasiological format of a CCI, i.e. the sign-oriented set of its possible components. This has to be kept distinct from the onomasiological content, which points to the semantic domain to which the involved signs actually refer. This distinction is based on Geeraerts' (2010: 23) classical formulation (see also Glynn 2015 for further discussion):

> [S]emasiology takes its starting point in the word as a form, and charts the meanings that the word can occur with; onomasiology takes its starting point in a concept, and investigates by which different expressions the concept can be designated, or named. Between the two, there is a difference of perspective: semasiology starts from the expression and looks at its meanings, onomasiology starts from the meaning and looks at the different expressions.

In Gaeta (2013), this basic distinction, traditionally applied to lexical entries, is extended to semasiological formats which are distinct from the onomasiological contents connected with them.

2.1. The semasiological format of CCIs

The semasiological format is not based on the postulation of a common semantic value – i.e., an onomasiological format defined a priori – but it rather generalizes over single formal components of a construction, in our case involving a comparative procedure. The latter constitutes a specific situation type – for convenience exemplified by the English example in (1) above – for which "the morphosyntactic

construction(s) or strategies used to encode" (Croft 2003: 14) are investigated cross-linguistically:

> Although categories (and constructions) are language-specific as morphosyntactic structures, categories and constructions may be compared across languages according to their function … The formulation of cross-linguistic universals is in fact dependent on identifying categories and constructions across languages in terms of shared function (Croft 2001: 51).

Thus, the semasiological approach takes advantage of Croft's radical constructional procedure which allows us to concretely identify language-specific constructions which display cross-linguistically a shared function. On the other hand, "the semasiological approach aims to provide a typology of the source constructions which give rise to [CCIs]. This typology allows us to reconstruct those cognitive processes of meaning extension and generalization which are at the heart of the genesis of grammar" (Gaeta 2013: 478-479). In this perspective, the typology opens a diachronic window on the possible sources of the morphemes recruited in the language-specific constructions via common processes of grammaticalization.

To illustrate the semasiological format, I will use two examples from Gothic, which at the same time show the two constructions that are likely to be postulated for Proto-Germanic:[1]

(2) Gothic (East-Germanic; Stolz 2013: 244, Harbert 2007: 174)

a. *unte þái* [*sun-jos*   *þis*   *áiwis*]$_C$ [*frod*]$_Q$[-*oz*]$_D$-*ans*
   and then son(M)-PL.NOM this.GEN time.GEN   wise-COMP-M.PL.NOM

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[1] Besides the standard abbreviations, the translations provided in the glosses correspond to the general semantic content of the morphemes in the languages at stake. Accordingly, the Gothic morpheme *þau* is glossed as 'but' because this is its general value, although in this context it rather corresponds to the value of the English particle *than*. Moreover, I will make general reference to the BUT-particle, because this also corresponds to its etymological value. This latter need not coincide with the actual semantic content attested in a language. For instance, I will gloss the German morpheme *weder* as 'neither', although I will refer to it in terms of a WHETHER-particle, because the latter represents its etymological value. Finally, I will also use the caps to refer to the onomasiological domain of a sign occurring in a semasiological format. Accordingly, the Gothic particle pertains to the domain of CONTRAST.

[*sun*[*-um*]~T~   *liuhadis*]~S~   *in kunja   seinamma   sind*

son(M)-PL.DAT   light.GEN   in kind.DAT   their.DAT   are.3PL

'For the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.'

b. *frijondans*   [*wiljan   seinana*]~C~   [*mais*]~Q+D~   [*þau*]~T~

love.PRS.PTCP.M.PL.NOM   will(M).ACC   POSS3.M.ACC   more   but

[*guþ*]~S~

God(N).ACC

'lovers of their will more than lovers of God.'

In both CCIs, the QUALITY and the DEGREE are expressed by means of the comparative form of an adjective. On the other hand, they differ in the strategy adopted for expressing the TIE: in the first case (2a), a synthetic coding is found consisting of a suffix for dative case on the STANDARD, while in the second case the TIE consists of a particle preceding the STANDARD.[2] As shown by the examples, this is an undeniable advantage of Stolz's approach, which is fairly well accommodated into the semasiological format: the single ingredients may take different forms (affixes or analytic particles) encoding the same constructional role. Thus, the semasiological format results from the (language-)specific constructions concretely instantiating a certain general pattern which can be taken to correspond cross-linguistically to a similar situation type encoded via grammatical means, in our case the CCIs. The semasiological approach focuses on the signs entering the construction as well as on their general role within the particular language.

The difference observed in the two Gothic examples is likely to be due to the different internal structure of either CCI. In particular, in (2b) the difference is due to the particular morphosyntactic environment in which the STANDARD is placed, i.e. "the standard of comparison is always introduced by *þau* when the two things being compared are not (understood) subjects" (Harbert 2007: 174). For this reason, "the dative as TIE might render the construction difficult to parse and thus the disjunctive

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[2] An anonymous reviewer contends that the two examples are different because in the second one the QUALITY is incorporated into the particle expressing the DEGREE. While this is partially true, because the form *mais* can be further segmented in a suppletive base *ma-* to which a comparative suffix *-iz-* is added (cf. Braune 2004: 125), this does not affect my point that the STANDARD is expressed in different ways in the two examples. A similar coding is theoretically conceivable and in fact attested in Old Icelandic (cf. Habert 2007: 175).

conjunction is an alternative solution" (Stolz 2013: 244). Thus, the synthetic coding of the TIE is dispreferred when it is likely to lead to syntactic opacity, i.e. when the case-marking blurs the syntactic coding of the STANDARD if the latter differs from the arguably default case, i.e. the nominative. In this case, the analytic construction is employed as a viable alternative recruiting a particle which is normally used with a disjunctive value. Thus, the rise of the analytic alternative is held to respond to a constraint of a different nature (parsing ease), while the particle is recruited on the basis of independent factors.

The independence of the formal aspects from their semantic content is well captured by the semasiological format and qualifies as a further advantage of this approach because it does not contain any reference to the range of possible semantic values, nor to the formal aspect (particle, clitic, affix, etc.) covered by the single components. In addition, not every piece of the semasiological format needs to be concretely realized in a language-specific construction. This is shown, for instance, by Wolof, in which the CCI lacks the overt expression of the TIE, and by Dhaasanac, where the DEGREE is absent or inferable from the TIE:

(3)   Wolof (Senegambian, Niger-Congo; Malherbe & Sall 1989: 37)

    [*suma   kër*]$_C$ *moo*   [*gën*]$_D$ [*mag*]$_Q$ [*sa   kër*]$_S$
    my   house   3PS.SBJ.FOC   more   big   your house
    'My house is the one which is bigger than your house.'

(4)   Dhaasanac (Cushitic, Afro-Asiatic; Tosco 2001: 293)

    [*máa=l=a*]$_C$ [*ye*]$_S$ [*du*]$_T$ [*dér*]$_Q$
    man=DEM=DET   1SG.OBL   upon   tall
    'This man is taller than me.'

2.2. The onomasiological content of CCIs

The semasiological format is distinct from the conceptual level expressed by means of event schemas as maintained by Stolz (2013) in Heine's (1997) shade. For instance, the Gothic particle used as TIE in (2b) above is held to pertain to the event schema of CONTRAST. Basically, Heine's event schemas reflect what I label as onomasiological domains from which their sign-components – the semasiological formats – are recruited, that concretely encode a CCI. As demonstrated by Stolz (2013: 264), "[t]he

choice of event schema is largely independent from that of the morpho-syntax of the construction type and vice versa". On the other hand, this conclusion, which gives support to a strict separation between the semasiological format and the onomasiological content, forces us to discard the confusing term 'event schema' adopted by Stolz.

A first reason for doing this is that in many cases no event *stricto sensu* is involved as shown by the Wolof and Dhaasanac examples, but rather a situation type in Croft's sense mentioned above. In this sense, a given situation type, which involves one or more entities, provides the general accommodation for a detailed semantic representation referring to one specific onomasiological domain such as for instance CONTAINER or GIVE, in whose connection processes of naming are likely to take place. The onomasiological process of naming consists in adopting a certain onomasiological domain to encode a certain situation type. Accordingly, the onomasiological domain – which originally refers to a basic situation type – adopted for encoding a different situation type (in our case the CCI) carries along its original semasiological format, which is recruited for the new function via metaphorical processes of meaning generalization and semantic bleaching typical of grammaticalization processes.

A second reason for speaking of onomasiological domains rather than of event schemas is that they allow us to express their complementary role with regard to the semasiological formats, and in fact to account for their peculiar status, which can also have an impact on the latter forcing a certain concrete output. For instance, in Goemai the onomasiological domain pertaining to OUTDO does not involve any explicit TIE or QUALITY – the latter is implicit in the COMPAREE – as it involves a transitive verb encoding the DEGREE, while in Hausa the QUALITY is represented as a post-verbal adjunct:

(5) Goemai (Chadic, Afro-Asiatic; Dixon 2012: 357)
     [*kˈoom   muk*]$_C$ [*ma*]$_D$ [*m-mak*]$_S$
     strength   3SG.POSS   surpass   NMLZ-2SG.M.POSS
     'He is stronger than you', lit. 'His strength surpasses yours.'

(6) Hausa (Chadic, Afro-Asiatic; Dixon 2012: 356)
     [*Bàlaa yaa*]$_C$ [*fi*]$_D$ [*Muusaa*]$_S$ [*karfii*]$_Q$
     Bala   3M.SG.COMPL exceed Musa   strength
     'Bala is stronger than Musa', lit. 'Bala exceeds Musa in strength.'

On the other hand, the same onomasiological domain can be expressed by means of different semasiological formats as in the case of the onomasiological domain pertaining to LOCATION in the following two examples, from Swahili and Malto:

(7)   Swahili (Bantu, Niger-Congo; Heine 1997: 123)

a. [*Juma*]$_C$ *ni*   [*m-refu*]$_Q$ [*ku-li-ko*]$_T$ [*Ali*]$_S$
   Juma   COP CLF1-long   INF-be-LOC   Ali
   'Juma is taller than Ali', lit. 'Juma is long there being Ali.'
b. [*Juma*]$_C$*ni*   [*m-refu*]$_Q$ [*ku-shinda*]$_D$ [*Ali*]$_S$
   Juma   COP CLF1-long   INF-defeat   Ali
   'Juma is taller than Ali', lit. 'Juma is long defeating Ali.'

(8)   Malto (Dravidian; Stolz 2013: 16)
       [*sardareh*]$_C$ [*majyen*]$_S$[*-te*]$_T$ [*beḍoh*]$_Q$
       sardar   village.chief-LOC   high
       'A sardar is higher than a village-chief.'

In the example (7a) from Swahili I interpreted the verbal infinitive carrying a locative marker as TIE, paralleling in this way the Malto example in (8), where the locative marker is suffixed to the noun serving as STANDARD. In fact, *kuliko* is normally glossed as corresponding to (*more*) *than* (cf. Burt 1910: 191, Brauner & Bantu 1964: 124). Exactly the same structure is employed in Swahili in the example (7b) in connection with the onomasiological domain pertaining to OUTDO and actually shows that they "are constructed essentially in the same way" (Heine 1997: 123). This is because in its etymology *kuliko* "is the infinitive of a verbal stem *-liko* 'to be at, to be present'" (Stassen 1985: 170), where *-ko* is a locative suffix. From this perspective the verbal infinitive of (7a) might also be interpreted as a DEGREE, paralleling the example in (7b).

2.3. Distinguishing the levels

The clear-cut distinction between a semasiological "skeleton" and its complementary onomasiological "flesh" helps us avoid a conceptual flaw which lurks in Stolz's approach and has severe consequences on the whole picture. In fact, Stolz interprets

Heine's event schemas, i.e. in our terms: onomasiological domains, as prototypically connected with particular constructions, i.e. semasiological formats. For instance, with regard to the LOCATION schema Stolz (2013: 17) says that "[p]rototypically, the TIE is represented by spatial adpositions or spatial cases (e.g. locative, essive, inessive, superessive, etc.)".

While this alignment of the semasiological format (adpositions or case-marking) and the onomasiological content pertaining to LOCATION might generally be true, it actually runs into troubles with what Stolz and Heine term PARTICLE COMPARATIVE in which "[t]he TIE marker is a particle, i.e., usually a free invariable monomorphemic element which does not govern (morphologically) the elements it combines with". The crucial point is that in this type the particle "is etymologically non-transparent, or opaque" (Heine 1997: 120). In Heine's and Stolz's typology, this type simply flanks the other ones which are based on a precise onomasiological content. As is well known, the issue of opacity and of the relevance of the source domains for synchronic typological comparison – especially with regard to "the crucial problem of determining how far back in (pre-)history one has to look to determine the etymological origin of a given item" – is in fact "a general problem of grammaticalization research" (Stolz 2013: 23).

In my view, while it is true that the onomasiological domain is often captured only in etymological terms as it is synchronically blurred, this is not a problem of grammaticalization studies, but rather an advantage. In fact, as pointed out by Heine (1997: 111) "like other grammatical expressions, comparative markers tend to be derived from other, more concrete, entities". The onomasiological content has to be understood as the range of possible meanings to which the source morphemes composing the semasiological format can be traced back in etymological terms. In this light, no zero option is admitted where the source morphemes are opaque. In principle, any ingredient of a semasiological format should be traced back to a source morpheme. Then, opacity can only be due to the limits of our knowledge, but cannot be immanent in a morpheme. For this reason, the usage of a PARTICLE COMPARATIVE on a par with the other onomasiological contents cannot be accepted, unless it is used as it is, namely as referring to a specific semasiological format, i.e. an analytic construction, which is based on an element recruited for serving as TIE. We will see in the next sections that the recruitment has not necessarily to be seen in terms of the direct grammaticalization of a certain morpheme pertaining to a given onomasiological domain.

Thus, in contrast to Stolz's mixed (and to a certain extent confusing) approach, it is more convenient to adopt a strictly semasiological representation which accounts for the whole range of constructions types which can give rise to CCIs (cf. Dixon 2012: 346, and Gaeta 2013: 483 for a view on existential constructions):[3]

Mono-clausal CCIs	
i.	$ENT1_C$ (COP) $PART_D$ $PROP_Q$ $PART_T$ $ENT2_S$
ii.	$ENT1_C$ $PRED_D$ $ENT2_S$ $PROP_Q$
Bi-clausal CCIs	
i.	$ENT1_C$ (AND) $ENT2_S$ (COP) / $ENT1_C$ (COP) $PROP_Q$
ii.	$ENT1_C$ (COP) $PROP_Q$ / $ENT2_S$ (COP) $\neg PROP_Q$

Table 1: Semasiological formats for CCIs.

First, there are mono-clausal CCIs of the type seen above. A first type (i) of mono-clausal CCIs in Tab. 1 is basically encoded by means of a copulative construction (COP) in which the copula is present as in Gothic (cf. (2) above) or not as in Wolof (cf. (3) above), the subject refers to the COMPAREE ($ENT1_C$), while the QUALITY is explicitly expressed by means of a specific morpheme ($PROP_Q$). In this first type, the DEGREE and the TIE are encoded respectively via analytic particles (resp. $PART_D$ and $PART_T$) as in Wolof (cf. (3) above) or via affixal elements attached to the STANDARD ($ENT2_S$) as in Gothic (cf. (2a) above) or via a combination of the two as in Gothic (cf. (2b) above).[4] A second type (ii) of mono-clausal CCIs exploits a predicative construction in which the verb encodes the DEGREE as in Goemai (cf. (5) above) while the QUALITY is possibly represented by an adjunct as in Hausa (cf. (6) above).

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[3] For brevity, no indications referring to word order in the CCIs are provided in the semasiological formats in the Tab. 1, although this is an important parameter of variation which should also be taken into consideration. This also means that the linearization of the abstract components given in the Tab. 1 for convenience does not exclude that the opposite orders are also possible and remains a matter for further investigation. Given the parasitic nature of CCIs with regard to other syntactic constructions (copula- or verb-centered, adposition- or complementizer-based, etc.), the null hypothesis is that their word order reflects that of their source constructions. At any rate, this deserves a specific investigation which cannot be undertaken here.

[4] In other words, the semasiological formats given in Tab. 1 as analytic constructions can be rephrased according to the specific morphosyntactic properties of a language, for instance by means of a suffixal representation as shown in (2a) above for Gothic: $ENT1_C$ COP $PROP_Q$-$SUFF_D$ $ENT2_S$-$SUFF_T$.

In addition, in Tab. 1 the bi-clausal CCIs are also reported in which the comparative value emerges inferentially from the juxtaposition of two clauses. The first type (i) of bi-clausal CCIs in Tab. 1 has been called by Heine (1997: 120) TOPIC SCHEMA because the COMPAREE (ENT1$_C$) and the STANDARD (ENT2$_S$) are paired in a coordinated conjunction (AND) and serve as the topic for the subsequent clause which implicitly profiles the COMPAREE against the STANDARD on the basis of the QUALITY encoded by a specific morpheme (PROP$_Q$) as in the following example from Nyanja:

(9)   Nyanja (Bantu, Niger-Congo; Heine 1997: 120)

[*madzi*]$_S$ *ni*   [*čakudia*]$_C$ [*komo*]$_Q$ [*čakudia*]$_C$
Water   and food   good   food
'Food is better than water', lit. 'As for water and food, food is good.'

The second type (ii) of a bi-clausal CCI in Tab. 1 is termed POLARITY SCHEMA by Heine (1997: 117) because the second clause contains the STANDARD (ENT2$_S$), which stands either in an antonymic or in a negative relation with regard to the QUALITY (¬PROP$_Q$) predicated for the COMPAREE (ENT1$_C$), as in the following examples respectively from Monumbo and Hixkaryana:

(10) Monumbo (Torricelli, Papuan; Stassen 1985: 185)

[*tsek*]$_C$ [*angam*]$_Q$,   [*ek*]$_S$ [*put*]$_{¬Q}$
you   tall   I   short
'You are taller than me.'

(11) Hixkaryana (Cariban; Stassen 1985: 186)

[*kaw-ohra*]$_{¬Q}$ *naha*   [*Waraka*]$_S$,   [*kaw*]$_Q$ *naha*   [*Kaywerye*]$_C$
tall-NEG   3M.SG.COP Waraka   tall   3M.SG.COP Kaywerye
'Kaywerye is taller than Waraka.'

With this general typology of possible semasiological formats for CCIs in mind, in the next section we will turn to the Germanic family, in which a peculiar type of CCI is actually attested.

3. CCIs in the Germanic family

The Germanic family consistently adopts for the CCI the type (i) of the mono-clausal semasiological formats in Tab. 1 above. Relevant points of variation concern the different onomasiological domains from which the particles expressing the TIE are recruited as well as the form in which the DEGREE and the TIE are encoded. In the Gothic example in (2b) the TIE is taken from the onomasiological domain of CONTRAST – which also parallels the Greek original – while in (2a) the dative case can be reconstructed as reflecting an old ablative and refers insofar to the domain pertaining to SOURCE. The latter used to be quite widespread across the old Indo-European languages settled in Europe and outside (cf. Stolz 2013: 278).

3.1. CCIs in the modern Germanic languages

In the modern Germanic languages, case-marking for the TIE – in dative – is only found in Icelandic (12a) where it is flanked by a second possibility also mirroring the Gothic construction with the TIE expressed by a particle pertaining to the domain of CONTRAST (12b):

(12) Icelandic (West-Scandinavian, North-Germanic; Stolz 2017: 47, 57)

a. $[hún]_C$ *var* $[hver[\text{-}ri]_T$ $kon[\text{-}u]_T]_S$ $[frí\eth]_Q[\text{-}ari]_D$
    she   was each-DAT   woman-DAT   beautiful-COMP
    She was more beautiful than each woman.'
b. $[Harry]_C$ *var* $[fljót]_Q[\text{-}ari]_D$ $[en]_T$ $[Higgs]_S$.
    Harry   was fast-COMP   but   Higgs
    'Harry was faster than Higgs.'

Besides Icelandic, the North-Germanic languages, i.e. Danish, Faroese, Norwegian and Swedish, all converge in showing a source morpheme for the TIE belonging to the domain of CONTRAST, while the North-Sea Germanic group excluding Frisian, i.e. English and Dutch, recruits for the TIE a particle pertaining to the onomasiological domain of SEQUENCE as exemplified by Dutch *dan* 'then, than':

(13) Dutch (Low Franconian, West-Germanic)

[*Harry*]_C *was* [*snell*]_Q-*er*]_D [*dan*]_T [*Hilarius*]_S.

Harry   was fast-COMP   then   Hilarius

'Harry was faster than Hilarius.'

Moving towards the South, the rest of the West-Germanic family mostly recruits for the TIE particles pertaining to the SIMILARITY domain, coming in particular from two different source morphemes, namely Luxembourgish *wéi* 'how' (cf. German *wie* 'how') and *als* 'as, when' shown by the standard German example:

(14) Luxembourgish (Central Franconian, West-Germanic; Freimann et al. 2010: 18)

[*China*]_C *ass* [*méi*]_D [*grouss*]_Q [(*e*)*wéi*]_T [*Lëtzebuerg*]_S

China   is   more big   how   Luxembourg

'China is bigger than Luxembourg.'

(15) Standard German (High German, West-Germanic)

[*Harry*]_C *war* [*schnell*]_Q-*er*]_D [*als*]_T [*Higgs*]_S.

Harry   was fast-COMP   as   Higgs

'Harry was faster than Higgs.'

Note that in Limburgian a small transition area is observed, in which the THEN-type alternates with the HOW-type (cf. Stolz 2013: 49).[5] The two particles found on the German territory are distributed unevenly insofar as the AS-particle is mostly found – besides Standard German – in the North: West Frisian (Tiersma 1999: 47), North Saxon (Goltz & Walker 1990: 45), North Central Westphalian (Durrell 1990: 78), East Low German (Stavenhagen, Schönfeld 1990: 111), and in some varieties along the Rhine border, namely Alsatian (Colmar, Philipp & Bothorel-Witz 1990: 321), Central Swabian (Russ 1990: 351) and High Alemannic (in particular the varieties spoken in Bern and Zürich, Russ 1990: 373).

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[5] Examples of the THEN-type are also found in Standard German in particular environments, namely in combination with the particle *je* 'ever' and to avoid the repetition of *als* (DUDEN: 372):

(i) [*Online-Tauschbörsen*]_C *sind* [*beliebt*]_Q[-*er*]_D [*denn*]_T [*je*]_S.

online-swap.meet.PL   are   liked-COMP   then   ever

'Online swap meets are more popular than ever.'

Note that the AS-particle coming from Standard German is reaching a wider distribution as shown by the city dialect of Zürich in (16a), at the expense of the older particle *wëder* also found in Zürich (16b), which corresponds to Standard German *weder* 'neither' (see Old High German (*h*)*wedar* 'which of the two, whether') and pertains to the domain of CONTRAST:

(16) Swiss German (Alemannic, West-Germanic; Reese 2007: 75, SI: s.v. *wëder*)

a. *das   äigentlich* [*di   alerelteschten Uufname*]$_C$ … [*fascht besser*]$_{Q+D}$ *sind*
   that in.fact   DET   oldest   recordings   almost better   are.3PL
   [*als*]$_T$[*die,   wo   dän spòȍt-er   ygschpilt   woorde   sind*]$_S$
   as   DEM.PL REL then late-COMP record.PST.PTCP become.PST.PTCP   are.3PL
   'that in fact the oldest recordings … were almost better than those which were taken later.'

b. [*'s*]$_C$ *isch^t nid* [*vil   [grȫß*]$_Q$-*er*]$_D$ *g'si^n* [*wëder*]$_T$ [*dā,   wo-n-i^{ch}*
   it   is   not much big-COMP   been neither   there   where-LE-1SG
   g'lëge^n bin]$_S$
   posed   am
   'It is not much bigger than where I am placed.'

Besides Luxembourgish (13c), the HOW-particle is mainly found in central and south-eastern German varieties as well as in Austria, namely South Hessian (Durrell & Davies 1990: 231), Palatinate Franconian (Kaulbach, Green 1990: 252), Thuringian (Unterellen, Spangenberg 1990: 279), Upper Saxon (Friedersdorf, Bergmann 1990: 304), Bavarian (Wiesinger 1990: 489) and West Tyrolean (Wiesinger 1990: 508). Note that in Tyrolean the AS- and the HOW-particles are combined (cf. Stolz 2013: 49).[6]

(ii)*Heutzutage sind   Mediziner* [*wenig*]$_Q$-*er*]$_D$[*als   Heiler*]$_C$ [*denn*]$_T$ [*als   Berater*]$_S$
    nowadays   are.3PL physician.PL little-COMP as   healer.PL then   as   advisor.PL
    gefragt.
    ask.PST.PTCP
    'Nowadays physicians are in great demand less as healers than as advisors.'

[6] This possibility is deemed to be obsolete in German, but it is still found in authors like Thomas Mann (from *Der Zauberberg*) and in non-standard or colloquial registers (ii) (cf. DUDEN: 372):

(i) *Es ist* [*hier*]$_C$[*anders*]$_Q$ [*als*]$_{T1}$ [*wie*]$_{T2}$ [*zu   Hause*]$_S$.
    It is here different   as   how   to   home
    'Here it's different from home.'

Besides the variation relating to the onomasiological domains which provide the source morphemes for the particle used as TIE, another issue concerns the synthetic / analytic expression of the DEGREE, which in the Gothic examples in (2) above used to be strictly synthetic by means of a suffix attached to the adjective encoding the QUALITY. This state-of-affairs is also likely to hold for Proto-Germanic (cf. Hopper 1975: 75, Lehmann 1975: Section 5.1.2). Recall that the Gothic example in (2b) also contains the adverb *mais* 'more' used for cases in which no explicit QUALITY carrying the DEGREE occurs in the morphosyntactic environment.

In the modern languages a general tendency towards the usage of an analytic particle for the DEGREE cognate with Gothic *mais* and preceding the QUALITY is observed, as shown for instance by the particle *méi* in the Luxembourgish example in (13b) above. However, this usage is not fully generalized nor uniformly distributed across the family. The picture emerging from Stolz (2013: 51-53) shows that within the Germanic family the suffixal marking of the DEGREE is still quite robust, although in several languages there is a more or less pronounced tendency for polysyllabic, morphologically complex and/or non-native adjectives to display the analytic particle for the DEGREE. At any rate, this tendency affects the Scandinavian as well as the North-Sea group of the Germanic family, leaving apart German and its varieties where the analytic expression of the TIE is mostly unknown (cf. Šticha 2011).[7] A true exception to this homogeneous picture found in the area covered by the German-speaking territory is provided by a variety for which language contact can be argued to play a major role, as reconstructed in details by Stolz (2013: 50), namely Luxembourgish with regard to French, where only analytic coding is found. On the other hand, "[n]one of the other Germanic varieties which are heavily exposed to

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(ii) [*Das*]$_C$*schmeckt doch* [*viel besser*]$_{Q+D}$ [*als*]$_{T1}$ [*wie*]$_{T2}$ [*Sprudel ohne Geschmack*]$_S$.
    this   taste.3SG yet   much better   as   how   fizz   without flavor
    'This tastes much better than fizz without flavor.'

[7] Notice, however, that also in German the analytic particle is used with participles which have a "heavily verbal character" (i) or with adjectives whose synthetic comparative is "hard to form" as for instance with compounds (ii) (cf. Helbig & Buscha 1991: 307):

(i) [*Diese Straße*]$_C$ *ist* [*mehr*]$_D$ [*befahren*]$_Q$ [*als*]$_T$ [*die Nebenstraße*]$_S$.
    this.F.SG street(F) is   more   congested   as   the.F.SG side.street(F)
    'This street is more congested than the back road.'

(ii) [*Hans*]$_C$ *ist* [*mehr*]$_D$ [*be-mitleiden-s-wert*]$_Q$ [*als*]$_T$ [*du*]$_S$.
    Hans   is   more   PREF-commiserate-LE-worth   as   you.2SG
    'Hans is more pitiful than you.'

influence from French attest to the remodeling of their [CCI] according to the Romance model" (Stolz 2013: 54). Thus, it is crucial that Luxembourgish lies at the margin of the German-speaking territory, and is therefore less exposed to normative influences than the varieties spoken in Germany.

3.2. The role of contact: the case of Yiddish

Language contact can also be made responsible for the use of a variety of particles for encoding the TIE which characterizes Yiddish, historically subject to intense contact with the Slavic languages. In Yiddish up to five different particles are found, with the addition of the possible use of *als*, considered however a Germanism ("daytshmerish"):

(17) Yiddish (High German, West-Germanic; Jacobs 2005: 183)

a. [*er*]$_C$ *iz* [*rajx*]$_Q$[*-ər*]$_D$ [*vi* / *ejdər* / *vidər*]$_T$ [*der*
   3SG.M.NOM   is rich-COMP   how / before / again   DET.M.SG.NOM
   man]$_S$.
   man(M).SG
   'He is richer than the man.'

b. [*er*]$_C$ *iz* [*rajx*]$_Q$[*-ər*]$_D$ [*far* / *fun*]$_T$ [*dem*   *man*]$_S$.
   3SG.M.NOM is rich-COMP   before / from DET.M.SG.DAT man(M).SG
   'He is richer than the man.'

In (17a), besides the particle *vi* 'how', which pertains to the SIMILARITY domain, the particles *ejdər* and *vidər* – which mean respectively 'before' and 'again' in Yiddish – pertain to the CONTRAST domain, because they are etymologically connected respectively with an EITHER- and a WHETHER-particle, although in the latter case a merge with the particle meaning 'again' (cf. respectively German *jeder* and *wieder*, Old High German *eogiwedar* and *widar*) has taken place, but see the form *jetvidər* 'each, every'.

  Furthermore, in (17b) we also find particles pertaining to GOAL – *far* 'for, before', see German *vor* 'before'[8] – and to SOURCE – *fun* 'from', see German *von* 'from, of'. In

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[8] This is the account suggested by Stolz (2013: 56), although the reference to the domain of LOCATION might appear more appropriate. At any rate, I leave the issue open for further investigation.

particular, Stolz emphasizes the role of contact with Slavic for the usage of the particle *fun*, which corresponds straightforwardly to the use of ablative particles for the TIE in Polish and Macedonian (*od* 'from'), Bulgarian (*ot* 'from'), Ukrainian (*vid* 'from'), etc. (cf. Stolz 2013: 65), and has no direct matching within the Germanic family. On the other hand, in spite of the rich attestation of analytic coding for the DEGREE found throughout the Slavic languages (cf. Stolz 2013: 177–179), the synthetic expression of the DEGREE is usually preserved in Yiddish.[9]

3.3. The role of contact: German varieties outside Europe

That contact can have a strong impact enhancing the general tendency towards an analytic expression of the DEGREE is also shown by cases of contact involving Germanic varieties outside Europe. A first example is Afrikaans, which continues and expands the tendency already present in Dutch of using the analytic particle with polysyllabic, complex (especially converted from participles) and non-native adjectives:

(18) Afrikaans (Low Franconian, West-Germanic; Donaldson 1993: 177-178)
   [*Sy*]$_C$ *is* [(*nog*) [*lang*]$_Q$[-*er*]$_D$ / [*meer*]$_D$ [*tevrede*]$_Q$ [*as*]$_T$ [*ek*]$_S$.
   3F.SG.s is even   long-COMP   / more   satisfied   as   1SG.S
   'She is (even) taller / more satisfied than I.'

Moreover, Afrikaans clearly departs from Dutch because the particle *as* is normally used, while "[*d*]*an* is a very formal synonym of *as* in this sense and if used at all, is used to avoid confusion with other *as*'s" (Donaldson 1993: 177).

   Further peculiar examples are provided by two varieties exposed to strong contact, namely Pommersch or Pomeranian spoken in Brazil and Unserdeutsch or Rabaul Creole spoken in Papua New Guinea. Pommersch results from the migration of Lutheran settlers in the state of Espírito Santo in Brazil from Farther Pomerania (*Hinterpommern* or *Ostpommern*) around 1850. They spoke Ostpommersch, a variety of Low Saxon, and in this light we are not surprised to observe that the AS-particle is used for encoding the TIE:

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[9] However, in the superlative an analytic construction is found involving the particle *samə*: "*di samə grojsə štot = di grestə štot* 'the biggest city'" (Jacobs 2005: 183).

(19) Pommersch (Low Saxon, West-Germanic; Postma 2019: 210)

[*Kaie*]$_C$ *ka*   [*beeter*]$_{Q+D}$ [*as*]$_T$ [*ik*   *un*   *mijn uldsch*]$_S$.
no.one can better   as   1SG.S and my   wife
'No one is more apt than me and my wife.'

On the other hand, Unserdeutsch is the only German-based relexified creole of the world developed towards the end of the 19th century by children who usually spoke Tok Pisin (New Guinea Pidgin English) when they were hosted in the orphanage of the Vunapope Catholic Mission on the Gazelle Peninsula of New Britain (then called *Neu-Pommern*, New Pomerania). Given the presence of English in the speakers' repertoire, we are not surprised to observe the use of the THEN-particle for encoding the TIE in (20a), besides the AS-particle typical of (Low) German in (20b):

(20) Unserdeutsch (West-Germanic; Maitz, Lindenfelser & Volker in press)

a. [*mehr*]$_D$ [*dunkel*]$_Q$ [*than*]$_T$ [*me*]$_S$
   more   dark   then   1SG.ACC
   'darker than me.'

b. [*ganz   mehr*]$_D$ [*jüng*]$_Q$[-*er*]$_D$ [*als*]$_T$ [*i*]$_S$
   very   more   young-COMP as   1SG
   'much younger than me.'

Note that for the DEGREE we observe analytic coding by means of a particle (20a) as well as the simultaneous combination of the synthetic and of the analytic construction (20b). The same examples are also found in Pommersch:

(21) Pommersch (Low Saxon, West-Germanic; Postma 2019: 94)

a. *åwer wen*   [*dai eir*]$_C$ [*meir*]$_D$ [*hard*]$_Q$ *is, ...*
   but   when   DET earth   more   hard   is
   'but when the soil is harder, ...'

b. *wen*   [*dai farken*]$_C$[*meir*]$_D$ [*gröt*]$_Q$[-*er*]$_D$ *sin, ...*
   when   DET pig.PL   more   big-COMP   are.3PL
   'when the pigs are bigger, ...'

The cases of double marking are fairly well known in first and second language acquisition and in several non-standard varieties (cf. English examples like *more happier*) as well as in several other languages (typically with suppletive comparatives like non-standard Italian *più migliore* 'more better') and "suggest for the stepwise replacement of the synthetic degree-marking strategy by the analytic strategy" (Stolz 2013: 53). At any rate, contact seems to play a crucial role in this connection.

3.4. Intermezzo: The overall typology of CCIs in Germanic

In sum, considering the semasiological elements (SemElem) forming the semasiological format and their onomasiological content (OnomCont) we obtain the following space of variation for CCIs in the actual Germanic family:

SemForm = ENT1$_C$ COP PROP$_Q$-SUFF$_D$ PART$_T$ ENT2$_S$		
SemElem	Germanic branch	OnomCont
TIE	[†]East Germanic	ENT2$_S$-T: SOURCE (DAT)
		PART$_T$: CONTRAST (OR)
	North Germanic	ENT2$_S$-T: SOURCE (DAT)
		PART$_T$: CONTRAST (BUT)
	North-Sea West Germanic	PART$_T$: SEQUENCE (THEN)
	Continental West Germanic	PART$_T$: SIMILARITY (AS, HOW), CONTRAST (WHETHER)
	Isolates: Yiddish	PART$_T$: CONTRAST (*ejdər, vidər*), GOAL (*far*), SOURCE (*fun*), SIMILARITY (*vi, as*)
	Afrikaans	PART$_T$: SIMILARITY (*as*)
	Pommersch	PART$_T$: SIMILARITY (*as*)
	Unserdeutsch	PART$_T$: SEQUENCE (*than*), SIMILARITY (*als*)
DEGREE	Luxembourgish	PART$_D$: (*méi*)
	North/North-Sea Germanic	PART$_D$: (MORE) when PROP$_Q$ is [polysyllabic], [converted], [– native]
	Isolates: Afrikaans	PART$_D$: (*meer*) when PROP$_Q$ is [polysyllabic], [converted], [– native]
	Pommersch	PART$_D$: (*mehr*) (before PROP$_Q$-SUFF$_D$)
	Unserdeutsch	PART$_D$: (*meir*) (before PROP$_Q$-SUFF$_D$)

Table 2: The overall typology of CCIs through the Germanic family.

As for the source particles for the TIE, there is a clear division of labor among the three groups within the Germanic family. Apart from cases like Icelandic and Zürich German where an older expression is being replaced by the newer particle, one single source domain is normally selected, namely CONTRAST in North-Germanic, SEQUENCE in North-Sea Germanic and – mostly – SIMILARITY in Continental Germanic.[10] In contrast to this, Yiddish, isolated from the German-speaking territory and exposed to massive contact, displays a certain richness of possible analytic strategies and – besides particles attested in the rest of the family – shows peculiar developments which are essentially different from what is observed in the rest of the family.

As for the encoding of the DEGREE, Luxembourgish stands alone in Continental Germanic as for the full adoption of the analytic strategy. In the other varieties, a similar trend towards the use of a particle with complex adjectives is observed, which is even more pronounced in varieties found outside Europe as shown by Afrikaans, Pommersch and Unserdeutsch. In Yiddish, on the other hand, this trend is not necessarily observed in spite of the analytic constructions displayed by the neighboring languages.

4. German minorities in Italy

Besides the South-Tyrolean region, in which German, including its varieties, is in fact the majority language, two distinct groups of language minorities are also present in Northern Italy, in the West and in the East, belonging respectively to the Alemannic and to the Bavarian branches of the German dialects. They share a similar origin, as they both result from Low Middle-Age migrations of settlers looking for better pasture and farming conditions.

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[10] However, it cannot be excluded a priori that also in these branches of the Germanic family other types are possibly attested besides those listed above and in Stolz's (2013) detailed investigation. More research is needed here in order to answer the question whether the contact with non-Germanic languages and the isolation from the West-Germanic territory really account for the rise of analytic particles, or whether it is rather the low codification of these varieties that provides the key to really understand the phenomenon.

4.1. CCIs in the linguistic islands of North-Eastern Italy

Several Bavarian enclaves survive in the north-eastern Italian territory, which are immersed as linguistic islands in a Romance-speaking environment, including varieties like Venetian, Ladin and Friulan. Cimbrian villages are found in the North-West of Veneto – especially in the provinces of Verona and Vicenza – and in the South of Trentino (cf. Bidese et al. 2005, Bidese 2008, 2010, Tyroller 2003), while Mòcheno is spoken in three towns of the Bersntol 'Valley of the river Fersina' in Trentino (cf. Bidese & Cognola 2013, Rowley 2010). Other sparse Bavarian enclaves are found in other villages of Friuli, namely Sappada, Sauris and Timau:

Figure 1: The Bavarian islands in Veneto, Trentino and Friuli.

These islands result from different migration waves which started around the year 1000, coming either from Germany or from Austria. Since they are placed in different environments and partially display different origins, their actual sociolinguistic condition is not homogeneous across the different villages and places.

As for the CCIs, synthetic coding is the most widespread way of encoding the DEGREE in Luserna Cimbrian (22) and in Mòcheno (23):

(22) Luserna Cimbrian (Bavarian, West-Germanic; WDS: 127)

Soinante   khalt,   lege-mar   å   [a   [sber]$_Q$-ar]$_D$-na   franéla]$_C$
be.PRS.PTCP cold   put.1SG-1SG.DAT on   DET   heavy-COMP-SG.ACC   flanel

[alz]$_T$ [da   bombasate]$_S$.
as   DEM   cotton

'Being cold I put on a heavier sweater than this of cotton.'

(23) Mòcheno (Bavarian, West-Germanic; Rowley 2010: 123)

[*hait*]$_C$ *is*   [*khelt*]$_Q$[*-er*]$_D$ [*as*]$_T$ [*gester*]$_S$.

today   is   cold-COMP   as   yesterday

'Today is colder than yesterday.'

On the other hand, the usage of an analytic particle is also found, especially – but not exclusively – with polysyllabic and/or non-native adjectives (cf. Kranzmayer 1981: 259, Tyroller 2003: 150 and Rowley 2010: 123), in Mòcheno (24) as well as in Seven Communities Cimbrian (25) and in Thirteen Communities Cimbrian (26):

(24) Mòcheno (Bavarian, West-Germanic; Rowley 2010: 123)

de   *hom*   [*mear*]$_D$ [*naturalet*]$_Q$ *galòt*   [*de*   *plent*]$_C$

DEM.PL have.3PL   more   natural   let.PST.PTCP   DET   polenta

'They left the polenta more natural.'

(25) Seven Communities Cimbrian (Bavarian, West-Germanic; WDS: 127)

Sodar   *benne*   *'s*   *machet*   *khalt ich*   *leghe*   *mich*   *au*

so.there   when   3N.SG   make.3SG cold 1SG.NOM   put.1SG 1SG.ACC   also

[*an*   *büllana*]$_C$ [*meeront*]$_D$ [*sbear*]$_Q$[*bon*]$_T$ [*doi bon bombaas*]$_S$.

DET   husk   more   heavy   from   DEM from cotton

'Because it's cold, I put on a heavier sweater than this of cotton.'

(26) Thirteen Communities Cimbrian (Bavarian, West-Germanic; WDS: 127)

Tort   *iz*   *machat*   *kalt, I*   *leige-an*   [*a*   *majùn*]$_C$

because   3N.SG   make.3SG cold 1SG.NOM   put.1SG.NOM-on   DET   sweater

[*mearur*]$_D$ [*sbèr*]$_Q$ [*mun*]$_T$ [*daz*   *'un*   *bombolje*]$_S$.

More   heavy   when   DEM   from cotton

'Because it's cold, I put on a heavier sweater than this of cotton.'

Besides the question of the analytic particle for the expression of the DEGREE, Mòcheno and Cimbrian, as well as the other Bavarian enclaves of North-Eastern Italy, are interesting also because they display a certain variety for the encoding of the TIE. In the Cimbrian villages of the Seven and of the Thirteen Communities, the particles *bon* (25) and *mun* (26) are respectively found which are etymological cognates of German *von* 'from, of' and *wenn* 'when, if' and pertain to the domain of SOURCE and SEQUENCE.

Moreover, besides the AS-particle found in Luserna Cimbrian (22) and in Mòcheno (24), Cimbrian also displays the THEN-particle (27a) pertaining to SEQUENCE and usually attested in the North-Sea Germanic, as well as the particle *ödar* (27b) pertaining to CONTRAST (see *weder* above) which corresponds to German *entweder* 'either' (see Swiss German *eiter* – SI, s.v. – from *eindeweder* 'either'):[11]

(27) Cimbrian (Bavarian, West-Germanic; Stolz 2013: 54–55)

a. *s'ist* [*pessor*]$_{Q+D}$ [*an   stuke   marmeladabon bostanajen   un   proat*]$_C$ [*dan*]$_T$
   it = is better   a   piece   marmalade   from carrots and bread then
   [*brioss   un   andere   gaplettarach*]$_S$.
   brioche   and other   things
   'A slice of carrot-marmalade and bread is better than brioche or such like.'
b. [*beelz   jaar   iste*]$_C$ *gabest*   [*mear*]$_D$ [*hungar*]$_Q$ [*ödar*]$_T$ [*hemmest*]$_S$.
    many   years ago exist.PST more   hunger   either   today
   'In the past, there was more hunger than today.'

In Mòcheno we also record the complex particle *abia* (28) resulting from the combination of the AS- and of the HOW-particle as observed for West Tyrolean above:

(28) Mòcheno (Bavarian, West-Germanic; Rowley 2010: 123)
    [*der mai^n hunt*]$_C$ *is* [*greas*]$_Q$[*-er*]$_D$ [*abia*]$_T$ [*der dai^n*]$_S$.
    DET 1SG.POSS dog   is big-COMP   how   DET 2SG.POSS
    'My dog is bigger than yours.'

Similar examples of complex particles are also found in the Friulian enclaves of Sappada (29), Sauris (30) and Timau (31):

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[11] This is likely to be the oldest particle in Cimbrian, because it is mentioned in Slaviero's (1760) grammatical sketch: *Du pist reichor öder ich* 'You are richer than me'. The account suggested by Stolz (2013: 55) in which *öder* as well as the Yiddish cognate *ejdər* seen above are held to correspond to German *eher* 'earlier, rather' and accordingly to pertain to SEQUENCE does not stand the etymological reconstruction and has to be rejected. In this connection, it is noteworthy to observe that in the 19th century the particle *bedar* – corresponding to German *weder* 'neither' – is also found for encoding the TIE: *ear ist grözor bedar ich* 'he is taller than me' (cf. SWB, s.v. *bedar*).

(29) Sappada (Bavarian, West-Germanic; WDS: 127)

Bail's   kòlt is,   leigimer   [ana   [dick]$_Q$[-ar]$_D$-a
because = 3N.SG cold be.3SG put.1SG.NOM.1SG.DAT DET   thick-COMP-SG.ACC

fanèlla]$_C$ on   [a bi]$_T$ [dei pambullina]$_S$.
flanel   on   as how   DEM cotton

'Because it's cold, I put on a heavier sweater than this of cotton.'

(30) Sauris (Bavarian, West-Germanic; WDS: 127)

[d]$_C$'ist   [dikh]$_Q$[-ar]$_D$ [assbie]$_T$ [de sele va   pamböle]$_S$.
DEM = be.3SG thick-COMP   as.how   DET that from cotton

'This is heavier than that of cotton.'

(31) Timau (Bavarian, West-Germanic; WDS: 168)

[Dar peton]$_C$ meik hakli   sain,   ovar nit [haklig]$_Q$[-ar]$_D$
DET cement may frangible be.INF but   not frangible-COMP

[a bia]$_T$ [dar glos]$_S$!
 as how   DET glass

'The cement can be frangible, but not more frangible than the glass!'

Finally, in Mòcheno as well as in Luserna Cimbrian the particles *bos* (32) and *baz* (33) are respectively found, which correspond to German *was* 'what':

(32) Mòcheno (Bavarian, West-Germanic; WDS: 127)

'S   ist   kòlt, alura I   leig   me   u' [an
3N.SG   be.3SG   cold then 1.SG.NOM put.1SG 1SG.ACC on DET

[dick]$_Q$[-er]$_D$-en   jack]$_C$ [bos]$_T$ [der sell va   bombasch]$_S$.
thick-COMP-M.SG.ACC jacket(M)   what   DET that from cotton

'It's cold, then I put on a heavier sweater than this of cotton.'

(33) Luserna Cimbrian (Bavarian, West-Germanic; WDS: 168)

[Dar zemént]$_C$ möse   lai prèchan,   ma
DET cement   must.SUBJ.PRS.3SG PTC break.INF   but

nètt [pell]$_Q$[-ar]$_D$ [baz]$_T$ ['z glass]$_S$!
not soon-COMP   what   DET glass

'The cement might also break, but not easier than the glass!'

4.2 The Walser German area

The label 'Walser German' identifies a group of dialects belonging to the Highest Alemannic branch of Upper German, originally spoken in the most south-western province of Switzerland, the Wallis 'the (Rhone) Valley', whence Wal(li)ser. At the outset of the last millennium groups of settlers left the Wallis and migrated south- and eastwards in search of better conditions for life and founded villages on the higher segments of the alpine valleys characterized by a common architectural landscape, hallmarked by the Städl, the typical Walser house made of wood and stone (cf. Rizzi 1993). A number of villages were also founded on the south side of the Monte Rosa massif, in which they were in contact with the local Romance-speaking population for centuries without losing, however, their relations and contacts with the native homeland as well as with the southern regions of Germany. Nowadays, the Walser islands on the Italian territory, which are placed in Aosta Valley and Piedmont (see fig. 2), are losing their linguistic identity with the last speakers of the Walser German variety mostly using the other varieties of their repertoire, namely Piedmontese and Standard Italian as well as French and Franco-Provençal for the varieties spoken in Aosta Valley, although the process of language shift is not yet completed (cf. Dal Negro 2004).

Figure 2: The Walser German islands in Piedmont and Aosta Valley.

In recent years, a number of projects were started to preserve this identity, to collect data on the Walser German varieties in order to make it available for future generations as well as for research. Thanks to these projects, the data presented in this section could be collected into a digital archive and carefully analyzed (cf. Angster et al. 2017, 2020, Gaeta in press for details).

Given their position at the southern edge of the Upper German area, Walser German dialects are traditionally known for their conservative character typical of

such marginal areas (cf. Bohnenberger 1913, Russ 1990: 367, and Eufe & Mader 2018 for a recent survey). This is for instance reflected in the retention of adjective agreement in predicative position as well as of distinct classes for weak verbs in neat contrast to all other dialectal varieties found in Germany and Switzerland (see Gaeta et al. 2019, Gaeta 2020 and Russ 1990: 383 for a survey). In this connection, however, one should not forget the role of language contact enhancing for instance the retention of final unstressed vowels which is a crucial factor for preserving those morphological traits (cf. Moulton 1941: 39, Zürrer 2011: 105).

4.2.1. CCIs in Walser German

While CCIs are expectedly based on the general semasiological format typical of the Germanic family summarized in Tab. 2 above, we observe an astonishing variety of the particles used for encoding the TIE. As for the two villages of Aosta Valley, Gressoney, which lies across the Swiss border, displays the AS-particle belonging to the SIMILARITY domain (34) also found in German, while in the near village of Issime the THEN-particle belonging to the SEQUENCE domain occurs (35):[12]

(34) Gressoney (Alemannic, West-Germanic; DOK_0441)

[*De Gnid*]$_C$ *éscht* [*schterch*]$_Q$[*-or*]$_D$ [*als*]$_T$[*ds Bedure*]$_S$
DET envy   is   strong-COMP   as   DET compassion
'The envy is stronger than compassion.'

(35) Issime (Alemannic, West-Germanic; SW: 96)

[*d sunnu*]$_C$ *ischt gsing* [*schtoarh*]$_Q$[*-ur*]$_D$ [*den*]$_T$ [*is*]$_S$
DET sun   is   been strong-COMP   then   3M.SG
'The sun was stronger than him.'

Note that in Formazza, which is found in Piedmont on the western side of Monte Rosa, in spite of its distance from Issime the THEN-particle is found, too:

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[12] The Walser examples indicated by DOK come from CLiMAlp, a digital archive which is freely accessible online at the website www.climalp.org (see Angster et al. 2017, 2020, Gaeta et al. 2019).

(36) Formazza (Alemannic, West-Germanic; SW: 94)

> *Un äso der wén het erchent das* [*t sunna*]$_C$
> and thus DET wind(M) has admit.PST.PTCP that DET sun(F)
>
> *éscht* [*schterch*]$_Q$-*er*]$_D$ [*de*]$_T$ [*är*]$_S$.
> is strong-COMP then 3M.SG.S
>
> 'And thus the wind admitted that the sun was stronger than itself.'

It must be added that – similarly to what we have seen above for the Zürich variety of High Alemannic – the AS-particle found in Gressoney should be treated as a Germanism modeled after the standard variety, because the older particle used for the TIE is *wan*, which corresponds to German *wann* 'when' and can be held to pertain to the SEQUENCE domain:

(37) Gressoney (Alemannic, West-Germanic; Zürrer 1982: 83)

> [*d χue*]$_C$ *iš* [*gross*]$_Q$[-*ur*]$_D$ [*wan*]$_T$ [*ds χalb*]$_S$.
> DET.F.SG cow(F) is big-COMP when DET.N.SG calf(N)
>
> 'The cow is bigger than the calf.'

In this connection, note that the other Walser island surrounded by Romance varieties but placed in the Swiss Ticino, namely Bosco Gurin, displays the same WHETHER-particle shown in (16b) above in Zürich as the older alternative with regard to the actual AS-particle:

(38) Bosco Gurin (Alemannic, West-Germanic; PALWaM: 41)

> *wen-sch grian-s fress-en, éscht* [*dar chaaŝch*]$_C$ [*fell* [*galw*]$_Q$-*ar*]$_D$
> when-3PL green-N.SG eat-3PL be.3SG DET.M.SG cheese(M) very yellow-COMP
>
> [*widar*]$_T$ *wenn* [*wenn-sch héww fress-en*]$_S$.
> neither when when-3PL hay eat-3PL
>
> 'When (the cows) eat green (grass), the cheese is much yellower than when they eat hay.'

In the other Walser villages of Piedmont other ways for encoding the TIE are found, which come from disparate source morphemes and are partially unprecedented in the Germanic family. In Alagna (39) and Macugnaga (40) the FROM-particle representative of the SOURCE domain is found:

(39) Alagna (Alemannic, West-Germanic; SW: 93)

*Der schturmwind   het   miessä   erchennä [di ŝchonna]*_C *ŝchi*
DET storm.wind(M) has must.INF admit.INF DET sun(F)   3F.SG

*ŝchige   [schterch]*_Q*[-ur]*_D *[fam]*_T *[ŝchi]*_S.
be.SUBJ.3.SG   strong-COMP   from   3F.SG.S

'The heavy gale had to admit that the sun was stronger than itself.'

(40) Macugnaga (Alemannic, West-Germanic; SW: 96)

*Der gruos wind   hetschi   ŝchi   móssó   zeichu, [t   sunna]*_C
DET big wind(M) has.3F.SG 3F.SG must.INF show.INF DET sun(F)

*hettschi si   ksid [schterch]*_Q*[-er]*_D *[fan]*_T   *[ém]*_S.
had.3F.SG be.INF been strong-COMP   from   3M.SG.DAT

'The big wind had to indicate that the sun had been stronger than itself.'

Paralleling the case of Yiddish seen in (17b) above with respect to Slavic, the particle *fan* (or *van*) 'from, of' – as well as the particle *bon* found in Seven Communities Cimbrian seen in (25) above – is likely to result from contact with the surrounding Romance varieties, in particular Italian *di*, Valdotain *de*, etc. (cf. Stolz 2013: 60).

5. Grammaticalization and the semasiological approach

In the other two Romance languages normally belonging to the Walser speakers' repertoire, the particle used for expressing the TIE is "an element *que/ca* that, synchronically, has a wide range of functions beyond the [CCI] such that it can be understood as a desemanticized general subordinator" (Stolz 2013: 58). This is true both for French *que* and Piedmontese *che*, but in fact in other Romance varieties this particle is widely used as an – in several cases obligatory – alternative for encoding the TIE. For instance, in Italian the situation is quite complex – as also recognized by Stolz (2013: 142) – and reflects both the employment of *di* and of *che*, depending on the type of STANDARD:

(41) Standard Italian (Romance)

a. *[Andare   in bici]*_C*è [più]*_D   *[faticos-o]*_Q   *[che]*_T / *[di]*_T *[andare*
   go.INF   in bike is more   strenuous-M.SG   that   of   go.INF

in moto]$_S$.

in motorcycle

'Biking is more strenuous than riding a motorcycle.'

b. [*La bici*]$_C$ *è* [*più*]$_D$ [*faticos-a*]$_Q$ [*della*]$_T$ / (coll.) [*che*]$_T$ [*la*

DET bike(F) is more strenuous-F.SG of.DET that DET

moto]$_S$.

motorcycle

'A bike is more strenuous than a motorcycle.'

Note that also in the case of a STANDARD consisting of a NP the alternative use of *che* is largely possible, although it might sound slightly colloquial to some speakers' ears. Moreover, it should be added that also *di* serves a large variety of functions, while the SOURCE value is in fact only possible in sentences like *Teo è di Roma* 'Teo is from Rome' containing a place name which identifies the birth place of the subject, but does not have a true ablative value: *Teo viene da / *di Roma* 'Teo comes from Rome'. On this basis, one might argue that also *di* serves as a general desemanticized subordinator although it introduces a different class of subordinated elements with regard to *che*.

This brief discussion shows that, while the question of the desemanticized general subordinator is marginal for the Germanic family, it raises an important theoretical question which lies behind Stolz's (2013: 58) general conclusion that "[m]ost probably, constructions with *que/ca* are the closest one can get to the ideal form of a PARTICLE COMPARATIVE". As already hinted at in Section 2.3 above, here is where the semasiological format is mixed with the onomasiological content. Recall that on the basis of such a desemanticized subordinator, Stolz identifies an autonomous type of PARTICLE COMPARATIVE for encoding the TIE on a par with the other types which are strictly connected with a specific onomasiological content referring to a basic cognitive domain. But in fact, the alleged onomasiological content which can be associated with the autonomous type of PARTICLE COMPARATIVE in the European languages basically coincides with the *que/ca* particle found in the Romance languages.[13] Besides a certain circularity in the reasoning, the philosophy adopted in this paper cannot share Stolz's conclusion because the semasiological approach crucially relies on a principled distinction between the form and the content of CCIs, and no 'ideal comparative particle' can be envisaged.

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[13] In Stolz's (2013: 84) sample 22 of the 32 languages belonging to the alleged type of PARTICLE COMPARATIVE belong to the Romance family which on the whole features 44 languages.

Instead, we adopt the vantage point provided by grammaticalization, which allows us to build a diachronic bridge between the conventionalized forms observed in a language and their onomasiological source domain. This does not mean, however, that for any single semasiological format a certain onomasiological source domain can be directly identified. In fact, particles recruited for encoding parts of a CCI can result from processes which are not immediately connected to grammaticalization channels of the type suggested by Heine (1997), i.e. via gradual semantic bleaching from a well-defined cognitive domain. In fact, they may also result from the generalization of certain morphemes already grammaticalized in a given language for certain functions. The functional motivation is similar to what we have already observed for the Gothic example in (2b) above in which the particle allows to encode as STANDARD any possible syntactic configuration (NPs, subordinate clauses, etc.). Especially when the latter is complex, languages can resort to employ general subordinators in order to overcome the possible structural difficulty and the resulting syntactic opacity. This is especially the case in languages where such general subordinators are widespread in a whole range of syntactic contexts like in the Romance languages. The Italian examples seen in (41) above illustrate pretty well this state-of-affairs. In this light, it is misleading to adopt a specific type called PARTICLE COMPARATIVE on a par with the other onomasiological domains, because the former identifies cases which result from a different diachronic mechanism than the latter ones.

Moreover, among the examples included by Stolz under PARTICLE COMPARATIVE we should distinguish cases where the original meaning of the particle is "irretrievable synchronically", as maintained by Stolz (2013: 80), from cases where we have really to do with the probable generalization of a desemanticized subordinator. The Romance languages provide a good example of this second case, to which the Albanian particle *se* can be added as the latter displays a rather wide range of functions and overlaps with that of English *that, than, because, since, unless,* etc. (Stolz 2013: 80). Their usage for encoding the TIE unveils a different diachronic mechanism of generalization. For this reason, they might be called generalized subordinators (= SUB) in order to express the neat contrast to the other particles which are related to a full-fledged onomasiological domain via a process of grammaticalization. Notice that the etymology of these SUB-particles is not obscure at all as they go back respectively to the Latin pronoun *quid* and to the Proto-Albanian pronoun **tšiā* (cf. Orel 1998, s.v. *se*), both going back ultimately to Proto-Indo-European **kʷid*.

The case of SUBs where the particle displays a full-fledged variety of functions has to be kept fully distinct from examples where no clear etymological source can be identified (yet). These latter examples are better treated with caution, also because further research might provide the correct account in the future. For instance, in Breton two different particles are used for encoding the TIE, namely *eget* and *evit*, with the former giving ground to the latter in colloquial registers. While this latter displays a large variety of usages, including the introduction of the benefactive or of the topic role as well as of concessive and final clauses, *eget* is apparently limited only to CCIs. Accordingly, Stolz (2013: 81) assigns *evit* to the onomasiological domain of GOAL, while *eget* is assigned to the type of PARTICLE COMPARATIVE in the light of its etymological opacity. But this example is clearly different from the Albanian and Romance cases discussed above and cannot be considered a SUB-particle. Rather, we have to conclude that *eget* defies a precise categorization and requires more research in the future.[14] Thus, the type SUB assumed here does not qualify as a sort of *Restklasse*, but points to an important channel for recruiting morphemes used as TIE, which is of a different nature with regard to grammaticalization.

5.1. The SUB-particle as an alternative to grammaticalization

The relevance of this brief discussion becomes tangible when we consider data coming from another Germanic variety exposed to a long-standing contact. In particular, in Pennsylvania German, which results from the migration from the 17th to the 19th centuries of German settlers coming from the Upper Rhine valley and speaking a variety of Central Franconian, both the HOW-particle (42a) and the AS-particle are found (42b):

(42) Pennsylvania German (Palatinate Franconian, West-Germanic; Haldeman 1872: 36, 54)

a. [*Dær   mann*]$_C$ *iss* [*krank*]$_Q$[*-ər*]$_D$ [*wie*]$_T$ [*d'r   annər*]$_S$.
   DEM.M.SG man   is sick-COMP   how   DET.M.SG   other

---

[14] One can tentatively group *eget* with other Breton particles like *nemet* 'except', *estreget* 'other than', etc. (cf. Press 1986: 117) in a set which reminds us of the EITHER- and WHETHER-particles seen above in several Germanic varieties and is likely to pertain to CONTRAST. At any rate, this has to be left open for further research.

'This man is sicker than the other.'

b. *Wii   kummt   əs,   dass dii   jung-i   buuwə* [*selli   meed,*
   how come.3SG 3N.SG   that DET.PL young-PL boy.PL that.PL girl.PL

   woo reichi,   daadis hen]_C,   [*liiw*]_Q[*-ər*]_D *noochschpringə* [*als*]_T[*dii*
   REL rich.PL dad.PL have.3PL   dear-COMP   after.jump.INF as   DET.PL

   aarmi]_S?
   poor.PL

   'How comes it that the young men sooner run after those girls who have rich fathers than the poor ones?'

On the other hand, we also find the generalized usage of a SUB-particle which corresponds to the German general subordinator *dass* 'that' for encoding the TIE in the construction of equality (43a) as well as in the CCI (43b):

(43) Pennsylvania German (Palatinate Franconian, West-Germanic; Haldeman 1872: 38, 42)

a. *des   land is aw   * [*frei*]_Q [*for mich*]_C [*so   goet*]_D [*das*]_T   [*for dich*]_S.
   DET land is also free   for 1SG.ACC so   good   that   for 2SG.ACC
   'This country is also free for me as well as for thee.'

b. [*wass*]_C is [*schenn*]_Q[*-ər*]_D *uf   dər   welt   * [*dass*]_T [*blimlin,   root un*
   what   is beautiful-COMP on   DET world   that   flower.DIM red and

   weiss]_S?
   white
   'What is finer in the world than flowerets, red and white?'

The contact situation is likely to have favored the expansion of the SUB-particle – which is unprecedented in the Germanic family for encoding the TIE – to the expense of the canonical particles found in the original Rhenish varieties. Thus, far from concluding that "the PARTICLE COMPARATIVE is mostly a Romance phenomenon with the occasional parallel in several other phyla" as maintained by Stolz (2013: 87), the development of SUB-particles illustrates an important diachronic mechanism of generalization of multifunctional particles which can be recruited for serving as TIE, namely as an analytic marker for introducing complex syntactic structures employed as STANDARD. A similar account can also be suggested for the usage of the WHAT-

particles in Mòcheno and Cimbrian seen in (32) above, because they are a calque based on the Italian multifunctional particle *che* which is used – besides as a TIE, see (41) above – also as interrogative pronoun, similarly to German *was*. Thus, both Mòcheno *bos* and Cimbrian *baz* are good examples of SUB-particles. On the same track, one can also interpret the particles *fan* and *bon* found respectively in Alagna/Macugnaga Walser German and Seven Communities Cimbrian as reflecting SUB-particles calqued on the Italian multifunctional particle *di*.

Finally, this distinction leads us to our last example drawn from the Walser communities, namely the particle *ŝchu* [ʒu] for the TIE used in the Piedmontese village of Rimella, which stands alone throughout the whole Germanic family:

(44) Rimella (Alemannic, West-Germanic; SW: 97)

> *Un der chalte vend het messu erchannju das* [*d*
> and DET.M.SG cold.M.SG wind(M) has must.INF admit.INF that DET.F.SG
> *ŝchunna*]ᴄ *isch gŝchid* [*mis*]ᴅ [*schtarch-e*]ǫ [*ŝchu*]ᴛ [*ier*]ₛ.
> sun(F) is be.PST.PTCP more strong-F.SG so 3M.SG
> 'And the cold wind had to admit that the sun was stronger than itself.'

The particle *ŝchu* corresponds to the German adverb *so* 'so' and can be related to the onomasiological domain pertaining to SEQUENCE or SIMILARITY. Note that *ŝchu* is also employed for introducing the protasis of a conditional sentence (45a), a concessive sentence in combination with another conjunction (45b) and an interrogative sentence (45c):

(45) Rimella (Alemannic, West-Germanic; WDS: 39, 55, 97)

a. *Ŝchu ŝchei wistet nid ŝchiéh-e, der Dŝchwànd*
   so 3F.SG be.SUBJ.PST.3SG not sick-F.SG DET.M.SG John
   tiéttet schpìlju bet ŝchi wattà.
   do.SUBJ.PST.3SG play with his.F.SG sister(F)
   'If she were not sick John would play with his sister.'
b. *Tiög z wasschu d tallerà vàm dum Luis,*
   do.IMP to wash.INF DET.PL dish.PL of DET.M.SG.DAT Luis
   öich ŝchu hét dschà gwascht gaschter.
   also so have.3SG already wash.PST.PTCP yesterday

'Let Luis wash the dishes, even if he has already washed them yesterday.'

c. *Pì   nid   ŝcheccher ŝchu ìsch   en   donder: matte ŝchi e   ruvenu.*
   be.1SG not   sure   so   be.3SG DET thundermight be.INF DET landslide
   'I am not sure whether it is a thunder: it might be a landslide.'

The usage of *so* in these three contexts is already found in Middle High German where it competes with other possible subordinators.[15] From this point of view, the variety of usages observed in Rimella might also speak in favor of an analysis in terms of a general subordinator, in which *ŝchu* is extended as a SUB-particle to the role of a TIE. This interpretation in terms of a SUB-particle might also be further supported by the parallel range of usages shared by *ŝchu* with the Italian multifunctional particle *se* 'if, whether', although they are not etymologically connected to each other nor does the Italian particle serve as TIE. Such an influence can be held to play a role on the vitality of this generalized usage of *ŝchu* because it is also found in other Walser German varieties as well, for instance in Gressoney, where the protasis (46a), the concessive (46b) and the interrogative value (46c) of *so* are also found:

(46) Gressoney (Alemannic, West-Germanic; DOK_0088, DOK_0002, DOK_0013)

a. *etza kammo desche ässe   so eschmo*
   now can.one this.PL eat.INF so be.3SG.one

---

[15] Besides a temporal value (i) corresponding to German *als,* we also record a modal similative value (ii) corresponding to German *wie,* and a conditional value (iii) corresponding to German *wenn*:

Middle High German (West-Germanic; Paul 2007: 415, 425, 415)
(i) *sô si   gedâht'   an Helchen, daz   tet   ir   inneclîche wê*
    so 3SG.F.NOM think.PST.3SG at Helchen, this do.PST.3SG 3SG.F.DAT internal.F.SG pain(F)
    'When she thought of Helchen, this hurt her innerly.'
(ii) *jâ   huoten   si   ir   êren,   sô noch   die   liute   tuont*
     yes   protect.3PL 3PL.NOM POSS.3honor.ACC   so still   DET   people   do.3PL
     'Yet they defend their honor, like people still do.'
(iii) *dû   kindest   al der   werlte   fröide mêren,   sô dû   ez*
      2SG.NOM can.SUBJ.PST.2SG all DET.F.SG.DAT world(F) joy   increase.INF so 2SG.NOM 3N.SG
      ze guoten   dingen   woltes   kêren
      to good.N.PL.DAT thing(N).PL.DAT want.SUBJ.PST.2SG return.INF
      'You could increase the joy in the whole world, if you would turn it into a good thing.'

enema	*Jägerchs-Hus*	*engladenz*
DET.N.SG.DAT	hunter.GEN-house(N)	invite.PST.PTCP.N.SG

'Nowadays one can eat these (things) when one is invited into one hunter's house.'

b.
Fer	*d'oalto*	*litté,*	*ou*	*sò*	*sinn*	*fell*	*joar*	*vorbi kanget,*
for	DET=old.PL	people	also	so	be.3PL	much.PL	year.PL	over go.PST.PTCP

éscht	*das*	*no*	*ni*	*ònder*	*d'erennròng*	*uskanget*
BE.3SG	that	yet	not	under	DET=memory	go.out.PST.PTCP

'For the old people, even if many years have passed, this has not yet gone out of their memory.'

c.
Hein	*éntsch*	*gfregt*	*so*	*hätteber*	*chònnò*
have.3PL	1PL.ACC	ask.PST.PTCP	so	have.SBJ.PST.1PL	can.INF

eppés	*séege*	*vòn*	*Greschòney*
INDEF	say.INF	of	Gressoney

'They asked us whether we could tell something about Gressoney.'

Thus, while the usage of *ŝchu* as particle for the TIE is only found in Rimella, its multifunctionality might also be interpreted in terms of a SUB-particle, whose generalized use found also outside Rimella is likely to have been favored by contact.

5.2 Analytic coding and morphological complexity

The variety of Rimella is also peculiar because it expresses the DEGREE by means of an analytic particle as shown by the example (44) above, which does not normally occur in the other Walser German varieties, although sporadic exceptions are found, for instance in the following example from Alagna:

(47) Alagna (Alemannic, West-Germanic; WDS: 127)

Denn	*erfriärd*	*lekki*	*mich*	[*as*	*triku*]$_C$	[*mei*]$_D$
because	freeze.3SG	put.1SG	1SG.ACC	DET.N.SG	shirt(N)	more

[*schweir-s*]$_Q$	[*van*]$_T$	[*d'*	*bowolins*]$_S$.
heavy-N.SG	of	DEM	cotton.GEN

'Because it's cold, I will put on a heavier sweater than this of cotton.'

However, the synthetic encoding of the DEGREE generally remains quite stable throughout the Walser German islands, while only Rimella clearly testifies of a

reduction of morphological complexity in favor of analytic coding. As we have seen in Section 4.1 above, this holds partially true for the Bavarian linguistic islands found in the North-East of Italy, with remarkable exceptions found in Mòcheno (24) as well as in Seven Communities Cimbrian (25) and in Thirteen Communities Cimbrian (26).

On the other hand, the reduction of morphological complexity is also observed with regard to the inflectional properties of the adjectives used for expressing the QUALITY. In this regard, in Section 4.2 I observed that Walser German varieties – in neat contrast to most Germanic varieties – preserve the subject agreement of the adjectives in the predicative position, besides the attributive position found in German and its varieties (cf. Fleischer 2007, Gaeta 2018, 2020). This is shown by the following examples from Gressoney:

(48) Gressoney (Alemannic, West-Germanic; DOK_0348, DOK_0192)

a. *d'gròss-ò*   *lougò*   *ésch*   *gwäschn-e*   *kanget*
   DET=big-F.SG   laundry(F)   be.3SG   wash.PST.PTCP-F.SG   go.PST.PTCP
   'The big laundry has been washed.'

b. *D'schuelstòbo*   *éscht*   *gròss-e*   *gsid*   *mé*   *drie*   *fäntschtre*
   DET=school.room(F)   be.3SG   big-F.SG   be.PST.PTCP   with   three   window.PL
   òn   *en*   *steinenen*   *ofe*
   and   DET   stony.M.SG   oven(M)
   'The classroom was big, with three windows and one stone stove.'

However, the adjective agreement in the comparative is only found in the attributive position (49a), while in the predicative position the uninflected form is found (49b), as in the other Walser German varieties seen in (34), (38) and (39) above:

(49) Gressoney (Alemannic, West-Germanic; DOK_0424, DOK_0296)

a. *Z'gébiet*   *vòn*   *den*   *Éndre*   *hät*   *sotte* *no*   *gròss-or-é*
   DET=area   of   DET   Éndre   have.3SG   so   still   big-COMP-F.SG
   wéerdé   *kriegt*   *fer*   *alpinismus*   *òn*   *skisport*
   value(F)   get.PST.PTCP   for   alpinism   and   ski.sport
   'The area of the Éndre has acquired in this way an even bigger value for alpinism and skiing.'

b. *chant   d'flammò   en bétz gròss-òr   si*
   can.3SG   DET = flame(F)   a   little big-COMP   be.INF
   'The flame can be a little bigger.'

Thus, when it occurs in the more complex predicative position the comparative form of the adjective follows the trend observed in German and in the other Germanic varieties, which consists in reducing the morphological complexity of inflection. Note in this case the contrast with the surrounding Romance varieties where adjective agreement is well preserved – see the Italian examples in (41) above, where the comparative form relies on an analytic particle. That the analytic construction can have an effect on the adjective agreement is shown by the cases of Rimella and Alagna in (44a) and (47) above where analytic comparatives are found which display agreement, similarly to the Italian examples. In this light, it is straightforward to conclude that the morphological complexity of the synthetic comparative militates against the occurrence of agreement in the more complex predicative position with regard to what happens in the attributive position.

5.3 A diachronic outlook

The impressive variety found in the German villages of Northern Italy substantially enriches Stolz's (2013) picture and is arguably due to the complex contact situation in which any direct connection with the German-speaking home country was substantially interrupted in the last 150 years. Thus, we could identify the influence of the German standard variety only in sporadic cases – namely in Gressoney, where direct contacts with the German-speaking territory are well attested also after Italy's unification (cf. Zürrer 2009). Note that this richness also characterizes other contact-involving varieties, from Pennsylvania German to Yiddish.

In this light, it is interesting to observe that the variety found in Continental Germanic – and preserved if not further expanded in the isolated varieties – closely mirrors the manifold options which are witnessed throughout its linguistic history. While for the other two branches of Germanic the diachronic development is linear and basically testifies of the diffusion of the analytic particles already present as an alternative to dative case-marking for encoding the TIE in the older stages, namely THAN and BUT respectively for North-Sea Germanic and North-Germanic, this was not the case for Continental Germanic. The initial Old High German stage paralleled the

corresponding THAN-particle for the TIE found in the rest of the West-Germanic branch (50):

(50) Old High German (West-Germanic; Schrodt 2004: 155)

[*thu*]$_C$ *mo*   [*liab*]$_Q$[-*ar*]$_D$-*a*   *bist*   [*thanne*]$_T$ [*al   gifugiles*]$_S$
2SG.NOM   3M.SG.DAT dear-COMP-M.SG   be.2SG   than   all   fowl.GEN
'He likes you more than all fowl.'

Thereafter, the range of particles used for the TIE increased dramatically in dependence with grammatical (e.g., the type of STANDARD) and extra-grammatical (among others: diatopic) factors. In Middle High German, besides *danne* we record also *wan*:

(51) Middle High German (West-Germanic; DWB, s.v. *wann*1)

[*daʒ*]$_C$ *ist*   [*beʒʒer*]$_{Q+D}$ [*wan*]$_T$ [*aller   creatûren   werc*]$_S$
this.N.SG   be.3SG better   when   all.GEN.PL creature.PL   work
'This is better than every creature's work.'

Later – from the second half of the 16th century on – *als* (52a) is firstly found, subsequently *weder* (52b), and *wie* (52c), also in the combination *als wie* (52d):

(52) Early New High German (West-Germanic; Ebert et al. 1993: 480, DWB, s.v. *weder, wie*)

a. *dz*   *es*   *vnmoglich das* [*er*]$_C$ [*hoch*]$_Q$[-*er*]$_D$ *ader* [*mehr*]$_D$
   this.N.SG   be.3SG   impossiblethat 3M.SG   high-COMP   or   more
   moge   *geheilget*   *werdē ...*   [*als*]$_T$ [*er   gereit*
   may.SUBJ.PRS.3SG sanctify.PST.PTCP   become.INF   as   3M.SG   already
   geheiliget   *ist*]$_S$
   sanctify.PST.PTCP   be.3SG
   'It is impossible that he might be sanctified in a more and more elevated way than he is already sanctified.'

b. *darumb*   *das* [*es*]$_C$ [*wolgeschmack*]$_Q$[-*ter*]$_D$
   therefore   that 3N.SG   well.taste.PST.PTCP-COMP

    were   [*weder*]_T   [*ander fleisch*]_S

    be.SBJ.PST.3SG   neither   other   meat(N)

    'For the reason that it was more tasteful than other meat.'

c. [*mer*]_D [*daran verbrechen*]_C [*wie*]_T   [*gutt machen*]_S

    more   therein   break.INF   how   good make.INF

    'to commit a crime therein more than to do good.'

d. *es*   *kan*   [*keiner*]_C   [*frömm*]_Q[*-er*]_D *seyn,*

    3N.SG   can.3SG   none(M)   pious-COMP   be.INF

    [*als wie*]_T   [*es*   *jhme*   *gott zugemessen*]_S

     as   how   3N.SG   3M.SG   God   allot.PST.PTCP

    'Nobody can be more pious than God has allotted him to be.'

This diversity appears to be only partially reflected in the actual situation found in the German-speaking territory where the AS-/HOW-divide is still observed, while it clearly strikes the observer when linguistic islands – as well as other contact-involving varieties – are considered.

6. Conclusion

The semasiological approach adopted in this paper has proved substantially useful in characterizing the general format of the CCIs in the Germanic family and in delimiting the possible onomasiological domains filling the format. As for the semasiological side, we could pinpoint two loci of variation, namely the analytic coding of the TIE and of the DEGREE. Especially the TIE qualifies as the main point of variation with regard to the range of possible onomasiological domains providing the source morphemes. The latter are well-distributed across the main branches of the Germanic family in a rather consistent way. A remarkable exception is constituted by Continental Germanic which deviates from this neat picture because it offers a certain number of possible alternatives for the TIE, which is even larger when varieties exposed to language contact are taken into consideration. Note that in the latter case we could also identify cases of the TIE belonging to the type SUB, i.e. resulting from the generalization of multifunctional subordinators.

    We can summarize the types collected in the German minorities of Italy as follows:

SemForm = ENT1$_C$ COP PROP$_Q$-SUFF$_D$ PART$_T$ ENT2$_S$			
SemElem	Dialect branch		OnomCont
TIE	Bavarian:	Cimbrian	PART$_T$: SOURCE/SUB (*bon*), SEQUENCE (*mun, dan*), SIMILARITY (*alz*), CONTRAST (*ödar*), SUB (*baz*)
		Mòcheno	PART$_T$: SIMILARITY (*as, abia*), SUB (*bos*)
		Sappada	PART$_T$: SIMILARITY (*a bi*)
		Sauris	PART$_T$: SIMILARITY (*assbie*)
		Timau	PART$_T$: SIMILARITY (*a bia*)
	Alemannic:	Gressoney	PART$_T$: SIMILARITY (*als*), SEQUENCE (*wan*)
		Bosco Gurin	PART$_T$: CONTRAST (*widar*)
		Issime, Formazza	PART$_T$: SEQUENCE (*dén, de*)
		Alagna, Macugnaga	PART$_T$: SOURCE/SUB (*fan*)
		Rimella	PART$_T$: SIMILARITY/SUB (*ŝchu*)
DEGREE	Bavarian: Cimbrian, Mòcheno		PART$_D$: (MORE) when PROP$_Q$ is [polysyllabic], [converted], [– native]
	Alemannic: Rimella, Alagna		PART$_D$: (MORE)

Table 3: The overall typology of CCIs in the German minorities of Italy.

This manifold picture witnesses of the high complexity of these varieties which have to be seriously taken into consideration when carrying out typological investigations and particularly areal typology. In this regard, the mixture of isolation and contact seems to enhance variation which partially exploits models occurring in the diachronic development of a language sub-family, and partially elaborates interesting new patterns calquing models present in the speakers' repertoire.

Abbreviations

ACC = accusative	GEN = genitive	POSS = possessive
C = COMPAREE	INDEF = indefinite	PREF = prefix
CLF = classifier	INF = infinitive	PROP = property
COMP = comparative	IMP = imperative	PS = person
COMPL = completive	LE = linking element	PTC = particle
COP = copula	LOC = locative	PTCP = participle
D = degree	M = masculine	Q = quality
DAT = dative	N = neuter	REL = relative
DEM = demonstrative	NEG = negation	S = standard

DET = determiner	NMLZ = nominalizer	SBJ = subjunctive
DIM = diminutive	NOM = nominative	SG = singular
ENT = entity	PART = particle	SUFF = suffix
EXIST = existential	PL = plural	T = TIE
F = feminine	PRS = present	
FOC = focus	PST = past	

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