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## Editorial: All change at Début

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Final-year projects and dissertations (FYPD) undertaken by students at the end of their Bachelor degree courses are a topic of current interest in many countries. It is timely to reassert the importance of FYPD and to rethink their role in the curriculum as the context of higher education changes. (Healy et al 2013).

Every year thousands of undergraduates undertake a final year project, an independent study or some other form of original research. Most of this research is never seen by anyone outside the student's own department. I don't know if a copy of my own undergraduate dissertation still exists somewhere in depths of Aberystwyth University. I think I had my own copy —if it survives it is probably in my parents' attic. As far as I know it was not read by anyone other than those who marked it. I can't recall receiving any feedback on it, except the mark which was printed alongside the results of my other modules.

I don't regard the non-publication of my own undergraduate work as a great loss to the world. In contrast I regard setting up *Début: the undergraduate journal of languages, linguistics and area studies* which enables others to publish their undergraduate work as one of my major achievements. Undergraduate (and recently graduated) authors have received feedback on their work from academics outside their own institutions. They have revised their work and made great work even better.

This is my final edition as Début Editor. I would like to thank all the authors, reviewers, colleagues at LLAS in Southampton, and colleagues all over the world who have urged their students to submit their work to

Début. Without all these people Début would not be possible. From September 2013 Billy Clark, Senior Lecturer in English Language at Middlesex University will be taking over as editor.

In September 2013 I will be taking up a post as Senior Lecturer in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education at the University of Brighton. I look forward to seeing Début prosper under Billy's leadership and wish him all the best.

## Reference

Healey M., L.Lannin, A, Stibbe and J. Derounian (2013) Developing and enhancing undergraduate final year projects and dissertations. York: Higher Education Academy. Available from: [http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/projects/detail/ntfs/ntfsproject\\_Gloucestershire10](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/projects/detail/ntfs/ntfsproject_Gloucestershire10)

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# Antigemination as thematic distinction

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## Abstract

Although there are general patterns as to when and where non-lexical gemination will occur, there are countless counterexamples where the formation of a geminate is blocked. This antigemination has been the subject of extensive debate over the last few decades as researchers have attempted to find a unifying explanation for the exceptions to the rule. This paper provides an overview of the strengths and flaws of the Obligatory Contour Principle, identity avoidance, homophony avoidance and paradigm collapse avoidance as arguments for antigemination. It then examines the link between these arguments and the syntax and semantics of their contexts, and suggests that thematic roles dictate the phonology of antigemination.

## 1 Introduction

Gemination is a phonological process where one consonant is realised as audibly longer than a regular, singleton consonant. Phonetically speaking, the most salient point of the consonant itself is not long—it is not possible

to lengthen or slow the sudden release of a plosive stop —rather, it is the build-up of pressure behind the articulator(s) which is extended. This takes place naturally in a variety of situations; examples include simple lexical contrast between singletons and geminates (as in Japanese: *aka* “red” contrasts with *akka*, “worsening, deterioration”), assimilation (as in Italian, where *doktore* has assimilated to *dottore* over time), expressive lengthening (as in West Greenlandic (Blevins 2008)), and the coalescence of two adjacent, identical consonants (as in English, where “crack cocaine” is not realised as [krak kəkem], with an audible gap between the end of crack and the beginning of ‘cocaine’, but as [krak:kəkem]).

However, while there are general patterns as to when and where a non-lexical geminate will result from other morphological or phonological processes, there are countless counterexamples where the formation of a geminate is blocked. Such antigemination<sup>1</sup> has been the subject of extensive debate over the last few decades<sup>2</sup> as researchers have attempted to find a unifying explanation for the exceptions to the rule. This paper provides an overview of the strengths and flaws of the Obligatory Contour Principle, identity avoidance, homophony avoidance and paradigm collapse avoidance as arguments for antigemination, and, after examining the link between these arguments and the syntax and semantics of their contexts, suggests a possible link to thematic roles.

## 2 The Obligatory Contour Principle

McCarthy (1986) originally coined the term antigemination and argued that it was enforced by the Obligatory Contour Principle (OCP), which prohibits adjacent identical elements at the melodic level. He provides examples such as the following vowel syncope (where a phonological process triggers the deletion of a vowel) data from Tonkawa (1986: 223-4) to substantiate his claim:

- |     |           |                 |           |                 |
|-----|-----------|-----------------|-----------|-----------------|
| (1) | notoxo-   | ‘to hoe’        | notxoʔ    | ‘he hoes it’    |
|     | picena-   | ‘to cut’        | picnoʔ    | ‘he cuts it’    |
| (2) | hewawa-   | ‘to die’        | hewawoʔ   | ‘he is dead’    |
|     | ham’am’a- | ‘to be burning’ | ham’am’oʔ | ‘he is burning’ |

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<sup>1</sup>As opposed to degemination, which is when a geminate consonant is reduced to a singleton consonant.

<sup>2</sup>See McCarthy (1986), Odden (1988), Yip (1998) and Blevins (2005) for various differing arguments.

McCarthy’s opinion was that the OCP prevented the unacceptable forms *\*hewwoʔ* and *\*ham’m’oʔ* from occurring because the vowel syncope would lead to two adjacent identical elements. The constraints of the OCP would block the gemination, the vowel remains, and hence Tonkawa exhibits antigemination. However, it is not quite that simple. Such occurrences must be consistent and predictable in order to formulate any kind of explicit rule; antigemination is neither consistent nor predictable, and the OCP is not explicit. The OCP has had a long and chequered history, and its enforcement (or non-enforcement) varies massively across languages and across McCarthy’s rather loosely defined “adjacent identical elements” (1986: 208). These elements could be suprasegmental, such as tone, as originally noted by Leben (1973) who first proposed the existence of the OCP; equally, these elements could be segmental, such as consonants in the Tonkawa examples. This is too broad a definition; no kind of natural class can incorporate suprasegmental and segmental elements, which makes any rule-based phonological predictions fundamentally flawed. Furthermore, the shared identical feature can even be subsegmental, such as when the OCP is invoked in order to explain the non-occurrence of adjacent non-high vowels in English (Paradis and Prunet, 1989).

This is flawed in two ways. Paradis and Prunet claim that the non-occurrence of low-mid vowel sequences in English are due to the OCP, which enforces the insertion of a high vowel between them; Israel [ɪzreɪəl] *\*[ɪzreəl]*, chaos [kerəs] *\*[ke əs]*. Firstly, it dilutes the conditions of the OCP to the subsegmental level, and attempts to explain the non-occurrence of similar adjacent elements as the non-occurrence of elements with an identical adjacent feature. Secondly, it falls into the trap of mistaking the absence of a feature as a shared non-feature, that is, the fact that both vowels are NOT high.<sup>3</sup> The requirement that something between two adjacent elements must be identical is too vague to properly formulate a legitimately enforceable phonological condition. Odden (1988) picks up on these inconsistencies and provides several instances of where antigemination does not apply where the OCP stipulates that it would. One such example is the following set of nouns from Chukchi/

(3)	<b>Absolutive Singular</b>	<b>Absolutive Plural</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
	miməl	miml-ət	‘water’
	wiwər	wiwri-t	‘board’
	ekək	ekke-t	‘son’

As Odden explains, the alternation between *ekək* and *ekket* is problematic

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<sup>3</sup>For an alternative account of the non-occurrence of adjacent high vowels and non-high vowels, see Guerssel’s and Lowenstamm’s (1996) proposal of apophonic theory.

for the OCP, as the co-occurrence of two adjacent identical /k/ elements should be prohibited; there are two ways of deriving this form, each of them violating one of McCarthy's proposals. If the stem is *ekəke*, then antigemination should apply and we should get something like *ekəkət*; however, it does not, and so antigemination cannot be a universal. If the stem is *ekke*, then epenthesis should apply between the two consonants so that the OCP is not violated; however, it does not, and so the OCP cannot be a universal.

It is clear that McCarthy is on to something, in that he has identified a pattern that seems to take place cross-linguistically. However, Odden points out that it is precisely that —a pattern, which is neither universal nor binding as there are several counterexamples. Antigemination does provide strong support for the OCP, and the OCP is not strongly enforced. If anything, it seems that the antigemination phenomenon falls tantalisingly into a phonological grey area; both advocates and opponents of the OCP can adapt it into evidence to fit their own arguments. As there is nothing conclusive from the OCP argument, it is necessary to look for other explanations.

So, if the OCP is not responsible (or at least, not conclusively responsible) for antigemination, then what is? The examples from Chukchi appear to be a simple case of vowel-zero alternation within a Government Phonology framework:

(4)	O		N		O		N		O		N
	x		x		x		x		x		x
			e		k		ə		k		
	O		N		O		N		O		N
	x		x		x		x		x		x
			e		k		k		e		t

In the first example, *ekək*, the word-final empty nucleus is parametrically p-licensed, and because it is licensed, it cannot govern the preceding nucleus. This nucleus must be phonetically realised, and so a non-lexical schwa appears. In the second example, *ekket*, the word-final empty nucleus is again parametrically p-licensed, but as the preceding nucleus is already filled with [e] (which is likely to be an inherent part of the morpheme), proper government between the word-final nucleus and the preceding nucleus is irrelevant. This [e] position remains unlicensed, and can therefore properly govern the preceding nucleus. Under the conditions of the Empty Category Principle (ECP), this properly governed nucleus is

phonetically null, and so the schwa of *ekək* does not appear in *ekket*.

However, this does not account for the examples of vowel syncope in the Tonkawa data in (1) and (2). The forms are exactly the same in terms of the patterning of vowels and consonants, apart from the fact that there are identical consonants in (2). The process in (1) clearly cannot be vowel-zero alternation, because it does not apply in the same environment in (2); licensing and government applies to segments, not features of segments, and so the process of vowel-zero alternation would not ‘see’ that the two consonants were identical.

Alternative, morpho-phonological accounts of identity avoidance have been proposed in order to account for antigemination. Yip (1998) suggests that languages have a general reluctance for consecutive identical elements of any sort —segments, suprasegmental elements, morphemes —while Blevins (2005) argues for homophony avoidance and paradigm conservation. These accounts provide a more nuanced and flexible approach to antigemination, and reject the OCP as a specific constraint.

### 3 Identity Avoidance

Yip (1998) analyses various cases cross-linguistically where a morpheme is omitted, and argues that there is a single principle which dictates the avoidance of sequences of homophonous elements, whether phonemes or morphemes. She reframes the overall tendency of the OCP into an anti-repetition constraint within Optimality Theory (OT), a rule-ordering linguistic framework which explains phonological processes in terms of outputs and constraints whereby the best (or “grammatical”) output is either the output which does not break any constraints (e.g. “the output must be a consonant”) or is the output which breaks the least important constraint in the rule-ordering. Yip’s constraint is a ban on repeated identical elements, unless a higher ranking rule or constraint takes precedence. In OT formalism, this is written as \*REPEAT. The advantage of OT for antigemination is that apparent exceptions can be acceptable depending on the rule-ordering, although OT can fall prey to post hoc analyses of phonology whereby constraints are formulated to support an argument rather than the data.

This deals neatly with both the evidence for and exceptions to the OCP and antigemination; it is a simple reordering of rules.

(1)	notoxo-	‘to hoe’	notxoʔ	‘he hoes it’
	picena-	‘to cut’	picno ʔ	‘he cuts it’
(2)	hewawa-	‘to die’	hewawoʔ	‘he is dead’
	ham’am’a-	‘to be burning’	ham’am’o	‘he is burning’
(5)	<b>Underlying</b>	<b>Derived</b>	<b>Gloss</b>	
	taʔane+nisʔo:yta-	taʔan(n)osʔo:ta-	“to pick up and stretch (something)”	

In Tonkawa, there is a restriction on non-lexical geminates; indeed, despite McCarthy’s claim that Tonkawa allows morphologically derived geminates as in (5) above (1986: 225), the data is not helpful in showing that morphologically derived geminates actually shorten to singleton consonants (Gouskova 2010: 549), which means that *taʔanosʔo:ta-* would be a more useful, less deliberately ambiguous transcription of the resultant derived form.

This means that in Tonkawa, the \*REPEAT rule —i.e. the restriction on non-lexical geminates —outranks the general verb conjugation rule where the vowel which immediately precedes the final consonant of the root syncopates when the suffix is added. The verbs in (1) can have vowel syncope, but the verbs in (2) cannot, because it would result in a geminate. In this case, vowel syncope for verb conjugation is violated, but the more important \*REPEAT rule (and by extension, the OCP) is not.

In Chukchi, the reverse is true.

(3)	Abs. Sg.	Abs. Pl.	Gloss
	miməl	miml-ət	‘water’
	wiwər	wiwri-t	‘board’
	ekək	ekke-t	‘son’

Based on this very limited set of data, there does not appear to be a restriction on geminates in Chukchi, but even if there is, then it is clear that the restriction can be violated. This is because the rule for deriving the plural, whereby the suffix is added and the vowel which immediately precedes the final consonant of the root syncopates, outranks the \*REPEAT rule. The hypothetical form *ekəkət* is not derived; this form could only be derived if the \*REPEAT rule is met while the plural derivation rule is not. The \*REPEAT rule is evidently not superior in Chukchi, and therefore a geminate is allowed to form. This anti-antigemination does violate the OCP, if the OCP were a specific phonological restriction; however, as one constraint in a series of parametrically-ranked constraints, such anti-antigemination is quite

acceptable.

Yip extends this \*REPEAT constraint to morphemes which constitute more than one segment or even a whole word. The following data from Mandarin shows so-called haplology, where one morphological segment fulfils the role of two homophonous ones (1998: 10) —in this case, the perfective aspect (PF) marker *le* and the currently relevant state (CRS) marker *le*:

- (6) a \*huo mei-le le  
 fire went.out-PF CRS  
 the fire went out, and that’s what I’m telling you (PF and CRS)  
 b huó mei-le  
 “the fire went out” (PF)  
 “the fire has gone out” (CRS)  
 “the fire went out, and that’s what I’m telling you” (PF and CRS)

Here, the constraint on adjacent identical morphemes means that the one morpheme can take on the functional roles of both morphemes, and the resultant phrase is indistinguishable from the phrases where only one underlying morpheme is present; the meaning would be apparent in context. However, this does not address various instances of adjacent identical repetition in English.

- (7) a he thinks that that puppy is cute  
 b he thinks that puppy is cute  
 c he thinks that puppies are cute / he thinks puppies are cute.  
 d she does not like that puppy, but he thinks it is cute

It seems that the sentences in 7 are not affected by any \*REPEAT constraint. 7a shows clearly that there is no such constraint, or that the \*REPEAT constraint is outranked by the need to show specific reference to one particular puppy. However, 7b shows that it cannot be due to any kind of reference constraint; 7a and 7b are entirely synonymous. Indeed, *puppy* in 7b cannot be interpreted as a generic referent —English uses the plural to refer to generic referents, as shown in 7c. Moreover, sentences 7c and 7d show that the nature of the referent, specific or generic, is maintained even if that is dropped from the sentence altogether. This is because English allows for optional complementiser dropping, as in 7b, 7c and 7d. There is no identity avoidance at work here.

Therefore, it appears that while there is a \*REPEAT constraint in English for the co-occurrence of the plural and possessive morpheme —if a number of cats possess an owner, then we refer to *the cats’ owner*, not *the cats’s*



*marrat*, ‘she passed’, and that antigemination is therefore a constraint on homophony. This would predict that antigemination occurs whenever a regularly derived form would be homophonous with another form in the language, and that antigemination does not occur when the regularly derived form would be entirely heterophonous (irrespective of orthography).

However, as Rowan (2012: 5) points out, the optional syncope in regular (as opposed to doubled) form II verbs results in the same template as a regular form I verb. The application of syncope in some instances to cause homophonous forms, and the resistance of syncope in other instances in order not to create homophonous forms, shows that Rose’s proposal of homophony avoidance in Arabic is dubious.

Even if it is the case in Arabic, it certainly is not in other languages; the cross-linguistic abundance of homophony casts doubt on whether there is a tendency towards homophony avoidance. In the previous section, Yip’s data in (6) shows that Mandarin is perfectly happy to allow homophonous, functionally-distinct morphemes, and that one *le* can take on the function of both morphemes if necessary.

Following Rose’s proposal that a derived verb will avoid homophony with another element, I applied this to English past tenses —most regular English past tenses are formed by adding [t] or [d] to the end of the verb, and when this follows a vowel or certain consonants, the resulting form is not necessarily analytic. [məʊd], for example, could be the noun ‘mode’ or the past tense ‘mowed’, while [pɑːst] (or [past], depending on accent) could be the noun ‘past’ or the past tense ‘passed’. It follows, therefore, that some regular English past tenses could have the same form as a monomorphemic English present tense.

However, I found that English exhibits similar tendency to homophony avoidance, in that there is a very limited set of homophones where one is a present tense and the other is a past tense. Even then, the two homophones have syntactic restrictions which prevent absolute identity, ensuring that the homophonous forms occur in a syntactic complementary distribution:

(10)	PAST	PRESENT	PRONUNCIATION
a	trussed	trust	[trʌst]
b	banned	band	[bænd]
c	whored	hoard	[hɔːd]

The verbs in (10)<sup>5</sup> are all competing homophonous past tenses and present tenses; however, each competing set of homophones has syntactic restrictions. One verb of the set is independent, while the other verb is a phrasal verb which must occur with a preposition. While *trust*, *banned*, and *hoard* affect direct objects, their homophonous counterparts do not—the equivalent objects must be *trussed UP*, *banded TOGETHER* or *whored OUT*.

(11)		PAST	PRESENT	PRONUNCIATION
	a	heard	herd	[hɜ:d]
	b	penned	pend	[pend]

In (11), there are thematic restrictions on the subjects of the verbs. The subject of *heard*, as in “I heard the sheep”, is an experiencer, while the subject of *herd*, as in “I herd the sheep”, is an agent. Meanwhile, the subject of *penned*, as in “I penned the letter”, is an agent, whereas the subject of the unaccusative verb *pend*, as in “it is pending his decision”, is by definition not an agent.

(12)		PAST	PRESENT	PRONUNCIATION
	a	pried	pride	[praɪd]
	b	fined	find	[faɪnd]

Finally, the verbs in (12) are also syntactically distinct. *Pried* takes a preposition—one pries INTO something—while *pride* is reflexive, as one prides ONESELF on something. The case of *fined* and *find* in 12b is a little more complex, as they can superficially both take a direct object; compare “I find him” with “I fined him”. However, there is still a syntactic difference:

(13)	a	I fined him £20
	b	I find him unpleasant

The nature of the object *him* is separate in 13a and 13b. In 13a, it is the direct object of the verb, but in 13b, it is in fact the subject of the complement clause. The verb *find* can still take a direct object, but it is semantically limited—it very rarely occurs in normal speech as a present tense. The past tense *I found him* or constructions such as *I will find him* are far more common because meaning of the verb dictates its usage; finding something is not a habitual action, nor does it describe a state, which is what the English present tense is most generally used for.

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<sup>5</sup>In these examples, I have transcribed the verbs according to standardised Received Pronunciation in British English, but this is not significant; the verbs *whored* and *hoard* would also be homophonous in a rhotic dialect.

So, it appears that while homophony avoidance cannot be universal, there are some interesting clues to support separate syntactic or semantic identities for homophones; homophones can co-exist if they are defined by separate paradigms.

## 5 Paradigm collapse

Blevins (2005) proposes that identity avoidance is not about prohibiting the repetition of an element or preventing homophony, but that antigemination takes place precisely where such syncopating sound change would result in the loss of a paradigmatic contrast (2005: 203).

Blevins uses Tunisian Arabic data in order to readdress McCarthy's (1986) argument. Firstly, she notes that antigemination does not happen for nouns and adjectives, even between identical consonants where the phonological environment is the same as in verbs where antigemination does happen. This shows that the OCP is not consistent across separate lexical categories even within the same dialect of the same language, which means that it cannot be a phonological process, but a morphological one.

Antigemination is shown to occur only in Arabic verbal templates; more specifically, in class II  $CV C_1 C_1 V C_1$  templates and class III  $CVVC_1 VC_1$  templates.<sup>6</sup> If antigemination were not to apply and the verbs were to undergo vowel syncope as usual, then the derived forms would be indistinguishable from other verbal templates.

- (14) dallal                      dallilaw                      \*dallaw  
       ‘he pampered’    ‘they pampered’

In 14, antigemination applies and the resulting form is *dallilaw*. If antigemination did not apply, the vowel would syncopate, a  $C_1 C_1 C_1$  sequence would be created, and this would degeminate to *\*dallaw*. This is problematic, because *\*dallaw* as a form II doubled template would be indistinguishable from a form I  $CVCCVC$  template. Antigemination as the avoidance of paradigm collapse seems to be a good argument.

However, Blevins' use of the data is flawed; while antigemination does apply to the doubled form of class III verbs, her hypothetical unacceptable

<sup>6</sup>Blevins uses  $CVCCVC / CVVCVC$  and  $CV C_1 C_1 V C_1 / CVVC_1 VC_1$  interchangeably (2005: 213-4). It is important to stress that it is the doubled forms of class II and class III verbs, with identical consonants, where antigemination applies.

derivations are not consistent in terms of degemination. The following examples from Iraqi Arabic (2005: 213) show this inconsistency:

- |      |   |                  |                             |           |
|------|---|------------------|-----------------------------|-----------|
| (15) | a | fiaaja.j         | fiaajjaw                    | *fiaajjaw |
|      |   | ‘he argued’      | ‘they argued’               |           |
|      | b | traaSSaS         | traaSSaSaw                  | *traaSSaw |
|      |   | ‘he moved close’ | ‘they moved close together’ |           |

In 15b, the hypothetical derived form *\*traaSSaw* is reached by applying syncope to the /a/ in between /SS/ and /S/, which forms *\*traSSaw*. Degemination then applies to the tripled consonant, deriving *\*traSSaw*. However, in 15a, no such degemination takes place. *\*fiaajjaw* is derived by applying syncope to the /a/ in between /j/ and /j/, which forms *\*fiaajjaw*, but then no degemination of /jj/ is applied, which is inconsistent with 15a. Blevins could explain this by stating that there is no surface contrast between  $C_1C_1$  and  $C_1C_1C_1$ , as she does for Damascene Arabic in the same paper (2005: 214). This would mean that a derived  $C_1C_1C_1$  sequence is redundant, and so degemination to  $C_1C_1$  is only to be expected, whereas there is a contrast between  $C_1$  and  $C_1C_1$ , so this ‘tidying up’ kind of degemination cannot apply. This would explain the inconsistencies between 15a and 15b, but this is not mentioned.

In any case, the more pertinent point is that the hypothetical derived forms do not actually conflict with another homophonous template.  $CVVC_1C_1$  is not a verbal template (Rowan 2012: 7) and so a syncopated doubled form III verb such as *\*traaSSaw* would not be indistinguishable from another verb in another form. Paradigm conservation might be the underlying motivation for antigemination doubled form II verbs, but it is not the motivation for antigemination in doubled form III verbs.

## 6 Verbal paradigms and thematic differences

However, that is not to say that verbal paradigms are entirely irrelevant. I have already established with some limited and by no means exhaustive research that when homophony results between two different verbal derivations, separate syntactic paradigms are maintained: one is transitive, the other intransitive; one is transitive, the other takes a complement clause; one is independent, the other is phrasal. The verbs in Tonkawa also exhibit a syntactic split. Consider the following (Blevins 2005: 216):

(16)	UNDERLYING	SURFACE	GLOSS
a	/notoxo-/	notxoʔ	‘he hoes it’
b	/picena-/	picnoʔ	‘he cuts it’
c	/yakapa-/	yakpoʔ	‘he hits him’
d	/topo-/	ketpoʔ	‘he cuts me’
e	/hewawa-/	hewawoʔ	‘he is dead’
f	/ham’am’a-/	ham’am’oʔ	‘he is burning’
g	/totopo-/	ketotopoʔ	‘he cuts me repeatedly’

The verbs in 16a-d which have vowel syncope are all transitive verbs with an agent subject, while the verbs in 16e-f where antigemination takes place are unaccusative verbs, where the subject is the patient or theme of the action. Here again, there is a noticeable divide in the syntactic-semantic function of the verbs. This does not explain 16g, where there is no antigemination and yet the verb is clearly transitive and the subject is clearly an agent.

Tonkawa verbs use iconic reduplication, whereby part of the phonological stem of the verb is repeated in order to express a repetitive or intense activity, and these verbs are apparently not subject to regular vowel syncope rules. This can be explained by the OCP, except that the OCP is too general and too ill-defined a process to apply with any certainty or credibility. However, iconicity is by its very definition phonologically noticeable. Iconic words cross-linguistically have been found to violate the otherwise reliable phonological rules of a language (Bodomo 2006), and so it could be the case that iconic, expressive words are not subject to the rules and restrictions of degemination and vowel syncope.

Alternatively, perhaps it is simply that Tonkawa does not allow geminates in the surface representation of the language, and that antigemination in Tonkawa is therefore a language specific phonotactic constraint. This is Kisseberth’s (1970) argument, which McCarthy (1986: 225) dismisses and attributes to the OCP. Even if Tonkawa can handle underlying morphologically derived geminates but requires degemination or vowel epenthesis on the surface, there is still a different process happening in 16e and 16f. Why could /hewawa-/ not form /hewwoʔ/ and then shorten to [hewoʔ]? This could be evidence for Rose’s (2000) theory of homophony avoidance or Blevins’ (2005) theory of paradigm preservation, as the hypothetical [hewoʔ] could conflict with another word, or another verb pattern. Sadly, Tonkawa is an extinct language, and there are no more speakers to ask. This is a cautionary tale of working with data from extinct languages; nothing can be conclusively proven, even if there are suggestions towards a pattern or rule. New evidence from different languages is far more important, as hypothesis can be checked; going

round in circles with a limited set of data (which may well have transcription errors in it —there is no way to know now) from an extinct language ultimately does not advance the field.

Following the pattern of thematic distribution in the extinct Tonkawa, does the same apply to the extant Arabic? It does not appear to. While there are some doubled form II or form III verbs which are intransitive or have a non-agent subject, there are plenty of counterexamples where the doubled verb which undergoes antigemination is a transitive verb with an agent subject. This generalisation, therefore, cannot apply to Arabic.

However, there does appear to be a link between the thematic role of the subject and the presence (or lack) of antigemination; in almost all cases where vowel syncope applies, the subject of the verb is an agent. In all Arabic verbs from all dialects provided in McCarthy (1986) and Blevins (2005), I have only found two where the thematic role of the subject of a syncope verb does not appear to be an agent:

- (17) a btəskon      btəskni  
          ‘you dwell’    ‘you (f.sg.) dwell’  
      b ybaddil      ybadluun  
          ‘he changes’    ‘they change’

Even then, the glossing provided by McCarthy (1986: 241) and Blevins (2005: 213) is unhelpful. The verb *ybaddil* is in fact transitive, taking an agent subject; it would be used for sentences like “he changes the channel, he changes clothes”, rather than “he changes around her, he changes over time”. *btəskon*, meanwhile, is optionally transitive; it usually takes a prepositional phrase, but can also be transitive like the English verb *inhabit*.<sup>7</sup> Thematic roles are a subject of intensive and endless debate, but it could certainly be argued that there is some degree of intentionality to a verb such as *inhabit*. Further work by an expert Arabic linguist is needed to establish whether this syntactic pattern observed from a small set of data is plausible.

This pattern does, of course, fall short elsewhere. The thematic roles which a verb subcategorises for, or the transitivity of a verb, are not at all relevant when explaining vowel syncope taking place in nouns or adjectives, as in the Tunisian Arabic data from Blevins (2005: 211-2). Nor does it explain the iconic nature of gemination as reduplication, as in Tonkawa.

While the syntactic generalisation cannot apply to all languages, I would

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<sup>7</sup>Chris Lucas, Arabic linguist, personal communication.

argue that it doesn't need to. Antigemination, and more generally homophony avoidance, is a widespread linguistic process, and, as with any linguistic process, each language has its own way of enforcing it and its own way of creating exceptions. It might be a strictly phonological process which is due to the OCP. It might be due to identity avoidance, homophony avoidance, or paradigm collapse avoidance. It might be due to the iconic nature of violating rules on vowel syncope. It might be due to a combination of syntax and semantics, as I have suggested. However, every suggestion has its counterexamples and cannot be conclusively responsible for all cases in all languages; what works in one language does not work in another. In the quest for universal grammar, linguists sometimes do not see the wood for the trees, and lose sight of the fact that languages vary hugely. There do appear to be some language universals; but I am not convinced that any explanation for antigemination is one of them.

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# Variation in case governance with the preposition *trotz*; *trotz*+ genitive and/or *trotz*+ dative

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This article is based on work written for Professor Nicola McLelland's module *Investigating the German Language* while the author studied at the University of Nottingham.

## Abstract

This article describes the problems concerning the variation in case governance with the German preposition *trotz* ("despite (of)") and shows thereby how multifaceted language is. This case is interesting, and not only to speakers of German, as it is an example that does not only provoke uncertainty from the speakers' side, but also their anxiety about not adhering to the standard. English speakers hesitate as well, when it comes to certain constructions, as "He is taller than me/than I."

Firstly, this so-called standard is to be examined in this article by looking at prescriptive and descriptive sources, like dictionaries and grammar books. Secondly, a synchronical corpus-based study will be conducted in order to throw some light on the actual usage. Thirdly, a diachronical analysis shall show the change in case preference over time and finally, new trends, as realised on *twitter.com*, will be discussed; providing some unexpected insight.

## 1 Introduction

Language is not always as straightforward and simple as it sometimes seems, especially when it comes to grammatical rules and patterns. One of the most interesting and complex fields hereby is the case governance of certain prepositions. German prepositions usually govern the genitive, the dative or the accusative. However, there are certain prepositions which can occur with two different cases, e.g. the dative or the accusative, depending on the function, or even the genitive or the dative, depending on register, region or certain grammatical and stylistic contexts. One example for a preposition occurring with either the genitive or the dative is *trotz* “despite, in spite of”, a so-called *Zweifelsfall der Grammatik*, “a grammatical case of doubt”, which can be defined as:

Linguistic units (words / word forms / sentences) with at least two variant forms, and where even competent speakers have doubts as to which variant is standard. (Klein 2003: 2, cited in Davies and Langer 2006: 57)

As a native speaker of German (from Austria) I found especially the case of *trotz* being described as governing the genitive very interesting because as far as I could tell, from plain introspection and informal analysis of my friends and family’s language use, I expected *trotz* to occur with the third case, the dative. My differing expectations aroused my interest all the more.

The worry about what case goes with what preposition in German is something that affects not only foreign learners of the language. A particularly difficult problem seem to be those prepositions that can take either genitive or dative, e.g. *wegen*, *trotz*, *dank*. (Davies and Langer 2006: 197)

Consequently, I shall examine the treatment of *trotz* governing either the genitive or dative in the following discussion. My results are based on the examination and citing of different reference works and the report of a small corpus investigation I carried out.

## 2 Linguistic background

The question of correctness concerning a language provoked heated discussions not only in earlier times but also nowadays. What is standard German? Has it changed over time and how? What are common “offences” and are these maybe even accepted, or at least tolerated? Various articles (some of which will be mentioned at a later point in this essay) concerning an assumed decline of the *Hochsprache* “standard language” and recent phenomena can be found in newspapers and on the internet. Some aspects are even discussed by worried writers, e.g. Bastian Sick’s best-selling *Der Dativ ist dem Genitiv sein Tod* (2004), which deals with the decline of the genitive and mocks the trend to use said case after the preposition *trotz*, as mentioned in Davies & Langer (2006):

Interestingly, having thus stated his strong interest in preserving the genitive and having permitted numerous exceptions, he [Bastian Sick] then goes on to mock the hypercorrect use of the genitive with prepositions such as *trotz*, where he uses the metaphor of a successful hostile takeover by the genitive. (Sick 2004: 15-18, cited in Davies and Langer 2006: 210)

Also Glück and Sauer (1997: 104) use the case of the preposition *trotz* as an example to illustrate that, contrary to common belief, the second case, the genitive, is not disappearing, but rather absorbing a preposition which originally was to be found with the dative.

Nevertheless, having a look at two different descriptive dictionaries of the German language for speakers of English (published the same year) one encounters two different entries describing the case following the contrast *trotz*. Whilst the *Oxford Duden German Dictionary* (2005) describes *trotz* as a “Präp. mit Genitiv, *seltener* mit Dativ”, *Collins Dictionary* (2005: 1901) refers to *trotz* as a “prep. +gen or +dat”. Thus, *Oxford Duden German Dictionary* considers the combination of *trotz* + dative to be less frequent. In opposition to this, *Collins Dictionary* mentions both variants, although putting the genitive first. The *Duden Deutsches Universalwörterbuch A-Z* (1996: 1565), a dictionary for native speakers of German, states that *trotz* is used with the genitive and less frequently with the dative. In contrast to this Eisenberg (1999: 188) states both possibilities and puts the choice between the genitive or dative down to a question of style. Both *Langenscheidts Großwörterbuch Deutsch als Fremdsprache* (1993: 980) and Durrell’s *Essential German Grammar*

(2002: 76) (both reference works aimed at learners of German) describe the preposition *trotz* as governing the genitive case but also mention that in colloquial speech it is also often used with the dative. Helbig & Buscha (1994: 353) refer to *trotz* as a *primäre Präposition* “a primary preposition”<sup>1</sup> which is to be “counted” with the genitive. At a later point in their book *Deutsche Grammatik* (1994: 357ff.) they mention certain prepositions which can govern two cases, of which one is to be considered as a *Nebenkasus* “a secondary case”. The preposition *trotz* falls into this category and Helbig & Buscha determine the dative as the *Nebenkasus*. *Hammer’s German Grammar and Usage* (2002: 421) explains that “most German prepositions govern the dative or the accusative case” and that “prepositions governing the genitive are mainly confined to formal language.” Consequently, *trotz* is said to be “normally used with the genitive case in formal German, but [is] often found with a dative case in colloquial speech” (pp. 458-459). Nevertheless, *Hammer’s German Grammar and Usage* does not neglect the use of *trotz* with a dative case, but gives reasons for such usage (pp. 460-461); *trotz* is very commonly used, or at least accepted and tolerated, with a following dative:

- in everyday colloquial speech
- in written Swiss usage
- if followed by a plural noun which is not accompanied by a declined determiner or adjective (e.g. *trotz Beweisen*, “despite proof”)
- if the noun governed is preceded by a possessive genitive (e.g. *trotz Vaters kurzem Urlaub*, “despite dad’s short vacation”)
- to avoid the use of the genitive of the personal pronouns (e.g. *Ich werde kommen - trotz dir!*, (“I will come - despite your attendance!”))
- to avoid consecutive genitives (e.g. *trotz dem Rollen des Zuges*, “despite the rolling of the train” )
- if the following noun has no determiner with it (e.g. *trotz Geldmangel*, (“despite lack of money”)<sup>2</sup>
- to achieve a particular stylistic effect (e.g. rhymes, slogans)

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<sup>1</sup>These refer to a closed group of words. Secondary prepositions are likely to be taken over from other word groups, like *dank*, *laut* or *nahe*. Most of the secondary prepositions govern the genitive, only a few the dative or accusative. One cannot help but wonder why Helbig and Buscha classify *trotz* as being a primary preposition although it has been derived from the noun *Trotz* and governs the genitive, apparently. See Helbig and Buscha. 1994. *Deutsche Grammatik*. pp. 353-357

<sup>2</sup>Helbig and Buscha (1994: 359-360) consider this example to be “uninflected”, “caseless”:

The *Duden Richtiges und gutes Deutsch* (1985: 665) explains that the dative case is the “old version”, still preserved in the adverb *trotzdem* (“yet, still, however”), but that *trotz* is nowadays usually used with a genitive, apart from some regional differences, namely:

- South Germany, Austria and Switzerland, where the dative is still likely to be found (e.g. *Sie gingen trotz dem Regen viel spazieren*. “They went for a long walk despite of the rain.”)<sup>3</sup>

Summarising one can say that the preposition *trotz* nowadays usually governs the genitive (at least *trotz*+genitive is given first and described as “more commonly” in various reference works), although there are some regional and grammatical exceptions where the original case, namely the dative, is found.

## 2.1 Historical background

After my general, spoken and regional corpus investigation, which will be discussed later on, I considered the above stated fact that the dative is said to be the “old/original” case occurring after *trotz*. As the results are presented in the second part of this essay, it is important to have a brief look at some reference works from the 19th century, as cited and referred to in McLelland’s discussion *Rules for the neighbours: Prescriptions of the German language for British learners*, in order to see how *trotz* has been described earlier on.

Originally governing the dative, *trotz* in constructions with the genitive emerged in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, and was judged incorrect by both Adelung and Campe. However, since then [...] the use of the dative and genitive may be observed side by side in the same author, right up to the present day. [The author of] *Sprachleben und Sprachschäden* (1897) [...] conceded

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Bei einigen Präpositionen, die regulär den Genitiv fordern, wird gewöhnlich vom abhängigen Substantiv ohne Artikel und Attribut im Singular kein Kasus (bzw. der merkmallöse Kasus Nominativ) gefordert: *trotz* Regen, aber: *trotz* des starken Regens.

In the course of my corpus investigation I did not classify these nouns as datives, but put them into a separate category which I named *unflektiert* ‘uninflected’.

<sup>3</sup>See [www.empros.ch/www.wienerzeitung.at/diepresse.com](http://www.empros.ch/www.wienerzeitung.at/diepresse.com) (as cited in the bibliography): Three articles on the use of *trotz* +gen/+dat, all of which in favour of the “old and original dative” rather than the “posh and new genitive”.

that the genitive is the [...] ” more frequent”, but maintained that the dative is [...] ” the better” but ” actually now more rare” form. (McLelland 2012: 261-262)

Davies and Langer cite Becker from 1863 (p. 204) when saying “that *trotz* is used with the dative as a rule”. Whilst throughout the literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the dative is described as the correct case after *trotz*, writers of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century notice a decline of the third case in favour of the genitive:

*Deutsches Leben* [1934] is proof of just this point, as here we find British learners warned against the (historically original) dative with *trotz*: “*Trotz* and *während* are sometimes found with the dative, this is not very good German, and should not be imitated.” (McLelland 2012:263 ).

As a consequence, the change in prescriptive and descriptive grammar concerning *trotz* is obvious. In the next section of this essay the actual use is analysed and reflected upon.

### 3 Corpus investigation

#### 3.1 Methods

I searched different corpora (*Das digitale Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache des 20. Jahrhunderts* (written and spoken part), *Deutsches Spracharchiv IDS-DSAv*, Austrian novels (*GRA*) and newspapers (*Oberösterreichische Nachrichten*) on *ConCapp*) and the online platform “*twitter.com*” for the preposition *trotz* and analysed random samples of different sizes from each.

The original research question was simply to see if the genitive is really more likely to be governed by this preposition and if the results were significant. In the course of the investigation the subject of analysis was modified and expanded: Firstly, it was not enough to see which case was more frequent in the *DWDS*-corpus of written German but I also decided to compare two of the spoken language corpora mentioned (*IDS: DSAv* and *DWDS* spoken language part, see ??) and the informal internet platform *twitter.com* as *trotz* + dative was described as “colloquial” throughout the literature. Secondly, I decided to analyse two novels and a newspaper from Austria (found on *ConCapp*) in order to see if the dative was really

more frequent in this country. Thirdly, I was curious to know whether there was a significant difference between two different time periods, namely 1900-1950 and 1951-2000 (from *DWDS*), in order to see if the use of the genitive really increased discernibly over the last century. I expected *trotz* + genitive to be more frequent in the *DWDS*-corpus, a higher proportion of *trotz* + dative from samples from the spoken corpora, a more frequent use of the dative in Austria and a slightly higher number of the genitive in the period from 1951 to 2000 than in the earlier time period.

Depending on the corpus a different number of random samples was selected and categorised as follows: “*trotz* + genitive”, “*trotz* + dative”, “feminine singular” (where the case cannot be told, could be both), “unflektiert” (plural nouns where the genitive is not clearly marked) and “invalid” (including the noun *Trotz*, the verb *trotzen* or incomplete sentences as frequently found on [twitter.com](https://twitter.com)).

### 3.2 Corpora and samples

The following corpora were used for my investigation and shall be introduced in a few words:

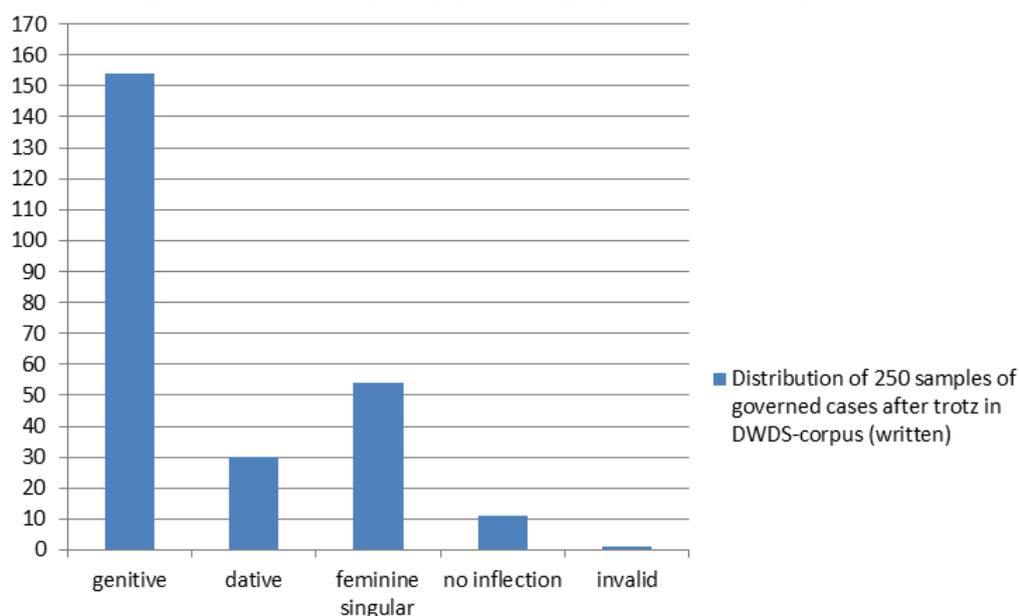
- *DWDS*-Das digitale Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache des 20. Jahrhunderts [www.dwds.de](http://www.dwds.de): Kerncorpus: 100 million words (analysis of 250 tokens out of 12802 hits), spoken corpus: 2,5 million words (analysis of 100 tokens); from different genres. Furthermore, analysis of 100 tokens from two different time periods: 1900-1950, 1951-2000.
- *DSAv*-Deutsches Spracharchiv [dsav-oeff.ids-mannheim.de](http://dsav-oeff.ids-mannheim.de): a large corpus of standard and non-standard spoken German, going back many years, analysis of 100 samples.
- *Twitter* [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com): online platform, colloquial, informal language, 60 tokens analysed.
- Corpus from [webct.nottingham.ac.uk](http://webct.nottingham.ac.uk): Austrian sub-corpus: novels and newspapers, analysis of 100 tokens.

I chose to work with these corpora as they were straightforward and easy to use and because I considered them to be representative for each field of my investigations (of spoken vs. written language, of regional, stylistic and diachronic differences).

### 3.3 Results and discussion

Figures 1 and 2 show that the first part of the hypothesis is supported: the genitive (154 out of 250 tokens in DWDS, that is 61%) after *trotz* is far more frequent than the dative (30 examples (30%), out of which 15 were combinations of “*trotz allem/alledem*” or “*trotz dem*”). No examples of the dative could be categorised as suggested by *Hammer’s German Grammar and Usage* and *Duden Richtiges und gutes Deutsch* (see ?? of this article); they were rather “plain” datives, instead of which genitives could be used. A chi-squared test showed that the results are very likely to be significant ( $p < 0.0001$ ).

Figure 1: Word frequency per category in DWDS-corpus



#### Examples:

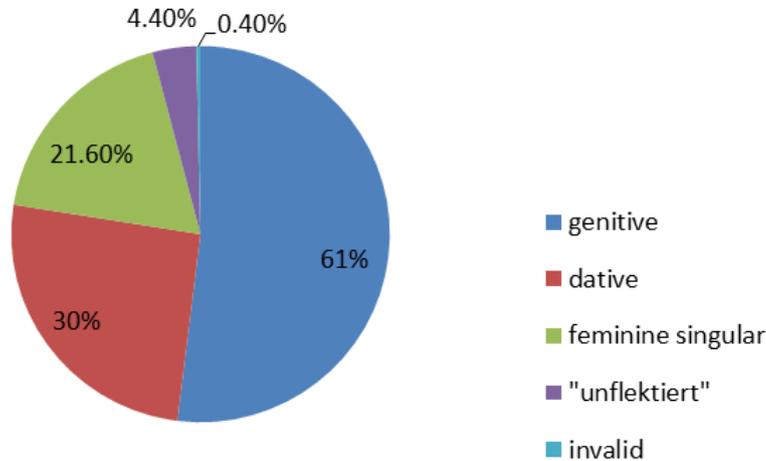
*trotz der großen Schwierigkeiten/ aller denkbaren Nachteile/ des Fehlens/  
trotz zunehmend er Fliegerangriffe (Gen)*

(**despite of** the great problems/all imaginable disadvantages/the absence/the increasing air raids)

*Unsere Aktion entwickelt sich trotz heftigem Widerstand planmäßig.  
(Dat)*

(Our action is developing according to plan **despite of** the fierce resistance.)

Figure 2: % distribution of 250 samples from DWDS-corpus



*Sie wissen, daß sie uns nicht klein kriegen, daß wir **trotz allem** den Kopf hoch halten!* (Dat)

(They know that they cannot get us down, that we will hold our head high **despite** everything!)

*Letztlich wurden ihre Angriffe **trotz** fünfmaligem Ansatz zerschlagen.*

(Dat)

(In the end their attacks were shattered **despite** their five-time approach.)

***trotz** Abwehr durch die Flak (unflektiert)*

(**despite** the defence of the flak)

Figure 3 shows the slightly different results of the consultation of two spoken language corpora, although the genitive dominates in both. The percentage of the tokens analysed is distributed as follows: DSAv: 40% genitive and 23% dative, DWDS: 55% genitive and 11% dative. Thus, it is not only shown that the dative is used more often in colloquial speech than in written language, but one should also bear in mind the significant difference between the two corpora.

#### Examples from the DSAv-corpus for the dative:

*Er gibt hoffentlich nicht auf **trotz** den schlechten Weinjahren.*

(Hopefully, he won't give up **despite of** the bad wine years.)

***trotz** dem Maschinenzeug da*

(**despite of** the machinery stuff)

***trotz** meinem hohen Alter*

(**despite of** my old age)

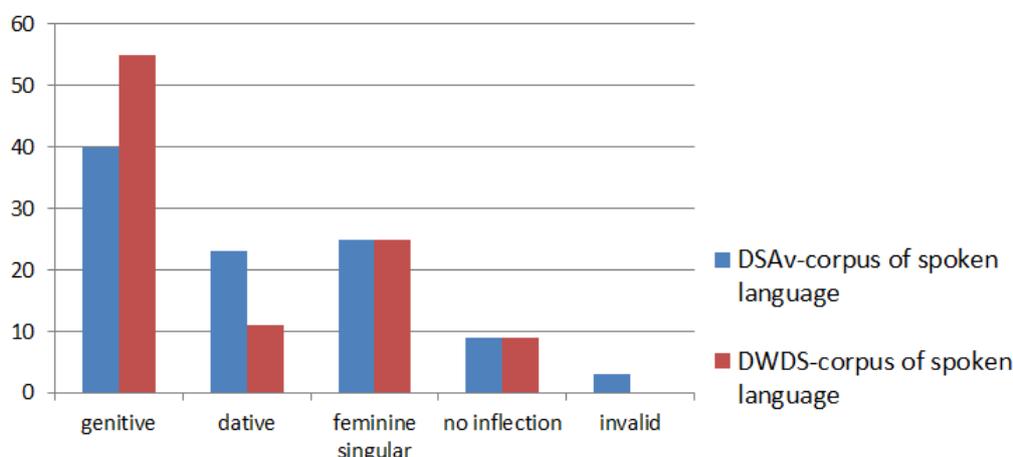


Figure 3: Comparison and distribution of a similar 100-token sample of DSAv and DWDS-corpora

*trotz allem wirtschaftlichen Niedergang*  
(**despite** all the economic recession)

An analysis of 60 tokens from the internet platform *twitter* shows how written informal language differs from spoken language. While 30% of the examples occurred with a genitive, and only 13.3% with a dative, the largest category is made up by uninflected nouns (36.7%). A reason for this might be the very informal language, which is characterised by incomplete sentences and a “staccato”-style, found on such platforms. The data was shown to be slightly significant for these samples ( $p < 0.0499$ ).

#### Examples:

*trotz Krankheit* (**despite** illness)

*trotz Niederlage* (**despite** the defeat)

*trotz Whisky* (**despite of** the whiskey)

*trotz einem Minus (Dative)* (**despite of** one minus)

*trotz Hindernissen (Dative)* (**despite of** the obstacles)

*trotz Verlusten (Dative)* (**despite of** the losses)

*trotz der Affäre (Genitive)* (**despite** the affair)

Figure 5 illustrates that a dominance of the dative in Austria could not be shown in this investigation. The genitive case still dominates by 69%, while the dative was only used in 9% of the cases.

Figure 6 deals with the hypothesis that the use of the genitive after *trotz* increased in recent decades. Whilst from 1900 to 1950 the genitive was used in 47% and the dative in 20% out of 100 examples, the use of the

Figure 4: Raw figures of an analysis of 60 tokens from twitter

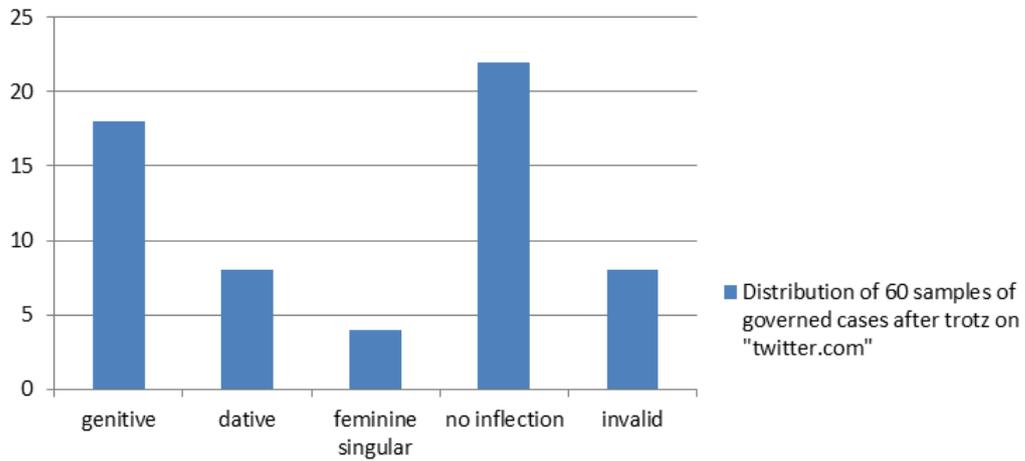


Figure 5: Analysis of regional differences (e.g. Austria) regarding the governed case after *trotz*

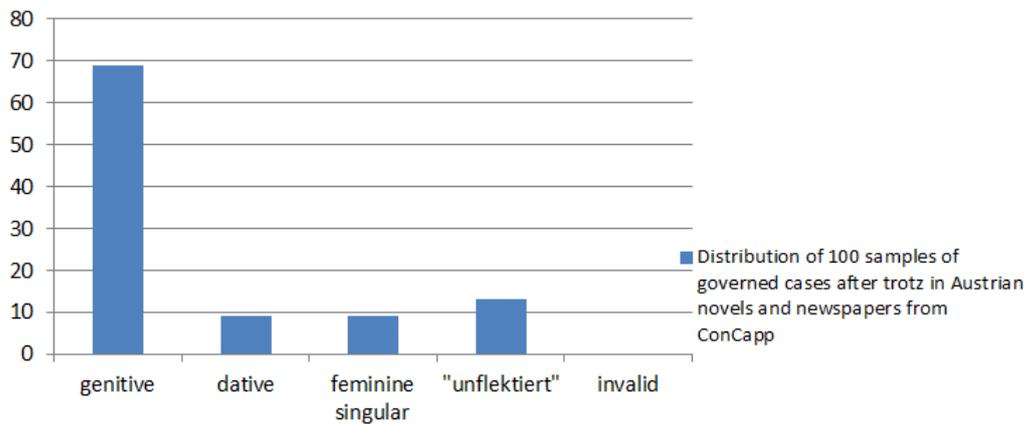
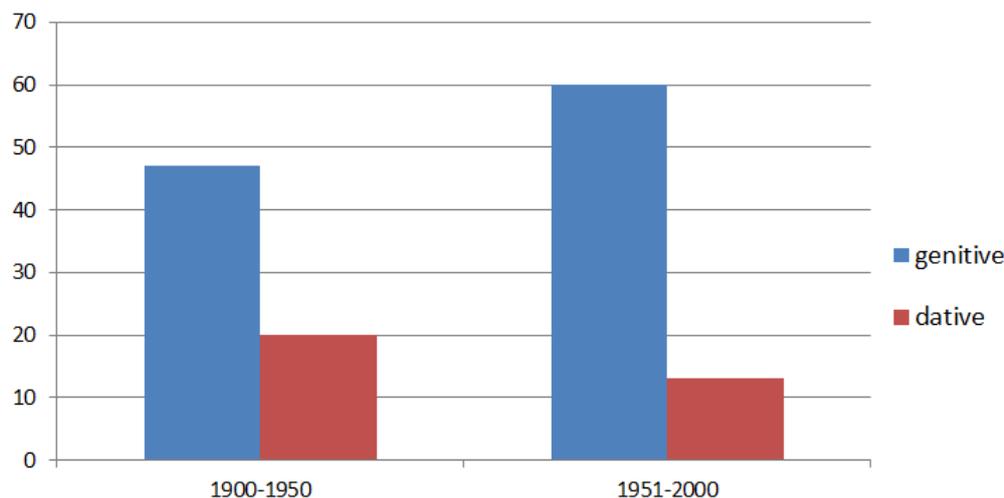


Figure 6: Comparison of the distribution of *trotz* +genitive or +dative in two different periods, namely 1900-1950 and 1951-2000, from the DWDS-corpus (analysis of 100 tokens per period)



genitive increased in the second period to 60% and the frequency of the dative decreased to 13%. Nevertheless, the slight differences were shown not to be significant ( $p < 0.0935$ ).

## 4 Conclusion

Concluding one can say that my hypotheses were partly confirmed. Firstly, the genitive was shown to be far more frequent than the dative after the preposition *trotz*, as shown in Figures 1 and 3. Even if the category “unflektiert” (no inflection) would be counted as representing a dative case the results were shown to be significant for my samples. Secondly, there was no significant difference for colloquial/spoken language or written language in Austria. Thirdly, a slight increase of the genitive could be observed during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, the data could not be proofed as being significant. Finally, an investigation conducted with the online platform `twitter.com` revealed how written informal language differs from spoken language. Here the most frequent category was the one without inflection. Future points of investigation could be an analysis of spoken German in Austria and an examination of earlier time periods, e.g. 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century, for more significant results concerning regional differences and the decline of the dative over time.

## 5 Bibliography

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