The grammar and pragmatics of *N hin, N her* (*N thither, N hither*) in German*

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In this paper, I investigate the German *N hin, N her* (*N thither, N hither*) construction. I first provide a close description of its syntactic and semantic properties, arguing that *N hin, N her* is a grammatical construction. I then show that this construction is not entirely idiosyncratic, as there are specific pragmatic aspects contributing to its meaning and functional potential. These are the deictic adverbs *hin* and *her*, restrictions on the choice of nouns, and effects of syntactic disintegration. I argue that a purely semantic analysis of the construction as concessive or concessive conditional is insufficient, as it neglects pragmatic processes of contextual enrichment and implicature. Based on these assumptions, I provide a detailed analysis of the discursive and interactional functions of the construction, showing that it is a prime candidate for construing textual coherence and for subjectification and stance taking. Evidence comes from a corpus of newspaper examples.

**Keywords:** construction, coherence, deictic adverbs, discourse, grammar, interaction, mock repeat, pragmatic enrichment, reduplication, stance

1. Introduction

In this paper, I investigate the German *N hin, N her* (*N thither, N hither*) construction, as exemplified in (1) and (2).

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In this construction, two nouns – which may or may not be phonologically identical – are coordinated, with the first conjunct noun being followed by the directional adverb hin (‘thither’), and the second conjunct noun followed by the directional adverb her (‘hither’). Semantically, the pattern is related to the antecedent in a concessive conditional construction (‘whether or not p, q’), similar to English X or no X. However, as will be argued, the main functions of the pattern are not on the local propositional-semantic level, but rather on the level of discourse and interaction. Most importantly, the N hin, N her construction is a prime candidate for construing textual coherence as well as for subjectification and stance taking.

The meaning of N hin, N her is not fully compositional, i.e. it cannot be derived in a straightforward manner from the meanings of the two coordinated nouns and the adverbs hin and her. Rather, it is an instance of what Fillmore et al. (1988) have called “schematic idiom”, i.e. a lexically partly specified and partly open syntactic pattern with a productive use that is assigned a holistic meaning. More generally, thus, N hin, N her has the status of a construction, an arbitrary form-meaning pairing in the sense of construction grammar (e.g., Goldberg 2006). Still, one may ask the question whether the properties of the construction are entirely idiosyncratic, or whether at least some of them are motivated. I will argue that it is the pragmatic meaning of the deictic expressions hin and her, the pragmatic restrictions on the choice of nouns and the pragmatic effects of syntactic disintegration that make an important contribution to the overall meaning constitution of the construction.

Typically, the different varieties of construction grammar do not draw a clear distinction between semantic and pragmatic meaning (e.g., Langacker 1987). However, from a modular viewpoint, we should try to treat conventional semantic meaning and pragmatic or contextual meaning as two distinguishable linguistic domains. N hin, N her is particularly interesting in this respect, because the meaning of the construction varies between contexts. That is, it would be inadequate to speak of a construction with one specific ‘meaning’ (in a broad sense). Rather, I argue that we have a syntactic form which is associated with a certain
(rather abstract) semantics. Via pragmatic enrichment processes, this meaning is further specified. In actual usage contexts, speakers employ the construction for purposes such as construing textual coherence, subjectification and stance taking.

Despite its interesting grammatical and pragmatic features, the *N hin, N her* construction so far has been widely neglected in the literature. All one can find are sparse references to the pattern in some early works on German phraseology (e.g., Fleischer 1982). Standard grammar books, e.g. the Duden (2009), do not provide any information on the pattern. Leuschner (2005, 2006), in his work on concessive conditionals, only mentions the construction briefly. For English, there are some recent works on the *X or no X* construction, which seems to be roughly equivalent to *N hin, N her* (Pullum and Rawlins 2007; Kobele 2008). However, the focus of these works is on syntactic and semantic aspects, while the complex pragmatics of the pattern is still underresearched (but see Finkbeiner and Meibauer 2014).

Against this background, the aim of this paper is to provide a detailed analysis of the *N hin, N her* construction in German with a focus on its discursive and interactional functions. In what follows, I will first sketch the main syntactic and semantic properties of the construction (Section 2). This description sets the stage for a pragmatic account which is developed in Section 3. I first argue that pragmatic aspects contribute in specific ways to the overall meaning of the construction (Section 3.1). Then, I provide a detailed description of the main discursive and interactional functions of the *N hin, N her* construction (Section 3.2). The paper closes with a short conclusion (Section 4). Throughout argumentation, I draw on written examples from the W-Archive corpora at Institut für deutsche Sprache, IdS Mannheim (http://www.ids-mannheim.de/kl/projekte/korpora/). When on some occasion no source is provided, the examples are based on linguistic intuition.

1. Other English constructions that are functionally roughly equivalent to German *N hin, N her* are *X is neither here nor there*, which contains deictic adverbs as well, and *X willy nilly*, which exploits a partial reduplication pattern. However, while these constructions seem to belong to a colloquial (spoken) register, the German *N hin, N her* construction is largely restricted to written language.

2. The W-Archive is a collection of various text types, though containing predominantly newspaper texts, and comprises roughly 3.7 billion words.

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2. Syntactic and semantic characteristics of *N hin, N her*

In this section, I describe the main syntactic and semantic features of *N hin, N her*. In Section 3, we will see that these grammatical features contribute in specific ways to the constitution of the construction’s functional pragmatic potential, i.e. to the functions of construing textual coherence and of stance-taking.

2.1 Syntax

Syntactically, the construction is a coordinate structure with two open slots that are preferably filled by nouns; the structure as a whole is juxtaposed to a main clause.

The coordinate structure can be described more specifically as an ordered pair of two conjuncts, with the first conjunct containing a noun followed by *hin*, and the second conjunct containing a noun followed by *her*. A reversal of *hin* and *her* is not strictly excluded, but appears clearly marked. The presence of more than two conjuncts is excluded (e.g., *Emanzipation hin, Emanzipation her, Emanzipation her*; *Emanzipation hin, Emanzipation her, Emanzipation hin*). Graphematically, the two conjuncts are separated by a comma; prosodically, the construction is realized as one intonational unit, with stress on *hin* and *her*, and a prosodic break between the construction and the juxtaposed main clause.

There is a syntactic variant of *N hin, N her*, namely the pattern *N hin oder her* (‘*N thither or hither’). This pattern contains only one N and connects the two adverbs via the disjunctive conjunction *oder* (‘or’), cf. (3).


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3. There are only three examples in my corpus that exhibit the inverse ordering *N her, N hin*, as opposed to 55 examples exhibiting the ordering *N hin, N her*. In two of the three examples, the inverse ordering is due to the usage in a poem, where rhyme restrictions play a role. Thus, it seems that inverse ordering only occurs in marked contexts. For the single noun variant *N her oder hin* (see below), there are 14 examples with inverse ordering, as opposed to 111 examples with unmarked ordering; thus, also for this variant, inverse ordering is clearly dispreferred.

4. As I have been examining written data only, I cannot make any more detailed claims about prosody here.

5. In the corpus, the single noun variant is actually twice as frequent as the variant *N hin, N her*. There are 110 instances of *N hin oder her* in the corpus, and 53 instances of *N hin, N her* (see also Footnote 7).
‘Smoking ban thither or hither: The US-tobacco giant Philip Morris International sold a good 5 percent more cigarettes in the first quarter than the year before.’

One might assume that *N hin, N her* and the single noun variant *N hin oder her* are two different elliptical variants of a common base construction *N hin oder N her* (‘N thither or N hither’), where in the former case, the conjunction *oder* has been deleted, while in the latter case, the second *N* has been deleted. However, the two constructions behave differently; for example, *N hin oder her* allows for complex noun phrases as well, while *N hin, N her* is clearly restricted to *N*, i.e. a lexical, not a phrasal category. I will therefore treat *N hin, N her* as a construction in its own right.

As to the categorical preference, the elements to fill the open slots in the construction are almost exclusively nouns. However, there is no phonological identity restriction, cf. (2), contrary to what has been suggested in the literature (Fleischer 1982: 137), and contrary to descriptions of the English equivalent *X or no X* (Manaster-Ramer 1986; Kobele 2008). In (4) and (5), I provide examples of noun pairings from the corpus for the identical and the non-identical variant, respectively.

6. E.g., *schlechte Bezahlung der Ärzte hin oder her* ‘bad payment of doctors thither or hither’ (Rhein-Zeitung, 05.03.2009), *Baustelle mitten im Dorf hin oder her* ‘construction site in the middle of the village thither or hither’ (Rhein-Zeitung, 13.04.2007), *frühere SP-Dogmen zur Frühpensionierung hin oder her* ‘earlier SP [Social Democratic Party] dogmas about early retirement thither or hither’ (Die Presse, 10.02.1992).

7. The corpus search for *X hin, X her* resulted in 55 hits, 53 of which were nominal instances (*N hin, N her*). Categories other than nouns occurred only exceptionally; there was one instance of a past participle (*aufgeholt hin, aufgeholt her*, ‘caught up thither, caught up hither’, Kleine Zeitung, 26.07.1999) and one instance of an adjective in the corpus (*unlogisch hin, unlogisch her*, ‘illogical thither, illogical hither’, Kleine Zeitung, 14.01.1997). The nominal restriction is also valid for the *X hin oder her* variant; of 111 examples, there were 110 instances of *N hin oder her* and only one adjectival example (*regulär hin oder her*, ‘regular thither or hither’, Kleine Zeitung, 16.03.1997). On the basis of these corpus data, I think it is adequate to represent the format of the construction as *N hin, N her*. I intend this format to reflect a preference rather than a rule.

8. Fleischer (1982: 137) represents the pattern as “Substantiv + hin, gleiches Substantiv + her” (‘noun + hin, same noun + her’).

9. Manaster-Ramer (1986) suggested that in *X or no X*, a string *X* precedes *or no*, with an exact copy following (cf. Pullum and Rawlins 2007: 278). This analysis is adopted by Kobele (2008). I am not aware of any claims concerning categorical restrictions on the *X*-slot in the English construction; therefore, I adopt the unspecified “*X*-format. It should be pointed out, however, that a thorough corpus-based investigation of English *X or no X* is still lacking.
While for English *X or no X*, a syntactic reduplication analysis has been proposed, which puts forward a mechanism of syntactic copying (Kobele 2008), the above examples provide evidence against a syntactic reduplication analysis of German *N hin, N her*. Rather, the data suggest that the only syntactic requirement is one of categorical (not phonological) identity (cf. Zwarts 2013). Categorical identity of conjuncts is not specific for this construction, but is a standard requirement for syntactic coordination constructions.

If there is no syntactic copying, it follows that the (potential) identity of the two nouns cannot be motivated syntactically. This line of argument is taken by Pullum and Rawlins (2007), who, for English *X or no X*, argue against a requirement of (syntactic) string identity and for a requirement of (semantic) sense identity. However, while this approach may explain cases with non-identical strings

An interesting finding was that more than half of the examples (31 of 55) of *N hin, N her* in the corpus stem from Austrian newspapers. This might be an indication of a regional preference for *N hin, N her* in the variety of German spoken in Austria. However, one would need to carry out a systematic quantitative corpus analysis to confirm this hypothesis, also excluding the possibility that the corpus itself is biased towards Austrian newspapers.

In order to “save” a reduplication analysis, one might refer to morphological doubling theory (MDT), cf. Inkelas and Zoll (2005), which proposes a model of (morphological) reduplication that does not require formal identity of the doubled elements. According to Inkelas and Zoll, reduplication is a construction with two equally ranked slots X and Y that are connected to each other via the mother construction. Instead of assuming a syntactic copying rule, in MDT, the crucial constraint is the existence of a certain semantic relation between X and Y. Consequently, MDT allows for reduplicative constructions whose constituents are phonologically not identical.
(e.g., cases with expressive epithets such as War with Iraq or no fucking war with Iraq, or elliptical cases such as War with Iraq or no war), it falsely predicts that synonyms should be allowed (which, according to Kobele 2008, is not the case, cf. *Gnu or no wildebeest). While for N hin, N her, in contrast, synonyms are not strictly excluded,\(^{12}\) the ‘sense identity’ account still has two important shortcomings. First, it does not specify the notion of sense – this notion may be associated either with intension or with ‘communicative sense’ (Bierwisch 1980). Second, this account does not say anything about the specific pragmatic effects of the construction. Below, I will show that the choice of nouns in N hin, N her largely depends on pragmatic principles, e.g., the construal of a common integrator for the two concepts denoted by the nouns (see Section 3.1).

As to the syntactic position of the construction, N hin, N her always occurs in juxtaposition with a main clause. There are no independent usages, e.g., as answers to questions. This indicates that the construction does not have a speech act potential on its own.\(^ {13}\) In the majority of cases, the construction precedes the main clause (see, e.g., (1) and (2)). Examples such as (6), with parenthetical position in the middle field (Mittelfeld), or (7), with right-peripheral position, are rare. All instances (e.g., (1), (2), (6) and (7)) have in common that N hin, N her is syntactically not embedded into the main clause. Thus, the construction can be said to be syntactically disintegrated.\(^ {14}\)

\[(6) \quad \text{Wie gut das JUZZ tatsächlich besucht ist, ist – Berichte hin, Berichte her – schwer zu sagen. (Niederösterreichische Nachrichten, 08.04.2009)}
\]

‘How well the JUZZ [youth center, R.F.] is really frequented is – reports thither, reports hither – hard to tell.’

\(^{12}\) Cf., e.g., Euphorie hin, Begeisterung her, ‘euphoria thither, enthusiasm hither’ (Die Presse, 21.03.1992).

\(^{13}\) For example, the following usage is infelicitous: A: Wie findest du eigentlich Ronaldo? ‘What do you think about Ronaldo?’ – B: *Ronaldo hin, Ronaldo her. ‘Ronaldo thither, Ronaldo hither.’ In contrast, English X or no X does have an independent use as a question, e.g. Hamlet: To be or not to be? The possibility of an independent usage of English X or no X indicates that X or no X is related to alternative (yes/no) questions, presenting its propositional content as open. N hin, N her, in contrast, does not exhibit question semantics. It presents its propositional content as given or presupposed.

\(^{14}\) Evidence for the syntactic disintegration of N hin, N her can also be found in punctuation. While canonical subordinated clauses in pre-field position are separated from the main clause by a comma, in the compound clauses containing N hin, N her, writers frequently use semicolon, dash, or colon, that is, punctuation marks signalling a major break.
(7) Es ist schon erstaunlich, wie viel Sympathien der Mann bei seinen Landsleuten noch hat und wie viele ihm noch zutrauen, in der Politik erneut mitmischen zu können. Diese Sympathiewelle könnte Berlusconi wieder in ein Regierungsamt tragen, Haftstrafe hin, Bunga-Bunga her. (Wiesbadener Kurier, 8. März 2013)

‘It is indeed astonishing that this man still enjoys such great popularity among his fellow countrymen and that there are so many who still believe in him being able to again play a role in politics. This wave of sympathy might put Berlusconi anew into a governmental position, prison sentence thither, Bunga-Bunga hither.’

The most frequent syntactic position of *N hin, N her* in the corpus is in the “left outer field” (linkes Außenfeld, cf. Zifonun et al. 1997), cf. (1), repeated below as (8). Pre-field (Vorfeld) positioning of *N hin, N her*, i.e. its positioning immediately to the left of the finite verb, is ungrammatical, cf. (9). In contrast, subordinated clauses that precede the main clause normally are located in the pre-field, cf. the *obwohl*– (‘although’) clause in (10).

Table 1. Linear syntactic position of *N hin, N her*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>left outer field</th>
<th>pre-field</th>
<th>finite verb</th>
<th>middle field</th>
<th>infinite verb</th>
<th>post-field</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(8) Emanzipation hin, Emanzipation her,</td>
<td>der Cartellverband bleibt</td>
<td>[was er immer gewesen ist], ein Männerverein.</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9) *Emanzipation hin, Emanzipation her,</td>
<td>bleibt</td>
<td>der Cartellverband, was er immer gewesen ist, ein Männerverein.</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10) Obwohl wir eine emanzipierte Gesellschaft sind</td>
<td>bleibt</td>
<td>der Cartellverband, was er immer gewesen ist, ein Männerverein.</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The “left outer field” position is a syntactically peripheral position which is typically filled by discourse markers or topical constituents. This may be taken as an indicator that the main functions of *N hin, N her* are not on the propositional level, but on the level of discourse.

15. Thanks to Jörg Meibauer for providing this example.
2.2 Semantics

From a semantic point of view, there are two proposals in the literature as to the meaning of *N hin, N her*. The first proposal ascribes the construction a concessive meaning (Fleischer 1982: 137). Concessivity is a semantic relation between two propositions p and q, which both are entailed, but which normally – according to a speaker’s previous experience, world knowledge, etc. – are expected to be mutually incompatible (König 1986; cf. also Zaefferer 1987). This can be represented by the formula in (11).

(11) \( p \rightarrow \text{normally} \sim q \)

‘if p, then normally not q’

The possibility of using canonical concessive connectors such as *although* in paraphrases of *N hin, N her* indicates that the construction may convey a concessive meaning, e.g. (1), repeated here as (12); cf. the paraphrase in (12’).

(12) *Emanzipation hin, Emanzipation her*, der Cartellverband bleibt, was er immer gewesen ist, ein Männerverein. (Kleine Zeitung, 05.05.1997)

(12’) ‘Although we are an equal rights society, the Cartell association remains what it always has been, a men’s club.’

The second proposal ascribes the construction a concessive conditional (‘irrelevance conditional’) meaning (e.g., Leuschner 2005; cf. König 1986 on concessive conditionals in general). Concessive conditionals “relate a set of antecedent conditions to a consequent”. Thereby, “the consequent is asserted to be true under any of the conditions specified in the antecedent” (König 1986: 231). An example of an utterance of *N hin, N her* conveying a concessive conditional meaning is (13); cf. the concessive conditional paraphrase in (13’). (13’’) shows, in contrast, that a concessive interpretation is not quite acceptable.


‘Spelling reform thither, spelling reform hither: What really interests the true Mainz resident is neither clarified by the Duden nor by anyone else. Is it Määnz or Meenz?’

(13’) ‘Whether there was a spelling reform or not: What really interests the true Mainz resident is neither clarified by the Duden nor by anyone else. Is it Määnz or Meenz?’
Although there was a spelling reform: What really interests the true Mainz resident is neither clarified by the Duden nor by anyone else. Is it Määnz or Meenz?

A concessive conditional meaning may be encoded by a disjunction (14a), a universal quantifier (14b), or a focus particle (14c) (cf. König 1986: 231).

(14)  

a. Whether he is right or not, we must support him.  
b. However much advice you give him, he does exactly what he wants.  
c. Even if you drink (only) a little, your boss will fire you.

While English X or no X is a clear instance of the disjunction type, German N hin, N her does not contain any overt negation. However, the contrast between the first and the second X is conveyed by the lexical antonyms hin and her. Also, the existence of the syntactic variant N hin oder her may be taken as evidence for an analysis of N hin, N her as a disjunction (cf. also Leuschner 2006: 60).

The semantic approaches to N hin, N her suggest that the construction has a certain conventional meaning, either to be modeled as concessive or concessive conditional meaning. The shifting character of some instances of N hin, N her between a concessive and a concessive conditional interpretation is explained, in this framework, by the assumption that both concessives and concessive conditionals “may carry an implication of incompatibility between two situations” (König 1986: 233). However, a semantic analysis along the lines sketched above has two major shortcomings. First, it does not take into account that the propositional content of N hin, N her is semantically underspecified, i.e. that the proposition conveyed contains constituents not found at the level of syntactic-semantic representation. Second, this analysis does not take into account that the meaning of N hin, N her may vary dependent on context. That is, whether N hin, N her is interpreted as concessive, or as concessive conditional, or as something else, seems to depend on its context of use, and on the implicatures a reader/hearer draws from the respective context.

As to semantic underspecification, it is clear that although N hin, N her does not constitute a syntactically complete sentence, it is interpreted as a full proposition. For example, the subsentential utterance Griechenland hin, Griechenland her in (15) is interpreted as a full proposition, e.g. ‘whether Greece is in financial trouble or not,’ cf. (15’).

(15)  

Griechenland hin, Griechenland her: Staatsanleihen sind weiter attraktiv.  
(VDI Nachrichten, 23.12.2011)  
‘Greece thither, Greece hither: government bonds are still attractive.’
‘Whether Greece is in financial trouble or not, government bonds are still attractive.’

One might try to explain this as a case of syntactic ellipsis, by analogy to cases such as (16) and (17):

(16)  A:  Whose dog is that?
       B:  It’s Bill’s [dog].

(17)  John went to the library and Mary [went] to the museum.

However, while in instances of syntactic ellipsis, the missing constituents (here in square brackets) can be recovered more or less directly from the syntactic context, in utterances of N hin, N her there is, at most, a process of indirect recovery, as the missing constituent – typically, a predicate – is not (necessarily) an overt constituent of the syntactic context. For example, to recover the full proposition ‘whether Greece is in financial trouble or not’ in (15), the addressee cannot simply take a previously mentioned predicate from the syntactic context, as in (17), but needs to activate broader contextual and conceptual knowledge that helps her to infer the salient predicate ‘is in financial trouble’.

An alternative to the ellipsis approach would be to think of the missing predicate as an “unarticulated constituent” (e.g., Carston 2002; Recanati 2010), in analogy to cases such as (18) and (19).

(18)  It’s raining [in London].
(19)  Jane can’t continue [her university study].

The idea is that in order to arrive at a truth-conditional proposition for (18) and (19), the hearer must add the constituents in brackets. These are not part of the linguistically encoded meaning, but must be inferred pragmatically. Thus, the recovery of unarticulated constituents, in this approach, is an instance of “pre-propositional pragmatics”, i.e. a pragmatic enrichment process influencing truth conditions.

An analysis along these lines for utterances of N hin, N her seems appealing as well. However, standard examples for unarticulated constituents usually refer to complete syntactic sentences (cf. (18) and (19)), while N hin, N her is not a complete sentence in the traditional sense. It is unclear, therefore, in how far it is adequate to apply the unarticulated constituent approach to the N hin, N her construction. Nevertheless, what this discussion shows, on a more general plane, is that to

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arrive at a full proposition for *N hin, N her*, hearers/addressees have to enrich the utterance by pragmatically induced constituents. Thus, a purely semantic approach to the meaning constitution of *N hin, N her* is insufficient.

As to context-dependency, it is fruitful to take a short comparative look at the case of equative tautologies such as *The rules are the rules* (Meibauer 2008). Equative tautologies are standard examples for utterances that float Grice’s (1975) maxim of quantity, as they are trivially true and therefore semantically uninformative. While there are some who claim that tautologies merely have a conventional meaning such as ‘there is nothing one can do about it’ (Wierzbicka 1987), Meibauer (2008:444) emphasizes that tautologies are productive and therefore cannot be totally conventional. Providing examples (20)–(22), Meibauer shows that different tautological utterances may give rise to different specific implicatures (cf. (20)–(21)), and that the same tautological utterance may generate different implicatures in different contexts, cf. (22).

(20) *Die Regeln sind die Regeln. Mal sind sie gegen dich, mal profitierst du von ihnen.*
(Wiesbadener Kurier, 15.07.05)
‘The rules are the rules. Sometimes they are against you, sometimes you profit from them.’

(21) *Es gibt bestimmt viele schöne Rennen, aber die Tour ist die Tour. Da kommt nichts drüber.* (Frankfurter Rundschau, 27.06.05)
‘Surely there are many beautiful races, but the Tour is the Tour. There is nothing equal to it.’

(22) A: Ken bought the enterprise for almost nothing.
B: Business is business.
Context 1 +> “That was very clever of Ken”
Context 2 +> “There is nothing one can do about it”

Utterances of *N hin, N her* may likewise be regarded as tautological, because the second conjunct is in a contradictory relationship with the first, which allows for no other possibilities (cf. Haspelmath & König 1998:603).\(^{18}\) Furthermore, as we have seen above, there are contexts in which *N hin, N her* gets a concessive, and contexts in which it gets a concessive conditional interpretation. Below, I will show that there are still other contexts in which *N hin, N her* is used neither as a concessive nor as a concessive conditional, but as a mock repeat (see Section 3.2.2). From this, one may conclude that neither the concessive nor the

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\(^{18}\) In particular, this is evident for instances where the two nouns are identical. However, also the non-identical cases often evoke a contrast between the two conjuncts. In any case, even if the tautology analysis may not work for all instances of *N hin, N her*, this does not, in principle, exclude an analysis suggesting a violation of the maxim of quantity.
concessive conditional (nor the mock repeat) interpretation can be regarded as the conventional, context-invariant meaning of the construction. To account for the context-variability of *N hin, N her*, then, it is plausible to assume that the actual interpretation is triggered by the speaker’s floating of the conversational maxim of quantity, and arrived at by the hearer through an inferential process in which contextual information plays a crucial role.

3. A pragmatic approach

In this section, I will take a detailed look at *N hin, N her* from a pragmatic point of view. In the first part of this section, I will sketch an analysis of the pragmatic meaning of *N hin, N her*. The core idea behind this is that pragmatic aspects of meaning contribute in a systematic way to the determination of the construction's functional potential. That is, the construction is not entirely idiosyncratic. Based on this description, I will in the second part of this section describe in more detail the discursive and interactional functions of *N hin, N her*.

3.1 Pragmatic contributions to meaning

There are, crucially, three aspects which contribute to the overall pragmatic meaning of the construction: The deictic adverbs *hin* and *her*, the pragmatic restrictions on the choice of nouns, and the pragmatic effects of the disintegrated syntax of the construction.

As to the first aspect, *hin* (‘thither’) and *her* (‘hither’) are deictic expressions pointing into two opposite directions relative to the position of the speaker. What is indicated is either a movement first away from the speaker (*hin*) and then towards the speaker (*her*) – here I take the ordering of *hin* and *her* as an iconic indicator of ordered events – or an oscillating movement between two positions with the speaker as a mere observer (one may think of the side-to-side movement of a pendulum). The former kind of movement is encoded in the usage of *hin* and *her* as verbal particles with verbs of motion (e.g., *Wo gehst du hin?* ‘Where are you going to?’, *Wo kommst du her?* ‘Where do you come from?’; cf. Rossdeutscher 2009), or in prepositional constructions (e.g., *zur Straße hin* ‘on to the street’, *vom Walde her* ‘from the forest’). The latter kind of movement is encoded in formulaic word

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19. Cf. also Finkbeiner (2012b), where a Gricean approach to the related *X und X* (‘X and X’) construction in German is sketched.
pairs such as hin und her (‘to and fro’, ‘hither and thither’),\textsuperscript{20} hin und zurück (‘back and forth’; ‘there and return’), hin und wieder (‘every now and then’).\textsuperscript{21}

Because of hin and her being indexicals, they are inherently tied to the speaker’s perspective. This is crucial for the interpretation of N hin, N her as a constructional marker of stance (see Section 3.2.2). That is, one may assume that hin and her iconically indicate two opposite sides of a fact, or two opposite alternatives that the speaker weighs up against each other, expressing something like ‘you may look at it whatever way you want’.

As to the second aspect, for N hin, N her to be used felicitously, there must be a topical relation between the referents of the two nouns. In terms of Lang (1984), what is needed is a “common integrator” under which both referents may be subsumed. Trivially, in the case of identical nouns, both nouns belong to the same common integrator. In the case of non-identical nouns, a common integrator must be construed, either based on a lexical relation, e.g. subordination/superordination, or based on the conceptual knowledge of speaker/writer and hearer/addressee. For example, in (23), the categories of dachshunds and cats can be conceptualized as hyponyms of a category ‘Western pet animals’ (as contrasted to exotic animals).

\begin{enumerate}
\item[(23)] Dackel \textit{hin}, Katze \textit{her}: Viele Tierhalter im Kreis Altenkirchen schwärmen eher für exotische Vögel, Reptilien oder Spinnen. (Rhein-Zeitung, 22.06.2007)
\begin{quote}
‘Dachshund thither, cat hither: Many animal owners in the district of Altenkirchen are more keen on exotic birds, reptiles or spiders.’
\end{quote}
\end{enumerate}

\textsuperscript{20} It is striking that the word order in the German word pair \textit{hin und her} (‘thither and hither’) is opposite to the word order in the corresponding English word pair \textit{hither and thither}. Other Germanic languages seem to apply the English word order as well, cf. Swedish \textit{hit och dit} (‘hither and thither’). Obviously, word order in idiomatic word pairs like these is language-specifically fixed (*\textit{her und hin}, *\textit{thither and hither}, *\textit{dit och hit}). Now, one may ask why German should utilize an inverse word order, that is, why English and Swedish would lexicalize the concept ‘first towards the speaker and then away’, while German would lexicalize the opposite concept (‘first away from the speaker and then towards the speaker’). A reviewer makes the interesting point ‘that the ‘away’ and ‘back’ meaning of hin and her is neutralized in the word pair hin and her; \textit{er fuhr die ganze Zeit zwischen Berlin und Hamburg hin und her} does not mean ‘away from the speaker and back towards the speaker’ (who could be in Hanover), but ‘back and forth between Berlin and Hamburg’’. This actually strengthens my point that in the German word pair hin und her, it is the ‘oscillating’ or ‘pendulum’ reading that is salient (see above). It is this ‘pendulum’ reading that is evoked in the constructional pattern N hin, N her as well, I think.

\textsuperscript{21} Thus, German hin and her have a regular use as verbal particles and occur in a range of frequently used word pairs. In contrast, English \textit{thither} and \textit{hither} seem to be rather old-fashioned and to have more or less fallen out of use.
In (24), a common integrator can be construed with the help of contextual knowledge about Britain’s membership in the EU and the construction of the Channel tunnel between France and Britain, which both represent steps towards a better integration of Great Britain into continental Europe.

(24) **EU hin, Kanaltunnel her: Die Briten bleiben anders.** (Tiroler Tageszeitung, 29.05.1996)

‘EU thither, Channel tunnel hither: The British remain different.’

If a common integrator cannot be established, the utterance act is not felicitous, cf. the constructed example (25). Here, it seems very hard to find an appropriate context that allows for the construal of a common integrator for the two nouns. Therefore, the utterance is odd.

(25) ?? **Quantenphysik hin, Kaffeetasse her, …**

‘Quantum physics thither, coffee cup hither, …’

The common integrator analysis can account both for instances with identical and with non-identical nouns. If one compares the two constructional alternatives, it seems that the specific pragmatic effect of choosing non-identical nouns is that the range of facts presented as irrelevant – in relation to the state of affairs asserted in the main clause – is even widened compared to the alternative with identical nouns. Representing two (non-complementary) instances of a common integrator concept, the two nouns evoke a list that could be continued. In König’s (1986) terms, one might say that the non-identical variant instantiates the universal quantifier type of concessive conditional, while the identical variant instantiates the disjunction type, as does English *X or no X* (see Section 2.2).

Third, the syntactic disintegration of *N hin, N her* contributes to its pragmatic status as a discourse marker. As argued above, *N hin, N her* does not represent a speech act on its own. Rather, its function is to mark a (subsequent) speech act as expressing a certain attitude or stance. In terms of Auer (2007), one may describe *N hin, N her* as a construction that is both retroactive and projective: It is retroactive as it connects the utterance to the context by integrating elements from previous discourse. At the same time, it is projective, as it projects a certain expectation as to what is going to follow (cf. also the notions of retrospective/prospective cohesive means, cf. Bublitz 1998). Thus, by using *N hin, N her*, a speaker/writer positions herself with respect to a state of affairs that is part of the discourse

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22. This seems to be the case also for instances of synonymous nouns, such as *Euphorie hin, Begeisterung her* (cf. footnote 13). Crucially, while there may be denotational identity in such cases, the nouns still express implicit (pragmatic) meaning differences.
universe, creating the expectation that a contrasting attitude will be presented in the subsequent utterance (the juxtaposed main clause) (cf. also Günthner 2009).

In the next section, I will take a closer look at the usage potential of the construction as it is determined by the formal and pragmatic features described so far. I will both look at discursive and interactional functions.

3.2 Discursive and interactional functions of *N hin, N her*

In this section, I argue that the main functions of the *N hin, N her* construction lie both on the level of discourse, as a linguistic means for construing textual coherence, and on the level of interaction, as a linguistic means for expressing subjectification and stance-taking. Both functions are closely connected, as will be shown.

3.2.1 *Textual coherence*

I will adopt an interactional, process-oriented view of coherence, in which coherence is not a discourse or text inherent property, but rather a cognitive operation of selecting and categorizing information (Fetzer 2012a: 448). In this view, textual coherence is something that is construed actively in text or discourse processing, based on the linguistic material, but also on other information provided by, e.g., the linguistic context, the socio-cultural environment, genre, and other resources (Bublitz 1998; Fetzer 2012a). This view includes the assumption that language provides certain linguistic means or markers that are suitable to help speakers/writers by “guiding their hearers/readers to a suggested line of understanding”, and, conversely, may be used by hearers/readers as “instructions to align their interpretations with what they take to be the speakers’/writers’ intentions” (Bublitz 1998: 12).

I will argue that one such linguistic means is the *N hin, N her* construction. Because of its specific form and meaning, *N hin, N her* is suitable both as a marker of structural coherence, of relational coherence and of referential coherence.

At the level of structural coherence, *N hin, N her* contributes to the construal of a certain theme/rheme structure or functional sentence perspective. More specifically, the construction assigns theme status to that part of information that is encoded in the *N hin, N her* component, while assigning rheme status to that part of information that is encoded in the juxtaposed main clause. In this way, it clearly establishes links to preceding and following utterances. Moreover, it contributes to the construal of a certain evaluation structure: While the theme component is assigned a status of minor informational relevance, the rheme component is assigned a status of major informational relevance.

At the level of relational coherence, *N hin, N her* connects two adjacent propositions by establishing some sort of contrasting relation between them. Thereby,
the second proposition is presented as valid, while the first proposition is presented as representing a set of irrelevant conditions. According to Leuschner (2005: 296), the “communicative weight” in concessive conditionals is on the information presented in the second component \( q \), while the information in the first component \( p \) is “pragmatically downgraded” (cf. also Brandt 1996; Hoffmann 2002). Crucially, the second, valid proposition is correlated with the speaker’s (or a third person’s) own argumentative position, while the first, irrelevant proposition is correlated with some opponent’s position that the actual speaker (partly) rejects. This specific structural-semantic property of \( N hin \), \( N her \) may be used by discourse participants, on the interactional level, as a powerful means in argumentation (see Section 3.2.2).

At the level of referential coherence, I already pointed out above that \( N hin \), \( N her \) helps to establish coherence via reference to a discourse entity that is referred to in the preceding text. This is either achieved by recurrence, i.e. repetition of a preceding element, or by substitution (cf. Bublitz 1998). Thus, in (26), the noun \( Krieg \) (‘war’), which has occurred in the text preceding the example, is repeated in identical phonological form in the construction, establishing coherence between the recurrent text elements involved (cf. also Bamford 2000; Perrin et al. 2003).

\[
\text{(26) Der Krieg auf dem Balkan hat – zumindest in Brüssel – ein artiges Gesicht. CNN überträgt täglich um 15 Uhr das Briefing der Nato zum Balkan-Krieg. Wer die Presse-Briefings im Weißen Haus oder auch bei der UNO kennt, der wird sich über das Nato-Briefing – Krieg hin, Krieg her – nicht wundern.} \\
\text{‘The war in the Balkans has – at least in Brussels – a well-behaved face. CNN broadcasts daily at 3 p.m. the NATO briefing about the Balkan war. Everyone who knows the press briefings at the White House or even at the UN will not be surprised – war thither, war hither – about the NATO-briefing.’}
\]

In contrast, in (27), coherence must be construed with the help of conceptual or contextual knowledge about relations between the referents of the preceding text element and those of the substituting nouns in the construction.

\[
\text{(27) Georg Totschnigs Befürchtungen ("Ich hab beim Essen etwas Schlechtes erwischt") haben sich bei der Untersuchung in der Freiburger Klinik bestätigt: Der Telekom-Profi fing sich in Spanien eine bakterielle Infektion ein. Bakterien hin, Magenprobleme her – Georg Totschnig läßt sich nicht so einfach klinkrieg-en. (Neue Kronen-Zeitung, 03.04.1997)} \\
\text{‘Georg Totschnig’s apprehensions ("I must have caught a bad bug while eating") were confirmed during the examination in the Freiburg clinic: The Telekom professional contracted a bacterial infection in Spain. Bacteria thither, stomach problems hither – Georg Totschnig is not someone who gives up easily.’}
\]
Here, the nouns *Bakterien* and *Magenprobleme* substitute *bakterielle Infektion*. This substitution is licensed by a conceptualization of *Bakterien* and *Magenprobleme* as elements of the set ‘bacterial infection’ (this link is supported, in addition, by a relation of partial recurrence between *bakterielle* and *Bakterien*).

The notion of ‘previous discourse’ here may refer, in a narrow sense, to the preceding linguistic context (co-text), as well as, in a broad sense, to the common ground, i.e. topical background knowledge that discourse participants have available at the sequential point of the utterance. For example, while in (26) and (27), there is a connection to elements from the preceding linguistic context, in (1), here repeated as (28), the writer merely alludes to a topic that is assumed to be part of the writer’s and reader’s shared knowledge and assumptions.

(28)  
_Emanzipation hin, Emanzipation her, der Cartellverband bleibt, was er immer gewesen ist, ein Männerverein._ Im Rahmen der 40. Cartellversammlung am vergangenen Wochenende in Wien hatte die Wiener Verbindung “Norica” den Antrag auf Aufnahme von Frauen gestellt. Der Antrag erhielt allerdings nicht die nötige Mehrheit. (Kleine Zeitung, 05.05.1997)  
‘Women’s liberation thither, women’s liberation hither, the Cartell association remains what it always has been, a men’s club. At the meeting of the Cartell association last weekend in Vienna, the Vienna association ‘Norica’ applied for the admission of women. The application did not obtain the needed majority, however.’

In (28), there is no preceding linguistic context, as *N hin, N her* is positioned at the very beginning of the article. A coherent integration of *Emanzipation* with the issue raised in the article is made possible only later on in the text, where it is explained that the student association “Norica” has applied for admission of women in the Cartell association. At the same time, the process of women’s liberation that is alluded to by the noun *Emanzipation* certainly is a topic that is part of the general knowledge of the potential addressees of the article, and thus part of the common ground. Using this word as a ‘starter’, the text generates suspense in the reader, namely the expectation to be presented with a reasonable resolution of how *Emanzipation* relates to the rest of the article. This attention-getter usage of the construction is quite frequent in the newspaper corpus.

3.2.2  **Subjectification and stance taking**

The functions of *N hin, N her* at the level of textual coherence are closely connected to its interactional functions of subjectification and stance taking. As has been suggested above, the construction helps establishing specific discourse relations between discourse sequences (the relational aspect); also, it allows speakers/writers to connect to a discourse topic (the referential aspect), convey a certain
speaker-related perspective towards this discourse topic (indexical aspect), and raise the expectation that some contrasting, informationally stronger point will be made (informational aspect).

More generally, then, using \textit{N hin}, \textit{N her} can be regarded as a contextualization strategy (Gumperz 1982; Fetzer 2012b). A speaker/writer takes a (part of a) statement or belief of some other discourse participant from its original context (decontextualization) and embeds it within her own speech. By way of the pragmatic meaning of the construction, the speaker/writer adds some kind of negative comment or attitude towards this statement and puts forward her own position or argument as the preferred one (recontextualization).

This process can be fruitfully described in terms of subjectification and stance taking, two notions that are closely connected (for an overview, see Kärkkäinen 2006); another closely related notion in this connection is the notion of evaluation (cf. Thompson and Hunston 2000; Finkbeiner 2012a). According to Finegan (1995), subjectivity is the expression of self and the representation of a speaker’s (or, more generally, a locutionary agent’s) perspective or point of view in discourse – what has been called a speaker’s imprint. (Finegan 1995:1)

The expression of subjective (epistemic, affective, evaluative) states is also called stance. However, as Kärkkäinen (2006) points out, stance taking is not entirely a subjective or speaker-related matter. Rather, participants in interaction achieve intersubjective understandings of the ongoing conversation as they display their own understanding in their sequentially next turns, while correcting or confirming those of their coparticipants. (Kärkkäinen 2006:704)

The \textit{N hin}, \textit{N her} construction seems to be particularly suitable for sequentially advancing a speaker’s stance, while still relating to the opinion of the co-participants and trying to elicit a response of shared understanding. By using \textit{N hin}, \textit{N her}, speakers “deal with the prior talk not purely in its own terms, but rather they address it in the way it is relevant for their own subsequent purposes” (Kärkkäinen 2006:704).

There are two main kinds of evaluative and affective stances speakers/writers express by using \textit{N hin}, \textit{N her}: downgrading/dismissal, and mocking/launching a metapragmatic attack. First, \textit{N hin}, \textit{N her} has the effect of downgrading the proposition conveyed in the theme component (\textit{N hin}, \textit{N her}), while upgrading or highlighting the proposition conveyed in the rheme component (the juxtaposed main clause). Speakers/writers may thus express an evaluation as to the importance or relevance of a state of affairs relative to some other states of affairs. For example, in (29), obligation is contrasted to private life, love and emotions, and
the writer expresses the opinion that private life is to be valued as more important than obligation in the situation at hand.

(29) [From a horoscope:] Jungfrau 24.8.–23.9.: Pflicht hin, Pflicht her; heute darf das Privatleben zu seinem Recht kommen. Die Liebe natürlich auch. Tun Sie Ihren Gefühlen keinen Zwang an. (Rhein-Zeitung, 17.11.2006)
‘Virgo 24.8.–23.9.: Obligation thither, obligation hither, today it’s (your) private life that matters. Also love, of course. Don’t constrain your feelings.’

In this kind of usage, what is expressed is a dismissal of a certain belief (the belief that we are supposed to fulfill our obligations) as irrelevant, in favor of some other belief that is conceptualized as relevant. Crucially, though, the dismissal of a certain belief may be easily connected to the dismissal of the standing of the actor who is a representative of this belief. For example, in (30), the speaker dismisses the belief that it was the referee’s fault that the team lost the match; simultaneously, she expresses a negative affective stance towards those that hold this belief. This group of actors themselves, in turn, is then made responsible for the defeat in the subsequent weil-clause.

‘Referee thither, referee hither – he was not responsible for our defeat. For that, we should blame ourselves, because some were not fighting enough.’

Thus, the expression of downgrading some state of affairs as irrelevant may be charged with additional affective contents or emotions targeted at a certain actor or group of actors.

What makes N hin, N her particularly suitable for the expression of dismissal of the standing of an actor or a group of actors is its mitigating function. Generally, expressing critique is a face-threatening act (Brown and Levinson 1987). However, by explicitly relating (by using anaphoric nouns) to a certain opinion expressed in previous discourse, the speaker/writer shows that she has heard and understood this expression of opinion. Furthermore, by hin and her, the speaker/writer suggests that she has carefully reflected the pro’s and contra’s, weighing up the different alternatives against each other. Thus, the putting forward of the speaker’s own belief is embedded within signals of acknowledging the addressee’s beliefs, and so the critique expressed is mitigated. More generally, then, using N hin, N her may be used as a fairly manipulative strategy to enhance the acceptance of the argument by the addressee (cf. Leuschner 2005:300), and is therefore an effective tool of gaining interactional power.
It is clear that there are different potential origins of the stance expressed in the newspaper examples examined. Newspaper texts typically are reports of actions, with actors involved on the plane of the reported event, and the journalist involved as reporting person. Sometimes, the reporter ascribes the attitude expressed to the (group of) actor(s) he or she is reporting on, as in (31).


‘Ronaldo thither, Ronaldo hither – according to expert Günter Netzer, it is the French national player Zinedine Zidane who ist the “best technician” of the World Cup.’

In other cases, it is the reporter him- or herself who takes the stance expressed, as in (32).

(32) Schön an der demnächst anstehenden Weihnachtseuphorie ist der Umstand, dass jede Menge Beleuchtung in die Innenstädte kommt. Licht-Smog hin, Energieverschwendung her – spät abends hält das den Puls niedrig. (Braunschweiger Zeitung, 07.11.2009)

‘The good thing with the soon upcoming Christmas euphoria is that lots of light will enter the inner cities. Light pollution thither, waste of energy hither – late at night, it keeps the pulse down.’

In still other cases, it seems to be both the actors reported on and the reporter himself who are construed as origins of the attitude, cf. (33).

(33) [Context: The beverage tax was abolished in Tyrol, which resulted in financial problems for the municipalities] Zu überzeugen gilt es nun Tirols Gesundheitsreferentin sowie die maßgeblichen Herren in Wien, die über die Verteilung medizinischer Großgeräte in Österreichs Krankenhäusern entscheiden. Das müsste zu machen sein. Getränkesteuer hin, Getränkesteuer her: Für die Gesundheit der Bürger müssen allemal noch zwei Mio. S drinnen sein. (Tiroler Tageszeitung, 16.05.2000)

‘Now one must convince the head of the Tyrolean health division and the leading representatives in Vienna who decide about the distribution of medical technology in Austria’s hospitals. This should be feasible. Beverage tax thither, beverage tax hither: For the health of the citizens, finding two million Schilling should be feasible.’

If the construction is used in non-reporting contexts, such as personal letters to the editor, the ascription of the attitude is more straightforward; in these cases, it is typically the speaker/writer herself who is the agent of stance taking, cf. (34).
From a letter to the editor: Energiesparlampe, du verdammtes Teil! Klimaschutz hin, Energiesparen her, warum brauchen die Dinger gefühlte zehn Minuten, um hell zu werden? [...] Ganz gehässig: Sie werden erst dann hell, wenn’s schon zu spät ist. Vielen Dank, Klimaschutz! (Hannoversche Allgemeine, 30.09.2008) ‘Energy saving lamp, you bloody thing! Climate protection thither, power saving hither, why do these things need what feels like ten minutes to get bright? [...] To be really mean: They get bright only when it’s too late already. Thanks a lot, climate protection!’

It is in non-reporting contexts like these that N hin, N her may be used to express not (only) downgrading or dismissal of beliefs in favor of some other, preferred belief, but also to perform a more direct act of verbal aggression. Cf. (35) and (36).

And because the guests, when she came back, were still talking about Sepp, she herself finally tried to divert their attention to other things. – He forgot his newspapers, suddenly she said, wouldn’t you like to read something about the Italian war? – War thither, war hither, we have more than enough war at home.

Culture thither, culture hither! We had [there follows a list of engineering professionals and technical innovations originally from, or located in, the city of Graz, R. F.] List, Puch, Boltzmann, Wegener, Schrödinger, Hess, Schmiedl usw. in Graz, eine Lokomotivfabrik, die Brüder Renner … When are we going to have the technical museum?'

In these usages, the speaker expresses a clear derogatory stance towards something the addressee (or some other interlocutor) has uttered in the preceding discourse. In the (fictional) dialogue in (35), the girl's question of reading about the war in Italy is dismissed as stupid or foolish; in the letter to the editor in (36), the opinion that one needs more culture in Graz is abolished as totally missing the point: the need for a technical museum. Generally, the corpus analysis suggests that these usages are more frequent in direct speech (dialogue, letters) than in reporting speech.
From the perspective of research on repetition in interaction (Tannen 1989; Bazzanella 2011), (35) and (36) can be regarded as mock repeats. Both mock repeats, such as in (37), and the relevant usages of *N hin, N her* feature repetition of a discourse item across turns, and total reduplication of this item within the speaker’s turn.23

(37) Mother: *Bonjour mon Simon*
‘Good morning my Simon’
Simon: *humhum*
‘humhum’
Mother: *humhum, humhum, c’est ça, humhum*
‘humhum, humhum, that’s it, humhum’
Simon: *Allo*
‘Hello’
Mother: *As-tu fait de beaux dodos?*
‘Did you sleep well?’

(Perrin et al. 2003:1854)

In mock repeats, the speaker indicates that she does not agree with the wording of the preceding utterance, be it on the level of content or form of the word(s) used (cf. Bamford 2000). Thus, mock repeats are meta-communicative acts, they comment on (parts of) utterances. Due to this function, exact formal identity of the nouns is obligatory in the mock repeat cases (but not in the general downgrading usages). Thus, B’s reply to A’s utterance in (38) is not acceptable.

(38) A. *Wollt ihr von dem bewaffneten Konflikt in Italien lesen?*
‘Would you like to read about the armed conflict in Italy?’
B. *Krieg hin, Krieg her, wir haben mehr als genug Krieg daheim.*
‘War thither, war hither, we have more than enough war at home.’

More generally, mock repeats can be regarded as strategies of metapragmatic attack (Jacquemet 2001:38): The speaker/writer overtly expresses contempt of the interlocutor’s verbal action. According to Keevallik (2010), mock repeats can be characterized as “disaffiliating actions”, i.e. linguistic acts of confrontation. However, compared to other metapragmatic attack devices, such as direct accusations (e.g., “What you say is nonsense”, “Stop talking bullshit”), mock repeat usage of *N hin, N her* is a more indirect strategy, as it, because of its specific constructional shape, allows speakers/writers to pretend taking a reflective point of view towards the opponent’s opinion.

23. Yiddish *shm*-reduplication (e.g., A: *Have you already read Sandy’s new book?* – B: *Book, shmook!* ) is an example of a mock repeat construction with partial reduplication of the repeated item (cf. Moravcsik 1978; Israeli 1997).
4. Conclusion

In this paper, I investigated the German construction N hin, N her (‘N thither, N hither’). N hin, N her is a schematic idiom in the sense of Fillmore et al. (1988), i.e. a lexically partly specified and partly open pattern that is assigned a semantic meaning that cannot be derived compositionally from the semantics of its parts. It was argued, however, that the construction is not entirely idiosyncratic, as its prime pragmatic functions on the level of discourse and interaction can be motivated, at least in part, by the specific pragmatic aspects of meaning that are associated with the components of the construction. In particular, the deictic adverbs hin (‘thither’) and her (‘hither’), the pragmatic restrictions on the choice of nouns, and the pragmatic effects associated with its syntactic disintegration play an important role in the constitution of the functional usage potential of the construction. A purely semantic analysis of N hin, N her as concessive or concessive conditional, in contrast, was claimed to be insufficient, as it neglects the pragmatic processes of contextual enrichment and implicature in the utterance processing of N hin, N her.

Following a close description of the syntactic and semantic properties of the construction, I argued for a pragmatic approach to its meaning and functions. These functions were situated primarily on the level of discourse and interaction. At the level of discourse, it was shown that N hin, N her is an important linguistic means of construing textual coherence, both structurally, relationally and referentially. By using N hin, N her, speakers/writers may establish structural coherence in assigning theme status to the N hin, N her component, while assigning rheme status to the juxtaposed proposition in subsequent context. Speakers/writers may establish relational coherence in using the construction by conveying a contrast between the N hin, N her component and the juxtaposed proposition. Thereby, the information conveyed in the N hin, N her component is downgraded, while the information in the juxtaposed proposition is upgraded. Referential coherence is established as speakers, by using N hin, N her referentially, connect a preceding discourse referent to the utterance containing N hin, N her.

At the level of interaction, it was shown that N hin, N her is a linguistic means of stance taking, and, more generally, a means of negotiating interactional power relations. On the one hand, speakers/writers can use the construction to enhance their own position in relation to a discourse participant’s (or third actor’s) position which is dismissed. This usage can be found in many examples of reporting speech, e.g. in newspaper reports. The dismissal of the argumentative position of the opponent may be connected with the dismissal of the standing of the actor(s) as representative(s) of this position. While in this usage, N hin, N her mainly is about the evaluation of relevance of arguments, it was shown that in addition,
there is a usage of *N hin, N her* as a mock repeat which can be regarded as an act of verbal aggression. In the mock repeat use, which is mainly used in direct speech contexts such as dialogues or letters, speakers/writers abandon the level of ‘objective’ argumentation in favor of expressing a clear negative affective attitude towards a discourse participant. Thus, the mock repeat use is a case of meta-communicative acting that is charged with a hearer-directed negative affective attitude, and as such it can be described as a strategy of meta-pragmatic attack.

While speakers, by using *N hin, N her*, may convey a derogatory attitude towards co-participants in interaction, the construction also functions as a marker of mitigation. Because of the explicit or implicit anaphoric relation to previous discourse, speakers/writers signal that they have heard and understood the opponent’s perspective. By the use of the deictic adverbials *hin* and *her*, they indicate, furthermore, that they have indeed weighed up the different alternatives against each other. Thus, the critical speech act is embedded in a context signaling recognition of the addressee's position. More generally, then, using *N hin, N her* is a manipulative strategy aiming to enhance the acceptance of the argument by the addressee, and therefore represents an effective tool of gaining interactional power.

References


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