The uni- or polyfunctionality of *so* in German

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In this talk, the syntactic and semantic features of the German lexical form *so* in different syntactic positions will be discussed in order to analyze obvious or subtle differences and similarities between the different occurrences. More precisely, I will focus on the prenominal position of *so* (as in **so** *ein Tier*-'such an animal' and **so** *Menschen*-'such humans', cf. (1) and (2)), comparing it with the occurrences of *so* that are described more detailed in the research literature.

The German form *so* belongs to the most heterogeneously distributed forms in the German language. In the literature, the following parts of speech are discussed most commonly: adverb, intensifying particle, sentence adverb, subjunction, discourse particle, focus marker. An essential aim of the paper is to analyze in how far these syntactic functions are compatible with the same lexical meaning.

An often neglected function of the form *so* is its occurrence in the determining position:

(1) **So** ein Tier habe ich noch nie gesehen.
     Such an animal have I yet never seen
     (*I have never seen such an animal yet.*)

(2) **So** Menschen kann ich nicht leiden.
     Such people can I not stand
     (*I cannot stand such people.*)

Due to the fact that these occurrences are analyzed relatively rarely, the talk will focus on the grammatical description of *so* in (1) and (2). Particularly, the following questions are discussed:

- Have occurrences of so like in (1) and (2) to be analyzed as variants of German solch 'such' or as "original" cases of *so* as an adverb, particle, etc.?
- Should *so* in (1) and (2) be considered the same part of speech category?
- Which category is it?

I will provide linguistic evidence that *so* in (1) and (2) can equally be described as a predeterminer that is not only restricted to contexts of oral speech. I will also argue that the occurrences of *so* in (1)–(2) are semantically and from a usage-based perspective equivalent to occurrences of *so* in particular other syntactic contexts named above.

Methodologically, this talk combines self-conducted corpus analyses with semantic analyses of *so* by Hole & Klumpp (2000), Umbach & Ebert (2009), Umbach & Gust (2014), and more general classifications of *so* in German grammar books such as Zifonun et al. (1997).

References: Hole, Daniel & Gerson Klumpp (2000). Definite type and indefinite token: the article son in colloquial German. Linguistische Berichte 182, 231–244. Umbach, Carla & Helmar Gust (2014). Similarity Demonstratives. Lingua 149, 74–93. Umbach, Carla & Ebert, Cornelia (2009). German demonstrative so – intensifying and hedging effects. Sprache und Datenverarbeitung. International Journal for Language Data Processing 33(1–2), 153–168. Zifonun, Gisela, Ludger Hoffmann & Bruno Strecker (1997). Grammatik der deutschen Sprache. Band 1. Berlin, New York: de Gruyter.