

# Comparisons in the history and dialects of German—with an outlook on cross-linguistic diachrony and syntactic analysis

Agnes Jäger

Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena

In colloquial and regional varieties of Modern German, one can observe a widespread shift of the comparative particle standardly used only in comparisons of equality (equatives) *wie* into comparisons of inequality (comparatives), replacing *als*. Diachronic corpus research reveals that this development is part of a long-term cyclical change in German that may aptly be referred to as the comparative cycle. The talk traces this development on the basis of Old, Middle, and Early New High German corpus data as well as Modern dialect data, working out recurrent paths of change. Furthermore, evidence for the comparative cycle from the diachrony of other languages is presented, and implications of the historical and dialect data for the syntactic analysis of comparison constructions are discussed.