

***Rather***  
**A Semantic Diachronic Account**

Remus Gergel (University of Tuebingen)

This study is concerned with the semantic representation and the history of the word *rather*. The meaning of *rather* has developed from temporal precedence towards so-called priority in reason (OED; Mitchell 1985). Rather clear subtypes from the temporal and doxastic varieties are illustrated in ME (1) and ModE (2).

- (1) ... sterres of the north [arisen] rather than the degre of her longitude, and alle the sterresof the south [arisen] *after* the degre of her longitude -. (PPCME2; CMASTRO,668.C1.150)
- (2) She heard Spanish and Korean, Russian and Chinese, Arabic and Greek, ..., but rather [<sub>q</sub> than feel intimidated ...], [<sub>p</sub> she exulted in this variety of human sound] (P. Auster; *Brooklyn Follies*)

We use the semantic framework of Eckardt (2006) (and related work). The database includes the Penn-Helsinki Parsed Corpora of English. Our motivation is that while a comparative *rather* has previously sometimes been surmised for ModE via syntactic assumptions, a semantic-diachronic detailed case study is necessitated if one is interested in how and why *rather* structures should (still) be comparatives.

Comparatives of temporal precedence (*earlier, sooner*) concomitantly convey time and a scale of degrees. This parallelism is synchronic and exploits the common scale structures (Cresswell 1976; v.Stechow 2006). Second, we argue that the current intensional readings yield relations between situations. Sentence (2), for examples, thus conveys that, instead of the logical *q* from the contextual expectations-background, a doxastic alternative - proposition *p* - should be closer to the truth-evaluation of the (fictious) world. The reinterpretation of the comparative two-place relation is from temporal arguments ( $t_1 < t_2$ ) towards the (in some cases invited) alternatives (here modally, *p* over *q*). The transition thus extends from Eckardt's (2006) "side messages" to the argument structure two-place relation being fully saturated by modal (i.e. preferential/bouletic, and later also fully doxastic) alternatives. The change is gradual given that both temporal and (various) intensional readings co-existed for a long time. A plausible motivation for the cross-linguistically common shift is found in the pragmatics of the original constructions (cf., Eckardt's 2007 *Avoid Pragmatic Overload Principle*). While exploiting the importance of this factor in the current case, and in particular with regard to the beginning of the change, we will argue that more is needed for the change to run its course. Specifically, we claim that compositional, structure-dependent factors play a key role in the change, which took place from generalized quantifiers over sets times (adopting a von Stechow 2006 analysis for the starting grammar) in the original meaning towards modal-like structures with bouletic and doxastic backgrounds (cf. Kratzer 1991, 2007) in the later grammars, in which *rather* entirely lost its original meaning.