
THE USE OF THE PREFIX "BE-" IN GERMAN AND ITS COMPARISON WITH THE ALBANIAN LANGUAGE

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Abstract: The verb is one of the most significant components of speech, enabling the construction of textual and discursive structures and facilitating communication. Each language has its unique characteristics regarding the formation, function in sentences, and derivation of verbs. As in all languages, substantial differences exist between Albanian and German in terms of verb construction, tense, mood, and derivation.

In German, verbs are often referred to as "Tätigkeitswort, Tuwort, Tunwort," and verb derivation is highly productive. From a single lexeme, multiple meaningful words can be derived. For example, adding prefixes like *ab-*, *an-*, *auf-*, *aus-*, *be-*, and others to the lexeme *kommen* generates entirely new meanings, such as *ankommen* (arrive) or *bekommen* (receive), whereas in Albanian, equivalent cases are rare, often requiring separate lexemes.

Keywords: German Language, Albanian Language, Verb Derivation, Prefix Verbs, "be-" Prefix, Transitive Verbs, Verb Modification, Lexeme Creation, Morphological Diversity, Syntactic Function, Semantics, Comparative Linguistics, Language Comparison.

1. INTRODUCTION

The German language is celebrated for its complex and rich morphological structure, where prefixes substantially contribute to the evolution of word meaning and grammatical properties. Among these, the prefix **be-** holds a unique position due to its diverse applications. It plays a significant role in modifying verb transitivity, enriching semantic layers, and facilitating word formation. Its pervasive influence spans across formal, colloquial, and specialized terminologies. This paper delves into the semantic, morphological, and historical aspects of the prefix **be-**, explores its application across different contexts, and offers a comparative perspective with analogous structures in the Albanian language. This comprehensive analysis highlights the prefix's vital role in shaping German as a linguistically versatile language.

Verbs are classified according to semantic, morphological, and syntactic criteria.

The classification of verbs according to semantic criteria is made by considering their meaning and the type of action. Based on meaning, verbs are divided into:

- Action verbs (arbeiten - "work", lesen - "read", etc.)
- Process verbs (a change or process that the subject undergoes, e.g., "Der Apfel fiel vom Baum" - "The apple fell from the tree.")
- State verbs (where the subject does not undergo any change, e.g., "In der Ecke steht ein Schrank" - "In the corner stands a cupboard.")

Based on the type of action, verbs are classified into:

- Durative verbs (expressing continuity, e.g., arbeiten - "work", leben - "live", etc.)
- Perfective verbs (expressing actions already completed, e.g., einschlafen - "fall asleep", loslaufen - "run off", etc.)

According to morphological criteria, verbs are classified by their ability to be conjugated and the type of conjugation:

- Finite and infinitive forms.
- According to syntactic criteria, we distinguish between independent verbs and auxiliary verbs (haben, sein, werden - in Albanian: kam and jam).

In this work, we will analyze the prefix "be-", which is the most frequently used prefix in German. It forms derivations when combined with verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs, resulting in new meaningful words in the German language.

The grammatical function of the prefix "be-" turns intransitive verbs into transitive verbs, where the direct object (Akkusativ-Objekt) becomes the focus of the event in the sentence, such as: fragen - befragen (ask - question), dienen - bedienen (serve - serve someone), lügen - belügen (lie - deceive).

The intransitive verb "achten" becomes transitive when the prefix "be-" is added, as in "Erachtet auf die Regeln" - "Pay attention to the rules" becomes "Er beachtet die Regeln" - "He pays attention to the rules."

When prepositional objects are required, like in "Über jemanden lächeln" (smiling at someone), the prefix "be-" removes the preposition, turning it into a direct object: "Jemanden belächeln" (to mock someone).

The prefix "be-" expresses the following semantic implications:

- As "applicative verbs," it equips a noun with something, e.g., Waffe (weapon) - bewaffnen (arm), Flagge (flag) - beflaggen (flag).
- As "factive verbs," which characterize an action that leads to a specific goal, e.g., begrenzen (limit), befruchten (fertilize), beflecken (stain).
- As "attributive verbs," turning adjectives into verbs, e.g., frei (free) - befreien (free), fähig (capable) - befähigen (empower).
- For intensifying the meaning of an existing verb, e.g., bemühen (try), befürchten (fear), befühlten (feel).
- In a single case, the adverb becomes an intensified verb: bejahen (affirm).
- It can radically change the meaning and create new lexical meanings, e.g., stehen (stand) - bestehen (consist), kommen (come) - bekommen (receive), gehen (go) - begehen (commit).

The lexeme "kommen" in Albanian means "come," and when we add prefixes like ab-, an-, auf-, aus-, be-, durch-, ein-, ent-, empor-, her-, hin-, hinein-, hinter-, mit-, nach-, über-, um-, unter-, ver-, vor-, vorbei-, weg-, zurück-, zu-, we create new meanings, with equivalent examples in Albanian such as:

- abkommen (get off track), ankommen (arrive), aufkommen (emerge), auskommen (manage), bekommen (receive), etc.

The prefix "be-" does not affect whether the verb is regular or irregular; this depends on the verb itself. For example:

- "arbeiten" (regular, intransitive) becomes "bearbeiten" (transitive).
- The meaning changes: kommen (come) becomes bekommen (receive).
- For intensification: grüßen (greet) becomes begrüßen (greet warmly).
- The beginning of an action: ruhig (calm) becomes beruhigen (calm someone down).

The prefix "be-" originates from the Indo-European "bhi" and develops into "bi-" to modify verbs, such as "beginnen" (begin), "bi-halten" (hold), evolving into the modern "be-" as in "behalten" (hold).

In German, there are separable verbs (trennbare Verben), inseparable verbs (untrennbare Verben), and both separable and inseparable verbs (trennbare Verben und untrennbare Verben). Since verbs with the prefix "be-" are inseparable, the stress falls on the root of the verb after the prefix, such as:

- be+arbeiten: Stress falls on "ar".
- be+obachten: Stress falls on "ob".
- be+antworten: Stress falls on "ant".

Also, the vowel "e" in the prefix "be-" is not articulated together with the following vowel but is articulated separately, as in:

- Arbeiten (work) - bearbeiten (process),
- Urteilen (judge) - beurteilen (evaluate),
- Leuchten (shine) - beleuchten (illuminate),
- Danken (thank) - bedanken (thank someone),
- Handeln (act) - behandeln (treat),
- Nehmen (take) - benehmen (behave).

The prefix "be-" in different dialects can carry various meanings. For instance, "bekommen" (receive) is used instead of "verstehen" (understand) in some dialects.

In scientific works, verbs like "beobachten" (observe), "beschreiben" (describe), "begründen" (justify), and "belegen" (prove) are frequently used.

In official documents, verbs like "beantragen" (apply), "bewilligen" (approve), and "bekanntgeben" (announce) create a formal and distant tone.

In literary texts or poetry, verbs with "be-" are often used to create a certain humor or "beautify" the language, as verbs with the "be-" prefix sound more formal or emotional, such as "beglücken" (make happy), "beklagen" (lament), "verehren" (honor), and "verherrlichen" (glorify).

In literature, the prefix "be-" adds emotional intensity, akin to the Albanian prefixes "për-", "sh-", "ndër-", "mbi-".

In medicine, frequently used verbs are "behandeln" (treat), "betäuben" (anesthetize), "beruhigen" (calm), "befunden" (diagnose), etc.

In technology, verbs like "bearbeiten" (process), "befeuchten" (moisten), "beleuchten" (illuminate) are used.

In economics, verbs like "bewerten" (evaluate), "berechnen" (calculate), "bewirtschaften" (manage), "bezahlen" (pay) are used.

Examples with the prefix "be-":

1. **arbeiten** (regular, inseparable verb: arbeitet • arbeitete • hat gearbeitet)
Albanian equivalent: punoj
Example: *Ich arbeite den ganzen Tag. - Unë punoj gjithë ditën.*
2. **bearbeiten** (regular, inseparable verb: bearbeitet • bearbeitete • hat bearbeitet)
Albanian equivalent: përpunoj
Example: *Meine Unterlagen sind noch nicht bearbeitet worden. - Dokumentacioni im ende nuk është përpunuar.*
3. **dauern** (regular, inseparable verb: dauert • dauerte • hat gedauert)
Albanian equivalent: zgjatën
Example: *Diese Freundschaft wird lange dauern. - Kjo miqësi do të zgjasë gjatë.*
4. **bedauern** (regular, inseparable verb: bedauert • bedauerte • hat bedauert)
Albanian equivalent: më vjen keq, ndiej keqardhje
Example: *Ich bedauere die Absage. - Më vjen keq për refuzimin.*
5. **denken** (irregular, inseparable verb: denkt • dachte • hat gedacht)
Albanian equivalent: mendon
Example: *Ich denke an meine Schulzeit. - Mendoj për ditët e mia të shkollës.*
6. **bedenken** (irregular, inseparable verb: bedenkt • bedachte • hat bedacht)
Albanian equivalent: peshon, kujton, përkujton, marr parasysht
Example: *Du musst bedenken, dass sie noch jung ist. - Duhet ta marrësh parasysht se ajo është ende e re.*
7. **kommen** (irregular, inseparable verb: kommt • kam • ist gekommen)
Albanian equivalent: vjen
Example: *Ich komme. - Unë vij.*
8. **bekommen** (irregular, inseparable verb: bekommt • bekam • hat bekommen)
Albanian equivalent: merr, pranon
Example: *Ich habe eine gute Nachricht bekommen. - Kam marrë një lajm të mirë.*
9. **stellen** (regular, inseparable verb: stellt • stellte • hat gestellt)
Albanian equivalent: vendos
Example: *Ich stelle das Buch auf den Tisch. - Unë e vendos librin mbi tavolinë.*
10. **bestellen** (regular, inseparable verb: bestellt • bestellte • hat bestellt)
Albanian equivalent: porosis
Example: *Herr Ober, ich möchte eine Pizza bestellen. - Kamariet, dëshiroj të porosis një picë.*

2. SEMANTIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE PREFIX BE

The classification of verbs based on semantic criteria considers the meaning and type of action. Verbs are divided into:

- **Action:** (arbeiten - punoj, lesen - lexoj, etc.)
- **Process:** A change or process that affects the subject itself (Der Apfel fiel vom Baum. - Molla ra nga pema.)
- **State:** The subject does not undergo any change (In der Ecke steht ein Schrank. - Në cep qëndron një dollap.)

According to the type of action, verbs are divided into:

- **Durative Verbs:** Verbs that express continuity (arbeiten - punoj, leben - jetoj, etc.)
- **Perfective Verbs:** Verbs that express actions already completed (einschlafen - fle, loslaufen - nisem, etc.)

3. MORPHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

In German, verbs with the prefix *be-* are inseparable (*untrennbare Verben*), with the stress placed on the root syllable. For instance:

- *bearbeiten*: The stress is on “-ar.”
- *beobachten*: The stress is on “-ob.”
- *beantworten*: The stress is on “-ant.”

The prefix *be-* does not influence whether a verb is regular or irregular; this is determined by the verb itself. Examples include:

- Intransitive to transitive: *arbeiten* (work) – *bearbeiten* (process).
- Change in meaning: *kommen* (come) – *bekommen* (receive).

- Intensification: *grüßen* (greet) – *begrüßen* (warmly greet).

4. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The prefix *be-* originates from the Indo-European root *bhi*, evolving into the Old High German *bi-* (e.g., *bi-ginnan* – begin) and eventually into the Modern German *be-* (e.g., *behalten* – retain).

5. USAGE ACROSS CONTEXTS

- **Academic and Scientific Contexts:** *beobachten* (observe), *beschreiben* (describe).
- **Official Documents:** *beantragen* (apply), *bewilligen* (approve).
- **Medical Field:** *behandeln* (treat), *betäuben* (anesthetize).
- **Technology:** *bearbeiten* (process), *beleuchten* (illuminate).
- **Economy:** *bewerten* (assess), *berechnen* (calculate).

6. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS WITH ALBANIAN

In Albanian, there is no equivalent prefix to *be-* in German. Modifications such as intensification or attributive verbs are expressed using entirely different lexemes rather than prefixes. For example, German verbs like *bearbeiten* (process) are represented in Albanian by distinct verbs, not derived forms.

In Albanian, the prefix **be-** translates into prefixes like *për-*, *sh-*, *ndër-*, or *mbi-* depending on the context. These can modify verbs and create new meanings.

Example:

- **beantworten** (përgjigjem)
- **behandeln** (trajtoj)
- **befinden** (diagnozuj)

EXAMPLES WITH THE PREFIX BE-

- **arbeiten** (punoj)
 - German: Ich arbeite den ganzen Tag.
 - Albanian: Unë punoj gjithë ditën.
- **bearbeiten** (përpunoj)
 - German: Meine Unterlagen sind noch nicht bearbeitet worden.
 - Albanian: Dokumentacioni im ende nuk është përpunuar.
- **bedauern** (ndiej keqardhje)
 - German: Ich bedauere die Absage.
 - Albanian: Më vjen keq për refuzimin.
- **denken** (mendoj)
 - German: Ich denke an meine Schulzeit.
 - Albanian: Mendoj për ditët e mia të shkollës.
- **bekommen** (marr)
 - German: Ich habe eine gute Nachricht bekommen.
 - Albanian: Kam marrë një lajm të mirë.
- **stellen** (vendos)
 - German: Ich stelle das Buch auf den Tisch.
 - Albanian: Unë e vendos librin mbi tavolinë.
- **bestellen** (porosis)
 - German: Herr Ober, ich möchte eine Pizza bestellen.
 - Albanian: Kamarier, dëshiroj të porosis një picë.

7. CONCLUSION

The German prefix *be-* showcases significant morphological and semantic flexibility, playing a crucial role in the formation of new verbs, refining existing meanings, and shifting syntactic functions. Its productivity in German contrasts sharply with Albanian, where the primary method of word formation involves the use of distinct lexemes rather than prefixation. In German, the prefix *be-* contributes to a variety of meanings, such as creating transitive verbs from intransitive ones, intensifying actions, or changing the fundamental sense of a verb altogether. On the other hand, in Albanian, such transformations are generally achieved through the creation of entirely new words or through the application of other linguistic processes. This contrast in linguistic structures underscores the typological differences between Germanic and Albanian languages, particularly in their approaches to word formation. The role

of affixes, especially prefixes like *be-*, in German, contrasts with the Albanian reliance on stem changes and lexical derivation. These differences illuminate broader principles of language formation, reflecting how each language builds on its own set of grammatical rules and structures. These observations highlight the importance of comparative linguistics in understanding the intricate mechanisms behind language development. By examining these typological differences, we can gain a deeper understanding of the cognitive and social factors that shape linguistic systems. Comparative studies not only offer insights into the unique features of each language but also contribute to our broader understanding of universal linguistic principles, offering a richer perspective on the diversity of human language.

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