

An extraction restriction with complement-less prepositions in dialectal German and British English

This paper observes an A-bar extraction restriction on object DPs contingent on the silence of the complement of P in dialectal German and British English (BrE). This variation between overtness and silence is not just a matter of PF (non-)pronunciation; elucidation of the underlying syntactic structures will benefit from a comparative perspective.

BrE allows a variant of locational sentences with *have* (Myler 2016) (1a) without the pronoun complement of P (1b) (Griffiths & Sailor 2015, 2017 [G&S]). The pronoun or silent counterpart (\emptyset) obligatorily corefers with the subject:

- (1) a. This box_i has papers in it_{i/*j}. b. This box_i has papers in $\emptyset_{i/*j}$.

At first blush, (1) might seem to present an instance of PF optionality regarding pronunciation of the pronoun. However, we observe that when the complement of P is silent, the post-verbal ‘object’ of *have* cannot A-bar move (2), whether by relativisation (a), topicalisation (b), question formation (c), etc.; all of which are possible when *it* is pronounced:

- (2) a. The papers OP_j that the box_i has t_j in {it_i / * \emptyset_i } are very important.
 b. Papers_j, this box_i certainly has t_j in {it_i / * \emptyset_i }.
 c. What_j does this box_i have t_j in {it_i / * \emptyset_i }?

This restriction affects only the object; adverbs (3a) and the subject (3b) can still A-bar move:

- (3) a. These boxes OP_i that t_i have papers in {them_i / \emptyset_i } are very heavy.
 b. [Very frequently]_j [this box]_i has papers in {it_i / \emptyset_i } t_j .

Thus, a syntactic manipulation that is possible when the complement of P is pronounced (object extraction) is impossible when it is not. This argues that variation in phonological (non)realization reflects an underlying syntactic difference. The behaviour of (1) under object extraction further contrasts with that of other understood complements of P: (4) is fine in all varieties of English, leaving PF optionality tenable; i.e., while (the structure surrounding) the *it* of (1a) \neq the \emptyset of (1b), it may be that $e = \#$ in (4):

- (4) What_j does this box_i have t_j inside {it_i / e_i}?

We suggest that a parallel A-bar extraction restriction is found with silent P complements in dialectal German. In German (and elsewhere in Germanic), inanimate pronominal complements of P take on a special form as ‘R-pronouns’ (van Riemsdijk 1978), e.g., *da(r)*:

- (5) Fritz hat gestern {**dar**an /*an es} gedacht. vs. ... {an sie/***dar**an} gedacht.
Fritz has yesterday {*DAR.on*/**on it*} *thought* {*on her*/**DAR.on*} *thought*

Some German dialects allow leftward displacement of *da* to the Mittelfeld and – reminiscent of the alternation in (1) – its optional omission (6) (Fleischer 2002):

- (6) Ich hab ?(**da**) meist nur sehr wenig Zeit **zu** gebraucht.
I have DAR normally only very little time for needed

We aim to show that object A-bar extraction is restricted when *da* is dropped. Whereas the BrE judgements in (2) are relatively robust in the ‘standard’ southern variety, displacement and omission of *da* are proscribed in Standard German, thus requiring speakers to be in ‘dialect mode’ in a maximally colloquial register. We are therefore running acceptability rating experiments, from which we report pilot data. Participants and at least one of their parents grew up in Berlin or Brandenburg. The general design is 2×2, comparing A-bar fronting of a direct object vs. another constituent when *da* is present (displaced leftward from P but not clause-initial) vs. absent. Our first experiment contrasted fronted objects with fronted subjects in relative clauses (cf. (2a) vs. (3a)).

To make *da*-drop and word order manipulations felicitous, each item consists of an utterance followed by a response, each up to 3 sentences, where the sentence to be rated always comes last. (7) illustrates a sentence from A’s utterance and the target sentence from B’s response:

- (7) A: Herr Müller hat mir gesagt, dass ich jetzt auch noch die Abrechnungen machen muss.
Mr. M has me told, that I now as well the till.balancing do must
 B: i. [obj] Eigentlich war die Zeit, die ich (da) insgesamt zu brauchte, gering.
actually was the time that I DAR altogether for needed minimal
 ii. [subj] Die Leute, die (da) zu viel Zeit zu gebraucht haben, sind entlassen worden.
the people who DAR too much time for needed have have dismissed been

If *da* behaves like the complement to P in BrE, we predict an interaction on top of the main effects of dropping *da* (always rated lower) and relativizing an object (always rated lower than a subject), such that object relatives in the absence of *da* should be especially bad. Table 1 shows the ratings on a 1–7 Likert scale (7=best) based on 29 subjects and 10 items, Table 2 the statistics (computed on z-scores); so far the predicted interaction is marginally significant.

Table 1: Mean ratings by condition

Relativized argument	<i>da</i> overt	<i>da</i> dropped	Difference
Subject	5.24	4.30	0.94
Object	5.02	3.41	1.61

Table 2: ANOVA

Source	$F_1(1,28)$	p
Subj vs. Obj Rel	4.308	0.047*
<i>da</i> vs. \emptyset	22.630	0.001***
Interaction	3.449	0.074

Our next experiment (underway) tests topicalisation, as in (8), cf. (2b) vs. (3b).

- (8) B: i. [object] Zeit hab ich (da) meist nur sehr wenig zu gebraucht.
time have I DAR usually only very little for needed
 ii. [adjunct] Meist hab ich (da) nur sehr wenig Zeit zu gebraucht.
usually have I DAR only very little time for needed

In sum, a point of apparent PF variation in (1) and (6) turns out to have the syntactic consequence of restricting object A-bar extraction. Such a restriction is not expected under an extension of G&S's analysis of (1b) as derived by A-movement of *this box* from the complement of P to subject position. Crossing dependencies would be involved, but crossing of an A-chain and an A-bar chain is not generally excluded (9):

- (9) Who(m)_i does John_j strike t_i as (being) t_j selfish?

Still, it is tempting to attribute the degradation in (2) and (7i) to the interaction of two movement(-like?) dependencies. This would align with Fleischer's observation that the availability of *da*-drop in a given dialect entails the availability of *da*-fronting, suggesting that *da* is dropped from a displaced position, not in situ adjacent to P. (That generalization, and the fact that first position is occupied by something other than *da* throughout (6)–(8), rules out assimilating *da*-drop entirely to Topic Drop.)

Beyond sharing the extraction restriction, there are further reasons for thinking the BrE and German facts are related. For one, both BrE P-complement omission (10) and *da(r)* (5) (hence also its omission) are limited to inanimates (G&S):

- (10) That guy_i looks like he has ten pints of beer in him_i/* \emptyset_i .

Second, while they can sound archaic, R-pronouns survive in present-day English, e.g., *thereon*, *thereafter*, suggesting that (1b) may involve a silent counterpart to *there* rather than *it*, e.g. *This box has papers ~~therein~~*. Other points of (micro-)variation await explanation. Why is (1b) dialectally restricted to BrE and (6) to Northern German dialects? Why is there further dialectal (sub-)variation as to which prepositions allow silent complements (e.g. within BrE, *in/on* vs. greater liberality; among German dialects, some allow *da*-drop with vowel-initial prepositions)? And why is *da* omission not restricted to *have*-clauses? Despite these open questions, the extraction restriction and other similarities seem too tantalizing to ignore.

Fleischer (2002). *Die Syntax von Pronominaladverbien in den Dialekten des Deutschen: Eine Untersuchung zu Preposition Stranding und verwandten Phänomenen*. Steiner. **Griffiths & Sailor (2015)**. Prepositional object gaps in British English. *Linguistics in the Netherlands*, 63-74. **G&S (2017)**. Probing the PP domain: Complex possessive PPs in British English. Talk at Morphosyntactic Variation in Adpositions, Cambridge. **Myler (2016)**. *Building and interpreting possession sentences*. MIT Press. **van Riemsdijk (1978)**. *A case study in syntactic markedness*. de Ridder.