

# The syntactic representation of ADDRESSEE evidence from *wh*-drop in Berlin German

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## 1 Background & aims

- In constituent question in German, the *wh*-phrase appears in SpecCP

(1) *Was hast du gekauft?*  
what have you bought  
'What did you buy?'

- In many varieties of German (including Berlin German), this *wh*-phrase can be absent  
→ *WH-DROP*

(2) a. *Wat hast=n du jekooft?* [Berlin German]  
what have=N you bought  
'What did you buy?'  
b. *Hast=n du jekooft?*

- Standard analysis (Bayer 2010, Pankau 2020):  
*wh*-drop = deletion of a *wh*-phrase after movement to SpecCP

(3) ~~Wat~~<sub>i</sub> hast=n du jekooft t<sub>i</sub>?

- This analysis assimilates *wh*-drop to topic drop, which also involves deletion in SpecCP

(4) A: *Wolln=w'r den Film da kieken?* [Berlin German]  
want=we the movie there watch  
'Do we want to watch this movie?'  
B: *Nö, ha' ick schon jesehen.*  
no have I already seen  
'No, I already watched it.'  
= ~~den~~<sub>i</sub> ha' ick schon jesehen t<sub>i</sub>.

- Aims of this talk
  - *wh*-drop ≠ A'-movement of a *wh*-phrase + ellipsis  
= short A'-movement/scrambling of an empty operator
  - regular A'-movement of a *wh*-phrase to SpecCP is blocked, because SpecCP is occupied by a silent DP designating the ADDRESSEE (cf. Oyharçabal 1993)

(5) [<sub>CP</sub> DP<sub>ADDR</sub> hast=n du [<sub>VP</sub> Op<sub>i</sub> [<sub>VP</sub> t<sub>i</sub> jekooft ]]]?

- Roadmap
  - basic properties of *wh*-drop
  - analysis of *wh*-drop
  - syntax and pragmatics of *wh*-drop
  - analysis
  - open questions

## 2 Basic properties of *wh*-drop in Berlin German

- It requires the particle *'n* (Gärtner & Pankau 2024 for *'n* in Berlin German), cf. (6)
  - Although *'n* is typically taken as the *sine qua non* for *wh*-drop (Bayer 2010, Pankau 2020), Northern Dutch challenges this assumption (Marcel den Dikken, p.c.), cf. (7)

- (6) a.  $\checkmark$  *Hast=n du \_ jekooft?*  
           have=N you bought  
           ‘What did you buy?’  
       b. \**Hast du \_ jekooft?*
- (7) *Kost m’r dat \_ ?*  
       costs me this  
       ‘What does this cost me?’

- It affects only and basically all inanimate *wh*-phrases

- (8) *Siehst=n du da \_ ?*  
       see=N you there  
       ‘**V What** / \* **who** do you see there?’

- (9) a. *Jeht=s=n dir heute \_ ?*  
       goes=it=N you today  
       ‘**How** do you feel today?’  
       b. *Willst=n du \_ kommen?*  
           want=N you come  
           ‘**When** do you want to come?’  
       c. *Bist=n du grade \_ ?*  
           are=N you even  
           ‘**Where** are you right now?’

- (10) *wh-R-pronoun wo ‘what’, literally ‘where’*

- a. *Wo ham=se=n dè \_ bei erwischt?*  
       **where<sub>R</sub>** have=they=N you at caught  
       ‘**What** did they catch you at?’  
       [‘at what’ = *bei wat* → *wobei* “whereby”]  
       b. *Ham=se=n dè \_ bei erwischt?*

- (11) a. *why-like wat*  
       *Kiekt=n du so?*  
       look=N you so  
       ‘**Why** do you look at me?’  
       b. *wat-für split*  
       *Hast=n du [\_ für Frauen] jeditet?*  
       have=N you for women dated  
       ‘**[What women]** did you date?’

- SpecCP must be radically empty

- (12) a. \**[\_ Für Frauen]<sub>i</sub> hast=n du t<sub>i</sub> jeditet?*  
           for women have=N you dated  
           ‘[What women] did you date?’  
       b. \**Wer hat=n \_ jesacht?*  
           who has=N said  
           ‘Who said what?’

- It is restricted to root clauses

- (13) a. \**Ick frach m’r, der=n da \_ macht.*  
       I ask me he=N there makes  
       b.  $\checkmark$  *Ick frach m’r, macht der=n da \_.*  
       I ask me makes he=N there  
       ‘I wonder what he’s doing there.’

### 3 Syntax of *wh*-drop: clause-bound A'-movement/scrambling

#### 3.1 A'-movement

- *wh*-drop licenses parasitic gaps

(14) *Hast=n du, ohne* <sub>-PG</sub> *gekaut zu haben, \_* *glei wieder ausjespuckt?*  
have=N you without chewed to have soon again spit out  
'What did you spit out immediately without having chewed?'

- *wh*-drop is only possible with movable *wh*-R-pronouns

(15) a. *Wo<sub>i</sub> hast=n du dè [t<sub>i</sub> für] engagiert?*  
where<sub>R</sub> have=N you you for engaged  
'What did you engage in?'  
a'. *Wo<sub>i</sub> ham=se=n dè [t<sub>i</sub> bei] erwünscht?*  
where<sub>R</sub> have=they=N you at caught  
'What did they catch you at?'  
b. \**Wo<sub>i</sub> hast=n du dè [t<sub>i</sub> durch] entwickelt?*  
where<sub>R</sub> have=N you you through developed  
'What made you develop?'  
b'. \**Wo<sub>i</sub> hast=n du [t<sub>i</sub> jehng] gekämpft?*  
where<sub>R</sub> have=N you against fought  
'What did you fight against?'

(16) a. *Hast=n du dè [\_ für] engagiert?*  
have=N you you for engaged  
a'. *Ham=se=n dè [\_ bei] erwünscht?*  
have=they=N you at caught  
b. \**Hast=n du dè [\_ durch] entwickelt?*  
have=N you you through developed  
b'. \**Hast=n du [\_ jehng] gekämpft?*  
have=N you against fought

- *wh*-drop is island-sensitive (vP-internal vs. DP-internal *wh*-R-pronouns)

(17) a. *Wo<sub>i</sub> hat=r=n sè [t<sub>i</sub> mit] beschäftigt?*  
where<sub>R</sub> has=he=N REFL with dealt.with  
'What did he deal with?'  
b. \**Wo<sub>i</sub> hat=r=n seine [Beschäftjung [t<sub>i</sub> mit]] beendet?*  
where<sub>R</sub> has=he=N his occupation with finished  
'What did he finish his occupation with?'

(18) a. *Hat=r=n sè [\_ mit] beschäftigt?*  
has=he=N REFL with dealt.with  
b. \**Hat=r=n seine [Beschäftjung [\_ mit]] beendet?*  
has=he=N his occupation with finished

### 3.2 Clause-boundedness

- *wh*-drop is impossible out of finite clauses

- (19) a. *Wo<sub>i</sub> glaubst=n du, dass=it t<sub>i</sub> hinjeht?*  
where believe=N you that=it goes to  
'Where do you think we're going?'
- b. <sup>?</sup> *Wo<sub>i</sub> glaubst=n du, dass=r [t<sub>i</sub> mit] zufrieden is?*  
where<sub>R</sub> believe=N you that=he with happy is  
'What do you think he is happy with?'

- (20) a. *\*Glaubst=n du, dass=it \_ hinjeht?*  
believe=N you that=it goes to  
'Where do you think we're going?'
- b. *\*Glaubst=n du, dass=r [\_ mit] zufrieden is?*  
believe=N you that=he with happy is  
'What do you think he is happy with?'

- *wh*-drop is impossible out of extraposed (aka non-restructuring) infinitives

- (21) a. *Wat<sub>i</sub> hat=r=n bestätigt, t<sub>i</sub> besessen zu haben?*  
what has=he=N confirmed owned to have  
'What did he confirm to have owned?'
- b. <sup>?</sup> *Wo<sub>i</sub> hat=r=n bestätigt, sè [t<sub>i</sub> für] engagiert zu haben?*  
where<sub>R</sub> has=he=N confirmed REFL for engaged to have  
'What did he confirm to have been engaged in?'

- (22) a. *\*Hat=r=n bestätigt, \_ besessen zu haben?*  
has=he=N confirmed owned to have  
'What did he confirm to have owned?'
- b. *\*Hat=r=n bestätigt, sè [\_ für] engagiert zu haben?*  
has=he=N confirmed REFL for engaged to have  
'What did he confirm to have been engaged in?'

- *wh*-drop is severely degraded in ATB constructions

- (23) a. *Wat hast=n du t<sub>i</sub> in=n Mund jenomm und t<sub>i</sub> glei wieda ausjespuckt?*  
what have=N you in=the mouth taken and soon again spit out  
'What did you eat and spit out immediately?'
- b. <sup>???</sup> *Hast=n du \_ in'n Mund jenommen und \_ glei wieder ausjespuckt?*  
have=N you in=the mouth taken and soon again spit out  
'What did you eat and spit out immediately?'

- NB: *wh*-drop is fine with partial movement, supporting an indirect dependency approach

- (24) *Glaubst=n du \_, wo=t hinjeht?*  
believe=N you where=it goes to  
'Where do you think that we will go to?'

### 3.3 *wh*-drop as scrambling

- *wh*-drop is fine out of so-called *third construction* (TC) infinitives
  - TC: extraposition + movement to a clause-internal position of the selecting verb
  - Whether an infinitive is a TC infinitive depends on the selecting verb

- (25) a. \**Er hat=it<sub>i</sub> bestätigt, t<sub>i</sub> besessen zu haben.* [non-TC]  
 he has=it confirmed owned to have  
 'He confirmed to have owned it.'
- b. *Er hat=it<sub>i</sub> versucht, t<sub>i</sub> zu koofen.* [TC]  
 he has=it tried to buy  
 'He tried to buy it.'

- Regular *wh*-movement is fine from both TC and non-TC infinitives

- (26) a. **Wat<sub>i</sub>** *hat=r=n bestätigt, t<sub>i</sub> besessen zu haben?* [non-TC]  
 what has=he=N confirmed owned to have  
 'What did he confirm to have owned?'
- b. **Wat<sub>i</sub>** *hat=r=n versucht, t<sub>i</sub> zu koofen?* [TC]  
 what has=he=N tried to buy  
 'What did he try to buy?'

- *wh*-drop, however, is only licit from TC infinitives

- (27) a. \**Hat=r=n bestätigt, \_ besessen zu haben?* [non-TC]  
 has=he=N confirmed owned to have  
 'What did he confirm to have owned?'
- b. *Hat=r=n versucht, \_ zu koofen?* [TC]  
 has=he=N tried to buy  
 'What did he try to buy?'

- Similarly, R-pronouns cannot be moved out of TC infinitives to a clause internal position, they do allow *wh*-movement to SpecCP, but they do not allow *wh*-drop

- (28) a. \**Er hat da<sub>i</sub> versucht, sè [t<sub>i</sub> für] zu engagieren.*  
 he has there<sub>R</sub> tried REFL for to engage  
 'He tried to engage in it.'
- b. **Wo<sub>i</sub>** *hat=r=n versucht, sè [t<sub>i</sub> für] zu engagieren?*  
 where<sub>R</sub> has=he=N tried REFL for to engage  
 'What did he try to have been engaged in?'
- c. \**Hat=r=n versucht, sè [\_ für] zu engagieren?*  
 has=he=N tried REFL for to engage  
 'What did he try to have been engaged in?'

- *wh*-drop patterns with clause-internal movement out of TC infinitives  
 clause-internal movement out of TC infinitives is scrambling (Müller 2019)  
 → *wh*-drop is scrambling
- NB: scrambling is clause-bound and shows A'-movement properties (Webelhuth 1992)

## 4 Pragmatics of *wh*-drop

### 4.1 *wh*-drop & interlocutor-addressee

- *wh*-drop is restricted in a way that regular constituent questions are not
- All these restrictions can be subsumed under a single condition

(29) Condition for *wh*-drop in Berlin German

*wh*-drop in BG is possible if the question is directed to the interlocutor-addressee

- Types of addressees (Portner et al. 2019: 4; cf. also McCawley 1998, 1999; Goffman 1978):  
addressee = the person to whom the speaker directs his utterance  
interlocutor-addressee = the persons to whom the speaker directs his utterance  
(IA) and with whom the speaker ~~interacts~~ can potentially interact

### 4.2 Pragmatic restrictions on *wh*-drop

- Consequence of (29): *wh*-drop is impossible whenever there is no IA
  - Type 1: mismatch between addressee and IA
  - Type 2: there is an addressee, but not an IA
- Type 1: mismatch between addressee and IA
  - *wh*-drop is bad when the addressee is 'shifted'

(30) [I want to suggest something to my friend Hannah and I tell her:]

a. \**Frag=n ma, macht=r=n da \_?*  
ask=him PRT makes=he=N there  
'Ask him, what does he do there?'

b. *√Frag=n ma, wat<sub>i</sub> macht=r=n da t<sub>i</sub>?*  
ask=him PRT what makes=he=N there

→ the IA is Hannah, but the question is directed towards Peter

- *wh*-drop is incompatible with the generic use of 2.SG *du* 'you'

(31) [I discuss with my friend John a problem he faces at work, and I say: "Let's think,]

a. *Kannst=n du da jetzt \_ machen?"*  
can=N you there now make  
'What can <sup>√</sup>you<sub>John</sub> / \*you<sub>GEN</sub> do now?'

b. *Wat<sub>i</sub> kannst=n du da jetzt t<sub>i</sub> machen?"*  
what can=N you there now make  
'What can <sup>√</sup>you<sub>John</sub> / <sup>√</sup>you<sub>GEN</sub> do now?'

→ the IA is John, but *du* picks up an arbitrary addressee

- *wh*-drop is fine with some, but not all interjections

(32) <sup>√</sup>*Verdammt* / <sup>√</sup>*Ey* / ??*Scheiße* / \**Mist* / \**Häh*, *machst=n du da \_?*  
damn hey shit shit Eh? make=N you there  
Damn/hey/shit/Eh?, what are you doing there?'

→ those that are fine allow vocatives, and hence allow an IA to match *du* 'you'  
 the others are self-addressed, which does not match the use of *du* 'you'

(33) <sup>v</sup>*Verdammt Daniel!* / <sup>v</sup>*Ey Daniel!* / <sup>??</sup>*Scheiße Daniel!* / <sup>\*</sup>*Mist Daniel!* / <sup>\*</sup>*Häh? Daniel!*  
 'Damn Daniel! / Hey Daniel! / Shit Daniel! / Shit Daniel! / Eh? Daniel!'

- Type 2: there is an addressee, but not an IA

- *wh*-drop is bad in prayers

(34) [I pray to God and confess my recent sins and I don't know what to do, so I say:]

- <sup>\*</sup>*Soll=ick=n jetz \_ machen?*  
 shall=I=N now make  
 'What shall I do now?'
- <sup>v</sup>*Wat soll=ick=n jetz t<sub>i</sub> machen?*  
 what shall=I=N now make

- *wh*-drop is bad when talking to pets or objects (like cars)

(35) [Rocky has something in its snout / Betsy seems to have a scratch.]

- <sup>\*</sup>*Hast=n du da \_ ?*  
 have=N you there  
 'What do you have there?'
- <sup>v</sup>*Wat hast=n du da t<sub>i</sub> ?*  
 What have=N you there

- *wh*-drop is bad in utterances without an IA

(36) [I call my friend John, but he doesn't pick up the phone.]

- <sup>\*</sup>*Bist=n du bloß \_ !?*  
 are=N you only  
 'Where are you!?'
- <sup>v</sup>*Wo<sub>i</sub> bist=n du bloß t<sub>i</sub> !?*  
 where are=N you only

- NB: utterances without an IA are different from self-addressed utterances

(37) [I call my friend John, but he doesn't pick up the phone.]

- <sup>v</sup>*Is=n der bloß \_ !?*  
 is=N he only  
 'Where is he!?'
- <sup>v</sup>*Wo<sub>i</sub> is=n der bloß t<sub>i</sub> !?*  
 where are=N he only
- <sup>v</sup>*Scheiße / Mist, is=n der bloß \_ ?*  
 shit is=N he only  
 'Shit, where is he?'

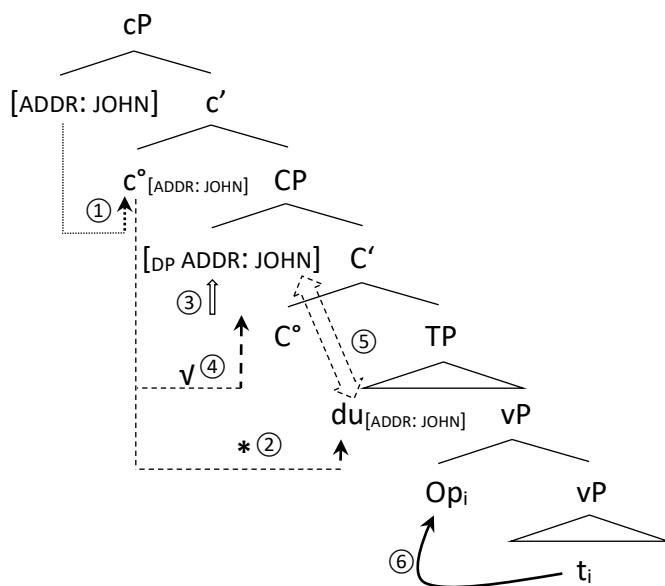
## 5 Analysis

- Assumptions
  - There is a cP on top of CP hosting SPEAKER and ADDRESSEE ('neo-performative analysis') (Portner et al. 2019, Haegeman & Hill 2013, Zanuttini 2008, Speas & Tenny 2003, a.o.)
  - ADDRESSEE's are represented as a feature [ADDR:  $\alpha$ ]
  - This feature can be transmitted to c°, which in turn must bind a CP-internal featurally identical DP that indicates the IA (Portner et al. 2019: 23-25)
  - If no such DP is independently present, a silent DP indicating the IA is merged in SpecCP and bound by c°
  - Within CP, all values for ADDR must be identical
  - The DP in SpecCP blocks *wh*-movement and an empty operator is scrambled instead
- *wh*-drop  $\approx$  repair strategy to circumvent the blocked regular formation of a *wh*-question

### 5.1 Type 1 problem: mismatch between addressee and IA

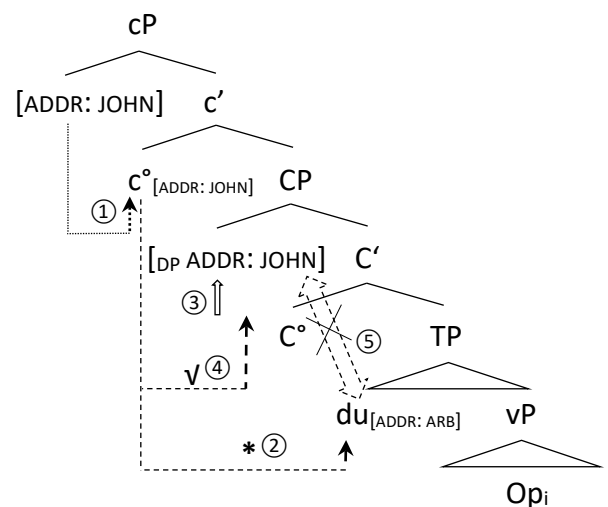
- (31) [I discuss with my friend John a problem he faces at work, and I say: "Let's think,]  
*Kannst=n du da jetzt \_ machen?"*  
 can=N you there now make  
 'What can <sup>v</sup>you<sub>John</sub> / \* you<sub>GEN</sub> do now?'

<sup>v</sup> Kannst=n du<sub>John</sub> da jetzt machen?



- ① feature transmission to c°
  - ② binding blocked
  - ③ merging of DP = IA
  - ④ binding possible
  - ⑤ identity of ADDR-values
  - ⑥ scrambling of Op
- *wh*-drop

\* Kannst=n du<sub>GEN</sub> da jetzt machen?



- ① feature transmission to c°
  - ② binding blocked
  - ③ merging of DP = IA
  - ④ binding possible
  - ⑤ **no** identity of ADDR-values
- **no** *wh*-drop



## 5.2 Type 2 problem: there is an addressee, but not an IA

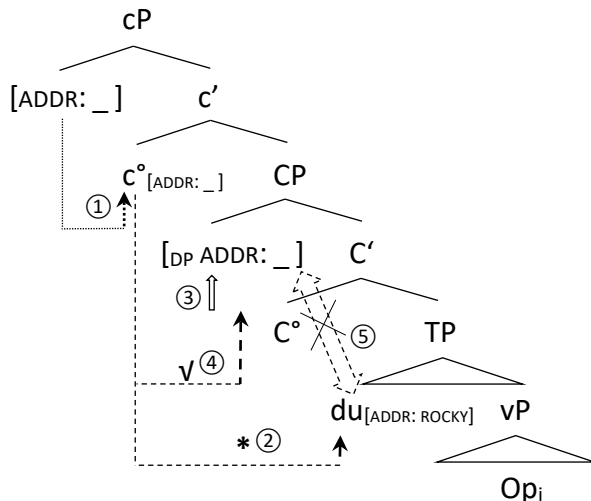
(35) [Rocky has something in its snout / Betsy seems to have a scratch.]

\**Hast=n du da \_ ?*

have=N you there

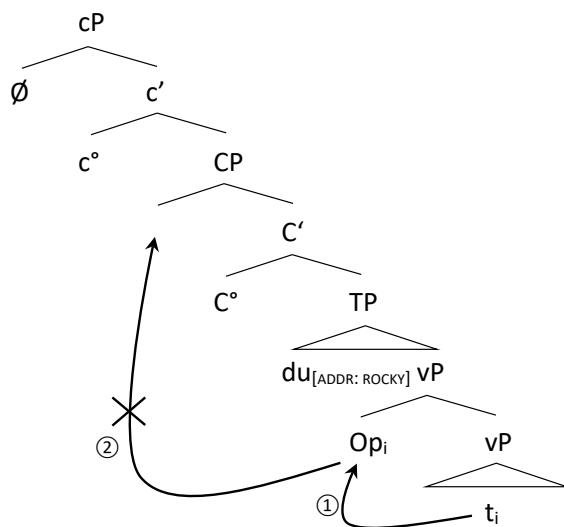
'What do you have there?'

### OPTION 1



- absence of an IA = [ADDR: \_]
- no *wh*-drop because of the non-identical ADDR-values

### OPTION 2



- absence of an IA is literal absence
- no *wh*-drop because step ② is blocked: scrambling in German must not target SpecCP

## 6 Open questions and some preliminary answers

- Why is 'n required?
  - 'n marks an interrogative clause as true question and true questions require an IA
  - BUT: an IA does not imply a true question, many special questions also have an IA
- Why not move a *wh*-phrase to SpecvP? Why must it be absent?
  - *wh*-phrases cannot be scrambled, unless they are D-linked (Wiltschko 1997), and D-linking with simple *wh*-phrases in German requires minimally two simple *wh*-phrases
  - BUT: what then excludes multiple *wh*-drop?
- Why only inanimate *wh*-phrases?
  - Why must the empty operator scramble?

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