# Aspects of definiteness in relative sentence compounds in Mennonite Low German

*Göz Kaufmann (University of Freiburg, Germany)*

Examples (1a-g) illustrate seven Mennonite Low German (MLG) translations of the sentence *The doctor who wants to see my foot is very worried*. These relative sentence compounds form part of a data set of roughly 14,000 sentences resulting from the translation of 46 stimulus sentences (presented in either English, Spanish, or Portuguese) by 313 North and South American speakers of MLG (cf. KAUFMANN 2007):

(1)    a.      *de Doktor **waut** <u>min'n Fut will sehen</u> is sehr besorgt* (USA-1)
               the doctor that my foot wants.VERB1 see.VERB2 is very worried

        b.      *de Doktor **waut da** <u>will minen Fuut sehen</u> is sehr besorgt* (Mexico-26)
               the doctor that 'there' wants.VERB1 my foot see.VERB2 is very worried

        c.      *de Doktor **der waut** <u>min'n Fuut sehen will</u> is [0.5] sehr [0.6] nieschierig* (Mexico-43)
               the doctor who that my foot see.VERB2 wants.VERB1 is […] very […] curious

        d.      *der Doktor **daut** <u>will min Fuut besehen</u> [0.6] is [0.9] sehr worried* (USA-75)
               the doctor that wants.VERB1 my foot see.VERB2 […] is […] very worried

        e.      *de Doktor **dei** <u>min Fuut sehne will</u> is sehr besorgt* (Paraguay-35)
               the doctor who my foot see.VERB2 wants.VERB1 is very worried

        f.      *de Doktor **wei** <u>an mine Fuut sehne will</u> is sehr besorgt um mi* (Paraguay-31)
               the doctor who at my feet see.VERB2 wants.VERB1 is very worried about myself

        g.      *de Doktor [0.7] **waut da** <u>min Fuut sehne will</u> **DEI** is [eh] [1.1] sehr begone* (Bolivia-4)
               the doctor […] that 'there' my foot see.VERB2 wants.VERB1 he is [eh] […] very experienced

As the reader can easily detect, there is a huge amount of variation in (1a-g). Besides lexical differences with regard to *worried*, structural variation is concentrated in three fields:

(i) Six relative markers (in bold print: relative particles *waut (da)*, *daut*; relative pronouns *dei*, *der waut*, *wei*)

(ii) The presence of a resumptive pronoun in the matrix clause (in bold print and capitals in (1g))

(iii) Three types of verb clusters in the relative clause (underlined: ObjNP/PP-V2-V1, V1-ObjNP-V2, ObjNP-V1-V2)

On first sight, one may not reckon with interdependencies between these (and other) language phenomena. Closer inspection, however, shows several intriguing co-occurrence patterns, whose analysis may further our understanding of the role of definiteness in MLG. Importantly, a variety like Standard German does not allow for such an analysis, since (i) and (iii) do not show any variation at all and (ii) is of rather marginal acceptability.

The first co-occurrence pattern is that the relative clause in *The doctor **who wants to see my foot** is very worried* normally appears with the MLG default marker *waut*; it hampers the appearance of relative markers featuring a {d-}-segment (especially *dei*/*die*/*daut* and *waut da*). As this segment is normally taken to signal definiteness in German varieties (cf. for causal *da* 'since' BLÜHDORN 2006: 326–332), one would like to know why these non-default

markers are significantly more frequent in relative clauses like *I don't like people **who make a lot of noise*** or *Who is the guy **who could have saved my brother's life***?

A second co-occurrence pattern is that informants who frequently use *waut **da*** or the relative pronouns *dei*/*die*/*daut* also use resumptive pronouns frequently. (1g) is a good example for a possible case of syntactic tripling (cf. for syntactic doubling BARBIERS 2013): If {d} is indeed a marker of definiteness, the informant producing (1g) marks definiteness on the subject *de Doktor*, on the relative marker *waut **da***, and on the resumptive pronoun *dei*.

A third case of a structural co-occurrence is that relative clauses introduced by {d-}-markers, especially by the (complex) particles *daut* and *waut **da***, show a marked preference for the right-branching sequence *V1-ObjNP-V2* as in (1b+d) (Verb Projection Raising) and hardly ever appear with the right-branching sequence *ObjNP-V1-V2* (Verb Raising). This is unexpected since the preferred right-branching sequence in MLG relative clauses is *Obj-V1-V2* (cf. (1a)). Possible reasons for this may be the original function of *daut* as MLG default complementizer (*daut* cannot be a neuter relative pronoun in this case), the curious element *da* in *waut **da***, which exclusively appears in subject function (FLEISCHER (2004: 224) mentions this marker for a North Saxon dialect), or the information status of the respective relative clause. This status may further both certain relative markers and this particular cluster variant.

All three co-occurrence patterns are directly or indirectly related to relative markers featuring the segment {d}. This suggests a connection to the information status of the clauses in which they occur. Besides this, questions of clause linkage and syntactic doubling will be central to my talk. As a side effect, I will be able to show once again that relative and complement clauses share many formal and conceptual features (cf., e.g., ARSENIJEVIĆ 2009 and LEHMANN 1984: 325–329).

*Used literature*

Arsenijević, Boban (2009). 'Clausal complementation as relativization' in: Lingua 119: 39–50.

Barbiers, Sjef (2013). 'Where is syntactic variation?' in: Auer, Peter, Javier Caro Reina, and Göz Kaufmann (eds.). Language Variation – European Perspective IV: Selected papers from the Sixth International Conference on Language Variation in Europe (ICLaVE 6). Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins. 1–26.

Blühdorn, Hardarik (2006). 'Zur Semantik kausaler Satzverbindungen: Integration, Fokussierung, Definitheit und modale Umgebung' in: Linguistici e Filologici Online. Rivista Telematica del Dipartimento di Linguistica dell'Università di Pisa (SLiFO) 3/2. 311–338.

Fleischer, Jürg (2004). 'A typology of relative clauses in German dialects' in: Kortmann, Bernd (ed.). Dialectology meets Typology: Dialect Grammar from a Cross-Linguisitic Perspective. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter. 211–243.

Kaufmann, Göz (2007). 'The Verb Cluster in Mennonite Low German: A new approach to an old topic' in: Linguistische Berichte 210. 147–207.

Lehmann, Christian (1984). Der Relativsatz: Typologie seiner Strukturen, Theorie seiner Funktionen, Kompendium seiner Grammatik. Tübingen: Gunter Narr.