

The particle *de* in Mansfeld German

Introduction

It has been known for a long time that many East Middle German dialects feature the particle *de* in embedded clauses. Despite this, there still doesn't exist an analysis for the conditions that regulate its occurrence. In this talk, I aim to fill this gap for one East Middle German dialect, namely Mansfeld German. Based on an analysis of dialect texts, I argue that *de* in Mansfeld German licenses traces of moved non-selected phrases.

Background

There are various descriptions for *de* found in the literature. *de* is first mentioned in Albrecht (1881) for the dialect of Leipzig. According to this description, *de* is restricted to relative clauses with subject relative pronouns or the locative relative pronoun *wo* 'where'. Weise (1900) in his description of the syntax of the dialect of Altenburg also mentions *de* and notes that it is restricted to relative clauses. However, the Altenburg dialect differs from the dialect of Leipzig in that *de* occurs irrespective of the syntactic function of the relative pronoun, that is, *de* occurs in all relative clauses. Baumgärtner (1959) in his description of the dialect of Leipzig gives yet a third characterization of the distribution of *de*. According to him, *de* only occurs with *wh*-words, irrespective of whether they occur in relative clause or embedded questions. Apart from being partly incompatible with each other, these previous descriptions of *de* suffer from two defects. First, they are fragmentary. They do not provide a full description of *de*'s distribution but only mention it in passing. Second, and more problematic, they lack the relevant syntactic categories that would allow for a coherent description. For example, some descriptions conflate embedded interrogatives with relative clause. Consequently, such descriptions don't allow gaining a deeper understanding of the nature of *de*.

The distribution of *de* in Mansfeld German

In order to gain such a deeper understanding of *de*, I investigated its distribution for one specific East Middle German dialect, namely Mansfeld German, a North East Thuringian dialect spoken around the cities of Mansfeld and Eisleben. In particular, I investigated recent dialect texts. Regarding the distribution, four results were obtained. First, *de* is restricted embedded clauses. There is not a single instance of *de* occurring in main clauses. Second, *de* appears in various sorts of embedded clauses, namely in all types of relative clauses (1-6), in clefts (7), and in embedded questions (8). Importantly, not all embedded clauses contain *de*. The third result is that *de* only occurs in embedded clauses where movement occurred (9). Fourth, zooming in in the examples, a curious asymmetry emerged. As shown in table 1, *de* only occurs with moved non-arguments, that is, with subjects or adjuncts (10). The two objects relative clauses seen in table 1 that occur with *de* both contain the ACC.PL relative pronouns *die*, which happens to be syncretic with the NOM.PL relative pronoun *die*. In other words, relative clauses with *die* still look on the surface like a subject relative clause. Moreover, there are no instances of an object relative clause with the unambiguous ACC.SG.MASC relative pronoun *dän* where *de* appears.

Analysis

To explain the properties of *de*, I assume that traces in Mansfeld German must be head-governed. Head-government refers to an idea of the GB-era that traces need to be separately licensed, namely by the *Empty Category Principle* (ECP, cf. Hornstein & Weinberg 1995). Reviving this idea paves the way for understanding the distribution of *de* in Mansfeld German. Head-government requires a lexical governor. Objects are head-governed as they are selected by a verb. Subjects and adjuncts, however, are not selected by a verb, hence require a distinct lexical licenser. The empty C° in embedded clause with moved phrases is not lexical. *de*, however, is a lexical element. I therefore analyze *de* in Mansfeld German as a lexical complementizer inserted to satisfy the constraint on head-government. That *de* is restricted to embedded clause also follows. In main clauses, C° is occupied by the finite verb (due to the V2 property of German), the verb is a lexical element, can head-govern, and so no other element is needed.

- (1) appositive relative clauses
Huwert, der de immer 'n jruhß'n Rachen jehatt hutte, ...
Huwert, who DE always a big throat had had
‘Huwert, who always had a big mouth, ...’
- (2) restrictive relative clauses with *d*-pronouns
Denn jabs do ah immer Leite, die de allemah an Finster hungken,
then gave it there also always people who DE always at window hung
‘There were always people that spent all day at the window.’
- (3) restrictive relative clauses with *wh*-pronouns
Ä nahmb sei zwahtes Ah aus d'r Ficke, was de ah su blau war,
he took his second egg out the pocket what DE also so blue was
‘He took his second egg from his pocket that so blue was.’
- (4) light-headed relative clauses
Unn alles was de do in'n Klahderschranke hungk
and all what DE there in the wardrobe hung
‘And all that was hanging in the wardrobe’
- (5) free relative clauses
Wer de zeärschte komplett als Mannschaft ewwern Ziehelschtrich kahmb, der
who DE first entirely as team over the finish line came he
‘He, who first as a team crossed the finish line completely, ...’
- (6) continuative relative clauses
D'r Schtrom war wäck, was de allemah an'n Ahmde nach darzu kahmb.
the electricity was away what DE also at the evening still thereto came
‘The electricity was gone, which that evening came in addition.’
- (7) clefts
Unn wedder warns de Jungens, die de nich hingene warn.
and again were.it the boys who DE not at the back were
‘And it were again the boys that didn’t show up at the back.’
- (8) embedded interrogative clauses
Ich wahß nich meh wer de anne Kewwelschpritze ahnjeschleppt brochte.
I know not more who DE a stirrup pump dragged along brought
‘I don’t know anymore who brought a stirrup pump.’
- (9) *de* only occurs in embedded clauses where movement occurred
- (10) *de* only occurs with moved non-arguments

clause type	Σ	subject	object	adjunct
<i>appositive RC</i>	17	17	-	-
<i>d-RRC</i>	35	33	2	-
<i>w-RRC</i>	6	5	-	1
<i>LHRRC</i>	2	2	-	-
<i>FR</i>	5	5	-	-
<i>continuative RC</i>	1	1	-	-
<i>clefts</i>	2	2	-	-
<i>wh-questions</i>	15	7	-	8

table 1: distribution of *de* in Mansfeld German

SOURCE Harry Bernhardt. without year. *Mansfelder Mundohrt*. 7 issues.

REFERENCES Albrecht, Karl. 1881. *Die Leipziger Mundart*. Arnholdische Buchhandlung: Leipzig. Baumgärtner, Klaus. 1959. *Zur Syntax der Umgangssprache in Leipzig*. Akademie Verlag: Berlin. Hornstein, Norbert & Amy Weinberg. 1995. The ECP. In: Gert Webelhuth (ed.), *Government and Binding Theory and the Minimalist Program*. Oxford: OUP, 241–296. Spangenberg, Karl. 1993. *Laut- und Formeninventar thüringischer Dialekte*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag. Weise, Oskar. 1900. *Syntax der Altenburger Mundart*. Breitkopf & Härtel: Leipzig.