Oneness > Indefiniteness > Impreciseness in Numbers and Clock Time >
Reciprocal Disorder – in Bavarian, where else

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## 1.	From 'one' to indefinite, as usual

It is exceedingly common for the cardinal numeral 'one' to be reanalysed as an indefinite form, pronoun and/or article. Like often elsewhere, this also happened in all the Germanic languages. In Bavarian, an Upper German dialect mainly spoken in the German state of Bavaria and in neighbouring Austria, while arguably rich in old non-Germanic admixtures, 'one'-derived indefinites are part of the heritage that is shared with the rest of German.

Thus, corresponding to *ein-s* and *ein-* in Standard German, the numeral 'one' in Bavarian is *oàn-s* as a counting form and *oàn-* otherwise, inflecting for gender, case, and number (if as a singulare tantum) in an adjectival manner. In many regional varieties of Bavarian /n/ induces nasalization on a preceding stressed vowel or diphthong and syllable-finally tends to drop; thus, the numeral (like the indefinites based on it) is [O‡å‡(n)] rather than [Oån].

In this same form, *oàn-* also serves as Bavarian's chief indefinite pronoun, and is inflectionally indistinguishable from the numeral used without a noun, except that, unlike the numeral, it also has plural forms:

(1)		MASCULINE	NEUTER	FEMININE	PLURAL
	NOMINATIVE	*oàn-à*	*oàn-s*	*oàn-e*	*oà*
	ACCUSATIVE	*oàn-n*	*oàn-s*	*oàn-e*	*oà*
	DATIVE	*oàn-n/oàn-m*	*oàn-n/oàn-m*	*oàn-à*	*oàn-e*

The inflectional endings transparently correspond to those of Standard German (*oàn-à* = *ein-er*, etc.), though Standard German lacks a plural (*oà* = *ein-e*, as in *kein-e* 'no'), using

the plural of the interrogative *welch-e(n)* in indefinite function instead (Plank 1994). Owing to the reduction of final nasal clusters, accusative and dative singular come out as *oàn* and *oàm*, with the distinctive dative form in *-m* under threat from the accusative.

Somewhat straining the notion of indefiniteness since the relevant contrast is one of identity (or proximity) and alterity, *oàn-* also occurs in the company of the definite article,[1] typically in syntagmatic contrast with 'the other' and inflecting essentially like a weak adjective: *dà oà(n-e)* 'the one', *de oàn(-à)* 'the ones', etc.

The indefinite article is reduced in segmental substance, but also inflects for gender and case, showing more neutralizations, though:

(2) | | MASCULINE | NEUTER | FEMININE |
|---|---|---|---|
| NOMINATIVE | *à* | *à* | *à* |
| ACCUSATIVE | *à-n* | *à* | *à* |
| DATIVE | *à-n/à-m* | *à-n/à-m* | *à* |
| | (*àràn/àràm*) | (*àràn/àràm*) | (*àrà*) |

The long dative alternants, augmented by extra segments /rå/, are synchronically and diachronically opaque (Standard German has *ein-em, ein-er*); probably, internal /r/ phonologically derives from stem-final /n/. In some southerly varieties there are regular plural forms of the indefinite article, too.

Now, unlike in lots of other languages getting their indefinites from the numeral 'one', including contemporary Standard German and other German dialects, indefiniteness was not the end of the road in Bavarian.   Not altogether unexpectedly, although native grammarians have found this hard to face up to, one might say it was going further downhill with indefinites, or rather with forms derivative of indefinites. But there are always lessons to be learnt from decline. The main lesson in such cases tends to be that there are more ways of declining than one might have thought. What we learn from the particular case at hand, on a more encouraging note, is that there are also more ways of hanging on. Capitalizing on natural conceptual affinities and with the play of morphological and syntactic reanalyses reined in none too strictly, there can

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[1] Perhaps as a nominalized pro-adjective rather than as a pro-noun: unlike in English and like elsewhere in German, noun phrases without a noun do not really need 'one' as a head.

be more in store for a numeral 'one' than to end its grammaticalization career as an indefinite.[2]

2.   Two numerals juxtaposed, plus *(à) ... à* for approximation

In comparison with contemporary Standard German and also with other German dialects, where numerical approximation of this sort is typically expressed through the asyndetic juxtaposition of two neighbouring numerals (3), Bavarian, apparently in all its regional varieties, goes to greater lengths, adding a form *à* in between the two numerals and optionally also in front of the first (4).[3]

(3)   *Ambros säuft jeden Tag sieben acht Bier, Benedikt bloss vier fünf*
       Ambros downs every day seven eight beers, Benedikt only four five
       'Ambros downs some seven or eight beers every day, Benedikt only some four or five'

(4)   *Dà Ambros saufd jedn Dåg (à) sim à achd Bià, dà Bene bloß (à) fiàr à fimf(e)*
       the Ambros downs every day (?) seven ? eight beers, the Bene only (?) four ? five

Ambros may be drinking seven beers per day, or eight, or perhaps also only six or as many as nine, and mutatis mutandis for Bene(dikt): the speaker does not vouch for any precise number, but only for some number in the region of the two numerals given, not including the next round numbers on either side.[4]

The identity of this extra *à* is a problem. One suggestion, probably originating with Schmeller's pioneering *Grammatik* (1821: §775), is that it is a reduced form of the disjunctive connector *oder* 'or'. This would make semantic sense, since the non-

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[2] The origin of indefinites has received far more attention in the grammaticalization literature than their further progress; noun phrase markers of some sort is what they are known to be able to be turned into. Still, though not widely reported, it is unlikely that scenarios like those to be sketched presently are unique to Bavarian.

[3] In spelling Bavarian, in a makeshift orthography which somewhat exaggerates the closeness to Standard German (the dialect is hardly written for any practical purposes), what is relevant here is that <à> is used for [å], contrasting with a back <a> [A], and also with mid back <å> [O].

[4] The juxtapositional construction also permits neighbouring ROUND numerals, such as 'fifteen, twenty', 'twenty, thirty', or 'two, three hundred'.

exclusive disjunction of two or more numerals is a crosslinguistically frequent mode of expressing numerical approximation.[5] However, even the most casual of Bavarian speakers would not succeed to reduce ["o….då], with stress on the first syllable, to its unstressed second syllable minus its onset, i.e., to [å].[6] An even bigger mystery on this interpretation is why *à* = *oder* should accompany also the first numeral: *oder* occurs BETWEEN disjuncts, never PRECEDING a FIRST disjunct. Nor can it be argued along such lines, seeking support for the disjunction analysis, that the asyndetic juxtapositional construction, as in (3), is not really so different from the disjunctive construction, but is only a more extreme variant of it, with the connector *oder* not only segmentally reduced but elided altogether. The asyndetic juxtaposition of numerals represents a wholly different strategy of conceptualizing numerical approximation, unrelated to disjunction: its rationale is not to give alternatives but an (abbreviated) enumeration of those numbers falling within the admissible numerical range.

There is another interpretation of *à* in such constructions which is semantically equally plausible and formally entirely unproblematic, and which has plausible ramifications also elsewhere, as will be seen below. On this interpretation, unlike contemporary Standard German and probably unlike other contemporary German dialects, Bavarian has seized on the indefinite article, itself deriving fom the numeral 'one' but synchronically distinct from it, and standardly employs it – or rather a form deriving from it – with a sequence of numerals to indicate that the numerical value is only approximate:

(5)   [(*à*) NUMERAL=*à* NUMERAL] NOUN

The *à* which precedes the first numeral becomes omissible when another numeral follows, presumably owing to this mode of expressing numerical approximation having gotten grammaticalized and hence lending itself more readily to formal simplification. Originally coming associated with the second numeral in a sequence of two, the construction as a whole is tight enough for the second *à* to encliticize onto the first numeral, in line with a general preference in Bavarian (as in

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[6] Self-evidently, another semantically plausible connector, *bis* 'to, through', would not reduce to *à* either.

German in general) for a leftward association of clitics. In fact, there is little evidence to militate against an analysis of the second *à* as a genuine suffix of the first numeral, triggered by the approximative construction of two numerals in a row. Neither *à* is in immediate syntactic construction with a noun (plus perhaps modifiers) within a noun phrase, as is the indefinite article; their co-constituents are the two numerals. This enables the indefinite articles reanalysed as in (5) to appear in noun phrases with a definite article or other definite determiners:

(6) a. *de (à) sim=à achd Bià, de dà Ambros jedn Dåg saufd*
         the (APPROX) seven APPROX eight beers which the Ambros every day downs
     b. *Dà Ambros saufd jedn Dåg seine (à) sim=à achd Bià*
         the Ambros downs every day his (APPROX) seven APPROX eight beers

    Although Bavarian has innovated a regular plural for the indefinite pronoun (and in some varieties also for the indefinite article), the form used for approximation in construction (5) is singular. (With the possible exception of typical counting units, nouns accompanying such approximative numeral sequences are plural – although that used for illustration in (4), *Bià*, happens to have a plural identical to the singular.) As shown above in (2), in nominative singular the indefinite article *à* neutralizes gender; but it does inflect for case, and in other cases genders are distinguished (never all three, though). Used in the approximative construction (5), however, *à* is essentially invariable.

    Thus, in construction (5), owing to its co-constituency and its lack of morphological variability for gender, case, and number, *à* can no longer be identified with the indefinite article. It has become reanalysed as a marker of enclitic or indeed suffixal status whose meaning is 'ill-defined numerical value in the region of the two numerals which the marker is in construction with'.

    In fact, in some varieties of Bavarian, the approximative marker does show phonological variation, taking the form [ån] before vowel, and [å] otherwise; thus, *(à) sim à<u>n</u> achd Bià, (à) fiàr à fimf(e)* in example (4). Underlying postvocalic final consonants, notably nasals, are evanescent in Bavarian, but are retained in hiatus position; when there is no underlying final consonant to be retained, intrusive /r/ is

productively used to avoid hiatus.[7] Which goes to confirm the analysis of approximative *à(n)* as deriving from the indefinite article rather than from, say, *oder* 'or'.

      And there is what looks like another case of formal variation of approximative *à*. After prepositions governing the dative, initial *à*, when present, may also take the form *àrà* (7b), with the second *=à* remaining invariable, though:

(7)   a.   *Mid (à) achd=à nein Bià fahrsd bessà mid à(rà)n Daxi, Walburga*
         b.   *Mid (àrà) achd=à(*rà) nein Bià ...*
               with (APPROX) eight=APPROX nine beers go.you better with a taxi, Walburga
               'With some eight or nine beers you better take a taxi, Walburga'

The longer form *àrà* looks like the longer feminine singular form of the indefinite article (cf. (2)): but this would be the wrong gender, *Bià* 'beer' being neuter (like *Daxi* 'taxi'); and the long forms of the right gender (*àràm/àràn*) are impossible as approximative markers. As will be seen subsequently, there is evidence of morphological material including indefinite-derived *à* having been assembled to yield a clitic or suffix *àr(-)à* to express numerical approximation and related notions in the company of several kinds of hosts, including prepositions: in cases like (7b), we seem to have an instance of it. And it does not even need two numerals in a row to trigger this newly assembled form *àrà* as the sole marker of numerical approximation after dative prepositions:

(8)   a.   *Mid nein Bià ...*
               with (precisely) nine beers ...
         b.   *Mid=àrà nein Bià ...*
               with=APPROX nine beers ...

      One question that remains open is why the basic approximative marker *à* itself does not seem to have caught on also with single numerals, remaining confined to pairs:

(9)   **Dà Ambros saufd jedn Dåg (à) sim=à Bià*

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[7] Far less frequently, hiatus is also avoided by intrusive /n/ in Bavarian.

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the Ambros downs every day (APPROX) seven=APPROX beers

As the pattern is now, $=\grave{a}$ is a marker that comes with an entire construction, (5), consisting of two numerals in a row, rather than expressing a meaning on its own, independent of its construction. But gaining independence would, perhaps, be the next step in its grammatical reanalysis.

Taking this step in fact seems to be facilitated by the presence of another word secondarily utilized for purposes of numerical approximation in Bavarian and elsewhere in German(ic),[8] on its own or in combination with other forms (including possessive pronouns): the manner and amount pro-adverb *so*.

(10)   *Dà Ambros saufd jedn Dåg so(=à) sim Bià*
        the Ambros downs every day so(=APPROX) seven beers

Like the obligatory $\grave{a}$ in sequences of two numerals in construction (5), the optional $\grave{a}$ here has a preceding word to formally associate with, whose meaning, moreover, bears some resemblance to numerals insofar as it is quantificational as least in its deictic use (e.g., *so gross* 'that big'). Arguably, thus, $\grave{a}$ still comes with a whole bipartite construction, [ADVERB=$\grave{a}$ NUMERAL], rather than applying to a numeral as such. An alternative approximative marker with this adverb, incidentally, is the composite form that we have just seen with dative prepositions, *àr(-)à*:

(11)   *… so(=àrà) sim Bià*

And this is not the last context that *àr(-)à* has been spreading to.

Whatever will be its future, tracing approximative $\grave{a}$ to the indefinite article, itself derived from the numeral 'one', leaves a fundamental question unanswered about its past: Precisely HOW did $\grave{a}$ get reanalysed in this function in Bavarian, of all German(ic) varieties? A comparative look at (West) Germanic in the next section will help in piecing together a plausible full story. One part of this story is arguably a tale of metaphorical transfer, and it goes as follows.

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[8] Cf. English *ten or so beers, ten beers or so*.

One thing that is made clear by the vocalic form of the approximative marker is that it is indeed the indefinite article (*à(n)-*), rather than the numeral (*oàn-*), which must have been its immediate source at least in Bavarian. Now, indefiniteness is to do with the reference of a noun phrase: essentially, an indefinite article or also pronoun gives overt recognition of the speaker's assumption that the referent at issue cannot be uniquely identified by the addressee.[9] On notional grounds, it is not really self-evident that forms for indefiniteness are naturally predestined to also serve in the domain of quantification, specifically for expressing numerical approximation. (Though quantificational, the numerical value '1' as such would be even less obvious as a suitable direct source.) As seen rather close to home, namely in (standard) Modern High German, numerical approximation is not inconsistent with the very opposite of indefiniteness; when local adverbs were reanalysed as approximative markers, they came firmly joined with the DEFINITE article, in plural form but now formally invariable: *an/um die fünf Liter* 'around/about the five litres'. In Bavarian itself, incidentally, the only local preposition thus reanalysed as a genuinely dialectal approximative adnumeral is *um* 'around', and it is NOT combined with the definite article, but once more with *àr(-)à* (less commonly also just *à*), already encountered as an approximative marker with dative prepositions and the deictic adverb *so*:

(12)   *Nach umm=(àr)à fimf Mass schlaffd dà Schorsch immà ei*
        after around=APPROX five litres sleeps the Schorsch always in
        'After some five litres Schorsch always falls asleep'

Despite the clear notional distinctness of approximation and indefiniteness, it would not seem too far-fetched, however, to recognize a relationship between them that is sufficiently close to encourage the forging of a metaphorical link. Non-unique identifiability of a precise numerical value would thus be metaphorically derived from non-unique identifiability of a referent.

And Bavarian would not be the only language thus to reanalyse a 'one'-derived indefinite article as a marker of numerical approximation. Close by, there is Italian (as in fact observed by Schmeller 1877: 730), where the indefinite combines with single

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[9] In Bavarian, unlike in Standard German, the indefinite article *à(n)-* accompanies mass nouns as well as singular count nouns, and in some varieties also plural count nouns; but this seems immaterial for the present issue.

numerals (preferably round ones: *un dieci*, *un cinque cento* 'approximately ten, five hundred', literally 'a ten, a five hundred') or also with a sequence of numerals (*un cinque o sei metri* lit. 'a five or six metres'); or even closer, there are its immediate southerly neighbours and old contacts, the Rhaeto-Romance languages (where, however, indefinite-based approximatives, such as *en trenta meters* 'some thirty meters' in Surmeir, are marginal, with derivatives of Latin *vere* 'truly' or *bene* 'well' as approximative adverbials of numerals being far more common). Within (West) Germanic, there is Dutch, where the indefinite article *een*, identical to the numeral 'one', can optionally be added in front of two numerals joined by the specifically approximative connector *à* (*(een) tien à vijftien biertjes* '(some) ten to fifteen beers'), or where *een* on its own renders a single round numeral approximative (*een tien biertjes* 'some ten beers'); and there is also English, which goes for a plural indefinite (*some seven (or eight) beers*; but cf. also *a hundred books* vs. *(one) hundred books*, with *a* implying that the number is approximate).[10] In fact, earlier Standard Modern High German itself had the indefinite article as an approximative marker too, preceding single numerals (*ein drei Jahre warten* 'to wait some three years'; see Grimm & Grimm 1862: 137).[11] None of these languages, however, has two (ex-) indefinites in sequences of two numerals in their accustomed position preceding the noun, *alla Bavarese* (5), but either uses a disjunctive or some other connector between the two numerals (INDEF NUMERAL *or/to*/*INDEF NUMERAL).

　　Pointing out such parallels and divergences is not to imply that Bavarian inherited or borrowed and then adapted. Rather, innovating at some point vis-à-vis the rest of German, perhaps some two or three centuries ago, the indications are that Bavarian has independently reanalysed its indefinite article as an approximative marker in construction (5). Especially when certain predispositions are shared, this does not seem such an unnatural thing to do that one would perforce need a model.

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[10] Not such a far cry from indefinites, the mid-range quantifier *einige* can also function as an approximative marker in Standard German: *Ambros säuft jeden Tag einige sieben Biere* 'Ambros downs some seven beers every day'.

[11] In such uses, *ein* is is almost invariably invariable. Sanders (1876: 353) records one case of an inflected form: *ein-e 2 Stunden* 'some two hours', where *-e* can be interpreted as feminine singular, agreeing in gender as if the noun where singular, or also as an innovated plural (otherwise only attested in Bavarian), provoked by the noun phrase having plural reference.

3.   Unit noun followed by numeral, plus *(àr)à* for approximation

Tracing numerical approximation to an indefinite source also accounts for another somewhat enigmatic form in expressions from the same domain:

(13)   *Dà Lenz håd (à) Schdugg (àr)à zwoà / zwanzg(e) gfressn*

         the Lenz has ? piece ? two / twenty eaten

         'Lenz has eaten approximately two/twenty units'

With the standard all-purpose unit noun *Schdugg* 'piece', numerals follow rather than precede when they are intended only approximately. Again, we find *à* used with the unit noun and with the numeral, with the latter alternating with a form *àrà*. If *Schdugg* were to be analysed as a typical numeral classifier, one would expect a further noun after the numeral, denoting the kind of entity counted (14a); but that is far less common than having such a noun fronted (14b):

(14)   a.   ??*Dà Lenz håd (à) Schdugg (àr)à zwoà / zwanzg(*e) Gnedl gfressn*

                  the Lenz has ? piece ? two / twenty dumplings eaten

         b.   *Gnedl håd dà Lenz (à) Schdugg (àr)à zwoà / zwanzg(e) gfressn*

                  dumplings the Lenz has ? piece ? two / twenty eaten

When *Schdugg* is used without *(àr)à* and with a numeral preceding and a noun following it, the classificatory reading tends to be superseded by a partitive one:

(15)   *Dà Lenz håd zwoà Schdugg Gnedl gfressn*

         the Lenz has two pieces/bites dumpling eaten

Thus, in the construction at issue, illustrated in (13), the numeral is a co-constituent of the preceding noun, *Schdugg*, whose function is classificatory without being a straightforward numeral classifier, and approximation is expressed through postposing the numeral plus *à* and *(àr)à* added before and after *Schdugg* respectively.

         It was again Schmeller (1877: 730) who suggested a possible interpretation of this construction, or indeed two. One is that *à* with *Schdugg* is an indefinite article or

the numeral 'one', and *à* with the numeral is again *oder*: 'one piece or two'. On top of the objections above to reducing *oder* to *à*, which extend to *àrà* too, the latter self-evidently makes little compositional sense when the numerals are higher: 'one piece or twenty'. And even with 'two' as the second numeral, what it combines with (synchronically) is not the numeral *oàn-*, as would be expected on this interpretation, but a form close to the indefinite article, *à*.

As a more logical alternative for all numerical values, Schmeller himself envisaged a cross-referential partitive construction:

(16)   *dà Schdugg iàr(-à) zwanzge*
       the-GEN.PL piece-GEN.PL their(-GEN.PL) twenty

However, despite the superior semantics and the continuing availability of traces of a genitive (especially of personal pronouns) especially in such partitive constructions, there remains a formal problem insofar as the putative source of *(àr)à*, the possessive pronoun cross-referencing the unit noun in the partitive genitive, in basic form (*ià(r)*) or itself in the genitive (*iàr-a*), does not regularly reduce to *(àr)à*. And the genitival definite article on the unit noun, *dà*, does not reduce to *à* either.

Given that we are again dealing with numerical approximation, why not interpret the dubious forms as above, i.e., as deriving from the indefinite article?[12]

One has to note, first, that Bavarian *Schdugg* does not inflect exactly as Standard German *Stück* does. They share a zero plural, used in particular in the presence of a numeral. But the overt plural suffix in Bavarian is *-er* (*-à(r)*), rather than *-e* as in Standard German.

Now, being part of a grammaticalized approximative construction, *Schdugg* is deserving of getting an (ex-) indefinite article of its own, like the first in a sequence of two numerals; like there, it is omissible, though perhaps somewhat less freely. Equally deserving of this marker is the numeral, following upon the unit noun in an unorthodox order. The constructional analogy is as shown in (17), with (5) repeated as (17a) and with the adverbial extension added, and the semantics of the constructional marker is as given above, 'ill-defined numerical value in the region of the unit noun and the numeral the marker is in construction with'.

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[12] This is also what is suggested in Zehetner (1997: 284).

(17) a.   [(*à*) NUMERAL/*so*_{ADV}=*à* NUMERAL] NOUN

      b.   [(*à*) UNIT_{NOUN}-PL=*à* NUMERAL]

When *Schdugg* and the following numeral are linked by *à*, this is the zero plural form followed by the invariable approximative marker, deriving from the indefinite article. The alternative *-àr=à* is the overt plural suffix (with underlying final /r/ appearing prevocalically; as in *(à) zwoàr=à drei* 'a two=a three', where /r/ after the first numeral is epenthetic, however, though equally avoiding hiatus) followed by the approximative marker. Here the association of the approximative marker with the preceding unit noun, itself an inflectable word, would seem to be closer than mere enclisis – so close as almost to suggest an analysis of *-àra* as one suffix.

      For this interpretation of *(-àr)=à* to work, it is immaterial whether or not the construction is conceived of as partitive: formally, *Schdugg(-àr)* could be genitive as well as nominative plural. If it were partitive, this would be a particularly strong incentive to analogically transfer the full approximative marker also to another partitive construction, with a genitive of a personal pronoun (e.g., *uns-à* 1st person plural, with underlying final /r/)) in the position of the unit noun *Schdugg*:

(18) a.   *Mià hàn uns-à zwanzg(e) gwen*

              we are we-GEN.PL twenty been

              'We were [precisely] twenty of us'

      b.   *Mià hàn uns-àr=à zwanzg(e) gwen*

              we are we-GEN.PL-APPROX twenty been

              'We were some twenty of us'

Creating such a contrast is something most Bavarians are probably still looking forward to; but there are some (including the present writer) who have already got it.

      What remains unaccounted for in this conjectural history of *(à) Schdugg-àr=à* NUMERAL is how come the numeral itself could end up in the unaccustomed position behind its noun, acquiring all this bound or clitic marking for approximation, on the constructional analogy depicted in (17a/b). In a way, this re-ordering is reminiscent of Russian and other East Slavonic languages, where approximation is likewise expressed

through an inversion of numeral and noun (though with no further approximative marking); again, however, this is not to suggest that Bavarian borrowed. In fact, closer to home, within Germanic, there were ways and means, too, of getting numerals past nouns in approximative constructions. The scenario here is as follows.

As a variation on the theme of disjunctive or also limiting approximative constructions in German, as elsewhere, the second numeral (or also further ones) together with the disjunctive or limiting connector may be positioned after the noun:

(19)   a.   *zwei oder/bis drei Tage*
                 two or/to three days
        b.   *zwei Tage oder/bis drei*
                 two days or/to three

For present purposes it is immaterial whether this second pattern is the result of extraposition or of the omission of a second occurrence of the same noun (*zwei Tage oder/bis drei [Tage]*). Instead of a second numeral, one also finds quantifying expressions such as 'so', 'what', or 'some' in (West) Germanic languages whose reference is none too specific: but that is perfectly appropriate since all that is needed is a quantifier covering the neighbourhood of the number given first, preceding the noun. With two quantifiers and a suitable connector, the semantics of approximation in (19b) is perfectly compositional.

Now, it would seem impossible to assign such a compositionally approximative meaning to examples like (20) which on the face of it are parallel to (19b):

(20)   *ein Tag oder/bis zehn*
        one day or/to ten

But such constructions are attested from Middle High German up to the 19th century and perhaps later, in the standard language and presumably in dialects too, and also in Dutch (cf. Sanders 1876: 353, Grimm & Grimm 1862: 114, 137, Latendorf 1868, De Vries et al. 1893: 65-66) – and what they mean is not 'either one day or ten days' (i.e., exclusive disjunction), but 'approximately ten days'. This meaning cannot be construed

compositionally, regardless of whether one crucial part, *ein* preceding the noun, is taken for the numeral 'one' or the indefinite article.

Reading *ein* as the numeral does not lead anywhere in making synchronic sense of the construction in (20). However, it is the numeral 'one' that arguably was the starting point of reanalyses leading to whatever semantics we have got in (20). The lowest neighbouring numerals, 'one' and 'two', are likely to have been used a lot in disjunctive or limiting approximative constructions like (19). With 'one' separated from 'two' as in (19b), and alone in front of a noun, the numeral was not to be distinguished in form from the indefinite article, homonymous with it in many varieties of German(ic) (other than Bavarian). It was argued above that indefinites articles and pronouns can be utilized for purposes of numerical approximation, in German and elsewhere, because indefiniteness lends itself to being metaphorically transferred from reference to numerical specification. This metaphorical potential may have been a factor here too, licensing the use of what used to be the numeral 'one' and what looked exactly like the indefinite article with ANY numerals, rather than only with the neighbour of 'one', as in (20). The semantic contribution of *ein* in (20) is thus getting rather close to being that of a marker of approximation, delimiting the neighbourhood of the numeral that would come after the noun ('any number in the neighbourhood of ten', not, as Grimm & Grimm 1862: 114 would have it, 'more than one and up to ten'). Formal evidence for a reanalysis of *ein* are occasional occurrences of an uninflected form where the indefinite article or also the numeral 'one' would be inflected (giving *ein-en* for masculine singular accusative in example (21)):

(21)   *ein gut-en Geselle-n zwe-n*
        APPROX good-ACC.SG.MASC apprentice-ACC.SG two-ACC.SG
        'two or so good apprentices'

This reanalysis of the numeral 'one' as first indefinite and then approximative-of-sorts made the "real" marker of numerical approximation in this construction, the disjunctive or limiting connectors ('or', 'to, through'), rather redundant. It was only natural, then, that such connectors would be omitted before the postnominal numeral. It is with nouns for the culturally most salient counting units – such as 'day' and other

time periods, 'times', all kinds of measures, currency units, and the general-purpose unit noun *Stück* – that such reduced constructions aremost frequently attested:

(22) *ein Tag zehn*
      APPROX day ten

Seeing the pattern in (22) as derivative of the enumerating approximative construction, with numerals joined asyndetically to begin with, is implausible, because there is no reason why a second numeral in a close-knit series, differing from bipartite disjunctive structures, should have been shifted after the noun (*ein zwei Tage* 'one two days' > **ein Tag(e) zwei*).

What is also attested in 18th and 19th century Modern High German, in writing that is close to informal speech, and with no apparent dialectal limitation, is an alternative to the construction illustrated in (22), with something added between noun and postnominal numeral:

(23) *ein Tag er zehn*
      APPROX day ? ten

Several interpretations of extra *er* in this approximative construction have been suggested.

For Grimm & Grimm (1862: 114) and others, *er* is the disjunctive connector *oder*, retained in shortened form from the predecessor construction (20) and appended to the noun ("gekürzt und einverleibt"). Even granting that the connector has become semantically redundant, owing to the reanalysis of *ein* as an approximative marker, and might therefore be especially vulnerable, such a reduction is phonologically implausible.

Sanders (1876: 353) enigmatically suspects a genitive form in *er* – presumably a genitive plural in partitive function. Against the backdrop of what happened to *ein* as the postposing of numerals as in (20) and (22) came about, assuming a partitive construction here is less plausible than in Schmeller's corresponding suggestion for Bavarian (cf. (16) above). Also, most nouns attested in this construction do not have a

genitive plural in *-er* in the standard language or its relevant varieties, which would require this suffix being analogically extended from the few nouns which do.

In fact, there is evidence of *er* getting analogically extended: according to Grimm & Grimm (1862: 114), it is occasionally found added to nouns already in the plural (*ein Kind-er-er vier* 'APPROX child-PL-*er* four'). Also, quite a few nouns for counting units that would typically appear in construction (22) do end in *er* in their basic as well as in their plural forms (e.g., *Meter*, *Zentner*, *Liter*, *Heller*, *Kreuzer*), and could potentially have provided a source from which to extend it. The question, however, is why one would want to generalize *-er* in the first place.

Adducing several instances where *er*, in the phonological shape of an unstressed vowel ([´] or [å]), can be meaninglessly appended to short words, Latendorf (1868: 206) suggests that the raison d'être of *er* in the approximative numeral construction (23) is merely euphonic, too: such rhythmic units are improved when a stress clash of bare noun and adjacent numeral is avoided by an intervening syllable, whatever its morphological standing (for Latendorf it seems to have none).

But there is another conflict in construction (22) whose alleviation was possibly felt to be more urgent than repairing a stress class: one between meaning and form. Notionally, such noun phrases containing a numeral higher than 'one' are plural, but the nouns themselves are invariably singular. Ostensibly the easiest way out would have been to use the regular plural form of the noun:

(24)   **ein Tag-e zehn*
         APPROX day-NOM.PL ten

Yet the numeral and indefinite, hence dedicatedly singular, past of approximative *ein* may have been sufficiently alive to render this solution unsatisfactory.[13] If the dilemma was hard to resolve, then it could at least be covered up. By generalizing *-er*, a plural

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[13] Sanders (1876: 353) has an example where the noun is in the regular plural, but it also deviates from the standard as in (23) in other respects:

   in 'n-er Tag-e drei
   in APPROX-*er* day-NOM/ACC/GEN.PL three
   'in three days or so'

Here *er* is appended to *ein* rather than to the noun; and the noun is not in the dative as required by the preposition, perhaps suggesting a partitive genitive construction.

ending of some though not all nouns appearing in this approximative numeral construction, *ein* was spared the embarrassment of being followed by a regular plural, and at the same time the noun phrase had got a morphological marker with a distinctly plural touch, sharing in the expression of numerical approximation with invariable *ein* and numeral postposing.

Given a pan-German construction like that illustrated in (23) – with invariable *ein* (derived from numeral 'one' and the indefinite article), followed by a unit noun with the generalized suffix -*er*(-*àr* in Bavarian), followed by a numeral (or indeed several numerals) – all that had to be added in Bavarian to get (16b) was another approximative marker *à* for the numeral itself, likewise indefinite- and ultimately numeral-derived;[14] but this was no revolutionary innovation since *à* was already in use in approximative constructions with two numerals preceding their noun (16a). As already adumbrated, this combination of -*àr* with approximative =*à*, limited to the general-purpose unit noun *Schdugg* in Bavarian, was to form a successful partnership, also occurring on prepositions (7b, 8b), the ex-preposition *um* (12), the deictic adverb *so* (11), and personal pronouns (18b) in construction with numerals.

4.   Preposition and clock time, plus *(àr)à* for approximation

Just as in Standard as well as dialectal German, *um* is the preposition for giving clock times in Bavarian. However, unlike in Standard German and its dialects, *um* can add a syllable or two, and the longer forms are used for giving an approximate time:

(25)   *Wann fahrd=n dei Zug, Emerenz? — Um sechse*
        'When is your train then, Emerenz? — At six o'clock'

(26)   *Wann wiàsd=n feàdig, Zenta? — Um(m) (àr)à sechse*
        'When will you be finished then, Zenta? — At around six o'clock'

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[14] There is the unlikely possibility that a reduced form of *ein* is also the (misspelled) source of *er* in German in general: *ein Tag er zehn* (23) < *ein Tag ein zehn* 'a day a ten'.

As *um* derives from Middle High German *umbe*, a point could perhaps be made for seeing bisyllabic *um(m)à* as straightforwardly continuing that form, with /mb/ assimilated to [mm]. But the longer variant *um(m)àrà* cannot be traced back to this source, nor would this explain the semantic contrast between precise and approximate clock time.

In view the pivotal role of the indefinite article and what it was reanalysed as in Bavarian numerical approximation, it is tempting to recognize the short form of the appendage of temporal *um* as another instance of it. Its semantic contribution is the same as in the other two approximative constructions: 'ill-defined numerical value (in the domain of clock time) in the region of the numeral the marker is in construction with'. As its "anchor" here serves the temporal preposition, like a numeral or the unit noun did before.

The longer form of the appendage is more difficult to explain, at least in terms of morphological material potentially found in such prepositional phrases for clock time themselves. In the approximative construction (5) *à* as such was seen to be invariable. The dative singular feminine form of the indefinite article *à* is *àra* (*àrà Frau* 'to a woman'); but that would be an inappropriate case, since *um* governs the accusative. (Whether the hours of clock time can be thought of as feminine is a further question.) Alternatively, *àrà* could consist of the full Middle High German source form *um(b)e*, plus epenthetic /r/, plus invariable approximative *à*.

More plausibly, *àra* was not assembled locally at all, but was transferred as a whole from a related construction, namely that of the unit noun *Schdugg* and a following numeral, where the component parts in between each had their morphological justification: -*àr* as generalized plural[15] and =*à* for approximation. Clock-time *um* would not be the only preposition (including an ex-preposition: the approximative adnumeral *um*) eventually to host -*àr*=*à* as a longer, originally bipartite variant of =*à*: see above, see below.

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[15] In an example of informal North German in Sanders (1876: 353), this generalized plural -*er* is attached to the noun, à la (23), even though *Uhr* in this clock-time use is uninflecting:

> *gegen Uhr-er viere*
> towards o'clock-*er* four
> 'at about four o'clock'

## 5.	Preposition, plus *(àr)à* for reciprocal disorder

There is further evidence that *-àrà* has become a form almost on its own, needing no proper compositional motivation for its first part (*àr*) and only a hint of indefiniteness as encouragment for its second. It comes from a separate domain, but one sufficiently close to numerical approximation to license such formal transfers.

In Bavarian, reciprocal *ànand(à)* 'one-(an)other' differs from Standard German *ein-ander* in that it can only occur in combination with a preposition. Like its Standard German equivalent, the reciprocal word is derived from the numeral 'one', in the shape this has taken when reanalysed as an indefinite article, and the alterity word 'other'. Like in Standard German, its bipartness is not fully transparent, insofar as the first syllable boundary (*à.nand(à)*) does not coincide with the original morpheme boundary (*àn-and(à)*), with the final consonant of the first morphemic part resyllabified as the onset of the second. Unlike in Standard German, the syllabic segmentation is confirmed by a peculiar pattern of formal variations: (i) in combination with most prepositions, *ànand(à)* alternates with *àrànand(à)*, where *àrà-* looks like the dative singular feminine form of unstressed *à(n)* in its indefinite article use; (ii) in combination with some prepositions, *ànand(à)* also has a shorter alternant *nand(à)* (e.g., *bei-nand* 'at', *mid-nand* 'with'). In view of the exclusive association of the reciprocal with prepositions, one could consider accounting for *àrà-* as a fossilized dative, since this case is governed by most prepositions; the question would remain unanswered, though, why the feminine form *àrà* should have been generalized at the expense of masculine/neuter *àm/àn*. At any rate, /n/ is present in all three alternants, *à.nand(à)*, *àrà.nand(à)*, and *nand(à)*, and is thus naturally associated with the second part of the reciprocal in accordance with its syllabification, as the metanalysed final segment of indefinite *àn-* (*ein-*). Thus, the right morphological segmentation is *à-nand*; and, accounting for the shortest variants, the unstressed initial vowel, which is all the lighter as its own syllable is underlyingly now without a final consonant, is prone to delete in the phonological environments created by some prepositions (such as *mid + Ø-nand*).

No gender question remains unanswered when *àrà* in the longst variants of such prepositional reciprocals is seen as reflecting the influence of approximative uses of *-àr=à* with the unit noun *Schdugg* and in the other contexts identified above, most of which also involve prepositions (and the ex-preposition, adnumeral *um*). The formal

analysis is that a preposition serves as the anchor of -*àr*, combined with a following *à* that is contributed by the reciprocal, taking the position that is held by a numeral in the other relevant construction types, all collected in (27).

(27) a.   [(*à*) NUMERAL/*so*ADV(-*àr*)=*à* NUMERAL] NOUN   (see (4), (10/11))

      b.   [(*à*) UNITNOUN(-*àr*PL)=*à* NUMERAL]   (see (13))

      c.   [PERS.PRONOUN-*àr*GEN.PL(=*à*) NUMERAL]   (see (18b))

      d.   [*um*PREP(-*àr*)=*à* NUMERAL]   (see (26))

      e.   [*um*ADNUMERAL(-*àr*)=*à* NUMERAL] NOUN   (see (13))

      f.   PREPOSITION(-(*àr*)=*à*) [NUMERAL NOUN]   (see (8b))

      g.   [PREPOSITION(-*àr*) + *à-nand*RECIPROCAL]ADVERB

Although *à* of the reciprocal historically derives from a pronoun ('the one – the other'), itself derivative of the numeral 'one', it is now deprived of its final /n/ and is inflectionally as invariable as =*à* of numerical approximation, itself derivative of the indefinite article and ultimately the numeral 'one'. This suggests that the approximative marker rather than the pronoun is the morphological form it is to be identified with. And it is tempting to assume an analogous constituent structure, too:

(27) g′.   [[PREPOSITION(-*àr*)=*à*] + *nand*RECIPROCAL]ADVERB

      In the reciprocal construction, the extension *àrà* shows no idiosyncratic limitations to particular prepositions. It is not confined to *um* of clock-time and adnumeral fame (27d/e), where a suitable bisyllabic form could claim some historical justification and which conceivably provided a foothold for *àrà*'s further extension to this non-numeral type of construction. Also, there are at least half a dozen other prepositions or adverbs in Bavarian which come in doublets, insofar as their monosyllabic short forms can be lengthened by -*àr* ([å], with [r] only realized in hiatus), which is either semantically empty or sometimes derives prepositions from corresponding adverbs: *undd* 'below' (ADV) – *unddà* 'under', *hindd* – *hinddà* 'behind' (ADV – PREP), *neem* – *newà* 'next to' (corresponding to Standard German *neben*), *geeng* – *gegà* 'against' (Standard German *gegen*), *weeng* – *we(n)gà* 'because of' (Standard German *wegen*), *zweng(s)* – *zwengà* 'because of'. Such alternations may also have been

an influence in reshaping the juncture in combinations of prepositions and the reciprocal. But again, long forms with reciprocals are not limited to just those prepositions which also have them on their own; more must have happened to bring about alternations such as *mid|nand(à) – mid|à|nand(à) – mid|àrà|nand(à)* 'with each other'. The suggestion here is that morphological material was transferred to reciprocal constructions on the strength of its salience in constructions of numerical approximation.

In fact, the meaning of relevant forms of PREPOSITION*(-àr)-à-nand(à)*, illustrated in (28), can hardly be characterized as reciprocal in any strict sense:

(28)　a.　*D'Buàm(à) rennàn aufn Hof umm(-àr)-à-nand(à)*
　　　　　'The boys run in the yard around-RECIP'
　　　　　(not 'the ones around the others' but rather 'aimlessly hither and thither')

　　　b.　*Dà Buà rennd/schded/schaud aufn Hof umm(-àr)-à-nand(à)*
　　　　　'The boy runs/stands/looks in the yard around-RECIP'
　　　　　(i.e., 'hither and thither, around, about')

　　　c.　*Dà Buà is no ganz duàch(-àr)-à-nand(à)*
　　　　　'The boy is still quite through-RECIP' (i.e., 'confused')

Most notably, subjects can be singular (as in (28b/c)), which militates against even the weakest kind of reciprocal reading. In such productive, if sometimes idiomatic combinations with prepositions, *(-àr)-à-nand(à)* can express a range of adverbial meanings which, at least synchronically, are not easily related to reciprocity, although one senses possible diachronic connections.

Alternations between such forms with *-àr* and ones without, often found with one and the same preposition, may give the impression of being instances of free, playful variation;[16] but there arguably is a subtle semantic motivation for *-àr*. The prepositions admitting *-àr* are typically local or also temporal ones, and prominent themes of their combination with *à-nand(à)* are aimless movement, with no distinct origin, path, and goal, or disorderly configurations in space or time. With comitative-instrumental *mid*, a typical contrast between the *-àr* form and the one without would be as in (29):

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[16] This is, for example, how the pattern is presented in Merkle (1975: 136-137).

(29) a. *De zwoà ràffàn mid-àr-à-nand(à)*

'The two fight with each other'

b. *De zwoà gengàn mid-(à-)nand(à)*

'The two go with each other' (i.e., have a relationship)

It is the notion of ill-defined relationships and configurations, as exemplified in (29a) but not in (29b), that provides a strong link to numerical approximation. Arguably, inspired by approximative *-àr=à*, PREPOSITION-*àr-à-nand(à)* was seized on as the form highlighting impreciseness and disorder, 'ill-defined figures in spatial orientation or movement', in contrast to less disorderly PREPOSITION-*(à-)nand(à)*.[17]

Once more, this time via a detour as the constituent part of a reciprocal marker and adverbial relations derivative of the reciprocal relation, the numeral 'one' thus ended up in the great domain of imprecision and disorder in Bavarian, again mutually supporting itself with morphology of plural origin, the number epitomizing imprecise quantification, sprawling beyond its original word-class limits. It is as if *(àr)à* was destined not to cut a fine figure. It had better been stabilized by writing – but Bavarians are dedicatedly oral.

[August – November 2002]

Dedication: More than a quarter of a century ago, we would disagree on just about everything in the seminars on Bavarian that we taught together when we were junior colleagues in the Linguistics Department of the Technische Universität Berlin. (And I don't remember whether *(àr)à* was on our agenda then, indefinite, approximate, and disorderly as it was). It had not yet dawned on us that this is what Bavarian linguists are destined to, especially in exile and when their native dialect is for them but a professional pastime. In remembrance of these days of inevitable disagreement, this paper is dedicated to the memory of Willi Mayerthaler.

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[17] This section is based on parts of Plank (2002), taking the reciprocal reanalysis first suggested there a little further. Among other insights, the link between approximation and reciprocal/local impreciseness emerged in (typically controversial) discussion with my Slavicist colleague Walter Breu.

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