

The Syntax of 'n in North East Berlin German

Introduction

The variety of the Berlin Brandenburg dialect spoken in North East Berlin (henceforth NEBG) features the obligatory presence of the particle 'n in wh-interrogatives, cf. (1).

- (1) *Wo hat'n Peter George Clooney jesehen?*
where has.N Peter George Clooney seen
'Where did Peter see George Clooney?'

The aims of this talk are twofold. The first is to show that 'n in NEBG is a genuine question particle. The second is to argue that although 'n often appears in C°, it does not originate in C°, but in a higher projection from which it is lowered to C°.

'n is a Question Particle The analysis of 'n is given in (2).

- (2) 'n is a true question particle: it marks ignorance of the speaker towards the answer

Support from this analysis comes from the behavior of 'n in special questions (Bayer & Obenauer 2011; Obenauer 2006, 2004; Munaro & Obenauer 1999, 2002), that is, interrogatives that are not requests for information. 'n is barred from special questions where the speaker knows the answer to the question he is posing. For example, 'n must never occur in exam questions.

- (3) *Wann hat (*'n) Cäsar den Rubikon überquert.*
when has.N Cesar the Rubicon crossed

'Let me check whether you know this: When did Cesar cross the rubicon?'

Although 'n in NEBG looks like a reduced version of the German modal particle *denn* (Bayer 2017; Wegener 2002: 379; Thurmair 1991: 378), there are two arguments against this idea. First, 'n and *denn* can co-occur in surprise disapproval questions (Obenauer 2004).

- (4) Paul's girlfriend combs her hair as every morning. All of the sudden, she starts screaming and running around. After she calmed down, Paul asks:

Wat is'n denn mit dir los!?

what is.N DENN with you PRT

'What the hell is going on with you?!'

Second, *denn* but not 'n is fine in exam questions (cf. Pankau 2018 for details).

- (5) *Wann hat denn Cäsar den Rubikon überquert?*

The Position of 'n

In all examples with 'n seen so far, 'n is attached to the finite verb in C°. This invites the analysis that 'n is a clitic base-generated in C° (Bayer 2010; 2013a; 2013b). Evidence against this analysis comes from sluicing. As is well-known, sluicing in German requires elements in C° to be elided as well (Merchant 2001). If 'n was located in C°, one predicts that 'n is elided under sluicing as well. This however, is not the case: 'n in NEBG survives sluicing.

- (6) A: *Peter hat George Clooney jesehen!*

Peter has George Clooney seen

'Peter saw George Clooney!'

B: *Wo 'n?*

'Where?'

As (7) shows, in non-sluicing contexts, 'n must not be attached to the wh-phrase.

- (7) **Wo 'n hat Peter George Clooney jesehen?*

That 'n survives sluicing cannot be captured by Ott & Struckmeier's (2018) approach that sluicing is derived via ellipsis of all non-given material, as shown in (6B') for (6B).

- (6B') *Wo hat'n Peter George Clooney gesehen?*

The problem with this analysis is that it doesn't capture the behavior of objects of comparison. As (8) shows, they can be sluiced, but they never undergo A'-movement to SpecCP, as required for Ott & Struckmeier's analysis to work.

- (8) A: *Peter is größer als jemand.*

'Peter is taller than someone'

B: **Als wer is'n Peter größer?*

than who is.N Peter taller

B': *√Als wer'n?*

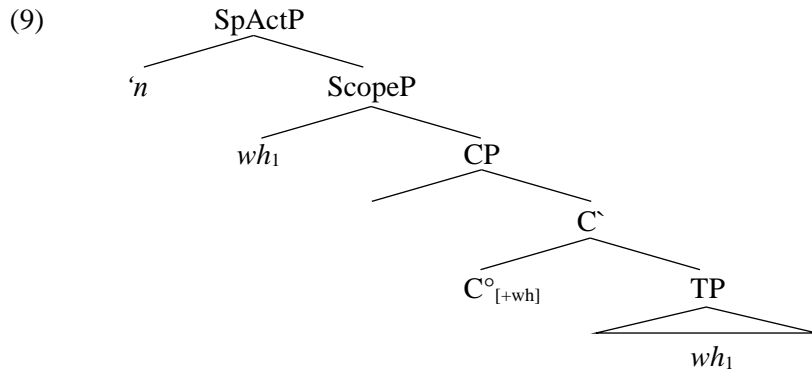
than who.N

'Who is Peter taller than?'

If (8B) underlied sluicing, (8B') is expected to be ungrammatical, contrary to fact.

To account for the position of 'n, I assume that 'n is base-generated in a position above C°, namely within a Speech Act phrase (SpActP), where it marks questionhood. As for wh-phrases, I will follow

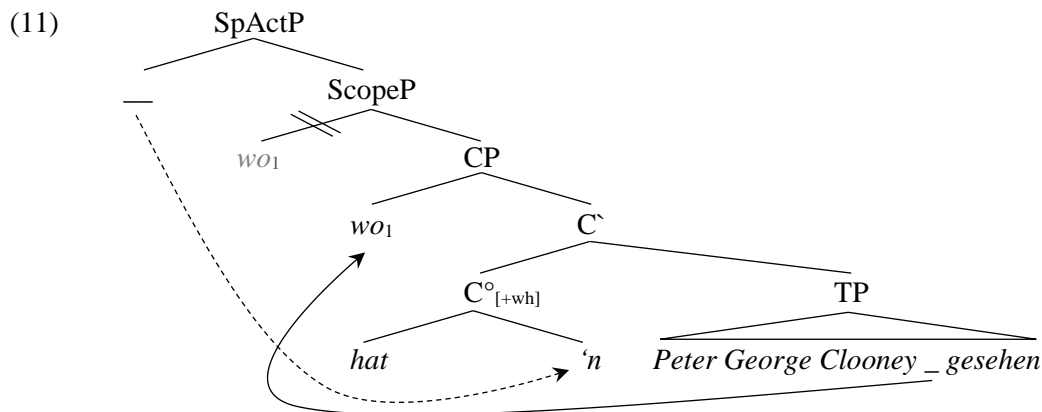
Pankau (2013) that *wh*-phrases have two base positions. One is their scope position in a designated ScopeP, sandwiched between CP and SpActP. The other is a TP-internal position where the *wh*-phrases appear as arguments or adjuncts, as shown in (9) (the indices indicate that two *wh*-phrases are identical).



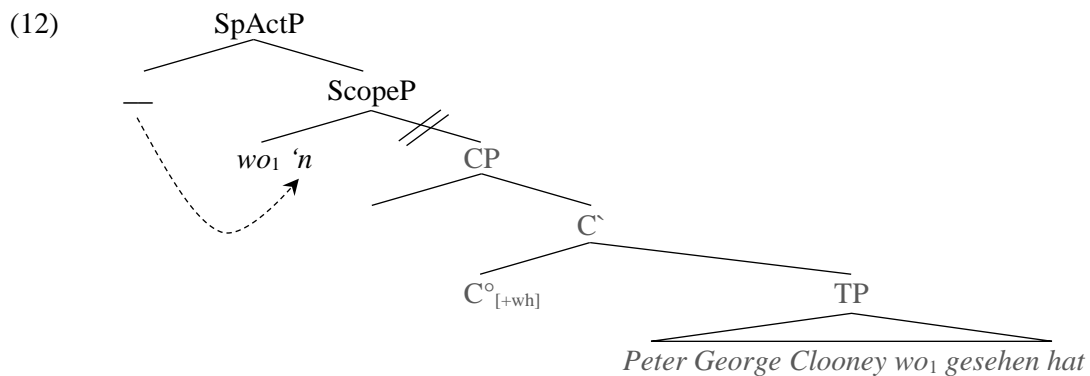
The following constraint formulates the condition on admissible hosts for 'n:

(10) 'n lowers and right-adjoins to the first base generated and unelided element bearing [+wh]

Consider the structure for (1) shown in (11).



The *wh*-phrase *wo* is elided in its top base position, and is raised from its lower base position to SpecCP (cf. Pankau 2013 for arguments for this derivation). Although the raised *wo* bears a [+wh]-feature, it does not count as a licit host for 'n because this *wo* is not base generated in SpecCP. The top copy of *wo* doesn't count as host either because it is elided. C° on the other hand is both base generated and bears [+wh], hence 'n lowers to C°. The structure for the sluicing example (6B) is given in (12).



The structure in (12) incorporates the idea that sluicing affects *wh*-phrases before they A'-move (Pankau 2016), which captures the contrast between (8B) and (8B'). More specifically, instead of its left-hand daughter, sluicing elides the right-hand daughter of ScopeP, namely the whole CP. 'n can then lower to *wo* because *wo* is both unelided, sits in its base-generated position, and possesses a [+wh]-feature.

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