

# “I’m not sure what kind of a ban that FIFA has in mind” and other uncertainties of modern life<sup>\*</sup>

MANUELA SCHÖNENBERGER

## 1 Introduction

Several decades ago, Chomsky & Lasnik (1977) stipulated the doubly-filled COMP filter according to which the co-occurrence of a *wh*-constituent and a complementizer is banned. In those days, COMP was a single position that could either contain a *wh*-constituent or a complementizer, but not both. Nowadays two positions, SpecCP (hosting maximal projections) and C (hosting heads), correspond to what was once referred to as COMP. There is thus no a priori reason why a *wh*-constituent in SpecCP could not co-occur with a complementizer in C, since these two elements do not compete for the same position. Indeed, many languages exist that violate the doubly-filled COMP filter. In some, doubly-filled COMPs (DFCs) are obligatory, e.g. West Flemish (see Haegeman, 1992) and in others, DFCs are optional, at least to a certain extent, e.g. Bavarian and Alemannic (see Bayer & Brandner, 2008a; Bayer & Brandner, 2008b; Penner & Bader, 1995 for Bernese Swiss German; Schönenberger, 2010 for St. Galler German/Lucernese) and Belfast English (Henry, 1995). In yet others, they seem to be banned, e.g. German and English, but this may be due to normative pressure, since earlier stages of these languages allowed them (see e.g. Zwicky, 2002: for DFCs in present-day English).

The argument made in this paper is that prosody is the driving force behind the phenomenon of DFCs. The focus is on DFCs in Alemannic, but some data from English that seem relevant to the discussion will also be reported. The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 reviews Bayer & Brandner’s experimental data and introduces their structural account. Section 3 summarizes my own work on naturalistic data from another Alemannic dialect that is spoken in eastern Switzerland and outlines a prosodic account. Section 4 discusses some data from present-day English, which seem to imply that prosody might play a role, as well as the length/complexity of the *wh*-constituent. Section 5 presents new data from the eastern Swiss-German dialect, which further support the argument that DFCs might be governed by prosody, despite challenging my earlier assumptions.

---

\* This English example with a doubly-filled COMP (DFC) is attributed to Bert Millichip (BBC Radio 4) by Radford (1988: 500) and is cited in Zwicky (2002: 221). FIFA, the international governing body of association football (soccer), is based in Switzerland, as are speakers of Swiss German who cheerfully use DFCs, unconstrained by FIFA bans and normative pressure from outside influences

## 2 A structural account of DFCs in experimental data from Alemannic and Bavarian

Bayer & Brandner (2008a) and Bayer & Brandner (2008b) studied the distribution of DFCs in Lake Constance Alemannic and Middle Bavarian based on judgement data. The participants of the study were asked to rate sentences that were read to them, on a scale from 1 (“I would use such a sentence in my dialect”) to 6 (“I would never use such a sentence in my dialect”). The sentences varied with respect to the type of wh-constituent and to whether they contained *dass*. In general, the informants rejected DFCs with short wh-constituents (“wh-word I”: *wer* ‘who’, *wen* ‘who.ACC’, *was* ‘what’, *wie* ‘how’ and *wo* ‘where’), but accepted DFCs with long wh-constituents (“wh-phrase”: wh-DP and wh-PP). Shortish wh-constituents termed “wh-word II” (*warum* ‘why’, *wieviel* ‘how much’ and *wem* ‘who.DAT’) were also often accepted with *dass*. Bayer & Brandner (2008a: 93) note that “short wh-words” can co-occur with *dass* if they are contrastively focussed, because these focussed wh-words then have “a richer syntactic structure”. One of the problems they note is that all of the informants, who are native speakers of the relevant dialect, are also native speakers of German, in which DFCs are banned. It is thus not clear to what extent, if any, German influenced the informants’ judgement of DFCs in the dialect.

Bayer & Brandner develop a structural account for the distribution of DFCs. The following assumptions are central to their analysis: short wh-items have a hybrid status; short wh-items contain a ‘latent C-feature’; clauses need to be typed. Short wh-items have an ambivalent syntactic status as they are wh-operators and complementizers at the same time. Because they compete for the same syntactic position as complementizers they generally do not co-occur with *dass*. Wh-items like *warum* ‘why’, *wieviel* ‘how much’ and *wem* ‘who.DAT’, which is monosyllabic but bears a case-feature, are taken to involve phrasal structure just like full wh-phrases. And just like full wh-phrases they can co-occur with *dass*. Generally, clauses need to be typed as <interrogative>, <declarative> etc. In the case of wh-clauses, the wh-phrase merges with TP at some point in the derivation in order to endow it with an interrogative feature. A short wh-item can activate a latent C-feature in an embedded context, thus blocking the insertion of *dass* for economy reasons. Since this C-feature is latent, a short wh-item does not need to discharge it. This is crucial, or else verb movement would be blocked in root contexts. Some of the technical details still need to be worked out, but the core idea that short wh-items are complementizer-like is appealing. Moreover, the authors adduce evidence in favour of the head-status of these short wh-items in Alemannic and Bavarian, and they point out that in some languages short wh-items have been grammaticalized as complementizers.

## 3 A prosodic explanation of DFCs in spontaneous production data from Alemannic

In Schönenberger (2010) – my work – spontaneous production data from an eastern Swiss-German dialect that is spoken in Wil and is referred to as St. Galler German are presented. The occurrence of a DFC is seen as dependent on whether the wh-constituent consists of two

or more syllables. The data clearly support the hypothesis that DFCs are used with polysyllabic wh-constituents only and that they are obligatory. However, the data come from a small number of speakers (n=3), who produce many examples with monosyllabic wh-constituents (1/116 with a DFC) but relatively few with polysyllabic wh-constituents (27/27 with DFC). Data from another dialect (Lucernese) are also discussed. These were obtained in a longitudinal acquisition study that also examined child-directed speech. The data from two of the three Lucernese speakers who interacted with the child look just like those from the speakers of St. Galler German, but they produced few examples. There is much more data from the third speaker—the child’s mother—but these look quite different. While the vast majority of her examples with monosyllabic wh-constituents do not contain a DFC (396/397), many of her examples with polysyllabic wh-constituents do not contain a DFC either (46/108). The following is advanced as a possible explanation: “It is [...] noticeable that she often speaks particularly clearly when addressing the child, which might subtly distort the data. If prosody is indeed relevant to the occurrence of DFCs then clear speech might influence the overall prosodic structure” (Schönenberger, 2010: 48). This is an idea I wish to expand on in Section 5. My primary assumption then was that in Swiss German “the organization of linguistic material into prosodic units of trochaic feet” is preferred (Schönenberger, 2010: 47). Note that the combination of *dass* + *weak pronoun* results in a trochaic foot, as does the combination of (an unstressed) *monosyllabic wh-constituent* + *a weak pronoun*. The following generalizations were derived:

- (1) a. If the wh-phrase and the following constituent form a prosodic unit—a trochaic foot—DFCs are excluded.
- b. If the constituent following the wh-phrase is a clitic, which cannot be integrated into the prosodic structure of the wh-phrase, a complementizer must be inserted. The clitic and *dass* form a trochaic foot.
- c. In all other contexts, DFCs may be optional in Lucernese, while in St. Galler German they are obligatory with all non-monosyllabic wh-phrases.

If prosody does play a role, then the stimuli used in Bayer & Brandner’s acceptability judgement task may present another problem. The participants in their study may not have received the stimuli with exactly the same prosody because the test sentences were read out rather than having been previously recorded and the recording played back. But even if this had been done, how can one avoid biases in the oral presentation of potentially unacceptable stimuli e.g. a long wh-phrase without *dass*? If prosody does play a role then even subtle differences in ‘input’ prosody may influence an informant’s judgement.

#### 4 DFCs in present-day English

Zwicky (2002) lists 29 examples with DFCs that were produced by speakers of different varieties of English. Six of the 29 examples are from Radford (1988). In all 29 examples the wh-clause is finite and the wh-constituent consists of more than one word. Some judgement data from speakers who occasionally produce DFCs were also obtained, albeit informally. While a DFC is judged as more or less acceptable in (2a), it is judged as unacceptable in (2b)

and (2c). Note that the *wh*-constituent in (2c) just like that in (2a) consists of more than one word. Thus the occurrence of a DFC is not only dependent on whether the *wh*-constituent consists of several words, but also on what Zwicky labels as the *Lexical Head Restriction*: “In the XP [...WH], the WH word is (part of) a modifier of a lexical (not grammatical) word from the category N (or A)” (Zwicky, 2002: 230).<sup>1</sup>

- (2) a. (?) I know *from what box that* you took it.  
b. \*I know *what that* you took it from.  
c. \*I know *from what that* you took it.  
(from Zwicky, 2002: 228; diacritics added by MS)

Zwicky refers to work by Seppänen & Trotta (2000), who examined a very large database of mainly British English—the British National Corpus and the Cobuild *Direct* Corpus, totalling approximately 150 million words. They found only 90 examples of DFCs. Unexpectedly, quite a large number of these involved single-word *wh*-constituents (25 items), as in (3a) and (3b). Seppänen & Trotta observe that this is much rarer than in contexts with multi-word *wh*-constituents: although single-word *wh*-constituents are generally predominant (an estimated 84%), they account for only 27% of all DFCs. However, the speaker of example (3a) hesitates, indicated by *er*. The speaker may use *that* in *when that* as a substitute for something he has in mind and is still thinking about, e.g. the occasion or the car park. This would then *not* be an example of a DFC.

- (3) a. If I recall *er when that er* the King Street car park was given to the town ...  
b. I don't know *why that* you go for a certain colour  
(from Seppänen & Trotta, 2000: 171)

Beatrice Santorini also collected examples of DFCs, most of which she overheard, and which are listed on her webpage<sup>2</sup>. Only in 4 of her 84 examples with DFCs does the *wh*-constituent consist of a single word. Santorini comments briefly on each of the four (“no marked intonation on *why*”; “no marked intonation on *how*”, and “high-low-high intonation on *why*”; “high-low-high intonation on *how*”), but does not comment on the examples with multi-word *wh*-constituents.

What do these data tell us? DFCs are possible in English. They do not occur with high frequency and they appear to be optional for speakers who allow them. Beatrice Santorini's comment on single-word *wh*-constituents may imply that the production of a DFC in this context is unexpected especially with neutral intonation, while the production of a DFC with multi-word *wh*-constituents is not dependent on any kind of special intonation. As in the case of Bayer & Brandner's study, it is unclear whether the influence from the standardized language keeps the occurrence of DFCs in check. Moreover, it is unclear what role prosody plays.

---

1 A native speaker who has just crossed my path told me that even without *that* “from what” in (2c) sounds much worse than “from what box” in (2a). He would have used “from where”.

2 <http://www.ling.upenn.edu/~beatrice/examples/doublyFilledCompExamples.html> (last accessed on May 19th 2015)

## 5 More data from St. Galler German that may support a prosodic explanation

In the project “Studying Variation in Syntax: A parsed corpus of Swiss German” (SNF project no. 146450)<sup>3</sup> we are collecting data from native speakers of St. Galler German—all speaking the local dialect of Wil—by conducting informal interviews. These interviews are recorded and then transcribed. Our goal is to compile a tagged and parsed corpus of this dialect in order to study language variation and language change. To this end, an interviewer who also speaks the local dialect conducts interviews with informants who can be classified into three age groups (elderly speakers (>70), middle-aged speakers (45–55) and young speakers (20–30)). So far 12 interviews (ca. 18 hours of audio data) have been transcribed and checked for consistency, totalling about 200000 words. These transcripts contained 338 finite wh-clauses that are potentially compatible with a DFC.<sup>4</sup> The wh-constituents introducing these wh-clauses are classified into monosyllabic, listed in (4a), and polysyllabic, listed in (4b), in the order of decreasing frequency. As expected, monosyllabic wh-constituents occur much more often than polysyllabic ones (257 vs. 81).

- (4) a. Monosyllabic wh-constituents  
 wie ‘how’ (111×); wa ‘what’ (90×); wo ‘where’ (33×); wenn ‘when’ (14×); wär ‘who.NOM’ (9×)
- b. Polysyllabic wh-constituents  
 worum ‘why’ + wiso ‘why’ (20×); wie x ‘how x’ (17×), wivil ‘how much’ + wivil X ‘how many X’ (13×); wohär ‘from where’ + wohii ‘where to’ (10×); wa för X ‘what kind of X’ + weli X ‘which X’ (10×); P wa ‘P what’ + P wäm ‘P whom’ (P = preposition) (11×)

The distribution of DFCs in these wh-clauses is summarized in table 1. As can be seen from the table, the generalizations in Schönenberger (2010) still obtain: if the wh-constituent is monosyllabic no DFC is used, and if the wh-constituent is polysyllabic a DFC is used. However, there are now several counterexamples to both of these generalizations.

In all 11 examples in which a monosyllabic wh-constituent co-occurs with *dass*, the wh-constituent is stressed, marked in small CAPS in the examples in (5). Since *bischt* is also stressed in example (5b), *dass* may have been used to provide an unstressed syllable between two stressed syllables.

- (5) a. Es chunt uu            druf aa, woo *dass* i gòò.  
 it comes extremely there on where that I go  
 ‘It depends a lot on WHERE I go.’

3 This project is supported by the Fonds National Suisse (FNS) for a period of three years (2014–2016) by a grant to Eric Haeberli at the University of Geneva.

4 We asked some of the informants after the interview to translate German sentences into Swiss German. These were presented in written form. Several of the sentences contained wh-complements. Although the informants readily produced DFCs during the interview, they were much more reluctant to do so in this translation task. Still, when they did, they were more likely to produce them with longer wh-constituents than with short ones.

Table 1: Distribution of DFCs in wh-clauses with mono- and polysyllabic wh-constituents

	wh=mono +DFC	wh=mono -DFC	wh≠mono +DFC	wh≠mono -DFC
Age 20–30 (n=1)	5	20	6	0
Age 45–55 (n=10)	6	179	57	5
Age > 70 (n=4)	0	47	11	2
Total	11 (4.3%)	246	74 (91.4%)	7

- b. ...chunt immer druf aa, woo *dass* BISCHT ...  
 comes always there on where that are.2SG  
 ‘it always depends on WHERE YOU ARE’

Similarly, in 4 of the 7 examples in which a polysyllabic wh-constituent does not occur with a DFC the wh-element is stressed, as in (6a). Two of the remaining three counterexamples were produced by a dialect speaker who has been living in Northern Germany for over 25 years and whose spouse is also from the area. His dialect may have been influenced by German and he may therefore no longer produce DFCs as ‘liberally’ as he would if he had stayed in the Swiss-German speaking area. In one of his examples without a DFC he used German *womit* ‘with what’ instead of the Swiss-German equivalent *mit wa*. The last counterexample, shown in (6b), has a rather unusual stress pattern. The speaker produced a DFC in the first *worum*-clause, in which *sii* ‘she’ and *dää* ‘this’ are stressed, but she did not do so in the second *worum*-clause, in which *haisst* ‘call’ is stressed.

- (6) a. Jawoll Wiilerdialäkt, waiss i ger nöd, *durch* was sich dää achli uszaichnet  
 yes Wil-dialect know I really not through what itself that a-bit distinguishes  
 ‘Right. The dialect from Wil, I really don’t know WHAT distinguishes it.’
- b. ... sòndern eren persöönleche Iidruck vom David, *worum dass* SII DÄÄ  
 but her personal impression of David why that she this  
 schöö findet, *worum s* HAISST, dass er schöö isch oder so schpeziell.  
 beautiful finds why it says that he beautiful is or so special  
 ‘...but her own impression of David, why SHE considers HIM beautiful, why people SAY he is beautiful or so special’

Example (6b) is particularly intriguing, because it challenges previous assumptions: *worum dass* is *not* followed by a clitic, while *worum* (without *dass*) is. In the first wh-clause *dass* may provide an unstressed syllable between *worum*, in which word stress falls on the second syllable and the stressed pronouns SI and DÄ (cf. example (5b)). In the second wh-clause *worum* shows the same word-stress pattern, but it may be able to host the clitic *s* ‘it’ because unlike other clitics the clitic *s* is a lightweight (does not amount to a syllable).

I have not presented an analysis because anything I might say about prosody is treading on thin ice. Still, I hope to have shown that prosody plays an important role. Moreover,

these new data show that not only does the stress pattern within the *wh*-constituent have an impact on whether a DFC is produced, but so does the stress pattern in the immediately following material.

## References

- Bayer, J. & E. Brandner. 2008a. On *wh*-head-movement and the doubly-filled-comp filter. In C. B. Chang & H. J. Haynie (eds.), *Proceedings of the 26th West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics*, 87–95. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Press.
- Bayer, J. & E. Brandner. 2008b. Wie oberflächlich ist die syntaktische Variation zwischen Dialekten? Doubly-filled COMP revisited. In F. Patocka & G. Seiler (eds.), *Dialektale Morphologie, dialektale Syntax*, 9–26. Vienna: Praesens.
- Chomsky, N. & H. Lasnik. 1977. Filters and control. *Linguistic Inquiry*. 425–504.
- Haegeman, L. 1992. *Theory and description in generative syntax: A case study in West Flemish*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Henry, A. 1995. *Belfast English and Standard English: Dialect variation and parameter setting*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Penner, Z. & T. Bader. 1995. Issues in the syntax of subordination: A comparative study of the complementizer system in Germanic, Romance and Semitic languages with special reference to Bernese Swiss German. In Z. Penner (ed.), *Topics in Swiss German Syntax*, 73–290. Bern: Lang.
- Radford, A. 1988. *Transformational grammar*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schönenberger, M. 2010. ‘Optional’ doubly-filled COMPs (DFCs) in *wh*-complements in child and adult Swiss German. In M. Anderssen, K. Bentzen & M. Westergaard (eds.), *Variation in the input: Studies in the acquisition of word order*, 33–64. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Seppänen, A. & J. Trotta. 2000. The *wh-* + *that* in present-day English. In J. M. Kirk (ed.), *Corpora galore: Analyses and techniques in describing English*, 161–175. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Zwicky, A. M. 2002. I wonder what kind of construction that this example illustrates. In D. Beaver, L. D. Casillas Martínez, B. Z. Clark & S. Kaufmann (eds.), *The construction of meaning*, 219–248. Stanford: CLSI Publications.