

The occurrence of doubly-filled COMPs in a dialect of Swiss German

In this talk we concentrate on the phenomenon of doubly-filled COMPs (DFCs) in the spontaneous speech of speakers of Swiss German. DFCs are not restricted to dialects of German and Dutch, but also exist in dialects of French and Italian, and in older Germanic languages, e.g. Middle High German and Middle English. In dialects of Swiss German (CH) and German there is a clear tendency to prefer DFCs with longer wh-constituents (1a) than with very short ones (1b).

- (1) a. I fròòg mi **i welere Schtadt dass** er momentan woont? (CH)
ich frage mich in welcher Stadt dass er momentan wohnt
a.' ?? I fròòg mi i welere Schtadt er momentan woont?
b. I fròòg mi won er momentan woont? (CH)
ich frage mich wo er momentan wohnt
b.' ?? I fròòg mi **wo dass** er momentan woont?

We concentrate on a Swiss-German dialect spoken in a mid-sized town in the canton of St. Gallen in order to address the following questions:

- (i) Can the rather vague concept of length be made more precise?
- (ii) Does the way in which a wh-constituent is pronounced influence the preferences in (1a) and (1b)?
- (iii) Does the constituent that follows the wh-constituent have an impact on whether a DFC is used?

To address these questions we have collected data from informal interviews with informants of different ages speaking the same local dialect, in order to exclude possible differences between dialects. Previous findings based on informal conversations between three speakers of this dialect—parents and daughter—suggest that the three speakers behave the same. While these speakers produced many examples with monosyllabic wh-constituents (115 examples) they produced fewer with two syllables (21 examples) and many fewer with three or more syllables (6 examples). They always used a DFC with a non-monosyllabic constituent, and they generally did not use a DFC with a monosyllabic wh-constituent. There are just two examples in which a monosyllabic wh-constituent co-occurs with *dass*. It is well-known that focal stress on a short wh-constituent has an impact on the use of DFCs (see e.g. Bayer & Brandner 2008a/b). In the two examples the wh-constituent is unstressed, but the subject *dää* 'this.masc.' bears heavy stress. Based on a much larger speech sample we try to determine whether the restrictions found with these three speakers also hold for other speakers/informants of this particular dialect. The first findings suggest that this is indeed the case. One informant, however, sometimes pronounced a long wh-constituent quite slowly and when she did so, she did not produce a DFC. We have also tried to elicit some data, by having informants translate several German examples into the local dialect. The first results suggest that the use of DFCs by the informants does not follow as clear a pattern as in their spontaneous speech: they are less likely to produce DFCs, but when they do it is always with wh-constituents consisting of three or more syllables.