

Dependents of German Indefinite Pronouns: from Genitive to Concord (talk)

Empirical: The group of words traditionally called “indefinite” pronouns (IndPron) can be semantically existential or universal and can be etymologically simplex or complex. The complex ones consisted of a quantifying element (Q) plus a noun or pronoun:

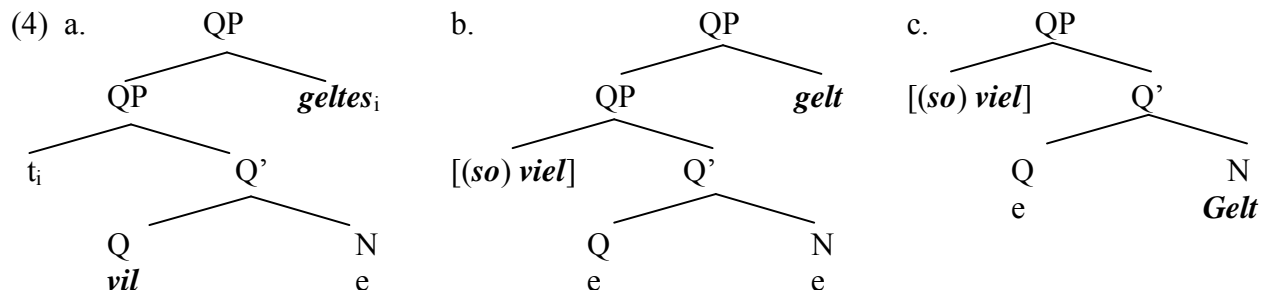
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| (1) | | existential | | universal |
| | simplex | <i>filu</i> → <i>viel</i> ‘much’ | | <i>al</i> → <i>alles</i> ‘all’ |
| | Q + pronoun | <i>et+waz</i> → <i>etwas</i> ‘something’ | | <i>io+wethar</i> → <i>jeder</i> ‘every’ |
| | Q + noun | <i>ni+wiht</i> → <i>nichts</i> ‘nothing’ <i>io+man</i> → <i>jemand</i> ‘someone’ | | |

IndProns can occur with a dependent (DEP) noun or adjective. In the history of German, the DEP changed from genitive case (2a-b), facilitated by ambiguous forms (2c), to concord in features with the IndPron (2d). Moreover, there was a strong correlation between case and word order: DEP could precede IndPron if DEP was genitive (2a) but not when the two agreed (3):

- (2) a. DEP_{GEN} IndPron
liebes vil (12th cent.) *oder anders etwaz* (14th cent.)
 love.GEN much (*Nibelungenlied*) or other.GEN something (*Benediktiner*)
- b. IndPron DEP_{GEN}
vil geltes (15th cent.) *mit etwas susses* (15th cent.)
 much money.GEN (*Burlaeus' Vita*) with something sweet.GEN (*Pillenreuth*)
- c. IndPron DEP_{GEN/CON}
vil bekorung (14th cent.) *etwas merglichs* (15th cent.)
 much temptation.GEN/CON (*Altväter*) something strange.GEN/CON (*Rothe Chr.*)
- d. IndPron DEP_{CON}
viel Gelt (17th cent.) *mit etwas Süßem* (Mod. German)
 much money.NOM (*Chr. Memming.*) with something sweet.DAT
- (3) * DEP_{CON} IndPron

Analysis: We assume that all IndProns involve a quantifying element in Q. Some simplex IndProns arose from nouns by grammaticalization from N to Q, leaving behind a null noun; complex IndProns were composed of a Q head (*ni-*, *et-*, *io*) and an overt nominal in N.

We propose that the DEP was base-generated in Spec,QP and assigned genitive case by the head Q. The positional variants of DEP_{GEN} (2a-b) involved a heaviness restriction: the heavier DEP usually followed the lighter IndPron by undergoing movement to the right (4a). The DEP_{GEN} on the right was often ambiguous with agreement (2c) due to syncretism in noun and adjective paradigms (e.g. fem. nouns like *bekorung* no longer had case endings; neut. adjectives had *-s* in nom., acc., and gen. cases). Next, the IndPron underwent head-to-Spec reanalysis (4b). With IndPron in Spec, genitive can no longer be assigned there, resulting in concord. Moreover, in a phrasal position, the IndPron can now be modified by a degree adverb such as *so*.



The DEP, now agreeing with the noun, can be reanalyzed as a complement, replacing the null noun (4c). With Spec occupied by IndPron, DEP_{CON} cannot appear to its left, ruling out (3).

All IndProns in (1) underwent this development, summed up in (5), but not at the same time. E.g. in Old High German, *al* had nearly completed the move to Spec,QP (only rarely occurring with genitive), while *filu* was just beginning grammaticalization from N to Q (it had nominal morphology and singular agreement with the verb, cf. Modern German *viele kommen*.PL):

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| (5) | N | → | Q | → | Spec,QP | → | Spec,DP | |
| | a. <i>filu</i> | → | <i>vil</i> | → | <i>viel(e)</i> | | | ‘much/many’ |
| | b. <i>ni_Q+wiht_N</i> | → | <i>nicht</i> | → | <i>nichts</i> | | | ‘nothing’ |
| | c. ? | → | <i>al</i> | → | <i>all</i> | → | <i>alles</i> | ‘all’ |

Universal quantifiers like *al* have moved to Spec,DP: in Spec,QP they triggered strong adjective inflection (6a) like most quantifiers, but now they trigger weak inflection (6b), as do determiners:

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| (6) a. | <i>aller edeler gesteyne</i> | (15th cent.) | b. | <i>aller innerlichen Kriege</i> | (17th cent.) |
| | all precious.ST stones | (<i>Rothe Chronik</i>) | | all inner.WK wars | (<i>Schaubühne</i>) |

Although all IndProns became Specs, not all DEPs completed the change to a complement. We argue that DEPs of complex existential IndProns are still analyzed as in (4b) in Modern German, presumably because N was still filled by the noun element of the complex IndPron at the time of the change to (4c). Crucially, DEPs of complex IndProns may have the “special” ending *-es* (e.g. *jemand Nett-es* ‘somebody nice’), which is neither concord (*jemand Nett-er*) nor genitive (e.g. *kalt-en Weins* ‘of cold wine’). With Roehrs (2008), we assume that this ending is the bound counterpart of French *de* (e.g. *quelqu’un de bien*) mediating adjunction of the DEP.

Discussion: The change of the DEP from genitive to concord provides good evidence for head-to-Spec reanalysis (*pace* van Gelderen 2004): IndProns that were originally nouns (*wiht*, *man*, *filu*) are now in specifiers. This predicts that a degree adverb can modify IndPron without taking scope over a following adjective (cf. Svenonius 1993: 445-6). This is borne out:

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| (7) a. | [<i>sehr viel</i>] <i>kaldes Wasser</i> | b. | [<i>fast alle</i>] <i>zwei Meter großen Männer</i> |
| | ‘very much (#very) cold water’ | | ‘almost all (#almost) two meter tall men’ |

Our analysis can be extended to numerals, another type of quantifier, which underwent similar word-order changes and lost genitive assignment (8). Furthermore, the indefinite use of genitive with no apparent quantifier (9a) was lost by Early Modern German (9b), which can be explained by the assumption of a null quantifier ([e]) that develops similarly to the overt ones.

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| (8) a. | <i>ganzer Tage acht</i> | (16th cent.) | b. | <i>acht ganze Tage</i> | (Mod. German) |
| | whole.GEN days eight | (<i>Hans Sachs</i>) | | eight whole.NOM days | |
| (9) a. | <i>immer [e] guotes jehen</i> | (12th cent.) | b. | <i>zu Nutz ... vnd [e] Guttem</i> | (17th cent.) |
| | always good.GEN to say | (<i>Erec</i>) | | to use and good.DAT | (<i>Augs. Arzt</i>) |

Conclusion: The change in the syntactic properties (word order and case) of the DEP can be straightforwardly captured if the IndPron itself undergoes head-Spec reanalysis. The semantics of the different IndProns regulated the timing of the change (with universals going first), but the internal structure of the IndPron led to slightly different structural relations between the IndPron and its DEP in Modern German.

References

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