

An Argument against PP-Shells for Benefactive DPs in German

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Abstract: The relationship between free datives and prepositional phrases has often been discussed. In this paper, I argue that German free datives with a benefactive interpretation are not PPs, but just DPs. This goes against Rezac's (2008) proposal that all DPs with theta-related case are included in a PP-shell. My argument is built on a comparison of German free datives and German prepositional phrases with synonymous interpretations and their behavior in different syntactic transformations, especially extraposition. Differences in the behavior between the PPs and the free datives are taken as support for the latter being DPs without a PP-shell.

1. Introduction

In this paper, I make an argument against PP-shells for German DPs that are free datives with a benefactive interpretation. One question concerning free datives has long been whether they should be regarded as having some form of a covert preposition because of their (semantic) similarity to PPs. I investigate this question based on Rezac's (2008) proposal that all DPs with theta-related case have a PP-shell. German free benefactive datives provide an interesting testing ground because of the additional availability of a prepositional benefactive construction in German. I compare these two to show that free benefactive datives do not have a PP-shell.

This article is structured as follows: In section 2, I discuss the German benefactive constructions, both the free dative and the benefactive *für* 'for'-PP. I also introduce Rezac's (2008) PP-shell hypothesis. In section 3, I discuss the predictions of Rezac's theory when applied to German benefactive *für*-PPs and show that German benefactive datives do not behave in the same way as benefactives do. This is taken to support the idea that free (benefactive) datives do not have a PP-shell. In section 4, I provide more evidence for the analysis of free datives as DPs. I conclude this paper in section 5.

2. Background

In this section, I discuss the two basic phenomena that are relevant for my argument, namely German benefactive constructions and Rezac's (2008) claim that DPs with theta-related case have a PP-shell.

2.1. German Benefactive Constructions

German has two main strategies for introducing elements interpreted as beneficiaries. The first strategy is using the preposition *für* ‘for’ followed by a(n accusative-marked) DP (1).

- (1) Susi malte für ihre Mutter ein Bild.
 Susi painted for her.ACC mother a. ACC picture
 ‘Susi painted a picture for her mother.’

This strategy contrasts with the use of a so-called *free dative*, i.e. the addition of a dative-marked nominal element to a sentence without that element being selected by the verb or a preposition. Among other interpretations, this dative-marked element can be interpreted as marking a beneficiary in certain cases (see Bosse 2011, Hole 2008 among many others), cf. (2).

- (2) Susi malte ihrer Mutter ein Bild.
 Susi painted her.DAT mother a. ACC picture
 ‘Susi painted a picture for her mother.’

The dative constituent here, as well as the PP in example (1), is an optional element and not selected by the verb. This can be seen from the grammaticality of the following sentence (3), in which no beneficiary is included (and is not implied or entailed either).

- (3) Susi malte ein Bild.
 Susi painted a. ACC picture
 ‘Susi painted a picture.’

The reason for the (seeming) redundancy of the two German strategies for marking benefactives is beyond the scope of this paper. In the provided examples, the two strategies lead to synonymous interpretations, while differences can be forced in other examples.

2.2 Rezac (2008)

Rezac (2008) argues that DPs that receive theta-related case have a PP-shell, as in (4).

- (4)
$$\begin{array}{c} \text{PP} \\ \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ \text{P} \quad \text{DP} \\ \emptyset \end{array}$$

The PP-shell is a prepositional phrase with a phonologically null preposition selecting a DP complement. Rezac uses this PP-shell to argue for why certain DPs (in Basque) are not available for AGREE.

Rezac states that theta-related case is Woolford's (2006) non-structural case. According to Woolford, non-structural case can be identified by being preserved in A-movement (such as passives) whereas structural case is not persevered in A-movement. Combining this with Rezac's approach, it should follow that DPs that preserve their case in A-movement have a PP-shell. Below, I argue that German benefactive datives have non-structural case (which they preserve in A-movement), but that they do not have a PP-shell.

3. An Argument against PP-shells

In this section, I present the predictions made by Rezac's (2008) hypothesis with respect to German benefactive datives, and some data that argues against the PP-shells for German free datives with a benefactive interpretation. While I am only addressing PP-shells for benefactive datives here, this is part of a larger argument against phonologically null prepositions in German free datives.

3.1 Non-Structural Case and vP-Structure

First, I establish that German benefactive datives have a non-structural case according to Woolford's (2006) definition. As stated above, the decisive criterion is the behavior of a phrase in A-movement contexts. The benefactive dative can occur in passive sentence but it must preserve its dative case. This is shown in (5) where the direct object of the active sentence (2) functions as the subject of the passive sentence, and the beneficiary is still dative-marked.

- (5) Ein Bild wurde ihrer Mutter (von Susi) gemalt.
a.NOM picture was her.DAT mother by Susi painted
'A picture was painted (by Susi) for her mother.'

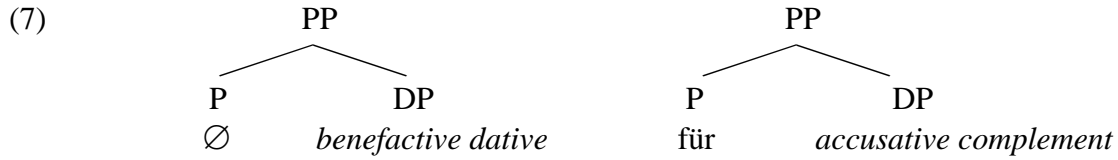
It is not possible for the dative element of the active sentence to take on the role of subject of a passive sentence.¹

- (6) * Ihre Mutter wurde ein Bild (von Susi) gemalt.
her.NOM mother was a.ACC picture by Susi painted

Thus, the German free dative with a benefactive interpretation carries non-structural case by Woolford's definition and should therefore have a PP-shell according to Rezac (2008).

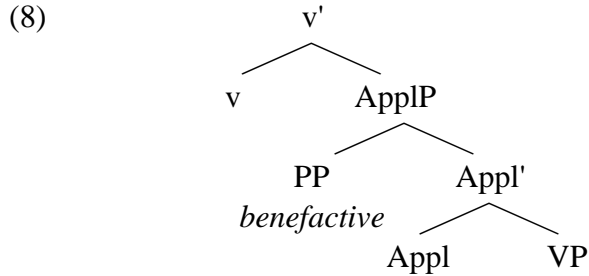
If it is assumed that benefactive datives have PP-shells, German benefactive *für*-PPs and benefactive datives should behave alike when undergoing syntactic transformations because structurally they are both PPs (7).

¹ It is possible to transform the dative into a subject of a *bekommen* 'get'-passive; see section 4.3.



The two structures differ only in the phonological content of the head (and the case assigned to the DP).

Rezac (2008; see also Pylkkänen 2002) suggests that free datives are introduced inside of vP (below the subject). According to UTAH (Baker 1988), the benefactive *für*-PP should be introduced in the same position, leading to the structure in (8). In this structure, *Appl(icative)* is used for the integration of the benefactive phrase into the structure. It is typically used as the head introducing free datives (see Pylkkänen 2002, among others).



Based on this discussion, I expect the benefactive dative and the benefactive *für*-PP to behave alike in the available syntactic transformations because they are both PPs (according to Rezac 2008) and attached as a specifier of Appl inside the vP (following UTAH).

3.2 Prediction

In this section, I investigate the prediction that the benefactive dative and the benefactive *für*-PP behave alike when undergoing syntactic transformations. It can be shown that there is support for this, namely *wh*-questions. The prepositional benefactive and the benefactive dative can both be *wh*-phrases (9).

- (9)
- | | | | | | | |
|--|----|------------------|-----------|---------|----------------|----------------|
| | a. | [P Für [DP wen]] | malte | Susi | ein | Bild? |
| | | for | whom. ACC | paintet | Susi | a. ACC picture |
| | b. | [P ∅ [DP Wem]] | malte | Susi | ein | Bild? |
| | | whom. DAT | paintet | Susi | a. ACC picture | |
- ‘(For) whom did Susi paint a picture?’

While this example seems to support the prediction that benefactive datives and prepositional benefactives are structurally alike, German DPs and PPs do not differ in their availability for *wh*-movement. Thus, this is not a strong argument for a PP-shell around the benefactive dative.

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German DPs and PPs do differ in their ability to be extraposed (Scherpenisse 1985). PPs can easily be extraposed but DPs can only rarely be extraposed and are highly marked when they are extraposed. Scherpenisse (1985) provides the following examples to demonstrate this difference. Example (10) shows that the extraposition of a PP is possible, whereas exposition of a DP is either highly marked (here as recognizable “train conductor”-speech) or ungrammatical (11).

- (10) ... dass er oft vor seinem Fenster stand am Nachmittag.
that he often at his window stood in.the afternoon
'...that he often stood at his window in the afternoon.'
(= Scherpenisse 1985, p. 90 ex. 32)

- (11) a. Es ist eingefahren der Intercity aus Berlin.
it is arrived the intercity.train from Berlin
'The intercity train from Berlin has arrived.'
(based on Scherpenisse 1985, p. 89 ex. 27)
- b. * ... dass ich im Garten sah einen Mann.
that I in.the backyard saw a man
Intended: '...that I saw a man in the backyard.'
(based on Scherpenisse 1985, p. 89 ex. 26)

Using extraposition as a test for PP-status and applying it to the benefactive *für*-PP and the benefactive dative, it becomes clear that there is a difference between the two. The dative benefactive cannot be extraposed (12), whereas the extraposition of the benefactive *für*-PP is possible (13).²

- (12) * Susi hat Bilder gemalt ihrer Mutter.
Susi had pictures painted her.DAT mother
- (13) Susi hat Bilder gemalt für ihre Mutter.
Susi had pictures painted for her. ACC mother
'Susi had painted pictures for her mother.'

These findings indicate that the benefactive dative is a DP without a PP-shell as it patterns with other DPs in terms of availability for extraposition. In the next section, I provide further support for this analysis by ruling out a competing hypothesis.

² The past perfect is used here because the participle clearly delimits the midfield, and thus shows that this is extraposition rather than scrambling.

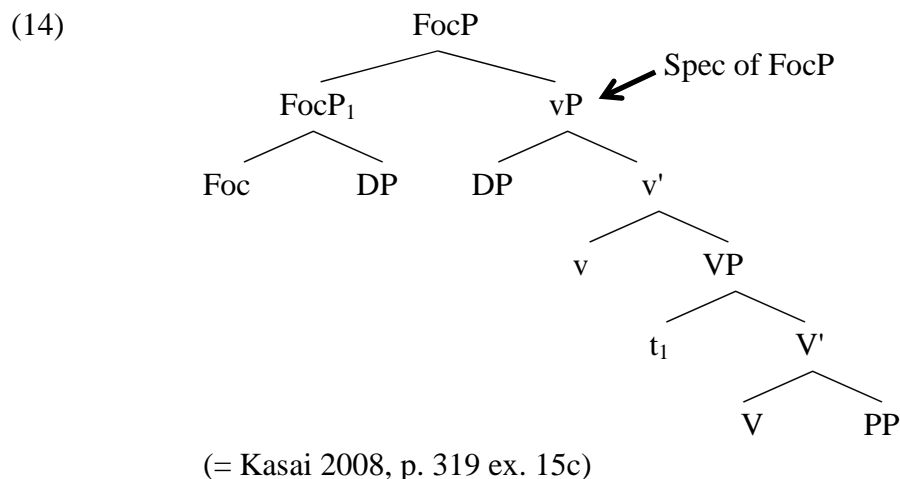
4. Analysis

Given the findings with respect to the extraposition of benefactive datives above, I discuss two possible hypotheses for this pattern in this section. The first hypothesis is to assume that both the benefactive dative and the *für*-PP are PPs but they are generated in different syntactic positions. The second hypothesis is that both types of benefactives are introduced inside of (or at) vP but that the benefactive is a DP acting as a specifier of Appl while the *für*-PP is adjoined.

Before I discuss these two hypotheses, I present Kasai's (2008) analysis of extraposition. While he developed his approach for English, I assume that it also holds for German. This analysis is used to decide between the two hypotheses in sections 4.2. and 4.3.

4.1. Kasai (2008)

Kasai (2008) proposes the following account for extraposition in English: First, the constituent that is to be extraposed is headed by a Foc(us) head which is phonologically null. This FocP moves to the edge of vP due to an uninterpretable Foc feature. This moved phrase then projects as (another) FocP. Due to this projection of the moved phrase, vP is positioned in the specifier of FocP. This is schematized in (14).



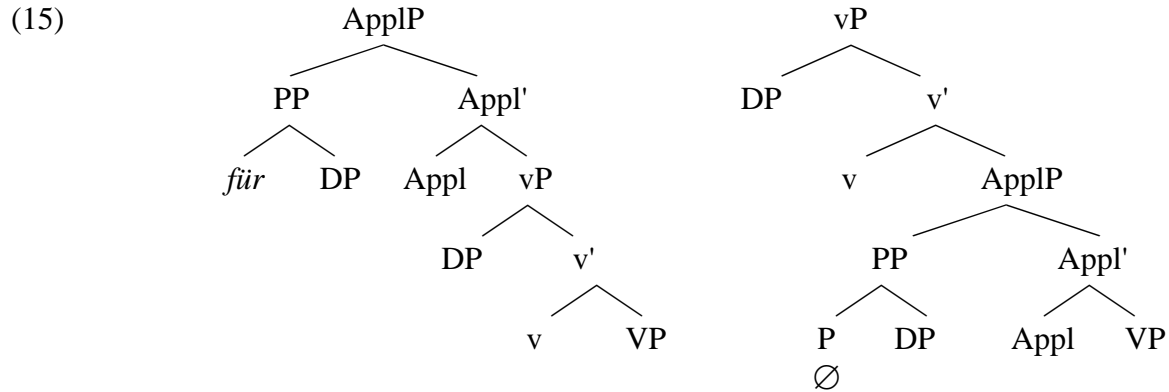
The result of the movement and projection of FocP is apparent rightward movement/ extraposition of the DP due to the fact that specifiers are linearized universally as preceding the complements. Thus, vP is linearized as preceding the moved FocP.

In the following, I use this analysis of extraposition by Kasai to argue that the German benefactive dative does not have a PP-shell.

4.2. Hypothesis 1

In this section, I discuss the first hypothesis concerning the difference between benefactive datives and *für*-PPs with respect to extraposition as shown in (12) and (13), namely that they are both PPs but are not generated in the same syntactic position. This could take two different forms, namely (i) that Appl selects either the benefactive *für*-PP or the benefactive dative but

these ApplPs attach at different syntactic positions (e.g. one outside of vP) or (ii) that the benefactive *für*-PP is adjoined to the structure without being selected by Appl. In the second case, any differences between the benefactive dative and the benefactive *für*-PP can be attributed to the presence (or absence) of Appl, rather than to the presence (or absence) of a PP-shell. Thus, here I assume for the sake of the argument that the benefactive *für*-PP occurs in SpecAppl but this phrase occurs at a different syntactic position than the benefactive datives (with a PP-shell) in SpecAppl. (The option that the benefactive *für*-PP is not selected by Appl is further discussed below.) In other words, I assume that both the benefactive dative and the benefactive *für*-PP are PPs and that they are generated in SpecAppl (8), but that the two Appl phrases are not generated in the same syntactic position. The two relevant structures are schematized in (15).



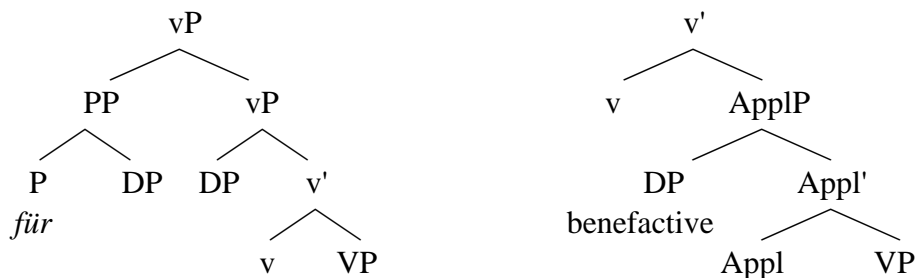
On Kasai's (2008) approach to extraposition, the dislocated element must be generated low enough so it can move to the edge of vP. Thus, even if the two types of benefactives are not generated in the same syntactic position, each must still be generated in (or at) vP. Due to the fact that the benefactive dative is assumed to be outside of VP (see Bosse 2011, among others), it is likely that both types of benefactives are generated in the same phase. Consequently, they should be equally available for movement and, thus, for extraposition, if Foc can select a PP. No difference in the grammaticality of extraposition is expected. Thus, the assumption that both types of benefactives are PPs but that they are in different syntactic positions cannot explain the different behaviors with respect to extraposition that have been observed above.

4.3. Hypothesis 2

In this section, I discuss the second hypothesis concerning the two types of benefactives, namely that only the benefactive *für*-PP is structurally a PP, while the benefactive dative is structurally a DP. I assume that the benefactive *für*-PP and the benefactive dative are generated inside (or at) vP. The difference is that the benefactive dative is generated as SpecAppl, with Appl carrying the benefactive meaning, and the benefactive *für*-PP is generated without an Appl projection, with *für* carrying the benefactive meaning. This is schematized below.³

³ For the argument here it is irrelevant if the *für*-PP is generated above or below the subject.

(16)



Based on this hypothesis, the difference in availability for the extraposition between the two types of benefactive can be explained by using Kasai's (2008) analysis of extraposition. Kasai allows for selectional restrictions on the Foc head (which he needs to explain the lack of preposition stranding in English heavy NP shift). For German, I propose that Foc can select PPs but (generally speaking) not DPs as complements. Consequently, extraposition of PPs is grammatical (10) whereas the extraposition of DPs is not (except for highly marked cases) (11). With respect to benefactives, this correctly predicts that the benefactive *für*-PP may be extraposed (13), whereas the benefactive dative must not be extraposed (12).

This analysis has at least three additional advantages: A lexical meaning of the preposition *für* is maintained, case matching in free relative clauses can be explained and the grammaticality of *bekommen* 'get' passives is predicted. I address each of these in turn.

First, the structural difference in the presence/absence of a preposition means that the preposition *für* is not semantically empty in the *für*-PP, as it would need to be if this phrase is in the SpecAppl (assuming Appl has the same semantic contribution regardless of the phrase in its specifier). This seems to be preferable over an analysis where an unpronounced element (Appl) carries meaning and a pronounced one (*für*) does not.

The second advantage is that this analysis is supported by case matching in free relative clauses.⁴ Free relative clauses can be analyzed as DPs (Riemsdijk 2005). As Riemsdijk (2005) discusses, in German the *wh*-word of the free relative and the case assigned to the position of the free relative clause in the matrix clause must match (except when there is case syncretism). With respect to the two types of German benefactive constructions, it can be shown that the benefactive dative is available for case-matching in a free relative clause when it matches a (dative) DP. This is exemplified below. In 0, it is shown that the verb *vertrauen* 'trust' selects a dative-marked object. This can be matched with a free relative clause with a dative benefactive but not with a free relative with a benefactive *für*-PP.

⁴ Special thanks to Jason Merchant for pointing this out to me.

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- (17) a. Ich vertraue dem Mann.
 I.NOM trust the.DAT man
'I trust the man.'
- b. Ich vertraue, wem Susi ein Bild malt.
 I.NOM trust who.DAT Susi.NOM a. ACC picture paints
'I trust who Susi paints a picture for.'
- c. * Ich vertraue, für wen Susi ein Bild malt.
 I.NOM trust for who.DAT Susi.NOM a. ACC picture paints

The benefactive dative matches a DP in instances of case-matching in free relatives. This is further support for benefactive datives not having a PP-shell because if the benefactive dative of the free relative were a PP it would not be expected to match the selected DP of the matrix clause unless the (phonologically empty) preposition does not interfere with the case matching. In example (18), I show that an overt preposition assigning dative case to its complement does interfere with the case matching of a free relative clause. This makes a transparent, phonologically null preposition in 0 less likely.

- (18) * Ich vertraue, mit wem Susi Bilder malt.
 I.NOM trust with who.DAT Susi.NOM pictures.ACC paints
'I trust who Susi paints pictures with.'

The third advantage of analyzing benefactive datives as not being included in a PP-shell comes from so-called *bekommen* 'get'-passives.⁵ This construction is a syntactic transformation usually of an active sentence with both a direct object and a free or selected dative. In the *bekommen*-passive the dative constituent of the active sentence becomes the subject while the accusative constituent is preserved (Kunkel-Razum 2009). Example (19) shows that it is possible to create a *bekommen*-passive based on a benefactive dative (compare to (2)).

- (19) Ihre Mutter bekam (von Susi) ein Bild gemalt.
 her.NOM mother got by Susi a. ACC picture painted
'Her mother was painted a picture (by Susi).'

However, it is not possible to form a *bekommen*-passive based on a PP, even if the preposition governs a dative DP and regardless of whether the preposition is included in the *bekommen*-passive. This is shown in the following.

⁵ It is unclear if this should be treated as a passive construction or not, and whether A-movement (and therefore theta-related case) is involved in these structures.

- (20) a. Ich kitzelte den Jungen mit dem Grashalm.
 I.NOM tickled the.ACC boy with the.DAT blade.of.grass
 'I tickled the boy with a blade of grass.'
- b. * Der Grashalm bekam den Jungen (mit) (von mir) gekitzelt.
 the.NOM blade.of.grass got the.ACC boy with by me tickled
 Intended: 'A blade of grass was used (by me) to tickle the boy.'

This is further evidence that the benefactive dative does not have a PP-shell. If it did, it should not be available to participate in the *bekommen*-passive because PPs may not act as the subject of this construction.

Thus, I conclude that benefactive datives are DPs without a PP-shell. They contrast with benefactive *für*-PPs which are in fact PPs and are not selected by Appl.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that German free datives with a benefactive interpretation do not have a PP-shell, as would be expected based on Rezac's (2008) proposal. The first type of evidence for this comes from extraposition facts which show that benefactive datives behave like DPs, rather than PPs. Additional support comes from instances of case matching of free relative clauses and the availability of the *bekommen*-passive.

While I have only discussed free datives that have a benefactive interpretation here, I do expect future research to show that these patterns hold for other types of free datives (in German) as well, supporting the analyses of free datives as DPs proposed elsewhere (Pylkkänen 2002, Hole 2008, Bosse 2011, among others).

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