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## Loss, Optionality, and Free Variation of Categories

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To get a better understanding of the requirements for the loss of a category I will consider three phenomena in Alemannic (a German dialect): The loss of a category, the optional realization of a category and free variation.

Genitive marking has been lost in Alemannic and there are a number of alternative strategies to compensate for this development. Furthermore the function of the Genitive is rather restricted.

Attributive adjectives must inflect in Standard German but inflection is optional in Alemannic.

- (1) a. mit dem nui(a) Waga  
with the.Dat. new(wk) car

I relate this optionality to the multifunctionality of the inflection, which does not exclusively combine with adjectives (cf. Leu, 2009). The inflections must therefore remain available in the lexicon. At the same time the syntactic structure provides a slot in which inflection on adjectives can be merged, explaining its optional appearance.

Relative clauses in Alemannic can be introduced with a d-pronoun (also functioning as definite determiner), a particle (related to the wh-pronoun *where*), or the combination of both. The three strategies are in free variation as Bräuning (2017) shows in an extensive empirical study.

- (2) das Haus, das... das Haus, wo... das Haus, das wo...  
*the house, that... the house, PRT the house, that PRT*

The three discussed cases share, that there is more than one means for the realization of the (original) function/construction. In addition adjectival inflection and the relative clause introducers are (unlike Genitive) multifunctional which is why they cannot get lost.

**References:** • Bräuning, I. (2017): The Syntax of Alemannic Relative Clause Strategies. Paper presented at the Fachbereichskolloquium, Universität Konstanz • Leu, T. (2008): The Internal Syntax of Determiners. Dissertation, NYU.