

Missing in Action: Variation of the Temporal Auxiliary *häwa* ‘have’ in Past Counterfactuals in Pomerano

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Pomerano is an unroofed Low German variety spoken by roughly 200,000 speakers in Brazil. Its linguistic base are Eastern Pomeranian varieties of the regions which, today, are part of the Polish Voivodships of West Pomerania and Pomerania. Due to the expulsion of Germans from these regions in the aftermath of World War II, Eastern Pomeranian varieties have been lost in Europe. Likewise, there are hardly any speakers left in the United States although most Pomeranians migrated there, and not to Brazil, in the 19th century.

In order to elicit comparable syntactic data of Pomerano, 103 speakers from Rio Grande do Sul, 67 speakers from Espírito Santo, and 76 speakers from Rondônia were asked to orally translate sixty Portuguese stimulus sentences. The focus of my presentation will be the translations from Rio Grande do Sul, since they have already been edited and preprocessed and thus allow refined statistical analyses of one core area of the Pomerano data set, past counterfactuals with modal verbs. In this context, translations (1) and (2) are of crucial importance since they demonstrate that the informants either produce a finite temporal auxiliary or a finite modal verb as highest verbal element.

stimulus <45> Portuguese: Ontem eu poderia ter vendido o anel
English: Yesterday I could have sold the ring

- (1) *gistern hät küüt ik dai fingerring forköft hat häwa* (Pom-206)
yesterday has_{3SG/Present} can_{Participle} I_{1SG/Subject} the ring sold had have
- (2) *gistern küün ik dai fingerring [0.4] forköft häwa* (Pom-153)
yesterday could_{1SG/preterite} I_{1SG/Subject} the ring [0.4] sold have

Although (2) superficially resembles the Portuguese stimulus sentence – and the constellation that results from the presence of an epistemic modal verb in Standard German –, I will demonstrate that it is not connected to either of these possible models. It rather results from the loss of the temporal auxiliary *hät* in (1). Importantly, one would have expected *haar*, the 1SG-preterite form of the temporal auxiliary, in that translation, but *haar* and thus agreement seem to be blocked by the localization of the modal verb *küüt*. Quite unexpectedly, this element occurs alongside the temporal auxiliary in the CP-domain. Crucially, in translations where these two elements do not surface adjacently, finite *haar* occurs frequently:

stimulus <45> Portuguese: Ontem eu poderia ter vendido o anel
English: Yesterday I could have sold the ring

- (3) *gistern haar ik küüt dai fingerring forköipa* (Pom-105)
yesterday had_{1SG/Preterite} I_{1SG/Subject} can_{Participle} the ring sell

A second important feature of (1) is the syntactic tripling of *häwa* (‘have’), which appears as finite verb *hät*, as past participle *hat*, and as infinitive *häwa*. This extremely marked structure does never appear in translations where a subject pronoun separates the temporal auxiliary and the modal verb as in (3). Its presence in (1) is therefore critical for the morpho-syntactic derivation of this translation.

My analyses are based on more than 3,000 tokens of *häwa* ('have') as main verb, as temporal auxiliary in the present perfect tense, and as auxiliary in past counterfactuals with or without a modal verb. Especially the comparison of the morphological shape of *häwa* in the last two contexts underlines the decisive role of the (localization of the) modal verb. Its presence triggers a process that first blocks the agreement of the finite auxiliary with the subject and then causes its continuous phonological weakening illustrated by the "apparent time" change from *haar* to *hät* and *häär*, then to *hää* and *hä*, and finally to \emptyset . Support for this sequence comes from the rare, but robust occurrence of superficially non-finite translations such as (4):

stimulus <45> Portuguese: Ontem eu poderia ter vendido o anel
 English: Yesterday I could have sold the ring

(4) *gistern küüt ik dai fingerring forköft häwa* (Pom-50)
 yesterday can_{Participle} I_{1SG/Subject} the ring sold have

As the syntactic and morphological variation illustrated in (1) through (4) occurs at the same time and in one speech community, it indeed "provide[s] a unique window into the mechanisms of language change in general, and of syntactic change in particular" (cf. <https://microcontact.sites.uu.nl/project/>). Variants (1) and (4) can be seen as "in-between stages" in the change from variant (3) to variant (2). Importantly, without a thorough analysis of the morphological and syntactic variation of *häwa* ('have'), one may have mistaken the predominance of variant (2), which appears in roughly 60% of the relevant tokens, as an unambiguous case of 'contact-induced syntactic change' (CIC). Granted, the resemblance of (2) with past counterfactuals in Portuguese may explain part of this predominance, but the robust presence of several variants with a finite temporal auxiliary makes it clear that the predominance of (2) is essentially the consequence of the morphosyntactic markedness of variants such as (1), i.e., the consequence of an 'endogenous change' (EC).