

Loss of the diminutive in Pomeranian in Brazil - Consequences for Formal Grammar

The diminutive, as a morphological category, is an extremely common feature in the Eurasian languages (Körtvélyess 2015:94), and even more so in the continental languages of Europe. Why then does English and the Mainland Scandinavian languages lack (or have lost) such a feature? The question becomes urgent when one considers Northern German dialects. While Münsterland dialect is rich in diminutives, Oldenburger Platt has drawn early attention for lacking these forms (Goldschmidt 1847, Andree 1863:107) systematically. Although the forms are often known from neighboring dialects, this morphological dimension is absent in Oldenburg, or rather, these forms cannot be used in a productive way in the Oldenburger dialect. Instead of searching for an anthropological explanation, as Andree did, we pursue a syntactic approach. As we will see, Pomeranian, as spoken in the state of Espírito Santo in Brazil, is a key to the solution.

Pomeranian was a the coastal dialect (or set of dialects) of Continental Germanic between the Oder river and the Vistula river, an area which is called Hinter-Pommern. Until 1945 it was part of Germany, but lays in present-day Poland. While Pomeranian is not used anymore in cohesive communities in Europe since 1945, it is still in full use in various parts of Brazil, with many children not learning Portuguese until schooling at age six or so. These communities derive from immigration as early as 1850, and remained isolated until recently.

Using the Wenker sentences taken from REDE (regionalsprache.nl) and various Ortsgrammatike (e.g. Mahnke 1931), we first show that European Pomeranian was rich in diminutives. Brazilian Pomeranian, on the other hand, has lost the morphological diminutive completely. This is even more surprising as the superstrate Portuguese has an extremely productive diminutive system and most Pomeranians are bilingual. This makes a structural blocking factor in Pomeranian probable. Is there, then, a structural syntactic or morphological property that correlates with the lack of a productive diminutive? And secondly, how can we characterize a productive diminutive vis-à-vis the few lexical cases of morphological diminutives, which do exist in English, Oldenburger Platt, and Brazilian Pomeranian? In the ideal case, these question should be solved *in tandem*.

First we argue that there is a correlation between the morphological diminutive in the nominal domain and head movement in the verbal domain: those languages that lack a productive diminutive also lack verb movement to T. In (1) we give this correlation for the Germanic SVO-languages where V-to-T is easy to observe and uncontroversial. In (2) we give a similar correlation for the SOV languages. For SOV languages, we take embedded do-support as a sign that V-to-T is blocked in that variety, not do-support in main clauses, which involves block to V-to-C. After a detailed empirical discussion of these tables, we come to the explanation and to the supporting evidence. We follow Dressler & Barbaresi (1999), who take the full fledged diminutive not to mean 'small' but rather 'not serious', i.e. it represents a pragmatic dimension. We then argue that the full fledged pragmatic diminutive come about by providing the diminutive morpheme wide scope under head movement to the highest shells of the D-domain which is a pragmatic prolific domain (Grohmann 2003). In languages that lack head movement to T, also head movement in the nominal domain is blocked.

Corroborating evidence comes from the Pomeranian again. As we have seen, Pomeranian lacks a productive diminutive, i.e. head movement in the NP domain is blocked. Instead, the diminutive scopal movement comes about under XP movement. Instead of a diminutive, Brazilian Pomeranian uses *klain* 'little' as a analytic diminutive marker. However, *klain* is not an adjective, as it does not follow the adjectival inflection but the inflection of D (it follows the so-called *ein/mein/dein/sein*-group in German). We finally discuss some Dutch dialects in Brazil if time permits.

VO-Languages	± [V-to-T]	Productive DIM e.g. <i>het oude mannetje</i>
Modern English	no (Pollock 1989)	no
Danish	no (Platzack&Holmberg '89)	no
Norwegian	no (Platzack&Holmberg '89)	no
Swedish	no (Platzack&Holmberg '89)	no
Icelandic	yes	yes -ling-ur
Faroese	yes (optional)	yes -ling-ur
Yiddish	yes	yes le/elech (Fleischer 2013)
Old Norse	yes	yes -ling- (Koziol 1937)

(1)

OV-Languages	± [V-to-T] (test: absence of do-periphrasis in T in embedded clauses)	Productive DIM e.g. <i>het mannetje</i>
Dutch	yes (Evers 1976)	yes <i>het mannetje</i>
Frisian	yes (Hockstra 1997)	yes <i>it mantsje</i>
OE, ME	yes (Kroch 1989)	yes -ling
St.German	yes (Sabel 1996)	yes <i>das Männlein</i>
Bavarian	yes	yes -al :as <i>Màndal</i>
Alemannic	yes (Brandner 2006)	yes <i>(s mänli)</i>
EPomeranian	yes (Mahnke 1931, Kühl 1932)	yes <i>(dat keelke, 90% mürka)</i> (Mahnke 31, Wenker 1874)
Dutch in Hollandintha	yes (but few cases of do-support) (preliminary results)	yes? <i>(een kleen hüsje)</i> (preliminary results)
Dutch in Garrafão	no (pervasive do-support) (Schaffel <i>et al.</i> 2015)	no? <i>(een kleen hüüs / \$hüsje)</i> (preliminary results)
Low Saxon	no (Erb 2001)	no <i>(ain lütt muur/ 10 % mürke)</i> (Wenker 1874)
Brazilian Pomeranian	no (Postma 2014)	no <i>(air klair huus / *hüska)</i>

(2) %: dialectological variation \$: upon explicit elicitation only

References • Andree, Karl (1863) Die Leute im Lande Oldenburg. In: *Globus: illustrierte Zeitschrift für Länder- und Völkerkunde* 4, , p. 107.). • Dressler, Wolfgang & Merlini Barbaresi, Lavinia. 1994. Morphopragmatics: Diminutives and Intensifiers in Italian, German and Other Languages. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. • Grohmann Kleanthes K. 2003 Successive Cyclicity Under (Anti-)Local Considerations. *Syntax* 6.3, 260-312. • Mahnke, Georg (1931). Die Schlauer Mundart - Sprachgeschichtliche und dialektgeo-graphische Untersuchung. Bamberg, Greifswald.