



SFB Guest Lecture

Friday, January 19, 2024 at 5.00 pm
Campus Golm, Building 14, Room 0.29

Invited by the projects C02 and C10

Prof. Dr. [Göz Kaufmann](#) (University of Freiburg)
 will give a talk on

In the thick of it: scope rivalry in past counterfactuals of Pomerano

Abstract:

Pomerano is an unroofed ('dachlose') Low German variety spoken by roughly 250,000 speakers in several parts of Brazil. Its linguistic base are Eastern Pomeranian varieties, which, due to the expulsion of Germans from Eastern Pomerania in the aftermath of World War II, have been entirely lost in Europe. Likewise, there are hardly any speakers left in the United States though most Pomeranians who left Europe in the 19th century migrated there, and not to Brazil.

In order to elicit comparable data of this unique variety, 348 speakers from Brazil (128 from Rio Grande do Sul, 98 from Espírito Santo, 77 from Rondônia, and 45 from Santa Catarina) were asked to orally translate 61 Portuguese stimulus sentences (leading to roughly 21,000 translations). Although this data set allows the analysis of various phenomena (cf. Kaufmann 2017, Kaufmann 2023, and Kaufmann & Duran 2022), the focus of the present presentation is on past counterfactuals with modal verbs (cf. Kaufmann 2022). For this phenomenon, translations such as (1) and (2) are crucial as they either feature a finite temporal auxiliary or a finite modal verb:

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 fingering [0.4] forköft häwa (Pom-153)
 yesterday could ^{1SG/Past} I ^{1SG/Subject} the ring [0.4] sold have

Although translation (2) resembles the Portuguese (and English) stimulus sentence – and the verbal constellation in German clauses with an epistemic modal verb –, there can be no doubt whatsoever that it is not related to either construction. It rather results from the eventual loss of the already defective temporal auxiliary *hät* in translation (1). After all, one would expect a 1SG-past tense form of the temporal auxiliary, i.e., *haar*, to code for the counterfactual layer of this clause (cf. Iatridou 2000: 240). In (1), however, both person and tense 'agreement' seem to have been blocked, most probably by the adjacent modal verb

küüt. The scope rivalry between these two verbs becomes even more obvious once we realize that both of them appear in the CP-domain (cf. Postma 2019: 639–642), a syntactic rarum in Continental West Germanic varieties.

The other noteworthy 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 marked structure, which will be shown to result from derivational misfiring, does not appear in translations in which the modal verb surfaces non-adjacently to the temporal auxiliary. Importantly, in these cases, the temporal auxiliary frequently appears in its expected 1SG-past tense form clearly demonstrating that the scope rivalry in this case seems to be less acute. The fact that the adjacency of hät and küüt in (1) triggers a process that does not only block the 'agreement' of the temporal auxiliary with the head of ModP (normally leading to 'past tense'-morphology; cf. the discussion of tense in Iatridou 2000) and the head of AgrSP (normally leading to 1SG-morphology) but also causes the continuous phonetic weakening of the temporal auxiliary can be shown in (3), an infrequent, but robustly occurring variant:

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

(3) gistern küüt ik dai fingerring forköft häwa (Pom-50)
 yesterday can Participle I 1SG/Subject the ring sold have

Here, the temporal auxiliary has simply disappeared leading to a finite clause with no finite verb. As the translations in (1) through (3) only represent some of the extant variants, there indeed seems to be hardly any limit to the morphosyntactic variability in Pomerano. However, as all variants appear in all speech communities and as these variants can be put into a meaningful derivational sequence, past counterfactuals with modal verbs in Pomerano grant us a privileged view into its clausal architecture and, even more importantly, into general processes of clause formation.

Cited literature

Iatridou, Sabine (2000). 'The grammatical ingredients of counterfactuality' in: *Linguistic Inquiry* 31/2. 231–270.

Kaufmann, Göz (2017). '„Sorvete und Tema is nich Dütsch“: Zur lexikalischen Integration von Entlehnungen in drei deutschen Varietäten Südbraziens' in: Eller-Wildfeuer, Nicole, Péter Maitz, and Alfred Wildfeuer (eds.). *Sprachkontaktforschung – explanativ* (ZDL-special topic). Stuttgart: Steiner. 260–307.

Kaufmann, Göz (2022). 'In the thick of it: scope rivalry in past counterfactuals of Pomerano' in: *Journal of Comparative Germanic Linguistics* 25/3. 333–384. doi.org/10.1007/s10828-022-09137-9.

Kaufmann, Göz (2023). 'Aspectual marking in three (Low) German varieties from Southern Brazil' in: Hans-Bianchi, Barbara and Barbara Vogt (eds.): *Deutsch im Kontakt: Neue empirische Studien zu Kontakthänomenen und -szenarien in der Gegenwart* (GL-special topic). Baden-Baden: Olms. 335–393.

Kaufmann, Göz and Daniel Duran (2022). 'Of snoidels and hofdüütsch: Some (Standard German) keys to the phonetic variation in Pomerano' in Ganswindt, Brigitte, Yvonne Hettler, and Ingrid Schröder (eds.): *Niederdeutsche Dialektologie* (ZDL-special issue). Stuttgart: Steiner. 231–282. doi.org/10.25162/zdl-2022-0008.

Postma, Gertjan (2019). *A contrastive grammar of Brazilian Pomeranian*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins.

Everyone is cordially invited.