

Variation, Contact, and Change. ***What can we learn from language islands in the “flood”?***

Peter Rosenberg (Frankfurt/Oder)

I would like to present you some findings of a research project which is about language change in German language islands in Brazil and Russia. The core idea of this project is the assumption that we can learn as well from language obsolescence (attrition, decay) as from language emergence (standardization, koineization, dialect merger) which has been the subject of linguistic research in the past.

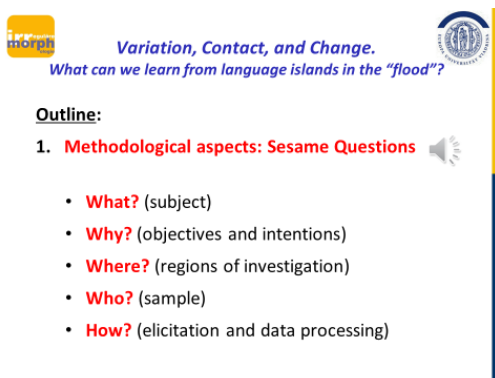
Outline:

Intro

1. Methodological aspects: Comparative language island research
2. Linguistic aspects - some results:
 - 2.1 Variation
 - 2.2 Contact
 - 2.3 Change
3. Sociolinguistic and ethnological aspects: Boundary marking by language
4. Conclusions

1 Methodological aspects: Comparative language island research

At first, it might be useful to give you some information about the most important questions concerning our language island research:

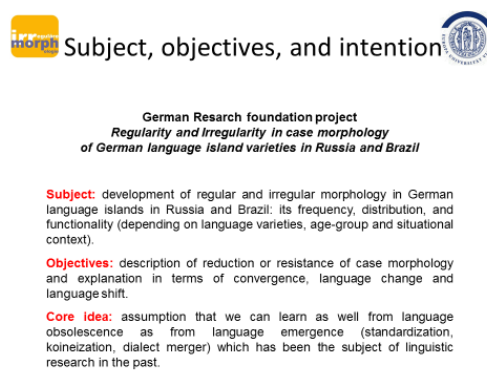


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What can we learn from language islands in the “flood”?

Outline:

1. **Methodological aspects: Sesame Questions**

- **What?** (subject)
- **Why?** (objectives and intentions)
- **Where?** (regions of investigation)
- **Who?** (sample)
- **How?** (elicitation and data processing)



Subject, objectives, and intention

German Research foundation project
Regularity and Irregularity in case morphology of German language island varieties in Russia and Brazil

Subject: development of regular and irregular morphology in German language islands in Russia and Brazil: its frequency, distribution, and functionality (depending on language varieties, age-group and situational context).

Objectives: description of reduction or resistance of case morphology and explanation in terms of convergence, language change and language shift.

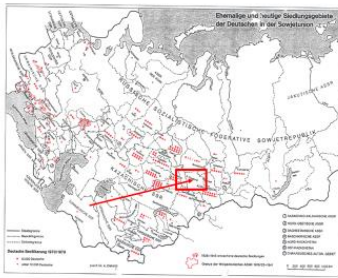
Core idea: assumption that we can learn as well from language obsolescence as from language emergence (standardization, koineization, dialect merger) which has been the subject of linguistic research in the past.

In more detail the contribution is dealing with the development of regular and irregular morphology in German language islands in Russia and Brazil: its frequency, its distribution, and its functionality (depending on languages and language varieties in contact, sociolinguistic context). The aim is to describe the reduction or resistance of case morphology and to explain these phenomena in terms of convergence, language change and language shift.

The regions of the language islands have been chosen with the aim of comparability: long existing and big German communities, historically under political pressure, but still rather stable, with Low and High German varieties in contact:



Regions of investigation: Russia



German settlements in Russia
National District of „Halbstadt“ (Altajskij Kraj)



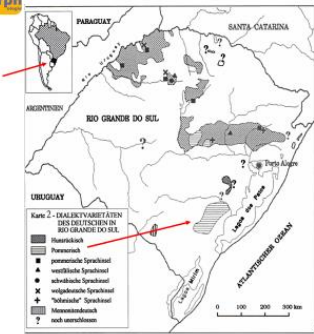
Regions of investigation: Russia



Language islands in Siberia:
Place of investigation



Regions of investigation: Brazil



German varieties in Rio Grande do Sul, South Brazil



Regions of investigation: Brazil



Language islands in Rio Grande do Sul:
Place of investigation



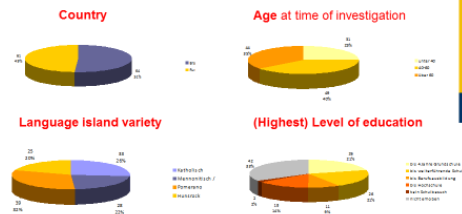
Sample



	< 40 1990s	< 40 2000s	40-59 1990s	40-59 2000s	≥ 60 1990s	≥ 60 2000s	Σ
RUSSIA							
Plautdietsch	0	6	5	7	4	5	27
Repetitive recordings (Real-time comparison): 3							
„Catholic“	3	4	10	6	6	5	34
Repetitive recordings (Real-time comparison): 7							
BRAZIL							
Pomerano	2	9	9	5	9	5	39
Repetitive recordings (Real-time comparison): 5							
Hunsrückisch	1	6	3	5	4	6	25
Repetitive recordings (Real-time comparison): 1							
TOTAL	6	25	27	23	23	21	125
Repetitive recordings (Real-time comparison): 16							



Sample



The sample contains 125 speakers (about 60 in Russia, 60 in Brazil, each investigation with about 60 speakers in the 1990s and 60 in the 2000s). Additionally, a real-time panel study has been arranged: tape-recordings of 16 speakers a second time after 15 years.



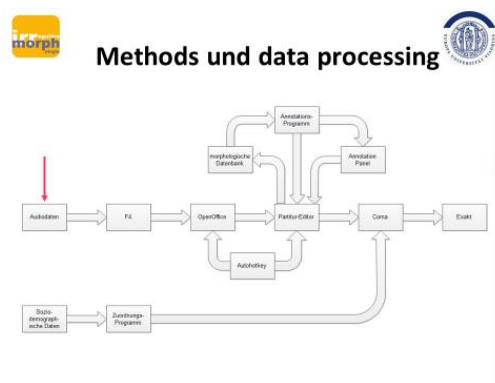
Methods



Age groups	< 40	40-59	≥ 60
Situational contexts			
Translation task (Standard German into intended vernacular)			
Interview and narration			
Language varieties			
Brazil:			
Pomerano		East Low German Variety	
Hunsrückisch (Hunsriqueano)		High German Variety (West Central German)	
Russia:			
(Mennonite) Plautdietsch		East Low German Variety	
„Catholic“		High German Variety (West Upper German)	

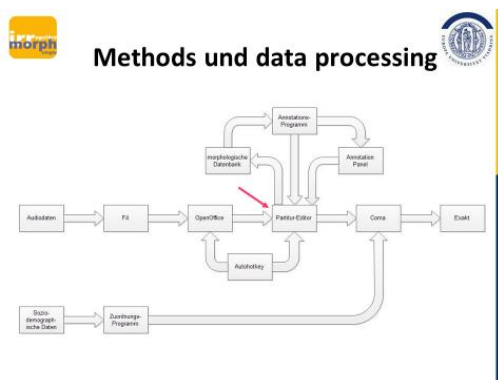
The methodology of the investigation implies the study of language usage in German language islands in different situations, i.e. in three settings of investigation: a set of 60 standardized sentences to be translated into the intended dialect; an interview narration; and a home conversation self-recorded by the speakers. This is done by three age groups of speakers (under 40 years, 40 to 59 years, over 60 years) of two dialects in contact in each country: the East Low German *Plautdietsch* and a West Upper German variety called „Catholic“ in Russia, and the East Low German *Pomerano* and the West Middle German variety *Hunsrückisch* in Brazil. The investigation is done in the West Siberian German National Rayon, and in the South Brazilian area around Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul.

Our methodology had to be quite ambitious because in “drowning” language islands it is a pretty mess to control all intervening factors because all varieties are mixed varieties, mostly undescribed and speakers are insecure about their own grammar. Thus, it might be interesting to show you some of our methods to deal with these challenges.



Our audios have been taken systematically as I said before.

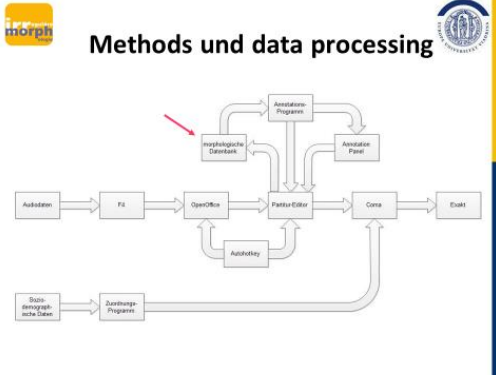
We used the Exmaralda system which most of you will know.



Methods und data processing

Exmaralda – Partitur Editor

In our example, you see the partitur editor containing the translation into the intended vernacular, a Standard German translation, so called sentence elements (for real text searches), and the tagging tier.



Methods und data processing

Morphological Data Base

Typ	Realisation	Interpretation
342.1	342.1	342.1
342.2	342.2	342.2
342.3	342.3	342.3
342.4	342.4	342.4
342.5	342.5	342.5
342.6	342.6	342.6
342.7	342.7	342.7
342.8	342.8	342.8
342.9	342.9	342.9
342.10	342.10	342.10
342.11	342.11	342.11
342.12	342.12	342.12
342.13	342.13	342.13
342.14	342.14	342.14
342.15	342.15	342.15
342.16	342.16	342.16
342.17	342.17	342.17
342.18	342.18	342.18
342.19	342.19	342.19
342.20	342.20	342.20
342.21	342.21	342.21
342.22	342.22	342.22
342.23	342.23	342.23
342.24	342.24	342.24
342.25	342.25	342.25
342.26	342.26	342.26
342.27	342.27	342.27
342.28	342.28	342.28
342.29	342.29	342.29
342.30	342.30	342.30
342.31	342.31	342.31
342.32	342.32	342.32
342.33	342.33	342.33
342.34	342.34	342.34
342.35	342.35	342.35
342.36	342.36	342.36
342.37	342.37	342.37
342.38	342.38	342.38
342.39	342.39	342.39
342.40	342.40	342.40
342.41	342.41	342.41
342.42	342.42	342.42
342.43	342.43	342.43
342.44	342.44	342.44
342.45	342.45	342.45
342.46	342.46	342.46
342.47	342.47	342.47
342.48	342.48	342.48
342.49	342.49	342.49
342.50	342.50	342.50

The morphological data base which you can see here contains nearly 30.000 types – which characterizes the messy thing I told you before.

Our tagging system is an adapted version of the STTS system. We used it the following way: On the left we note the input, on the right of the angle the output. Word class, gender case, number, person, weak or strong paradigm of inflection etc. everything has a fixed digit position for computer aided analysis. All this is documented – and if you like you can get all information, of course.

Methods und data processing

Morphological Tagging (Stuttgart-Tuebingen-TagSet (STTS))

Stimulus (Input) > Realization (Output) [interpretations in probability order]

word class:gender.case.number(optional)s > word class:gender.case.number(optional)s

Word class	Explanation
ADJ	(attributives) Adjektiv
APPRART	Präposition mit Artikel
ARTdef	bestimmter oder unbestimmter Artikel
N	Nomen, Eigennamen
PDS	substituierendes oder attributierendes Demonstrativpronomen
PIB	substituierendes oder attributierendes indefinitpronomen mit oder ohne Determiner
PIDAT	substituierendes oder attributierendes indefinitpronomen mit oder ohne Determiner
PIAT	substituierendes oder attributierendes indefinitpronomen mit oder ohne Determiner
PPER	irreflexives Personalpronomen
PPOSS	substituierendes oder attributierendes Possessivpronomen
PPOSAT	substituierendes oder attributierendes Possessivpronomen
PREL	substituierendes oder attributierendes Relativpronomen
PRF	Reflexives Personalpronomen

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Grammatische Kategorien / Paradigmen	Werte	Ergänzung
Genus	M F N	Possessor (hintere Stelle) Possessum (vordere Stelle) "Common gender" (MFN)
Kasus	N G D A	Obliquenkasus = DA Common Case = [NDA]
Numerus	S P	"Common Number" = [SP]
Person	1 2 3	
Definitheit	def indef	
Deklinationsparadigma (ADI, PI)	ST SW	
Komparationsgrad (ADI)	KD SU	

As an example of what we did with this tagging system I'll give you the input and output of the translation task sentence *Vor ihm lag ein Hund* ('A dog lay in front of him.'): We've been interested in *ihm* ('him'):

Example (translation task sentence *Vor ihm lag ein Hund*): PPER.M.D.S.3>PPER.F.D.S.3>PPER.M.N.S.3

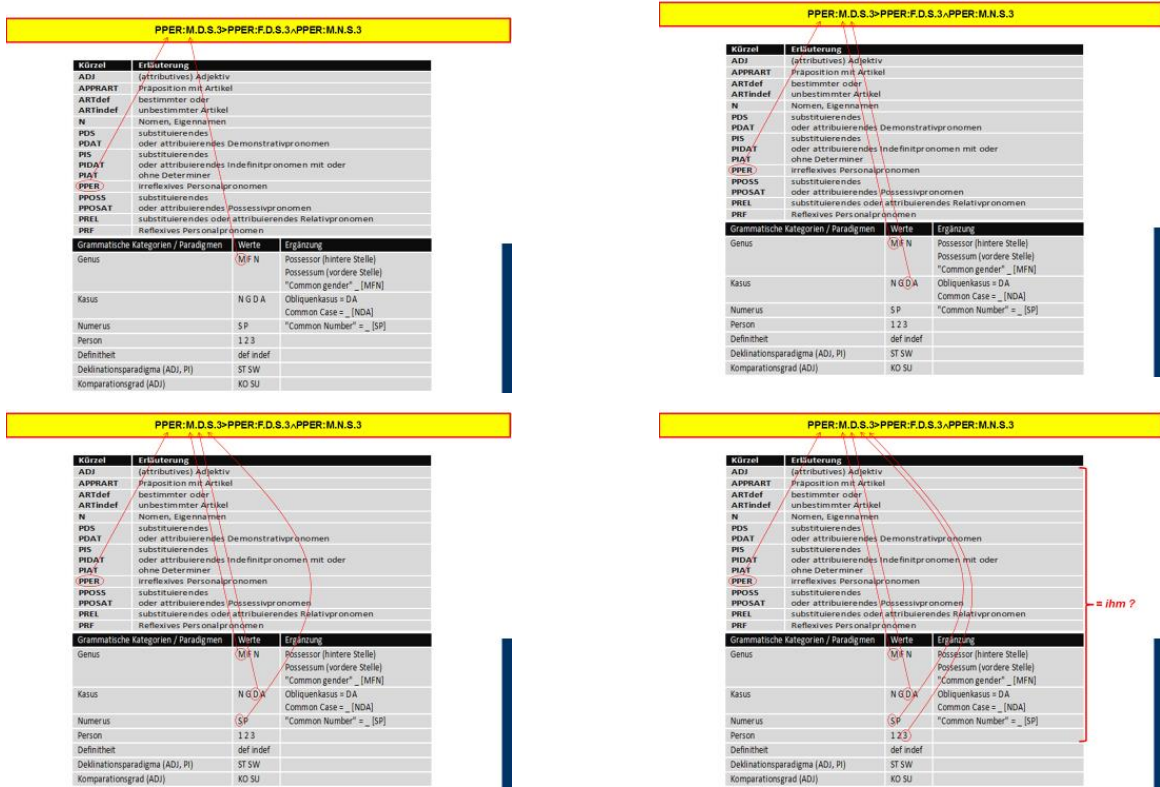
Kürzel	Erklärung
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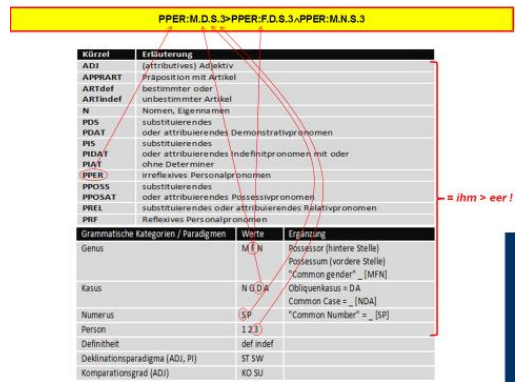
PPER.M.D.S.3>PPER.F.D.S.3>PPER.M.N.S.3

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ADJ	(attributives) Adjektiv
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This was the input. What about the output? Apparently, it has been realized as eer.



On the right hand side of the angle the conjunction symbol of a small roof (\wedge) is used to arrange the hierarchy of the output according to probability: In this case we assume that, in the first place, it should be a Low German expression of the personal pronoun dative feminine *ihr* ('her'), but it could also be the nominative masculine *er* ('he'). (The probability order is constructed by strict morpho-syntactical rules of verbal or prepositional government, then by semantics and last by agreement or other parallel structures in the utterance.)

How?

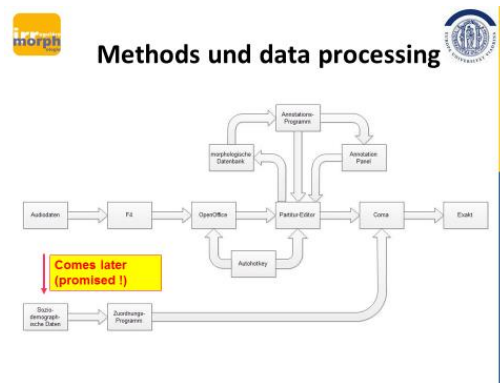
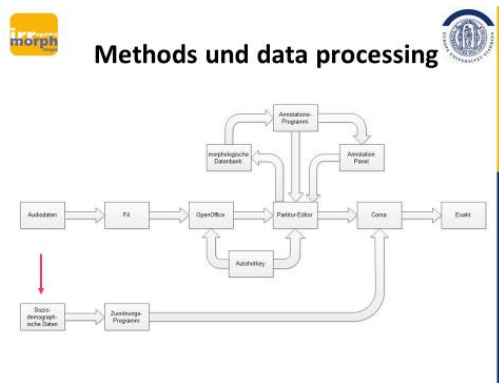
Methods und data processing

EXAKT search procedure: PPER: LA *PDS:*
 all personal pronouns (PPER) with accusative (A), which are realized as demonstrative pronouns (PDS)
 Translation task: Das ist ihre Tasse. Gebt sie ihr zurück!

Sp	Morphologisches Tag	Satz- element	Text- s#fznr		
1	Zohu10	jeft die trüch	PPER:F.A.S.3-PDS:F.3-PDS:M.N.S	sie	20
2	GoAn11	geb di dem tsurück	PPER:F.A.S.3-PDS:F.NA.S-PDS:..NA.P	sie	20
13	HeMa10	jff eer die trüch	PPER:F.A.S.3-PDS:F.NA.S-PDS:..NA.P-PDS:M.N.SP-PDT.D-POM	sie	20
14	WHe10	jeft die der tsurech	PPER:F.A.S.3-PDS:F.NA.S-PDS:..NA.P-PDS:M.N.SP-PDT.D-POM	sie	20
15	LeH09	jää eer die trüch	PPER:F.A.S.3-PDS:N.NA.S	sie	20
18	FRU11	geb die dem tsurück	PPER:F.A.S.3-PDS:N.NA.S	sie	20
19	GeD11	gibt die dem tsurück	PPER:F.A.S.3-PDS:N.NA.S	sie	20
20	HeMa10	jff der die trüch	PPER:F.A.S.3-PDS:N.NA.S	sie	20
23	HePi10	jebbx Ke dei (teret)	PPER:F.A.S.3-PDS:..(RUT,RED)*PPER:M.N.NA.S(KLIT,RED)*PPER:F.D.	sie	20
24	BeGr09	Geff e die wedder	PPER:F.A.S.3-PDS:..(RED)	sie	20
27	KoNi10	jff die trüch	PPER:F.A.S.3-PDS:..(RED)	sie	20

Beispielsuche 2: Personalpronomina mit Akkusativ-Input und Realisierung als Demonstrativpronomina

The last step has been the sociolinguistic interpretation which, however, will be given a little later.



That will do about the methodology. Now, you will be (hopefully) curious enough about the results.

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What can we learn from language islands in the "flood"?

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- 1. Methodological aspects:**
Comparative language island research
- 2. Linguistic aspects - some results:**
 - 2.1 Variation
 - 2.2 Contact
 - 2.3 Change
- 3. Sociological and ethnological aspects:**
Boundary marking by language
- 4. Conclusions**

2 Linguistic aspects – some results

Let me first report on some results related to different variational factors:

2.1 Variation



Variation, Contact, and Change.

What can we learn from language islands in the "flood"?



Outline:

1. Methodological aspects:
Comparative language island research
2. Linguistic aspects - some results:
2.1 Variation
 - systematic: regular – irregular inflection
 - variety
 - age
 - usage
 - formality



Variation, Contact, and Change.

What can we learn from language islands in the "flood"?



Outline:

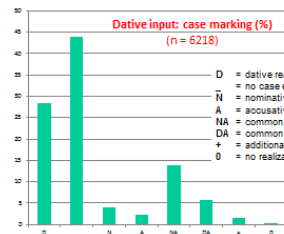
1. Methodological aspects:
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We observed a general tendency to case reduction in the language islands. While genitive is absent, dative is rarely realized, accusative is more frequent, and finally, only nominative is left over. What you see here, is the translation task with dative input. As you can realize, dative is rare in the output with less than one third.



Case marking on dative input Translation task

(125 subjects, 270 potentially case marked elements, > 28.536 types)

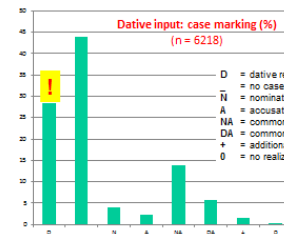


D = dative realization
 - = no case ending (for instance de)
 N = nominative
 A = accusative
 NA = common form for nominative and accusative (die)
 DA = common form for dative and accusative (mi/di)
 + = additional form
 0 = no realization



Case marking: dative input > output? Translation task

(125 subjects, 270 potentially case marked elements, > 28.536 types)



D = dative realization
 - = no case ending (for instance de)
 N = nominative
 A = accusative
 NA = common form for nominative and accusative (die)
 DA = common form for dative and accusative
 + = additional form
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If we look only at regular inflection this is even more pronounced.



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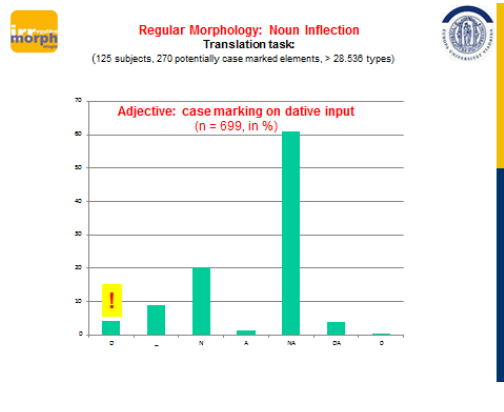
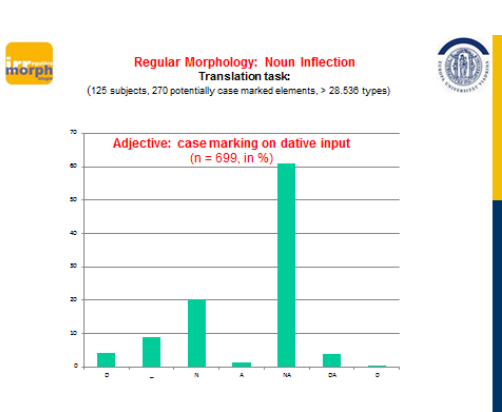


Outline:

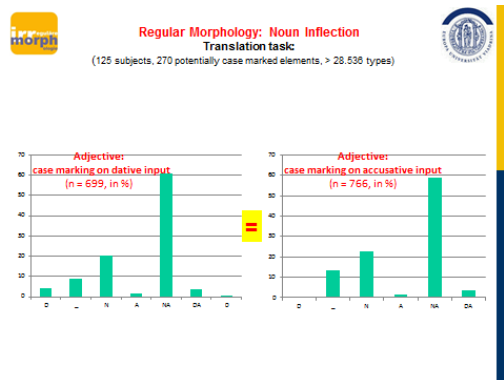
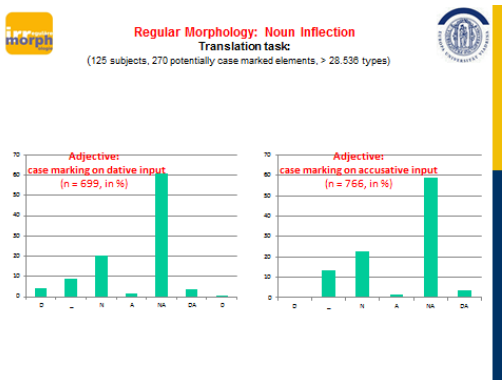
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2.1.1 Regular morphology: noun inflection

Case distinction in regular morphology (noun inflection: nouns, determiners, adjectives, demonstrative, indefinite and possessive pronouns) is rarely marked. If we look at the adjective, for instance, this is quite prominent:



There is almost no difference in output whether a dative or an accusative input is given. The output marks only an oblique case if any case.



As you can see, dative input or accusative input makes no difference in case marking: nominative (N) or common case (NA) are prevailing by far.

As concerns noun inflection, we can conclude as an intermediary result, two main tendencies:

- (1) The first one is the spread of *den/-n* as a default for all kinds of oblique case marking (analogous to accusative masculine) which is common and well attested also for neuter, where we should have *-s* in High German varieties or *-t* in Low German ones (i.e. *der leegt den brööt in en korbje* 'he puts the bread(s) into a little basket'; *mi braure hett den schääp gråås jejeft* 'my brother has given grass to the sheep'; *wi derfe in den huus rinnegåån* 'we may go into the house').

Regular Morphology: Noun Inflection Translation task (125 subjects, 270 potentially case marked elements, > 28.536 types)

Findings I: spread of *-en*

(1)	<i>den</i> oule mann	den alten Mann	den
(2)	help <i>den</i>	hilf dem ihm	dem ihm
(3)	help <i>den</i>	hilf ihnen	denen ihnen
(4)	der winda <i>den</i> letzte jår	der Winter des letzten Jahres (, der Winter das letzte Jahr)	das/ des
(5)	der leegt <i>den</i> brööt in en korbje	er legt das Brot/ die Brote in ein Körbchen	das/ die
(6)	mi braure hett <i>den</i> schääp gråås jejeft	dem Schaf Gras gegeben	dem
(7)	<i>den</i> letzte jår	das letzte Jahr	das
(8)	wi derfe in <i>den</i> huus rinnegåån	in das Haus hineingehen	das

Regular Morphology: Noun Inflection Translation task (125 subjects, 270 potentially case marked elements, > 28.536 types)

Findings I: spread of *-en* (even in neuter!)

(1)	<i>den</i> oule mann	den alten Mann	den
(2)	help <i>den</i>	hilf dem ihm	dem ihm
(3)	help <i>den</i>	hilf ihnen	denen ihnen
(4)	der winda <i>den</i> letzte jår	der Winter des letzten Jahres (, der Winter das letzte Jahr)	das/ des
(5)	der leegt <i>den</i> brööt in en korbje	er legt das Brot/ die Brote in ein Körbchen	das/ die
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(7)	<i>den</i> letzte jår	das letzte Jahr	das
(8)	wi derfe in <i>den</i> huus rinnegåån	in das Haus hineingehen	das

You might object that this is the general tendency in case systems of all German nonstandard varieties, and, of course, this is right. But the development is highly speeded up:



Regular Morphology: Noun Inflection
Translation task
Findings I: spread of -en



Definite Determiner (cf. Jedig 1966: 52)				
	Singular			Plural
	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	M. F. N.
Nominative	däi də	däi də	däut det et	däi də
Kasus obliquus	dē:m əm m (de:n ən n) (də)	däi də	dē:m əm m (däut det et)	däi də

In general, the accusative (with masculine and neuter) is replaced by **dative**. [It is] used by the older generation almost exclusively, by the **younger** generation, however, it is hardly ever found'. (Jedig 1966: 52, 71; transl. PR)

50 years later: **accusative (den/n)** or **no case marking (de)**!

„Der Akkusativ ist beim Maskulinum und Neutrum im allgemeinen vom Dativ verdrängt. [Sie wird] fast ausschließlich von Vertretern der älteren Generation gebraucht, bei Vertretern der jüngeren Generation findet sie sich fast gar nicht.“ (Jedig 1966: 52, 71).

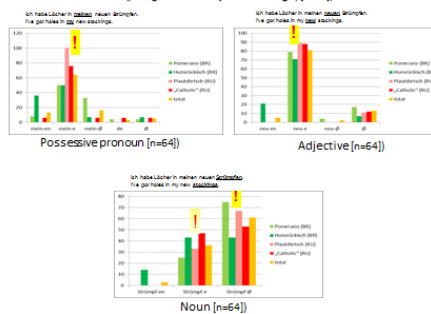
For the Plautdietsch variety of the Russian German Mennonites 50 years ago Hugo Jedig stated that *dem* is the most frequent oblique case marker: ‚In general, the accusative (with masculine and neuter) is replaced by dative. [It is] used by the older generation almost exclusively, by the younger generation, however, it is hardly ever found‘. (Jedig 1966: 52, 71; transl. PR)

50 years later, not the dative form [de:m, əm, m] but the accusative form [de:n, ən, n] or no case marking [də, ə] has taken over!

- (2) If no oblique case marking is chosen we find – as a second tendency – further reduction to the common case marker –e:



Regular Morphology: Noun Inflection
Findings II: reduction to common case marker –e
[Translation task sentence: *Ich habe Löcher in meinen neuen Strümpfen.*
(‘I’ve got holes in my new stockings’) (n=64)]



The translation of the sentence *Ich habe Löcher in meinen neuen Strümpfen* (‘I’ve got holes in my new stockings’) into the intended dialect illustrates this finding:

The reduction to –e prevails with the possessive pronoun *meine* (instead of *meinen*), with the adjective *neu* (instead of *neuen*), and it is frequent with the noun *Strümpfe* (instead of *Strümpfen*).

This tendency of simplification is common in the entire regular morphology, and even more in interview and narration settings.

Interestingly, the direction of simplification is exactly the weak inflection paradigm in German that holds as well for the strong inflection paradigm:



Number	Case	Gender	Inflectional ending
Singular	Nominative	all Genders	-e
Singular	Accusative	Fem./Neuter	
all other			-(e)n

Weak adjective inflection paradigm in German (cf. Helbig/Buscha (2001: 274))

2.1.2 Irregular morphology: personal pronoun inflection

Now, let's have a look into the results yielded by irregular inflection (in terms of personal pronouns):



Outline:

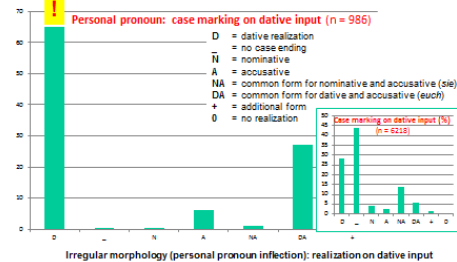
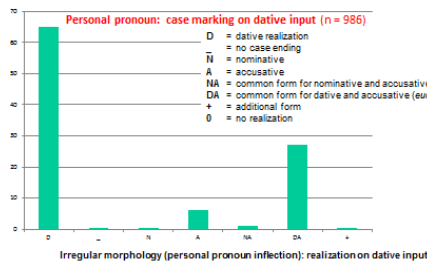
1. Methodological aspects:
Comparative language island research

2. Linguistic aspects - some results:

2.1 Variation

- systematic: regular – irregular inflection
- variety
- age
- usage
- formality

While dative is only rarely realized in noun inflection it is very frequent in personal pronoun inflection:

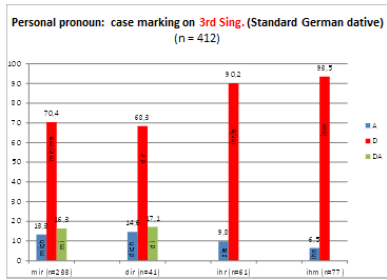


A clear difference with about two thirds of the data realizing dative input as dative output is obvious if compared to the results of noun inflection mentioned above (down there on the right hand side).

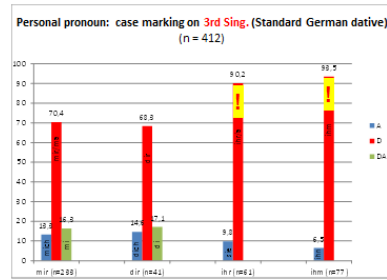
This is most frequent in 3rd person singular:



Irregular Morphology: Personal pronoun inflection
Interviewand narration



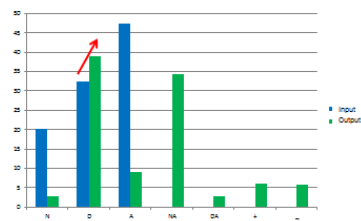
Irregular Morphology: Personal pronoun inflection
Interviewand narration



In 3rd person singular, dative output is even more frequent than demanded by input:



Irregular Morphology: Personal pronoun inflection
Translation task

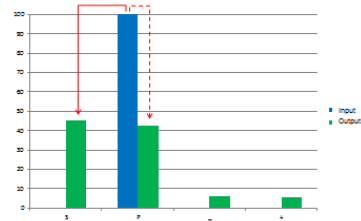


Personal pronouns of 3rd Person Singular: all cases (n = 1.762)

Plural pronouns are treated different: 3rd person plural in oblique case are frequently reduced and changed to singular or replaced by nouns. Frequently, speakers do not even seem to possess 3rd person plural pronouns.



Irregular Morphology: Personal pronoun inflection
Translation task

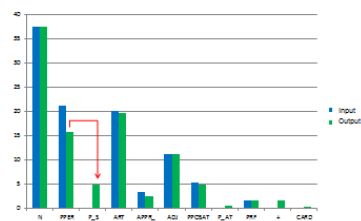


Personal pronouns of 3rd person plural: Realization of number (n = 572)

However, personal pronouns are not entirely exempt from case reduction: Speakers often change word class in their output when replacing personal pronouns (*ihm, ihr* 'him, her') with demonstrative pronouns (*dem, der* 'this.DAT'):



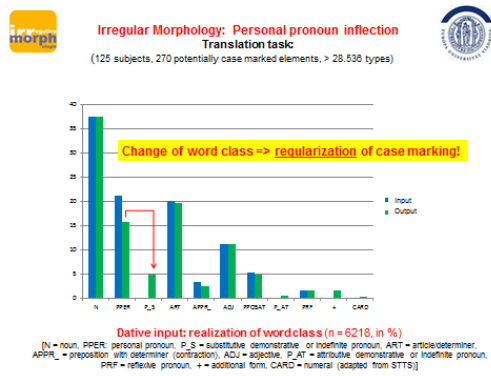
Irregular Morphology: Personal pronoun inflection
Translation task



Dative input: realization of word class (n = 6218, in %)
[N = noun, PPER = personal pronoun, P,S = substitute demonstrative or indefinite pronoun, ART = article/determiner, APPR = preposition with determiner (contraction), ADJ = adjective, P,AT = attributive demonstrative or indefinite pronoun, PRF = reflexive pronoun, + = accasional form, CARD = numeral (adapted from STTS)]

If changing the word class into a regularly inflected one speakers use to some extent the accusative (*den, die* 'this.AKK') or nominative, which they do when case-marking regular forms.

This could be interpreted as a kind of regularization.



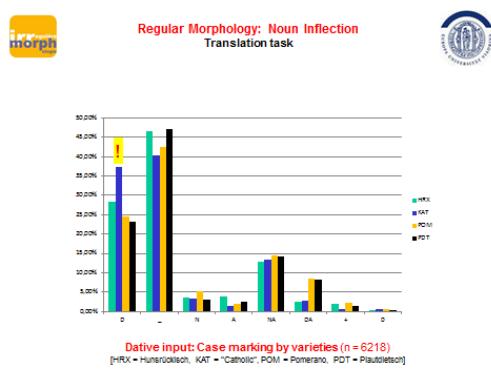
What about differences between the language island **varieties** (which might also be a matter of variation if speakers are able to speak more than one variety):

Variation, Contact, and Change.
What can we learn from language islands in the "flood"?

Outline:

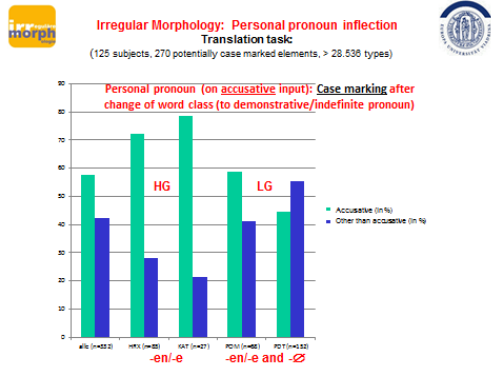
- Methodological aspects:**
Comparative language island research
- Linguistic aspects - some results:**
 - 2.1 Variation**
 - systematic: regular – irregular inflection
 - variety
 - age
 - usage
 - formality

To a certain extent, case marking is depending on the variety spoken:



The Catholic community in Russia uses more dative forms than any other.

While the weak inflection paradigm mentioned above is common for the High German dialects the Low German varieties have also their typical Zero-endings.

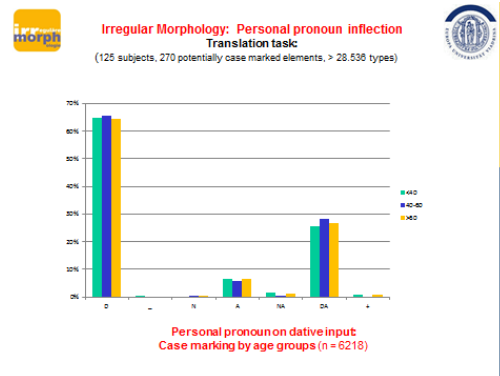


The age factor is not significant in case marking of personal pronouns:

Variation, Contact, and Change.
What can we learn from language islands in the "flood"?

Outline:

1. Methodological aspects:
Comparative language island research
2. Linguistic aspects - some results:
2.1 Variation
 - systematic: regular – irregular inflection
 - variety
 - age
 - usage
 - formality



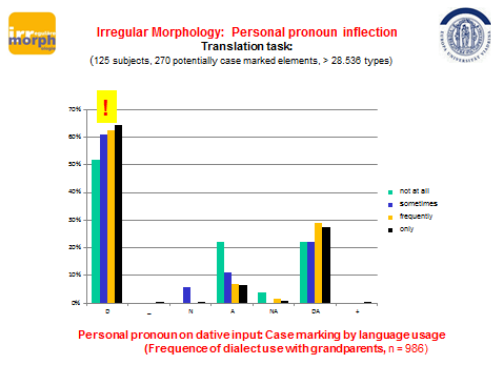
But another factor is more important:

Variation, Contact, and Change.
What can we learn from language islands in the "flood"?

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1. Methodological aspects:
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 - variety
 - age
 - usage
 - formality

While age groups do not remarkably correlate with case distinction, criteria of language use, however, offer a more convincing correlation: the intergenerational usage of the language island variety spoken with grandparents correlates best with case marking on personal pronouns (proportionally depending on frequency of usage):



Finally, the situational setting of our investigation reveals some differences.

Variation, Contact, and Change.
What can we learn from language islands in the "flood"?

Outline:

1. Methodological aspects:
Comparative language island research
2. Linguistic aspects - some results:
 - 2.1 Variation
 - systematic: regular – irregular inflection
 - variety
 - age
 - usage
 - **Formality** (situational setting)

Regular Morphology: Noun Inflection

Possessive pronoun: case marking on dative input - Interview narration (n = 281)

Possessive pronoun: case marking on dative input - Translation task (n = 324)

The results of interview style and narrations compared to the translation task yield some differences (in possessive pronouns) with a slightly higher tendency to nominative instead dative or any other cases (and, of course, one case is no case).

Now, what can we say about **change** induced by contact?

Variation, Contact, and Change.
What can we learn from language islands in the "flood"?

Outline:

1. Methodological aspects:
Comparative language island research
2. Linguistic aspects - some results:
 - 2.1 Variation
 - 2.2 Contact
 - 2.3 Change
3. Sociological and ethnological aspects:
Boundary marking by language
4. Conclusions

Contact induced phenomena?

- Would convergence account for the reduction of case morphology? But what kind of convergence?
- Convergence as a result of language contact?
Not very likely, since change occurs in both language contact settings
- Convergence as a result of variety contact?
Not very likely, since change occurs in all variety contact settings

2.2 Contact

The most important question is: Is change caused by convergence (an interpretation which appears sometimes referring to the influence of US-American English or Brazilian Portuguese)?

At first, we could ask: convergence with what? Convergence as a result of language contact to Russian or Brazilian Portuguese?

Contact induced phenomena?

- Would convergence account for the reduction of case morphology? But what kind of convergence?
- Convergence as a result of language contact?
Not very likely, since change occurs in both language contact settings
- Convergence as a result of variety contact?
Not very likely, since change occurs in all variety contact settings

2.2.1 Convergence as a result of language contact

These phenomena emerge in all varieties observed, not only in those communities with intense contact to the majority language or to another German variety. That's why convergence is not very likely to serve as an explanation of this kind of change.

Case reduction occurs in communities with a morphologically „rich“ contact language (Russian), as well as with a „poor“ one (Brazilian Portuguese), in morphologically more „conservative“ varieties (Low German dialects), as well as in others (High German dialects).

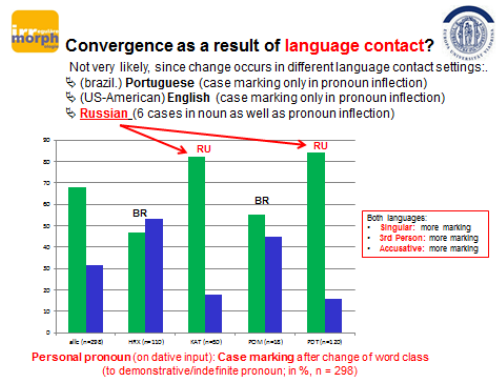
The influence of the contact languages may, indeed, be referred to the following structural differences:

Russian has six cases which have to be case-marked with little exception, in noun as well as in pronoun inflection, even in typical settings which trigger reduction processes: orality, colloquial and informal style, or allegro speech. Within personal pronouns all cases are case-marked, too. Singular is more differentiated than plural, 3rd singular masculine is most differentiated.

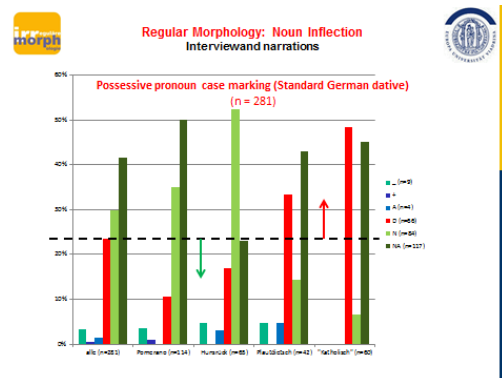
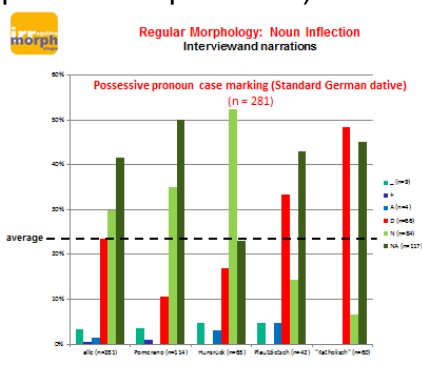
Brazilian Portuguese has case – as far as formally marked – only in personal pronouns: While in 1st and 2nd person (singular and plural) merely an oblique case is marked, dative and accusative are differentiated in 3rd person singular.

Obviously, the concept of case is established in both contact languages. Like in other languages, singular (more than plural), 3rd person (more than 1st and 2nd person), and accusative (more than dative) are morphologically most differentiated in terms of case- (and gender-) marking.

The comparison of the language islands in Russia and Brazil reveals some differences: Within the Russian German islands speakers maintain dative even in case of the „regularization“ mentioned above (by change of word class from the irregular to the regular inflection paradigm (CAT and PDT both are Russian German varieties). This might be due to the influence of the morphologically more differentiated Russian language:



Interview narrations yield some more differences between the varieties – the Russian German language islands producing more datives than the Brazilian German ones (in possessive pronouns):



Would variety contact serve as a trigger of change?



Contact induced phenomena?



•Would convergence account for the reduction of case morphology? But what kind of convergence?

- Convergence as a result of language contact?
Not very likely, since change occurs in both language contact settings
- Convergence as a result of **variety contact**?
Not very likely, since change occurs in all variety contact settings

2.2.2 Convergence as a result of variety contact

Of course, the grammatical structure of the varieties is of some significance. Furthermore, the linguistic communities differ in terms of boundary marking: The Plautdietsch speaking community of the Russian German Mennonites can be referred to as a real „group“ (Brubaker 2007) in the sense of a dense communicative network with shared socio-cultural norms and a strong feeling of „belonging“ (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2013). Their variety serves as a „boundary marker“ (Barth 1969) distinguishing the community at socio-cultural, economic, and religious levels. Additionally, the speakers of Plautdietsch were the majority and the autochthonous inhabitants in this „central village“ composed in the 1970s out of several smaller villages speaking different dialects. This makes them more resistant to external influence. This is partly true also for the speakers of Pomeranian in the Pelotas region but in Brazil Hunsrückisch can be regarded as a koiné among the German speaking population (vgl. Altenhofen 1996).

Comparing the varieties reveals some differences concerning case reduction:

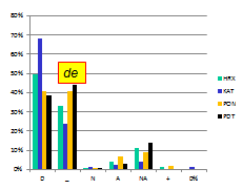


Convergence as a result of **variety contact**?



Not very likely, since change occurs in different variety contact settings:

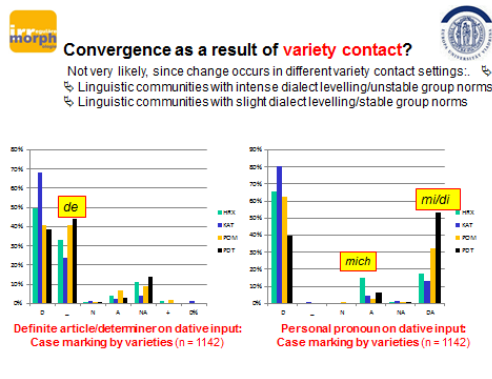
- ☒ Linguistic communities with intense dialect levelling/unstable group norms
- ☒ Linguistic communities with slight dialect levelling/stable group norms



Definite article/determiner on dative input: Case marking by varieties (n = 1142)

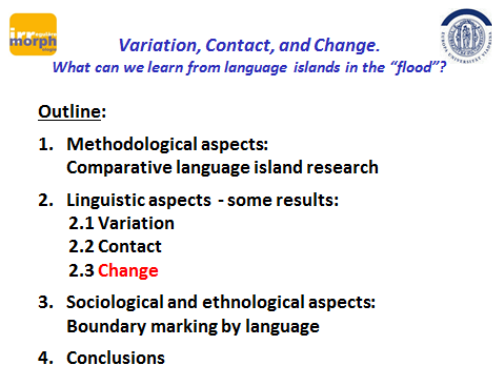
Dative output (D) in determiners is most frequent with the High German varieties (Hunsrückisch and „Catholic“), while reduction to *de* () is slightly more frequent with the Low German varieties.

In personal pronouns dative output is more frequent in the „Catholic“ speaking community. Low German speakers, especially the Plautdietsch community, use the oblique form *mi, di* (DA), speakers of Hunsrückisch use also accusative (*mich/dich*):



Of course, there are some phenomena of convergence directed to the contact language or a contact variety within the language islands. But the overall tendency is quite uniform. Hence, the case reduction presented above appears to be an accelerated – but ordinary – linguistic change all German varieties are subject to, not essentially a matter of contact-induced adoption or advergence.

So, what else could explain **change** in the language islands?



2.3 Explanations of change

The first question to answer is: Why do these processes of an accelerated language change take place in the very moment of **language shift**?

The present situation of the German language islands metaphorically characterized as „in the flood“ can be characterized as follows:

The language island varieties are more or less **communities „in obsolescence“** (Dorian 1989) which entails

- the dissolution of social networks and boundary marking which I will address in a minute (in my last point Sociolinguistics).
- a decay of „normativity“ (in terms of linguistic knowledge and of linguistic loyalty)
- an increase of second language learners, but a decrease of native speakers
- We observe several phenomena of linguistic simplification which prompt some authors to suggest an analogy of „language death“ and pidginization (Dressler/Wodak-Leodolter 1977), others regard „language death“ as „creolization in reverse“ (Trudgill 1978). They draw on phenomena like:
 - a representation of grammatical relations less by morphology than by word order
 - form-function-patterns according to the 1:1-principle (cf. Andersen 1989: 386)
 - and a replacement of marked (case-) structures by unmarked (or less marked) structures (cf. Campbell/Muntzel 1989: 189, Jakobson 1936) or by „natural“ ones (cf. Mayerthaler et al. 1998: 167).

The second question to address is: Why are **personal pronouns** so conservative in terms of case distinction?

- Personal pronouns are *frequent*.
- They have – as a core concept – *animate* reference.
- They are closed and small classes.
- They are in many cases *suppletives*.
- They are probably „full-listed“ (Cholewa 1993), that is, organized in the lexicon as whole entities.
- 3rd person singular displays dative forms most frequently. This is of course not uncommon: If we take some other languages into account we find this as a common trait, which suggests that 3rd person singular personal pronouns are of a different nature:
 - cf. English *him/her* (Old English dative: *him/hire*)
 - cf. Danish *ham/henne* (Old Scandinavian dative *honum/henni*)
 - cf. French *lui* (Old French *li*, Vulgar Latin *li*, Latin *illi*)
- As some authors argue *animacy* und *agency* might cause the need for differentiation in 3rd person singular masculine: Prototypically the agent is an animate masculine (cf. Rabanus 2008: 274). If a typical candidate for agent and nominative is represented as patient or affected by the verbal proceedings this infringes upon a presupposition and has to be signaled (cf. Bittner 2002: 216).
- In irregular inflection a distinction of *case-semantic core function* is maintained: Formal simplification is accompanied by a functional focusing of case marking on the core semantic function – in terms of the German dative on the main case semantics of marking the *animate recipient* (cf. Jakobson 1936). What is maintained in terms of case distinction seems to be in part a simplification and reduction of morphology to the point of a core concept of case that we could call a „resemantization“ which in turn might be the backside of degrammaticalization (cf. Leiss 2004: 857).

Is this mere speculation or is there any evidence for this suggestion?

Why change in the very moment of language shift?

Cognitive processes under pressure of language "obsolescence" (Dorian 1989):

- Simplification and resilience: (re)structured!
- "Learners economy": easing the burden of L2-Learning

• **Personal Pronouns 3. Pers. Sg.**, most frequent dative marking:

- English *him/her* (oengl. dative: *him/hire*)
- Danish *ham/henne* (oscand. dative: *honum/henni*)
- French *lui* (ofr.: *li*, vulgarlat.: *li*, lat. *illi*)

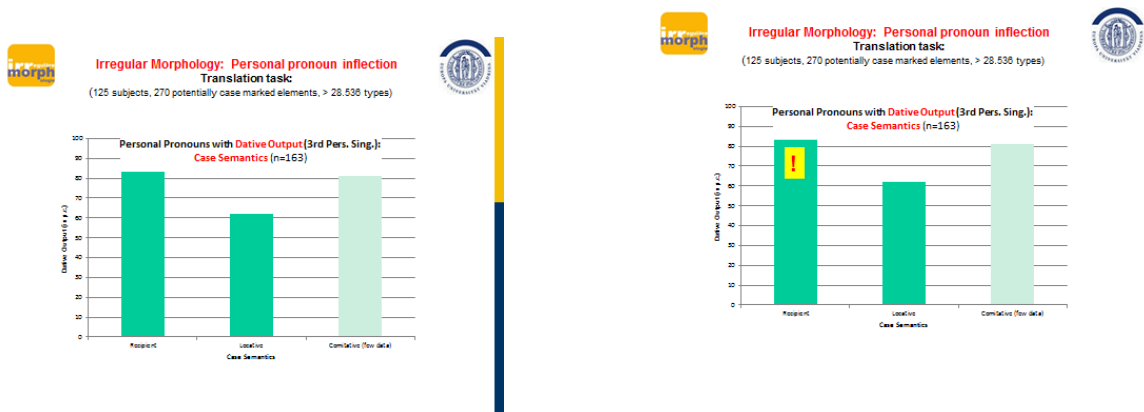
• **Why Personal Pronouns?**

- frequent
- closed classes
- small classes
- suppletives
- "full-listed"
- animate reference
- **case semantic core function of dative as case of the animate recipient**

➤ **Systematization, regularization, simplification, spread of defaults**
[resilience of irregular pronouns: early learnt, frequent, case (core) semantics]

Mere speculation - or is there any evidence?

If we analyze the functional distribution of dative personal pronouns we find some evidence:



The case semantics of dative as recipient case prevails while locative is less important (and comitative is insignificant because of few data).

3 Sociolinguistic and ethnological aspects: Boundary marking by language

Variation, Contact, and Change.
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Let us come back to the question: why now? What is specific of these language islands in terms of sociolinguistics and ethnology?

These communities belong to the biggest German language islands worldwide. But they are – sociolinguistically spoken – language islands in the „flood“. What is meant by this metaphor?

Change in the Brazilian language islands is more intense, but the Russian language islands catch up quickly. The process of assimilation began earlier in the Brazilian German communities, but it is more rapid in the Russian German communities.

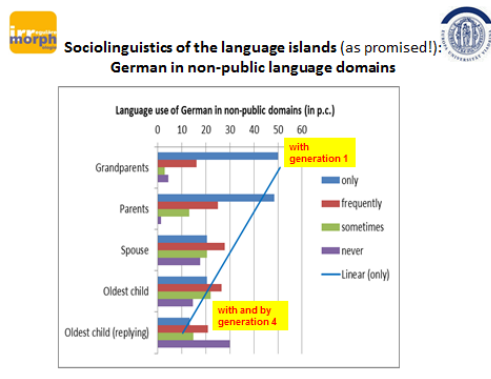
The *Brazilian* society is multiethnic and the German speaking minority is only one of a hundred ethnic communities. From the beginning, the German colonists have been „aliens“ by mission: For about 100 years, they kept their distance to the surrounding population in terms of geography, language, culture, economy, religion and social structure. Since about 1940 „Brazilianization“ has emerged, unifying the country (at least related to the „white“ Brazilians), in the last decades modernizing the society, and, hence, lowering the barriers of social contact. Today, Brazilian Germans are primarily Brazilians, speaking Brazilian Portuguese, married with Brazilians of other ethnic descent, studying somewhere in the country. Among the younger ones, the German language has become a cultural heritage. The disintegration of the language islands has begun two generations ago. Nowadays, ethnic diversity is still a familiar trait of all people but it is not a vital resource of social distinction.

Russia and the Soviet Union have been based on ethnicity. Since the breakdown of the Soviet Union, a disruptive language shift emerged among Russian Germans because of the mass emigration of resettlers (“Aussiedler”) to Germany in the 1990s.

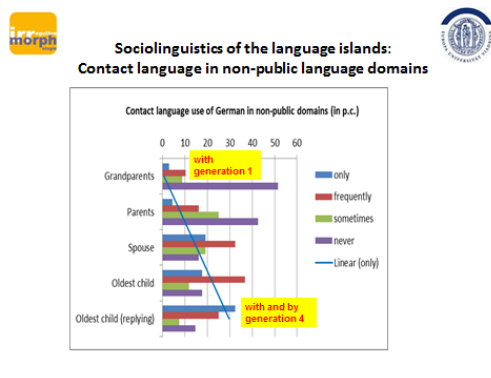
Today, the majority language is dramatically expanding in public and private domains. Younger generations are quickly shifting to Russian, code-mixing is more frequent than code-switching, and the proportion of second-language learners outweighs native speakers. Inter-marriage is steadily increasing, and getting vocational education outside of the village is common. Additionally, the ethnic composition of the villages is becoming more diffuse because of the replacement of the emigrated resettlers by non-Germans or non-locals (immigrating Germans from the Central Asian republics of former USSR). Today, only about 10 – 15 p.c. of the villagers are locally born and network clusters are dissolving. Being German is not a primary distinction anymore.

This is met by the results of our sociolinguistic survey in the colonies (with 85 items concerning sociodemographic data, social networks, language awareness, language acquisition, language competence and language use, attitudes, related to the varieties and languages in contact):

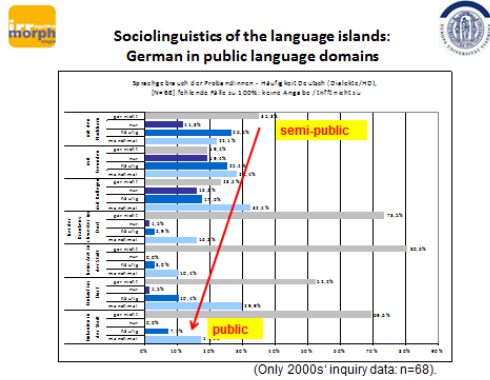
Within the non-public language domains German is mainly used with the grandparents and parents, rarely with spouses and children.



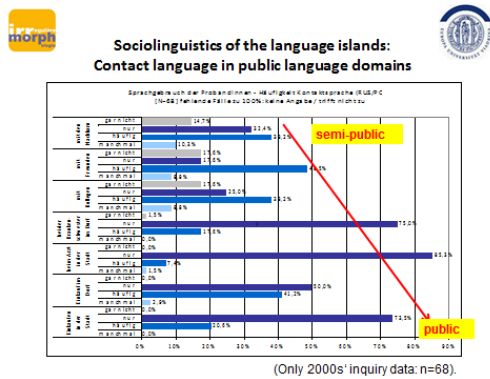
For speaking with the children the contact language is used mostly. The trendlines (for usage „only“) are almost inverted:



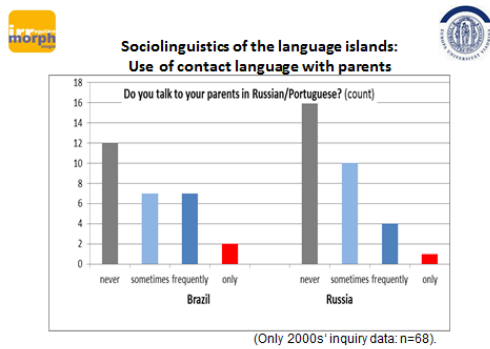
Within the public language domains German is hardly ever used. If so, it is restricted to semi-public domains (neighbors, friends, workmates):



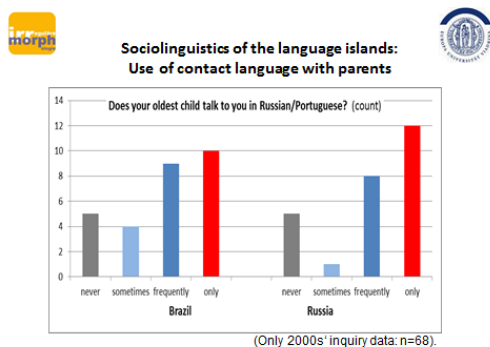
Again, the trend lines (for usage „only“) are almost inverted:





If we compare Russia and Brazil, some traits of an accelerated loss of the German language in Russia can be detected: If asked whether the speakers use the contact language with their parents, more Russian Germans predominantly answer *never* (more than Brazilian Germans do; cf. the grey columns):



But with their children, Russian Germans use Russian *only* or *frequently* by a clear majority:



What is striking in our findings is that the acceleration in language change in the Russian-German language islands is not simply a consequence of language contact and imposition. What we find is a loss of something different: the gradual loss of knowing and caring about what is linguistically „ours“ and what is „theirs“. This is connected to a lack of intergenerational transmission of the German language, an increasing proportion of non-native speakers, a common practice of code-mixing (frequently without any awareness of using elements of two languages). The determining factor which might have opened the gate for change in these communities could be called a loss of *normativity*, i.e. of norm awareness and norm loyalty.



Variation, Contact, and Change.
What can we learn from language islands in the “flood”?

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 - 2.3 Change
3. **Sociolinguistic and ethnological aspects:**
Boundary marking by language
4. **Conclusions**

4. Conclusions

The results allow some conclusions:

4 Conclusion

- 1 **Case syncretism in contact with morphologically rich and poor languages:**
Sociolinguistics paves the way for ordinary **internal** change.
- 2 **Accelerated language change in the moment of language shift?**
 - Communities „in obsolescence“ (Dorian 1989)
 - Dissolution of social networks and boundary marking
 - Decay of „normativity“ (= linguistic knowledge and of linguistic loyalty)
 - Increase of second language learners, decrease of native speakers
 - Parallels between „language death“ and pidginization?
(Dressler/Wodak-Leodolter 1977) (Trudgill 1978: „creolization in reverse“)
 - Representation of grammatical relations by word order (less by morph.)
 - Form-function-patterns: 1:1-principle (cf. Andersen 1989: 386)
 - Replacement of marked (case-) structures by unmarked (or less marked) structures (cf. Campbell/Muntzel 1989: 189, Jakobson 1936) or by „natural“ ones (cf. Mayerthaler et al. 1998: 167).

1. Case syncretism with irregular morphology is less frequent than with regular. This holds for language islands exposed to morphological „rich“ (Russian) as well as to morphological „poor“ contact languages (Portuguese in Brazil, English in the USA), for more conservative communities as well as for more “adaptive” ones. Hence, what I would suggest, is to prefer an internal explanation or, at least and more precisely, to consider the interaction of „internal“ and „external“ language change with external effects being the trigger of a basically internally structured process. Sociolinguistics paves the way for an ordinary internal change.



4 Conclusion

- 1 Case syncretism in contact with morphologically rich and poor languages: Sociolinguistics paves the way for ordinary internal change.
- 2 Accelerated language change in the moment of language shift?
 - Communities „in obsolescence“ (Dorian 1989)
 - Dissolution of social networks and boundary marking: Language loses function as symbol of *distinctiveness* within an *ethnic frame* („belonging“, Pfaff-Czarnecka 2011)
 - Decay of „normativity“ (= linguistic knowledge and of linguistic loyalty)
 - Increase of *second language learners*, decrease of native speakers

2. These changes are, however, accelerated by language obsolescence. Ethnic boundaries are in dissolution.

Ethnic boundaries are not “given” by the essence of origin, language or culture, but constructed by choice and evaluation of social relations.

This is the famous contribution made by Fredrik Barth 1969, the forefather of ethnological constructivism who stated that the most important process is in ethnic boundary marking:

The critical focus of investigation from this point of view becomes the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses. (Barth 1969: 16)

Brubaker, too, warns against the tradition of “groupism”, which takes (ethnic) groups for “things in the world” instead of appraising a shared and imagined “groupness”. Groups are „what we want to explain, not what we want to explain things with” (Brubaker 2002: 165).

In postmodern terminology, Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka suggests to use the concept of belonging not identity with the aim to assess the heterogeneous and multilingual group memberships and the degree of incorporation into different groups.

The notion of construction has become widely accepted in social sciences and in interactional sociolinguistics. And sometimes in postcolonial studies construction appears as a *deus ex machina*, a kind of *passe-partout* explanation, which shifts the field of interpretation from interaction to mental states. But since we have to explain the emergence or obsolescence of boundaries (of social, ethnic or national groups), we still have to answer some questions: What are the resources of this construction? And what is the impact of language in boundary marking?

Boundaries may be differentiated according to three criteria: *durability* (stability), *permeability* (allowing crossing or not), and *liminality* (abrupt or smooth transition, cf. Schiffauer et al. 2018).

What causes the construction of a disruptive boundary or its state as a blurred one?

As Fredrik Barth (1994) conceded 25 years after his programmatic proposition: Construction is not arbitrary, not just an imagination, but as a social organization of cultural difference, it consists in structuring experience along central cultural values.

Instead of disregarding the role of experience and social interaction, I would suggest taking construction as a threefold process: A process including *selection*

of experiential features (making them “focused” in terms of Le Page/Tabouret-Keller 1985), their *hierarchization* (making them relevant) and – as far as attitudes are involved – their *evaluation* (making them highly valued)¹.

Thus, we have to ask: under which circumstances does language serve as an ethnic boundary marker, under which does it lose this ability?

With the focus on ethnicity we could say: Language is an ethnic boundary marker if it serves a *communicative need* (in some language domains), if it displays a certain *distinctiveness* (Mattheier 1996), and if it is considered a legitimate distinction within an *ethnic frame*. An ethnic frame is chosen if social experience is reasonably focused as an ethnic structure (cf. Esser 1996) with prototypical actors of relevant „ethnic“ characteristics and if an *ethnolinguistic vitality* of the speech community is *positively evaluated* (cf. Giles/Bourhis/Taylor 1977). Then, ethnic (or multiethnic) varieties are maintained or even emerge.

Ethnic boundaries are going to vanish if the experience of difference is less prominent, if language loses the ability to focus this experience, and if differences no longer represent an ethnic „loading“. Then, normativity decreases and borders become diffuse – not when oppression is most severe, but when language and culture lose their discreteness. Then, language shift – and sometimes language decay – is the consequence. Losing boundaries is akin to losing norm awareness, norm institutions and norm loyalty, which opens the gate for obsolescence, assimilation, and change.



4 Conclusion

3 Methodology:

- **Interdisciplinary** methodology (qualitative & quantitative methods)
- **Comparative** language island research
- Linguistic **laboratories** of language change

3. Having this in mind, the interdependence of boundary marking, language contact, variation and change requires an *interdisciplinary* methodological approach.

¹ Barth himself, has admitted some oversimplifications when reviewing his approach in 1969 at a 25-years-anniversary conference in 1993: The main objections have been the following:

- The claim, it wouldn't be the “cultural stuff” which defines the ethnic group, but the boundary was “overstated”, and thus “people's choice of diacritica appeared arbitrary” (Barth 1994: 12).
- These diacritica of boundary marking are not constructed by a “mere act of imagining”, but rather have “empirical properties” (Barth 1994: 13): they are based on “experience”, and reflect “salient, major cultural discontinuities” (Barth 1994: 14).
- In this sense, “ethnicity is the social organization of culture difference” (Barth 1994: 13).



A *comparative* language island research is suitable to contribute to the question of internal and/or external induced change. Research on language island in obsolescence serves as well as the famous *linguistic laboratory of language change* Viktor Schirmunski (1930) addressed.

This means to combine the study of internal (structural, typological and cognitive), external (variety and language contact), and attitudinal (sociolinguistic and ethnographical) features. If possible a comparative investigation might be useful – of different terms of contact, different types of speakers and different variational settings.

Variation, Contact, and Change.
What can we learn from language islands in the "flood"?

Thank you very much for your attention!
Merci beaucoup pour votre attention!
Muito obrigado pela sua atenção!
Большое спасибо за Ваше внимание!
Vielen Dank für Ihre Aufmerksamkeit!

Peter Rosenberg
 (Europa-Universität Viadrina Frankfurt/Oder)

International Conference (CSF Workshop)
Variationist Linguistics meets Contact Linguistics
 May 20-23, 2018 Ascona, Switzerland – Conference Center Monte Verità
 May 23, 2018

available <http://www.kuwi.eu/frankfurt-o.de/lehrtstuhl/wsvr/oder:rosenberg@europa-uni.de>

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