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Emergence of a complex system: routinized plurilingual language use in Brazil

Spoken language is the place where we may observe and listen to fused lects, an important part of emerging language systems. In this paper, I focus on a plurilingual community of practice living in the countryside of Southern Brazil. Their ancestors migrated from Germany in the 19th century. Nowadays, due to changes in infrastructure – namely asphalted roads, media and mobility of the younger generations – these villages are no longer isolated monolingual environments. The generations living together today show differing levels of competence in the three languages involved: Pomeranian, Brazilian Portuguese and German. Within the community, they developed a plurilingual routine of speaking performed during everyday encounters in informal contexts. Their language use shows evidence for the emergence of a new system with its own characteristic lexical and grammatical complexity. Unique, plurifunctional, and for outsiders sometimes opaque items are creatively coined. Some of them are conventionalized and integrated into complex morphological forms and plurilingual constructions. The impact of this language use on the linguistic systems of Portuguese must be considered local. However, the plurilingual routine of discourse may become more important due to migration of members of the speech community to the neighborhoods of the nearby cities.

1 Introduction

Plurilingual *communities of practice* (Lave/Wenger 1991; Eckert/McConnel-Ginet 1992) using *Pomeranian* (Brazilian Portuguese: *Pomerano*) or *Hunsrück* (both dialects of German), Brazilian Portuguese and to a lesser degree Standard German may be observed in some of the Southeastern and Southern States of Brazil: namely, Espírito Santo, Santa Catarina, and Rio Grande do Sul. Data gathered in a village in the countryside of Rio Grande do Sul will show the multifaceted complexity of the language use at a micro level. The study presented here is a qualitative one¹ that may serve as a starting point for future quantitative research. I shall analyze lexical items and examine, focusing on grammar, morphological forms and the pragmatic function of discourse structures. Evidence from different linguistic domains, for example the segmentation of discourse by a cross-valid marker, the polyfunctionality of some lexical items, and the opacity of some neologisms for monolinguals, will lend support to the claim that the observed plurilingual language use gives insights into a new system.

The paper is structured in the following way: Firstly, the reader will be introduced to the plurilingual community of practice, including some remarks on its migration history. Secondly, reflections on orality and the collected spoken language data are presented, followed by a closer look at language use in one of the villages: Pelotas, *Rio Grande do Sul*. Thirdly, the aforementioned analysis is applied to some parts of the data, starting with discourse markers, continuing with creatively coined lexical items as part of morphology, and concluding with plurilingual discourse structures including observations on the concord of the grammatical features in

¹ Cf.: “In general, it seems preferable to carry out an initial analysis of small-scale communities in terms of a notion such as network, which is designed for this level of social organization [...]” (Milroy & Milroy 1992, 8).

plurilingual phrases. Lastly, I sum up the findings and give an outlook on the language use shared by some adolescents commuting between urban and rural places.

2 Plurilingual communities of practice in Brazil

The ancestors of the plurilingual German-Brazilian communities of practice migrated to Brazil in several waves starting in the mid-19th century. In Prussia, as in other parts of Europe, increasing industrialization led to significant changes in the agricultural economy, the most important push factor toward migration. Specifically, the automation of the processes of plowing, seeding, harvesting, loading and transport of food products led to massive job losses among peasants. Their manual labor became increasingly redundant. In this historical context, Brazilian strategies for attracting potential emigrants to their country were especially successful in two parts of former Prussia: in the northeastern part of Pomerania along the Baltic Sea coast and in the west in the Hunsrück Hills² near the French border.

Among the pull factors was the policy of King Pedro I, who around the year 1825 began inviting agricultural laborers to populate and cultivate regions in the Brazilian countryside south of Rio de Janeiro. Forced by Napoleon Bonaparte, his father, João VI had moved with the entire court to Brazil in 1807. In 1815 at the Congress of Vienna, Brazil was granted the same rights as Portugal, and in 1822 João VI's successor Pedro I declared independence. Besides the main purpose of cultivating the land, the settlement of the land by Europeans was considered to be a suitable strategy for "whitening" the skin color of the Brazilian population (called *embrancamento*, Andrews 1998; cf. discussion of this political concept in the context of 'forming Brazilians' for the nation, called *brasilianidade*, Lesser 2014). The goal of the migrants was to find better living conditions. Most of them established colonies in the form of compact villages in the countryside of the states of *Espírito Santo*, *Santa Catarina* or *Rio Grande do Sul*.

2.1 Plurilingual language use in German settlements

The newly-established communities remained relatively isolated from their Brazilian surroundings. They continued to speak their dialects, *Pomeranian* or *Hunsrück*,³ though some of them were also relatively competent in Standard German. In mixed settlements, processes of convergence between the different dialects took place (Altenhofen 1996, 2016). During the first years, communication with Brazilians – who represented the surrounding dominant society – was typically limited to a few selected members of the community. As a result, the communities only had few bilingual, or less commonly trilingual Pomeranian/Hunsrück-[German]-Brazilian Portuguese speakers, which in turn led to a general lack of widespread knowledge of Brazilian Portuguese among the German descendants. The migrants did not have an explicit right to attend school, but priests and unmarried women are reported to have taken up the task of giving instruction in reading and writing to the children, the schoolrooms often being installed close to

² A region between the rivers Rhine, Moselle, Nahe and the border river Saar.

³ Less common: *Hunsrik*, cf. Maselko/Hamester-Johann/Dewes (2014).

the church. In those times, the respective German dialect and Standard German, the latter important for reading the Bible and other sacred texts, were used at school.

Brazilian Portuguese became a more important part of everyday life in the villages when TV arrived from the 1960s onward. Around the same time, starting in 1962, the government of Goulart introduced (semi)-obligatory education at national level, with Portuguese⁴ as the primary language of instruction. Later, processes of urbanization led to the migration of the younger generation to the nearby cities. People of the former German-speaking villages got acquainted to speaking Brazilian Portuguese, not only in formal contexts, but also as an alternative medium of informal communication. Plurilingual German-Brazilian Portuguese forms of expression were created and became more and more routinized over time. Communities of practice, which may be considered *speech communities* (Labov 1972) – especially when their members are connected by *strong network ties* (Milroy/Milroy 1992) – develop a shared form of language use. In doing so, a sense of belonging is established towards insiders and outsiders alike. We give preference to the term *community of practice*, thus emphasizing the aspect of *doing*. While *speech communities* are defined by their language, which usually differs from that of their surrounding area, *communities of practice* refer to their language use which may include the use of several languages. Therefore this latter term fits better in plurilingual contexts (Vallentin submitted). The understanding of language use as a process and its integration into the wider context of cultural sciences is sketched in the following citation:

Approaches forming part of the only recently established frame called *practice turn* understand spaces and identities as socially constructed which may be correctly addressed as doing space or doing identity, respectively (Wille/Reckinger 2015, 3; my translation).

Coined terms emerging in the dyad of conversation among two or more speakers may be easily adopted, repeated by others, spread among the members of the community and accepted as a routine. In the context of this volume, a change in language use may be considered as the *flap of a butterfly's wing* (Lorenz 1972), indicating that apparently small differences are perceptible in complex dynamic systems and may end up provoking a change at a larger scale under favorable circumstances. In linguistics, one may recall, for instance, the process of the English continuous form becoming the most frequent form for expressing an activity in the present (Stein 1985). This process is best described by an S-shaped curve starting with the use among two speakers, and ending after three generations in the widespread use of this form. When the newly coined usage gains a symbolic function for all or a certain social (sub-)group of the members (cf. Jungbluth 2017a), the process is sufficiently established, and it becomes more and more probable that the forms will not disappear (“white noise”).

Mobility and internal migration play a crucial role for the emergence of new varieties. In the context of the present paper, for those descendants of the speech communities living in cities, the domains and situations where they spoke their

⁴ European Portuguese was still mostly taught as the norm, and Portuguese (school)books were used at that time in Brazil. People thought that the Standard Brazilian language was European Portuguese. At the universities, officials dictated that everyone had to follow the [European] Portuguese norm when speaking or writing: “We suffered from a colonized linguistics, or an auto-colonized one.” (Ataliba de Castilho in Kassab 2006; http://www.unicamp.br/unicamp/unicamp_hoje/ju/junho2006/ju328pag4-5.html; 19082016; my translation). Little by little, over the course of the 1960s, Brazilian Portuguese takes precedence in schools. However, until today the choice between different reference books for certain areas of education is limited.

respective dialects diminished over time. Some of them even preferred to express themselves in the national language in informal contexts as well. Their use of bilingual forms of expression may be considered Brazilian Portuguese-German instead of vice-versa. The process continued so that nowadays, families of German descendants living outside of their former communities no longer consider it important for their children to learn German. Yet, they still try to maintain continuity of their traditions with the goal of maintaining their culture. For example, some believe it to be important to arrange dancing lessons for their adolescent children, including old-fashioned German dances (Zinkhahn Rhobodes 2012).

3 Spoken plurilingual data: documenting orality

We collected data in Pelotas, a village in the countryside of Rio Grande do Sul:



Map 1: The Estado of Rio Grande do Sul⁵

⁵ <http://www.estadosecapitaisdobrasil.com/mapas-do-brasil> [23022017]. The capital of *Rio Grande do Sul* is Porto Alegre. It forms part of the Southern Region (Região Sul) at the border of Brazil with Argentina and Uruguay.



Map 2: Pelotas – the place of the case study⁶

Our data representing spoken language use in the rural area of Pelotas has two parts, both of which show the emergence of two different systems and are performed with considerable variation. One represents *Pomeranian*,⁷ a Low German (or *Plattdüütsch*) dialect that is still spoken as a first language (L1) by elderly people of the community. However, in informal contexts with foreigners and with younger residents, elderly people prefer to use a unique new variety that emerged as a result of close language contact between *Pomeranian*, Standard German and Brazilian Portuguese. This emerging variety⁸ will be further explained later in this paper. Before examining this novel variety, however, I will first give a brief overview of *Pomeranian* itself.

The elicited data shows a diverging use of the German dialect among members of this community of practice today as compared with earlier usage⁹ and with the use made of German dialects in other language islands¹⁰ (Rosenberg 2016).¹¹ The gathered data present an enormous diversity of morphological forms, both in the

⁶ http://www.mapa-brasil.com/Mapa_Rodoviario_Regiao_Sul_Brasil.htm [23022017]. Pelotas is situated close to the metropolis Rio Grande, half way between Porto Alegre and Jaguarão, a city at the borders of Uruguay.

⁷ Cf. Tressmann (2006), who considers *Pomeranian* a language in its own rights. This variety belongs to the Low Saxon subgroup, *nds* in the code for comprehensive coverage of languages (ISO 639-3; <https://www.ethnologue.com/language/nds> [24022017]).

⁸ This variety is the result of language contact including two standards and the already mentioned dialect; cf. Kloss (1976). Kloss discusses parameters for measuring the distance (*Abstand*) between Standard and Dialect.

⁹ E.g. in terms of diachronic change as a general corollary of language use.

¹⁰ For example, in Russia, where there are German settlements close to Barnaul, the capital of the Altai region in the South of West Siberia; see reference to the DFG sponsored project in the following footnote.

¹¹ This publication emerged from the DFG-sponsored project *Regelrätigkeit und Irregulärheit in der Kasusmorphologie deutscher Sprachinselnvarietäten (Russland, Brasilien): intralinguale, interlinguale, typologische Konvergenz*, 2009-2013 (Peter Rosenberg) https://www.kuwi.europa.uni.de/de/lehrstuhl/sw/sw1/forschung/Irregul_re_Morphologie/index.html [15.08.2016]. DFG is the largest research funding organization in Germany.

nominal and verbal paradigms.¹² The linguist may observe regularity and irregularity next to one another,¹³ thus manifesting the variational amplitude of grammar “ranging from knowledge of rules by a fully competent speaker to instability accompanying the loss [of the inherited language] even among the elder speakers, and the ongoing shift towards the contact language [e.g. Brazilian Portuguese]”¹⁴ (Rosenberg 2016, my translation).

With regard to the use of *Pomeranian* and/or Standard German, one has to take into consideration that the speech community in Brazil underwent a process of redialectalization due to the exclusion of foreign language instruction [of Standard German] since the post-World War II era, when Getúlio Vargas was president of Brazil for the second time (cf. Altenhofen 1996; Rosenberg 2016). Times of “rooflessness” [German: *Dachlosigkeit*] of the minority language, that is, the lack of a Standard variety as a reference point in the diasystem, accelerates the processes of language change, a well-known fact in sociolinguistics [...]” (Rosenberg 2016; my translation).

In what follows, I focus on the other part of our data, plurilingual *sui generis*. The data documents language use in Pelotas as spoken in the context of everyday life. It was collected by a German student researcher who is bilingual in German and Brazilian Portuguese. This is of course an important precondition for the recording of this kind of data (cf. Laudien 2010). The three generations living together in Pelotas, meeting each other from time to time on the weekend, during family parties, village festivals and the like, engage in conversations where linguistic competence in the three languages is often unequal. Therefore, their already routinized plurilingual language use is built upon items and structures of the three languages involved: Brazilian Portuguese, Pomeranian and German. This paper will discuss some examples of the data documenting the orality in this village. The “tremendous dynamism orality is made of” (Castilho 2009, 124) mirrors the complexity of emerging varieties.

3.1 Studying language as a complex system

It should be emphasized that spoken language and listening/understanding are basic elements of the system of language. Quoting Coseriu (1988),

[i]t is obvious that the knowledge of language is one of doing, that is, a knowledge, which in the first place is manifested in the form of speaking. In speaking and understanding, this knowledge is completely solid, but is a knowledge whose foundations are either not given at all, or for which, at best, only first, immediate reasons are mentioned, but not reasons for the foundations themselves. As it is always possible to give this kind of explanation when asked for, one has to consider the knowledge of language, especially of a certain language, as *cognitio clara distincta inadaequata*,¹⁵ [the object of reasoning is identified, ‘clear’, founded

¹² See also Gauchat (1905, 48), who already at the beginning of the 20th century observed “la diversité [...] beaucoup plus forte que je ne me le serais imaginé après une courte visite” in the data of a small village; *apud* Krefeld (2017, 15).

¹³ Possibly, these findings could be analyzed in another framework and in terms of an emergence of a complex system (present in this volume). I will not use this part of the data, but rather the plurilingual one to do so.

¹⁴ The urban neighborhoods bring together members with different origins. One may observe that even if only one monolingual speaker of Brazilian Portuguese is present, people engaged in conversation choose the national language as the medium of communication. This practice is well known in the context of spaces where majority language and minority languages compete, and it regularly happens regardless of the role the monolingual takes in the ongoing interaction, e.g., whether he or she speaks or listens or acts as an ‘innocent’ bystander.

¹⁵ Following Leibniz (1684), the oppositions are *clara/obscura* ‘clear/dark’; *confusa/distincta* ‘confuse/distinct, coinclusive’; *(in)adequate* ‘(in)adequate/(not)reflexive’.

‘distinct’, but usually not reflected, e.g. not recursively turned towards the constitutive features of language.^{16]} (Coseriu 1988, 210–211; my translation).

Coseriu’s understanding of language is in line with Castilho’s assumption that this complex system should be analyzed starting with discourse. Most importantly, one should be aware that we are dealing with processes and movements operating within the dynamics of the system, where interrelations between the different parts are crucial. I agree with Auer/Pfänder (2011, 1):

[Starting from] the processual and dynamic character of grammatical construct(ion)s in emergence, both from emergent and emerging perspectives [...] grammar is built as highly adaptive resources for interaction.

This falls in line with the statement that

the usage-based paradigm [...] maintains that routines of language use are the basis of grammar (Auer/Pfänder 2011, 4).

The method of gaining insights into the system shown in our data will be exemplified by the presentation of different perspectives: discourse, lexical innovations, morphology and syntax.¹⁷

3.2 Observing plurilingual language use in Pelotas

In Section 2, the reader was already introduced to the trilingual community of practice this paper focuses on. The coding of the data (see DATA below) reflects the knowledge of the languages of the speaker recorded: Brazilian Portuguese (BP), Pomeranian (POM) and German (GER). The latter refers to colloquial usage close to Standard German.

Most of our informants in this part of the data are women (female *f*) and represent the elder generation. This generation should be called third generation,¹⁸ if we take into consideration the people living together in the villages today; they are (mostly) grandparents. As already stated, the study is qualitative and is exploratory in character.

3.2.1 The discourse marker *né / ne*

Discourse markers are often used to code segments of utterances.¹⁹ In the following fragment, we see that the discourse marker *ne* assumes this function. It is highly prominent in several of our informants’ data.

¹⁶ “Es ist klar, daß das sprachliche Wissen ein Tunkönnen ist, d.h. ein Wissen, das sich an erster Stelle im Tun, im Sprechen, manifestiert, und daß es beim Sprechen und Verstehen ein vollkommen sicheres Wissen ist, aber ein Wissen, das entweder gar nicht begründet wird oder für das höchstens erste unmittelbare Gründe angegeben werden, jedoch keine Begründungen für die Gründe selbst. ... Da die hier gemeinte unmittelbare Begründung eigentlich in jedem Fall möglich ist, wenn danach gefragt wird, so kann man das sprachliche Wissen, insbesondere die Kenntnis der Sprache, als eine *cognitio clara distincta inadaequata* einstufen.” (Coseriu 1988: 210-211). Cf. Lehmann (2007), http://www.christianlehmann.eu/ling/psych/coserius_kompetenz.html [19.08.2016].

¹⁷ However, we should keep in mind that the perspectives on the data from the point of our established subdisciplines is part of our research, but not of our object, e.g., of language itself.

¹⁸ If we refer to the subsequent generations, including the migrants coming from Europe as first generation, most of the “third” generation are their great-grandchildren, and therefore should be considered fourth generation. Some of them are even fifth generation, as their ancestors arrived earlier or were young children when migrating.

¹⁹ This task of segmentation is comparable with punctuation in written language.

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------------|--------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Hoje em dia</i> | <i>assim</i> | <i>ca [...]</i> | <i>äh</i> | <i>heiraten</i> | <i>sie</i> | <i>und</i> | <i>kurze</i> |
| nowadays | so | here | ehm | marry.PRS.3PL | they | and | short |
| <i>Zeit</i> | <i>später</i> | <i>sind</i> | | <i>sie</i> | <i>schon</i> | <i>auseinander</i> | <i>ne</i> <i>aqui</i> |
| time | later | be.PRS.3SG | | they | already | separated | ne here |
| <i>é</i> | <i>muito</i> | <i>comum</i> | | <i>ne</i> | | | |
| be.PRS.3SG | very | common | | ne | | | |

‘Nowadays, so, here, ehm, they marry and shortly afterwards they are already divorced **ne** here it is very common, **ne**’

[Hoje em dia: 0246_Laudien_RS_Pelotas 64f POM_BP_GER]

Data 1: Preference for the use of the discourse marker *né* in plurilingual discourse

The discourse marker *né* forms part of discourse in Brazilian Portuguese, but it is close to another discourse marker *ne*, used for segmentation and sometimes for asking for confirmation (*nicht wahr* ‘isn’t it?’) in German in informal interaction (colloquial usage and in several dialects). Such a *crossing* (cf. Rampton 2005) in the trilingual variety belongs to both or even all three languages involved. Obviously, its function is segmentation on the one hand, but on the other hand it brings about the *flagging* (Matras 2009) of the forthcoming code-switching, which may also be called *bridging* (cf. ‘Überbrückungsphänomene’ Koch/Oesterreicher 1990, 60–61, describing similar phenomena observed in the constructions of turns in monolingual dialogues). In the latter case, the function of the same discourse marker *né* consists in drawing the attention of the interlocutor(s) to the code-switching from one of the three languages of the repertoire another one. The bi- or even trilingual marker does not pre-determine the choice of the language in the following part, as shown in the example above. Either one of the languages in the plurilingual context may be selected in the next turn by the speaker her-/himself or by her/his interlocutor if she or he is (self)-selected for continuing (for further examples, see Jungbluth 2017b).

3.2.2 Morphology I: verbal derivation

The creatively coined verb *grudiert* ‘to stuck’ serves as an example of lexical innovation. Based on the Portuguese verb *grudar* ‘to glue’ or ‘to stick’, this neologism represents procedures belonging to derivational morphology. The amalgamation between the two languages happens below the level of the word boundary. Analyzing the form, the verbal root of Portuguese *grud-ar* ‘to stick’ is combined with the German verbalizer morpheme *-ieren* and receives the inflectional morpheme *-t* to form the perfect passive participle:

Meine ersten beiden Kinder [...] die sind ja auch
 my first both children they be.PRS.3PL yes also
grudiert weil sie konnten ein Hiesig.

stick.PTCP because they can.PST.3PL no local

‘My first two children couldn’t pass to the next grade because they didn’t master the local language.’

Data 2: Grudiert ‘sticked’>had to repeat [the grade]

(0633_Laudien_RD_Pelotas 64w POM_BP_GER)

The meaning of *grudiert* here is opaque for monolingual Germans and Brazilians alike. Metaphorically speaking²⁰ and highly context-specific, the woman refers to the failure of educational success suffered by her first two children, who at that time could not express themselves in Brazilian Portuguese – called commonly *Hiesig* ‘local language’ by the members of this speech community – and therefore had to repeat a year at school.

Indeed, this usage shows that the languages involved are not kept separate, but rather form an integrated plurilingual pool – a complex new language variety which may be considered to be an example of a fusion-lect (see Zinkhahn Rhobodes 2016; Jungbluth 2016; ‘fused lect’ cf. Auer 1999). Turning from verbs to nouns, we present another example thus strengthening the argument in favor of an emerging fusion-lect.

3.2.3 Morphology II: nominal composition

The following utterance shows the blurring of the border at NP-level. It is surprising that, in an ongoing German utterance, further determination of a noun may be added in Brazilian Portuguese even within a nominal phrase as is shown in the following fragment. One may argue that new terms coined in the domain²¹ of modern fashion do not form part of traditional vocabulary and that it is this fact that triggers the language change inside the structure.

[...] tragen ne [die Hose cintura baixa]_{SN} ne

wear.PRS.3PL ne the trousers waistline low ne

hängt der Speck so drüber

hang.PRS.3SG the flab like over

‘They wear *ne* hipsters / low rise trousers *ne* the [fat] belly hangs out’

Data 3: Cintura Baixa ‘hipsters’ (0339_Laudien_RS_Pelotas 64w POM_BP_GER)

Similar to the example in 3.2.2, in order to understand the meaning, one has to be familiar with the context and share knowledge anchored in time and space of the object relevant in the utterance. This fact points again to the *community of practice* and its particular language use.

²⁰ Metaphoric usage is one way to build up polyfunctional items in the shared lexicon (cf. Müller 2008).

²¹ The term *domain* is used here in the sense of ‘hived-off’ discourse worlds belonging to certain social domains (cf. Jungbluth/Schlieben-Lange 2004).

3.2.4 Discourse: further evidence for an emerging fusion-lect

So far, the blurring of the borders between the languages has been shown at the level of morphology, where words and phrases are built from roots and morphemes belonging to either language. Referring back to the first example, we have seen that the polyfunctional discourse marker *né* may flag switching from one language to another. Such change may also be introduced by a pause: “Hoje em dia assim ca.. äh heiraten sie ‘Nowadays, so, here [filled pause: ca.. ehm] they get married’” (cf. 3.2.1). However, in general the interlocutors are so familiar with the fusion of languages forming part of their trilingual variety that they often refrain from flagging changes and keep on talking without any hesitation (see Data 4).

This behavior indexes the loss of importance of earlier language barriers at the least, with the reiterated occasion of observing sometimes already conventionalized use of an emerging fusion-lect, unconsciously performed time and again at most.

E... eu respondl_____auf Hochdeutsch oder auf
 and I answer/ in High German or in
*Platt?*²² *Ach auf Platt_____está bom*
 Platt well in Platt be.PRS.3SG good
 ‘I/ I answer/in Standard German or in dialect? Oh in dialect is good.’

Data 4: Standard language or dialect [‘tanda’]? (0132_Laudien_RS_Pelotas 64w POM_BP_GER)

The sequence does not show any signs of segmentation – not even a signal for hesitation or silence, marking a distance between the two languages German and Brazilian Portuguese. There are no pauses, no clearing of one’s throat or other forms of communicating the switch between the two or three languages involved. Indeed, the interlocutors do not mark any switch at all. Borders dividing the languages from one another are absent in this piece of discourse.

The same holds true of the Portuguese noun *geração* ‘generation’ in the following utterance, which is characterized by the features Gender:feminine, and Number:singular. Both features are anticipated by the preceding German article *die* and the attribute *neue*: *die*_{FSG} *neue*_{FSG} *geração*_{FSG} ‘the new generation’:²³

*[die*_{FSG} *neue*_{FSG} *geração*_{FSG} *ist so [.] der Kerl*
 the new generation be.PRS.3SG so the guy
tut auch kochen
 do.PRS.3SG also cook.INF

‘The new generation is like that: the boyfriend does the cooking as well.’

Data 5: The new *geração* (0438_Laudien_RS_Pelotas 64w POM_BP_GER)

Data 5 shows that concord, a typological feature of inflectional languages including German and Portuguese, is realized as a plurilingual practice overcoming former language borders.

²² *Platt* etymologically means ‘flat, plain’. The latter use is documented in Old Franconian [*Altfränkisch*] in this very sense of speaking plainly. Today, it is used in the Northern part of Germany to refer to dialects spoken there.

²³ Following the suggestion of an anonymous reviewer, we checked our data again. Unfortunately, there is no example in our data showing the combination of a masculine noun with a feminine attribute.

The ascending order of our data fragments mirrors a growing density of fusion-lectal phenomena. While the first data shows a close, but still audible neighboring of parts of both languages in one and the same utterance, or, including Pomeranian in other parts of the conversation, all three of them, some of the other data represents an amalgam which becomes more and more unintelligible for by-standers not familiar with this trilingual community of practice and its unique way of expression (cf. ‘usage-based paradigm’ Auer/Pfänder 2011; above 3.1). At the discourse level, features of words expressed in one language determine the forms of words expressed in the other, frontiers between the languages involved disappear. In doing so, the users erase the frontiers between the languages turning them opaque. Literally and audibly, the speakers override the borders between the languages (borders get ‘blurred’, Zinkhahn Rhobodes 2016; the interlocutors *do* the borders away). We consider this fact as further evidence for an emerging fusion-lect.

4 Emergence of a complex system: plurilingual language use

By observing and closely listening to the members of the plurilingual *community of practice* living in Pelotas, the researcher was easily able to document the plurilingual routine of language use²⁴ developed and frequently performed by her informants in informal contexts.

This everyday routine shows the emergence of a complex system in several ways. The fragments analyzed in Section 3 of the paper exemplify that the routine developed among them is neither restricted to the lexicon in form of the use of polyfunctional discourse markers or derivational extensions nor to grammar. The smaller elements, such as the monosyllabic discourse markers (*ne*), are already widespread, i.e., conventionalized, as are plurilingual phrases integrating several parts of speech (*die neue* geração; *Hose* cintura baixa; Data 3 and Data 5). The complexity appears side-by-side with opacity when monolingual²⁵ bystanders, Germans or Brazilian Portuguese speakers, do not understand what the people of Pelotas are talking about (Data 2: *grudiert* and other plurilingual items, depending on their competences).

Whether the fusion-lect used among the locals will persist in the future cannot be foreseen, as predictability is limited in the humanities (cf. Lorenz 1972; footnote 5). The process depends largely on the choices of the younger generation. Will there be enough people among them who prefer the rural context to the urban one, and who will decide to cultivate the same lands as their ancestors? Is their departure from the village only temporary, so that they come back later to make their living in Pelotas or surroundings (cf. Jungbluth 2017b)?

In conclusion, it seems as if Standard German is gaining ground among the younger generation, not only among the villagers, but also among the urban citizens. Just at the moment when *Platt* – their inherited dialect – is losing importance, it is among the adolescents that many seek instruction in their heritage language, which they recognize as Standard German.²⁶ In this regard, it is telling that some of them

²⁴ Our interest is to focus on “language structures that do not follow canonical patterns, that are [still] not entrenched or sedimented” (Auer/Pfänder 2011, 7; cf. “between emergence and sedimentation”, Günthner 2011). We consider this language *in statu nascendi* as an important object of research in linguistics, especially for researchers interested in language contact.

²⁵ Or, to be more exact, close to monolingual interactors.

²⁶ Similar preferences in favor of the Standard are common among Italian descendants (Gaio 2018).

evaluate competence in Standard German higher than their dialectal competence, even in matters of love:

das Hoch ist (.) mais romântico, wenn ich so [...]

the high is more romantic when I like

Mädchen (..) namoriere

Mädchen flirt.PRS.1SG

‘The Standard is more romantic when I am flirting with girls.’

Data 6: Namoriere (0538_Laudien_RS_Pelotas_19m BP_GER_POM)²⁷

So far, the impact of their language use on the linguistic systems of Portuguese should be considered local. However, their plurilingual routine of discourse may become more important due to migration of many adolescent speakers to the neighborhoods of the nearby cities. They will be crucial in influencing the language use of the next generation.

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