

Structure of a middle voice in Germanic high contact varieties

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Keywords: voice, diathesis, language contact, language islands, morphological borrowing

The central principle of Uriel Weinreich's (1954) structuralist dialectology is the idea that diachronic processes of language change become visible as diffusion of varieties in space. Dialects as spatially bound varieties are thus the ideal test field to study change processes of natural (i.e. natively acquired) languages (cf. Moulton 1962:25). In addition, language islands are regarded as a special kind of historical linguistic "laboratory" (Schirmunski 1992: 113). On the one hand, they are detached from the dynamics of the source variety and preserve the developments of often more conservative structures for a longer period of time, and, on the other hand, they are more exposed to language contact situations and the associated language changes. In our talk, we will address the latter by examining contact-induced changes in the morphosyntax of Germanic high-contact varieties such as German language islands and Yiddish (for the first and only approach of comparing these varieties cf. Weinreich 1958).

While the Proto-Indo-European reflexive pronoun **s(u)e* (Kulikov 2010:397) has been extended to a middle marker (MM) in many ide. languages like (1), the (older) Germanic languages have dismantled the reflexive pronoun and have not developed a MM. Only in Old High German the reflexive pronoun remained in 3.sg.acc. (Ottósson 2013). However, compared to e.g. slavic languages High German has developed only a rudimentary Middle Voice (MV) system, limited to only a few contexts (1c) (Steinbach 2002).

- (1) a. rus. *On utomil=sja*
he exhausted=MM
'He grew weary' (Haiman 1983:796)
- b. fr. *Il s'=est lassé*
he MM=is exhausted
'He grew weary'
- c. germ. *Das Buch liest sich (leicht)*
the book reads MM (easily)
'The Book reads (easily)'

Germanic varieties standing in close contact with Slavic (2a–b) and Romance (3c) languages can express MV in more semantic domains (cf. Kemmer 1993) than in the source variety (German; Western Yiddish). Thus, a language contact influence can be assumed.

- (2) a. Eastern Yid. *der fidl hot zekh tsibrokhn*
the fiddle has MM broke
'the violin broke'
- b. Rus. Germ. *die bonga hat sich verschloje*
the jar has MM broken
'The jar broke'
- c. Cimbrian *Di ulla izze=se vorprocht*
the pot is=MM broken
'The pot is broken' (Bidese & Turolla 2018:33)

Looking at selected high contact varieties we discuss how the borrowing of MM is structured, what the semantic, morphological or lexical conditions are and how the varieties differ.

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