

# Sprachvariation und Sprachkontakt in Existenzverbkonstruktionen des Pomerano

Eine korpusgestützte Untersuchung  
einer niederdeutschen Varietät in Brasilien

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### Abstract

This study investigates the Low German variety of Pomerano spoken by descendants of settlers who arrived in Brazil around 1860-1880 from the European region of Pomerania. The focus of this linguistic study is on existential constructions (Existenzverbkonstruktionen – 'EVK'), which are used to express "existence" (*Es gibt einen Gott*) or an ingressive status of "coming into existence" (*Es gibt ein Fest*). The data comprises eight hours of spoken Pomerano recorded from 18 speakers in the Pomeranian settlements in Espírito Santo, Rio Grande do Sul, and Santa Catarina.

The primary purpose of this study is to analyze the variation in existential constructions with GÄWEN, SIN, and HEWWEN in Pomerano on morpho-syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic levels. Additionally, the study aims to identify contact-induced variation through Brazilian Portuguese, taking sociolinguistic factors into account. The theoretical framework combines descriptive-structuralist methods with a usage-based cognitive approach to language contact. The theoretical framework combines descriptive-structuralist methods with a usage-based cognitive approach to language contact.

In general, the results indicate that the Low German construction in Pomerano appears relatively stable at the morpho-syntactic level. Contact-induced variation by Brazilian Portuguese occurs in the HEWWEN-EVK, which is documented here for the first time in about 14% of the 285 tokens. This innovation is interpreted as a re-structured variant of the dominant HAVER/TER-EVK in Brazilian Portuguese and is discussed with the usage-based factors *similarity* and *frequency*.

Additionally, the behavior of speakers in Santa Catarina and Espírito Santo, who are competent in High German or not, respectively, suggests that High German is deployed in preventing direct Portuguese influence on Pomeranian existential constructions, especially in relation to the NP. Speakers in Santa Catarina, who typically speak a High German variety alongside with Pomerano, use genuine German nominals or conventionalized loanwords in HEWWEN-EVK. Speakers in Espírito Santo, who generally lack High German competence, tend to use lexemes or spontaneous loan translations of Portuguese nominals.

The study also demonstrates multilingual speakers using different EVK variants depending on their communicative goals. This leads to intra-individual use of a variant repertoire in comparable semantic settings with highly conventionalized EVK, such as *Es gibt einen Unterschied*.

**Keywords:** Language contact, variational linguistics, sociolinguistics, corpus linguistics, existential constructions, cognitive linguistic, spoken German in Brazil, Pomeranian Low German, Brazilian Portuguese