

# Zeeuws-Flemish in Brazil: multilingualism and language decay\*

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## Abstract

*In this paper, we present the linguistic and cultural description of the Brazilian Zeeuws-Flemish population in Espírito Santo, which today has no more than 20 speakers. The Zeeuws-Flemish speakers, hundreds of whom left Zeeland in 1858-1862, have faced hardship and difficulty in adaptation and integration into Brazilian society ever since their arrival, with their language threatened not only by Brazilian Portuguese, but also by Brazilian Pomeranian, somewhat of a lingua franca among the Germanic Protestant community in the region. In this paper we present a sociolinguistic survey of the Brazilian Zeeuws-Flemish language community and an overview of its linguistic features such as intra- and interspeaker allophony, lexical borrowing and calquing, relative pronoun neutralization, do-support, topic drop, complementizer fusion, and loss of diminutives.*

**Keywords:** *Immigration. Language practices. Language policies.*

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## Introduction

In this paper, we present the linguistic and cultural description of the Brazilian Zeeuws-Flemish population in Espírito Santo, which today has no more than 20 speakers. The Zeeuws-Flemish speakers, hundreds of whom left Zeeland in 1858-1862, have faced hardship and difficulty in adaptation and integration into Brazilian society ever since their arrival, with their language threatened not only by Brazilian Portuguese, but also by Brazilian Pomeranian, somewhat of a lingua franca among the Germanic Protestant community in the region. The comparison of these two allochthonous languages in South America, both of which arrived at roughly the same time and, initially<sup>1</sup>, in similar numbers, show quite divergent outcomes in the contemporary vibrance today, arguably in part because of different community relations as maintained in the Lutheran versus Calvinist churches. Indeed, the Pomeranian community maintains a Pomeranian language radio program and enjoys mainstream media attention within Brazil<sup>2</sup>. The Zeeuws community has also been the focus of a recent documentary (*Febre Brasileira: uma emigração zelandesa esquecida*), although notably one made by a Dutch production team (Schoutsen & Van Westen, 2015). In this paper, we present a sociolinguistic survey of the Brazilian Zeeuws-Flemish language community and an overview of its linguistic features such as intra- and interspeaker allophony, lexical borrowing and calquing, relative pronoun neutralization, do-support, topic drop, complementizer fusion, and loss of diminutives.

### 1. A brief history of the Zeeuws immigrants

In the nineteenth century, the Brazilian imperial government created a program to attract a large number of European immigrants. This program was set up to solve the lack of manpower to cultivate agricultural land, which was a direct consequence of the abolition of slavery. The state of Espírito Santo, located in the southeast of Brazil, had yet another goal: to increase the number of civilized whites, during the phase of Brazilian history known as *embranqueamento* 'whitening of the population' (ROOS; ESHUIS, 2008, p. 11). They created an association named *Associação Central de Colonização*, which was

<sup>1</sup> Johann Jacob von Tschudi gives the following numbers for Santa Leopoldina in 1860: Total number of colonists: 1.003 (232 heads of family), of which: Swiss (104), Hannover (4), Luxemburg (70), Prussia (384), Bavaria (10), Baden (27), Hessen (61), Tirol (82), Nassau (13), Holstein (13), Mecklenburg (5), Saxonia (76), Belgium (8), Holland (126), France (1), England (1), and some Brazilians. This shows that the Prussians (perhaps mostly Pomeranians) were initially just slightly more than twice the number of Dutch+Belgians. De facto, it resulted in five groups/colonies: Dutch (in *Holand(inh) a*), Pomeranians (in *Califórnia/Biriricas*), Hunrucksch (in *Luxemburgo*), Tirolese (in *Tirol*), and Swiss (in *Suíça*).

<sup>2</sup> See for example the recent news feature <http://g1.globo.com/como-sera/noticia/2016/11/pomeranos-no-brasil.html>

responsible for the settlement. To achieve this goal, offices of immigration passed out leaflets in the port cities of Europe promising, among other things, agricultural land, housing, animals, and crops to encourage the immigration of working families, preferably farmers (ROOS; ESHUIS, 2008, p. 12).

On the basis of immigrant rates at Espírito Santo, we can infer that the advertisement had reached the intended effect. The state received thousands of immigrants of different nationalities. According to the Public Archives of Espírito Santo<sup>3</sup>, the state received about 323 Dutch immigrants in the period from 1812 to 1900. Dutch immigrants occupied the seventh place in the ranking, behind Italy, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Poland, and San Marino. For the whole of Brazil, there were more than 500 Dutch immigrants (BUYSSE, 1984), originating from the communities listed in Table 1 and represented graphically in Map 1. Those that did not go to Espírito Santo went to the state of Minas Gerais or to the South of Brazil (BUYSSE, 1984).

**Table 1.** Dutch immigrants in Brazil by communities of origin

<i>Community</i>	1858	1859	1860	1861	1862	<i>Total</i>
<i>Zuidzande</i>	-	23	57	21	8	109
<i>Cadzand</i>	31	7	28	20	-	86
<i>Groede</i>	-	18	24	42	-	84
<i>Retranchement</i>	-	16	20	23	5	64
<i>Nieuwvliet</i>	11	18	16	4	-	49
<i>Schoondijke</i>	7	-	18	10	-	35
<i>Hoofdplaat</i>	18	-	-	-	3	21
<i>Oostburg</i>	-	2	-	17	-	19
<i>Breskens</i>	6	-	6	6	-	18
<i>Ijzendijke</i>	-	-	15	-	-	15
<i>Waterlandkerkje</i>	-	2	-	-	-	2
<i>Sluis</i>	-	2	-	-	-	2
<i>Total</i>	73	88	166	151	26	504

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ape.es.gov.br/imigrantes/>

Source: ROOS; ESHUIS, 2008, p. 12.

**Map 1.** Locations in the Netherlands of emigrants to Brazil



Source: ROOS; ESHUIS, 2008, p. 12.

All the relevant places are situated in a rather restricted area in the Netherlands province of Zeeland, visible below the three peninsulas on the central-western part of the map. We will refer to the language of these immigrants as Zeeuws. A short note on the term “Zeeuws” is in place – the adjective for Zeeland, an archipelago of islands in the Southwest of the Netherlands. This province overall speaks a dialect that is relatively close to Hollandish. However, the immigrants to Brazil come from a part of Zeeland that is on the opposite side of the archipelago, on the continental part of Zeeland, which forms a geographic unit with Flanders (see Map 1). Historically, this population speaks a Flemish dialect, but this area has been part of the Netherlands for more than 500 years. As such, they are religiously Calvinists, and their Flemish has been influenced by Dutch. As a result, they identify themselves as Dutch and refer to their dialect as Dutch, despite their dialect being historically Flemish. Strictly speaking, the dialect should be referred to as Zeeuws-Flemish (i.e. Flemish as spoken in Zeeland), but in this article, we use the term “Zeeuws” or “Dutch” more concisely. The present-day descendants in Brazil call their language *ollands* in their mother tongue, or *holandês* when they speak Portuguese.

The first Dutch immigrants came to Espírito Santo in 1858 for economic reasons. At that time, the Netherlands, and especially the province of Zeeland from which all the immigrants came, was going through a devastating crisis that started in the 1840s (ROOS; ESHUIS, 2008). In addition to the general economic recession, potatoes and grain crops were affected by pests, causing serious economic and social problems. Potatoes were the main basis of nutrition, but the few that were collected were exported, and wheat was too expensive for farmers. In addition to inflation, the farmers suffered from unemployment or low wages.

Upon arriving in Rio de Janeiro, these immigrants stayed in quarantine and underwent medical evaluation before being taken to their final destinations. Within Espírito Santo (ES), there were two destinations: The colony of Rio Novo in the South of ES and the colony of Santa Leopoldina in the interior of Vitória. The Dutch immigrants who went to the colony of Rio Novo arrived there in June 1858. Their disappointment was immediate (ROOS; ESHUIS, 2008, p. 27). The colonies were wild, untamed forest and had not been cleared as had been stated in the contract. The properties had to be deforested, and the immigrants did not have appropriate tools to do this. There were no habitable houses – only huts with palm leaves as roofs. There was no coffee or cassava to plant, and no pigs or chickens – nothing of the promises that were in the contract. Moreover, the Dutch colonists did not receive any medical, religious or educational care. Emperor Dom Pedro II (ROOS; ESHUIS, 2008, p. 28) and the Swiss Baron von Tschudi who visited the colony in the 1860s brought back terrible reports about misery, disease, hunger and violence that the immigrants suffered from in the colony (TSCHUDI, 2004, p. 77). The death rate of Dutch immigrants reached 20% in that colony (TSCHUDI, 2004, p. 46). The colony of Rio Novo was known as the most disorganized of Imperial Brazil. Some researchers attribute it to the initial organization of the colonies which did not take into consideration ethnic groupings (FRANCESCHETTO, 2004, p. 156).

The colony of Santa Leopoldina, however, did take ethnic grouping into consideration (TSCHUDI, 2004; ROOS; ESHUIS, 2008). All Dutch immigrants who arrived in the colony were sent to a tract of land which today is still called “Holanda/

Holandinha". This colony was side by side with other ethnic colonies, like "Luxemburgo", "Tirol", and "Suíça". Interestingly, the settlements of the two predominant immigrant groups, the Pomeranians and the Italians, did not have such ethnic names ("Califórnia" and "Santa Teresa"), though ethnic organization was present. The first Dutch immigrants arrived in the Santa Leopoldina colony in 1858, but new immigrants were arriving each year, as can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Numbers and arrivals of Dutch immigrants in Espírito Santo

Arrival date in Vitória	Number of immigrants
June 1859	62
June 1860	75
April 1861	70
Many months during 1862	36

Source: ROOS; ESHUIS, 2008, p. 50, 121.

In total, the colony of Santa Leopoldina received 243 Dutch immigrants, who faced similar difficulties to those of the Rio Novo colony. They were in the middle of dense forest, under a scorching sun, on infertile land, without tools and money to restart their lives, short of food and without any assistance. Moreover, the little that the immigrants could cultivate was in the hands of a colonel who controlled the planting and the harvesting. The immigrants sold their products at the colonel's sale house (the *venda*) for a very low price and had to buy what they needed, i.e., salt, at the same *venda* for exorbitant prices. Thus, the owner of the *venda* controlled the immigrants, who always paid more than they could afford. Despite all the trouble and despite the recognition of the mismanagement of the colony, a government official blamed the Dutch for their misfortune. In 1862, a report claimed that the Dutch did not make progress due to lack of initiative. Because of this report, the Dutch were punished and discriminated against even more. The little help that the Brazilian imperial government offered ceased to exist. As a consequence, the Dutch immigrants were isolated and abandoned (TSCHUDI, 2004).

This situation inhibited the integration with other groups and helped in the maintenance of customs, such as preservation of dialect and religion. The influence of Calvinism was very strong among the Dutch immigrants (BUYSSE, 1984; ROOS; ESHUIS, 2008). They did everything to get a Calvinist pastor, but these attempts were in vain. With no other alternative, the Dutch agreed to build a modest temple in 1864, together with the Pomeranians, who were Lutherans. However, this led to many disputes, as the two religions follow different precepts. The Dutch immigrants did not abandon Calvinism and finally built their own small chapel in 1903, which was made possible through donations. Despite being served by Lutheran pastors, they convinced the priest to adopt some Calvinist precepts, such as the absence of the cross, altar, and candles (ROOS; ESHUIS, 2008, p. 65, 77).

Another institution that interfered with the replacement of Zeeuws throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century was education. After more than half a century on Brazilian soil, few had the opportunity to go to school, where the use of Zeeuws was strongly discouraged and even punished. For those who went to school, it was a traumatic experience, which may explain why the education level is low among descendants who are older than 40 years. Since virtually all school children were descendants of immigrants, Portuguese was not used much at home (SCHAFFEL, 2010). Mr. RM – a man of more than 50 years old – says they “were roughed up a lot in learning to speak properly”. The prejudice did not end there: as Dutch is an immigration language and it was the language of only a few speakers, it came to be considered even worse than Pomeranian (SCHAFFEL, 2010).

This school imposition was grounded in a nation-building campaign; specifically, a set of measures that were taken during the Estado Novo of Getúlio Vargas to reduce the influence of foreign immigrant communities in Brazil and to force integration with the Brazilian population. Accordingly, in 1939, a law forbidding immigrants to speak their languages, even during their religious ceremonies, was implemented (PORT, 2004).

## 2. Research into contemporary Brazilian Zeeuws

In this section, we discuss the methodology of two parts of our study of the Zeeuws-Flemish immigrants in Espírito Santo. The first part is a sociolinguistic study carried out by one of us, Elizana Schaffel, in 2010. The second part is a preliminary study of linguistic aspects of Brazilian Zeeuws, carried out in a joint enterprise.

In 2010, Schaffel began to investigate the health of Brazilian Zeeuws, as well as the social, historical, economic and cultural factors that influenced the linguistic vitality, the cultural and daily uses that the language occupies, and the attitudes that speakers hold towards their language. This study was carried out from a sociolinguistic perspective, and the UNESCO document entitled *Language Endangerment and Vitality* (2003) was taken as guidance. On the basis of 6 factors, the degree of endangerment of the Zeeuws dialect could be assigned. Schaffel (2010) follows studies such as Blom & Gumperz (2002 [1972]), Giles *et al.* (1977), Appel & Muysken (1996) and De Heredia (1989), which describe the processes of linguistic maintenance and replacement. Finally, we refer to Weinreich (1970 [1953]) to understand the power relations established between the majority language and the heritage language, in this case Portuguese and Zeeuws, respectively.

Schaffel analyzed 76 interviews with Dutch descendants, distributed as represented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Zeeuws-Flemish informants

Female			Male		
Number of interviewees	Age group	Years of schooling	Number of interviewees	Age group	Years of schooling
5	< 12	<i>up to 8 years</i>	5	< 12	<i>up to 8 years</i>
5	13-19	<i>up to 8 years</i>	5	13-19	<i>up to 8 years</i>
6	13-19	<i>8-11 years</i>	6	13-19	<i>8-11 years</i>
6	20-39	<i>not applicable</i>	5	20-39	<i>n. a.</i>
9	40-60	<i>n. a.</i>	5	40-60	<i>n. a.</i>
9	> 60	<i>n. a.</i>	10	> 60	<i>n. a.</i>
= 40			= 36		

Source: SCHAFFEL, 2010.



The interviews were recorded, and a semi-structured questionnaire was adopted. An important methodological asset was taking a local guide to each community. In total, the interviews and questionnaire were conducted in 10 communities in the three municipalities of Santa Leopoldina, Santa Maria de Jetibá, and Itarana, all of which belonged to the former colony of Santa Leopoldina. The specific communities were as follows: in Santa Leopoldina: Holanda/Holandinha, Pau Amarelo, Califórnia, and Rio das Farinhas; in Santa Maria de Jetibá: Caramuru, Alto Jetibá, Alto Rio Triunfo, and São João de Garrafão; and in Itarana: Alto Jatibocas. The informants and the localities arose from suggestions made by informants. Not all informants were still speakers of Zeeuws, but as language replacement was one of the targets of investigation, this meant conducting the questionnaires was still important. The locations are projected on Map 2.

**Map 2.** Locations of Zeeuws speakers in the state Espírito Santo (Brazil)



Source: © Authors.

In 2012 and 2013 we returned to Espírito Santo for more linguistically oriented research. We recorded the speech of the last speakers of Brazilian Zeeuws and studied specific grammatical effects of language loss. We interviewed 9

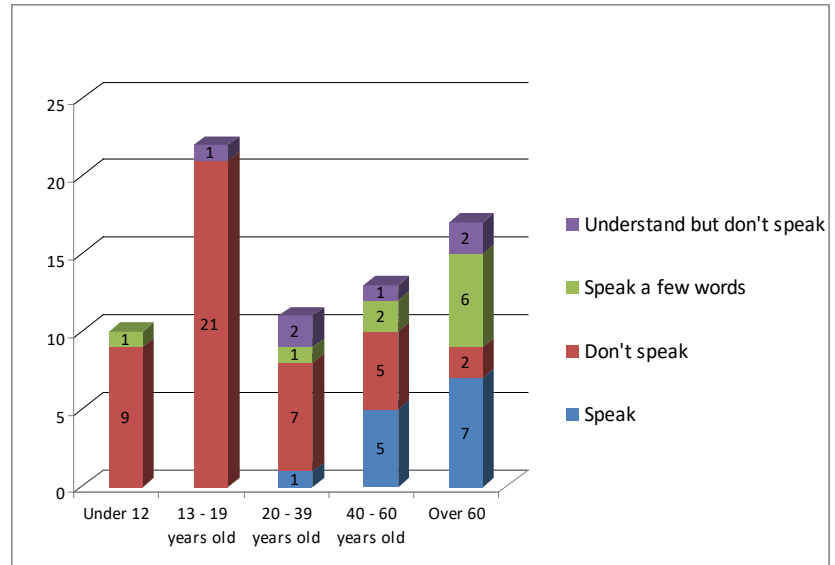
speakers (five men and four women), living in Holandinha, Garrafão, Alto Jatibocas, Caramuru and Alto Jetibá. They were all older than 40 years. Some of them were interviewed both in 2012 and 2013, others were visited only once in 2013. Recordings were made at people's homes, where two or more speakers were present, and they talked with each other, as well as with the interviewers. Three of the interviewers spoke Portuguese with the informants (ESB, AN, GP), one also spoke standard Dutch (GP), and one of them was a native speaker of Pomeranian (ESB). The other interviewer was a native speaker of European Flemish (KR). The interviews were a mixture of these four languages, with a great deal code-switching in the informants' speech, and the overall aim to elicit as much Zeeuws as possible. In order to do so, we asked them to speak about their past, religious matters, their language, the work on the land, their sentiments about the community, and so forth. Apart from these open-ended spontaneous conversations, we also conducted explicit elicitations focused on grammatical and lexical issues. The interviews were audio- and video-recorded, and total more than 4 hours of speech, only part of which is in Zeeuws. Parts of these recordings have been transcribed, glossed, annotated, and translated into English, with segmentation in Praat. The linguistic characteristics of the informants' speech discussed in Section 5 were mostly<sup>4</sup> selected from these transcripts.

### 3. The sociolinguistic situation of Brazilian Zeeuws

The Zeeuws language in Espírito Santo is restricted to a small number of descendants of Dutch. In the initial research, 13 people were found that still speak the language (to varying levels of proficiency), as shown in Figure 1 (SCHAFFEL, 2010).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Some data derive from interviews by Schoutsen & Van Westen (2015).

<sup>5</sup>As of 2015, 5 more speakers were identified.

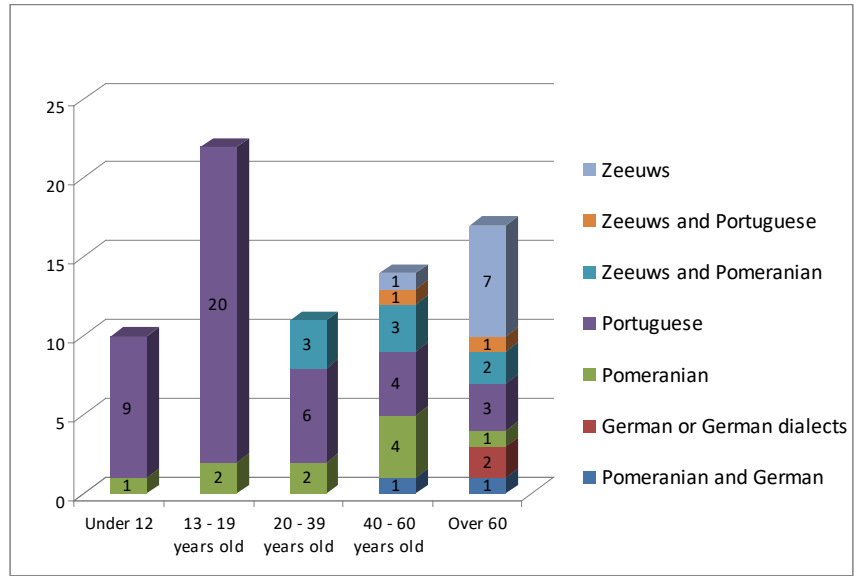
**Figure 1.** Interviewees that speak Zeeuws-Flemish

Source: SCHAFFEL, 2010.

Most of these speakers admit that they do not regularly use the Zeeuws language. According to Schaffel (2010), the intergenerational transmission of the language has ceased, and about 20% of descendants aged less than 19 years have never heard the dialect. This might be related to the fact that the Dutch language was always restricted to the group of immigrants and their descendants and used only in family contexts (SCHAFFEL, 2010). Moreover, children did not participate in conversations of adults, which may have accelerated the replacement of the language by Portuguese.

Very few informants in our sample classify the Zeeuws dialect as their mother tongue: only 7 of the age group above 60 years and 1 between 40 and 60 years. The other informants have two or more mother tongues, as shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2.** Mother language of the interviewees



Source: SCHAFFEL, 2010.

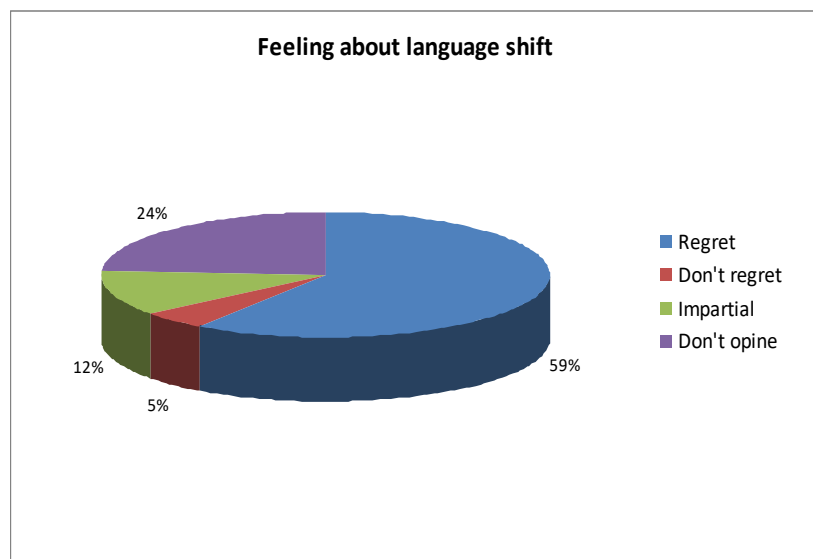
As Figures 1 and 2 clearly show, the Zeeuws language is threatened. There are many factors that have contributed to this degree of endangerment. Among the demographic factors that favored the replacement of the Dutch language are the relatively small number of immigrants and their dispersion in the old colony of Santa Leopoldina. Undoubtedly, a smaller and dispersed group is much more susceptible to the influence of other groups. Interethnic marriages have encouraged language replacement. Inevitably from the second generation onwards, these marriages interfered with the degree of closure of the group (BLOM; GUMPERZ, 2002 [1972]) and facilitated the entry of new cultural values. Finally, change of religion (mostly to Lutheranism) seems to be the major factor in their loss of cultural bonding (SCHAFFEL, 2010). Note that religion is for Weinreich (1970 [1953]) and De Heredia (1989) a determining factor for the maintenance vs. replacement of a language. Losing this strong cultural reference has meant, for these immigrants, losing canonical cultural traditions, including the use of language.

As mentioned above, within the educational system and in public policy, a set of measures were taken during the Estado Novo of Getúlio Vargas to reduce the influence of

foreign immigrant communities in Brazil and force integration with the Brazilian population, including a law forbidding immigrants to speak their languages. These institutional measures were strong factors for the abandonment of Zeeuws. However, we must also take into account the subjective factors that played a role in this process, such as the influence of attitudes that speakers have about their language and the language of the majority, as well as bilingualism, and cultural values and identity. Important as well are the attitudes they have developed towards the countries represented symbolically by their languages. These attitudinal factors may have a stronger effect on language replacement than the social, geographic, demographic, economic and institutional factors (WEINREICH, 1970 [1953]; VERMES; BOUTET, 1989).

Schaffel (2010) found that negative memories of the country of origin, aggregated with the historical abandonment of the Dutch immigrants by the motherland were crucial factors in the process of replacing the Dutch language. Only 59% lament the disappearance of the Dutch language despite all of their pride in their ancestry, as shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3.** Attitudes towards language shift



Source: SCHAFFEL, 2010.

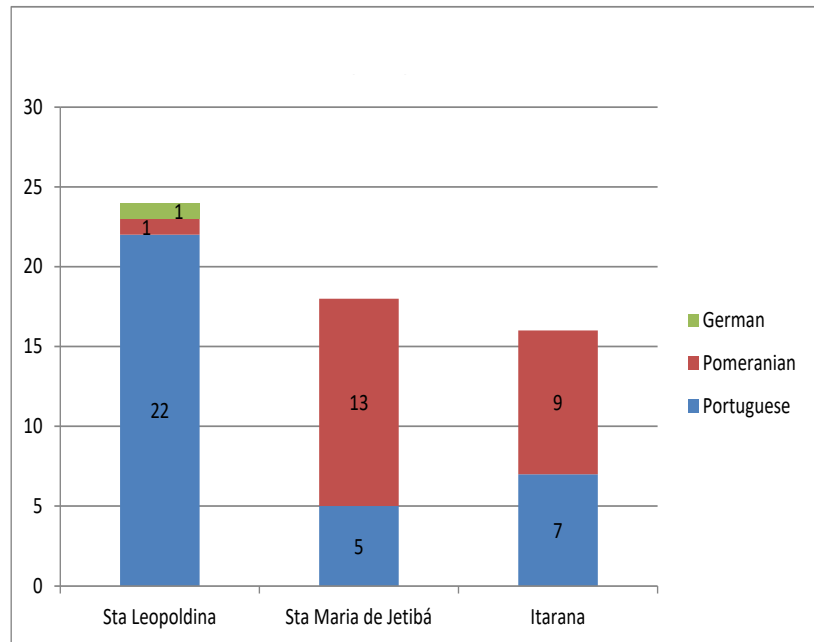
Based on these considerations, Schaffel (2010) concludes that Brazilian Zeeuws is characterized by the degrees of endangerment represented in Figure 4.

**Figure 4.** Brazilian Zeeuws degrees of endangerment, based on UNESCO (2003)

Factors		Brazilian Zeeuws Degree
I	Intergenerational language transmission	1
II	<b>Absolute number of speakers</b>	<b>(13)</b>
III	Proportion of speaker within the total population	1
IV	<b>Shifts in domains of language use</b>	1
V	Response to new domains and media	0
VI	<b>Material for language education and literacy</b>	0
VII	Governmental and institutional language attitudes and policies including official status and use	0
VIII	<b>Community members' attitudes toward their own language</b>	2
IX	Amount and quality of documentation	0

Source: SCHAFFEL, 2010

The process of replacement of immigration languages is normally doomed by the third generation (WEINREICH, 1970 [1953]). In the case of Zeeuws in Brazil, however, this process has dragged on more slowly to 5 generations or more, probably due to the group's isolation. After their isolation was gradually reduced and the community merged with the Lutherans, the language was being replaced by other ones, mainly Portuguese and Pomeranian. Generally, the language adopted by the minority group is the national language; after all, government efforts towards integration aim at such replacement. However, the language adopted by the Dutch varies from region to region, as can be seen in Figure 5.

**Figure 5. Language choice**

Note: "German" refers to the Hunsrückisch, Tirolese or Swiss-German dialects.<sup>6</sup>

Source: SCHAFFEL, 2010.

While the switch to Portuguese was expected, 43% of immigrants have switched to another immigration language, Pomeranian (SCHAFFEL, 2010), especially in Santa Maria de Jetibá and Itarana. This might be motivated by the strong similarity between Zeeuws and Pomeranian, both West-Germanic languages, which have influenced each other in some locations and families, as compared to the more distant Portuguese. The coexistence of both groups in the Lutheran church and interethnic weddings certainly have played a role as well.

In sum, Zeeuws dialect replacement in Espírito Santo has been gradual. The first generations of immigrants still expected help from their homeland. As time passed by, their hopes faded, their memories started to disappear, and the wish for acceptance and inclusion in the local community in Brazil increased. Therefore, the descendants, at that time already native Brazilians, decided to adopt another language. The numerical weakness of Zeeuws has played a role. However, subjective

<sup>6</sup> Hunsrückisch in the colonies of Santa Leopoldina is threatened. The Tirolese dialect (in Tirol) has virtually died out (SCHABUS, 2009) as well as Swiss German in Suíça.

factors were more conducive to dialect replacement. Religion – specifically the abandonment of Calvinism – was the major factor in this replacement process. Marriage, cultural events, and social behavior were affected by the change of religion.

#### **4. Language contact and decay and “semi-speakers”**

As mentioned in Sections 2 and 3, the Zeeuws dialect is still spoken at least by the 13 inhabitants of Espírito Santo counted within Schaffel’s survey (2010), and we have recently identified a handful more. The linguistic situation among these Dutch descendants is one of multilingualism. Some of these speakers acquired Zeeuws as their mother tongue but started to acquire Pomeranian as a second language after having come in contact with the Lutheran community, while others speak it as their second or third language. Portuguese was learned as a language of literacy at school, but since most of the speakers interviewed went to school for at most four years, they did not necessarily master the official language very well. Pomeranian, on the other hand, is used on an everyday basis as the home language. Given their dispersion, since most of these Zeeuws speakers do not have contact with each other on a regular basis, their fluency in the production of this language has diminished. Since they do not pass along the Zeeuws dialect to their children, they can be considered to be the last speakers of Zeeuws in Brazil, also known as “terminal speakers” (SASSE, 1992a). This means that Brazilian Zeeuws is a moribund language, on the one hand confronted with a situation of intense language contact with Pomeranian and Portuguese, and on the other hand a process of language decay. As pointed out by Dressler (1996, p. 195), “language death typically occurs in unstable bilingual or multilingual speech communities as a result of language shift from a recessive minority language to a dominant majority language.” In the case of Brazilian Zeeuws, there has been a shift to Pomeranian as well as Portuguese. An unstable multilingual situation has emerged caused by the factors that were discussed in Section 3.

We wish to draw attention here to an important aspect of the study of language death: the distinction between different types of speakers. Generally, all “terminal speakers” exhibit language attrition and speak a language characterized by



differing degrees of structural change. Although our speakers are all bi- or trilinguals (i.e. Zeeuws, Portuguese, Pomeranian), they are not fluent multilinguals in the sense of being able to converse fluently in each of the languages involved (cf. HOLLOWAY 1997). In spite of this, their speech does show some typical features of multilinguals, such as interference and borrowing. With respect to their native language, Zeeuws, all speakers are “semi-speakers” – a term coined by Nancy Dorian (1981) in her work on the disappearance of Scottish Gaelic. Different studies on language death have interpreted the notion of semi-speaker in various ways. Interesting for our study is the fact that Sasse (1992a, 1992b) distinguishes between two types of imperfect speakers in dying speech communities: the so-called “rusty speaker” and the true semi-speaker. He argues that the rusty speaker is characterized by “a comparably good proficiency in the grammatical system of the language and a perfect passive knowledge” but that he or she has “suffered from severe memory gaps, especially in vocabulary, but also in more complicated areas of the grammatical system” (SASSE, 1992b, p. 61). In most cases, these rusty speakers used to speak the language fluently in the past, but because of lack of regular use of the language, they started to forget their language. These should be considered as a special type of L1 learners. On the other hand, there is the true semi-speaker, who, as discussed by Sasse (1992b, p. 61) only has a command of the language that is from the beginning “imperfect to a pathological degree”. These semi-speakers result from the interruption in the transmission of the language in the community. In other words, they are speakers who did not learn the language from their parents anymore, but who learned it just by listening to and sometimes conversing with elder fluent speakers. They should be considered as L2 speakers. In practice, nonetheless, it is often difficult to categorize speakers into either rusty speakers or semi-speakers.

## 5. Structural consequences of language death and contact

In this section, we discuss some structural consequences of the language decay process of Brazilian Zeeuws. We have observed structural changes in the speech of our informants on all linguistic levels: phonology, the lexicon, morphology, and

(morpho)syntax. The literature (CAMPBELL; MUNTZEL, 1989; CRYSTAL, 2000; DORIAN, 1981; DRESSLER, 1996; HOLLOWAY, 1997; SASSE, 1992b; SCHMIDT, 1985; TSISIPIS, 1989, among others) provides an overview of typical characteristics of language decay, but at the same time warns against the “risk” of interpreting a normal contact-induced phenomenon as a phenomenon typical of dying languages. In what follows, we use the overview of language death phenomena provided in the literature as a guide for the description of the linguistic phenomena attested in the recorded speech data. We do not, however, proceed to evaluate these phenomena as being exclusively the consequence of the language death process of Brazilian Zeeuws. Further research should reveal whether the phenomena encountered only occur in the speech of our Brazilian informants or also in the Zeeuws-Flemish dialect of European speakers who are involved in language contact between their dialect and Standard Dutch on the one hand, and between their dialect and other Dutch and Flemish dialects on the other. In fact, we discuss phenomena occurring in the speech of our informants that almost certainly are contact-induced, such as transfer from Pomeranian or Portuguese to Brazilian Zeeuws. We cannot disconnect these instances of contact-induced phenomena from those that are exclusively typical of language death since language death almost always occurs as a consequence of language contact. We therefore consider instances of transfer or other contact-induced phenomena as relevant for this discussion as well. As pointed out in Campbell & Muntzel (1989, p. 188), linguistic change in contact settings often results from so-called “multiple causation”, that is, various factors contribute simultaneously to the linguistic change.

Cook (1989, p. 235) argues that “the two most conspicuous phenomena reported on dying languages are (a) structural (and stylistic) simplifications and (b) dramatic increases of variability due to incongruent and idiosyncratic ‘change’”. Most of the linguistic data discussed below are illustrative of this claim: many instances of phenomena taken from the speech of our informants either display structural simplification or are examples of the massive free variation among our speakers on all linguistic levels.

## 5.1. Linguistic change at the level of phonology

Typical of dying languages is that language norms fade away (cf. TRUDGILL, 1977, p. 35), which results in a large amount of intra- and inter-speaker variability (DORIAN, 1973; DRESSLER, 1972, 1996; HOLLOWAY, 1997; TAYLOR, 1989). Every speaker has his or her own idiosyncratic variety of the language. This variability occurs on all linguistic levels, but is particularly visible at the level of phonology (cf. CAMPBELL; MUNTZEL, 1989, p. 189; COOK, 1989, p. 235; SASSE, 1992a, p. 72). Dressler (1996, p. 208) speaks of a “massive occurrence of free allophones” with respect to dying languages, which he contends is due to the diminishing use of the recessive language and to the fact that sociolinguistic norms disappear. Thus, the semi-speaker typically displays a wide gamut of allophones for one phoneme, as can be illustrated with the following examples, attested in the speech of a female informant from Garrafão. This informant realizes the word *geen* ‘none, not one’ in two different ways, [ze:n], [zɪən] (modulo z/s and n/m assimilation), and the word *hier* ‘here’ in two different ways, [hi:r], [zɪ:ər]. The examples below are presented in Dutch orthography, alongside phonetic transcription.

1	<b>hier</b> deed <b>geen</b> priester wonen [hi:rdeze:mpri:stərwoŋ] here did no priest live ‘here did not live a priest’	<i>hier</i> ‘here’ with [h]-onset with [i] nucleus	<i>geen</i> ‘no’ z-onset e:-nucleus
2	<b>hier</b> was een kleine kerk [zɪ:ərwasʔi:ŋklɪnəkɛ:rkə] here was no small church ‘here was no small church’	with [z]-onset with [ɪ] nucleus	-
3	daar was <b>geen</b> dokter [dɑ:wɑs:rʔndɔktər] there was no doctor ‘there was no doctor’	-	z-onset [s] with [ɪ] nucleus
4	<b>geen</b> mens wilt dat hebben [ze:mɛ:swɪltaʔɛ:n] no man wants that have.inf ‘no-one wants to have that’	-	z-onset e:-nucleus

Not only is there intra-speaker phonological variation as illustrated above for sibilant place and for vowel laxness; in addition, between different speakers, pronunciations may vary strongly. In the following example, for instance, a speaker from Alto Jatibocas pronounces the word *geen* ‘none, not one’ quite differently from the above speaker from Garrafão, with a voiced glottal fricative:

- 5 er binnen er bal(d) **gene** meer  
 [dərbi:ndərbal**ɦi**ˈnəmiːr]  
 there are there almost none anymore  
 ‘there are almost none left’

Next to this free variation of allophones, the most striking feature at the level of phonology is the influence of the Pomeranian phonological system on the Zeeuws language speakers living in Pomeranian areas. The most salient example of this are consonant clusters with <s> like <sch>, <sl> and <str>. The pronunciation of the clusters <sl> and <str> in the examples (6) and (7) as [ʃl] and [ʃtr], respectively, show the adstrate influence of the Pomeranian phonological system on Brazilian Zeeuws, since the Zeeuws-Flemish dialects of the heartland never have [ʃ] in these clusters. The cluster <sch> in (8) is in certain modern Flemish and Dutch dialects pronounced as [ʃx] (e.g. the West-Flemish dialect of Roeselare, cf. GOEMAN et al., 2005), though not in the modern Zeeuws-Flemish dialects where it is pronounced as [sx] (cf. DE WULF et al., 2005, maps 9-11). So, while [ʃx] might be an old feature of the homeland, the pronunciation as [ʃ], without [x], as in example (8), is likely borrowed from Pomeranian.

- 6 bie julder dan, né, deed die daar slapen [ʃla:pən]  
 at your-place then, TAG, did that-one there sleep<sub>INF</sub>  
 ‘it was at your place he was sleeping, wasn’t he?’  
 (Garrafão)
- 7 aarde aan de **struiken** [ʃtrykən]  
 soil on the bushes  
 ‘soil on the bushes’  
 (Alto Jatibocas)
- 8 geenDuuts meer, bloot Portugees, en naar **schoole** [ʃo:lə] gaan dan  
 no Dutch anymore, only Portuguese and to school go<sub>INF</sub> then  
 ‘no Dutch anymore, only Portuguese, and going to school then’  
 (Caramuru)

The examples demonstrate that terminal speakers of Zeeuws in Espírito Santo do not stick to the phonological system of the dialect of their ancestors. Instead, their pronunciations freely vary, both under the influence of imperfect learning and second language transfer.

## 5.2. Linguistic change at the level of the lexicon

Typically, speakers of dying languages have word-finding problems (cf. SASSE, 1992b). When such problems of word-retrieval occur, the most obvious solution for the speaker is to shift to his or her dominant language, which in this case is Pomeranian or Portuguese. As a consequence, a lot of Pomeranian vocabulary is mixed in with the Zeeuws speech of our informants. Here are some examples, with the Pomeranian words in bold. Note that the words in the examples (9) to (11) all occur in Common German, Pomeranian included:

- 9     daar was geen dokter wat kunnen Nederlands praten **oder** Pommersch  
 there was no doctor what can Dutch speak or  
 Pomeranian  
 ‘There was no doctor that could speak Dutch or Pomeranian.’  
 (Garrafão)
- 10    moet **bald** koffie maken ja  
 have-to soon coffee make<sub>INF</sub> yes  
 ‘I have to make coffee soon.’  
 (Caramuru)
- 11    maar a’n ze **billig** zijn dan haal je...  
 but if<sub>3PL</sub> they cheap are<sub>3PL</sub> then get you  
 ‘But if they are cheap you get...’  
 (Alto Jatibocas)

The amount of Portuguese transfer on the lexical level is much more restricted than the Pomeranian influence. In the speech of our informants, there was a pervasive use of the Portuguese question tag *né*, short for *não é*, meaning something like *isn't it?*. Another example is the use of the Portuguese words *mamai* ‘mum’ and *papai* ‘dad’ in the following example of a male informant from Caramuru:

- 12    wilder zijn Hollands ja mijn **papai**, mijn **mamai**, ulder broers  
 we-guys are Dutch yes my dad, my mum, their brothers  
 ja alles Hollands  
 yes all Dutch  
 ‘We are Dutch, my dad, my mum, their brothers, all of them are Dutch.’

Another lexical characteristic in the speech of our informants is the occurrence of loan translations or calques – the phenomenon of literally translating a complete grammatical construction from one language into the other language by multilingual speakers. This is not exclusively typical of speakers of dying languages but is a general contact-induced phenomenon. We observed it for example in the following sentences:

- 13 **Geeft dat** (Pom. *jift dat*) geunter ook koeien **voor te melken** zo?  
 gives that yonder also cows for to milk<sub>INF</sub> so  
 ‘Now, are there also cows to milk over there?’  
 (Caramuru)
- 14 vandoar zijn ze **rops-toe** kommen  
 from-there are they here-upto come  
 ‘From there they have come towards this place.’  
 (Garrafão)

In (13) there are two instances of calques: the Pomeranian construction *jift dat* ‘gives it’ + existential object is literally rendered in Zeeuws as *geeft dat* + existential object (*koeien*), without agreement, while the Dutch construction has an existential subject agreeing with the verb. Moreover, the full pronoun *dat* is copied (Pomeranian does not have weak forms) instead of the weak Zeeuws form *het/’t* ‘it’, to be expected in such expletive constructions. The other example *voor te melken* ‘for to milk’ is more ambiguous. Although there are some modern Flemish dialects that have the construction *voor* + *te* + infinitive to express purpose, with *voor* as a purpose complementizer (comparable with English complementizer *for* in *in order (for)*, and Belfast English *for* in ‘for to go’), Zeeuws-Flemish dialects do not and did not use *voor* as a complementizer (BARBIERS et al., 2005, maps 1.3.1.9-10; GERRITSEN, 1991, map 28; WINKLER, 1874). The ‘normal’ complementizer in purpose clauses, both in Standard Dutch and in the Zeeuws-Flemish dialects is *om* (*om* + *te* + inf; *om te melken* ‘in order to milk’). The use of the complementizer *voor* in example (13) might be calquing from Portuguese *para* ‘for’. See also section 5.3.4 for another perspective.

In (14) the expression *rops-toe* is a calque from the Pomeranian expression *ruper-tau* ‘upwards/to above’. In Brazil (Pomeranians and Portuguese alike), reference to a

place is done by mentioning whether the place lies higher or lower than the current location. For example, Garrafão is higher than Holanda, so the informant in (14) talks about people who came from Holanda to Garrafão, saying that they came *rops-toe* 'lit. here upto'. Thus, this way of speaking is adaptation to Portuguese parlance (*subir*), while the wording is provided by the Pomeranian adverb *ruper-tau*, adapted to the Zeeuws vocabulary.

The above examples make clear that in the case of speakers of dying languages, lexical substitution is a process that results from an impoverished vocabulary on the part of the speaker (cf. BLUM; LEVENSTON, 1978; HOLLOWAY, 1997). Whenever a speaker has word-finding problems in his or her Zeeuws mother tongue, he or she switches to Pomeranian or Portuguese and borrows a word or a construction from one of these languages. A result of this large amount of lexical borrowing in Brazilian Zeeuws speech is again a high degree of inter-speaker variability since it is completely unpredictable when and how often a speaker will replace a Zeeuws word by a Pomeranian or Portuguese equivalent. In the end, a moribund language like Brazilian Zeeuws is permanently changing under recurrent borrowing from the dominant language(s).

### 5.3. Linguistic change at the level of (morpho-)syntax

#### 5.3.1. Relative pronouns

Not only lexical items but also morphosyntactic features of the dominant language(s) can interfere with the speech of terminal speakers of a language. This is what happens in the speech of at least one female informant living in the Pomeranian area. This speaker uses the Pomeranian all-purpose relative pronoun *wat* 'what' (cf. POSTMA, 2014) instead of the usual Zeeuws-Flemish gender-agreeing relative pronouns *die* 'who/which, that' and *dat* 'who/which, that', non-neuter and neuter respectively.<sup>7</sup> Instead of differentiating between masculine, feminine, neuter, or plural nouns, *wat* 'what' is used as a relative pronoun in all cases (16-18), though the agreeing forms also exist, cf. (19).

<sup>7</sup>This system is similar to that of Standard Dutch (cf. HAESERYN et al. 1997, 5.8.2-5.8.3).

- |    |   |        |
|----|---|--------|
| 16 | noe atte eur veint, <b>wat</b> mien onkel es, né?<br>now had her husband what my uncle is, TAG?<br>'Now, her husband, who is my uncle, you know, had...'  | masc   |
| 17 | de jeersten wuuf <b>wat</b> dan dood 'ebleven es<br>the first wife what then dead stayed is<br>'the first wife that has died then'  | fem    |
| 18 | maar in die kerke (...) zijn (...) veel meer <b>wat</b> pommeraans zijn<br>but in the church are much more (people) what pomeranian are<br>'But in church there are much more who are Pomeranian' | plural |
| 19 | die preester <b>die</b> alles op ..eh... duuts moggen<br>the priests REL everything on German recite.pl<br>'the priests that recite everything in German'   | plural |

This use of *wat* is parallel to the Pomeranian relative pronoun *wat*, which is invariant for all nouns, irrespective of their gender or number,<sup>8</sup> as is demonstrated in the examples (20)-(23), taken from Postma (forthcoming).

- |    |  |                  |
|----|--|------------------|
| 20 | Air walach <b>wat</b> ni futert bruukt.<br>a horse that not feeded needs<br>'a horse that does not need to be fed'   | masc, singular   |
| 21 | dai airst schaul <b>wat</b> wij had häwa<br>'the first school that we have had'  | fem, singular    |
| 22 | Bijm airst best dail <b>wat</b> eer frömd foirkümt<br>upon-the first best thing that them strange seems<br>'upon the first thing that seems strange to them' | neuter, singular |
| 23 | dai lüür <b>wat</b> kaina stampklots kena<br>the people that no pestle know  | plural           |

These examples show that the relative pronoun does not agree with the antecedent in Pomeranian. It is very likely that the use of *wat* in the examples (16)-(18) is a case of Pomeranian adstrate influence, a typical contact-induced phenomenon.

It is less plausible that the use of the all-purpose pronoun *wat* is an exclusive instance of loss of gender marking. When the complete morphosyntactic system of a language is affected by contact with a more dominant language, features like gender marking are easily lost (cf. AUDRING, 2006; DE VOGELAER, 2006). Since Pomeranian has a fully-fledged 3-gender system – though neutralized in relative pronouns – it seems improbable that the generalized use of *wat* for all genders in the Zeeuws examples in (16)-(18) is a consequence of contact-induced

<sup>8</sup> In Dutch *wat* 'what' can be used as a relative pronoun too, but only with certain types of antecedent, such as for instance another pronoun, a complete sentence, an indefinite pronoun like *iets* 'something', *niets* 'nothing', etc. (HAESERYN et al. 1997, 5.8.3.1).



loss of morphological oppositions. Moreover, the speaker from whose speech the example sentences are taken has fully-fledged inflection on complementizers and verbs when needed.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, we assume that the use of *wat* is a case of influence of the adstrate and not an instance of inflectional loss from within.

### 5.3.2. Do-support

Structural reduction on the (morpho)syntactic level in processes of language death often takes the form of a replacement of synthetic constructions by their analytic counterparts; for example, the replacement of future suffixes by periphrastic constructions in present-day Pipil (CAMPBELL; MUNTZEL, 1989, p. 192) or the replacement of the synthetic expression of infinitive and person by the analytic one in Breton (DRESSLER, 1996, p. 205). As Andersen (1982, p. 99) argues, semi-speakers will generally make excessive use of syntactic constructions that most “transparently reflect the underlying semantic and syntactic relations.” We also observed this kind of structural reduction in the language of Zeeuws speakers living in the Pomeranian area. These speakers make abundant use of periphrastic constructions with *doen* ‘do’ as a dummy auxiliary, that is, do-support: instead of using a finite lexical verb, they use a finite form of the verb *doen* ‘do’ + the infinitive of the lexical verb (see examples 24-29). This do-support does not occur in the current West-Zeeuws-Flemish dialect of the heartland (cf. BARBIERS et al., 2005). Whether it occurred in the dialect of the original immigrants is uncertain: we do not find it in old sources such as Winkler (1874) and we only came across one attestation in the ‘Dutch Dialect Database’ called Soundbites.<sup>10</sup> Most likely the phenomenon only started to occur as a result of the language contact situation in Espírito Santo, but we cannot rule out the possibility that the original immigrants brought along this do-support from their homeland dialects, after which it started to flourish in Brazilian Zeeuws due to language contact – as opposed to European Zeeuws, where it disappeared. Below, we give some examples from the many attestations in our speech data:

<sup>9</sup> Likewise, this speaker uses do-support extensively (see below), though not because she does not have command of the inflection, as she uses inflected forms as well (cf. POSTMA; NEVINS, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> Ver nota no fim do texto.

- 24 dan **deed** die priester kommen  
 then did that priest come<sub>INF</sub>.  
 ‘Then the priest would come.’  
 (Garrafão)
- 25 hier **doe** je anders proaten of wijder, wij doen niet zo  
 here do you differently speak<sub>INF</sub> if further, we do not so  
 ‘Here you speak differently than further away, we don’t speak like this.’  
 (Alto Jatibocas)
- 26 overmèèrgen **doe** ‘k ik daar weer frisse  
 day-after-tomorrow do ICLITIC ISTRONG there again fresh-one  
 onderbrengen, dan **doe** ‘k ik die t’hope brengen  
 under.bring-<sub>INF</sub>, then do ICLITIC ISTRONG those together bring-<sub>INF</sub>  
 ‘The day after tomorrow I will add fresh (coffee), then I will mix it.’  
 (talking about coffee)  
 (Alto Jatibocas)
- 27 mien mai at die leven **dee**, die zei...  
 my mum if that-one live<sub>INF</sub> did, that-one said  
 ‘My mum, when she was still alive, she said...’  
 (Alto Jatibocas)
- 28 enen **deed** den anderen nie verschoan  
 one did.sg the other-one not understand<sub>INF</sub>  
 ‘One did not understand the other.’  
 (Caramuru)
- 29 moar die **deden** Hollands proaten  
 but those-ones did.pl Dutch speak<sub>INF</sub>  
 ‘But they spoke Dutch.’  
 (Caramuru)

As pointed out above, the replacement of synthetic (finite form of lexical verb) by analytic (finite form of *doen* + infinitive of lexical verb) constructions is a typical language death phenomenon. However, it is not restricted to situations of language death alone, but also occurs in ‘normal’ language contact situations (cf. DRESSLER, 1996, p. 205). Since do-support is also a feature of the Pomeranian adstrate language (POSTMA, 2014), the occurrence of it in Brazilian Zeeuws may also be the result of adstrate influence. The fact that the attestations of this phenomenon are restricted to the speech of informants from the Pomeranian area suggests that adstrate influence is quite probable. It could also be a case of multiple causation (cf. CAMPBELL; MUNTZEL, 1989): a combination of a typical language death process reinforced by transfer from the second language. Although the Pomeranian language may have a strong influence on the use of do-support in Brazilian Zeeuws, there are differences in the distribution of the phenomenon in both languages. As pointed out in Postma

(2014), *daua*-support in Brazilian Pomeranian occurs especially in embedded clauses. It occurs in main clauses as well, but then it behaves like a modal verb instead of a dummy auxiliary.<sup>11</sup> In embedded contexts, however, *daua* 'do' does not contribute any meaning. Postma (2014) argues that it particularly occurs in relative clauses and in temporal and conditional clauses, that is, clauses introduced by the all-purpose relative pronoun *wat* 'that, which', by *wen* 'when' and *as* 'if'.

In Brazilian Zeeuws, on the other hand, *do*-support is used both in main and embedded clauses, is observed significantly more in the past tense and there are tendencies for it to appear especially in negative and interrogative contexts and if-clauses (cf. POSTMA; NEVINS, 2013). All in all, *do*-support in Brazilian Zeeuws has a more extensive distribution than *do*-support in Brazilian Pomeranian. Although adstrate influence of Pomeranian may perhaps largely account for the occurrence of the phenomenon in Brazilian Zeeuws, the wider distribution of it in the latter language may be partly due to the process of syntactic reduction typically taking place in dying languages.

### 5.3.3 Topic drop

The cases of (morpho)syntactic reduction that have been discussed above are cases in which transfer from Pomeranian plays an important role. The third case of syntactic reduction that we discuss here involves Portuguese superstrate influence. In the speech of some of the Zeeuws speakers interviewed, we find cases of null objects. In these cases, the direct object, which refers to a formerly introduced antecedent in the discourse (a topic), is non-overt in the sentence. In the examples below the null object is indicated by the symbol  $\emptyset$ :

- 30 Ja eigens né Helena, van kleine op né, doen wulder  $\emptyset$   
 proaten.  
 yes in fact isn't it Helena, from small up TAG, do we-guys (it)  
 speak  
 'Yes in fact, Helena, from when we were children, we speak (it), don't  
 we?'(Garrafão)
- 31 Ja, aha, die praten  $\emptyset$  niet meer, nee nee, não.  
 yes, uhum, these-ones speak (it) not anymore, no no, no  
 'Yes, aha, they don't speak (it) anymore, no no, não'  
 (Garrafão)

<sup>11</sup> Note that in the example from Zuidzande provided in footnote 10 *doen* also acts as a modal verb, expressing habitual aspect.

32 Dieter Hecht, die hei Ø dan 'n bitje 'leerd, né Helena?  
 Dieter Hecht, that-one has (it) then a bit learnt, TAG Helena?  
 'Dieter Hecht has learnt to speak it a bit, hasn't he, Helena?'  
 (Garrafão)

33 als ik ook, ik (h)en Ø mien kinders ook niet meer geleerd  
 as me too, I have (it) my children also not anymore taught  
 'Like me, I haven't taught it to my children neither.'  
 (Caramuru)

34 of weet -ie Ø niet?  
 or know you (it) not  
 'or don't you know it?'

The discourse topic in (30) to (33) that was introduced earlier in the interview is the Zeeuws language, as it was what we were talking about. Reference to this antecedent is non-overt, resulting in a null object. The verb varies (*praten* 'talk', *leren* 'learn'). In (34) the verb is *weten* 'know', which incidentally allows a null object in English and German, but not in Dutch. The null object here refers to "something about the Calvinists". This kind of null object does not occur in the original Zeeuws language, nor in Pomeranian, in which the objects would have to undergo fronting in order to be left empty.<sup>12</sup> In Brazilian Portuguese, however, null objects are very common *in situ* (cf. CYRINO; LOPES, 2016; FARRELL, 1990; RAPOSO, 1986; SCHWENTER; SILVA, 2002). The Portuguese translation of example (32) with a null object would be perfectly acceptable:

32a Dieter Hecht, ele aprendeu (Ø / a língua) um pouco, não é, Helena?

In this respect, Brazilian Portuguese differs from the other Romance languages that obligatorily use a clitic in this context.

There is a difference in the distribution of null objects between European and Brazilian Portuguese (henceforth EP and BP, respectively). In EP, null objects cannot occur in strong island contexts, such as relative clauses (GALVES, 1989; KATO, 1993; RAPOSO, 1986). On the contrary, BP allows null objects in any syntactic context, including strong island contexts. We have not found any such cases in the *corpus* yet. There are nevertheless semantic restrictions on the occurrence of null

<sup>12</sup> Ver nota no fim do texto.

objects in BP as well, that is, if the antecedent is [+animate, +specific], there is a bias to lexicalize it (cf. SCHWENTER; SILVA, 2002). The Zeeuws sentences in (30) to (33) all have an antecedent that is featured as [-animate, +specific]. This could indicate that transfer from Portuguese might be at stake, although further research would be needed to confirm this.

#### 5.3.4 Complex complementizers

An intriguing morphosyntactic phenomenon of language change is the complex complementizers in Zeeuws that are arguably the result of contact with Pomeranian, where in the latter, elements such as *taum* are a fused realization of the two distinct elements FOR+TO. In European Pomeranian (EP) of the 19th century, infinitival constructions of the type in (35a-c) were possible (POSTMA, 2016):

35a	du bust nog nich grot naug um an Flasch Wiin ut-tau-drinken	EP
35b	du bust nog nich grot naug um an Flasch Wiin ut-ø-drinken	EP
35c	du büst no ni groot naug ø ain Flasch Wiin ut-tau-drinken	EP
36d	duu bist no ni grout naug taum ai flasch wijn ut-ø-drinken	BP
	'you are not large enough to empty a bottle of wine'	

The most widespread construction was (35a), in which the complementizer *um* 'for' and the infinitival prefix *tau* 'to' were used separately. However, constructions like (35b), in which the complementizer is retained but the infinitival prefix is dropped, and (35c), in which the complementizer is dropped but the infinitival prefix is retained, occurred as well. In Brazilian Pomeranian (BP), on the other hand, these purpose constructions are invariably realized with the complex complementizer *taum* TAU+UM 'lit. to+for, for to', in which the infinitival prefix *tau* 'to' has moved to the C-position, turning the complementizer *um* 'for' into *taum* (see Postma, 2014, for a formal analysis of this T-to-C-movement and a discussion of its development in the speech of the Pomeranian immigrants):

36	Dai lüür sin arm un häwa kair gild [ <b>taum</b> sich air huus ø buugen].
	the people are poor and have no money [for-to for themselves a house ø build.INF]
	'The people are poor and have no money to build themselves a house.'

Curiously, in the Zeeuws language of some of the speakers living in the Pomeranian area, we find infinitival constructions that are calques of the Pomeranian *taum*-constructions, as illustrated in the examples (37) to (39), taken from Postma (2016). Note that the order of the lexical material in C is just the opposite of the Pomeranian order, i.e. Pomeranian *tau + um* ‘to + for’ versus Zeeuws *om + te* ‘for + to’.

- (37) dat es dan vier dagen **omte** naar Santa Leopoldina **ø** kommen en dan vier dagen  
weer **omte** terug **ø** kommen  
that is then 4 days **for-to** to Santa Leopoldina **ø** come.INF and then 4 days again  
**for-to** back **ø** come.INF  
‘It takes 4 days to go to S. Leopoldina and again 4 days to return.’
- (38) as jinne krank worden deed, dan was gien auto **omte** die weg **ø** bringen  
if one sick become.INF did, then were no car **for-to** that-one away **ø** bring.INF  
‘If one became sick, then there was no car to take him away.’
- (39) die sijn dekkoppig west **om te** hier **ø** bluwen  
they are stubborn been **for-to** here **ø** stay.INF  
‘They have been so stubborn to stay here.’

In European Zeeuws the infinitival prefix *te* ‘to’ would never occur in the C-position. The infinitival construction in example (39) would then be

- (39a) (...) **om hier te bluwen**  
(...) **for here to stay.INF**

Thus, in the Zeeuws of some multilingual speakers in Espírito Santo the infinitival prefix *te* has moved to the complementizer *om*, in this way calqueing Pomeranian *taum*-constructions such as the one illustrated in (36). We have strong indications to assume that adstrate influence of Pomeranian plays a role here, since the complex complementizer *om-te* does not occur in the Zeeuws language of the speakers who live in the Portuguese area, as illustrated below:

- (40) een meulen **om** frunne **te** maken (Hollandinha, Portuguese area)  
a mill **for** farinha **to** make  
‘a mill to make farinha’
- (41) **om te** frenne maken (Garrafão, Pomeranian area)  
**for to** farinha make.INF  
‘to make farinha’

The speaker from the predominantly-Portuguese village of Holandinha uses the same construction as the one that would be used in European Zeeuws, in which the infinitival prefix has not moved to C, whereas the speaker from the predominantly-Pomeranian village of Garrafão uses the construction with the complex complementizer *om + te*, which is a calque of Pomeranian *taum*.

### 5.3.5. Loss of the diminutive

A final feature of language contact with Pomeranian is the loss of the diminutive in some speakers of Zeeuws-Flemish. While the source language in Europe was rich in diminutives and the superstrate language Portuguese is abundant in this morphological dimension, the Zeeuws-Flemish of Alto-Jatibocas have lost these morphemes completely. Upon a translation test, Portuguese words like *casinha* ‘little house’ and *mesinha* ‘little table’ were rendered by the analytic construction *kleen huus*, *kleene tafel* only, not by the synthetic diminutive *huusje* or *tafeltje*, even after explicit insistence. In Holandinha, on the other hand, diminutives were produced spontaneously (*lechje* ‘little light bulb’, ‘*n huusje* ‘little house’, even on adverbs *zaachjes* ‘slowly’). Garrafão took an intermediate position, not producing diminutives upon a translation test of Port. *gatinho* > *kleine katte*, but confirming the possibility upon explicit insistence: (*kleen*) *katje* ‘little cat’. Notably, forms such as *tafeltje* ‘tabouret’ and *stoeltje* ‘small chair’ which have a lexical flavor (‘a type of table/chair’) were readily produced. The decline of the diminutive seems to pattern along the lines of Pomeranian predominance, which is strongest in Alto Jatibocas. This would not come as a surprise, then as Pomeranian in Brazil lacks the synthetic diminutive completely. In fact, the diminutive had been present in European Pomeranian but was lost in Brazil (POSTMA, 2016). However, more research is needed to discern if Brazilian Zeeuws and Pomeranian lost the diminutive in mutual contact, as the original systems were quite distinct, or stepwise, first in Pomeranian and, by language contact with it, in Zeeuws as well.

## Summary and conclusions

In this paper, we have presented a thorough description of the language decay processes that have occurred in the Zeeuws-Flemish variety spoken in Espírito Santo, Brazil, by the descendents of the immigration wave of 1858-1862. We have demonstrated that the phonology, lexicon, and morphosyntax have changed from the original Zeeuws varieties, in part because of endogenous processes of language decay and in part because of direct influence that occurs in multilingual situations. In particular, Portuguese and Pomeranian have influenced phenomena such as topic drop, complementizer fusion, and diminutive loss, in specific ways in certain cases reflecting greater contact with one or the other of these dominant languages. Although Brazilian Zeeuws remains only with a handful of speakers, we hope that this detailed documentation of its sociolinguistic, phonological, lexical, and morphosyntactic properties, alongside the parallel attention the community has recently received from the cultural and historical sectors, can provide increased means of valorization of this linguistic variety for its speakers.

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## Notas

<sup>10</sup> In a recording of the dialect of Zuidzande (from 1966) in the Soundbites database we found the following example of do-support (with the form of *doen* 'do' underlined):

*mee een eh zòmè n'n een vierkant stik iezer zòò, dat deej' in de grond sett'n en dan*

with an eh so with a a square piece of iron so, that did you in the ground put<sub>INF</sub> and then

*mee een 'aomer zòòmar steeds zitt'n eh klopp'n dat dat die snee 'èèm dunne*

with a hammer just like that constantly sit<sub>INF</sub> eh knock<sub>INF</sub> that that this edge ehm thin *werd*

became

'with a square piece of iron, you would put that in the ground and then, with a hammer you would constantly sit and knock just like this to make the edge thin'

<sup>12</sup> In Dutch dialects, null objects are only acceptable in sentence-initial position in contexts upon speaker change, like the following:

A: Ken je dat boek?  
know you that book  
'Do you know that book?'

B: Ø heb ik vorig jaar gelezen.  
(that book) have I last year read

The following sentence is, therefore, unacceptable:

B: \*Ik heb Ø gelezen.  
I have (that book) read  
'I have read it.'

## Resumo

### **Flamengo-zelandês no Brasil: multilinguismo e decadência linguística**

*O intenso fluxo de imigração do século XIX possibilitou, ao estado do Espírito Santo, receber milhares de imigrantes de diferentes nacionalidades. Dentre eles estavam 323 imigrantes holandeses, que chegaram entre os anos de 1858 e 1862. Esses imigrantes trouxeram consigo sua língua, o flamengo-zelandês. Atualmente, no entanto, essa língua tem menos de 20 falantes, visto que foi substituída pelo português e pelo pomerano. Através de uma pesquisa de campo, entrevistamos dezenas de descendentes de imigrantes em diferentes municípios espírito-santenses. Pudemos constatar que a língua está criticamente ameaçada, e isso se deve a diversos fatores históricos, sociais e culturais. Neste artigo, apresentamos a situação sociolinguística do flamengo-zelandês no Espírito Santo e expomos algumas características atuais da língua em processo de desaparecimento: alofonia intrafalante e interfalante; empréstimo lexical e o calqueamento do Português; a neutralização do pronome relativo; o do-support; a omissão do tópico; a fusão do complementador e o marcador infinitival -te; e a perda parcial de diminutivos.*

**Palavras-chave:** Imigração. Práticas de linguagem. Políticas linguísticas.