

## Zero Morphemes: - Systematic Catalexis or Historical Apocope

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Apocopic rules are pervasive in diachronic phonology and morpho syntax. The question is if the material really drops or simply become latent. One can be a precursor for the other. In this talk we make a first step in showing that there is fundamental, but constrained, catalexis in natural language. Catalexis is the non-spelling out of (morpho)phonological material at the edge of a prosodic domain. The catalectic material then remains prosodically unparsed. Catalectic material can show up upon further affixation when it is not at the edge of the prosodic domain (latent sounds). A well-known phonological example is French, *petit* 'small-masc' where the final [t] is latent: [pəti]. This [t] becomes lexical upon further affixing of feminine [ə], *petite* ('small-fem'), while this feminine morpheme itself remains latent: [pətit]. Simplicity of the theory, and diachronic evidence, blocks in the case the assumption that it is the affixed /t/ that instantiates the feminine morpheme in [pəti/pətit], in view of the pair [gri/griz] 'gray', where /z/ seems to be the sign of the feminine. It is easier to hypothesize a catalectic feminine -e morpheme and latent final consonants. The spellout of the final /t/ only occurs in the presence of this zero suffix.

In this talk we will construe a compelling case where we *must* assume synchronic catalexis. The constructed case is drawn from Pomeranian, a coastal West Germanic dialect, related to German (still spoken in Brazil). This language variant has massive erosion of inflectional material. It has replaced: 1. final *-en* by *-e* everywhere (in infinitives, plurals, participles, ...), 2. final *-e* was dropped everywhere. 3. root consonant *-n* after long vowels and diphthongs were dropped as well: *swiin*>*swii* 'pig', *stain*>*stai* 'stone', *klain*>*klai* 'small' etc. The three changes are in (3), applied to forms of the indefinite article.

(3)	<u>Standard German</u>	<u>Pomeranian</u>
	1. ein-en	→ ain-e
	2. ein-e	→ ain-
	3. ein	→ ai

If we inspect the possessive *mein*-paradigm, the definite determiner paradigm, and the adjectival paradigm in Pomeranian and compare these to German, it turns out that they are identical, modulo the changes under 3. We here give the paradigm for *mijn* 'my' under (4). The subtractive morphology rule 3 (mi:n→mi:) is indicated by ø, the null inflection produced by rule 2 by —, i.e. (mijn—) is indicated by —.

(4)	<u>Pomeranian</u>					<u>Standard German</u>					
	<i>mijn</i>	mas	fem	neu	pl	←	<i>mein</i>	mas	fem	neu	pl
	NOM	ø	—	ø	—		NOM	—	e	—	e
	DAT	em	er	em	X		DAT	em	er	em	en
	ACC	e	—	ø	—		ACC	en	e	—	e

Similar charts hold for the indefinite article *ein/kein*, and some other functional morphemes. This means that Standard German and Pomeranian are similar modulo the changes under (3). We then present theoretical and dialect-geographical evidence that n-drop of change 3 is one and the same process as change 1. This creates a dilemma: we now cannot order the two rules 1/3 and rule 2 with respect to each other as they mutually feed each other, which would provide the wrong changes of either *einen*→\**ain* or *eine*→\**ai*. The only solution is to apply the various rules *in tandem*. As diachronic processes are ordered in time, interpreting the projection rules as *synchronic spellout rules* is the only option. We then apply the spellout rules to Pomeranian infinitives, gerunds, datives, and plurals. It turns out that many wild paradigms in Pomeranian become (almost) regular. Cases of subtractive morphology disappear etc.