

## **/t/ Deletion in German *braucht*: Auxiliarization Process or Phonetic Necessity?**

*Péter Maitz (Pécs) & Katalin Mády (München)*

The modal use of the verb *brauchen* in contemporary German is a result of auxiliarization, a diachronic process whereby the (non-auxiliary) full verb *brauchen* comes to be used in an auxiliary function. Due to this (still ongoing) process *brauchen* gradually adopts the characteristic features of modal auxiliaries. One of the most important of these features is the spreading deletion of the inflectional ending *-t* in the 3p.sg. present tense form. Relevant literature (Diewald 1997, Girth 2000) usually describes this deletion as a development caused by morphological analogy with the other modal auxiliaries (*er muss/kann/will – brauch(t)*). Contrary to this interpretation, Maitz/Tronka (2009) argued that the main reason for this morphological change might rather be a phonological one, namely the complexity reduction of the final consonant cluster as it can be observed in many other (especially high-frequency) words in several languages.

In this paper we present an analysis of /t/ deletion under the aspects of accentuation, word frequency, consonantal/vocalic environment after the target word, and full verb vs. auxiliary function. A passage of approximately two minutes (5 repetitions) was read by speakers of Standard Southern German – recordings of Northern speakers are in progress. The following tendencies were found: (1) Auditory perception and acoustic analysis of /t/ realizations often diverged: even in cases with no audible burst, a closure could be detected in the signal. (2) The few cases of complete /t/ deletion occurred with the 2p.pl form of *braucht* where missing *-t* cannot be explained by analogy to other modal auxiliaries. (3) The duration of closure and aspiration phase was longer in unaccented words, possibly due to rhythmic effects. (4) Closure and aspiration were longer if the target was followed by a word-initial consonant. (5) The observed tendencies applied to all target words, showing no effect of word frequency or modal vs. full verb function.

Thus we argue that /t/ deletion in *brauchen* is not a consequence of the auxiliarization process, but can be explained by phonotactic and rhythmic factors alone.

### **References:**

- Diewald, Gabriele 1997. *Grammatikalisierung. Eine Einführung in das Sein und Werden grammatischer Formen*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- Girth, Heiko 2000. *Untersuchungen zur Theorie der Grammatikalisierung am Beispiel des Westmitteldeutschen*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- Maitz, Péter/Tronka, Krisztián 2009. *brauchen – Phonologische Aspekte der Auxiliarisierung*. In: *Zeitschrift für Dialektologie und Linguistik* 76.2, 189-202.