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273

Introduction

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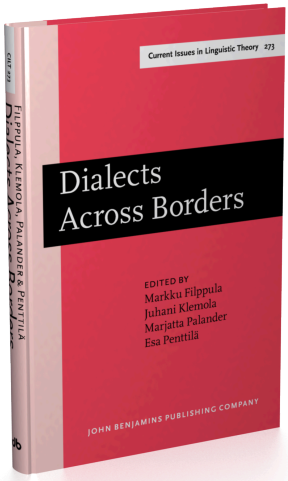

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INTRODUCTION

Until fairly recently, the word 'dialect' carried the connotation of being something antiquated and having low social status. The situation is now very different: along with the general rise of language awareness in modern societies, nonstandard varieties of languages have become an object of new interest, which in turn is reflected in their generally improved position even in educational systems. A similar change has taken place in scholarly research on dialects. This is partly due to the recent advances in the methods used in dialectological research. The advent of computer-assisted methods has enabled study of significantly larger databases than in traditional dialectological research. Also, methods derived from sociolinguistic and variation studies have greatly added to the general interest of dialect studies and distanced them even further from the 'butterfly collecting' mentality often associated with traditional dialectology. New language-theoretical frameworks form yet another source of inspiration for dialect studies today: typology, cognitive linguistics, discourse analysis and pragmatics have provided fresh perspectives on old problems and opened up completely new lines of research such as cognitive dialectology, folk linguistics, and perceptional dialectology.

The articles in this volume arise from The Eleventh International Conference on Methods in Dialectology (Methods XI), which was held from 5 to 9 August 2002, at the University of Joensuu, North Karelia, Finland. The special theme for Methods XI was "Dialects across borders". This theme was chosen because it accords well with the nature of North Karelia as a historical border area between two states and two different linguistic and cultural traditions. As can be seen from the selection of contributions included in this volume, various kinds of borders exert major influence on linguistic behaviour all over the world. The articles have been grouped according to whether they deal primarily with the linguistic outcomes of political and historical borders between states (Part I); various kinds of social and regional boundaries, including borders in a metaphorical sense, i.e. social barriers and mental or cognitive boundaries (Part II); and finally, boundaries between languages (Part III).

In the first five articles, grouped under the heading of "Dialects across political and historical borders", the main concern is the effects of political and historical borders on dialects. This chapter opens with *Peter Auer*'s article on "The construction of linguistic borders and the linguistic construction of

borders". Using the German language area as his example, Auer discusses the complex links between the nation-state and geographical space, on the one hand, and the relationship between these two and dialectal variation (or continua), on the other. An important aspect of geographical space is that it is not merely a physical phenomenon but a mental one. This idea, which Auer adopts from the early twentieth-century sociologist Georg Simmel, explains why lay persons' 'ethnodialectological' perceptions about dialect boundaries may be adjusted by the existence of present or past political borders. As an example, Auer cites the dialect differences between Swabian and Low Alemannic: southwest German informants treat these as different dialects because of their past political separation, although this is not supported by dialectological facts. The former political border between East and West Germany had led to similar 'cognitive adjustments' in the minds of West German informants. At a more general level, the state borders between Germany, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, France, Switzerland, etc. influence people' 'cognitive maps' and lead to the construction of dialect or language boundaries on the basis of political borders.

Auer's contribution is followed by *Raphael Berthele*'s article on "Static spatial relations in German and Romance: towards a cognitive dialectology of posture verbs and locative adverbials", which combines in an interesting way methods used in dialectology and language contact studies with a cognitive-linguistic theoretical framework. Focusing on spatial expressions, he examines the mapping of spatial relational concepts onto syntactic structures in different varieties of German across the German–Swiss border and in the neighbouring Romance languages, including French, Italian, and Romansh. The results suggest that, in the expression of spatial relations, Swiss German and Romansh favour verb phrase constructions consisting of a verb followed by locative prepositional phrase + adverb where the adverb can be said to be semantically redundant. By contrast, in Standard High German, Standard Italian and Standard French this PP+ADV pattern is either rare or non-existent. Instead, these languages use the 'simple' prepositional phrase construction. Berthele's explanation for the distinctive behaviour of Swiss German and Romansh rests on adstratal influences between these languages within the complex contact situation in Switzerland.

Third in this group, *Sandra Clarke* and *Gunnel Melchers* present an interesting survey of a seldom discussed linguistic feature: pulmonic ingressive articulation. Focusing on ingressive discourse particles, the authors argue that the use of this feature is an areal feature that stretches from the eastern Baltic to the Atlantic seaboard of the United States. Clarke and Melchers suggest that the use of pulmonic ingressive discourse particles has diffused *via* language

contact over this geographical area, and as such provides evidence for cross-linguistic transmission of socially and pragmatically determined features, a phenomenon seldom discussed in the dialectological or contact-linguistic literature.

In her study, *Larissa Naiditch* investigates the details behind the development of the consonant system of Mennonite Low German, or Plautdietsch, which is an insular dialect of German spoken by the religious minority of Mennonites. The speakers of this dialect can at present be found in various parts of Siberia, Kazakhstan, the USA, Mexico and Germany. The migrant past of the Mennonite community comes out in the richness of their dialect, since its consonant system has traces from a number of dialects spoken in the areas where this minority has resided in the course of history.

In the final article in Part I, *Sali Tagliamonte*, *Jennifer Smith* and *Helen Lawrence* compare evidence from six corpora representing relic areas in the North of England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Their aim is to find suitable diagnostic features for establishing historical relationships between New and Old World varieties of English. They argue that while verbal *-s* seems to be a suitable diagnostic feature, NEG/AUX contraction, *for to* infinitives, and zero adverbs are more problematic for testing similarities and differences in the Old and New World varieties of English. Furthermore, they suggest that examining the variable constraints on linguistic features that are shared across all varieties offers a fruitful way forward for tracking trans-Atlantic connections between varieties of English.

Part II ("Dialects across social and regional boundaries") opens with *Dennis R. Preston's* article on "Dialects across internal frontiers: some cognitive boundaries", in which he discusses some of the ongoing vowel changes in the urban dialects of the northern cities of the U.S.A. Also known as the Northern Cities Chain Shift (NCCS), these changes have been investigated by Preston and his research team from the points of view of dialectology, sociolinguistics and 'folk linguistics' (this last one being inspired by social psychology). Preston's uses the term *sociophonetics* to describe this kind of combination of different methods. His research focuses on the productive aspect of speech and on what individual factors are behind the NCCS: how adoption of this group of changes correlates with age, commitment to residence in a given locality, and how the ethnic background and social network relationships of the immigrant speaker affect his linguistic accommodation process. Also interesting from the folk-linguistic point of view are his findings on how capable an individual is in imitating a dialect which has a sound system different from his own, and on what impact an adoption of a sound change has on his perceiving of the same change in the speech of others. The effect of

gender on speakers' perception of their own dialect area is yet another variable studied by Preston.

Next, in his article entitled "On 'dative sickness' and other kinds of linguistic diseases in Modern Icelandic", *Finnur Friðriksson* writes on a number of changes in the use of some case-inflections (most notably, the dative, accusative and genitive when in subject position) in certain regional and social dialects of Icelandic which have by some researchers been interpreted as a threat to the very stability of the case-inflectional system of the language. Drawing on his own data representing the relevant regional dialects and social groups he, however, seeks to demonstrate that this threat is premature, as the features turn out to be so infrequent that they hardly undermine the stability of the grammatical system of Modern Icelandic. Rather, he sees the whole debate about their alleged spread as something which has originated in the educational system and in the efforts of school teachers to eradicate usages which deviate from the standard.

Writing also on social boundaries, *Ronald Macaulay* explores ways in which the influence of language-external factors upon linguistic variation could be investigated in greater detail than has hitherto been the case in sociolinguistic research. His article, entitled "Can we find more variety in variation?", is based on data collected from Glasgow English. According to Macaulay, the method of data collection is crucial: special care is needed to ensure that the participants in the communicative situation are on an equal footing; there is no need for an interviewer. Traditional external factors, such as age, gender and social class, should be studied in connection with each other, not as separate factors. Statistical analysis can then be used to discover gender differences within social groups that otherwise do not display significant differences. Furthermore, sociolinguists should look for 'hidden' linguistic variables that have not been considered in previous works. Such are, for instance, various discourse features.

Fourth in Part II, *Vincent J. van Heuven*, *Renée van Bezooijen* and *Loulou Edelman* present an acoustic analysis of 32 Dutch-speaking guests appearing in a television talk show. They focus on the analysis of the diphthong /ɛi/ in the speech of the speakers representing an emerging 'avant-garde' variety of standard Dutch, also known as Polder Dutch. The authors argue that with the help of acoustic measurement procedures they can observe a sound change in progress non-impressionistically and in much more detail than using other methods. From the sociolinguistic point of view, they claim, this new variety of standard Dutch represents yet another instance of the widespread phenomenon of women initiating and leading a linguistic change.

Finally in Part II, *Joan C. Beal* and *Karen P. Corrigan* discuss regional

variation of English in a paper which is part of an ongoing, extensive project on northern English dialects. They concentrate on analysing the urban dialects of Tyneside and Sheffield from a morphosyntactic perspective. Their tentative conclusions suggest more fine-grained distinctions between northern dialects than have been found in some previous studies, which are based on only phonological criteria.

Part III consists of three articles, all concerned with dialect variation or continua across language boundaries. In her article on grammatical borders, *Ruth King* addresses the question of linguistic constraints on borrowability in a bilingual setting. Using Preposition Stranding data from Prince Edward Island French, King argues against direct syntactic borrowing from English. Instead, she suggests that her Prince Edward Island data support the primacy of lexical borrowing as the source of syntactic effects in the recipient language.

Moving on to another kind of linguistic scene which also involves contacts between two languages, *Patricia Ronan* focuses on the well-known Irish English *after*-perfect construction. Ronan examines data based on participant observation and on a corpus of Dublin oral history material compiled by the American sociologist K. Kearns. She presents evidence to support the view that the HE *after*-perfect is not a unified category: for some speakers the *after*-perfect has grammaticalised to denote 'hot news' events, while for others it presents a more general alternative strategy for perfect marking.

This volume closes with *J. L. Dillard*'s article "Dialect history in black and white: are two colours enough?". This is a critical comment on some recent views on the origins of AAVE. Calling into question the substrate account defended by many linguists, Dillard emphasises the significance of plurilingualism in the historical circumstances surrounding the growth of AAVE. He argues that the West-African slaves of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries interacted more with indigenous Americans than with the Europeans. Consequently, English was not the only influential language in the contact setting; besides indigenous American languages, the Africans got into contacts with settlers representing different Indo-European languages, e.g. in the West Indian Islands. The plurilingual nature of the contact setting should according to Dillard be taken into account when writing the history of AAVE.

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