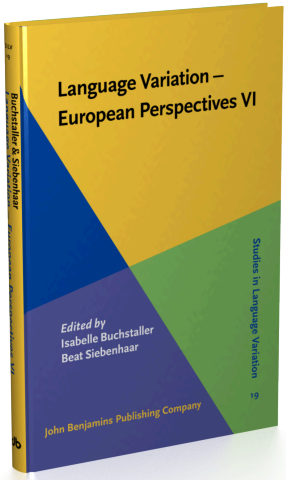
Studies in Language Variation
19

Introduction

Isabelle Buchstaller | Leipzig University
Beat Siebenhaar | Leipzig University

https://doi.org/10.1075/silv.19.int



Pages vii–xvi of
Language Variation - European Perspectives VI: Selected papers from the Eighth International Conference on Language Variation in Europe (ICLaVE 8), Leipzig, May 2015
Edited by Isabelle Buchstaller and Beat Siebenhaar
[Studies in Language Variation, 19] 2017. xvi, 237 pp.

Introduction

Isabelle Buchstaller and Beat Siebenhaar
Leipzig University

The International Conference for Language Variation in Europe (ICLaVE) addresses all aspects of linguistic variation observed in languages spoken in present-day Europe. The series aims to bring together scholars of European languages or language varieties with the purpose of discussing empirical, methodological and theoretical issues in the study of language variation and change on the European continent. As such, it is intended to provide a platform for scholars interested in historical linguistics, psycholinguistics, dialectology, sociolinguistics, language acquisition, phonetics, grammatical theory or any other point of view that considers issues that pertain to language variation and change in European languages.

The 8th ICLaVE conference took part from June 27th to June 29th 2015 at Leipzig University. Leipzig's geographical situatedness at the very heart of Europe and at the crossroads of the Germanic and the Slavic speaking areas was seen as an ideal location for attracting a maximally encompassing range of languages. Indeed, the conference call was taken up with much enthusiasm: We received 181 abstracts featuring thirty-three languages spoken and written in a great wealth of dialects. Out of these submissions, we accepted 151 papers and posters, amounting to a retention rate of 83%.

We decided not to group the papers by language / family but by thematic focus, which resulted in fifteen sessions on areas as diverse as language borders, complexity in morpho-syntax, language and migration, acoustic phonetics, and language and the media. These sessions were complemented by five thematic panels, including *Quantitative and qualitative approaches to language (de)standardization* (organised by Steff Grondelaers and Jürgen Jaspers), *Living on the border between conflicting communities of practice* (organised by Corinne Seals), *Koines and regional standard varieties* (organised by Frans Hinskens, Stavroula Tsiplakou and Juan Villena Ponsoda), *Community-based language change* (organised by Isabelle Buchstaller and Suzanne Evans Wagner), and *Minority languages in Europe* (organised by Anne-José Villeneuve and Nanna Haug Hilton). This edited volume contains a selection of these papers.

DOI 10.1075/silv.19.int

It is time-honoured ICLaVE tradition to invite at least one plenary speaker from the hosting country as well as one from further afield. We were delighted to be able to attract Jürgen Erich Schmidt (Forschungsstelle Deutscher Sprachatlas, Marburg University), whose plenary built on historical German dialect atlas data to examine "Dynamics, variation and the brain". We also relished the opportunity to tap into the typological expertise at the (since defunct) department of linguistics at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology by inviting Susanne Maria Michaelis and Martin Haspelmath to speak to us on "Analytic and synthetic: Typological change in varieties of European languages". Last but not least, we were thrilled that Miriam Meyerhoff (Victoria University of Wellington) agreed to make the long journey to Germany in order to explore "The large and the small of it: Big issues with smaller samples in the study of language variation". We are particularly happy that all plenary speakers have agreed to publish their contributions as chapters in this volume.

Scope of this volume

The submissions to this collection exemplify the breadth and the variability of research on European languages. The papers encompass languages from north to south (Swedish to Greek), from west to east (Galician to (again) Greek). The language families included in this volume include large ones, such as Germanic (varieties of Dutch (Francot, van der Heuij, Blom, Heeringa and Cornips), German dialects (Schmidt), Swedish dialects (Nilsen and Wenner) and English dialects (Schützler)) as well as Romance languages (including French (Adli) and Spanish dialects (Villena-Ponsoda and Vida-Castro)). We were particularly delighted to see small languages so well represented in this volume, including Škevin's chapter on Croatian, Beyer's research on Luxembourgish, Sousa's report on Galician, and Tirard's analysis of Romani. Haspelmath and Michaelis as well as Oberholzer and Kunzmann added a comparative angle and Meyerhoff investigates English-based contact varieties.

The diversity of methodologies used in the research represented here to explore the many issues related to European languages was not entirely expected, yet highly propitious; the methodologies in this collection span the gamut of approaches represented in the field of linguistics and its allied disciplines. Haspelmath and Michaelis' analysis is situated in a Greenbergian comparative-typological tradition. Geographical models for analysing patterns of language use feature in a number of chapters, including Villena Ponsoda and Vida-Castro's investigation of data derived from the Pasos (Sociolinguistic Patterns of Castilian Spanish) project, Sousa's work on the Galician atlas (Atlas Lingüístico Galego), Schmidt's

chapter on old data from the Digitaler Wenker-Atlas (DiWA), as well as Oberholzer and Kunzmann's project, which is based on atlases of the three languages of the Alpine area. Surveys are also well-represented, encompassing questionnaires which collect perception data (Škevin, Francot et al.) as well as a sociocultural questionnaire (Adli). While the quantitative analysis of speech collected via relatively unmonitored (semi)structured sociolinguistic interviews forms the basis of a range of submissions (Schützler, Pappas, Meyerhoff, Nilsson and Wenner), the research represented in this volume often relies on other, often highly innovative, types of data such as speech collected via a detective game (Adli), the parallel text corpus consisting of bilingual German/French public notices issued by the City of Luxembourg in the 19th century (Beyer), the newly-developed Limburgish dialect word production task (Francot et al.) and an experiment that asked informants to manipulate and describe a range of objects (Tirard).

Notably, this volume hosts a wealth of research which combines different methods to various ends (see Meyerhoff 2016, Soukup 2016). Adli, for example, analyses production data on the basis of a categorisation derived from survey-based methods. Meyerhoff and Klaere rely on constrained correspondence analysis (CCA), a method not often used in sociolinguistics, to assess patterns across space and speaker status. Francot et al. pair a standardized receptive vocabulary test in Dutch with a newly-developed Limburgish dialect word production task to compare children's receptive knowledge and use of standard and dialect vocabulary. Schmidt combines a range of older dialect atlases with state-of-the-art brain imaging EEG and ERG.

Given the many languages and dialects represented in this volume, and given the wealth of methodological approaches represented, we decided to group the chapters loosely by the level of linguistic structure investigated. The collection starts with the three plenary chapters (Haspelmath and Michalis, Meyerhoff and Klaere, Schmidt), followed by investigations into the lexicon (Sousa, Francot et al.). These are followed by a section on phonetics and phonology (Nilsson and Wenner, Pappas, Villena-Ponsoda and Vida-Castro) and morphology / morpho-syntax (Tirard, Adli, Schützler, Beyer). The volume concludes with an investigation that spans different linguistic levels (Oberholzer and Kunzmann) and with the perceptual research reported by Škevin. In the following we will briefly synthesize each chapter in turn.

Overview over individual chapters

Plenaries

Haspelmath and Michaelis take a macro-comparative perspective on typological variation across European languages. They argue that a synchronic distinction between analytic and synthetic patterns is problematic because it rests on the concept of the "(auxiliary) word", which is not well-defined and therefore fundamentally inconsistent across individual languages/linguistic descriptions. The authors propose to reconceptualise the typological contrast as a diachronic process whereby lexical or other concrete material comes into functional competition with (and tends to replace) older (synthetic) patterns. This "analyticising" or "refunctionalising" process is cross-linguistically very widespread and involved in a substantial number of salient grammatical innovations. On the basis of the *Atlas of Pidgin and Creole Language Structures,* the authors illustrate analyticising developments in a range of creole languages, which all show drastic loss of inflectional markers, their replacement by new function items, and/or the development of novel function items, mostly from earlier lexical roots. Haspelmath and Michaelis argue that this process can be explained on the basis of general principles of contact-induced grammatical change, not only for creole languages, but also for other high-contact varieties of the major language families of Europe. Analyticisations occur in social situations with many adult second-language speakers, when people need to make an extra effort to make themselves understood, i.e. they need to add extra transparency.

Meyerhoff and Klaere's chapter examines the relationship between variation in the individual and in the group. Since many linguistic sub-fields rely on data from a restricted number of observations and individuals, research that is successful in scaling up our questions across multiple variables and speakers can make small data sets meaningful to the field. A possible method for scaling up is exemplified via the analysis of the "short fat Bequia corpus", which contains a lot of information from relatively few (18) speakers coming from three different settlements. Constrained Cluster Analysis, which groups speakers on the basis of multiple variables, reflects the mechanisms by which interlocutors categorise and perceive each other as simultaneously members of groups and as individuals. The question of how intra-individual variation transcends intergroup differences brings to the fore the tensions between the notion of the speech community (which emphasises coherence) and the analysis of individual speaker style (which emphasises individual agency). Meyerhoff and Klaere argue that finding the mechanisms by which variation that is a property of the individual speaker is amplified across

speakers to become recognisable as the characteristics of a group, and eventually to differentiate entirely distinct languages, lies at the heart of linguistic enquiry.

Schmidt uses neurolinguistic tests to explain the change and stability that can be found in old linguistic maps. Large-scale collections of German dialect data allow the author to trace back linguistic changes in space and time over a period of more than 130 years. On the basis of these data, Schmidt considers stability, sound change which proceeds one word at a time, as well as cases where phonemes change as a whole. Stable situations can be characterized by a systematic correspondence of the sounds to those of neighbouring dialects, whereas in an unstable case, a conflicting sound distribution in a neighbouring dialect results in word-for-word-change, whereby speakers replace the dialectal form with one closer to the standard. An electroencephalogram (EEG) suggests that in the stable situation the deviant dialectal forms were hardly ever noticed, since the EEG shows hardly any difference between the standard and deviant realizations. In the conflicting case on the other hand, informants noticed phonetic differences in the words of their dialect as compared to the one they hear: they try to process them on the basis of their own phonological system, but the attempt fails.

In the case of change of a phoneme as a whole the dialectal system remains intact and maintains its difference from the standard. A neurolinguistic test revealed that this development is due to overlapping phonemes in coexisting varieties (i.e. varieties that speakers switch between in their everyday language usage). This overlap interferes with the ability of the phonemes in the subordinate variety to distinguish meaning. The combination of old dialect maps and neurolinguistic measurements allows Schmidt to show that sound change happens as word-for-word-change as well as phoneme-change. The strategy which is favoured depends on the linguistic situation, on whether there are phonological conflicts between neighbouring dialects, and their speakers' neurolinguistic reflexes.

Individual chapters

The recognised boundaries of many language areas are drawn on the basis of phonetic variables. *Sousa's* contribution presents an aggregate analysis of lexical variables collated from over one hundred maps from *Atlas Lingüístico Galego* with the purpose of identifying and characterising the main lexical areas in Galician dialects. Aggregate dialectology makes it possible to identify behavioural patterns which help to account for territorial nuclei of spatial distribution. Cluster analyses identify a set of dialectal areas showing internal similarity and contrast with other lexical spaces or areas within the Galician linguistic territory. Beam maps are used to discover areas of linguistic proximity to other zones belonging to

adjacent, closely related linguistic domains within Galician. Overall, there are clear correlations between the distribution of these lexical areas and the findings of previous analyses using traditional procedures based on morphological and phonetic features (Zamora 1953; Carballo 1966; Fernández 1994). Sousa's study provides solid evidence of the usefulness of quantitative dialectology for studying lexical data. It also supports the author's claim that the geolinguistic analysis of lexical variation ought to be incorporated into descriptions of language varieties within the domain of Galician.

Francot et al. relies on a unique combination of production and perception tasks. It has both a scientific and an applied goal and sets out (i) to explore whether it is possible to distinguish between monolingual and bidialectal children and (ii) to assess whether children raised with a dialect in Limburg experience more problems acquiring standard Dutch vocabulary than monolingual Dutch-speaking children. Their results reveal that each child shows a unique pattern of responses to the dialect production task, so it is not possible to draw a clear distinction between the bidialectal and monolingual children. Furthermore, there is no significant correlation between children's propensity to use dialect vocabulary and their vocabulary knowledge in Dutch. These findings suggest that being raised in a dialect does not hinder or facilitate the knowledge of standard Dutch vocabulary.

Nilsson and Wenner present a real and an apparent time investigation of the variable (ɛ), focusing on the use of the dialectal variant [a] in the small rural village of Torsby. Contrary to the levelling of most other dialect features, [a] has increased significantly in Torsby over the last 70 years, spreading both across the linguistic system, as well as in the speech community. Examining the social indexicality of [a] suggests that the opening of short /ɛ/ expresses tradition and authentic local identity in Torsby and has become enregistered (see also Johnstone et al. 2006). This is contrary to the opening of the variable (ɛ:), which signals urbanity and is found in large parts of Sweden, including the nearby town of Karlstad (Leinonen 2010; Svahn and Nilsson 2014). By triangulating production data with fieldwork notes, ethnographic interviews and data collected via questionnaires, the authors find that Torsby citizens are proud of their heritage, and that speaking the dialect is a very important part in maintaining an authentic local identity. They hypothesize that the motivation to signal tradition and local identity in Torsby may be an effect of increasing contact with other Swedish varieties over the past 70 years, similar to the processes Labov (1972) found in Martha's Vineyard.

Pappas' research investigates the linguistic effects of de-urbanization as a result of severe economic recession in Greece. Comparing two groups of middle-aged speakers on the island of Thassos who are differentiated by whether or not they had lived for a substantial period in an urban centre, Pappas demonstrates that urbanisation leads to dialect attrition and loss. The chapter focuses on unstressed

vowel deletion and vowel raising, both of which are socially embedded in Northern Greek. Even though the usage of standard forms is very close to categorical, Pappas presents quantitative evidence that the use of standard variants indexes more advanced education and an orientation towards an urban lifestyle. Deletion in particular carries more stigma than raising. Therefore, speakers who have moved to an urban centre, and who are more positively orientated towards the standard, lead in the avoidance of the most stigmatized feature of the dialect, i.e. deletion. Since the stigma against raising is not as strong, it is avoided the most by those speakers who, typically, lead in the adoption of the standard: Women who are less attached to their local community have been shown to be leaders of such changes (cf. Labov 1972, 2001).

Villena-Ponsoda and Vida-Castro's chapter reports on the research project 'Sociolinguistic Patterns of Castilian Spanish' (PASOS). Horizontal levelling of varieties in urban Andalusia has resulted in convergence towards the national standard – particularly in Eastern Andalusia, which is far from the influence of the urban regional standard of Seville. At the same time, this vertical process has brought Andalusian and central Castilian varieties – as well as transitional dialects – closer by eliminating the most vernacular features. The chapter provides evidence of the formation of an intermediate regional variety betweencentral and standard Castilian Spanish on the one hand, and southern innovative dialects on the other. The resulting intermediate variety, which has gradually been emerging in the urban centres of east Andalusia, is a koine melting innovative non-standard phonological traits with standard features. It thus maintains some of the Andalusian phonologically unmarked features affecting codas, but diverges from the Seville regional standard since it adopts overt-prestige marked features from the national standard. This intermediate variety is relatively stable.

Tirard analyses polydefiniteness in the Albanian Romani NP, where full doubling of the article is possible only with definite articles and in the presence of a postposed attributive adjective. The author presents results from a task which was designed to trigger doubling constructions (DNDA) in contrastive contexts. The language contact history of the Albanian Romani varieties suggests that polydefiniteness can be interpreted as a pattern replication from Greek that resulted in a new order. On the basis of these findings, Tirard postulates that the Romani doubled construction (DNDA) is a bridge from the canonical word order (DAN) to a new one (DNA). Notably, the community is split into subgroups who are involved in different patterns of language change: Mečkar and Čergar groups experience a pattern of stability since they have already completed the change toward DNDA and DNA. The Arli community on the other hand is split by age: the older Arli are stable but middle-aged Arli seem to exhibit a pattern of lifespan change, since the speakers of this cohort have individually changed in the direction of the rest

of the community. The patterning of the younger Arli, finally, can be interpreted either as age grading or indeed as generational change. Real-time data from the next generation will be needed to substantiate one or the other interpretation.

Adli's contribution explores the usefulness of Bourdieu's (1979) sociocultural theory for language variation in Parisian French. A complex questionnaire allows the author to stratify the informant pool based on their preferences in the areas of leisure, media, and clothing, which results in a complex composite index. Differences in terms of a person's lifestyle are then correlated with their use of subject doubling and subject-verb inversion in spontaneous speech. This mixed methodology allows for a consistent explanation of the data, which reveals a clear distinction between the groups. While the excitement-seeking, down-to-earth lifestyle (orthodoxy) defends the norms of standard French, refraining from doubling and making frequent use of the formal inverted interrogative variant, the educated liberal lifestyle (heterodoxy) does the contrary. While neither education nor occupation turn out to be significant variables in an ANOVA, an analysis that considers Bourdieu's notions of lifestyle and cultural capital allows Adli to demonstrate the salient complementary pattern of inversion questions and subject doubling across the two lifestyle types.

Schützler's chapter presents an analysis of the concessive conjunctions *although, though* and *even though* in British, Canadian and New Zealand English. The investigation, which is based on the *International Corpus of English*, highlights the underexplored semantic characteristics of the conjunctions, each of which is associated with clear preferences concerning the semantic types of concessives they encode. Notably, the difference between *although* and *though* is significant only in the oldest variety, BrE, which suggests that different semantic patterns between conjunctions may take a long time to evolve. The paper also provides evidence for inter- and intra-varietal stability: the semantic properties of conjunctions are very similar, not only in the three varieties under investigation, but also in speech and writing. Introducing a scale of subjectivity allows the author to suggest that constructions that are generally high in subjectivity tend to be even more subjective in speech, and constructions that are low in subjectivity tend to be even less subjective in speech. This synchronic pattern may be a symptom of ongoing semantic change led by spoken registers.

Beyer's contribution examines the role of contact between different varieties of German and French in the standardization of Luxembourgish German. Particular focuses of this project are contact-induced variation, interlingual transfer and norm selection, i.e. the increasingly standardised choices made amongst competing conjunctions (*Im Fall(e)(,) dass/falls* 'in case (that)', and the use of *wann* 'when' as conjunction). The analysis relies on a rare corpus of bilingual public notices

of the City of Luxembourg which span the years 1795–1920. Mining this corpus allows Beyer to show the influence of political events on language; for example the "French period" (1795–1814), during which the Grand-Duchy was governed by a ruler with a clear language preference, shows the most variation. Subsequent periods show increasing standardisation, a concomitant decrease of the overall number of alternatives and less frequent use of these alternatives. These findings suggest that replication processes are sources of increased variation. However, (i) even during the French period, structural patterns are transferred only occasionally and (ii) the exploitation of the identified correspondences can only be observed as long as one of the languages clearly has a higher status and more prestige than the other.

Oberholzer and Kunzmann report on the VerbaAlpina project, which aims to overcome a problem in traditional European geolinguistics: monolingual atlases, dictionaries and monographs usually survey only one particular dialectal region, and thus do not allow the exploration of linguistic phenomena that transgress dialectal and linguistic borders. Differing transcription systems and inconsistent conceptual descriptions have further hindered the direct comparison of different linguistic atlases. The VerbaAlpina project represents the three language families used in the Alpine area (Germanic, Slavic and Romance) with their corresponding dialects in one consistent environment, offering an interlingual overview of the Alpine region based on a wealth of different sources. The chapter focuses on the methodological challenges of transferring different repositories into one consistent and homogeneous structure. Innovations include: (i) a relational database which connects etymological roots ("basic type") with various morpho-lexical types, to explore historical linguistic relations, and (ii) the use of Beta Code (a graphematic transcription based on ASCII-symbols), which enables the comparison of data from different sources, provides a coherent transcription system for all data sources, and ascertains the project's sustainable compatibility with a wealth of repositories.

Škevin's questionnaire-based study investigates the responses of forty-five young rural university students from (island, coast, and hinterland) areas surrounding the Croatian coastal town of Zadar. Appealing to Le Page and Tabouret-Keller's (1985) acts of identity and the markedness model, Škevin demonstrates that participants dynamically structure their verbal behaviour according to their interlocutors and the interactional situation they find themselves in, positioning themselves relative to each other in establishing a new relationship, or in already-established relationships (see also Coupland 2007: 113–4). Moreover, well-known language ideologies structure linguistic behaviour: island respondents in particular report that they accommodate more, because they perceive their own

variety as different from standard Croatian, and they know that their dialects are perceived as "funny". Moreover, women report avoiding their hinterland variety and prefer the usage of regional Dalmatian forms or the standard (see Eckert and McConnell-Ginnet 2003, Trudgill's concept of 'covert prestige' 1972: 179).

References

Meyerhoff, Miriam. 2016. Methods, innovations and extensions: Reflections on half a century of methodology in social dialectology. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 20: 431–452

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1979. *La distinction: Critique sociale du jugement*. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit.

Carballo Calero, R. 1966. *Gramática elemental del gallego común*. Vigo: Editorial Galaxia.

Fernández Rei, Francisco. 1994. "Areallinguistik / Áreas lingüísticas." In *Lexikon der Romanistischen Linguistik*, ed. by Günter Holtus, Michael Metzeltin and Christian Schmitt, 98–110. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer.

Johnstone, Barbara, Jennifer Andrus, Andrew E. Danielson. 2006. "Mobility, Indexicality, and the Enregisterment of 'Pittsburghese'", *Journal of English Linguistics* 34 (2): 77–104.

Labov, William. 1972. *Sociolinguistic patterns*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Leinonen, Therese. 2010. An Acoustic Analysis of Vowel Pronunciation in Swedish Dialects. *GRODIL* 83. Groningen: Rijksuniversiteit Groningen.

Soukup, Barbara. 2016. An integrated theory of language attitudes for mixed methods research. Panel organised at Sociolinguistics Symposium 21, University of Murcia.

Svahn, Margareta and Jenny Nilsson. 2014. *Dialektutjämning i VästsverigeGöteborg: Dialekt-, ortnamns- och folkminnesarkivet i Göteborg*.

Zamora Vicente, Alonso. 1953. "De geografía dialectal: '-ao, -an' en gallego." *Homenaje a Amado Alonso, Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica* VII: 73–80.