Methods XVII Mainz
Conference Theme: (Dia)Lects in the 21ˢᵗ Century

Special thematic session proposal: "Borders, Dialects and Standard Varieties"

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Political borders have not figured prominently in dialect geography, which as a discipline developed in lockstep with the formation of European nation states. Dialect geography was therefore influenced by 19ᵗʰ-century nationalism and, in turn, 19ᵗʰ-century perceptions of nationality influenced dialectology and its perception of what constitutes "a language". If considered at all, dialect geography has, by and large, ruled out political borders as linguistically interesting.

While this perspective has changed incrementally since Kremer (1979), Chambers and Trudgill (1980), Auer, Kerswill and Hinskens (2005), today we see a refocussing on more essentialist interpretations of what makes a language (superordinate) and what a dialect (subordinate) in certain segments of the scholarly community via interpretations that are tied to the perceived or measured strength and relevance of political borders. We see this kind of new essentialism in statements such as, e.g. "two percent" of variation between standard varieties "hardly make a 'variety'" (Elspaß & Niehaus 2014: 54). Such statements stand in clear contrast to the dynamic nature of language attitudes and cognitive perceptions of what constitutes relevant difference or salience, which is decisive in distinguishing varieties, not absolute and categorical difference. As Hickey puts it, "the number [of differences] does not need to be great, and there are cases where single features are involved" (2017: 2) to discriminate one variety from another.

In this workshop at Methods in Dialectology we aim to test and elaborate the notions of linguistic autonomy and heteronomy (Chambers & Trudgill 1998) within the framework of pluricentric theory and its predictions (e.g. Muhr 2016, Clyne 1995, Auer 2005, Dollinger 2019b). By giving consideration to linguistic behaviour, linguistic attitudes, cognitive representations of identities and the dynamic nature of the interplay between these factors, this workshop brings data from seven settings to the table. The settings are the contexts of Belgium-The Netherlands, Scotland-England, Catalonia-Aragon, Austria-German, Belarus-Poland and Belarus-Russia and Canada-USA.

The contributions in this workshop explore the junction of traditional language conceptualizations, e.g. "Dutch", "English", "Spanish" or "German", as they morph into more recently moulded standard varieties, e.g. Netherlandic Dutch and Belgian Dutch, Scottish English and (Northern) English English, Catalan and Castilian Spanish, Austrian German and German German, Belarusian Russian and Russian Russian, Belarusian and Polish. The contributions explore diverging standard language dynamics (Grondelaers & Speelman), ongoing linguistic hegemonic regimes (De Ridder, Dollinger), dialectometric methods that

include social assessments (Valls; Llamas, Watt and Brown), or identify new divergences along, often very young, political borders (Konczewska, Woolhiser).

While concepts of 19th-century nation building no longer carry weight in academic circles, their traces can be found in linguistic conceptualizations of standard varieties (Dollinger 2019a: 23-76), that is e.g. Russian, not Belarusian Russian; German, not Austrian German, American English, not Canadian English and the like. In this context, the recent dissemination of quantitative and computational methods with algorithms that are, by and large, blind to social salience, seems to spur a new kind of unintended hegemonic linguistics in which traditional standards (Netherlandic Dutch, Castllian Spanish, Russian Russian) are unwittingly upheld and enforced by what were thought to be objective methods of description (e.g. Dollinger 2019a: 64-76; 2021: 139-59). The contributions in this special session address these methodological dilemmas either directly (Grondelaers & Speelman, Valls, Llamas et al.) or describe the descriptive and theoretical conundrums (Woolhiser, Konczewska, De Ridder, Dollinger) that reflect and lay bare increasing tension in contemporary sociolinguistic theory and practice. A tension that has considerable repercussions in applied linguistic and real-life situations for these varieties' speakers.

Auer, Peter. 2005. The construction of linguistic borders and the linguistic construction of borders. In: Filppula, Markku, Juhani Klemola, Marjatta Palandern and Esa Penttilä (eds). 2005. *Dialects Across Borders : Selected Papers from the 11th International Conference on Methods in Dialectology (Methods XI), Joensuu, August 2002,* 3-30. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Auer, Peter, Frans Hinskens and Paul Kerswill (eds.). 2005. *Dialect Change: Convergence and Divergence in European Languages.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Chambers, J. K. and Peter Trudgill. 1980. *Dialectology*. 1st ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Chambers, J. K. and Peter Trudgill. 1998. *Dialectology*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Clyne, Michael. 1995. *The German language in a changing Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dollinger, Stefan. 2019a. *The Pluricentricity Debate: On Austrian German and other Germanic Standard Varieties*. London: Routledge.

Dollinger, Stefan. 2019b. Debunking "pluri-areality": on the pluricentric perspective of national varieties. *Journal of Linguistic Geography* 7(2): 98-112.

Dollinger, Stefan. 2021. [*Austrian German or German in Austria? Identities in the 21st Century] Österreichisches Deutsch oder Deutsch in Österreich? Identitäten im 21. Jahrhundert*. 3rd ed. Vienna, Hamburg: new academic press.

Hickey, Raymond. 2017. Areas, areal features and areality. In The Germanic languages and areal linguistics. In *The Cambridge Handbook of Areal Linguistics*, ed. by Raymond Hickey, 1-15. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kremer, Ludger. 1979. *Grenzmundarten und Mundartgrenzen*. Köln: Böhlau.

Muhr, Rudolf (ed.) 2016. *Pluricentric Languages and Non-Dominant Varieties Worldwide. Part I: Pluricentric Languages across Continents. Features and Usage.* Frankfurt: Peter Lang.

Muhr, Rudolf. 2005. Language attitudes and language conceptions in non-dominating varieties of pluricentric languages. In: Rudolf Muhr (ed.), *Standardvariationen und Sprachideologien in verschiedenen Sprachkulturen der Welt.* Vienna: Peter Lang Verlag, 11-20.

1. Measuring standard language dynamics in Belgian and Netherlandic Dutch. Big data meets experimental attitude research

Stefan Grondelaers (Radboud University Nijmegen) & Dirk Speelman (University of Leuven)

In this talk we use a computationally enriched experimental technique (Grondelaers et al. 2020) to visualise language ideology (change) in Belgian and Netherlandic Dutch. A better grasp of Belgian and Netherlandic value systems is essential for making (somewhat valid) predictions about how the European national varieties of Dutch differ and diverge.

In a free response task, 211 Belgian and 177 Netherlandic respondents returned three adjectives in reaction to a number of regional and ethnic accent varieties and (for Belgium) two supra-regional varieties, viz. Belgian Standard Dutch and a stigmatised colloquial variety dubbed "Tussentaal". Valence information (pertaining to the positive/negative character of the responses) and big data-based distributional analysis (to detect semantic similarity) were used to cluster returns into 11 positive and 11 negative evaluative dimensions. Correspondence analysis was employed to visualise the correlations between these evaluative dimensions and the investigated varieties.

Crucially, the resulting "perceptual maps" confirm the very different standard language dynamics previously observed for Belgian and Netherlandic Dutch. While Netherlandic Dutch has stabilised into a "relaxed", consensual standard, Belgian Dutch continues to be conditioned by (conservative) ideology and prestige considerations. A comparison of older and younger evaluations, however, demonstrates that the Belgian system is very much in motion...

Grondelaers Stefan, Dirk Speelman, Chloé Lybaert & Paul van Gent (2020). Getting a (big) data-based grip on ideological change. Evidence from Belgian Dutch. *Journal of Linguistic Geography* https://doi.org/10.1017/jlg.2020.2.

Grondelaers, Stefan, Roeland van Hout & Paul van Gent (2016). Destandardization is not destandardization: Revising standardness criteria in order to revisit standard language typologies in the Low Countries. In Chloé Lybaert, Steven Delarue, Anne-Sophie Ghyselen & Jacques Van Keymeulen (eds.), *(De)standardisation in Europe − qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Theme issue of *Taal & Tongval, Language variation in the Low Countries*, 68/2, 119-149.

2. The usage of Belgian Dutch in translated and non-translated (audiovisual) fiction today and its sociolinguistic implications

Reglindis De Ridder (University of Stockholm)

Dutch as it is used in Belgium (henceforth *Belgian Dutch**) has taken a different course from *Netherlandic Dutch***, despite massive language planning efforts in the second half of the 20th Century to prevent this (Jaspers and Van Hoof 2013). For a long time, Belgian Dutch was considered a deviation from 'proper' Dutch. The turn of the century, however, marked the official recognition of the Dutch language area as a pluricentric language area with two equal national varieties in Europe by the Dutch language planning body (Nederlandse Taalunie 2003). Nevertheless, Netherlandic Dutch is still the dominant variety in translated (audiovisual) fiction. This paper discusses the results of a sociolinguistic analysis of 290 children's programmes focussing on the usage of Belgian and Netherlandic Dutch (De Ridder 2020a) with a reception study into parents' opinion as regards their children's exposure to both varieties of Dutch (idem 2020b). It highlights differences between local and imported programmes and calls for further sociolinguistic research into the language used in different children's media and how it may

affect language development in children and language attitude. Children's television has been criticized for its lack of diversity, yet, linguistically, children's media can also be out of touch with reality.

* In English, often referred to as 'Flemish', however, the official term used by the Nederlandse Taalunie is 'Belgisch Nederlands'/'Belgian Dutch'.
** In Dutch, colloquially referred to as 'Hollands', however, the official term used by the *Nederlandse Taalunie* is 'Nederlands Nederlands'/'Netherlandic Dutch'.

De Ridder, Reglindis (2020a). Dutch national varieties in contact and in conflict. In: R. Muhr, J. A. Mas Castells & J. Rueter (eds.) *European Pluricentric Languages in Contact and Conflict*. Wien: Peter Lang Verlag, 65-80.
De Ridder, Reglindis (2020b). Linguistic diversity in audiovisual media for children in Belgium and Austria. In: R. Muhr and Thomas, J. (eds.) *Pluricentric Theory beyond Dominance and Non-dominance*. Graz/Berlin: PCL press, 121-136. Available from https://pcl-press.org/publications/pluricentric-theory-beyond-dominance-and-non-dominance-a-critical-view/ (Last accessed on 26 September 2021).
Nederlandse Taalunie. (2003). Rapport Variatie in het Nederlands: eenheid in verscheidenheid [Report on the variation within Dutch: unity in diversity]. Available from https://taalunie.org/publicaties/94/variatie-in-het-nederlands-eenheid-in-verscheidenheid (Last accessed on 26 September 2021).
Van Hoof, Sarah & Jaspers, Jürgen (2013). Hyperstandardisation in Flanders. Extreme enregisterment and its aftermath. *Pragmatics*, 23(2), pp.331-359.

3. Comparing human and computer classification of phonetic features in the Scottish/English border region

Carmen Llamas, Dominic Watt and Georgina Brown

The *Accent and Identity on the Scottish/English Border* (AISEB) project (UK ESRC RES-062-23-0525) examined the links between phonological variation and local, regional and national identities at the extreme ends of the political border between England and Scotland (Eyemouth and Berwick in the east; Gretna and Carlisle in the west). The border is said to coincide with the most tightly-concentrated bundle of dialect isoglosses in the English-speaking world, turning Scotland into a 'dialect island' (Aitken 1992). The border therefore represents a prime context for the investigation of language and identity. In this paper we will discuss one of the tests used as part of AISEB's speech perception strand. Under the researcher's supervision, participants were asked to classify short audio samples according to the perceived origin of the speaker as a way of gaining insights into the socio-geographical associations and relative salience of local pronunciation variants, to complement those obtained using the Social Category Association Test (SCAT) described in Llamas, Watt & MacFarlane (2016). As an additional, objective means of probing the notion of salience, we compare the findings for our human participants to those yielded by a prototype automated accent classification system, Y-ACCDIST (Brown & Wormald 2017).

Aitken, A.J. (1992). Scots. In McArthur, T. (ed.). *The Oxford Companion to the English Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 893-899.

Brown, G. & Wormald, J. (2017). Automatic sociophonetics: Exploring corpora with a forensic accent recognition system. *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* 142 (1): 422-433.

4. Between dialectometry and sociolinguistics: the analysis of internal border effects

Esteve Valls (Universitat Internacional de Catalunya)

Following the realisation that the north-western dialect continuum of Catalan is splitting along the political border between Catalonia and Aragon, in Spain (as shown, for example, by Valls et al. 2013), this research upholds the view that internal borders should be incorporated into border studies, since they often trigger processes of linguistic convergence and divergence which alter the most common patterns of linguistic diffusion. The language change is analysed in apparent-time using a combination of dialectometric techniques that constitutes an innovation within the field of border effects, and which, in the specific case of Catalan in Aragon, illustrates the usefulness of dialectometry in detecting processes of structural hybridisation in areas where the vitality of the language is most seriously undermined. Lastly, this investigation evinces the need to further develop a form of social dialectometry that not only answers sociolinguistic questions, but also makes it possible to objectively evaluate the social motivations fuelling the ongoing changes —an attempt to bring dialectometry and sociolinguistics closer together that we explore by using generalised additive mixed-effects regression modelling, in line with Wieling et al. (2011).

Valls, Esteve; Wieling, Martijn & Nerbonne, John. (2013). Linguistic advergence and divergence in north-western Catalan: A dialectometric investigation of dialect leveling and border effects. *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 28(1)*.*

Wieling, Martijn; Nerbonne, John & Baayen, Harald. (2011). Quantitative Social Dialectology: Explaining Linguistic Variation Socially and Geographically. *PLoS ONE*, 6(9).

5. Cross-Border Language Contacts in the Polish-Belarusian Border Region in the 21st Century

Katarzyna Konczewska (Polish Academy of Science)

This paper focuses on border effects involving varieties of two closely related Slavic languages in contact, Polish and Belarusian, in the little-studied northern part of the contemporary Polish-Belarusian border region. The preliminary results of research allow us to posit the prevalence of productive bilingualism with diglossia in this area and to define the sociolinguistic situation as exoglossic, unbalanced, and four-component. The material for the study was collected by the author in 2015-2019 during dialectological interviews in communities on both sides of the Polish-Belarusian border, which it the lateral dialectology area of the Balto-Slavic contact zone.

Microarea studies are key regarding linguistic contact in the transitory zones since they allow, e.g. for the tracing of directions, the depth of local dialect infiltration.

The microarea under investigation is characterized by its relative inaccessibility, as well as heterogeneity of local residents in terms of national identity and religious affiliation. At present, the autochthonous local population is comprised of both Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholics, mainly Poles and Belarusians in terms of national self-identification, who are the descendants of peasants and the petty gentry. A unique feature of the area under investigation is that for more than five hundred years it was an integral unit within various state formations; it was divided by a political border only in 1948. Uneven settlement processes due to landscape features, as well as historical and political factors influenced the formation of specific, multicomponent sociolinguistic situations on each side of the border.

In this presentation I will examine the pluricentric languages common in the area, as well as the linguistic codes used by their native speakers. While the theory and methodology of research on language and dialect contact in border regions have been addressed in the scholarly literature (e.g. Woolhiser 2005), Konczewska (2021) has shown that the peculiarities of the formation and development of the area under investigation would benefit from a more individualized approach.

Hypotheses concerning the course of linguistic contacts in peripheral areas are the key elements in the research of linguistic contact in the greater Baltic area. The verification of such hypotheses will optimize research quality and make new knowledge available. In these studies I strive to go pass beyond the research models of traditional linguistics, taking the work of ethnographers and ethnohistorians into account as well.

Konczewska, Katarzyna. 2021. Polacy i język polski na Grodzieńszczyźnie. Kraków: Instytut Języka Polskiego PAN.

Woolhiser, Curt. 2005, *Political Borders and Dialect Convergence/Divergence in Europe*. In: P. Auer, F. Hinskens, P. Kerswill (eds.), *Dialect Change: Convergence and Divergence in European Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 236-262.

6. Modelling standard varieties: epistemological considerations, "fail-safes", and the peculiar case of German

Stefan Dollinger (UBC Vancouver)

This paper puts at its centre the German "Pluricentricity Debate" (Dollinger 2019), which explores the question whether the pluricentric view of languages is still adequate today. This debate is important, as recent critics have re-introduced the counter term of "pluri-areality" (Scheuringer 1996) and German dialectology has seen the branding of pluricentricity as an outdated model that is hampered by national limitations (e.g. Elspaß and Niehaus 2014, Herrgen 2015, Langer 2021, Koppensteiner & Lenz 2021). The pluricentric perspective of German – one language, several national standards – is, in German linguistics, now questioned more than at any point since Clyne's (1984) landmark publication.

The debate affords the opportunity to inquire how German – and any other codified language – should be modelled in the 21ˢᵗ century and allows conclusions about gaps in English, Dutch and other varieties of comparable social use. To that purpose, a comparative view is taken in this meta study that contrasts the sociolinguistic situations, linguistic behaviours, attitudes and perceptions in German with other Germanic varieties. Although philology-specific concepts do have their place, it will be shown that "pluri-areality" represents no such case, leaving pluricentricity as the most appropriate theory to date, a concept that abides by the epistemological principle of hypothesis testing (Popper 1966).

Clyne, Michael G. 1984. *Language and Society in the German-speaking Countries*. New York : Cambridge University Press.
Dollinger, Stefan. 2019. *The Pluricentricity Debate: On Austrian German and other Germanic Standard Varieties*. London: Routledge
Elspaß, Stephan and Konstantin Niehaus. 2014. The standardization of a modern pluriareal language. Concepts and corpus designs for German and beyond. *Orð og tunga* 16: 47–67.
Herrgen, Joachim. 2015. Entnationalisierung des Standards. Eine perzeptionslinguistische Untersuchung zur deutschen Standardsprache in Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz. In: Lenz & Glauninger (2015), 139-164.
Koppensteiner, Wolfgang & Alexandra Lenz. 2021. Standard(s) aus der Perspektive von „Nicht-LinguistInnen" in Österreich. In Hoffmeister et al. (2021), 391-416.
Langer, Nils. 2021. Review of Dollinger 2019, with rejoinder. *Zeitschrift für Rezensionen zur Germanistischen Sprachwissenschaft*. Online First. https://www.academia.edu/45577124/
Popper, Karl R. 1966. *Logik der Forschung*. Zweite, erw. Auflage. Tübingen: Mohr.

7. Identity, language attitudes and language use in the Belarusian-Russian border region

Curt Woolhiser (Boston College)

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the Republic of Belarus, overnight, became a fully independent state with a fully-fledged international border. The Belarusian language, despite enjoying a limited official status alongside Russian in the Soviet period, had become a de facto minority language by the 1980s, converging mainly toward Russian. In contrast to the other former Soviet republics, however, post-Soviet Belarus did not give precedence to the development of the "titular" national language, and instead, under the authoritarian Lukashenka regime, saw the continued expansion of the Russian language in most social domains. While Belarusian became relegated largely to the cultural sphere, with a minimal presence in education and government administration, researchers began to witness the emergence of distinct national variety of Russian in Belarus, differing from the Moscow-based standard Russian with respect to a number of variables (Mečkovskaja 2005, Norman 2008, Woolhiser 2014). Nonetheless, the linguistic and educational establishments in Russia and Belarus have to date largely resisted the concept of Belarusian Russian as a non-dominant variety.

This study is based on an online survey to be administered from March to May 2022 on awareness of, attitudes toward, and reported use of a number of phonological, morphological

and lexical features characteristic of "Belarusian Russian" among students of local origin at higher educational institutions in four cities along the Belarusian-Russian border region: Mahiliow (Rus. Mogilev) and Orsha on the Belarusian side, and Smolensk and Roslavl' on the Russian side. Data on informants' social identities and levels of identification with their regions and with their respective national communities will be collected. It is predicted that there will be a significant border effect in terms of awareness of and reported use of typical features of "Belarusian Russian," despite the presence of a shared Belarusian-like dialectal substratum on both sides of the border. In the case of Belarusian respondents, we are likely to find that those who express strongly negative attitudes toward a potential Anschluss with Russia will be particularly conscious of, and perhaps most likely to report use of, features that distinguish "Belarusian Russian" from the Russian language of the metropole.

Durnovo, N. N., N. N. Sokolov, D. N. Ušakov. 1915. *Opyt dialektologičeskoj karty russkogo jazyka v Evrope s priloženiem očerka russkoj dialektologii.* Moscow.

Mečkovskaja, Nina B. 2005. Postsovetskij russkij jazyk: Novye čerty v sociolingvističeskom statuse. *Russian linguistics* 29:1, 49 – 70.

Norman, Boris. 2008. Russkij jazyk v Belarusi segodnja. *Die Welt der Slaven* LIII, 289-300.

Woolhiser, Curt. 2014. "The Russian Language in Belarus: Language Use, Speaker Identities and Metalinguistic Discourse." In L. Ryazanova (ed.), *The Russian language outside the nation: Speakers and identities.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.