

Phonological Change in the Upper Rhine Area in the 20th Century from a Sociolinguistic Point of View - The Influence of the Individual on Variation in Written Questionnaires

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In written (indirect) data collection, homogeneity of the sample group is usually (methodologically) assumed and its heterogeneity is not made an object of scientific interest. This is also due to the typically low control over selection of respondents and lack of information on them. However, the rediscovered "Maurer questionnaires", which were sent to schools in Alsace (France) and Baden (Germany) in 1941, provide an indirectly collected data set that contains considerable metadata on the respondents. The "Maurer data" can thus be used to test sociolinguistic hypotheses on language change and variation in the first half of the 20th century.

In contrast to most sociolinguistic surveys, the "indirect method" does not provide a spatially uniform distribution of clearly definable groups of people; in most cases, there is only one questionnaire per location. Therefore, the influence of the sociolinguistic parameters must be examined separately from the spatial variation, even though the data is not distributed equally in space. For this purpose, a quadrat count method is applied. This way, statistically comparable maps for the different groups, e.g. older vs. younger respondents, are created (cf. e.g. methods with a grid over the study area in Auer, Baumann and Schwarz 2011, Lameli, Glaser and Stoeckle 2020, Pfeiff and Kasper 2020).

The paper focuses on the influence of the social parameters age, occupation, and 'biographical mobility' (place of birth) of the individual on phonological variation. The following questions will be addressed:

- Can – in combination with comparisons in real time – phonological change be dated more precisely?
- Did the dialectal decline in favor of near-standard variants in Baden (cf. Streck 2012; Schwarz 2015) and the divergence of Baden and Alsatian dialects (cf. Auer, Pfeiffer, Breuninger 2017) begin already before 1945?
- What are the potentials and limitations of such a dataset for sociolinguistic studies and what conclusions can be drawn about the indirect method?

First results indicate, on the one hand, horizontal change in apparent time, e.g. the spread of (Rhine-)Franconian variants in Lower Alsace. On the other hand, broadly scattered variation of standard (phoneme) variants is evident in some phenomena, especially in Baden. The latter rather points to a transcription problem than to phonological change. In this context, increasing standard competence seems to play a role, which is reflected in 'misspellings' decreasing in time (cf. among others Ganswindt 2017 and Strobel 2021 on the discussed data).

Literature

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