

The future of dialects and the dialectology of the future

Some considerations, with special attention to the Dutch language area

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Abstract

The days when dialectology was a quiet island in the (sometimes rough) ocean of modern linguistics seem to be over. Since the so-called social turn and the integration of quantitative methods into the study of urban as well as rural dialects, the barriers between early ‘Labovian’ sociolinguistics and dialectology have gradually been broken down. Of late, the study of dialect variation has become more and more an integral part of mainstream formal theory as ‘micro-variation’. Even more recently, constructivist approaches (such as Usage-based Phonology and Exemplar Theory for phonetics as well as ethnographic perspectives) are entering and enriching the field.

Apart from these various developments, at least in the Old World, the object appears to be changing more and more rapidly, giving rise to the erosion of traditional dialect landscapes and the emergence of supra-local koinai as well as dialect/standard continua.

This paper addresses some of the main aspects of these tendencies. We will discuss questions such as: how can the new types of language variety be studied; can dialectology be enriched with other than the traditional data and methods; how far-reaching is the innovative impact of the various disciplinary, inter-subdisciplinary and inter-disciplinary cross-fertilisations?

Keywords: social turn, formal theory, constructivist approaches, koinai, dialect/standard continua, historical dialectology of urban areas, stability of intermediate varieties, pluri-centricity vs. pluri-areality, life cycle of sound change, lifestyle, hyperdialectism, experimental data, digitalisation, pluralism

Dedicated to my late friend and brother in arms Johan Taeldeman

1 Introduction

Unlike its object, the systematic study of dialect variation is relatively young. This contribution will pay attention only to developments in the history of the field of roughly the last six decades (section 2).¹ With regard to the future of the field, potentially fruitful theories and research questions (section 3) as well as new types of data and methods (section 4) will be sketched. Some of the developments which seem to shape the future dialects of Dutch (and maybe more generally of the languages of the Old World) are briefly discussed in section 3. A desideratum concerning the methodology and the theoretical orientation of future dialect research is put forward in the final section.²

2 Variation linguistics

At least three important turning points can be distinguished in the recent history of dialectology: the social turn, the mutual rapprochement between dialectology and formal linguistic theory and the rise of constructivist approaches, respectively. In the subsections to follow a few observations and considerations will be devoted to each of these.

2.1 Dialectology and sociolinguistics

The relationship between dialectology and sociolinguistics is characterised by continuity as well as disruptions.³ With considerable simplification, some of the major conceptual and methodological differences can be summarised along the lines shown in Table 1.

Dialect-geography tends to confine comparisons to the horizontal, cross-dialectal dimension (transitions being either abrupt – isoglosses – or gradual). On the other hand, sociolinguistic studies of language variation (viewed as structured heterogeneity) zoom in on the vertical dimension i.e. linguistic repertoires and (typically) assign an important role to the social prestige of specific phenomena and their users as a driving force of a speech community's dynamics and to the socially emblematic role of many instances of language variation. 'Classical' sociolinguistics focussed on urban contexts, while sociolinguistically enriched dialectology ('socio-dialectology') applies insights and methods from Labovian sociolinguistics in the study of variation and change in rural dialects.

Table 1 Some of the main differences between the dialect-geographical and sociolinguistic approaches to language variation

	dialect-geography / micro-typology	Sociolinguistic study of language variation and change
object	traditional dialect	linguistic repertoire
basic extralinguistic unit	community	speaker
community type	villages	urban(-ized) areas
orientation:		
– space	diatopic	syntopic
– time	diachronic	synchronic
working assumption wrt linguistic system	homogeneity	heterogeneity
working assumption wrt nature of variation	intersystemic: categorical	intrasystemic: gradual
descriptive device	diasystem; correspondence rule	linguistic variable; variable rule
transitions	abrupt; geographically and/or phonetically gradual	quantitatively gradual
interpretation of change:		
– term	long term	short-term or mid-term
– effect	con- / divergence	style shifting; accommodation
– dimension	'horizontal', i.e. cross-dialectally	'vertical', i.e. wrt standard variety / overt prestige
– interdisciplinarity	history	sociology; social geography; ethnography

2.2 Dialectology and formal theory

Chronologically, the second important turning point revolves around the more than superficial flirtation between dialectology and formal theory. This has affected the approach to dialect features, the analyses and the interpretation of distributional patterns. There is an interesting cross-linguistic dimension to this aspect.

2.2.1 *Dialect features and Universal Grammar*

A central concept in generative theory is Universal Grammar (UG), the body of parameters, principles and constraints assumed to govern the way grammars of natural languages work. This hypothetical meta-grammar is claimed to be biologically programmed, and can be seen as a kind of decision tree, whose nodes are called parameters. Every individual language can be uniquely defined as a specific constellation of choices imposed by the respective parameters. The decision tree representing UG is built in such a way that it reflects an essential trait of natural language, namely

modularity, that is, the fact that the different parts of grammar (syntax, phonology, etc.), though interrelated, are internally autonomous to a certain degree. Certain instances of linguistic variation and change can be a side effect of the modular organisation of language, which may make it possible for abstract principles to interact.⁴

From the point of view of the theoretical concept of UG, dialect features can be understood as the smallest difference at the level of language as a system shared by the members of a community (Chomsky's 1995 'E-language'). As such they can or cannot be related to the greatest common divisor ('I-language', language as a cognitive commodity). In other words, the smallest differences between dialects may or may not manifest universal principles underlying the organisation of language systems.

This view is reflected in the observation that linguistic variables that occur in different languages are often influenced in the same way by the same or very similar linguistic factors (cf. Tagliamonte 2011; cf. Boberg et al. 2018: 11). The internal conditioning of language variation can thus contain important indications for possible universal constraints.

For example, instances of contextually conditioned quantitative variation can eventually 'freeze' into instances of allophony or allomorphy. Groups of southern and south-western dialects of Dutch show a variable process of word-final [t] deletion (WFtD), which typically applies more often before a consonant, as in

- (1a) loopt ## voor 'walks before'
 loo [p] voor

and less before a vowel, as in

- (1b) loopt ## in 'walks in'
 loo [pt] in

It is not inconceivable that in these dialects the process eventually loses its variable nature, ending as allophony

- (2a) no [t, d]# before C, always [t, d]# before V

In fact, in Afrikaans, which is a partly creolised daughter language of Dutch, WFtD has lost its productivity and has become lexicalised. The lexicalisation of WFtD in Afrikaans has complicated the morphology, as in many cases the stop has become part of the plural ending (N) or inflectional suffix

(adj), thus adding to the number of allomorphs, though on a lexically specific basis. Examples include

- (2b) lig – ligte ‘light(s)’
 hoof – hoofde ‘head(s)’

This case and alternations such as French liaison, which may have gone through a very similar diachronic development, can be understood from a universal preference for phonetic CV sequences and a dispreference for sequences of consonants or vowels:

- (2c) output [CV], *[CC], *[VV]

These and similar comparisons can result in ‘stochastic generalisations’ (Bresnan et al. 2001), i.e. generalisations which are categorical for some language(s) but probabilistic in others.

2.2.2 *Theoretical abstinence?*

One of the similarities between dialectology and sociolinguistics is a certain theoretical abstinence. In general, there is little interaction with the main 20th-century language theories and probably least of all with generative theory, although there are/were scholars in both areas who are/were exceptions in this respect. Table 2 gives a numerical summary of a content analysis carried out in volumes 2004 through 2014 – the heyday of the mutual rapprochement between dialectology and formal linguistic theory – of two important international journals, viz. *Lingua*, which is positioned in the domain of formal theory, and *Language Variation and Change (LVCh)*, which publishes quantitative studies of sociolinguistic variation.⁵ The question guiding the analysis was whether there are any signs of mutual cross-fertilisation between formal theory and dialectology. In this context, ‘deepening’ in the case of *Lingua* means, roughly, a fair degree of geographical and/or social detailing, of the relevant speech community in e.g. maps, tables or figures regarding social-geographic and/or ethnographic aspects and the like, as well as of the discussion of the findings. In the case of *LVCh*, ‘deepening’ means a recognizable formal theoretical enrichment of the analyses and discussion of the findings of studies regarding variation in the production (not perception or evaluation) of certain phenomena.

Overall, about one third of all relevant papers show cross-fertilisation, more so in *Lingua* than in *LVCh*. In *Lingua*, the cross-fertilisation seems to

Table 2 The main results of content analyses of ten volumes of the journals *Lingua* and *Language Variation and Change*⁶

journal	period	phonology	phon deepening	(morpho) syntax	(morpho)synt deepening
Lingua	2004-2008	10	1	23	5
			2 some		4 some
			30%		39%
	2009-2013	17	9	16	3
			1 some		1 some
			59%		25%
LgVar&Ch	2004-2009	30	4	28	5
			2 some		5 some
			20%		36%
	2009-2013	34	2	25	0
			4 some		
			18%		32%

do better in the field of phonology in this 10-year period, in *LVCh*, on the other hand, in the area of (morpho-) syntax ($\chi^2=7.573$, $df=1$, $p<.01$).

None of the developments in the two journals in the period between 2004 and 2014 appears to reach the level of statistical significance. The only statistically significant difference which emerged concerns the fact that overall in *LVCh* the synergy between dialectology and formal theory is stronger in the study of (morpho)syntactic variation than in contributions dealing with phonetic or phonological variation ($\chi^2=3.976$, $df=1$, $p<.05$); this effect does not occur in *Lingua*.

2.3 Escape into constructivism

In the past few decades many scholars turned their backs on structuralism and formal theory, for reasons that may have to do with the fact that ‘theory-driven’ studies are typically only accessible to those who are sufficiently familiar with the theoretical matrix (see Hinskens 2018a: 91-92 for further potential considerations). In the wider field of the study of language variation two types of constructivist approaches have benefitted from this development; they will be briefly sketched in the subsections below.

2.3.1 Ethnographic approaches

In the introduction to their volume on style-shifting in public, the editors Hernández-Campoy and Cutillas-Espinosa note a recent “shift from deterministic and system-oriented [...] to more social constructivist and speaker-oriented [...] approaches” (Hernández-Campoy & Cutillas-Espinosa (2012:6). In many of these approaches proactivity, agentivity and other ways of verbally underlining speaker identity are central. In closely related ‘Third

Wave' sociolinguistics, language use, especially interactional language use, is analysed as social behaviour and the approach is often ethnographically informed.

While the approach in which language is central tries to disentangle the rules, regularities and restrictions on the (variable) linguistic resources, the ethnographic approach conceives language systems as infinite resources from which speakers may freely choose to shape their identity. The distinction is roughly paralleled by Dilthey's (1883) broad methodological distinction between *Naturwissenschaften* and *Geisteswissenschaften*, i.e. science (sensu stricto) and humanities. In Dilthey's view, which has become an *idée reçue*, the humanities target at *verstehen*, understanding, with meaningfulness as one of the central concepts, whereas science in the narrow sense aims at *erklären*, 'explaining', with causality and probability as central concepts. This general distinction is related to the overall watershed between idiographic and nomothetic approaches: while the former focus on unique phenomena and their specific properties, the latter deal with recurring phenomena, inducing the regularities, laws or principles they are subject to.

An example of a study with an ethnographically informed approach concerns the change in the lax, front open vowel /æ/ in items such as *man* and *cat*, which is taking place in English of white ('Anglo') speakers in northern California (Eckert 2008). Before a nasal (in words such as *ham*, *man* and *gang*) the vowel is tense and diphthongal, before other consonants it does not vary, i.e. remains /æ/. At first, the speakers with a Chicano background did not take to this sound change, but the situation has since changed, to the extent that there are now both Anglos using the old system and Chicanos using the new system. They seem to do this on the basis of their place in relation to the dominant group and depending on the situation.

Also closer to home, speakers of ethnolectal varieties seem to play an unexpected role in the preservation and development of native urban dialects. Jaspers (2011), for example, argues that non-white students associate the Antwerp urban dialect with "angry white and/or racist voices" (493). Nevertheless, they use Antwerp dialect elements to emphasise their "assertiveness and [to] distance themselves from recent, linguistically incompetent, arrivals" (494) and they also use it for the construction of a working-class, non-immigrant identity. In Jaspers' interpretation it is for this reason that they use dialect forms such as *ksen* (Standard Dutch 'ik ben', English 'I am'), *zedde* ('ben je', 'are you'), *gulle* and *z'hun* ('jullie' and 'zij', 'you-plural' and 'they'), so-called double negations and diminutive forms such as *zakske* and *kopiekes* ('zakje', 'little bag', and 'kopietjes', 'little copies').

2.3.2 *Cognitivist linguistics*

The last two decades have seen the rapid development and spread of ‘cognitivist’ approaches to language, including Cognitive Grammar (Goldberg 2006) and Exemplar Theory (‘ET’; Johnson 1997; Pierrehumbert 2001) and closely related Usage-based Phonology (Bybee 2001; 2002; 2006) for the sound component. In these paradigms, language structure is not “given a priori or by design” (Bybee 2010:2): it does not result from ‘abstract rules’, but from the interaction of repetition and general cognitive skills like categorisation. Most linguists of this persuasion subscribe to the view that “the cognitive and psychological processes and principles that govern language are not specific to language, but are in general the same as those that govern other aspects of human cognitive and social behavior” (Bybee 2001:17). All this is summarised in the thesis that language is grounded in domain-general cognitive processes.

In cognitivist linguistics, lexical items and their properties (of form, function and usage – including all sorts of type and token frequencies) have a pivot position. Each realisation (‘token’ or ‘exemplar’) of an item, with all its articulatory, acoustic, grammatical, semantic and pragmatic information, is supposed to be stored in memory, along with extra-linguistic information, including characteristics of both the speaker and the situation. The geographic and social distribution of the tokens is hence part of the stored extra-linguistic properties. Items with their many properties are mutually connected in memory. Grammar emerges bottom-up from this huge, multi-dimensional memory cloud. These models assume that the frequency of a linguistic phenomenon, through sheer aggregation in memory, shapes the mental representation of language.

The stem cells of emergent grammatical knowledge are type frequency (the number of different items containing a specific element or pattern) and token frequency (the number of times a given item is used in a given corpus of utterances). As for token frequency, mention should also be made of local frequency manifestations such as ‘recency’/‘givenness’/‘audience design’ effects (e.g. Schwarz 2012), an instantiation of priming effects. The Information-theoretic tools of probability, entropy and surprisal value (Zampaolo 2016) are also based on token frequency. Closely connected with type frequency is the number of ‘neighbors’ (Luce & Pisoni 1998), words which have a similar phonological shape or “words that are one sound away from a given word”, including, of course, minimal pairs,⁷ and transitional probabilities, e.g. “the probability of a C given a final V” (Coetzee 2008:250). A related concept is the informativity of a

sound, i.e. its average predictability across all segmental contexts (Cohen Priva 2017).

In the cognitivist paradigm, corpora play a central role, also as the source of lexical frequencies. For the study of dialect variation cognitivist approaches have a lure of their own. First, variability is assumed to be represented directly in memory in the shape of concrete exemplars, which are assumed to contain social-indexical information as well (cf. Docherty & Foulkes 2000). Second, the model is not based on deterministic but rather on probabilistic principles; as such it seems to match the nature of most documented instances of language variation. Third, just like adherents of cognitivist approaches to language, many sociolinguists studying language variation reject the analytical distinction between diachrony and synchrony imposed by adherents of formal theories. Cognitivist approaches can be implemented relatively straightforwardly for the study of dynamic aspects of language like acquisition and processes of language change.

Hence, in this approach the lexicon is not a list of exceptions, as in Bloomfield's (1933) view, but rather a network of prototype-wise organised words, phrases and constructions, i.e. "multi-word combinations whose properties cannot be fully accounted for compositionally" (Booij 2004:234). All types of regularities (and hence predictability and productivity), including grammatical structure, emerge, while climbing a "ladder of abstractions" (Pierrehumbert 2003), from the information in the lexicon, through conventionalisation, which in turn results from repetition, hence from distributional frequency and frequency of usage.

The logical consequence of the cognitivist view is that "given that the set of utterances which any child hears in the course of language acquisition will be different from that of the next child, with different frequencies of, e.g. word variants, [...] every individual's grammar will be different at the level of phonetic implementation" (Blevins 2004:41). Language is "an emergent system resulting from the general cognitive capacities of humans interacting with language substance over many instances of language use" (Bybee 2001:18).

An important similarity between 'Third Wave' sociolinguistics and cognitivist language theory is that both approaches reject a priori categories such as e.g. native speaker, ethnicity, socio-economic class and linguistic concepts such as phoneme, morpheme and the like. In the cognitivist view, in social interaction, everything is always constructed on the spot and in acquisition the grammar is constructed bottom-up.

3 Research questions and theories

As argued in section 1, ever since the sixties, the study of dialect variation has undergone three major innovations – and these innovations have also benefited adjacent disciplines. Where and how can the field continue to grow and innovate? In this section some desiderata regarding research questions and theories will be succinctly presented. These will be looked at from disciplinary, inter-subdisciplinary and interdisciplinary levels.

3.1 Disciplinary

There are numerous areas which seem to have been insufficiently studied – in the dialectology of Dutch maybe more than in other languages. In this subsection three areas will be sketched in broad outline, urban areas to begin with.

The growing digital accessibility of archival material may be of considerable benefit to the study of the historical dialectology of urban areas. Urban dialects were considered off-limits by many representatives of traditional dialect geography (witness “umgehen die grossen Städte”, roughly: avoid the big cities – Schuchardt 1870:167), as they tend to show social and ethnic rather than geographical differentiation. In the urban context, the investigation of older ethnolectal variation is called for, e.g. Jewish Dutch in Amsterdam.⁸ Jewish Dutch was mainly Yiddish coloured but it also has Ladino traits; instances of both can be found in the phonology. H-less realisations such as *ebben* for standard Dutch *hebben*, ‘have’, and *andel*, standard Dutch *handel*, ‘trade’ (in French linguistics known as ‘h muet’) and the hypercorrect reaction as in e.g. *hop*, standard Dutch *op*, ‘on’, *havond*, standard Dutch *avond*, ‘evening’, is probably an originally Ladino trait. The same probably holds for the ‘un-Dutch’ use of the preposition *an* before a direct or indirect object – which may be rooted in Portuguese (which has a preposition-like *a*, often ‘fused’ with an article). Features which seem to go back to Yiddish include the aspiration of the stops /p, t, k/, as in e.g. *khoning*, standard Dutch *koning*, ‘king’, and the realisation of /s/ as [ʃ] before another consonant, especially /t/. Examples are *sjtom*, ‘dumb; stupid’, *sjtinkende*, ‘smelly; stinking’, *kunsjt*, ‘art’, *barsjte* ‘to burst’ and an inflected verb form such as *kosjt*, ‘costs’.⁹

There appears to be a growing enrichment of the verbal repertoires today with modern ethnolectal variation, e.g. from Surinamese Dutch (Cornips 2005; Hinsken & Muysken 2007), Antillean Dutch (Vervoorn 1976; Joubert 2005), Turkish/Moroccan Dutch (Van Meel 2016; Mourigh 2017; Hinsken et al. in press b). To the extent that these mechanisms have been studied, the findings confirm Boberg et al.’s (2018:11) claim that “if

we look beyond traditional dialects, we find a proliferation of new dialects constantly emerging". In these configurations, originally ethnic features may de-ethnicise (Labov 2001:250-256) to become dialect features. An example is the generalisation of the 'grave', palatal realisation of /s/ from Jewish Dutch to the Amsterdam urban dialect or accent, mentioned above (cf. Hinskens 2004).

At the same time, heritage languages can absorb features of the dominant language and related dialects. Work on 'heritage languages as new dialects' (Nagy 2016; Aalberse et al. 2019) makes it clear that extramural or roofless dialects constitute living laboratories of dialect divergence vis-à-vis their relatives in the homeland (Boeschoten 2000; Rosenberg 2005; Von Essen 2020).

A second area is dialect leveling and related developments. This area has definitely been more explored than historical urban variation, but there are still white spots on the map.

Wherever traditional local dialects disappear, it is typically not the case that only the standard language remains. In the structural space between the traditional dialects and the standard language, which used to maintain a diglossic (Ferguson 1959) relationship, continua of subtly different intermediate varieties can develop (cf. Bellmann's 1996 *diaglossia*). The various intermediate varieties, including supra-local koinai and regional standard varieties, constitute a continuum between the traditional dialects and the standard variety.¹⁰ For this spectrum of older and younger, make-shift varieties and variants, the Dutch dialectologist Hoppenbrouwers (1983) coined the notion of 'regiolect'. In the meantime, many use the notion of regiolect to refer to cross-dialectal convergence or koineisation (hence not to dialect – standard convergence).

Apart from intermediate variants and varieties, the post-dialect continuum typically contains hyperdialectisms; cf. section 3.3 below. The continuum can be visualised as¹¹

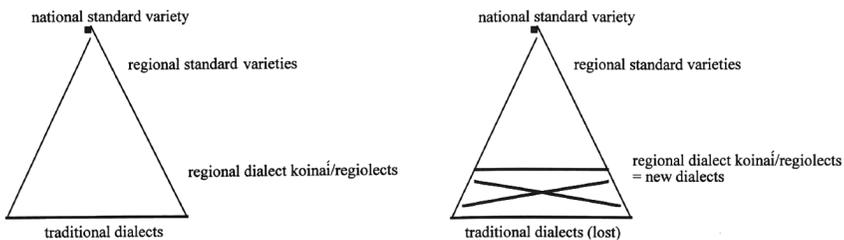


Figure 1 A visualisation of developments in the dialect/standard continuum (from Auer & Hinskens 1996)

The concept of intermediate varieties can be illustrated with the help of the ‘*dialektale Stufenleiter*’ (Ammon 1973), lit. dialectal (step-)ladder, from ‘deep’ East Brabant dialect (a) to standard Dutch (d):

- (3a) Hij hëggut Janne gegèève
- (b) Hij hě ut oan Jan gegèève
- (c) Hij hěeft ut āon Jan gegěëve
- (d) Hij hééft ut aan Jan gegéëve ¹²

lit. he has it to John given, ‘he has given it to John’

Here (3b) and (3c) are intermediate. In the deepest dialect realisation (a), because of the combination with the cliticised direct object pronoun, the finite verb ends in the fricative /ɣ/; the indirect object has a schwa-suffix (*Janne*). These two phenomena have disappeared in the realisation in (b). Compared to (b), the realisation in (c), which represents ‘standard language with dialectal (accent) colouring’ (thus Hagen – my translation) displays a difference with respect to the form of the finite verb, as well as in the quality of the vowel of the preposition *aan* and of the stem part in the past participle *gegeven*. With reference to the two intermediate realisations (b, c) the question now is whether, for instance, the variant *hě* of the finite verb occurs more frequently with *oan Jan* than with *Janne*, *āon Jan* or *aan Jan*, whether it occurs more frequently with *gegèève* than with *gegěëve*, and so on. These questions involve the nature and the statistical patterns of the co-variation between the respective variants. Co-variation is one of the ways in which coherence works – in addition to co-occurrence of and implicational relationships between variants (Guy & Hinskens 2016).

Similarly, it is conceivable to look at urban dialects as intermediate varieties, i.e. varieties which are intermediate between different (historical) local dialects (cf. the above quote from Schuchardt). Whether in originally rural or urban dialects, precious little is as yet known about the stability of intermediate varieties, the coherence of constitutive variable phenomena and the closely related question as to what it is that determines whether a dialect feature survives or not (Hinskens 2020).

Most research in these two areas shows that “old dialects are being continually wiped out only to make room for new ones”, as Sapir (1921: 152) put it. Language variation becomes more and more multi-dimensional. Apart from geographical space (including geo-political space: countries, regions, cities, villages), language variation is defined by dimensions such as

- social space (itself multi-dimensional) with macro-social parameters (socio-economic background, sex/gender, age group etc.) and meso-social ones (social networks, communities of practice etc.),
- cultural space / ethnicity,
- stylistic ('diastratic') space. Stylistic differentiation can develop parasitically in the dialect/standard continuum,
- diaglossic space (which is two-dimensional: there is a cross-dialectal or horizontal as well as a dialect-standard or vertical dimension),
- structural space between co-existing languages, etc.

With the disappearance of traditional dialects and the growing use of the standard language, more different, regionally coloured varieties of the standard language are emerging and at the supra-national level, divergence seems to be taking place; the fact that society (also due to migration) is becoming more heterogeneous plays a role as well.

A third area that deserves attention is this growing diversification of Standard Dutch. We have become familiar with the insight that Standard Dutch in Flanders (partly under the influence of the effects of dialect / standard convergence and the pressure from Tussentaal)¹³ is gradually going its own, partly autonomous way. But much less is known about comparable developments in Surinamese Standard Dutch and the role of ethnic variation in these developments; there is a need for documentation and research in this area. That research will show how Standard Dutch diverges in the three national parts of the language area.

What happens with Dutch in Belgium (Flanders, Brussels), the Netherlands and Suriname seems similar to what happens with English in England, North America, Australia and New Zealand, but also in Scotland and Ireland: different standard norms develop and each norm seems to have its own national centre, hence the designation 'pluricentrism' (Clyne 1992; Hinskens 2018b). According to Niehaus (2015) and Elspaß et al. (2017), the diversification of Standard German in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, is more a matter of 'pluri-areality'. On this view, the variation between different standard varieties of a language is largely independent of national and political borders; standard varieties are not limited by state borders, but overlap across 'imagined' borders.

In view of the socio-geographical circumstances, it is obvious that pluricentrism applies to Surinamese Dutch in Suriname. For the Surinamese Dutch used by the Surinamese who settled in the Netherlands after independence, a large majority of whom live in suburbs such as Bijlmermeer

(Amsterdam) of the big cities in the northwestern part of the country,¹⁴ the situation seems to be partly a matter of pluri-areality. At least for certain types of variation (such as e.g. the dialectal three-gender system and concomitant morphosyntactic variation in the regional standard varieties), the latter may also be more the case in connection with the Netherlandic and Belgian Standard Dutch.

3.2 Inter-subdisciplinary

According to Boberg et al. (2018:13) “dialectology is and always has been fundamentally a data-driven field”. Is this a strength or a weakness? Will it be possible for dialectology to survive with this orientation? Be this as it may, there are worlds to be won by establishing connections with other domains of linguistic description and theoretizing.

Van Craenenbroeck et al. (2019) is a recent example of the synergy between formal-theoretical and quantitative approaches to dialect variation in the word-order of verb clusters in the 185 dialects of Dutch documented in SAND (Barbiers et al. 2006). In Dutch embedded sentences with 2 verbs such as

- (4a) ... dat hij heeft gelachen
lit. that he has laughed

in principle and in fact two word orders are possible: *heeft gelachen* and *gelachen heeft*. In embedded sentences with 3 verbs such as

- (4b) ... dat iedereen moet kunnen zwemmen
lit. that everybody must can swim

in principle 6 word order permutations are conceivable, four of which actually occur. Two permutations do not occur in any Dutch dialect. Going by recent data, for two- and three-verb sentences there are in total 137 different Dutch dialect types. They can be accounted for with three interacting binary grammatical parameters concerning linearisation and specific properties of participles and infinitives, respectively (Van Craenenbroeck et al. 2019: 355; 359-60). With the operationalisations proposed by the authors these parameters predict 8 dialect groups (p. 360), each with their own set of possible orderings of two and three-verb clusters; with the aid of the parameters the variation in the data can be adequately modelled. The authors conclude that their method “allows one to make a detailed proposal about the amount of variation that is due to the grammatical system itself and the

portion that should be relegated to extragrammatical factors” (364), including geographical longitude and latitude (cf. Van Oostendorp 2019).

Minimalist syntax “avoids the tendency found in much generative work to explain syntactic variation by syntactic principles exclusively” (Barbiers 2013: 24). In Barbiers’ proposal, there is a role for extragrammatical factors like cognition, body (brain, oral tract, etc.) and society.

As to phonological theory: the late Johan Taeldeman was a pioneer in the enrichment of dialectological research with insights from generative phonology. Like many of his peers who investigated phenomena in the interface between phonology and morphology, Taeldeman gradually worked his way towards Lexical Phonology – a pre-eminently modular theory. The Optimality Theoretical counterpart of the Lexical Phonology (Stratal OT) is ideally suited for the study of the life cycle of sound change (Ramsammy 2015). In so far as it is not borrowed, sound change almost always proceeds along the same trajectory: from phonetic (Neogrammarian), through the ‘rule system’ (phonology and morphology) to the lexical forms (cf. Kiparsky 2009:54). The last of these steps, the lexicalisation of a formerly productive sound change, does not always affect all relevant words or morphemes. An example involves vowel lengthening in the plural forms of Dutch nouns like, e.g.,

- (5a) sch[ɔ]t sch[o]ten ‘shot(s)’
 b[a]d b[a]den¹⁵ ‘bath(s)’

but it never occurred in, e.g.,

- (5b) m[ɔ]t m[ɔ]tten, ‘moth(s)’
 r[a]t r[a]tten ‘rat(s)’

Phase differences in the grammatical status of a sound change form a major, although hardly researched, source of dialect variation; for example, a change that is only a matter of pronunciation in one language, may already be part of the rule system in a related language or may even have changed word forms permanently. In several groups of Dutch dialects, the final [t] is variably deleted after an obstruent. As was pointed out in section 2.1 above, in Afrikaans, which has developed out of 17th century Dutch dialects in contact with Khoe and Bantu languages, with languages of the contract workers from Asia, such as Malay, and with Creole Portuguese, WFtD has been morphologised and lexicalised. In Afrikaans nouns which have a final cluster of an obstruent followed by /t,d/, the /t,d/ only surfaces in the

plural form, where it is followed by schwa, e.g. *lig: ligte*, ‘light(s)’, *hoof: hoofde*, ‘head(s)’. In other words, /t/ and /d/ have disappeared from the end of these and countless similar word. Children who grow up with Afrikaans as their mother tongue have to learn that words such as *lig en fees* have a –te plural marker. Early and late in the life cycle, i.e. in the case of sound change which is either merely phonetic or in the process of being lexicalised, lexical frequencies typically play a role (Hinskens 2021), so there is room for an interface with cognitivist insights (cf. section 2.3.2 above).

As Kürschner (2018: 471) has noted, “comparisons of dialect contact and language contact are still lacking”. Such comparisons could deepen the insights into the role played by geographical, social and – not least – structural nearness in the linguistic effects of long-term, intensive language contact.

Dialectologists can both contribute to and profit from studies of

- psycholinguistic aspects of multilingualism and multilectalism, and
- neurolinguistic aspects of the storage of multiple languages and lects.

One of the rare examples is Schmidt’s (2017) study of the neurological correlates of Neogrammarian versus lexicalised sound change in cross-dialectal perception.

3.3 Interdisciplinary

Elsewhere in the humanities, developments are underway that may have a bearing on the systematic study of dialect variation. Three disciplines will be briefly touched on here.

Sociological work on the concept of lifestyle (Bögenhold 2001) as a community-building factor might well turn out to be a valuable complement to socio-economic class and social mobility. Thus, for a sample of 102 Parisian native speakers of French, Adli (2017) collected conversational speech, acceptability judgements on selected constructions and data regarding their leisure activities (45 items), media use (113), clothing (28) and values (referring to phenomena like religion, partner choice etc.; 18 items). On the basis of a two-step reduction of the third type of data, Adli identifies four lifestyles, which she labels ‘oriented towards social conventions and conservative values’, ‘excitement seeking, but down to earth’, ‘educated, liberal’ and ‘internet affinity, conservative values, and low estimation of aesthetics’. Statistical analyses show that the factor lifestyle overrules other external factors such as age and gender in their effects on subject doubling and subject-verb inversion. Adli discusses her findings against the background of

Bourdieu's sociocultural theory and views of capital which "combines micro and macrosociological perspectives" (158).

Methods and insights from social geography might be useful in expanding and deepening dialectological research on relationships between language variation on the one hand and aspects of migration, urbanisation and counterurbanisation (cf., e.g., Britain & Grossenbacher, in press) as well as issues of geographical representation on the other.

What else would the study of the 'history of ideas' have to offer beyond the Romantic ideal of the unity of one nation = one people = one language that might be fruitful to the study of geographical and social variation in language? Does the history of ideas merely relate to what is usually referred to as external language history? Which types of socially constructed or 'imagined communities' are relevant and how? There seems to be a connection between the concept of 'imagined communities' on the one hand and what has been referred to as 'pseudo-dialect' (Hoppenbrouwers 1990) on the other. Pseudo-dialect is characterised by, among other things, hyperdialectisms. Like intermediate variants, hyperdialectisms can be introduced by non-native (L2) speakers or semi-speakers, who sometimes over-apply a dialect feature in contexts where it does not 'belong' historically.¹⁶ Like intermediate variants, hyperdialectisms occur in make-shift dialect varieties. An example is what Hoppenbrouwers (1990: 124) has referred to as *Gevelbrabants*, lit. 'façade Brabantine', wannabe Brabantic, visible in the names which owners (especially if they are speakers of some other dialect) give to their restaurants, bars and similar places in order to add to the suggestion of the place's authenticity; an example is *Den ouden tramhalte*, 'the old tram-stop'. To tell from the form of the definite article and the suffix of the adjective, the head of the nominal phrase *tramhalte* is treated as if it were grammatically masculine; *d'aauw tramhalte* is grammatically well-formed in the relevant dialects, where *tramhalte* is feminine. Another example (from Swanenberg 2009) is the diminutive *clubske* for traditionally well-formed *clubke*, standard Dutch *clubje*, 'little club'. This variant definitely has a Brabantish¹⁷ ring to it and it may well be used to stake a claim to Brabant identity of the speaker. However, the authentic dialect variant of the diminutive would not have the -skə allomorph, which merely occurs following stems ending in a velar. Hyperdialectisms of this type have also been reported by De Vink (2004) for the local Hollandic dialect of the old fishing village of Katwijk.

4 Data and methods

Dialectology can grow also empirically, both in the type of data and the methodology. There are several types of data and methods of analysis that are new by dialectological standards, and which can be useful for a variety of questions and theoretical perspectives. Some of them will be briefly discussed below.

4.1 Data

In the last two decades audio (as well as video) recording equipment has become much smaller in size (and thus less ‘intrusive’), while the technical quality of the recordings has improved considerably, and the prices have come down. This makes collecting digital material in fieldwork not only more affordable, but also more feasible in practical respects, while chances that the recorded material is relatively natural have increased.

Data of a type different from the classical questionnaire can also be a rich source for dialectological research. Examples include data

- from dialect imitation (Schäfer et al. 2016; Vandekerckhove & Ghyselen 2017) relevant to perceptual-dialectological approaches;
- from ultrasound imaging of articulatory movements (Lawson et al. 2008; Scobbie et al. 2012; Spreafico 2016; Ooijselaar in prep.);
- from experiments, e.g. neurological experiments, involving e.g. electro-encephalographic reaction potential (ERP), a measure of brain activity (Schmidt 2017 on productive vs. lexically diffuse sound change); Cf. section 3.2 above;
- real time data, e.g. from replication studies, such as e.g. Pope et al.’s (2007) replication of Labov’s (1963) famous Martha’s Vineyard study;
- diachronic data – both written (transcribed) and oral data, e.g. from “analysis of archival recordings [...] skilled analysts can still procure a great deal of data from them” (Thomas 2018: 325);
- collecting data through via Wiki-type facilities, crowd-sourcing etc. *Sprekend Nederland* (‘Speaking Netherlands’) is a large-scale crowd-sourcing project targeting speech and the perception and evaluation of speech, initiated and designed by scientific journalists of the national public broadcast organisation NTR and a small group of researchers (Van Leeuwen et al. 2016). With the aid of a free app for mobile phone and tablet pc, samples of Standard Dutch speech were systematically collected from over 10,000 male and female speakers from different parts of the Netherlands, with a range of different educational and cultural backgrounds. Some 3,000 participants supplied data about

their socio-biographical background, some 528 hours of speech (largely scripted, but also free speech), as well as 1,552,683 answers to questions concerning other participants and their speech. Findings from first exploratory studies (on automatic accent recognition, variationist socio-linguistic analyses of a small coherent section of the data, and speaker evaluation) are presented in Hinskens et al. (in press a).

Eventually, all available data are to be digitised and made generally available in distributed networks of comparable data. For the labelling of meta-data, standards (such as IMDI cf. <<http://www.mpi.nl/IMDI/>>) have been developed.

4.2 Methods

Dialectology can also be enriched by other than the usual methods. These include

- corpus-based approaches. From the point of view of analytical techniques, it is especially in the area of exploration and refined frequency counts that corpus-based approaches stand out from other approaches. A weighty methodological question is how to interpret negative evidence: is it an accidental gap or are we dealing with an ungrammatical phenomenon? (cf. Szmercsanyi & Anderwald 2018: 308);
- computational approaches. These typically involve working with aggregated data – which relates to zooming in on single dialect features or isolated linguistic variables as a telescope to a microscope. These approaches are complementary. Computational techniques can be deployed for exploration and hypothesis testing;
- dialectometry with e.g. Levenshtein algorithms does not necessarily have to be explorative, see Heeringa & Hinskens (2012; 2014; 2015);
- grammar-wide comparisons based on the occurrence of phonological and/or grammatical features in smaller or larger sets of dialects. Phylogenetic software such as ‘Splitstree’ can serve to calculate distance measures and hence the relationships between dialects; these can be visualised in unrooted tree diagrams and as a network using ‘Neighbor-Net’ contained within Splitstree;¹⁸
- multi-dimensional cartography which could be fruitfully applied to data for clusters of phenomena or even grammatical (sub-)modules, e.g. a constraint ranking (Sloos and Van Oostendorp 2012). Such cartographical techniques can help bring to light the gradual internal generalisation of some structural phenomenon in the course of its diffusion, which may well be relevant to formal theory;

- Geographic Information Systems (or GIS, a system which integrates hardware, software and data for capturing, storing, managing, analyzing, manipulating and visualizing all kinds of geographically referenced information)¹⁹, geo-browsers, and applications such as Google Earth and Google Maps bring automatic cartography within the reach of many;
- animated maps, such as, e.g., <https://phys.org/news/2017-03-people-language.html>. These particular animated maps show the gradually decreasing proportion of speakers of Slovenian along with its continuously shrinking language area in Carinthia (Austria) between 1971 and 2001 and, in comparison, between 1880 and 1910.

4.2.1 Digital tools

Since computer hardware has become increasingly affordable and at the same time faster and more powerful, the possibilities for large-scale storage of rich data have grown enormously, as has digitally supported processing and analysis. These and similar developments facilitate technologically advanced research on a scale that was hitherto almost inconceivable. The tools that have been developed and made available in recent years include software for

- automatic speech recognition;
- time-aligned transcription as in PRAAT or annotation software such as ELAN. User-friendly tools (such as ELAN, freeware; cf. <<http://www.lamp.eu/tools/elan/>>) for the transcription, annotation and coding of

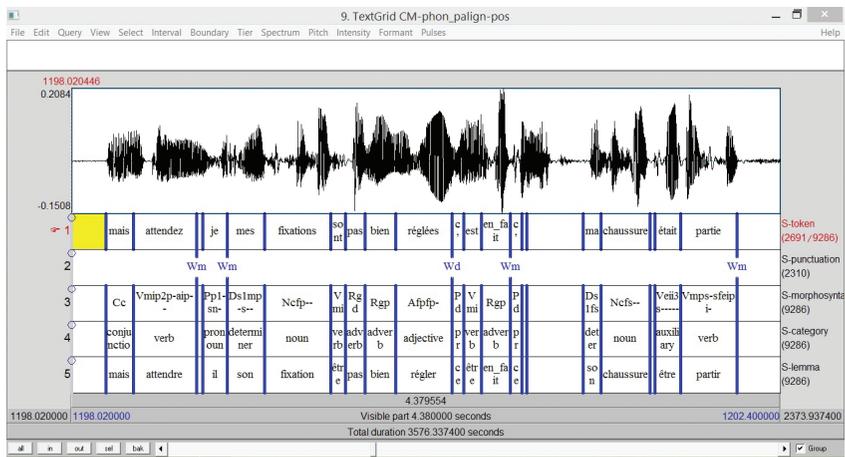


Figure 2 TextGrid, an annotation facility in Praat (screenshot)

recorded data and software (such as PRAAT <<http://www.praat.org>>, also freeware) for phonetic analyses are used more and more often. Fig. 2 is a screenshot of an analysis with TextGrid, a facility offered in Praat which can be used for annotation (segmentation, labelling) on several tiers;

- Forced Alignment and Vowel Extraction (FAVE) for automatic vowel detection and formant analyses. This can greatly benefit the large-scale investigation of phonetic variation. It has been applied in the study by Labov et al. (2014) of the fronting of back upgliding vowels /aw/ (as in ‘mouth’) and /ow/ (‘goat’) and changes in tense /æh/ (as in ‘mad’) and /oh/ (‘thought’) in Philadelphia English on the basis of data from 379 speakers (from 61 neighbourhoods) with dates of birth from 1888 to 1991. The data originate from a subset of the originally 1,107 recorded interviews, with hundreds or even thousands of vowel measurements obtained from every single interview. In the Dutch language area, FAVE has not yet been used for the study of dialect variation.

These and related tools allow for faster, bigger and more reliable research than the traditional, largely manual dialectological / variationist handi-crafts, which are very labour-intensive and time-consuming. Moreover, predominantly manual approaches may add ‘noise’, undermining the power of the research.

5 Outroduction. The need for pluralism

Finally, dialectology (like any other scientific discipline) may profit from more methodological pluralism. Basically, there are two different strategies: different data, same analyses and same data, different analyses. Converging findings count for more than double – cf. Labov’s (1972:102, 118-9) principle of convergence: “the value of new data for confirming and interpreting old data is directly proportional to the differences in the method used to gather it”.

However, without research questions and hypotheses the answers do not mean much. Clever and advanced as they may seem, exploration and modelling that is not at the service of a research question or hypothesis does not necessarily lead to useful insights and is sometimes mere statistical fetishism. Hence, pluralism is also called for from a theoretical point of view: the developments elsewhere in linguistics and in the humanities in general can inspire new questions, some of which may open horizons as yet unseen.

Notes

- 1 An excellent and well-documented overview of earlier phases in the history of Dutch dialectology (with ample references) is Taeldeman & Niebaum (2013).
- 2 Thanks to reviewer Gunther De Vogelaer for the many valuable questions and suggestions and to Frits Beukema for polishing my English as well some most useful remarks.
- 3 Not every consideration is presented here for the first time. Parts of section 2.1 are based on Hinskens 2009; Hinskens & Taeldeman 2013 and the references mentioned there; parts of section 2.2. in Hinskens 2018a; similarly 2.3.1 on Guy & Hinskens 2016 and the references mentioned there; section 2.3.2: Hinskens 2018a; Hinskens to appear 2021; Hinskens et al. 2014; section 3.1: Hinskens 2007; section 3.3: Hinskens 2014; section 4.1: Hinskens & van Hout 2013; Hinskens & van Oostendorp 2013; section 4.2: Hinskens & van Hout 2013; Hinskens 2018a; Hinskens & van Oostendorp 2013; sections 4.2.1 and 5: Hinskens & van Hout 2013.
- 4 Interestingly, some of the main representatives of the theory have recently taken ‘universal’ literally. On May 26, 2018, a scientific nonprofit organisation in Los Angeles, called Messaging Extraterrestrial Intelligence (METI), organised a workshop on “Language in the Cosmos” (earthsky.org/space/meti-workshop-linguists-talk-extraterrestrials). Noam Chomsky, Ian Roberts and Jeffrey Watumull gave a talk in which they stipulated among other things that “the overwhelming likelihood is that ET Universal Grammar would also be based on Merge”, a process which combines two items. Among the questions that arise, one of the main ones is: can the hypothesis ever be tested? In other words, is this an empirical claim? And if so, what will count as counter-evidence?
- 5 Carried out in 2015 for the sake of the overview chapter which appeared a few years later (Hinskens 2018a).
- 6 The correct count of relevant *Lingua* contributions for the period 2009-2013 is 32, but one particular paper equally discusses phonology and morphosyntax, with ethnographic deepening.
- 7 Cf. Martinet’s (1955) notion of ‘rendement fonctionnel’, functional load or functional yield, the number of items involved in specific phonological contrasts.
- 8 Kisch 1968; Van Praag 1985; Verhoeff & Wierema 1999; Hinskens 2004; Van de Kamp 2005; Van de Kamp & Van der Wijk 2006 – against the background of Zwarts 1937; Beem 1954; Zwiers 2003; Fleischer 2018.
- 9 More features, examples and discussion in Hinskens 2015:34-42.
- 10 Hinskens & Taeldeman 2013:5-7; Vandekerckhove 2013; Taeldeman 2013; Swanenberg & van Hout 2013; Cornips 2013; Van Oostendorp 2013; Bloemhof et al. 2013.
- 11 From Auer & Hinskens 1996. More refined visualisations can be found in Auer (2005:28), Figures 8 and 9.
- 12 From Hagen (1982: 49).
- 13 Lit. intermediate language. A recent appearance of the standard language that varies per area, as it is coloured with the more widespread characteristics of traditional dialects; Brabantic dialects of the Antwerp area have an imprint on every variety of Tussentaal. Cf. Geeraerts & Van de Velde 2013.
- 14 <https://www.hindorama.com/surinamers-in-nederland-een-demografisch-profiel-chan-e-s-choenni/> (accessed October 6, 2020)
- 15 Lahiri & Drescher (1999:681-82) list the remaining 22 modern standard Dutch nouns.

- 16 Another type of hyperdialectism is introduced by native (L1) speakers and it typically serves to dissociate; the mechanism has also been referred to as ‘polarisation’ (Taeldeman 2006). The distinction between the two types of hyperdialectism was proposed in Hinskens (2014: 112-117).
- 17 Or Limburg, for that matter.
- 18 See Maguire 2008: 273 and Dunn et al. 2011: 231-232 for references and examples.
- 19 Cf. sections 3.3 and 4.4 in Hinskens & Van Oostendorp 2013 for more information on available related software; De Vriend et al. 2008.

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