

WS proposal “Historical dialectology” (submitted to M. Cennamo on July 27, 2014)

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Main generalization and point of departure: “A future methodical Historical Linguistics and Diachronic Areal Linguistics has to be reconsidered given a new methodically purified program.”

- **Historical Linguistics/HL IS historical dialectology/HD.**
- **Historical dialectology/HD or historical areal linguistics, respectively, has to consistently and exclusively relate to those areas which are truly and uninterchangeably related to one another in diachrony. HD cannot be taken to refer to areally distributed, but diachronically unrelated printing and scribal centers. In other words, we draw the general conclusion that dialect areas must not be mixed and wrongly related to one another in the investigation and specification of L-change. In particular, the German dialect areas are sizable and fundamentally different – and it is quite intriguing to see and explain which of the areas are really involved in the emergence of MStG.**
- **The effects of linguistics standardization have led to regularities in grammar with the goal to establish norms pertinent and unmistakably identifying national languages. This process is committal to the extent that L-change patterns both BEFORE and AFTER those doctrinal-normalizing results have to be investigated independently of each other. This appears to be all the more essential in that natural L-change takes place only prior to the normalizing process(es), whereas L-change posterior to the norm-setting process yields unnaturally controlled results. Our goal to get to know the genuine, unfalsified L-change regularities commits us to keep the two processes apart carefully.**
- **One method to heed this warning is to make more use of the tradition of Early New High German/ENHG as a reservoir of encoded oral-dialectal language. Consider Reichmann’s (1988) claim that the documented ENHG consists nearly completely of printed DL.**
- **Another principal problem of historical linguistics is the manuscript normalization in the spirit of Lachmann (Cerquiglini 1989, Stackmann 1994), which has normalized away all dialectal differentiations and thereby made precious documents unappreciable for reliably philological investigation. What we aim at is to create a base for such a reliable investigation of diachronic language states.**
- **Final generalization: A methodically more soundly and profoundly reflected historical dialectology is expected to lead to sounder results in historical linguistics and the investigation of L-change.**

Concrete sample as a point of departure:

- **Although the system of lexical aspectual pairs is no longer completely intact in MHG one finds a conspicuous number of *ge*-verbs in temporal usage: „The use of *ge*- as a syntactical device was quite limited in early New High German. There is evidence that it continued to be employed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries with verbs in the preterit and present tenses to express the perfect, pluperfect, or future perfect” (Blumenthal 1968: 159). The author points out that almost all examples that are listed in Grimm (1836: 1613) are of Alemannic origin and that, in fact, they are still used in today’s versions of the dialect area: „in fact, the prefix *ge*- plays an important role in Alemannic dialects today.“ (Blumenthal 1968: 159, fn. 180).**

Further substantiation: All dialectal languages/DL are spoken-only vernaculars throughout their century-long diachrony. A lot follows from this theoretically – a lot opens for empirical probing.

- Syntactically and phonetically, processes of economy under parsing conditions are expected and evidenced – which specifically are, and which categorically others remain untouched?
- Parsing economy drives towards early phrase recognition under left-to-right processing
- Where qualitatively/When, developmentally, do economizing erosions and changes stop?
- When/At what developmental stages do WLs follow DL changes?
- Is there subjective/objective awareness of a critical mass of changes in DLs such that either WLs take over to substantiate the DL-WL unity, or WL receives detached status of another/foreign/less related L?

Main questions to be asked:

- Are DLs, mainly those which are more or less separated from standard language mediated through several channels, representative of older stages of the L, and are they therefore fossils, frozen L-history?
- Or are dialects breeding pots for autonomous L-change – and, if so, what kind of L-development (grammaticalization? Open for contact transfer from neighboring Ls – under which constraining conditions?

Main accompanying questions:

- Do DLs change faster than the standard WL (which is supported by media and normalists' influence and, as a consequence, socially ascertained and often hypertrophied)?
- Since it is common opinion that written languages/WLs are subject to normalization in diachronic development, WLs are expected to develop at a slower pace.
- Do, then, DLs forerunners to L-change by comparison to WS? In which categorial or phrasal dimensions more so than others? Are, then, DLs ahead of their WL variants in diachronic change? What specific properties might it be that makes them run ahead of WLs?
- Provided that L-contact drives L-change: Is L-change taking place “from below/from DL to above/to WS”? Can a vice versa to this scenario be imagined? What are the evidences?

Denkbeispiele/Specific instances (mainly from German with the non-unifying partition into Oberdeutsch-Hochdeutsch-Niederdeutsch-Mitteldeutsch):

- With respect to the lack of monophthongization in South German, which is usually – albeit wrongly (as in Salmons 2013) – taken as representing the main cut between Middle High German/MHG and Modern Standard German/MStG. However, what is taken as a unified development relates in fact to Middle High German/MHG as differing fundamentally from MStG and an East Middle German dialect area (Leipzig, Dresden, Magdeburg) base. What this amounts to is that none of the High (= South) German dialects have ever undergone phonological monophthongization.
- This last phonemic example is transferrable to the level of grammar: In the High German dialects (all of Oberdeutsch/South German) up to the 18th/19th century, the phrase <modal verb/MV+Infinitive> was formed only with verbs of the *ge*-class (Weise 1900: 106f.; Behaghel 1924: 103f.): *Wie muss ich denn da getu*. While this specific construal can be traced back even to Gothic it does not exist any longer in today's Austrian-Bavarian/AB. Is this due to natural L-change, or is this due to influence by the written (highly normalized) Standard? What, if under normal L-change, are the driving conditions?
- One of the most striking forms is the gerund in AB – a form which is only minimally extant in MStG in that it has been replaced by the prepositional infinitive – which, in turn, does not exist in AB (while it does in Alemannic). The following forms in AB and MStG are mutually exclusive (Abraham 2014).

(1) AB: *Ich hab dir was zum Sagen*

MStG: *Ich habe dir etwas zu sagen*

I have (to) you smthg. to.DAT tell. NOMINAL I have (to) you smthg. to tell
 (2) AB: *Kommst du heute die Säue zum Melken?* MStG: *Kommst du die Säue (zu) melken?*
 come.2sg you today the swine to.DAT milk. NOMINAL come you the swine (to) milk

The main point of this difference between dialectal AB and MStG is that MStG has opted to mono-categorize the infinitive alternative, while dialectal AB has retained the category-ambiguous gerund with the inflected verbal substantive. This is the bottom seed to a rich paradigm of gerundials in the less-than-standard regiolects:

- Transferred to morphology: Partitives played a major role in MHG, but does not in MStG. Consider AB **(eine) Milch holen* as opposed to MStG **(eine) Milch holen* “get some milk”. The original partitive code has still its clear traces in the class of nominal numerals: South German/SG (*Es sand da) viere* “There are four of them” for distributive counting. Compare the French partitive (*il’y a) *(des) quatres*. Needless to say that the indefinite article for partitives of mass nouns was strongly implemental for the emergence of the article paradigm in the history of German: *Ich brauch noch an kaas* = ‘Ich brauche noch ein Stück Käse’-“I need a piece of cheese.” The partitive reading was never given up in MStG for the very reason that it never was part of the article system of the areal variety on which MStG is based.
- Again transferred to the level of lexical semantics: The standard pejorization of *Dirne* to “prostitute” has not captured the High German dialects with *Dirn/Dean-Dirndl*. Rather, what we find is the metonymic shift to the customary costume “Dirndl”. This is counter to the accepted wisdom with respect to the necessary pejorization of denotations of women. Consider the equally norm-disputing parallel to OHG/OE *quena*, from which NE *queen* has evolved or NE *wife*, which did not develop in English and survived only in the German dialects with a predominantly pejorative meaning.
- Discussion about all languages and their diachronies are invited in the spirit described above. It is expected that a subsection of the workshop will be held in German.

Select references

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