

**REPORT ON THE THIRTEENTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
ON METHODS IN DIALECTOLOGY  
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*From the conference website:*

*The Methods in Dialectology conferences have been taking place every three years since 1972, at venues generally alternating between Europe and Canada. Beginning as a forum for the discussion of methodological issues in dialect research, they have steadily expanded their scope and now encompass the entire range of matters of regional, historical, and social language variation. Any and all languages are included within the compass of the Methods series.*

During this five day meeting with five parallel sessions some 180 papers and posters were presented. We heard papers on many diverse topics ranging from maps and mapping methods to variationist accounts of regional varieties. Given the size of this meeting and the tremendous breadth of topics discussed, no single perspective could properly represent the diversity of this conference. This report is a collaborative account of the 13th International conference on Methods in Dialectology based on the perspectives of three conference participants who report on some of the various papers that they heard during the five days of the conference. Thus this report does not represent an exhaustive review. A great many papers that were equally significant and important to the field of dialectology were also presented but they are not reported on here.

The conference included several Workshop/Symposiums in five concurrent sessions (see the program <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/english/methods.htm>). The program

also featured four plenary addresses: Sally Tagliamonte spoke on *Comparative sociolinguistics in a transatlantic perspective*, Anthony Lodge discussed *Codification and reallocation in 17th-18th-century Paris*, David Britain gave us *The difference that space makes: language, variability and the geographical dimension*, and William Labov delivered a discussion of *The linguistic implications of geographic distribution*.

Each of the co-authors offers a condensed report of their own experience at the Methods conference in Leeds, August 2008.

## 1. Asian dialectology

This section reports on the presentations that focused on Asian languages. Papers on Asian languages at previous Methods conferences have concentrated primarily on Japanese and Thai dialectology, and Methods XIII was not exceptional in this regard. Ten of the 13 paper presentations which raise issues in Asia are from Japan, the remaining 3 originating from Thailand, China, and Iran. The papers to be discussed are categorized below in Table 1.

Research Areas	Number
Geolinguistics	5
Phonological variation	4
Dialect contact	3
Dialect acquisition	1

Table 1. Categorisation of the research areas

As presented in Table 1, the papers on Asian languages can be broken into four topic areas: geolinguistics, phonological variation, dialect contact, and dialect acquisition. This ratio is similar to the distribution of presentations on languages and dialects in the U.S. and Europe, with the majority of research being dedicated to geolinguistics, phonological variation, and dialect contact. General descriptions and discussions are provided below. Due to limited space, this report does not include workshop presentations.

## *1.1. General Descriptions*

### *1.1.1. Geolinguistics*

Four presentations focused on geolinguistics, which is one of the most active research areas in Japanese dialectology. Takuichiro Onishi (*Comparing the distribution of dialects, societies and environments in Japan*) and Chitsuko Fukushima (*Progress in geolinguistics: What has been made possible using a computer?*) both discussed the advantages of using GIS (Geographical Information System) in dialectology. Current Japanese geolinguistics pays close attention correlations between geographical condition and linguistic variation. Similarly, Fumio Inoue (*Gravity model of diffusion for Tokyo new dialect forms*) discussed the importance of the Gravity model in accounting for the dynamism of language change in Japanese. Akemi Yamashita and Yasushi Hanzawa (*Language variation and diffusion in Japan: research through glottogram*) reported their survey results by using a technique called the ‘glottogram’ in Japanese dialectology, which was designed to explain both regional and generational variation in a certain area at the same time. Papers such as M.R. Kalaya Tingsabadh, Phinnarat Akharawatthanakun, Uraiporn Tantinimitkul, Sirivilai Teerarojonarat and Ornusa Chinkrachangkit (*Word geography of Thailand*) presented their findings from large-scale surveys in Thailand.

### *1.1.2. Phonological Variation*

Papers on phonological variation were the second largest category at the conference. Zendo Uwano (*The accent system of the Yonaguni dialect of Japanese*) presented results from ongoing research on the reconstruction of historical changes in the Japanese accent system. Ichiro Ota, Hitoshi Nikaido and Shoji Takano (*Variability of phrasal tone in Fukuoka Japanese*) focused on the leveling of the tone patterns in one locality in Japan. Mieko Takada (*VOT Variations in Japanese initial stops and their factors*) reported on VOT in Japanese. This must be one of the very first studies to pay close attention to this phenomenon in Japanese. Abbas Ali Ahangar and Fahime Khosravi’s paper (*A study of socio-linguistic variables of Persian in Sistan*) is a report of their survey on one of the dialects of Persian. They examined one of the Persian

dialects in Iran, Zaboli, and discussed the social constraints - such as social class, age, gender - upon phonological variables using spontaneous speech and interview data.

### 1.1.3. Dialect Contact

Papers on dialect contact phenomena are another major area; dialect contact situations in Japanese (Asahi) Chinese (Hsu) and English (Hirano) belong to this category. Yoshiyuki Asahi (*On the relationship of two Japanese regional koinés: Evidence from Sakhalin and Hokkaido Japanese*) dealt with the relationship between two regional Japanese koinés spoken in Hokkaido and the Sakhalin Island in Russia. Hui-ju Hsu (*When L2 becomes L1?: The Diffusion of Mandarin features into Southern Min in Taiwan*) discussed the degree of influence that Mandarin exerted on Southern Min in Taiwan. In contrast to these, Keiko Hirano (*Dialect contact in the Anglophone community of Japan: Modifications in the pronunciation of Trap and Bath vowels in American English speakers*) dealt with the Anglophone community in Japan. Her main research interest lies in the consequences of dialect contact between speakers of different varieties of English.

### 1.1.4. Dialect acquisition

The final category discussed is second dialect acquisition. This topic is gathering attention from sociolinguists who focus on English varieties, such as Tagliamonte and Molfenter (2007) and Christine Berger (*My oh mire: Canadian kids becoming R-Less in York*). Akiko Takemura's paper (*Accentual difference caused by parental accentual influence in a Japanese dialect*) belongs to this category. This paper, following Payne (1976) tried to discuss the dynamics of the acquisition of accentuation patterns by immigrants to the Kansai region of Japan.

## 1.2. Discussion

This brief overview allows for some conclusions to be drawn about the papers that focused on Asian languages at Methods XIII.

a) These papers made valuable contributions to the areas of geolinguistics, dialect

contact, phonological variation, and dialect acquisition. As most of the Asian papers deal with non-European languages, their findings should shed new light on current socio-/geo-linguistic theories.

b) At the same time, the interaction of social constraints upon the choice of specific variants has been, and should be, the essential focus of the Methods conference. In this sense, socio-/geo-linguistic approaches to research on Asian languages did make a significant contribution to Methods XIII. Future Methods conferences should explore, establish, and develop new perspectives to deal with language variation.

## **2. (Mostly) Romance dialectology**

This section focuses primarily on the papers presented as part of the (Gallo)-Romance Workshop/symposium with a number of other papers given in the general sessions of the conference that examined Romance as well as western European languages.

In a special session of the (Gallo)-Romance Workshop/Symposium Guylaine Brun-Trigaud and Michèle Oliviéri presented the *Multimedia dialectal database: the THESAURUS OCCITANI (THESOC)*. The goal of the THESOC database is to unite in one database the various research projects and their teams working on the varieties of Occitan. The database is a compilation of fieldwork (notebooks and maps), linguistic data from completed analyses, as well as tools to aid in further analysis (Bibliographic resources, tools and programs to aid in mapping).

Among the most commonly examined features of Romance languages are the pronoun paradigms and their morpho-syntactic and/or phonetic and phonological variables. We heard five papers which question previous theoretical models of, or offer new data and insights for the oft-discussed phenomenon of Null Subject Parameter and variable subject pronouns in their respective Romance language(s).

In her paper on *Dialectology and diachrony*, Michèle Oliviéri examines variable data for null subjects in closely related dialects of French as documented in the *Atlas linguistique de la France* (ALF) and demonstrates the utility and the effectiveness of traditional methods and data in dialectology for a fully informed theoretical model. Franziska Maria Hack & Sascha Gaglia contrast old and new variable subject pronoun

data from Renzi & Vanelli 1983 and from Heap 2000 (based on ALF and AIS data) with recent survey data from Swiss Romansch and Dolmitic Ladin speakers to demonstrate the necessity for more dialectal data to elaborate our models of the Null Subject Parameter. Michael Zimmermann, in a diachronic analysis of the variability of subject pronouns in impersonal constructions (expletive pronouns) of Medieval French, questions the status of Old French and Medieval French as V2 languages. Ernestina Carrilho also examines variability of expletive pronouns but for dialects of Iberian Portuguese, a null subject language, and challenges the notion of the Portuguese Overt Expletive as occupying canonical subject position. Carrilho also points to the absence of syntax in the traditional dialect atlas survey as a disadvantage for such an analysis, thus motivating the need for a more syntax-focused methodology as found in the CORDIAL-SIN (syntax-oriented corpus of Portuguese dialects). Finally, Chiara Ciarlo provides a morpho-syntactic analysis of variable subject clitics in data from a small corpus of spoken Ligurian (spontaneous speech exchanges). Using variationist analyses to elucidate the significance of the various internal factors (phonological as well as syntactic), Ciarlo shows that the subject clitic variability that may on the surface appear as phonological variation is in fact more closely related to syntactic constraints.

On the topic of object pronouns, Inés Fernández-Ordóñez examines the influence of both internal and external factors in the diachronic emergence of different object pronoun systems in the continuum of Northern Ibero-Romance dialects but cautions against privileging of type of factor over the other, while reminding us of the importance of keeping typological markedness in mind. Panayiotis Pappas in his paper on object clitic placement in Cypriot Greek uses diachronic data to establish the state of the medieval pronoun paradigm and placement constraints then compares these data to data from a variationist study of modern Cypriot Greek and observes that, while the paradigm remains largely unchanged, some lexical items show a change in pronoun placement.

In her paper on the selection of Perfect Auxiliaries, Sandrine Tailleur asks “does the semantic class of intransitive verbs (Sorace’s Auxilliary Hierarchy) influence the selection of *avoir* versus *être*?”. Using data from the FRANTEXT database for a diachronic study of Hexagonal French to test Sorace’s hierarchy compared with variable selection in spontaneous North American French (synchronic data from Sankoff & Thibault 1977, Russo & Roberts 1999 and Willis 2000), Tailleur demonstrates that

while there is good evidence from the diachronic data to support Sorace's typology, there is also evidence for the generalization of the auxiliary verb *avoir* that has been underway for many centuries. In her paper, *Investigating Lexical Diffusion*, Ruth King compares closely related varieties of French (Acadian and other Canadian varieties) for auxiliary verb selection and Preposition Stranding to demonstrate the gradual nature of these changes in progress.

In a diolectometric study of the phonetic features of Acadian French, Wladyslaw Cichochi examines the implicational scale proposed by Flikeid (1997) for traditional linguistic features of the Acadian-speaking region. Data are drawn from the *Atlas linguistique du vocabulaire maritime acadien* (Péronnet et al. 1998). Results confirm Flikeid's scale but in addition Cichochi observes a hierarchy amongst traditional phonetic features of Acadian corresponding to a single feature's role in regional variation. In a different study of Acadian French, Louise Beaulieu and Wladyslaw Cichochi observe a change in progress in subject-verb agreement wherein the traditional form is dispreferred over the more standard/normative form.

Jacques Durand reminds us that the story of French liaison is as yet an unfinished one. Using data from the *Phonologie du français contemporain* (PFC) corpus which contains audio recordings in three registers of French from around the Francophone world to show that the inventory of liaison consonants is reduced to five and can be regrouped into two sets: most frequent and least frequent. Durand shows that the 'traditional' liaison contexts are seriously threatened and that a category-by-category treatment is insufficient since variability appears to be more appropriately accounted for word-by-word. These data challenge even the most traditional assumptions made by a classic generative approach, so that even when the data support an assumption there is still much more to be accounted for including regional variation particularly in patterns of attrition versus conservation in these varieties.

Anthony Lodge in his plenary address *Reallocation and codification in 17th-18th century Paris* examines some of the literary conventions used in the construction of identity (the fishmonger, the market vendor and the farmer). Lodge shows us how the 'idioms' of vernacular speech coupled with various phonetic descriptions of the time allow us to reconstruct the rise, the decline and even the stability of many classic phonetic features of the period.

In her paper *Retrieving the sound: applying voice synthesis to dialectal data* Maria-Pilar Perea shows us that modern advancements in field methods, in particular, the use of audio recordings in the place of the traditional in the field transcriptions is not limited to new field work. Perea describes the process used to reconstruct synthesized sound from the phonetic transcriptions of traditional field notebooks with data from the database from *La flexió verbal in els dialectes catalans* (A. M. Alcover & F. de B. Moll 1929-32).

While not a Romance language, the *Euskal Herriko Hizkuntza Atlas* (EHHA) covers the Basque language across two Romance-speaking countries, and Gotzon Aurrekoetxea uses data from this well-presented atlas as well as other sources to examine a number of lexical, phonological and morphological variables using the Visual Dialectometry system developed by Hans Goebel (who unfortunately was not able to attend, though his presence was felt in more than one presentation).

From the papers discussed here, we have learned about the advantages of some newer approaches in dialectology and corpus building such as the focus on syntax of the CORDIAL-SIN (*Syntax-oriented Corpus of Portuguese dialects*) and the COSER, the ability of technological advancements to unite researchers of a same or similar field to build a corpus of their data, their analyses and analytical tools and their results in projects such as the *Thesaurus Occitan* THESOC and the *Phonologie du français contemporain* or PFC, which also unites researchers from diverse fields and from around the world in a collaborative research project using traditional methods in dialectology combined with variationist methodology. From the *Atlas linguistique de la France* (ALF) and the *Sprach- und Sachatlas Italiens und der Sudschweiz* (AIS), the Western European tradition of dialect atlases continues to provide a fertile ground for data mining and analysis as well as a superb model for new data collection. While some talks demonstrated the utility of historical data in our analyses others show us how we might better understand historical data by applying what we have learned from sociolinguistics and variationist studies.

### **3. North American (mainly English) dialectology**

In this section I focus primarily on talks that discussed North American English from a variationist or a dialectology perspective, although — due to the large number of papers, and five concurrent sessions during the conference — some relevant talks are, unfortunately, not included in this review.

A number of talks challenged current thinking about methodological practice in sociolinguistics. Relying on evidence from their research on adolescent African American girls in Washington, D.C., Christine Mallinson and Tyler Kendall used innovative analytic tools to integrate qualitative and quantitative methods for the purpose of capturing the complexity of synchronic variation during the course of individual sociolinguistic interviews and to question the degree to which the individuals comprised a group. They also question to what degree the underlying sociolinguistic purpose of the interview—to observe language use in context—should be overtly discussed with the interviewee during, or just after, the interview. Phillip Carter and Tonya Wolford also focused on a topic that is often overlooked in variationist studies by questioning the theoretical assumptions behind the variationist approach. They observe that any given methodological practice is embedded in disciplinary epistemologies that are tied to specific theoretical positions. Maintaining an awareness of this connection enables the researcher to choose an approach for a particular study that is appropriately aimed at addressing one set of underlying theoretical questions, without forgetting that it may not be appropriate for another set of questions. With this in mind, they took a multi-faceted approach to their research on Spanish language change in south Texas, relying on a combination of archival work, language attitude surveys, and quantitative analysis to uncover a complex linguistic reality for speakers in that language setting.

Another paper that discussed comparative methodologies was William Kretzschmar's talk on future directions in dialectology. He suggested a mathematical approach to future research that views language as a "complex system", a scientific concept that is related to "chaos theory". This perspective situates dialectology in the context of hard science, while also integrating various areas of linguistic research — including correlation studies, quantitative empirical work, and research that compares speech perception to speech production.

Additional papers on North American dialectology offered insight into ongoing changes within and across long-standing regional dialect areas. Utilizing evidence from the settlement histories of eight small towns in New York, in addition to phonetic data collected through over 60 short interviews, Aaron Dinkin offered an explanation for the complex patterning of dialect affiliation observed across this region. More specifically, he attributes the differences in vowel patterns to the lasting influence of the original settlers — New Englanders in some towns and Dutch in others. This research adds to our understanding of the rural regions on the dialect boundary between what is classified in *The Atlas of North American English* (Labov, Ash and Boberg 2005) as the Inland North and western New England. This paper was a complement to the presentation by Erik Thomas on the durability of the Northern/Midland dialect boundary in Ohio. Thomas compared vowel measurements from the speech of people born between 1880 and 1908, and interviewed in 1967 and 1968 (*Dictionary of American Regional English* recordings) to measurements taken from recent interviews with speakers born between 1970 and 1994. He thus provided longitudinal support for the observation that this boundary remains strong, although the features that distinguish it continue to change.

Dennis Preston offered a new perspective on the Northern Cities Chain Shift (NCCS), a vowel change in progress across part of the northern United States. He synthesized data from a range of immigrant-based communities across Michigan in order to demonstrate that a pan-ethnic dialect is emerging which reflects the reconfiguration of English vowel phonology within the minds of these speakers, as a result of contact with the local NCCS. Preston contrasted the Labovian concepts of linguistic transmission and linguistic diffusion, suggesting that what has, until now, been nothing more than phonetic change in vowel pronunciation is re-interpreted as phonological change by outsiders moving into an NCCS area.

In fascinating research on regional dialects outside of the U.S., Gerard Van Herk, Becky Childs and Ahmad Assiri compared the linguistic effects of urbanization on two very different rural villages — Petty Harbour, Newfoundland, and a small town in the Asir province of Saudi Arabia. In both, older women proved to sometimes be more local-sounding than older men, but with urbanization and access to education the younger women moved to supra-regional prestige forms, while the young men split—the men who aspired to go to university patterned with the women, while the men with

more locally-oriented goals were comparable to the old men in their use of local features.

Other papers at the conference emphasized the benefits of utilizing structural linguistic theory to illuminate patterns of language change and language variation. Rebecca Roeder relied on theoretical arguments to uncover a complex relationship between syntax and phonology with respect to the sociolinguistic conditioning of definite article reduction in Yorkshire English. And Jack Chambers offered new insight into the process of /ai/-raising in Canada, providing empirical evidence and support from theoretical phonology for his conclusion that /ai/-raising in Canada is not causally related to that found in the northern United States. In addition, regional variants of /ai/-Raising that appear to be lexicalized (e.g., *cider* in Philadelphia), with a raised onset underlyingly, may be explained by the opacity of raised onsets before flapped /t/, as in the word *writer* — allowing for a generalization to raised onsets before voiced consonants.

A symposium entitled “Lexis Lane” was dedicated to a discussion of the consequences of lexical effects on quantitative data analysis in sociolinguistics, both phonological and grammatical. One observation highlighted in the symposium was that supposed overall generalizations often apply to only a couple of lexical items or collocations, so that, for example, a phenomenon described as a verb class effect might, in fact, be the effect of a particular verb that occupies 80 % of that class. Sali Tagliamonte illustrated the impact of lexical idiosyncracies on the patterning of certain verbs in past temporal reference, as well as the overwhelming occurrence of certain forms in the analysis of variable (t,d). Significantly, she pointed out that the degree to which such effects skew statistical results must be rigorously investigated on a case-by-case basis. Several papers also illustrated why the lexical effects themselves can be interesting, however. As discussed by Gerard Van Herk, for instance, young people moving to St. John's, Newfoundland, have been found to overwhelmingly front the vowel in the name *St. John's* — a trait that has local identity value — although they may or may not front it elsewhere. Relying on data from Quebec English, Rena Torres Cacoullos and James Walker examined three grammatical variables whose general patterning is shaped to different degrees by the presence of frequent collocations: variable agreement with plural existentials, variable deletion of the complementizer *that*, and variable expression of future temporal reference. They observe that differences in

linguistic conditioning between non-collocational and formulaic, or conventionalized collocations (such as the use of singular *there's* in plural existential constructions) may be evidence that the latter have become separate, lexicalized entities, and as such are an integral part of a speaker's variable grammar, with important implications for linguistic research.

Sali Tagliamonte also led a workshop on statistical practices in variationist work, jointly presented with John Paolillo. The workshop offered a critical examination of the multivariate statistical analysis software program Goldvarb, which was developed specifically for quantitative sociolinguistic analysis several decades ago. Critical discussion of the statistics behind Goldvarb is a topic that has been discussed more widely in the field within the last few years.

In sum, the North American variationist and dialectology work presented at the conference covered a broad spectrum, raised important methodological questions, and offered provocative new findings. Important dialectology work on other areas of the world was also presented at the conference, as discussed elsewhere in this summary.

*The next International Conference on Methods in Dialectology (Methods XIV) will be held at the University of Western Ontario, where an earlier ICMD was held in the 1970s. David Heap and the organizing committee look forward to welcoming many dialectologists to London, which is roughly equidistant between Toronto and Detroit, as well within easy reach of the Niagara Peninsula and the epicentre of Canadian Dialect Topography (Stoney Creek, Ontario). See you in August 2011!*

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