

## REVIEW ON THE FOURTEENTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON METHODS IN DIALECTOLOGY<sup>1</sup>

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### 1. Introduction

*Methods in Dialectology*, the triennial international conference, continues to attract large numbers of high-quality papers and internationally-known participants. Some figures and facts: during five days of meetings, *Methods 14* at the University of Western Ontario (London, Canada) attracted over 220 participants from different countries: Canada, United States, Belgium, Japan, United Kingdom, Germany, Denmark (to name just a few). *Methods 14* gathered together young academics (doctoral students and postdoctoral researchers), established scholars and many leading figures in dialectology and connected fields.

In addition to the four plenary sessions (Julie Auger: *Traditional Speakers, Militants, and Language Change*; Beth MacDougall-Shackleton: *Birdsong dialects: engines of speciation, epiphenomena, or something in between?*; Fumio Inoue: *Improvements in the sociolinguistic status of dialects as observed through linguistic landscapes*; and Keren Rice: *Variation and change in Dene, Athabaskan*), eight excellent workshops on different themes and languages were organized by scholars from a range of countries:

- i. *Dialect and Heritage Language Corpora for the Google Generation* (Isabelle Buchstaller, Karen Corrigan, Adam Mearns and Hermann Moisl)

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- ii. *English and European Historical Dialectology* (Marina Dossena)
- iii. *Dialogue on Dialect Standardization* (Carrie Dyck, Karen Rice, Tania Granadillo and Jorge Emilio Rosés Labrada)
- iv. *Dialect and Regiolect Syntax* (Alexandra Lenz, Helmut Weiß, Jürg Fleischer)
- v. *Gabmap – A Web Application for Measuring and Visualizing Distances between Language Varieties* (John Nerbonne et al.)
- vi. *Methods in Malagasy Dialectology* (Ileana Paul)
- vii. *Atlas Lingüístico de la Península Ibérica (ALPI): Lessons and Perspectives* (David Heap et al.)
- viii. *Nouveaux corpus de français oral* (Robert Papen, Raymond Mougéon, Jacques Durand, Chantal Lyche)

The central aim of *Methods 14* is to promote research on different dialects (in general) and to share acquired knowledge on topics and methodological issues in specific dialects. The variety of thematic sessions on data, analyses and techniques in dialectology are firm proof of the degree of interest in this field of dialect research:

- corpus technologies: geo-informed dialectometry; maps and mapping and techniques, web-based linguistic analyses;
- study of dialect formation, dialect boundaries and spatial variation;
- variation and change (grammatical and discourse variation);
- variation: analysis and techniques;
- contact and interaction;
- variation and ethnicity.

Due to the large number of conference presentations and limited space available in this report, unfortunately, we cannot cover all of the papers; much exciting research will not be mentioned here and we refer the reader to the *Proceedings of Methods 14* to appear in the Bamberg English Linguistics Series (in preparation).

## 2. North American English and French

In this section, we report on some variation and change studies focused primarily on North American English and French from a sociolinguistic perspective.

## 2.1. Data and methods

The debate about which statistical tools to use for data analyses is a perennial topic at sociolinguistic conferences. The geo-informed dialectometry thematic session (facilitated primarily by John Nerbonne and William Kretzschmar), makes a major contribution to this debate/discussion by exploring dialect variation from the point of view of new technologies, modern empirical methods and sophisticated statistical tools.

Joseph Roy in his talk *Sociolinguistics Statistics: The intersection between statistical models, sociolinguistic theory and empirical data* provides an outline of different statistical models and their technical assumptions, and then gives examples to compare a number of linguistic variables analyzed by four different statistical techniques. The author emphasizes the fact that the choice of a statistical tool is driven by an understanding of what statistical technique is most appropriate for the hypotheses being tested. Although sophisticated statistical packages are able to give results on statistical significance, it is a sociolinguist's job to read the values and to interpret the (socio)linguistic phenomena appropriately.

Jack Grieve and Costanza Asnaghi in their paper *The Analysis of Regional Lexical Variation Using Site-Restricted Web Searches* demonstrate the utility of a novel method of site-restricted web searches for analyzing regional lexical variation.

Charles Boberg's paper *Some quantitative methods in the dialectology of the U.S.-Canada border* contributes to a better description and understanding of the role of political boundaries in creating and maintaining geolinguistic transitions. His aim is to explore the extent of the phonological and lexical particularities in the Canadian and American varieties of English in their situation of trans-border contact.

Alex D'Arcy in her study *When variation isn't available: Lexical conditioning in English adjective comparison* reveals the need for considering a large corpus in order to define the (non)existence of variability in linguistic systems, as well as emphasizing the importance of considering as many linguistic and social factors as possible. She draws her conclusions based on her study of variation in English adjective comparison forms (ex.: happiest/the most happy; happier/ more happy) in the vernacular speech of New Zealand English.

Sali Tagliamonte and Cathleen Waters' paper on methods for identifying innovators and their repertoires in the speech community examines leaders of linguistic change and their characteristics. They question whether the leaders of one change are the leaders of others, and if being a leader in the frequency of linguistic use implies being a leader in the direction or category of linguistic change.

## 2.2. Identity

*Methods 14* also brought together researchers addressing the relationship between variation and ethnicity. Papers from the thematic session on *Identity* raise interesting issues regarding local identity, stereotypes and their correlation with dialect features.

The paper by Susanne Wagner and Gerard Van Herk *From dialect feature to local identity marker: Converging patterns of verbal -s in two Newfoundland communities* discusses the local dialect features in Newfoundland English and their relation to social motivations and speaker aspirations. The authors point out the dangers of generalizing, noting that exceptions can be observed in situations of rapid social and linguistic change. Studies in two different villages independently discovered the tendency of young Newfoundland English speakers to use non-standard variants while older speakers show a decline in such usage. The same U-shaped path is observed by Barysevich in her paper *Lexical variation in contact language situation: identity or social conditioning?*: in the francophone community of Vieux-Hull young Québécois prefer the use of the stigmatized form *char* to the more common variant *auto*.

Gerard van Herk and Becky Childs in their paper *Superstars and bit players* find that the usage of 'salient' locally-identified features (interdental stopping and verbal -s marking) is being maintained or even increasing among locally-affiliated people. However, this is not the case with 'non-salient' non-stigmatized features. Past-habitual marking and Canadian-raising remain stable or are declining gradually. The authors conclude that the increase in rates of local features is correlated with their salience *as local identifiers*; the meaning and the trajectory of features are determined by local linguistic attention, rather than by broader global norms.

The paper by Jennifer Thorburn *Co-variables and saliency in coastal Labrador* is a complement to the two above presentations on Newfoundland English. Thorburn examines whether salient covariables show the same pattern in the variety under study, and whether these patterns correlate with non-salient features. She concludes that the relationship between these co-variables cannot be explained based solely on saliency. Her study of three salient and stigmatized features (verbal *-s* marking e.g. *I loves it*), interdental stopping in voiced (*them* pronounced as *dem*) and voiceless (*thing* as *ting*) contexts; and the non-salient word-final /t, d/ deletion, (*hand* pronounced as *han*) in data from Nain, an Inuit community in Labrador, shows that other factors, such as speaker agency, may be more suitable as explanations.

### 2.3. *Dialect contact: the case of French*

This section looks at papers on varieties of French in language-contact situations. For example, Anne-José Villeneuve in her paper *Regional French as the study of a linguistic intersection* explores the impact of the influence from Picard (a regional Gallo-Roman dialect) on French in the speech of Picard-French bilinguals and French monolinguals. Several linguistic features are examined: word-final cluster simplification and the reduction of the relative pronoun *qui*, among others. In order to ascertain a regional language effect, Villeneuve points out the need to consider both linguistic features which exist in the regional language, but which were taken to the French variety as well as features which remain absent from other varieties of colloquial French.

Anne Violin-Wigent looks at phonetic variability in *Does the scope of regionalisms affect their retention? A case study of nasal vowels and the double compound past in Briançon*. She questions whether the wider geographical distribution of grammatical features could potentially contribute to the retention or loss of regional features. She concentrates on the study of the phonetic variability in the pronunciation of nasal vowels and on the use of the double-compound past in main clauses in the variety spoken in Briançon, a small town in the French Alps. The results of this study show that in a situation of strong contact with standard French and hence its predicted

strong influence, the geographical factor is not as significant as was hypothesized in the process of dialect leveling.

Ruth King in her talk *Back in Time and Space: The Linguistic Trajectory of an Old Borrowing* traces the integration of the English intransitive preposition *back* into Acadian, Laurentian and Louisiana French from its earliest (1890) attestation through to its use in recently-constructed sociolinguistic corpora. The author builds her observations concerning the integration of *back* based on comparisons of quantitative apparent and real time analyses within a dialect, and between dialects. She first concludes semantic reanalysis of the English borrowing *back* into French precedes syntactic reanalysis. Second she points out that the particle *back* is fully integrated in varieties of French with long-term and strong contact with English, while the opposite is true for the communities undergoing language shift, with varieties undergoing concomitant morphosyntactic erosion.

Philippe Comeau examines variation between the use of the subjunctive and the indicative in the Acadian French of Baie Sainte-Marie, Nova Scotia. Using multivariate analyses (GoldVarb X) he studies the contributions of internal and external factors to the maintenance of the subjunctive in this variety.

#### 2.4. Ethnicity and variation

A session on *Ethnicity* as a variable of sociolinguistic investigation reported results on the relationship between ethnicity, ethnolect and variation in US and Canada.

Malcah Yaeger and Christopher Cieri presented a talk on *An evolving perspective on the concept of ethnolect*. They noted that language represents the identity of a person as well as of the group to which this person belongs. They raised methodological issues of sociolinguistic metadata and challenges facing all sociolinguists in their analyses. The authors highlighted the need to expand questionnaire protocols for fieldwork in order to incorporate attitudinal factors (such as propinquity, identity-based accommodation; the influence of intergroup attitudes on the individual speech in a given community) into analyses. Integration of attitudinal factors into questionnaires will contribute to a better understanding of the impact of the

relationship between a speaker's personal and community identities on their speech behaviour.

Ethnicity in Canada has only recently begun to be investigated, and primarily for urban, middle class groups, such as in Montreal English (Boberg 2004) and Toronto English (Hoffman & Walker 2010). Naomi Nagy, Joanna Chociej and Michol Hoffman delivered a talk on *Analyzing Ethnic Orientation in the Quantitative Sociolinguistic Paradigm*. The authors explore the possible reasons (such as research methods or type of variables) for the disparate patterns of correlation emerging between linguistic variants and measures of Ethnic Orientation. They also address the question of correlation or co-variation between generations in order to determine whether Ethnic Orientation patterns are changing or stable across a speaker's lifespan.

Nicole Rosen and Jeff Muehlbauer investigate the role of ethnicity in the variation of vowel space and rhythm in French on the Prairies (*Ethnicity as a variable on the Canadian prairies*). Following the methodology of previous studies (Boberg 2004; Hoffman and Walker 2010), they investigate if the generalizations drawn on the basis of larger communities (Montreal, Toronto) can be observed in smaller communities. Their results show that in contrast to larger communities such as Montreal and Toronto, where the impact of ethnicity is weakened across generations, in smaller communities (Canadian Prairies) the role of ethnicity is strong across generations, and ethnic influences do persist past the second generation (at least). They suggest that this maintenance of ethnicity impact is due to the relative geographic isolation and lower social mobility on the Canadian Prairies.

All of the papers presented at the *Ethnicity* session make an important contributions to the investigation of the relationship between ethnicity, ethnolect and variation in the US and Canada. The papers presented in this section emphasized the utility of considering the role of ethnicity among other social and geographic factors contributions to the linguistic variation. Finally, the papers in this section encourage the use of smaller case-by-case studies in order to achieve community-specific evaluations of linguistic variation.

### 3. Asian Languages

At the *Methods in Dialectology 14* conference, 14 papers dealing with language variation and change in Asian languages were presented. Compared with *Methods 13*, the number itself is more or less the same. What characterized *Methods 14* was, on the other hand, that one of the plenaries dealt with Japanese sociolinguistics. Although this was not the first opportunity for Asian sociolinguistics/dialectology to become a topic of a plenary lecture, *Methods 14* was especially significant for its inclusion of a presentation by the noted Japanese sociolinguist, Fumio Inoue, one of the most active Japanese delegates at Methods conferences.

The Asian languages covered at *Methods 14* were Japanese, Chinese, and Singaporean English; these papers discussed various aspects of linguistic variation; geolinguistics, the linguistic landscape, koine formation, real-time language change, honorifics, prosodic variation, tone systems, and syntax. This section provides a brief explanation of each area with some examples from the relevant papers.

#### 3.1. Geolinguistic studies

Two papers focused on geolinguistic studies: Takuchiro Onishi's paper, *A New Theory of the Formation of the Distribution of Japanese Dialects*, and Chitsuko Fukushima's paper, *Revisiting Regional Variation on an Island after Thirty Years*. Onishi utilized nation-wide Japanese dialect data collected by the National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics (NINJAL), to explain how the distribution of major Japanese dialect divisions were formulated. Based on this, he discussed these distribution patterns in relation to relevant principles such as the 'principle of adjacent distribution of dialects'. Chitsuko Fukushima raised both geolinguistic aspects of a Japanese dialect in the southern island of Tokunoshima in the Kagoshima prefecture. Based on two surveys (one in 1976-1977, and another in 2008), she tries to render a real-time change especially in the dialect distribution. She argued for both dialect change and its maintenance in several categories.



### 3.2. 'Linguistic landscape'

Two papers raised this topic in Japanese-speaking communities: Daniel Long and Seiichi Nakai's paper, *Researching Non-standard Dialect Usage in Linguascapes*, and Fumio Inoue's plenary lecture, *Improvements in the sociolinguistic status of dialects as observed through linguistic landscapes*. Studies on linguistic landscapes started early 1990s, and have been one of the most active and popular research topics in today's Japanese sociolinguistics. Long and Nakai's paper raised a methodological issue in their studies on linguistic landscape, which the authors call 'linguascapes'. The meaning of the use of non-standard forms in signboards, the role and function of senders and receivers of such messages, the orthographic representation of non-standard forms, and language attitudes were discussed. Inoue's plenary lecture on language landscapes focused on the sociolinguistic status of various Japanese dialects, claiming that linguistic landscape should be one of the keys to represent their status. Raising examples from his fieldwork data, he explained an increase of the dialectal usage of the linguistic landscape can be observed over the past 14 years. He also discussed the advantages of the use of 'Google maps' to investigate the use of dialectal forms.

### 3.3. *Koine formation*

Two papers raised this topic at *Methods 14*: Yoshi Asahi's paper, *Same dialects, similar dialect settings, and different sociolinguistic histories*, and Mie Hiramoto's paper, *Phonological Change of Tōhoku Dialect*. Asahi's paper discussed similarities and differences amongst three Japanese regional koine in the northern islands of Hokkaido, Sakhalin, and Kuril, in both Japan and Russia. He claimed that each had very similar immigration dialect contact situations although the average community-age varied. Hiramoto focused on another Japanese variety abroad, Hawai'i Japanese. Based on sound recordings made in the late 1970s and early 1980s of first-generation Japanese immigrants from the Tohoku region, she conducted sociolinguistic analyses of the sound changes observed in this variety of Japanese. She argued for the possibility that the second dialect acquisition of the local host Japanese dialect is based on the Hiroshima dialect, one of the major dialect groups in Hawai'i.

### 3.4. Real-time language change

Four real-time language change studies were also presented: Kenjiro Matsuda's paper, *Observing the Transition of Honorifics for 55 years*; Chitsuko Fukushima's paper (see § 3.1); Fumio Inoue and Akemi Yamashita's *Change in the use of beautifying "O" and late adoption*; James Stanford's *Methods in Tone Dialectology*.

I have already reported Fukushima's work in "Geolinguistic studies" above; however, what should be emphasized here is that she adopted a real-time approach. She utilized the same survey methods to collect her data (one in 1970s and the other one in 2008), thus her paper can be also categorized among real-time language change studies. Kenjiro Matsuda's paper dealt with another real-time language change study on Japanese honorifics based on the three sociolinguistic surveys conducted in Okazaki City, Aichi prefecture by the National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics. He discussed honorific change and its implications in relation to such social variables as sex and educational background, and to lifespan change. Inoue and Yamashita also explored a change in the 'beautifying o' in Japanese honorifics in both the apparent-time and real-time frameworks. Details of their study will be described in the next section. James Stanford investigated variation in tone system in the Chinese language, comparing his research data collected in the 2000s with a 1950s survey, Shuiyu Diaocha Baogao. Again, details of his paper will be illustrated in a later section.

### 3.5. Honorifics

Two papers dealt with Japanese honorifics at *Methods 14*: those by Kenjiro Matsuda, and Fumio Inoue and Akemi Yamashita (see titles above). Matsuda discussed sociolinguistic change in Japanese honorifics, while Inoue and Yamashita focused on, one of the major categories in Japanese honorifics, 'beautification' (美化語, or bikago). They looked into its change and acquisition by adults. Matsuda's paper looked into the degree of politeness in panel data: he claimed that middle-aged female panel showed a downward trend in their honorifics while the male panel stayed at the same level of politeness.

### 3.6. Prosodic variation and tone system

Two papers raised issues in prosodic variation, one on Japanese and the other on a tone system in Chinese: Ichiro Ota, Shoji Takano, Hitoshi Nikaido, Akira Utsugi, and Yoshi Asahi's paper, *Variation in prosodic phrase of Japanese dialects*, and James Stanford's paper, *Methods in Tone Dialectology*. Ota and his colleagues focused their attention on the prosodic subordination phenomena in Japanese dialects of Kagoshima, Fukuoka, and Sapporo in relation to the Tokyo dialect. Based on sociolinguistic interviews with both older and younger age groups in each locality, they found that language change in tone level is in progress; young age groups tend to have a similar trend in all localities. They also discussed the applicability of the 'cookbook method' when seeking correlations between social variables and linguistic variation.

Stanford focused on one Chinese dialect, i.e. Sui dialect of Southwest of China: it is said to have six tones whilst standard Chinese has four. He claimed that regional variation is observed in Tones 1 and 6, and that, what is more, Tone 6 was more stable than Tone 1, which has shown some real-time changes.

### 3.7 Syntax

Lastly, one paper focused on syntax in a new variety of Singaporean English. Mie Hiramoto's paper, *Can Construction in Colloquial Singapore English: Substrate Reinforcement and Semantic Broadening*, explained that *can* in Colloquial Singapore English (CSE), has a different function from that of Standard English. She claimed that in CSE *can* have the meanings 'competent' and 'okay', both of which are equivalent to meanings in substrate languages, including Chinese and Malay. She also argued for some syntactic constraints on the use of *can* in CSE.

## 4. Conclusion

A diversity of theoretical frameworks, empirical approaches and methodological viewpoints interacted with each other during five fruitful days of at the *Methods 14*

conference. We are glad to notice increased interest in and willingness to share (socio)linguistic data between scholars, and a growing interest in web-based corpora. *Methods in Dialectology 14* also saw contributions emphasizing the interaction between synchronic and diachronic research methods as well as contributions with new methods in dialect research. However, there are a couple of suggestions we could consider in near future, perhaps at the *Methods 15*.

During *Methods 14* we noticed an under-representation of less-studied languages, and small community-specific dialects seemed under-represented. Phonological variation is still a major area in dialect research, but more attention paid to research in other areas would be welcome. We also encourage the participation of more researchers from different parts of the world (including perhaps from less-developed countries in order to acquire a more global perspective on dialect research and to contribute to its development around the world).

*Methods 15* will take place at the University of Groningen (Netherlands) in August 2014. We look forward to seeing you all there!