

Sardis Meeting 2018

Workshop on **Dialectal variation vs. Standardization and Models of Language Change**

Comparing the results of (contemporary) dialectal research to the variation that is attested in earlier stages of German (Early New High German with its immense database in particular), the impression is that the **amount and also the type of variation** has essentially not changed. There is still considerable variation in the area of e.g. adjectival inflection, the verbal complex, relative clause introducers, or the organization of the determiner system.

What is often referred to as “stabilization” or “endpoint of a development” is therefore possibly rather an artefact of the standardization process with its written encoding. As is well known, seeming “redundancies”, still attested in the contemporary dialects, have been eliminated due to style or other non-linguistic factors.

The grammaticalization process is often described as being driven by economy (see Roberts/Rossou 2003 and especially the work by van Gelderen). Given that at the same time, the notion of economy is directly woven into the model of generative syntax, the following questions arise that we would like to discuss:

- Is there diachronic development at all?
- Can it be captured with notions of economy of derivation as it is conceived of in modern generative grammar?
- What about the linguistic cycles? Is our picture of them (first weakening, then loss, then re-enforcement) adequate?
- What about the issue of the “inertness” of syntax?

The round table addresses thus two issues:

- (i) The empirical side: Is the above sketched situation empirically valid? Until now – it is more an impression. What should the methods look like to bring such a claim on empirical sound basis - or to contradict it?
- (ii) If economy does indeed not play such an important role – what then drives language change and language variation?

The time slot will be organized as follows: Two brief presentations by Ellen Brandner & Alexandra Rehn that illustrate the points raised above by using data from contemporary Alemannic and older stages of German. These brief statements are then open for discussion.

If you want to make a longer contribution (e.g. by giving a short presentation), please contact the organizers of the workshop directly:

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