Linguistic Distance Patterns between Survey Sites of the SADS

A linguistic distance between survey sites was expressed using 60 survey questions in the SADS. To quantify the language contact possibility several geographic distances were used. We hypothesized that older travel times correlate better with linguistic distances than Euclidean distance or travel times of the present.

Predicting Linguistic Distance: Travel Times vs. Euclidean Distance

By conducting analyses of correlation and regression, we explained the relation of the syntactic distance and geographical distances, to answer linguistic hypotheses. We have shown (Jeszenszky & Weibel, 2014):
- In most cases geographical distances explain the majority of variance in the syntactic distance.
- Travel times are significantly better predictors for syntactic distance than Euclidean distance.
- The difference between prediction value of travel times in 1850, 1950, 2000 is not significant statistically.

The Database

- Project funded by the SNF 2000-2008 (extended through 2014).
- 4 questionnaires including different syntactic phenomena (118 questions in total).
- 3187 informants at 383 locations (between 3 and 26 informants at each location), not only NORMs.
- Different questioning techniques (translation, completion, multiple choice).

Example: Verb doubling

In this type of construction, which is often considered to be typical for Swiss German, a reduced variant of the verb is repeated before the infinitive (cf. Stoeckle, 2015).

Example:

\[ \text{Wenn es weiter so warm bleibt, fängt das Eis an zu schmelzen.} \]
\[ \text{... fängt s iis AFA schmelze} \]
\[ \text{... fängt s iis afA schmelze} \]

If it stays this warm, the ice will begin to melt.

Evidence for Linguistic Change?

- Apparent-time comparison (cf. Labov 1963): Division of SADS informants into two age groups (threshold: 57 years).
- Calculation of mean percentage rates of AFA occurrences for each age group at each survey location and their differences.
- Mapping difference values and using Kriging interpolation to detect areas where evidence of apparent time change can be found.

Contact

Philipp Stoeckle, philipp.stoeckle@ds.uzh.ch
Péter Jeszenszky, peter.jeszenszky@geo.uzh.ch
www.spur.uzh.ch/synmod.html

References


Detecting Change in Swiss German Morphosyntax

The verb doubling construction (see middle column) shows variation: while being absent in the east, it is optional in the western part of German-speaking Switzerland (Stoeckle, 2015).

Project Summary

The SynMod project aims to more closely link research questions and methods of the two disciplines dialectology and geography, especially in the field of Geographic Information Science (GIScience). Project members from the German Department and the Department of Geography conduct joint studies employing quantitative methods of GIScience to verify linguistic hypotheses about distribution patterns in the morphosyntactic phenomena of the SADS*. Focus lies on boundary tendencies and testing the applicability of GIScience methods on linguistic phenomena.

Contact

Philipp Stoeckle, philipp.stoeckle@ds.uzh.ch
Péter Jeszenszky, peter.jeszenszky@geo.uzh.ch
www.spur.uzh.ch/synmod.html

References


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Department of Geography

SynMod: Modelling Morphosyntactic Area Formation in Swiss German

Philipp Stoeckle1, Péter Jeszenszky2, Elvira Glaser1, Robert Weibel1
1German Department, University of Zurich; 2Department of Geography, University of Zurich