

Project:

European Dialect Syntax

The goal of the project is twofold. First, it aims at setting up, extending and developing cooperation between dialect syntax projects in Europe, thus yielding a European network of dialect syntacticians that use the same standards with respect to methodology of data collection, data storage and annotation, data retrieval and cartography. The data collection resulting from this project will be made accessible in a web-based research tool enabling the researcher to access the original data and the annotated transcriptions on-line and to visualize the search results automatically on geographic maps.

The second goal is to make this cooperation thematically coherent by investigating phenomena of syntactic doubling, such as subject pronoun doubling, negation doubling, question word doubling, agreement doubling, auxiliary verb doubling and focus particle doubling. Since these phenomena primarily occur in non-standard varieties, their existence has gone largely unnoticed in the linguistic literature. The project will therefore greatly enhance the empirical basis of theoretical research. As doubling always seems to involve a semantically superfluous element, syntactic doubling provides an opportunity to study pure syntax. The analysis and cross-linguistic comparison of doubling phenomena will make it possible to test hypotheses about central abstract syntactic relations such as dependency chains and SpecHead Agreement, thus contributing to the theory of natural language syntax. It will also contribute to the theory of language variation, in particular providing an answer to the question as to which modules of the grammar allow for variation and how this variation can be captured theoretically.

Comments:

The project approaches the (vastly neglected) domain of dialect syntax in European languages with a variety of recently established theories and methods. In order to give the cooperation within the network a clear focus “doubling phenomena” are selected as a field of inquiry across dialects and languages.

First rate quality and clear potential as a scientific leader as far as all methodological and technical aspects of the project are concerned; applicant is first-rate in the field of quantitative dialectology with a focus on syntax; the work done so far within the SAND project and his initiative in launching a European dialect syntax proposal are clear evidence of the abilities.

The ideas presented and the claims made in connection with the fragments of dialect syntax selected for close study (doubling phenomena) were very inspiring and innovative; the project is very clear in its contours and programme. The aim of creating a European network of dialect syntax based on the methodology developed by the applicant and others met with great approval.

Given that the relevant methodology and technology was developed at the Meertens Institute, there is every reason to assume that this institute is also the right location for the project.

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