

ESF/SCH Exploratory Workshop *European Dialect Syntax*

Padova, Italy, 11-13 September 2003

Scientific Report

- Scientific convenor:** Prof. Dr. Bernd Kortmann, University of Freiburg, Germany
- Co-convenors:** Dr. Sjef Barbiers, Meertens Instituut of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences, The Netherlands
Prof. Dr. Hans Bennis, Meertens Instituut of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences, The Netherlands
Prof. Dr. Elvira Glaser, University of Zurich, Switzerland
- Local organizer:** Dr. Cecilia Poletto, University of Padova, Italy
- Participants:** see separate list (including statistical information)

1. Major objectives of the workshop

The workshop had three major objectives:

- exchanging information about existing projects on the morphology and syntax of regional dialects and spoken (largely non-standard) varieties of European languages
- exchanging information about planned projects and the stages of planning
- organizing a coordinated pan-European research initiative and identifying fields for collaboration.

The five half days of presentations, computer demonstrations, and intensive discussions (see the **final programme**) were a full success with regard to all three objectives, as will be sketched below. As emerged from all presentations, this Exploratory Workshop proved to be a timely enterprise allowing research teams from various European countries to join forces at a point when they can all still profit from each other's experiences, especially of course if they are still in the planning stage. It also emerged that, whatever genetic group of dialects in Europe we are looking at, dialect syntax is a much neglected field in dialectology, requiring new fieldwork on a large scale to begin with.

2. Kinds of projects currently under way or planned for the immediate future

During the first three half-days all presentations (except for Cinque's guest lecture) related to the presentation of existing (7) and planned (3) projects on dialect syntax. Among the existing ones, some are close to completion (especially the SAND project on Dutch dialects), others are in the midst of the collection and analysis of data. From a bird's-eye perspective, these ten projects can briefly be categorized as follows:

- **On a genetic level:** Most prominently represented in current work on dialect syntax in Europe are **Germanic** dialects, especially West Germanic dialects, and **Romance** dialects. For these genetic groups of dialects there are five projects that either currently receive or have until recently received major national funding. For the West Germanic dialects witness especially the Dutch/Belgian SAND-project (Syntactic Atlas of the Dutch Dialects; 2000-2003), the Freiburg project on English dialect syntax (2000-2005), and the Zurich project on Swiss German dialect syntax (2000-2005). Furthermore, it is not a coincidence that four of the presentations on the fourth half day reported on syntactic phenomena from English and German dialects. As for Romance, there are currently two projects under way: the Padovian ASIS-project (Syntactic Atlas of Northern Italian Dialects; 1992-2002) and the CORDIAL-SIN project on Portuguese dialect syntax located in Lisbon (1999-2003).

Germanic and Romance dialects also figure prominently among the dialect syntax **projects planned** for the future. Platzack and Vangsnes presented an impressive pan-Scandinavian research initiative (the Nordic Network for Dialect Syntax) which is tightly coordinated and fairly far advanced, and for which national funding is currently applied for in Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Finland. By contrast, the plans of Gemma Rigau's research group in Barcelona for a project on Catalan dialect syntax are still at a fairly preliminary stage, primarily because of lack of funding possibilities of the Catalan and Spanish authorities.

The problem of **lacking funding possibilities** applies even more severely to Krapova's plans for a project on Balkan dialect syntax. Here especially it is to be hoped that in the process of admitting several Eastern European countries to the EU later this decade, countries like Romania and Bulgaria will have more possibilities for funding research. In the meantime Krapova and like-minded Balkan dialectologists may learn from the pan-European research project on the morphology and syntax of Romani dialects (which are, of course, also crucial for the linguistic landscape of the Balkan peninsula) directed by Yaron Matras, whose members were successful in tapping various national and private funding institutions.

The workshop has also made clear that there are still many **white spots** on the map of Europe judging from the point of view of dialectological work on syntax, e.g. Celtic, Finnish, French, German, Slavic (especially East and West Slavic). As for German, despite the long and still strong-going tradition of dialectology in Germany, it is no coincidence that the presentations by Bayer, Eroms and Weiß were exclusively concerned with Alemannic and Bavarian. What little work has so far been done on the syntax of the German dialects is largely restricted to these two most distinctive dialect groups of the South of Germany as well as Austro-Bavarian and Swiss German.

- **Theoretical frameworks:** There are projects with an exclusively functionalist orientation (the projects on English and Romani dialect syntax), with an exclusively generative orientation (the projects on Romance dialects), and projects drawing on both frameworks (the projects on Dutch, Swiss German, Scandinavian, and Balkan dialects).
- **Types of data:** On the one hand, there are currently projects which work exclusively with questionnaire-based data (i.e. data collected specifically for these projects with self-designed questionnaires): the projects on Dutch, Swiss German, Northern Italian and Romani dialects; this strategy is also planned for the Scandinavian project and is currently being implemented in the Freiburg project on English dialect syntax. On the other hand, there are projects (especially the Freiburg project) which (at least so far)

work with computerized natural discourse data collected for other purposes (e.g. transcribed interviews conducted as part of oral history projects), which allows the application of established corpus-linguistic research tools.

- **Technical sophistication:** There are great differences with regard to the degree of technical sophistication with which the individual projects work. Furthest advanced in almost all respects is the SAND-project given the unrivalled computational infrastructure of the Meertens Instituut. In this respect, in particular, this project can (and will) help other projects on dialect syntax in Europe and assume a leading role in developing standards for collecting and documenting dialect data and in establishing a computerized database on European dialect syntax.
- **Domains of syntax investigated:** The workshop has clearly shown that there is a high degree of overlap between the various existing projects with regard to the areas of syntax representing the foci of research. This, too, will be very helpful in getting a pan-European research initiative started. The relevant domains are: agreement, negation, complementation, relativization, pronouns, and clitics.

3. Future directions in the study of dialect syntax in Europe (beginning in October 2003)

Right from the beginning of the workshop, all presentations and discussions were dominated by the major objectives as outlined in 1. above, especially by the aims of getting a joint, coordinated pan-European research initiative off the ground. Thus, in a first step, in connection with the individual talks and the laboratory session during the first two days, all of the aims and most promising areas for a European-wide collaboration mentioned in the application for this ESF Exploratory Workshop were discussed in depth (see 3.1). In a second step, especially during the concluding business meeting, the possible formats of this collaboration were discussed and first concrete steps in launching this research initiative were decided on (see 3.2).

3.1 Aims and most promising areas of a joint European research initiative

- (a) New fieldwork: collection of data in a standardized format, or at least in compatible formats (concerning, for example, questionnaire design, tagging, transcription and glossing conventions), to be made electronically accessible.
- (b) Establishing, ideally, a computerized database on European dialect syntax in a standardized format; the minimal aim will be the creation of a platform and standards which ensure immediate compatibility of the data collected for different (genetic groups of) dialects, and thus make possible quick database access and comparative work on dialect syntax using data from the different projects.
- (c) Working towards a Syntactic Atlas of the Dialects of Europe based on a selection of syntactic phenomena, namely agreement, negation, complementation, relativization, pronouns, and clitics.

- (d) A major contribution to the study of the "real" linguistic landscape of Europe, "real" in the sense that this workshop and the resulting research network or programme will look at the **spoken** varieties of European languages, thus complementing the ESF Research Programme EUROTYP ("Typology of European Languages", 1990-94) whose focus was clearly on the written standard varieties. Non-standard varieties of the European languages played only a marginal role within EUROTYP.

Dialects and spoken varieties of a language, in general, often differ quite markedly from the relevant written standard variety. The study of spoken varieties on a European scale is bound to yield new insights for areal typology, both on a small scale (e.g. areal distribution of individual syntactic variables, regionally restricted convergence areas in Europe, areality of grammaticalization phenomena) and on a much larger scale. On this larger scale, the detailed study of spoken vernaculars will put to test, for example, the ideas of "Euroversals" in dialect grammar and, above all, of a European Sprachbund (still best known under Whorf's label *Standard Average European*) which, most recently, the EUROTYP programme has strongly substantiated. The question is, though, to what extent this only holds for the written standard varieties of the European languages.

- (e) As part of exploring the "real" linguistic landscape of Europe it will also be interesting to see what can be said about processes of language change affecting European dialect syntax, for example: Which former regionally restricted syntactic features seem to be on their way towards becoming part of a new spoken standard? Which areas of dialect syntax seem to be largely resistant to language change (i.e. rather time-stable), which ones, by contrast, seem to be affected by language change (including grammaticalization processes) particularly frequently (i.e. across dialects of different languages)?
- (f) A cross-fertilization of traditional research on dialect syntax in dialectology and sociolinguistics, on the one hand, and the study of dialect syntax (or: microparametric syntax) within recent syntactic theory and language typology, on the other hand; this cross-fertilization will concern both methodology and theory (development). For example, it is a shared experience of all currently existing projects on dialect syntax in Europe that, at the very least, it is very useful in drawing on work done in both functionalist and formalist frameworks when deciding on the phenomena to be investigated and the research design.
- (g) The theoretically informed study of dialect syntax is bound to be an important testing ground for the relevant theoretical frameworks and to feed back into them, be it generative syntactic theory or language typology (especially functional typology). Thus from the study of dialect syntax there will be both a significant benefit for language description and linguistic theorizing. This can already be observed on the basis of the ongoing work, but will become an ever more more important issue once syntactic research on a wide array of dialects can be drawn upon and judged from a comparative perspective.
- (h) All participants of the workshop agreed that the study of dialect syntax holds an enormous potential for postgraduate research in linguistics on a national and European scale. This can easily be proved by the large number of completed and ongoing Ph.D. projects conducted within the existing projects.

3.2 Envisaged format and concrete first steps towards establishing a joint European research initiative

Of the various formats of research collaboration across Europe offered under the roof of the ESF, it was unanimously agreed upon by the workshop participants that, at the present stage of the research field, a Scientific Network would be the most suitable one. The immediate aims of this Network will be those in (a) to (c) in section 3.1. It is for these that joint planning and close collaboration is most urgently needed in order to ensure at an early stage a high degree of compatibility and standardization in all practical aspects of research into dialect syntax, notably the collection, documentation, and coding of the data. An application for an ESF Scientific Network will be submitted by 30 May 2004. For this purpose, members of the Steering Committee were already identified during the business meeting.

At the same time, the following immediate steps in establishing a pan-European collaboration on dialect syntax were decided on by the workshop participants:

- The creation of a Bulletin Board on European Dialect Syntax (administered by the Meertens Instituut, Amsterdam).
- As a service to current and future dialectological fieldwork, it was agreed to compose a (theory-neutral !) manual, to be drafted by Sjef Barbiers, Hans Bennis, and Cecilia Poletto of the SAND and ASIS projects, based on their own experiences, but also pooling information on and evaluating existing tools for linguistic fieldwork and the annotation of linguistic data (e.g. questionnaire design, interlinear morphemic translations, transcription and tagging conventions) with regard to their usefulness for dialectological work.
- In connection with the drafting of this manual, the members of the existing research projects and of projects soon-to-be-launched (such as the project on Scandinavian dialects) will arrange visits and work towards the establishment of a new database on European Dialect Syntax, developing questionnaires for specific phenomena taken from the six domains of syntax identified in 2. and 3 (c), i.e. agreement, negation, complementation, relativization, pronouns, and clitics. For each of these phenomena, data will be collected with the help of the same set of questions (no more than 20 per phenomenon) and documented in a standardized format for all dialects investigated by the workshop participants (and ideally more dialects), thus adopting an established fieldwork strategy in dialectology and language typology.
- It was agreed that the members of the projects for the (especially West) Germanic dialects, on the one hand, and of the Romance dialects, on the other hand, should closely collaborate since the study of microsyntactic variation must not arbitrarily stop at national borders; one promising avenue of European dialect syntax will be to study microsyntactic variation within individual language families, a research endeavour that only now, for the first time in dialectology, is or will soon be possible to pursue.
- On a national level, the workshop participants will encourage the organization of linguistic summer schools to be either wholly devoted to dialect syntax or to offer at least one section on dialect syntax. It is hoped that summer schools for graduate students organized within individual theoretical frameworks or with a typological orientation will also include dialect syntax in the future.

- In the same vein, aiming to strengthen postgraduate research in dialect syntax across Europe, it was agreed to cooperate on the design of relevant joint graduate degree programmes (or modules thereof) and the joint supervision of masters and, especially, doctorate theses.

Finally, on behalf of all workshop participants, I would like to thank Cecilia Poletto and her colleagues and support team at the University of Padua and CNR for the excellent organization, and the ESF for financing this workshop, which has truly been an eye-opener for many participants. The workshop will lead to many synergetic effects across national boundaries, and holds many promises for an intensive pan-European research collaboration and a significant strengthening of Europe's position both in the study of linguistic variation and the advancement of linguistic theorizing.

Freiburg, 7 October 2003

Bernd Kortmann



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FINAL PROGRAMME

Thursday 11th September 2003

Official opening and welcome

- 09:00 • **Ekkehard König** (ESF Standing Committee for the Humanities)
 • **Alberto Mioni** (Head of Department Linguistics, University of Padua)
 • **Emanuela Magno** (for the ISTC-CNR)
- 09:20 **Welcome / Aims of the workshop**
 Cecilia Poletto & Bernd Kortmann

Reports on the state of the art of current dialect syntax projects (including methodology)

- 09:30 **Syntactic Atlas of the Dutch Dialects: The Netherlands**
 Sjef Barbiers & Hans Bennis
- 10:15 **Syntactic Atlas of the Dutch Dialects: Belgium**
 Magda Devos & Johan van der Auwera
- 11:00 *Coffee Break*
- 11:30 **Swiss German Dialect Syntax**
 Elvira Glaser
- 12:15 **English Dialect Syntax from a Typological Perspective**
 Bernd Kortmann & Lieselotte Anderwald
- 13:00 *Lunch*
- 14:30 **Syntactic Atlas of Northern Italian Dialects**
 Cecilia Poletto
- 15:00 **The ASIS database: its structure and research perspectives**
 Nicoletta Penello
- 15:15 **The CORDIAL-SIN Project on Portuguese Dialect Syntax**
 Ernestina Carrilho
- 16:00 *Coffee Break*
- 16:30 **The Morphosyntactic Database of Romani Dialects: Methodology
and selected findings**
 Yaron Matras
- 17:15-19:00 **Round table discussion cum laboratory session on methodology
and research tools**



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Friday 12th September 2003

Morning lecture

09:00 **The Prenominal Origin of Relative Clauses**
Guglielmo Cinque

Setting up dialect syntax projects in other European countries involved

10:15 **Plans for a Scandinavian dialect syntax project**
Christer Platzack & Øystein Vangsnes

11:00 *Coffee Break*

11:30 **The Catalan dialect syntax project**
Gemma Rigau

12:00 **Plans for a Balkan dialect syntax project**
Iliyana Krapova

Sociolinguistic aspects of syntactic variation

12:30 **Contact-induced varieties, syntactic variation and methodology**
Leonie Cornips

13:00 *Lunch*

Selected topics of dialect morphosyntax

14:30 **Interrogative strategies in the Northern Italian domain**
Nicola Munaro

15:00 **Variation in agreement phenomena**
Joao Costa

15:30 **Inflected complementizers in Continental West Germanic dialects**
Helmut Weiß

16:00 *Coffee Break*

16:30 **Clitic *zu* in Bavarian and Alemannic infinitives**
Josef Bayer

17:00 **Word order of modal constructions in Middle Bavarian dialects**
Hans-Werner Eroms

17:30 **Genitive variation in English dialects**
Juhani Klemola

19:30 *Conference Dinner*



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Saturday 13th September 2003

- 09:00 **Perspectives for the study of dialect syntax in Europe**
 Bernd Kortmann
- 09:30 **Business meeting to organise further cooperation**
- 11:00 *Coffee Break*
- 13:00 *End of workshop / Lunch*



Provisional List of Participants

Convenor:

1. **Bernd KORTMANN**
Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg
Department of English
Rempartstr. 15
79085 Freiburg
Germany
Email: Bernd.Kortmann@anglistik.uni-freiburg.de

Co-convenors:

2. **Sjef BARBIERS**
Meertens Institute
Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences
PO Box 94264
1090 GG Amsterdam
Netherlands
Email: sjef.barbiers@meertens.knaw.nl
3. **Hans BENNIS**
Director
Meertens Instituut
Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences
P.O. Box 94264
1090 GG Amsterdam
Netherlands
Email: hans.bennis@meertens.knaw.nl
4. **Elvira GLASER**
University of Zürich
German Linguistics
Schönberggasse 9
8001 Zürich
Switzerland
Email: eglaser@access.unizh.ch
5. **Cecilia POLETTO** (*Local Organiser*)
CNR Istituto di Scienze e Tecnologie della Cognizione
Università degli studi di Padova
Dipartimento di Linguistica
Via Beato Pellegrino 1
Palazzo Maldura
35137 Padova
Italy
Email: cecilia.poletto@unipd.it

ESF Representative:

6. **Ekkehard KÖNIG**
Frei Universität Berlin
Institut für Englische Philologie, FB 17
Gosslerstrasse 2-4
14195 Berlin
Germany
Email: koenig@zedat.fu-berlin.de

Participants:

7. **Liselotte ANDERWALD**
University of Freiburg
Department of English
Rempartstr. 15
79085 Freiburg
Germany
Email: Lieselotte.Anderwald@anglistik.uni-freiburg.de
8. **Josef BAYER**
Universität Konstanz
Sprachwissenschaft
Universitätsstraße 10
Fach D 191
78457 Konstanz
Germany
Email: josef.bayer@uni-konstanz.de
9. **Paola BENINCA**
Università di Padova
Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia
Dip. Linguistica
Via B. Pellegrino
1 Palazzo Caldura
35137 Padova I
Italy
Email: paola.beninca@unipd.it
10. **Ernestina CARRILHO**
Universidade de Lisboa
Centro de Linguística
Complexo Interdisciplinar
Av. Professor Gama Pinto, nº 2
1649-003 Lisboa
Portugal
Email: e.carrilho@clul.ul.pt



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11. **Guglielmo CINQUE**
Università di Venezia
Dipartimento di Scienze del Linguaggio
Ca'Garzoni, S. Marco 3417
30124 Venezia
Italy
Email: cinque@unive.it
12. **Leonie CORNIPS**
Meertens Instituut (KNAW)
Joan Muyskenweg 25
PO Box 94264
1096 CJ Amsterdam
Netherlands
Email: Leonie.Cornips@meertens.knaw.nl
13. **João COSTA**
Universidade Nova de Lisboa
FCSH, Departamento de Linguística
Av. de Berna, 26C
1069061 Lisboa
Portugal
Email: jcosta@fcs.unl.pt
14. **Magda DEVOS**
Universiteit Gent
Vakgroep Nederlandse Taalkunde
Belgium
Email: magda.devos@rug.ac.be
15. **Hans Werner EROMS**
Universität Passau
Innstraße 25
Nikolakloster Neubau Raum 482
94032 Passau
Germany
Email: eroms@uni-passau.de
16. **Juhani KLEMOLA**
University of Vaasa
Department of English
P.O. Box 700
65101 Vaasa
Finland
Email: juhani.klemola@uwasa.fi
17. **Iliyana KRAPOVA**
Department of Linguistics and Slavic Languages
University of Plovdiv "Paisij Hilendarsky"
24 Tsar Assen Str.
4000 Plovdiv
Bulgaria
Email: iliyana@ulcc.pu.acad.bg
18. **Yaron MATRAS**
University of Manchester
Department of Linguistics
Oxford Road
Manchester M13 9PL
United Kingdom
Email: y.matras@man.ac.uk
19. **Nicola MUNARO**
Università Ca' Foscari
Dip. scienze del linguaggio
Dorsoduro 1453
30123 Venezia
Italy
Email: munaro@unive.it
20. **Nicoletta PENELLO**
Università di Padova
Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia
Palazzo Liviano
piazza Capitaniato, 7
35139 Padova
Italy
Email: nicoletta.penello@unipd.it
21. **Christer PLATZACK**
Lund University
Institutionen för Nordiska Språk
Helgonabacken 14
22362 Lund
Sweden
Email: Christer.Platzack@nordlund.lu.se
22. **Gemma RIGAU**
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
Dept. Filologia Catalana
Edifici B, Campus de la UAB
8193 Bellaterra
Spain
Email: gemma.rigau@uab.es
23. **Johan VAN DER AUWERA**
University of Antwerp - Linguistics (GER)
Center for Grammar, Cognition, and Typology
2610 Wilrijk
Belgium
Email: auwera@uia.ua.ac.be
24. **Øystein Alexander VANGSNES**
University of Tromsø
Department of Scandinavian Studies
9037 Tromsø
Sweden
Email: oystein.vangsnos@hum.uit.no
25. **Helmut WEIß**
Universität Regensburg
Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft
Universitätsstr. 31
93053 Regensburg
Germany
Email: HWei329053@aol.com



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Outside participants:	Age
Anderwald	34
Barbiers	44
Bayer	53
Bennis	52
Carrilho	35
Cornips	43
Costa	31
Devos	55
Eroms	65
Glaser	49
Klemola	46
Kortmann	43
Matras	40
Platzack	59
Rigau	55
van der Auwera	50
Vangsnes	35
Weiss	42

Local participants:	Age
Badan	27
Benincà	61
Cinque	56
Da Monte	34
Garzonio	26
Ghegin	28
Krapova	43
Munaro	31
Padoan	25
Patruno	27
Penello	31
Pescarini	26
Poletto	39
Rasom	26