

Pilot studies in Germany

I intend to study the attitudinal relationship between the German standard (*Standarddeutsch* or *Hochdeutsch*), the City vernacular of Stuttgart (*Stuttgarter Schwäbisch*) and the Dialect in the area surrounding the city of Stuttgart (*Schwäbisch*) (the towns of Reutlingen and Schwäbisch Gmünd) in South-western Germany. The aim is to examine whether the standard and/or the city vernacular has either overt or covert (or both) prestige in the area.

How do I lure out the folk linguistical 'reality' in South-western Germany?

To get acquainted with the folk linguistical *landscape* of the region, as well as completing the design for the main study, I conduct some pilot studies. One part of these consists of ranking lists – the Label Ranking Task (*LRT*). Test subjects are asked to name and rank as many German varieties they can think of. Three studies have already been carried out (very small scale): one amongst my German colleagues (9 subjects), one in a university class in Freiburg (17 subjects), and one in an education fair ('Science Days' in *Europe Park*) near Freiburg (31 subjects). Another three is planned in the final pilot studies to be carried out with one school class (preferably from *Gymnasien*) from each of the study locations – the test classes.

Analyses of the so far gathered data indicate that 77% rank their own variety in top three in the *LRT*. 50% of German participants name the 'Standard' (*Hochdeutsch*) as their own variety or one of their varieties. As an additional outcome 10 German varieties seem more relevant to the participants since they were mentioned by more than 50% of the participants in at least one of the studies. These 10 are: *Berlinisch*, *Bairisch*, *Schwäbisch*, *Hessisch*, *Sächsisch*, *Hochdeutsch*, *Schweizerdeutsch*, *Badisch*, *Alemannisch* & *Fränkisch*.

Another part of the pilot studies are the Speaker Evaluation Experiments (*SEE*) set to be carried out in the three test classes. The test subjects are presented with two voice samples from Stuttgart, one standardised, and one standardised with a few features of *Stuttgart Schwäbisch*. In these three test *SEE* I intend to manipulate with the design of the questionnaire and the carrying out of the experiment in order to test certain aspects like the division between unconsciously and consciously offered attitudes and maybe 'loosen' the rigid designs of the evaluational scales a bit.

In one test class the subjects are made aware of language differences being the aim of the study, whereas the subjects in the two other classes are kept unaware. This is to control for the effect of the division of the subconsciously and consciously offered attitudes.

In two classes the subjects are presented with 'open' questionnaire where the evaluational scales are replaced by the question: "Was ist dein unmittelbarer Eindruck

von dieser Person?" ("What is your immediate impression of this person?"). This is to see whether a more open approach could be more fruitful in the sense that the subjects get to determine the relevant characteristics for evaluating the individual voice samples. This, however, means that the data will be harder to analyse statistically, but, with thorough analyses using for instance *Grounded Theory* (Strauss & Corbin 1998) and code for phenomenon and conceptualise these in categories fit for statistical analysis, I think this is certainly possible to achieve.

The final part consists of qualitative interviews in one form or another. Here I intend to get the subjects to describe and discuss the linguistical 'landscape' and the stereotypes that are part of this. Listening to the two Stuttgart voice samples is an essential part of this.

In the class, where the subjects are made aware of the aim of the study, I intend to start out with the interview, whereas it is going to be a follow up to the questionnaires in the two other test classes. Starting out with the interview gives the opportunity to manipulate with the voice samples, as in mislabelling them, to see if the participants in the interview notice this and are bold enough to mention it. If they do notice it, and the differences between the two voice samples are not discovered during the *SEE* in the two other classes, this indicates that the differences are there, but they are so subtle that you have to be made aware of them to notice them. If they do not notice the mislabelling I intend to enquire more into the subject before revealing the mislabelling, since this 'not noticing' may be the result of me as an interviewer being too much of an authority to contradict (and an important factor nevertheless!).

In the other two interviews the two voice samples will be used as a starting point for the interview, an 'icebreaker', and a reference point during the interviews.

In the three test interviews I will not have the results of the two questionnaires before interviewing, but I intend to have them for the interviews in the main study.

References

Strauss, A & J. Corbin (1998), *Basics of Qualitative Research* (2nd edition), London, Sage.