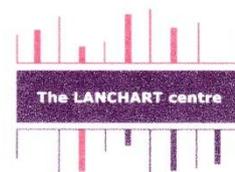


to the D NRF  
board

The Danish National Research Foundation  
for Language Change in North-Tyrol



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Final self-evaluation  
of the D NRF LANCHART Centre  
2005-2014  
with special reference to the  
years 2012-14  
by the director,  
Frans Gregersen

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## Research achievements

The story of the LANCHART Centre evaluations is an exception to the rule of the DNRF carrying out only one mid-term evaluation in addition to the final one. The LANCHART Centre was in fact evaluated twice. For that reason this self-evaluation will differ from the other ones the board will receive.

The first evaluation pointed out that while the panel was in general very happy with the research achievements of the Centre there was at the time a lack of international publications. This was taken as the cue for the next period of the centre's activities and looking back I think the greatest achievement has probably been to internationalize Danish sociolinguistic research so that it is now firmly entrenched in European and American sociolinguistics.

It is a well-known characteristic of the humanities in general that they manifest national differences and harbour geographically different traditions. Linguistics very early in the Scandinavian countries became split between on the one hand the study of the Nordic mother tongues, which was only inter-national in the sense that the Nordic perspective was always within sight but otherwise was dedicated to studying the various languages as the emblems of their respective nation-states, and on the other hand a general linguistics which was naturally born international in a much deeper sense. Since the LANCHART Centre focusses on spoken Danish and the speech communities of Denmark we have in this respect been placed right between the devil and the deep blue sea. We have attempted as best we could to cater for the Danish audience (cf. the publication list, henceforward PL) while making our voices heard - and Danish data and results seen - at the relevant international fora and I am proud to say that we have succeeded in placing the centre as a central player in both arenas.

## Integration of sub-disciplines

The watchword for the centre's empirical work has been *the integration of linguistic subdisciplines in the study of language variation and change*. We have consciously searched for interfaces between phonetics and morphology (cf. PL 371), phonetics and grammar (PL 247), grammar and pragmatics (PL 402), semantics and grammar (PL 387) and last but not least language attitudes and language use (PL 227, 404 among others). This is in so far original that it has not been done on this scale before.

Furthermore, in the work carried out by Tanya Karoli Christensen we have spearheaded a first attempt at theorizing an integration of semantic variation into empirical variationist sociolinguistics (following the early lead of Ruqaiya Hasan).

A substantial part of the work at the centre has been devoted to a critical assessment of the *methodology of variationist sociolinguistics*. We have studied microphones and measurements, the sociolinguistic interview (PL 257), the relationship between apparent time and real time (PL 307), coding as a historical activity (PL 237) and style and genre as determinants of phonetic variation within interviews (PL 359)

Another, still growing, body of work has been concerned with *the theory of sociolinguistics*. It is inevitable that I start this section by paying tribute to the regretted J. Normann Jørgensen whose untimely death in 2013 was a serious set-back not only for us but for Danish research within the humanities in general. Jens had been and still remains pivotal in the rethinking of linguistics as a discipline (PL 32-33), his work keeps inspiring us. To really understand what a conception of language that does not take for granted that language is tied to the nation state would look like, we

have sought for the roots of this essential link. We have also tried to historicize the relationship between language use and societal structures by focusing on historical processes within the nation state and on the metropolis. But most importantly, the Amager group has lived up to the legacy of Jens' work by summarizing the important achievements in a book which has now been delivered to the publishers (PL 83). The book will be an important witness to how much we owe to his inspiration.

### **Language attitudes and language use: exporting the Kristiansen method**

Another distinguishing feature of the Centre is its insistence on the complexity of the links between language attitudes (or language awareness) and language use. The work in this area has been led by Tore Kristiansen and the Kristiansen method of distinguishing between consciously offered and unconsciously offered language attitudes has now been exported to a number of countries. Everywhere it has turned out to be uniquely revealing to carry out experimental studies of the possible difference between what people say when they know this is about language and when they are completely unaware of it being about language. Recent developments include the studies in the UK prepared by Charlotte Sellick as part of her post doc at the Centre. This particular study is coordinated by Professor Peter Garrett and Tore Kristiansen and Pete will be a visiting Professor at the Centre for a month in the winter of 2014. The enthusiastic crowd of researchers making up the international SLICE network is the best witness to the fruitfulness of studying what happens to standard languages and language standards in contemporary Europe.

### **Creating networks**

In 2007 we arranged a workshop at the ICLaVE in Cyprus. In 2009 we organized the ICLaVE in Copenhagen and a workshop at the ICHL in Montreal. In 2012 we organized three panels at the Sociolinguistics Symposium in Berlin and were instrumental in bringing about the Linguistic Ethnography symposium in Copenhagen. In 2013 we organized two panels at the ICLaVE in Trondheim and the second ExAPP in Copenhagen. In short, the LANCHART group is now well-known but for what we are working at and for how we do it. The LANCHART brand is strong.

### **Organization**

#### **The IC, the board and the empirical coordination group**

In the first period of the centre's existence the International Council (IC) was vital for the planning and developing of routines. We had a total of three meetings of the IC. They were all of them extremely fruitful but at the end of the third meeting, the IC itself expressed that it might no longer be necessary for the Centre to arrange such general meetings. Instead the IC recommended bilateral specific cooperative efforts and we have taken this advice to heart. Let me just mention a few examples of several: Two days after I have finished this report there will be a high profile meeting of researchers involved in the specific sub-field of socio-syntax. In connection with this meeting I will meet up with my Dutch colleague Leonie Cornips to finalize the empirical part of a joint paper on the GIDDY project (cf. annual reports). The week after we will have a post doc from Stockholm, Maria Bylin visiting, and the year will end with a month long visit from Professor Peter Garrett (cf above).

During the centre's existence we have coordinated the empirical work in various ways. We started out with large meetings involving the entire group of researchers but pretty soon gave that up in favour of a smaller group of immediately involved group leaders. This has in recent years been supplanted by a much more flexible organization focused on fewer meetings (only when absolutely

necessary) and a much smaller group (only the centre director and his two deputies, Marie Maegaard and Torben Juel Jensen). To my mind this has been a healthy development, we use much more time writing up papers (and teaching) than we use administrating ourselves. In all matters concerning the entire centre we use the list server to inform and stimulate responses to challenges but decisions are taken either by the director or by the director after consultation with the board, i.e. Marie, Torben and Tore Kristiansen.

In order to prepare for the embedding we have simplified also the administrative center so that it now consists of – as it is given in the embedding agreement – an administrator, Sigrun E. Petersen, and IT officer Michael Barner-Rasmussen who has been absolutely essential to the development and continuous renewal of the family of programmes at the centre and finally a part time corpus coordinator, Tilde Ranis, and two part time transcription coordinators, Vanessa Wolter and Kirsten Lundholm Appel. This staff will hopefully continue for many years to come in their various capacities!

### **Building, structuring and exploiting a corpus**

Empirical work at the centre exploits the unique corpus. It is unique in size, at present comprising 935 recordings, equalling ca. 818 hours of speech of which a little more than 670 have been transcribed and committed to the corpus after having been proof read. (Around 148 hours have been transcribed but have not yet been proof read; the number of words in the corpus now total 7.970.341). But it is also unique in both quality (a rigidly adhered to transcription practice and a thorough proof reading system) and structure: the information we have about the informants store in the informant base and the automatic Part of Speech (PoS) tagging and SAMpra phonetic transcription on the basis of the orthographic transcription not to mention the numerous hours put into coding of the various characteristics of the speech samples. Finally, the age range and the time depth match the best speech corpora in the world and will become even better when the new projects have channeled their recordings into the hub.

### **New kids on the block – new projects at the Centre**

In May 2014 the Carlsberg Foundation and the A.P. Møller and wife Chastine Mc-Kinney-Møller Foundation gave me notice that they had granted a sum total of around 11 mio. Danish Kr. for the Project Danish Voices in the Americas. This project is based on the existence of the LANCHART corpus which makes unique comparisons between the Danish spoken outside of Denmark and the Danish spoken in Denmark possible. In June this year the Danish Council for Independent Research within the Humanities granted a total of 6.2 mio. Danish Kr. to Associate Professor Pia Quist's project on *Language and place. Linguistic Variation in Urban and Rural Denmark (LaPUR)*. Here is what it says on the project's dedicated home page:

#### **“Cooperation with the LANCHART Centre**

The data of the Project will be handled in cooperation with the LANCHART Centre. The centre is embedded at the Department of Nordic Research and several of the researchers at the department have worked full time at the centre. The project data will become part of the corpus of spoken Danish at the centre and the department. The handling of the data will comply with the standard set by the disciplines of sociolinguistics and dialectology and the guidelines developed by the centre.”

In November this year Marie Maegaard's project on *Dialect in the periphery* received a 5 mio Danish Kr. grant from the VELUX foundation. I am sure the above is valid for this project as well since Marie Maegaard is not only the director of the VELUX project but also the appointed next director of the embedded LANCHART Centre. With these three projects the continued existence of the LANCHART Centre as an embedded but clearly profiled separate unit is off to a flying start

## Impact

The most significant impact for the LANCHART Centre undoubtedly lies in its function as a training site for researchers. During its existence we have trained three generations of researchers. The first generation includes those young researchers who already had had a scholarship or who got one during the first period from 2005 to 2008. All of these have long ago delivered their theses and are now employed as associate professors (Torben Juel Jensen, Marie Maegaard, Janus Møller, Nicolai Pharao, Søren Beck Nielsen, Christina Fogtmann Fosgerau, Kasper Boye, Lian Malai Madsen and Jacob Thøgersen). Two of the four PhD students who obtained their scholarships when the Centre started in 2006 were female, viz. Dorte Greisgaard Larsen and Malene Monka. As an *à propos* to the ongoing debate on the gender gap in research, they both had two maternity leaves and have both been considerably delayed in their careers for that very reason.

The second generation of researchers got their scholarships either through the centre or in free competition from the Faculty but in both cases I permit myself to entertain the belief that the training at the centre was essential for their success. Again, those researchers who have not had maternity leaves during their PhD studies have finished ahead of those who have. This generation numbers 5 who all of them were among the first group of student assistants to be hired in 2005. Finally, the third generation includes all those who at one time or another have been active at the centre and on its payroll as student assistants. Allow me an observation here: Of the total of 7 Ph.D. students only 2 are concerned with sociolinguistics in the broadest possible conception of this term. The others are active in various other disciplines within the language sciences, e.g. onomastics, general linguistics and the psychology of language.

Obviously, this list does not exhaust the numbers of PhD students supervised by the senior researchers at the LANCHART, Inge Lise Pedersen, J. Normann Jørgensen, Tore Kristiansen and Frans Gregersen. A number of our students have never been involved in variationist research and several of them have other careers: some of them have become researchers, while others are active as high school teachers or at teacher training schools.

Four conclusions from this brief overview: Female careers which include the birth of children are delayed with at least the time it takes to have maternity leave in comparison with those careers, male or female, which do not involve any children. And: A DNRFC Centre is the perfect breeding ground for researchers within a broad field of studies, not only that which it focusses on. The mere familiarity with research sparks the realistic possibility of becoming a researcher. A note on the gender balance: I have mentioned three generations. Of these 16 are women, 7 men; of course, we hired the most talented. And finally, we only had to pay for a small part of all these talented juniors through the grant. The rest were simply able to get their scholarships in competitions at the faculty.

We have in the publication lists and in this self-evaluation as in the annual reports only taken credit for research that was directly paid for by the grant from the DNRFC. Obviously, however, the centre has had the function of a catalyst in many respects, making initiatives possible which would otherwise have been unthinkable. The mere existence of a sociolinguistic centre of excellence has highlighted the discipline, and the numerous student assistants from linguistics, Indo-European studies, audiolopedics, the psychology of language and last, but certainly not least, Danish studies have learned and probably communicated to others that while research is not always sociable fun, it still sometimes may be just that.

## Outreach:

Our formal outreach programme has involved building up an organization which may respond to the many demands from the educational system to get up to date and research based knowledge about spoken Danish. In this the final period we have given the web pages a complete make-over. The result is a much clearer entrance to the knowledge we may provide. One result of this may be that we actually accomplish what we had as a clear goal once we picked our own brains to formulate a vision: To change the attitude to spoken Danish!

One means to do this is the computer game SNAK which was finalized and launched this year and has already been used by a number of teachers to (re)vitalize that part of the subject matter of Danish in upper secondary education which deals with the spoken language. The development of SNAK was financed by the Danish Ministry of Education but the grant covered only the technical side of the game. The content was written by the researchers at the centre as coordinated by Jane Bøll and Lin Solvang.

## The Interaction with the DNRF

I agree with other centre leaders that the grant and the spirit in the DNRF is extremely conducive for developing excellent ideas and testing them. The three words *freedom, freedom and freedom* nicely contrast with what happens elsewhere in the educational and research institutions. Here the watchword seems rather to be CONTROL!

Thus our correspondence with the DNRF has been minimal, i.e. confined mostly to matters of economy, professional (mostly), and effective but first and foremost designed to make life easier for the centre leader. This is much appreciated!

On the other hand, we have not had as much out of the annual visits from the board as we would have liked to. There are two rather simple reasons for this: First of all, the members of the board varied over the years to the extent that we have not seen any one member for more than two consecutive years. This was not helpful for a continuous dialogue and the main burden has been on the director to represent continuity and a sense of development. Fortunately, he has done so. Secondly, we never got critical feed-back, although I learnt later that some of the members present had thought of missed opportunities at at least one particular annual meeting. This would have been helpful for us to know and I would urge the board to institutionalize a section where the chairman or the director sums up what we might call 'the image' of the centre in so many words at the end of the annual sessions. It might be good to know whether the image had been modified or not and whether the image was based on annual reports or visits or other information.