Language Innovation and Change

German-Danish language contact

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• Braunmüller & Diercks:
  ’Hanse Project I’
  The Middle-Low-German influence on
  continental Scandinavian languages.
Research projects

• Fredsted (2002, 2003)

• Language contact in the Town of Flensburg in the 19th century
Research projects

- Divergent language usage among bilingual adolescents
Research projects

- Biliteracy (school children aged 6 – 8)
- ‘Literacy in a second language‘ (L2)
- Funded by Schleswig-Holstein
Research project

- Fredsted, Losch, Rösler, Westergaard (2009 – )
- Multilingualism at the interface between oral and written language
- (adolescents, new and traditional media)
Ole Borch (1675)
Dissertatio de causis divertatis lingvarum

“Nostri Flensburgenses inter Danicam & Germanicam
lingvam ambicunt,
neutri propemodum similes,
qvia utriqve.
Qvod & ad omnia Nationum
diversarum confinia
sollenne.”
What makes this border region interesting linguistically?

- Traditionally bi- or multilingual population
- Multiple language varieties (‘Fünfsprachenland’):
  A) Standard Varieties: German, Danish,
  B) Vernaculars: Low German, South Jutish, Friesian
  C) Contact varieties (historical and contemporary)
- Medial diglossia
- Minorities (Danish, German, Friesian)
- Vanishing vernaculars → language death (South Jutish)
Central Issues concerning language change

• How can we explain language change?

• Evidence from the German-Danish border area.
Language change

1. Language change through internal development
   a. The family three (divergence)
   b. Laws governing processes of change (Werner)
   c. Drift (Sapir)
   d. Altered replication (Croft)
Language change

2. Contact-induced structural change
   a. Convergence (Bossong 2009)
   b. Code switching \(\rightarrow\) language change? (Backus 2005)
   c. Historical studies in language contact (Thomason 2001)
Language change

• Croft (2000): No categorical difference between 1. and 2.:
  • Normal or altered replication
  • Innovation (altered replication) → propagation → change
Does language contact lead to language change?

- No/ perhaps?
- Meisel (2010): 'only anecdotal evidence'
- Poplack & Levey (2010): 'A cautionary tale...‘
In this article we suggest that much of the evidence brought to bear on contact-induced change diachronic as well as synchronic – either fails to demonstrate that change has occurred, and/or if it has, that it is the product of contact and not internal evolution. These issues, together with the possibility that the inherent variability characteristic of all spoken languages may have been mistaken for change, need to be resolved before a contact explanation can be justified.‘ (391)
Does language contact lead to language change?

• Yes!

• Thomason (2001)
  – 'What kind of linguistic changes count as contact-induced?'
  – 'Any linguistic change that would have been less likely to occur outside a particular contact situation is due at least in part to language contact.' (62)
1. Direct importations from a source language

2. Indirect effects:
   a. attrition processes
   b. later changes triggered by earlier (snowball effect)

'anything goes' (given the right social circumstances) and language change is not predictable (2001: 61, 71, 77, 85)
A necessary distinction...

• Not every innovation is a change:

  'an innovation in a speaker’s output is not a linguistic change until it has been agreed on and adopted by some community of speakers.' (Milroy 1992: 221)

• Croft (2000) innovation – propagation – change
Innovations

• ‘Once we become aware of a change, it has already been propagated: its moment of conception, the innovation, is likely to remain shrouded in unrecorded history.’ (Backus 2005: 316)

• ‘The moment of innovation is simply unobservable.’ (Poplack & Levey 2010: 396)

• ? Innovations on social network sites are observable.
Mock variety of learner language (Danish)

Languages involved:

- German
- Danish
- English
- Low German
- Dutch
- Spanish
- Swedish

(20) A → LP: **Hval går?**

**What’s up?** (direct: what goes?)

cf. standard Danish:

**Hvad så?** (direct: what then?)

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hvad d
[ð] (standard Danish)
[ l ] (language learner)
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Example: innovation – propagation?

(21) LS: [...] ...**se pauawörd** has been **schpoken** [...] ist doch alles scheisse!!! **Nau I will täke se** 12 tonner and **vergass mi in se** Garage!! :( [...] ...now it’s official...[...] that sucks!!! **Now I will take the** 12-ton-truck and **gas me in the garage!! :(**

A: i am glad,**schat** you are not in the garage with **se** 12 tonner! For the [...] record(LG du hast noch 12 Stunden dir einen Namen zu ueberlegen, oder **jjj bent uit!!**), week 33 lets go, but **schust se** three **uf os**! Clan meeting! Alles hoechst aegerllich!

i am glad that you are not in the garage with **the** 12 ton truck! For the [...] record(LG you’ve only got 12 hours left to find a name or **you’re out!!**), week 33 lets go, but **just the** three of **us**! Clan meeting! It’s all very annoying!
Methodological issue...

• Quantitative evidence, e.g. type/token relation.

Example: *do*-constructions (Muysken 2000)

The German main verb *machen* (‘make’, ‘put’, ‘do’) whose very broad semantic extension in colloquial German is transferred to the Danish verb *lave* and the South Jutish *lau*. A pupil complaining about his home work:

1. vi ska lau Aufsatz, we must do essay,
2. ja hvæ uch ska vi lau Aufsatz, yes every week must we do essay.

‘We have to write essay, yes every week we have to write essay’
Methodological issue...

• Compare South Jutish:
  ‘vi ska skriu stil, ja hvæ uch ska vi skriu stil’,

• Compare Standard German (colloquial):
  ‘wir müssen einen Aufsatz machen, ja jede Woche müssen wir einen Aufsatz machen/schreiben’.
1. Ok, så skal I nu lav-e mündlich-e Rede
   "Ok, then must you now make direct speech"

   ‘Ok, then you will have to produce direct speech’

• Compare Standard Danish:
  ‘og så skal I bruge direkte tale’,

• Compare Standard German:
  ‘und dann müsst Ihr mündliche Rede machen’.

• *Laue / lave* is used with an extremely high frequency (70 items of *laue*, 34 items of *lave*) substituting other verbs in South Jutish and Standard Danish with more specific semantics and pragmatics.

• It often precedes code switching and creates a morpho-syntactic slot (as object) for an EL-lemma
Transfer from bilingual mode (code-switching) to monolingual mode

1. *Vi laver pause nu* — *SD: Vi holder en pause nu*
   Let us take a break

2. *Jeg laver eksamen* — *SD: Jeg tager min eksamen*
   I pass my examen

3. *Jeg laver kørekort* — *SD: Jeg tager kørekort*
   I take my driver’s licence

Evidence for propagation and change: High frequency combined with an idiomatic use in monolingual mode
Are changes lexically induced?

• Through codeswitching? (Backus 2005)

• ‘The assumption that the lexicon is an essential mediator between conceptualization and grammatical and phonological encoding will be called the lexical hypothesis. The lexical hypothesis entails, in particular, that nothing in the speaker's message will by itself trigger a particular syntactic form, such as a passive or a dative construction. There must always be mediating lexical items, triggered by the message, which by their grammatical properties and their order of activation cause the Grammatical Encoder to generate a particular syntactic structure.’ (Levelt 1989: 181)
Johanson (2002) "structural attractiveness"

A) Certain structural features lend themselves to copying or

B) prove especially stable in the face of an imposing language
Morphological replication
structural attractiveness 1

- Derivational morphology > inflexional morphology

Example:
Import of derivational pre- and suffixes in Scandinavian languages during the medieval age → altered word formation processes
Low German influence 1: lexicon

- Cultural borrowings (trade, craft, administration, sailing, weapon etc.)
- Core borrowings: items of every day life
- Abstracta
- New Low German auxiliary:
  a) *blive* replaces Old Danish *warthæ*
  b) contact induced suppletiv patterns in varieties of Swedish (*bli, varda*). (Dahl 2009: 46)
Low German influence 2: Derivational morphology

• Prefixes:

  be-, an-, ver/for-, und-, veder-

• Suffixes:

  -bar, -agtig-, skab, -eri, -het/hed, -isk, -ske, -vortes.

(Indirect) syntactic effect:

Intransitive verbs of movement (e.g. stige på/op) become a transitive variety (bestige).
Low German influence? 
Inflectional morphology

Definite articles in Scandinavian (13-14th century):

Two grammaticalisation tendencies meet, at least one of them (preposed free article only in West- and South Jutland) show identity with Low German and other West Germanic languages:

S-Jutish:  æ huni,  æ stoe huni
Danish:  hund-en,  den stor-e hund
Swedish:  hund-en,  den stor-a hund-en
Johanson (2002) *structural attractiveness 2*

A) Certain structural features lend themselves to copying or

B) prove especially stable in the face of an imposing language
   Analytic constructions more attractive than synthetic constructions:

**Example:**
Possessive constructions in the minority variety of German in Denmark (Nordschleswigdeutsch)
Possessive constructions in German varieties (structural attractiveness 2)

Standard German:

*Das Grundstück des Nachbarn* (written)
*Das Grundstück vom Nachbarn* (oral)

Flensburg and North Schleswig:

*Nachbars Grundstück*

South Jutish:

Æ nabos grunj

Low German:

*dem N sin G*

(‘garpe genitiv’ cf. Norwegian dialects.)
Parallel constructions preferred by bilinguals (structural attractiveness 3)

Example:

• Determiner in Danish (German-Danish bilinguals)
• The rules of Standard Danish:
• The determiner is a suffix marked for gender and number:
  sing.: -\textit{en}, -\textit{et}, plu.: -\textit{ne}

But:

1) If the noun phrase contains some kind of other determiner (e.g. a genitive or a possessive pronoun) the inflexional suffix marking +DEF must be deleted in Danish.

2) If the noun phrase contains a modifier (an attribute adjective or quantifier), the inflexional suffix marking +DEF must be deleted and substituted by a preposed definite article (as in West Germanic languages like English).
Parallel constructions preferred by bilinguals

Example of insertion of a German composite noun stem in a Danish noun phrase (ML-frame) with a prepositioned definite article (det) in front of an attributive adjective:

‘Slesvig-Holsten altså Sydslesvig er det flotteste bundesland’

‘S-H, I mean South Schleswig is the most beautiful federal state’

Concerning insertions of German nouns in a Danish ML-frame, we find a clear preference for the preposed definite article as in example 2) (104 tokens, 79 types) whereas we only have 17 tokens, 13 types, respectively, of inflexional suffix.
Parallel constructions preferred by bilinguals

This means that not all examples are well-formed or well-integrated in the Danish ML as ‘classic’ code-switching would predict. E.g. we find different kinds of avoiding strategies which omit the obligatory inflexional suffixes.

The most common avoiding strategy is the use of a demonstrative pronoun (*det dér, den dér, de dér*) as a substitute for the inflexional suffix marking +DEF.

In the following example of insertion of a German noun in a Danish ML-frame, we find a Danish demonstrative pronoun, substituting an inflexional suffix:

1. ‘*men hvorfor er dén dér stecker?*’
   ‘but why is this plug?’
Parallel constructions preferred by bilinguals

Bilinguals create a ‘new’ simplified pattern of marking of definiteness in Danish which allow them to use the same pattern of a free, preposed marking of NPs in both languages (German and Danish), i.e. a preposed free article, supplied with a preposed demonstrative pronoun in Danish so that the Standard Danish ‘exception’ of suffix markers of definiteness can be almost totally avoided.
Parallel constructions preferred by bilinguals

- Bilingual speakers create functional, structural and typological transparency: Their contact variety of Standard Danish tends to transform the Danish language from a ‘mix’ of complementary distributed West-Germanic preposed free article and North-Germanic postponed inflexional suffix into a ‘purely’ West-Germanic type of language with a preposed free morpheme of definiteness marking.
Filling a structural gap in the receiving language: Durative aspect (structural attractiveness 4)

Data from monolingual writer in Flensburg:
1853-1856 (Christian Christiansen)

In Danish and South Jutish temporal constructions have different possibilities to express durative aspect (cf. progressive –ing in English)

Danish:  

*Hun er ved at male huset*
She is painting her house

*Hun sidder og strikker hele dage*
She is knitting all day long

*Det bliver ved med at regne*
It keeps on raining
South Jutish durative aspect in Flensburg German, data from the 19th century

• There are numerous verbal constructions in Christian Carsten’s letters with *bei sein* and *beibleiben*.

• This indicates that **he consciously has a category of durative aspects** in his language (comparable to the English *-ing* form):

  1. *Es scheint ja aber so als wenn dieser Winter beibleiben will* (20.2.1853)
     ‘It seems as if this winter is going to continue’.

  2. *Nun bin ich bei von meinen Brantwein zu verkaufen* (26.6.1853)
     ‘I am selling some of my spirits’.

     ‘If the steamers continue to sail from Hamburg to England’.
1. *Mit unseren Rademacher gesprochen, der ist bei und machen eine Zeichnung* (22.3.1854)
   ‘Have talked to our wheeler, who is making a drawing’.

2. *Jetzt sind wir bei und lassen eine Einrichtung machen* (3.11.1854)
   ‘Just now we are making an installation’.

3. *Wir sind jetzt bei von den alten Vorrath auszuräumen* (29.5.1856)
   ‘We are removing the old supplies’.

4. *Wir sind jetzt schon bei den Schiffer auf den Hause zu legen* (27.9.1856)
   ‘We are slating the roof of the house’.
A) Certain structural features lend themselves to copying or

B) prove especially stable in the face of an imposing language