

Kurzfassungen | Abstracts

Eröffnungsvortrag | Opening lecture

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Lexical lectal variation from a cognitive linguistic point of view

A major line of research within the Quantitative Lexicology and Variationist Linguistics research group at KU Leuven is the development of ‘cognitive sociolinguistics’ (cf. KRISTIANSEN/DIRVEN 2008 and GEERAERTS et al. 2010): we introduce models for semantic description developed in Cognitive Linguistics (like entrenchment and prototypicality; see GEERAERTS 2010 b and GEERAERTS/CUYCKENS 2007 for background) into quantitative, usage-based studies of lectal variation. In this talk, I will present an overview of the way in which this research program has been and is being developed, with a specific emphasis on the incorporation of geographic variation (cf. GEERAERTS 2010 a). The talk consists of three main parts.

The first part introduces the **theoretical background**, with a double focus. First, it is shown how the usage-based nature of Cognitive Linguistics contrasts with more traditional, system-oriented approaches, with a concomitant methodological preference for non-elicited language data. Second, I will explore how the prominent role attached to meaning in a Cognitive Linguistics framework can be translated into a set of requirements and suggestions for variationist research.

The second part takes a methodological perspective, describing the way in which we have translated the theoretical starting-point into a **lexical lectometrical method**, based on the notion of ‘onomasiological profile’ (GEERAERTS et al. 1999). Methodological extensions include the incorporation of multidimensional analyses (SPEELMAN et al. 2003), of measures of near-synonymy (RUETTE et al. submitted), and of smoothing algorithms (GRIEVE et al. 2011).

The third part surveys the **descriptive achievements** of the approach, ranging from our research into the convergence and divergence between Netherlandic Dutch and Belgian Dutch (GEERAERTS et al. 1999), over the stylistic stratification of Belgian Dutch (SPEELMAN et al. 2006) to the dialectological studies (SPEELMAN/GEERAERTS 2009 and GEERAERTS/SPEELMAN 2010) in which we used the data of the *Woordenboek van de Limburgse Dialecten* to investigate to what extent lexical heterogeneity is determined by concept characteristics such as fuzziness and entrenchment.

To conclude, I will present some of the possibilities that we are currently envisaging for further extending the research programme.

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- GEERAERTS, DIRK / HUBERT CUYCKENS (eds.) (2007): *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics*. New York.
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- SPEELMAN, DIRK / STEFAN GRONDELAERS / DIRK GEERAERTS (2006): A profile-based calculation of region and register variation. The synchronic and diachronic status of the two main national varieties of Dutch. In: ANDREW WILSON / DAWN ARCHER / PAUL RAYSON (eds.): *Corpus Linguistics around the World*. Amsterdam, 195–202.