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ABSTRACT

While the concepts of language continuum and diglossia are widely cited and discussed, they remain generally vague and are used in different ways by different linguists. Recent sociolinguistic research on Dutch-speaking Belgium provides a framework for examining the two concepts, a context for proposing a theoretical definition for language continuum, and a context for examining Fasold's distinction between "broad" and "leaky" diglossia. Results of a macrosociolinguistic study of language behavior in two western Flemish towns lead to the conclusion that, at least in the mind of the language users, there is no language continuum in the common sense of the term, and the situation is diglossic. Information gathered in such macrological research requires the complementary micrological research in order to be complete, but macrological studies are also necessary to establish the specific needs for micrological research. (MSE)

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THE INVESTIGATION OF "LANGUAGE CONTINUUM" AND "DIGLOSSIA":
A MACROLOGICAL CASE STUDY AND A THEORETICAL MODEL

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Résumé / Abstract

Bien que les concepts de continuum linguistique et de diglossie soient largement utilisés et discutés, ils n'en restent pas moins vagues et employés de façon différente par différents linguistes. Dans la première partie de cette communication ces deux concepts sont examinés dans le cadre des recherches sociolinguistiques actuelles portant sur la Belgique néerlandophone. Une définition théorique du continuum linguistique est proposée, alors que pour la diglossie la distinction de FASOLD (1984) entre diglossie "large" et diglossie "perméable" est discutée et adoptée. La seconde partie commente les résultats d'une enquête macrosociolinguistique sur le comportement langagier déclaré de locuteurs de deux villes ouest-flamandes, Oostende et Diksmuide. La conclusion est que, dans l'esprit des usagers en tout cas, il n'existe pas de continuum linguistique, dans le sens habituel de ce terme. La situation est donc diglossique. Il est évident que le type d'enquête suivie ne peut nous apporter des réponses qu'au niveau macrologique. Une vue détaillée et explicative ne sera possible qu'après que les composants micrologiques auront été ajoutés. Mais l'information macrologique est nécessaire en vue d'établir quelle sorte d'enquête micrologique devra être poursuivie.

The relation of macro- and micrological approaches in language-in-contact-situations is hardly different from what it is in any sociolinguistic analysis or investigation. As Fishman has stated "micro- and macro-sociolinguistics are both conceptually and methodologically complementary" (FISHMAN 1972b, 31). The question to be debated, therefore, is not which approach is "better", but which specific problems require which specific procedures. Micro and macro being complementary, it is problem specifications which should determine the selection of methods. Hence a theoretical debate is possible on which procedures in fact belong to the micro- or macrological level of analysis (BREITBORDE 1983) and which procedure is supposed to be most fitting in specific cases of language/dialect-in-contact-situations. But even here I favour an ad hoc procedure which lets problem specifications determine what to do. My working hypothesis then is that generally macrological procedures should provide an overall framework, whereas a more refined analysis of the situation may be brought about as a result of a combination of various micrological investigations. I will try to demonstrate this methodological assertion by discussing a case study.

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In order to contribute to the general theme I should like to analyse the code-in-contact-situation in a particular part of the Dutch language territory, viz., the Belgian province of West-Flanders, where the local dialect interacts not only with the standard language but presumably also with other, intermediate variants. An inquiry in this respect was carried out at the end of 1983 (for details, see WILLEMYNS 1985) and it is hoped that this case study will yield some generally useful results as to today's theme in particular and to the overall theme in general.

In a previous paper (WILLEMYNS 1984c) I distinguished, for the Flemish community as a whole, between five codes. Undoubtedly these five codes are present in West-Flanders as well but their status and interactions may be quite specific, the very strong position of the local dialect being one of the peculiarities of the particular situation there. Debating the question "why do localized codes persist", Susanne Romaine states that "the conditions of maintenance should be established on a macro-basis and the question why answered on a micro-basis" (ROMAINE 1984).

Since the "question why" can hardly be answered without the "conditions of maintenance" having been established, it is obvious that our case study should be a macro one.

Any kind of analysis of the contact situation in a particular region is bound to bring up the problem of diglossia and, consequently, of the "language continuum", two macro concepts which, in their turn, will also necessitate micro investigations in order to be fully clarified. They have in common that they are widely used and discussed yet remain vague and are often used in a different way by various linguists. Both terms are obviously linked together since in a "classical" so called "dialect-standard"-community it is assumed that:

- a) more codes exist than only pure dialect and standard language,
- b) the different codes constitute a continuum, the two extreme poles of which are dialect and standard; yet all the codes overlap as well. A typical example of this is Ammon's description of the Swabian situation (AMMON 1977).

If particular functions may be assigned to particular codes, however, it is questionable whether we are still in the presence of a normal "dialect-standard"-situation or whether it is rather to be labelled a diglossic one. Since diglossia is indeed a rather disputed term it may be useful to examine it in more detail.

Diglossia was introduced into linguistics by FERGUSON (1959):

"Diglossia is a relatively stable language situation in which in addition to the primary dialect of the language, which may include a standard or regional standard, there is a very divergent, highly codified, often grammatically more complex superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and

respected body of literature, heir of an earlier period or another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary communication" (336).

Ferguson, in this respect, speaks of L and H varieties (Low and High) and gives examples of such diglossic communities as the Arab Community, Greece and German-speaking Switzerland.

This definition, explicit as it may seem, gave rise to widespread misunderstandings and/or different interpretations. This accounts for our finding, in more recent publications, of definitions hardly matching Ferguson's at all.

The "Glossary" in TRUDGILL (1984) terms diglossia as:

"A language situation in which two very different varieties of a language are used for complementary functions, a 'high' variety normally used for written and formal purposes and a 'low' variety for ordinary conversation" (575).

A similar definition is to be found in HAMERS-BLANC (1983):

"Diglossie: situation linguistique relativement stable dans laquelle deux variétés d'une même langue ou deux langues distinctes sont utilisées de façon complémentaire, l'une ayant un statut socioculturel relativement supérieur à l'autre dans la société" (450).

They add moreover:

"Mais insistons sur le fait que, pour qu'il y ait diglossie au sens strict du terme, il est nécessaire que la répartition des usages de H(aut) et de B(as) soit complémentaire et institutionnalisée" (ib., 239).

Both definitions are quite "generous" in that they allow for many more situations to be labelled diglossic than would be possible in Ferguson's view. This generosity is brought about by the eagerness of many linguists after 1959 to extend Ferguson's definition so as to be able to use a handy concept in many situations originally not meant to be labelled that way (GUMPERZ 1961 and 1971).

One of the important changes in Trudgill's definition is the inclusion of the word "normally" implying that H can occasionally be used in informal situations and L in formal ones.

Yet, so broadening the scope of the definition gives rise to a number of complementary problems, the major one being the question whether the situation described is supposed to occur within the same category of speakers or whether there is some social stratification.

In other words, could it be possible for this kind of diglossia to occur only in the lower classes of the population (cfr. MEEUS 1979), whereas higher classes only display some kind of style shifting in formal vs. informal situations? Although these questions require a complementary micrological treatment, I shall briefly comment on them further on in this paper.

Post-Fergusonian research, moreover, reveals that a diglossic situation may be far less stable than Ferguson apparently thought it was. "Les rapports entre H et B évoluent sous la pression des changements sociaux et des rapports entre les groupes" HAMERS-BLANC (1983, 239) quite correctly observe.

GUMPERZ (1964) is one of the first instances to establish that diglossia is not only to be encountered in multilingual societies with several "official" languages, nor only in societies using a more classical and a more popular variant of the same language, but also in linguistic communities displaying different dialects or functionally determined linguistic variation of any kind.

Fishman, for one, terms diglossia a form of coexistence of two (or more) languages or language varieties, the social class values and class-bound functions of which are complementary (FISHMAN 1967 and 1971). This may have been the reason why BAETENS BEARDSMORE (1982, 33) lists FLANDERS as a diglossic community and why many other Flemish linguists agree with him (WILLEMYS 1984b). As a matter of fact the definitions listed above allow for a great many applications. Yet other linguists (e.g. HUDSON 1980) are not very happy with these extensions of Ferguson's definition. Since there is no reason to discuss the point of view of both sides once more, I am going to focus on only one aspect which will appear to be very valuable when going into the case study which is to follow.

Fasold suggests that "everyone agrees that H speech is used in formal, public settings and L in informal, private ones" (FASOLD 1984, 52) but he also, quite rightly, points out that diglossic situations must not necessarily remain unchanged:

"if there is substantial leakage of the H or L varieties into the functions of the opposite variety, this is usually a sign of the incipient breakdown of the diglossic relationship" (ib.).

Since leaky diglossia occurs more often than is usually acknowledged it seems proper to quote Fasold's definition of what he calls:

"BROAD DIGLOSSIA, i.e. the reservation of highly valued segments of a community's linguistic repertoire (which are not the first to be learned, but are learned later and more consciously, usually through formal education), for situations perceived as more formal and guarded; and the reservation of less highly valued segments (which

- a) the speaker is aware of which particular code is appropriate in any particular situation;
- b) the speaker masters every code of the theoretical continuum of his language.

This sum of codes available in a community constitutes the totally available linguistic competence and it may be assumed that, the more codes a speaker masters, the easier it will be to cope with any situation, i.e. to switch to the appropriate code in appropriate circumstances. Communicative competence defined in this way now ought to be introduced into the continuum as an instrument, i.e. into the refined, pluridimensional continuum, thus enabling us to combine in some way both the concepts of continuum and diglossia. To achieve this result micro- and macro- level elements should be combined.

I should like to demonstrate this model using information yielded by the Flemish situation.

A bilingual — or diglossic — native speaker, e.g. someone who was socialized in the local dialect and managed afterwards to acquire an excellent knowledge of the standard language, displays some kind of stylistic variation in both codes. In other words, he is able to use both dialect and standard language in formal as well as in informal circumstances, adapting these codes accordingly. This view strongly opposes a view which has recently become more and more popular, that dialect is in fact reserved for informal and standard language for formal communicative interactions.

In our model we can thus discern:

D_1	D_2	S_1	S_2
$\begin{bmatrix} + \text{ dial} \\ + \text{ formal} \end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix} + \text{ dial} \\ - \text{ formal} \end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix} - \text{ dial} \\ + \text{ formal} \end{bmatrix}$	$\begin{bmatrix} - \text{ dial} \\ - \text{ formal} \end{bmatrix}$

S is here to be understood as a more or less southern standard, i.e., in the words of T'SOU (1980) as a "regional standard".

But we should also take into account the more or less small group, mostly consisting of intellectuals, which also masters the so-called "superposed variety" (Baetens Beardsmore 1983), i.e. the standard language of the entire Dutch language community which, in its southern form, is northerly flavoured in that it is the same standard as used in Holland, minus some highly marked phonological and (mostly) lexical features (WILLEMYNS 1984c).

This code may be labelled \mathbb{I} and it may be assumed that characteristics of \mathbb{I} will be:

\mathbb{I}
$\begin{bmatrix} + \text{ super} \\ + \text{ formal} \end{bmatrix}$

Σ may also be looked upon as the "norm" of the language, i.e. something striven for, yet usually not achieved or performed by the majority of the members of the community (WILLEMYSNS 1984a).

A Σ with a [- formal] feature may theoretically be possible but is very unlikely to actually occur in the Flemish situation.

The most elaborate form of communicative competence then should be to actively master all of the five codes mentioned so far. An acceptable and workable communicative competence on the other hand could do without both Σ and D_1 . The average bilingual — or diglossic — native speaker probably will display an active knowledge of D_2 and S_1 , to which often S_2 may be added.

The native speaker not possessing a workable knowledge of an S-variant will nevertheless display some diglossic variation according to circumstances and will therefore need a specific code to cope with so-called H-settings. I shall label this code "vernacular" (V), likely to have the following characteristics:

$$V_1$$

$$\left[\begin{array}{l} + \text{vern.} \\ + \text{formal} \end{array} \right]$$

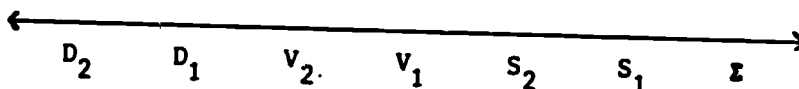
Generally speaking another V should be more common:

$$V_2$$

$$\left[\begin{array}{l} + \text{vern.} \\ - \text{formal} \end{array} \right]$$

but V_1 has, of course, a specific function in the population mentioned above.

The overall scale of the linguistic continuum may therefore be represented as follows:



but an individual communicative competence reaching from one pole to the other is rather unlikely to occur.

The slowly increasing group of native speakers having no active command of the local dialect is supposed to have a minimal competence of S_1 and S_2 or V_2 and S_1 , but the combination most specific for a large body of Flemings should comprise D_2 , V_1 and S_1 (or Σ).

Non-standard speakers, on the other hand, could be limited (for a small, uneducated and ageing group) to $D_1 + D_2$ or $D_2 + V_1$.

The Flemish community as it exists today should therefore not be regarded as a "linguistic community" in the sense of WEINREICH, LABOV, HERZOG (1968) "sharing an identical set of norms", but rather as a "colingual community", defined by YNGVE (1975) as:

"characterized by one or more linguistic features or items that serve to define the community and to set it apart from others" (11),

the specific feature then being that several particular portions of the population each covers a particular range of the continuum in a way not occurring elsewhere.

Although I am convinced that this may be the most appropriate way to describe the Flemish linguistic situation as a whole, it occurred to me that there is one question I didn't consider then (and which, as a matter of fact, is but seldom if at all considered by others) namely whether this continuum also exists in the minds of the speakers or whether this is "mere analyst's play".

This issue appears to be extremely important since the investigation to be reported reveals that in the region under consideration the respondents usually are quite aware of which code they intend to use and that, in their view, the alternatives are in fact reduced to only two, i.e. [+ dialect] or [- dialect].

Their production of [- dialect] may, from the linguist's point of view, be situated at quite different places on his theoretical continuum, but these considerations are hardly relevant to the language user himself. According to various circumstances such as age, level of education, place of residence, occupation, etc. ... of the speaker, the output may vary from what I termed "transliterated dialect" to "standard Dutch" (WILLEMYS 1984c, 62-63) and yet his intent remains unchanged, i.e. to use a code which in his view is merely [- dialect].

I don't suggest, of course, that some speakers may not realize that there are various alternatives in rendering a [- dialect] code but simply that they experience a clear gap between [+ dialect] and [- dialect].

For the linguist the only possible conclusion to be drawn from this state of mind of most speakers of Westflemish is that they simply do not experience a continuum. Consequently the linguistic situation involved must be termed diglossic, even according to the most narrow of definitions of diglossia one might imagine.

I intend to prove the probability of this hypothesis by discussing figures drawn from two investigations on reported behaviour.

The case study referred to is based on an investigation carried out at the end of 1983 in the Westflemish towns of Oostende and Diksmuide.

The questionnaire used was a slightly revised version of the one I used for the first time in WILLEMYNS (1979).

In each town 144 respondents were interviewed (n = 288) who can be classified according to the following variables:

sex : 144 male and 144 female respondents
 age : 96 young people (15-20 years of age)
 96 adults (30-45 years of age)
 96 older people (55+)
 Education level : 96 L
 96 M
 96 U

A list of settings or domains (cfr. appendix) was submitted to the respondents who were asked to state which of the following three variants they normally use under the circumstances described:

A : the local dialect
 B : an intermediate variant
 C : standard Dutch

This classification was also taken from WILLEMYNS (1979) and the investigators tried to explain beforehand the exact difference between the three codes as clearly as possible to the respondents.

The results of the investigation were classified along the age and education variables. Sex had to be ruled out since, contrary to what may be learned from various foreign investigators there seems to be no significant difference at all between male and female informants.

The S.E.S.-variable was restricted to level of education since previous studies have revealed that this is the only relevant and most distinctive aspect of social hierarchy in a Flemish linguistic context (WILLEMYNS 1979), the more so since I was somewhat intrigued by the following remark of Meeus's (1979):

"For the total population (of Flanders i.e., RW) we should, according to our data, accept the functional differentiation of language behaviour and the existence of diglossia. If, however, we subdivide the population, diglossia becomes very unclear and language behaviour will be functionally differentiated along different lines ... for the lower educational levels no indication of the existence of diglossia is to be found" (341).

The questions were subdivided, as usual, according to the formality of the situation they refer to:

[- formal] : questions 1 to 7
 [± formal] : questions 8, 10 and 12
 [+ formal] : questions 9, 11, 13 and 14

A general overview of the outcome (in percentage) is to be found in table 1 which was used as the input to Graph 1.

The first figures to be discussed need neither chart nor graph since they are so clear that the facts speak for themselves. I am referring to the dialect mastery of the respondents: 98% of them appear to speak the local dialect, which means that dialect mastery is complete.

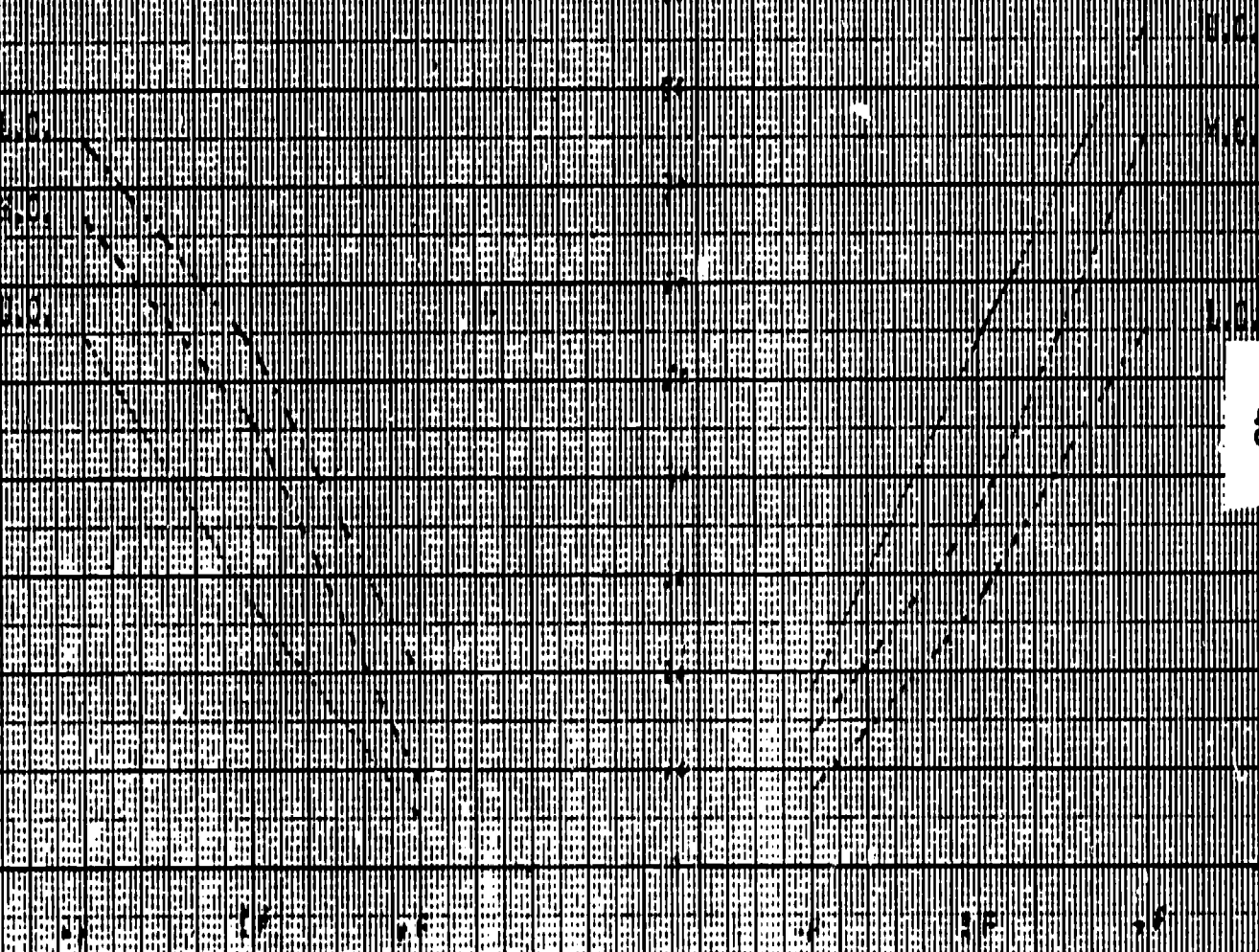
With regard to diglossia this is a very useful and significant piece of evidence, since it proves that the code which is considered to be one of both extreme poles of the continuum is indeed at the disposal of everyone. It will be more difficult and more delicate, however, to find out whether they also have a command of the second one and to eventually indicate what it is like and how, where, when and by whom it is used.

Let us therefore have a look at the exact figures.

Table 1: The use of the different codes (in percentage)

	Overall	Young	Ad.	Older p.	L.C.	M.C.	U.C.
A	65,5	70,8	62	64	75,2	67	54,1
[- formal] B	20,7	14,6	21,6	25,3	16,1	18,7	27,7
C	13,7	14,5	16,4	10,5	8,7	14,3	18,3
A	42,1	41,6	45,7	38,7	53,9	45,6	26,6
[± formal] B	18,9	15,2	19,5	23	19	18,5	19,2
C	39	43,1	34,6	38,7	27,1	35,9	54,1
A	11,8	12,8	11	11,5	20,4	9	6
[+ formal] B	16,2	9,4	13,5	25,3	25,2	15,4	8
C	71,9	77,8	75,5	63,2	54,5	75,5	86

CHART 1



DIALECT USAGE

STANDARD ENGLISH USAGE

As far as the education level is concerned there appears to be quite a discrepancy between the extremes. In [- formal] settings dialect is used by 75,2% of the LC informants. UC informants on the other hand use dialect in only 6% of the [+ formal] situations. We have a still more convincing case when changing the angle: in [+ formal] situations U.C. use standard in 86% of all cases, whereas only 8,7% of the L.C. use standard in [- formal] situations. This means that there is a gap from "almost always" to "almost never". It should be stressed that I am not now comparing the incomparable since my point is that there is a considerable discrepancy between the behaviour of one group in certain circumstances and of a different group in different circumstances. It moreover appears from all data according to the educational level variable that nobody always uses the dialect and that nobody never speaks standard language. At first sight this may seem to be an argument denying the diglossic character of the situation but for the time being I only want to use this outcome to demonstrate that everyone indeed has at least two codes at his disposal and that, therefore, the theoretical conditions for the existence of diglossia are fulfilled.

The figures of chart 1 make abundantly clear that code choice is influenced to a very great extent by the formality of the situation. The overall figures show that dialect usage drops dramatically from 65,5% in [- formal] to 11,8% in [+ formal] situations and that, accordingly, standard language usage in the same settings rises from 13,7% to 71,9%. Figures from separate questions are more striking still:

Chart 2 (question II, 13)

	Overall	Young	Adults	Older P.	L.C.	M.C.	U.C.
A	8	8	2	12	17	4	2
B	13	8	7	23	21	12	6
C	79	83	91	65	63	84	92

Chart 3 (question II, 6)

	Overall	Young	Adults	Older P.	L.C.	M.C.	U.C.
A	85	88	80	86	94	88	73
B	14	10	18	14	4	10	27
C	1	2	2	0	2	2	0

The standard language figures are most eloquent of all. No use at all is made of this code in the interaction between friends and acquaintances originating from the same region, even among the U.C. The U.C. behaviour remains consistent in the opposite situation as well. In the setting of question (II, 13) 92% use the standard language. Consistency is also apparent as far as M.C. data are concerned. L.C. results on the other hand are slightly surprising since 17% of these respondents use dialect even in formal situations. Obviously this should be accounted for by a lack of communicative competence.

What can these data add to our understanding of the diglossic character and the way the continuum in West-Flanders is organized? My working hypothesis — as I repeat — is that there actually is no continuum in any traditional sense and I should like now to analyse the data so as to see whether this hypothesis can be "proven". The use made of the B-variant is very significant in this respect (VAN DE CRAEN & WILLEMYS 1983). In the "continuum-theory", B should be characterized in the following two ways:

- a) on the one hand, as a variant which, from a linguistic point of view constitutes the transition from one pole (dialect) to the other (standard), in that it combines dialect and standard language features to a varying extent. In other words this is an attempt at standard language, with a great deal of dialect interference.
- b) on the other hand, as far as code usage is concerned, B is a code which is (or can be) used in situations too formal for dialect, but too solidarity-linked for the standard.

The B-score of the present inquiry is pretty low, as can be seen from the next chart where the present B-score is compared with the outcome of a previous inquiry among university students in 1979 (WILLEMYS 1979).

	L.C.		M.C.		U.C.	
	1979	1983	1979	1983	1979	1983
- formal	32	16	38	19	44	28
± formal	36	19	33	19	42	19

In 1979 the results of Westflemish students appeared to be considerably lower than the overall results; as a matter of fact they do match more or less the outcome of the 1983 inquiry. At the time I tried to explain this discrepancy by the notion of "distance":

"This means that speakers of those dialects which are considered by many (and most often even by these speakers themselves) as considerably diverging from the Dutch standard language (i.e. the dialects of West-Flanders and Limburg) will

be more inclined to consider their regional Umgangssprache as a dialect, leaving no room for an intermediate variant. This accounts (in both provinces) for a rather substantial dialect usage in [- formal] and an equally substantial standard language usage in [+ formal] domains, as well as for the lowest B-usage of all the provinces" (op. cit. 153-154).

Our present figures confirm this analysis and definitely show, for those regions where the "distance" between dialect and standard language is considerable, a polarization which is incompatible with the idea of a continuum. Our inquiry proves that Westflemings are quite certain what to use in particular situations, i.e. either A or C. The low B-quota are a clear indication that the notion of continuum hardly exists in the minds of Westflemish speakers. Confirmation can be found in the fact that there appears to be a discrepancy between the declared and the actual behaviour of the respondents. It was noted during the inquiry that actually about 44% of the respondents did use the B-code; yet what they declared was considerably lower. This can only be accounted for by the fact that they don't experience a continuum and therefore leave no room for an intermediate variant. They consider their own utterances to be either dialect or standard language, but hardly ever as something in between.

All of the preceding adds to the evidence that our respondents do indeed experience a clear cut gap between dialect and standard language and consequently it is evident that West-Flanders is indeed to be considered a diglossic community.

Yet the stability of the diglossic character in West-Flanders is going to be challenged in the future.

Chart 5 provided us with the answers to the question: "What code do (or would) you prefer to socialize your children in?":

	Overall	Young	Adults	Older p.	L.C.	M.C.	U.C.
A	27,5	36,5	25	21,5	35,5	25	17
B	24,5	15	33	26	23,5	23,5	26,5
C	47,5	48	40	52,5	34,5	50,5	55,5

These figures indicate that less than half the population is opting for the standard language and in the L.C. figures are lower still. Yet an increasing socialization in the standard is bound to change the distribution of function between codes, although it should be borne in mind that even children socialized in some kind of standard language eventually do learn to master the local dialect quite rapidly in some way or another. Yet "leakage of the H or L varieties into the functions of the opposite variety" (Fasold) is bound to increase and a "breakdown of the diglossic relationship" may be expected sooner

or later to align West-Flanders, more or less, with the remaining part of the Southern Netherlands.

Going back to the micro and macro analysis as far as languages or codes-in-contact are concerned, it would seem obvious that here too both aspects are complementary.

Our investigation provides us with some answers to Fishman's famous question "Who Speaks What Language to Whom and When?" The answer to "What Language" is provided by the three codes considered: A, B, and C. These are the possible alternatives. To whom they are spoken can also be understood from the data, since we have a list of domains and know exactly who reports to be using which code in which domains. It would seem that both factors belong to the macro level since they provide us with information about the community as a whole. We are indeed not concerned with individuals but with groups, whose linguistic habits are known to us.

The third question "When" may take us down to the micro level analysis since it is concerned with personal decisions and personal attitudes. It is quite obvious, therefore, that answers to this question cannot be extrapolated as such from the figures, since this is indeed a macro level investigation, providing us with an overall view of the situation at a given moment. Similar investigations may be repeated in time and each new one would presumably yield different data, indicating that there is change in progress. To be fully informed about this change it should be necessary to refine our investigation mechanisms to the level of the individual, i.e. to micro level analysis. Hence it appears that both approaches are complementary indeed and should be used together to yield a fully detailed picture not only of how the situation is but also of to what extent it is changing. Our macro investigation only provides us with a snapshot, a frozen moment in what is to be considered a continuously changing situation.

A similar attitude should be adopted when the item "Why" is added to Fishman's question. Why one uses one code rather than another with a particular interlocutor in a particular situation largely depends on factors such as solidarity and power and on one's attitudes towards particular codes. All of this is susceptible of change which takes place on the level of the individual as well and will depend upon his changing position in several networks. Hence micro and macro elements are to be combined here too.

As stated before, the type of investigation used here will mostly provide us with macro answers. A more detailed and more explanatory picture is only possible after micro components have been added.

Theoretically, a complete picture of the contact situation of a region could be drawn by either carrying out a good deal of micro investigations, completed afterwards by a macro investigation, or the other way round. In practice, I presume, one needs the macro information first in order to establish what kinds of micro investigations are necessary and how they may be carried out.

12. When phoning officials and civil servants you know personally
13. When phoning officials and civil servants you don't know personally
14. When intervening during a public discussion or meeting

III. Which variant do you normally use

- a. when being addressed by a stranger using the local dialect
- b. when being addressed by a stranger using another dialect
- c. when being addressed by a stranger in standard Dutch

IV. Which variant do you or would you prefer to socialize your children in?

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ABSTRACT

A three-year research project which will collect information on the grammar of British dialects is described. The project is part of a larger study of syntactic variation, undertaken to gain insight into the causes of and solutions to linguistic conflict in school. Information is to be gathered in selected schools from the speech of students 11-16 years old and supplemented with responses to questions about parental and grandparental speech. Interest is focused on common features or community usage rather than individual usage. Analysis of the data will permit charting of the distribution of a wide range of grammatical features of British English, development of an atlas of British dialect grammar, and identification of specific regions where more detailed studies of syntactic variation could be carried out most usefully. (MSE)

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A SURVEY OF DIALECT GRAMMAR IN BRITISH ENGLISH

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Résumé / Abstract

Cette communication présente un projet de recherche financé par l'ESRC (Conseil de la Recherche en Sciences Economiques et Sociales) qui durera trois ans de 1986 à 1989 et sera basé à Birkbeck College. Cette enquête a pour but l'analyse de données sur la grammaire des dialectes de l'anglais, données qui seront recueillies par des enseignants et leurs élèves dans des projets de classe sur le dialecte local. L'information sur la grammaire dialectale est importante pour des raisons descriptives et théoriques. Elle est importante également sur le plan éducatif pour les locuteurs des parlers anglais non-standard, qui forment la plus grande partie de la population. Les membres de l'équipe collaboreront avec des chercheurs d'autres pays européens qui travaillent aussi sur les implications pour l'éducation des différences dialectales.

1. Introduction

This paper will describe a 3-year research project which will begin in January 1986 in the Department of Applied Linguistics at Birkbeck College, financed by the Economic and Social Research Council. The project is still at the planning stage, and we would welcome comments on the methodology or on any other aspect of the research.

The project forms part of a wider research programme which aims to analyse variation in language, particularly syntactic variation. At present there are three strands to the research programme, not all of which are equally well developed. We will briefly discuss each strand in turn, and then give a description of the research project.

2. Theoretical aspects of the analysis of syntactic variation

In order to maintain the analytical precision that has been achieved in the study of phonological variation, it would clearly be desirable for the concept of the linguistic variable to be used at higher levels of analysis. There has been some controversy in the literature concerning the feasibility of this (for example, LABOV 1978; LAVANDERA, 1978; ROMAINE, 1981; WEINER and LABOV, 1983). One purely practical problem in attempting to analyse syntactic variation within a quantitative framework is that, in contrast to phonological

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variables, syntactic variables are unlikely to occur with sufficient frequency in any given sample of recorded speech. There are other problems, however, of a more theoretical nature, that have not yet been resolved (see CHESHIRE, forthcoming). For progress to be made in these theoretical issues, there is an urgent need for information on the type of linguistic structures that are involved in syntactic variation. Although there has been a considerable amount of research into syntactic variation in spoken French (for example, the work on the vernacular French of Quebec carried out at Laval University, and the work on Montreal French) there has been very little research into syntactic variation in spoken English.

The survey of dialect syntax that will be described below aims to provide some information of this kind for spoken British English. We hope, therefore, that it will provide a starting point for an informed discussion of syntactic variation in British English.

3. Educational implications of the analysis of syntactic variation

There is considerable variation between standard English syntax and the syntax of the nonstandard varieties of British English. Since the British educational system is based entirely on the assumption that both teachers and pupils will use standard English, a number of problems can be anticipated. First, it is possible that linguistic stereotyping will lead teachers to evaluate dialect-speaking children more negatively than their standard English speaking peers (see J. EDWARDS, 1979; V. EDWARDS, 1979). Secondly, a wide range of bad pedagogic practices are likely to result from inadequate information as to the nature of dialect differences, particularly in the teaching of reading and the correction of children's written work (see V. EDWARDS, 1983; CHESHIRE, 1984).

Clearly a major step in avoiding bad pedagogic practice would be for teachers to become more aware of the nature of dialect differences and of their educational implications. As ROSEN and BURGESS (1980) point out: "The onus is here placed firmly on teachers not only to adopt a positive attitude to dialect, but also to make sufficient effort to learn about the features of dialect to avoid confusing children".

The need for teachers to recognise differences between dialect grammar and standard English grammar has also been given considerable emphasis recently in the DES's pamphlet (1984), which attempts to formulate a consistent language policy for schools. For example, one of the objectives listed for 16-year-old pupils is that they should be aware of the differences between standard English grammar and dialect forms, and use standard English when it is appropriate to do so. However, it seems to us that it is both unfair and unrealistic to place the responsibility for remedying the mistreatment of dialect in school with teachers, when there is no information on dialect grammar available for them to consult.

Again, then, progress on this aspect of syntactic variation is seriously hampered by the lack of information that is available.

4. The nature and the distribution of features of British dialect grammar

From what has been said above it should be clear that information on the nature and the geographical distribution of features of British dialect grammar is essential if the educational problems caused by linguistic conflict in school are to be resolved. Since features of nonstandard English very frequently alternate with the corresponding features of standard English in people's speech, information of this kind may also go some way towards resolving the more theoretical problems that are involved in the analysis of syntactic variation. At the very least, it should allow us to point to those areas of the country where future research into syntactic variation could be fruitfully undertaken. A recent report prepared for the ESRC by EDWARDS, TRUDGILL and WELTENS (1984) surveyed some 200 studies dating back to the beginning of this century and abstracted any information about grammar that was presented either directly or indirectly in the studies. By far the greatest part of this information was derived from discussions of phonology or lexis in which grammar plays only a peripheral role, and the report, in stressing the need for further research into syntactic variation in English, mentioned some examples of linguistic phenomena in British English that are as yet poorly understood (such as, for example, the usage of modal verbs, auxiliaries and semi-auxiliaries). We intend to use the data that will be obtained from the survey to enable us to locate the precise areas of the country where these linguistic phenomena occur.

The survey is not, then, intended to be simply a data gathering exercise, although the gathering of data will inevitably form a major part of the survey. Some other ways in which the data will be used will be mentioned in Section 5.3. First, however, we will describe the methodology to be used in the survey.

5. Methodology

As mentioned in Section 2, a practical difficulty involved in the analysis of syntactic variation is that if analyses are based on recorded speech, as ideally they would be, it is unlikely that the variables under investigation will occur with sufficient frequency, even if specific attempts are made to elicit them. The methodology that we have devised aims to overcome this difficulty, whilst at the same time serving an educational purpose.

We propose to collect information on dialect grammar by working with teachers and their pupils. Such an approach has a wide range of advantages. There is a growing awareness in British schools (more so in some parts of the country than in others) of the educational potential of linguistic diversity, which includes recognition of working-class children's nonstandard dialects (see ROSEN and BURGESS, 1980; V. EDWARDS, 1983; OPEN UNIVERSITY, 1985). A project which focusses on dialect will therefore be likely to receive a sympathetic

reception from a broad cross-section of teachers. Teachers are clearly in contact with young people of all social backgrounds and in all parts of the country. It is thus organisationally feasible to locate large numbers of potential participants who fulfill the various selection criteria which are necessary for the project.

Working with young people of school age does, of course, preclude any study of age stratification of grammar. However, the data that we collect will reflect the current usage of an important proportion of the population and will be a useful counterbalance to the more usual practice of restricting surveys to older informants (see, for instance, ORTON ET AL., 1978). We will supplement information on young people's usage by asking questions about parental and grand-parental speech, though obviously this information will need to be treated with caution.

An undertaking of this kind will necessarily be a collaborative effort between teachers and pupils. This approach to learning departs significantly from the traditional mode, but it is by no means novel or unique, and collaborative learning techniques have attracted a considerable following in recent years. We believe that these techniques are important for a project which centres on non-standard language, for two reasons. First, many teachers will not come from the region in question or will themselves be standard English speakers, so that they will need to call upon the expertise of their pupils. Treating pupils as experts is in accordance with the approach adopted by, for example, RALEIGH (1981), in the Language Book, which is a book designed for use in the classroom:

"Everyone who reads this knows much more about language than can be put in a book. Everyone has managed the amazing job of learning at least one language in so many different ways that even one is a lot. So you're the expert; make sure you tell the others what you know about language and the ways it works".

Secondly, it is essential that discussions of linguistic diversity are handled with care and sensitivity, in order to avoid alienating speakers of nonstandard varieties of English. The material in the ILEA English Centre's (1979) booklet on Dialect and Language Variety, for example, which is designed for use with school children, has been criticised for adopting an 'us' and 'them' approach which does nothing to help those children who have to choose between in-group loyalty and educational participation (see MERCER and MAYBIN, 1981). If dialect is investigated as a joint project, with the pupils seen as the experts, this will not only provide an excellent opportunity for collaborative learning, but will also help to ensure that the topic is treated with the necessary tact and respect.

Finally, collaborative projects are essential for ensuring the reliability of children's responses. Reports of self-usage are notoriously unreliable. We will ask teachers and pupils to discuss the use of the various features as a group, and to respond to questions on community usage rather than on individual usage. We have made preliminary attempts to use this approach with Reading children, where we already have detailed information on local dialect usage and can therefore assess the reliability of pupils' responses. These attempts have been very successful. It would seem that the normative pressures of the group counteract the tendency of individual speakers to deny nonstandard usage (EDWARDS, forthcoming, reviews several studies which appear to have produced reliable results using this approach).

Our intention is to focus on children in the 11-16 age range. Although it has been proposed that sociolinguistic sophistication is seldom fully acquired before adulthood (see LABOV, 1966), it is now understood that even very young children are linguistically aware and are able to discuss linguistic difference in overt terms (see, for example, WILES, 1981; DAY, 1982; ROMAINE, 1984). We would therefore anticipate that young people in this age range would be reliable in their judgements.

5.1 Pilot study

The first stage will be to set up a pilot study, using our existing teacher contacts in four different areas of the country — South Wales, Reading, Peterborough and Manchester. Draft materials will be prepared to be tested by these pilot groups. The materials will include an introductory text, which will provide background information for the teacher, together with suggested topics for class discussion and a checklist of dialect features to be completed by teachers and pupils together. The materials will include requests for information on local sources of written dialects. For instance, there are newspapers in the West Country and in the West Midlands that have a column or cartoon strip in the local dialect. It will be useful to locate this information for the eventual preparation of resource lists for teachers.

During the pilot stage of the project a number of visits will be made to selected teacher groups to discuss the materials and to obtain first-hand information on any problems in their design.

5.2 The main study

Once the results of the main study have been evaluated, teacher contacts will be extended.

Our aim, at present, is to draw on about 400 schools. Although approximately 80% of the population live in cities, we will aim for approximately equal numbers of urban and rural catchment areas, rather than for a representative sample. This will allow us to sample the full range of dialect diversity and also to study questions pertaining to rural-urban interaction. We intend to fill in any gaps in national coverage by contacting schools and HMI's directly.

Each teacher will be asked to work with approximately 25 children. We will require information which will allow us to identify deviant participants, such as those who have moved to the area in recent years, and children whose parents come from different parts of the country or from abroad. We will also ask children to provide their postal codes. In this way we will be able to identify the enumeration district in which they live and to build a social profile for the children in a given school.

5.3 Analysis of the data

Analysis of the data will allow us to chart the distribution of a wide range of grammatical features of British English. We hope to produce a short Atlas of British Dialect Grammar, using the facilities of the Geography Department at Birkbeck College. We hope, too, that once the Survey has been completed we will have obtained a good understanding of the type of material on linguistic diversity that will be of most use as a classroom resource, so that we can begin to provide books and other resource materials that will be suitable for teachers to use with their pupils.

In addition, we expect that the data that we obtain will enable us to identify specific geographical regions where detailed studies of syntactic variation could most usefully be carried out — where, for example, features of particular linguistic interest are most likely to occur. They will, at the very least, allow us to build up a far fuller picture of the dialect grammar of those areas that up to now have received little or no attention. We may well be able to make a useful contribution to the controversial question of dialect levelling. Some writers have claimed that dialect diversity is reducing, and being replaced not simply by standardization but by a development towards a levelled nonstandard dialect. We will also be able to provide some information on the grammatical differences between urban and rural dialects. EDWARDS ET AL. (1984) note that investigations of more socially homogeneous rural and semi-rural areas would redress the current balance of research and might well yield important information on the possible interaction between urban and rural dialects. Although it is unlikely that the Survey will provide sufficient data from rural areas to address these questions directly, it should point to those areas of the country where detailed socio-linguistic analyses of rural-urban interaction could most profitably be pursued.

6. Collaboration with European colleagues

Although there is considerable interest in language awareness programmes in British schools (see STUBBS and HILLIER, 1983), no project similar in scope to this Survey has been undertaken to date in Britain, nor, as far as we are aware, in any English-speaking country. This is in marked contrast with Germany and Holland, where the question of dialect differences and their various educational implications has been examined in considerable detail. As a preliminary to the main stage of the Survey, therefore, we would like to consult colleagues in other countries who have already undertaken research in this area, to exchange information and to establish those elements of their research programmes that would be relevant to our project. Bert WELTENS, at the Katholieke Universiteit in Nijmegen, has already indicated an interest in coordinating a Workshop in the Netherlands to which we would invite colleagues from Belgium, Germany and other European countries. We look forward to an exchange of information and ideas, and in the meantime will be extremely interested to have feedback on the methodology of the Survey or on any aspect of the wider research programme.

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