

**NARNiHS Inaugural Conference**  
**Friday 21 July 2017**  
**University of Lexington (Kentucky)**

**The Present and Future  
of Historical Sociolinguistics**

Stephan Elspaß

# Overview

## **1. From past to present**

- 1.1 When, what and why ...?
- 1.2 Rationale of historical sociolinguistics
- 1.3 Some main topics, concepts and projects in historical sociolinguistics in the new millenium (including a glance at HiSoN activities)

## **2. From present to future**

- 2.1 Focus: Standardisation, normativity and prescriptivism in a view 'from below' – the case of German
- 2.2 Future challenges

## **3. Conclusion**

# 1. From past to present

## 1.1 When, what and why ...?

**When did it all start?** (cf. Auer et al. 2015, Russi 2016 for overviews):

- Weinreich/Labov/Herzog (1968) (English, Yiddish)
- Romaine (1982) (Middle Scots)
- Tieken-Boon van Ostade (1987) (English)
- Mattheier (1988 [and other articles]) (German)
- Milroy (1992) (English)
- Branca-Rosoff & Schneider (1994) (French)
- Jahr (1999) (Norwegian et al.)
- Willemyns & Vandenbussche (2000) (Dutch)
- ...

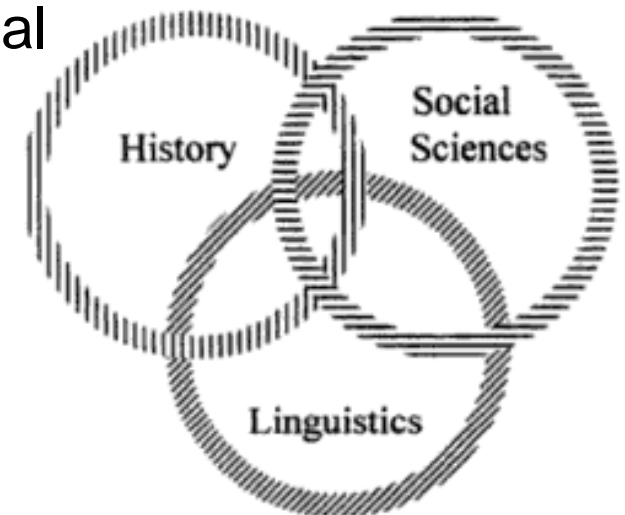
**... and taking off in the new millenium**

# 1. From past to present

## 1.1 When, what and why ...?

### What is historical sociolinguistics all about?

- (new) discipline at intersection of history, social sciences and linguistics, but also „differs significantly from all its three neighbouring fields“
- „Its main focus is language, and its main explanatory aim and interest should be linguistic forces and principles.“
- „It incorporates extralinguistic evidence, data, and theories in order to account for its attested linguistic facts, and it does so in historical time.“ (Bergs 2005: 21)



A model of historical sociolinguistics

(Bergs 2005: 8)

# 1. From past to present

## 1.1 When, what and why ...?

### Why historical sociolinguistics?

→ motives:

- 1) Discontent with traditional (hi)stories of languages
- 2) Unhappiness with dominance of formal approaches to historical linguistics with focus on 'big' languages which have a standard
- 3) Advances in sociolinguistics and (historical) corpus linguistics

# 1. From past to present

## 1.1 When, what and why ...?

### 1) Discontent with traditional histories of languages: German

→ identifying their cultural, sociological and ideological roots

‘I would argue that the language historiography of German until well into the second half of the 20th c. was not interested in an objective description of language reality. Rather, it aimed at convincing its readership of the existence of a specific, unique communication system called ‘German’, a system which is characterised by high structural, semantic and sociological (e.g. literary) standards and which is suitable for serving as a means of constructing or reinforcing identification and of solidarisation in a linguistic-national and cultural-national sense.’

(Reichmann 2001: 533; my transl., S.E.)

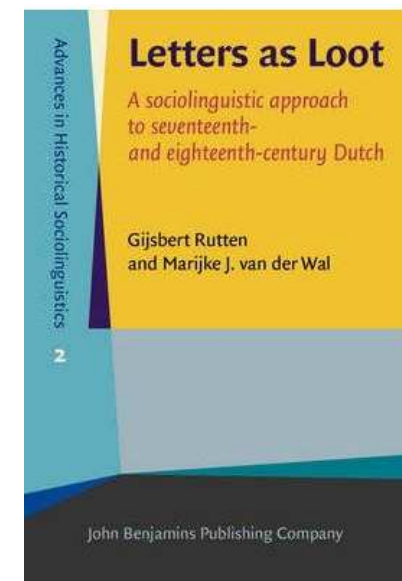
# 1. From past to present

## 1.1 When, what and why ...?

### 1) Discontent with traditional histories of languages: Dutch

→ quest of sociolinguistic approach to language histories

- “The traditional view of the standardisation of Dutch is largely based on the language of printed texts that were mainly written by well-educated upper-class men. Over the centuries, the written language of this small upper layer of society became increasingly uniform, which has given the impression of a standard language gaining more and more ground. [...] Linguistic uniformity was therefore assumed to have been consolidated in the eighteenth century.”  
(Rutten & Van der Wal 2014: 3)



# 1. From past to present

## 1.1 When, what and why ...?

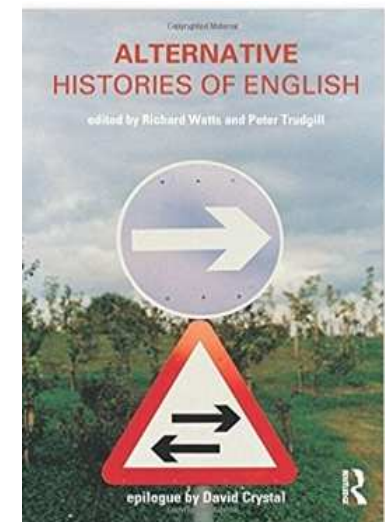
### 2) Discontent with traditional histories of languages: English

→ quest of alternative language histories

- “H.C. Wyld [...] was quite insistent that the only worthy object of our study was Received Standard English. [...] the language of ‘the Oxford Common Room and the Officers’ mess’ is an appropriate object of study, whereas that of ‘illiterate peasants’ is not”  
(Milroy 1992: 51; quoting H. C. Wyld, *A short story of English*, 1927)

- “Most histories of English in use at undergraduate and graduate levels in universities tell the same story. Many of these books are sociolinguistically inadequate, anglocentric and focus on standard English. This leads to a \*tunnel vision version of the history of the standard dialect after the Middle English period.”

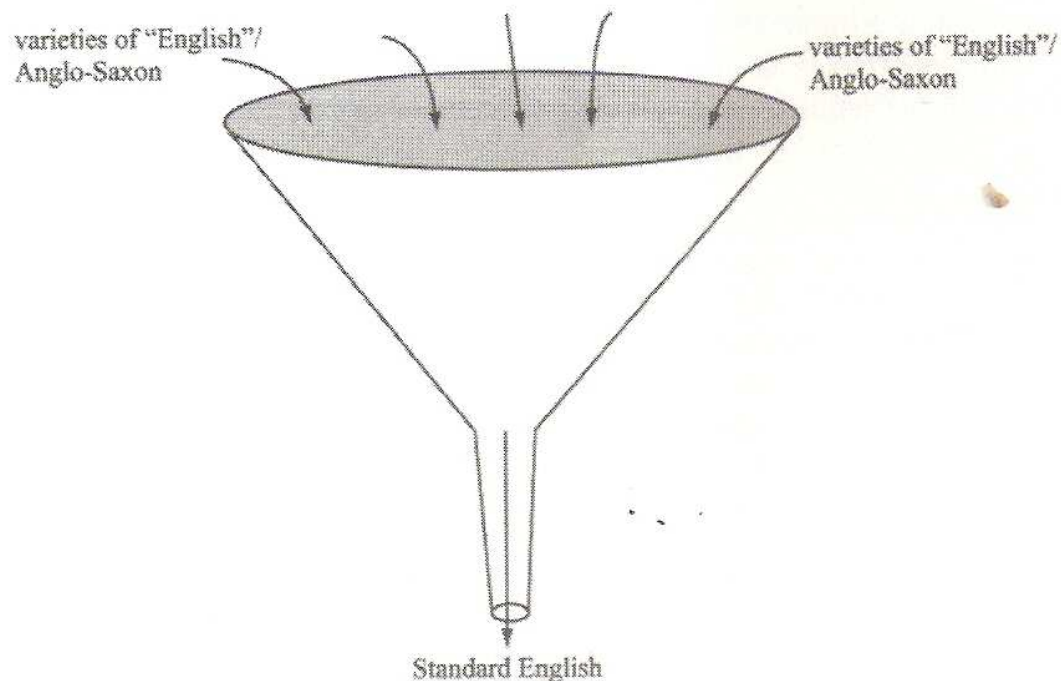
(Watts & Trudgill 2002, blurb)      \* **“funnel vision”** (Watts 2011)





# 1. From past to present

## 1.1 When, what and why ...?



“In reality, the wide top of the funnel is riddled with holes through which other, non-standard varieties of the language drip out, although that, of course, is not part of the conceptualization of the history of the language.”

(Watts 2012: 586)

FIGURE 12.2. The funnel view of the history of a language

# 1. From past to present

## 1.1 When, what and why ...?

### 2) Unhappiness with dominance of formal approaches to historical linguistics with focus on 'big' languages with a standard

- “It is undisputably true that much of descriptive and theoretical linguistics, together with much of historical linguistics, has depended on, or modeled its methodology on, the study of major languages (i.e. widely used ones) in standard language cultures – in which a language has been regarded as existing in a standard, classical, or canonical, form.”

(Milroy 2001: 543-544)

# 1. From past to present

## 1.1 When, what and why ...?

### 3) Advances in sociolinguistics and (historical) corpus linguistics

- “moving from more philological and qualitative approaches to more expert quantitative approaches and/or combinations between them” (Säily et al., in print)
- ... based on new corpora (including hitherto neglected or unknown text sources) and creation of multi-genre corpora accounting for social stratification (e.g. Helsinki corpora of historical English);
- advances in variationist, ethnographic and speaker(/writer)-based studies of sociolinguistic variation (Eckert 2012)

# 1. From past to present

## 1.2 Rationale of historical sociolinguistics

(inspired & partly based on Tony Fairman's 2014 talk in Helsinki)

1. A theory of language variation and change has to incorporate social factors. (cf. Weinreich, Labov & Herzog 1968)
2. The subject matter of historical (socio)linguistics comprises all manifestations of human speech and writing in the past.
3. Since linguists are not able to observe speech in the past directly, they must consider “material as close to actual speech as possible, only in written form”. (Sevič 1999: 340)
4. a. Language in the written medium is manifested in two modes: print and handwriting.  
b. A minority of the written language production in the past is manifested in print. Until the typewriter was invented (1867), language in the handwritten mode manifested everyone's writing.

# 1. From past to present

## 1.2 Rationale of historical sociolinguistics

(inspired & partly based on Tony Fairman's 2014 talk in Helsinki)

5. Only a minority of speakers in each language community speaks and writes a form of language which may be called a (formal) 'standard', and they do so in only a minority of their communicative practices.
6. Throughout the late modern period, linguists have based histories and grammars of language mostly on data from formal or literary language in the written medium – i.e. on edited ('purified') texts from print, mostly authored by men from the higher ranks of the societies.
7. Most textbook histories of Western languages are highly teleological, focusing on national languages and on processes of standardisation.
8. Most such textbook histories of Western languages are driven by ideologies such as 'standard language ideology', which try to legitimise the standard varieties (cf. Milroy 2001).

# 1. From past to present

## 1.2 Rationale of historical sociolinguistics

What's missing or neglected in most accounts of language histories?

- in general:
  - attention to heterogeneity of textual traditions
  - impact of social factors on variation in the past and change
  - attention to contact between languages, dialects and their role in language change
  - reflection of the role of language ideologies

# 1. From past to present

## 1.2 Rationale of historical sociolinguistics

e.g. history of German:

*Old High German*  
(c. 750–1050)

*Middle High German*  
(c. 1050–1350)

*Early New High German*  
(c. 1350–1650)

*Middle New High German*  
(c. 1650–1950)



German as ...

(cf. Fleischer/Schallert 2011: 26–27)

**“the language of the monasteries”**

(religious texts, glosses...)

**“the language of the courts”**

(medieval literature ...)

**“the language of the cities”**

(chancellery texts, Luther...)

**“the language of the bourgeoisie (in print)”**

(MNHG literature ...)



(by courtesy of Simon Pickl)

# 1. From past to present

## 1.2 Rationale of historical sociolinguistics

example: sentential negation in history of German – traditional view:

*Old High German*  
(c. 750–1050)

*ne*

(religious texts, glosses...)

*Middle High German*  
(c. 1050–1350)

*ne + niht*

(medieval literature ...:  
edited texts from 19th c.!)

*Early New High German*  
(c. 1350–1650)

*niht*

(chancellery texts, Luther...)

*Middle New High German*  
(c. 1650–1950)

*nicht*

(MNHG literature ...)



(by courtesy of Simon Pickl)



# 1. From past to present

## 1.2 Rationale of historical sociolinguistics

example: sentential negation in history of German – new results:

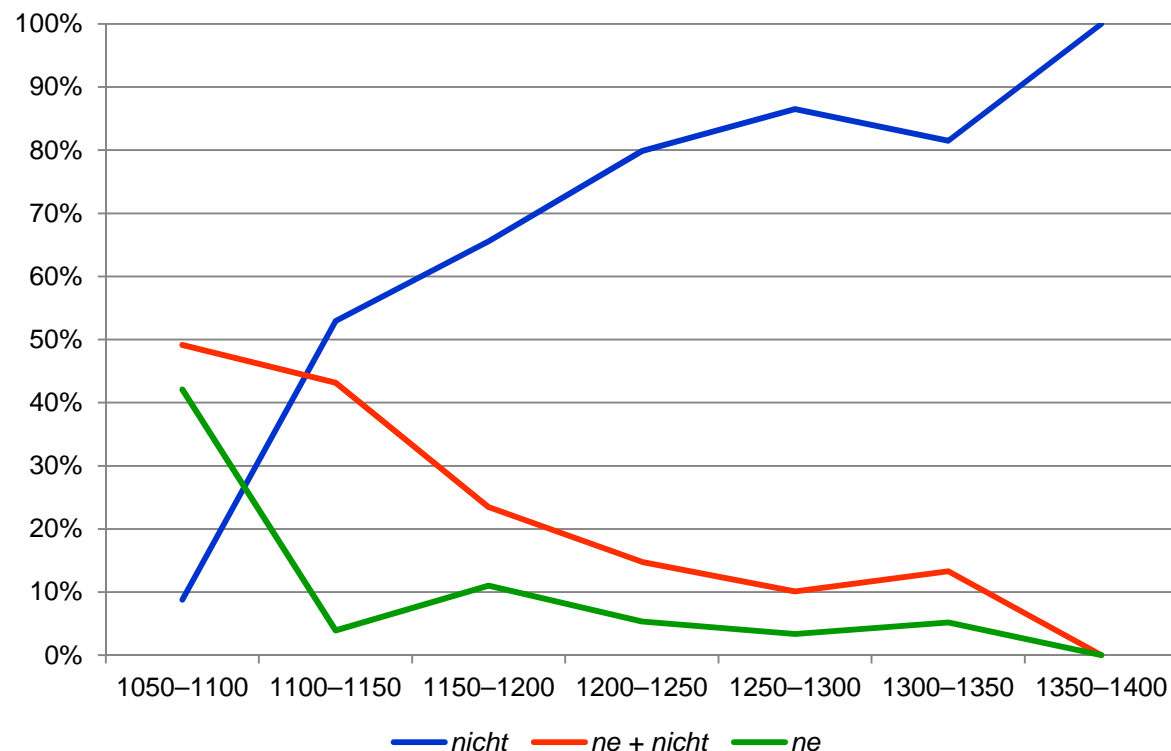
*Old High German*  
(c. 750–1050)

***Middle High German***  
(c. 1050–1350)

*Early New High German*  
(c. 1350–1650)

*Middle New High German*  
(c. 1650–1950)

Pickl (2017), based on corpus of **sermons**:



# 1. From past to present

## 1.2 Rationale of historical sociolinguistics

What's missing or neglected in most accounts of language histories?

- in general:
  - attention to heterogeneity of textual traditions
  - impact of social factors on variation in the past and change
  - attention to contact between languages, dialects and their role in language change
  - reflection of the role of language ideologies
- for the *modern* period:
  - attention to orality and oral registers
  - voice of the 'common people'
  - role of 'non-standard' ('deviant', 'not correct', 'bad' or 'corrupted'..) varieties and variants in standardisation processes

# 1. From past to present

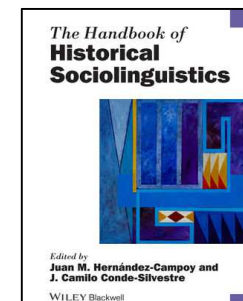
## 1.3 Some main topics, concepts and projects in historical sociolinguistics in the new millenium

What's missing or neglected ...? → chapters in Hdbk. of HiSo

(Hernández-Campoy & Conde-Silvestre 2012)

- in general:

- attention to heterogeneity of textual traditions
- social factors on variation in the past and change
- attention to contact between languages, dialects and their role in language change
- role of language ideologies
- „Methods of the Sociolinguistic Study of the History of Languages“ (with contributions on various text types)
- “Linguistic and Socio-demographic Variables”
- “Historical Dialectology, Language Contact, Change, and Diffusion”
- “Attitudes to Language”



# 1. From past to present

## 1.3 Some main topics, concepts and projects in historical sociolinguistics in the new millenium

What's missing or neglected in most language histories and historical grammars?

- for the **modern** period:
    - attention to orality and oral registers
    - voice of the 'common people'
    - role of 'non-standard' ('deviant', 'not correct', 'bad' or 'corrupted'..) varieties and variants in standardisation processes
    - individual repertoires and the indexicality of writing
- addressed by some of the projects in historical sociolinguistics in new millenium

# 1. From past to present

## 1.3 Some main topics, concepts and projects in historical sociolinguistics in the new millenium

some major projects in historical sociolinguistics in new millenium:

- **“Letters as Loot. Towards a non-standard view on the history of Dutch”** (NWO, 2008–2013, M. VAN DER WAAL, Leiden)
- **“Going Dutch. The Construction of Dutch in Policy, Practice and Discourse, 1750–1850”** (NWO-VIDI, 2014–2018, G. Rutten, Leiden)
- **“Reading and Writing from Below: Toward a New Social History of Literacy in the Nordic Sphere during the Long Nineteenth Century”** (NORDCOP, 2011–2014, A. KUISMIN, T. NORDLUND, Helsinki, M. DRISCOLL, Copenhagen, A.-M. EDLUND, Umeå & D. ÓLAFSSON, Reikjavík)
- **“Forgotten voices from below. A sociolinguistic analysis of lower class correspondence in the Low Countries between 1780 and 1815.”** (FWO, 2014–2018, W. VANDENBUSSCHE, Brussels)

# 1. From past to present

## 1.3 Some main topics, concepts and projects in historical sociolinguistics in the new millenium

some major projects in historical sociolinguistics in new millenium:

- **“Multilingualism in 19th-century Schleswig-Holstein”** (AHRC Scientific Network, 2007–2009, N. LANGER, Bristol)
- **“P.S. Post Scriptum. A Digital Archive of Ordinary Writing (Early Modern Portugal and Spain 1500–1900)”** (7FP/ERC Advanced Grant – GA 295562, 2010–2013 R. MARQUILHAS, Lisbon)
- **“Corpus Historique du Substandard Français”** (DFG, 2011–2015, H. THUN, Kiel)
- **“Flexible Schreiber in der Sprachgeschichte. Zensierte Patientenbriefe des 19. Jahrhunderts”** (Elitenetzwerk Bayern, 2017–2022, M. SCHIEGG, Erlangen-Nürnberg)
- ...

# 1. From past to present

## 1.3 Some main topics, concepts and projects in historical sociolinguistics in the new millenium




- “The twenty-first century marks the establishment of historical sociolinguistics as a separate independent field of linguistic enquiry, and its theoretical and empirical advances are reflected in the profuse, thriving body of publications of a variety of types.”

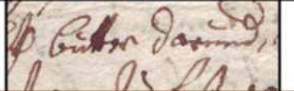
(Russi 2016: 3)

# 1. From past to present

## 1.3 Some main topics, concepts and projects in historical sociolinguistics in the new millenium (including a glance at HiSoN activities)



[Conferences & Summer Schools](#)
[People](#)
[Projects & Books](#)
[Links](#)
[Contact](#)



Historical Sociolinguistics Network

### Historical Sociolinguistics Network

The Historical Sociolinguistics Network (HiSoN) was founded at the University of Bristol in 2005 and is open to anyone with an interest in the field. We are a loose organisation without a formal membership structure but we meet regularly at dedicated conferences, workshops, and summer schools (see below). This webpage, hosted at the University of Salzburg, is our electronic home and serves as a platform to make announcements, document past and future activities, and present profiles of some of our members (contact Simon Pickl: [simon.pickl@sbg.ac.at](mailto:simon.pickl@sbg.ac.at)). For further information on the HiSoN network, contact Nils Langer ([Nils.Langer@uni-flensburg.de](mailto:Nils.Langer@uni-flensburg.de)).

#### Keep in touch

- [HiSoN mailing list »](#)  
 To join the HiSoN mailing list, which currently boasts of some 460 scholars from across the world, click [here](#).
- [HiSoN Summer Schools »](#)  
 Click [here](#) for information about past HiSoN summer schools, a list of teachers, and information about upcoming summer schools!
- [HiSoN Conferences »](#)  
 Click [here](#) for information about past and future HiSoN conferences.
- [HiSoN on Facebook »](#)

HiSoN News

Call for Papers:  
**Nineteenth Century Studies and Visions of the Future**  
 25-27 January 2018, Helsinki, Finland

LESBOS 2017  
**11th HiSoN Summer School**  
 16-23 July 2017, Metochi, Lesbos, Greece

HiSoN Conference  
**Examining the Social in Historical Sociolinguistics**  
 6-7 April 2017, New York University/CUNY Graduate Center, USA

Out now:  
**Norsk språkhistorie. I: Mønster.** Edited by Helge Sandøy.

LEIDEN 2016

Homepage of HiSoN at [hison.sbg.ac.at](http://hison.sbg.ac.at)



# 1. From past to present

## 1.3 Some main topics, concepts and projects in historical sociolinguistics in the new millenium (including a glance at HiSoN activities)

**HiSoN**  
**E-Mail-List**  
(492  
subscribers,  
17.7.2017)

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[Re: Permanent post at UWE Bristol: another](#)

[Permanent post at UWE Bristol from September 2017](#)

**HISON**

**Historical Sociolinguistics Network (HiSoN)**

*Founded in 2005, the network's members are academic researchers in historical sociolinguistics from all over the world*

# 1. From past to present

## 1.3 Some main topics, concepts and projects in historical sociolinguistics in the new millenium (including a glance at HiSoN activities)

HiSoN

Summer

Schools

(Lesbos, ...

2013 →

2017 ↓





# 1. From past to present

## 1.3 Some main topics, concepts and projects in historical sociolinguistics in the new millenium (including a glance at HiSoN activities)

**HiSoN  
Summer  
Schools**  
(Lesbos,  
Leiden,  
Kristiansand,  
Frauen-  
chiemsee,  
Bruges,  
Bristol)

Frauenchiemsee 2012 →



# 1. From past to present

## 1.3 Some main topics, concepts and projects in historical sociolinguistics in the new millenium (including a glance at HiSoN activities)

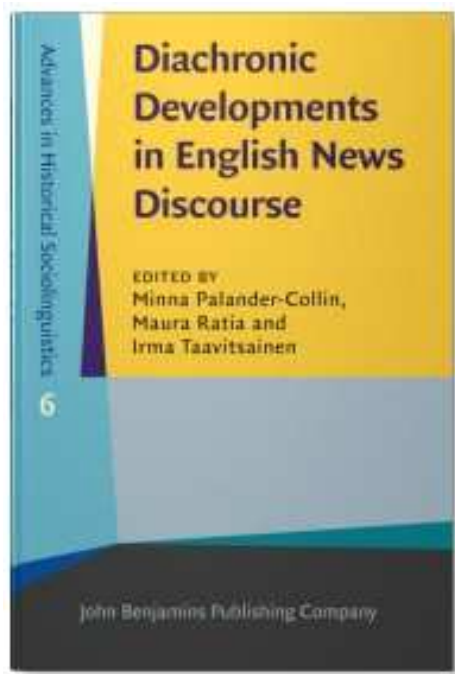
### HiSoN Conferences

e.g.

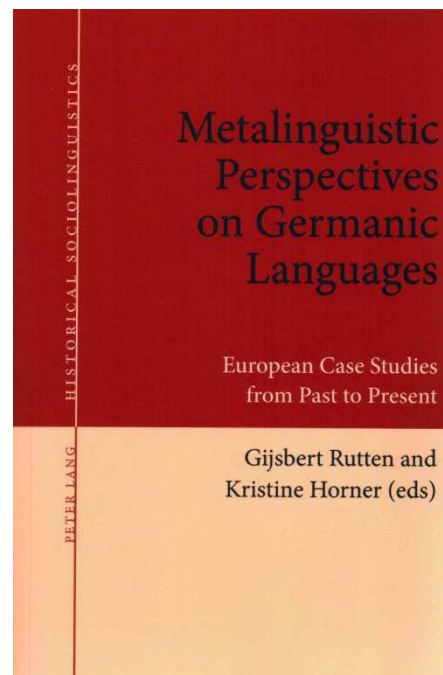
- **Examining the Social in Historical Sociolinguistics**  
New York University/CUNY Graduate Center, USA  
6-7 April 2017  
[More Information and Registration](#)
- **Historical Sociolinguistics and Socio-Cultural Change**  
University of Helsinki, Finland  
10-12 March 2016  
[More Information and Registration](#)
- **Historical Discourses on Language and Power**  
University of Sheffield, UK  
6-8 February 2014  
[More Information and Registration](#)
- **Touching the Past. (Ego) Documents in a Linguistic and Historical Perspective**  
Leiden University, The Netherlands  
22-24 June, 2011  
[More Information](#)
- **Language and History, Linguistics and Historiography**  
International Conference  
at Burwalls, University of Bristol  
2-4 April, 2009  
[More Information](#)

# 1. From past to present

## 1.3 Some main topics, concepts and projects in historical sociolinguistics in the new millenium (including a glance at HiSoN activities)



**Book Series II** (Benjamins)  
6 books so far (2013ff.)



**Book Series II** (Lang)  
4 books so far (2014ff.)



**Journal** (De Gruyter)  
5 issues so far (2015ff.)

# Overview

## **1. From past to present**

- 1.1 When, what and why ...?
- 1.2 Rationale of historical sociolinguistics
- 1.3 Some main topics, concepts and projects in historical sociolinguistics in the new millenium  
(including a glance at HiSoN activities)

## **2. From present to future**

- 2.1 Focus: Standardisation, normativity and prescriptivism in a view 'from below' – the case of German
- 2.2 Future challenges

## **3. Conclusion**



## 2. From present to future

### 2.1 Focus: Standardisation, normativity and prescriptivism

recall:

for the modern period, traditional histories of 'big' languages are characterised by

- focus on standardisation ('single-minded march' to today's standard),
- focus on written varieties which were to become standard,
- selection of (mostly) edited and printed texts, (mostly) from male writers from elites;

normative and prescriptive works hailed as milestones of standardisation

→ view 'from above'

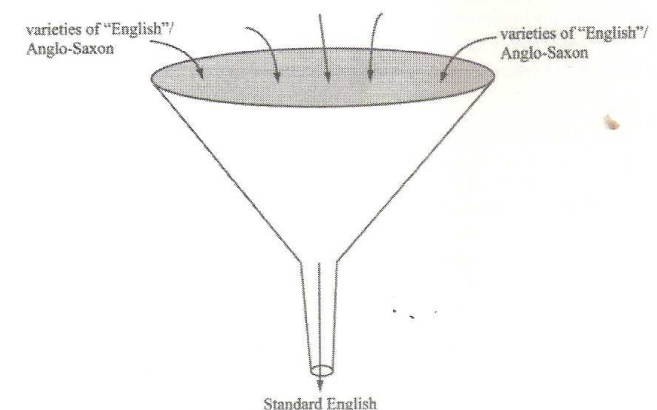


FIGURE 12.2. The funnel view of the history of a language

## 2. From present to future

### 2.1 Focus: Standardisation, normativity and prescriptivism

e.g. history of modern German characterised by

“a sometimes near-obsessive focus on the standard, where the establishment of norms has almost teleological value, and seems at times to function as a license to ignore any changes going on elsewhere in the language“

(Salmons 2012, 288–289)

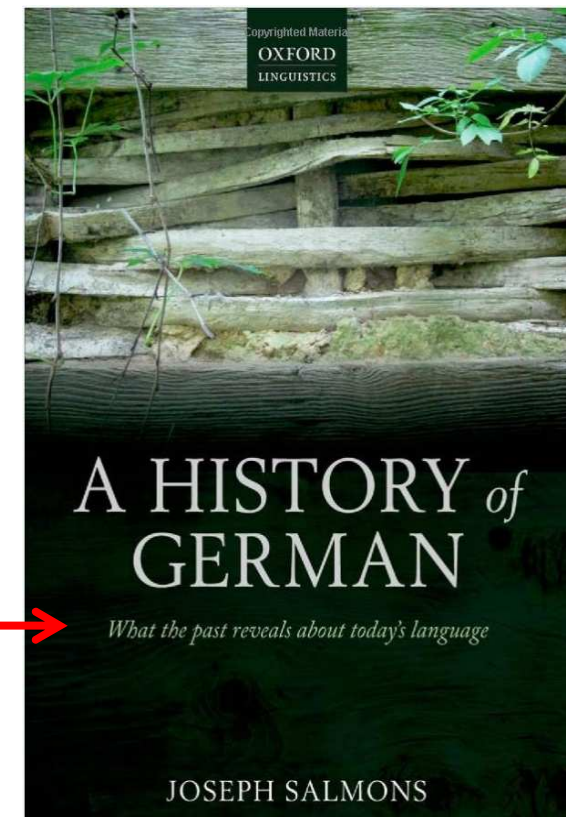
→ task:

reconstruct the ‘whole picture’

– including a view from below – and

explore (variation and change in) the past

to explain (variation and change in) the present





## 2. From present to future

### 2.1 Focus: Standardisation, normativity and prescriptivism in a view ‘from below’

#### traditional view:

- **language history ‘from above’**: written (or rather: *printed*) language bias – with focus on texts in formal registers authored by (mostly male) writers from the elites
- **language history as a single-minded march to standard** (< teleology, standard language ideology, ideology of homogeneity, Milroy & Milroy 1985, Lippi-Green 1997...)

#### alternative view:

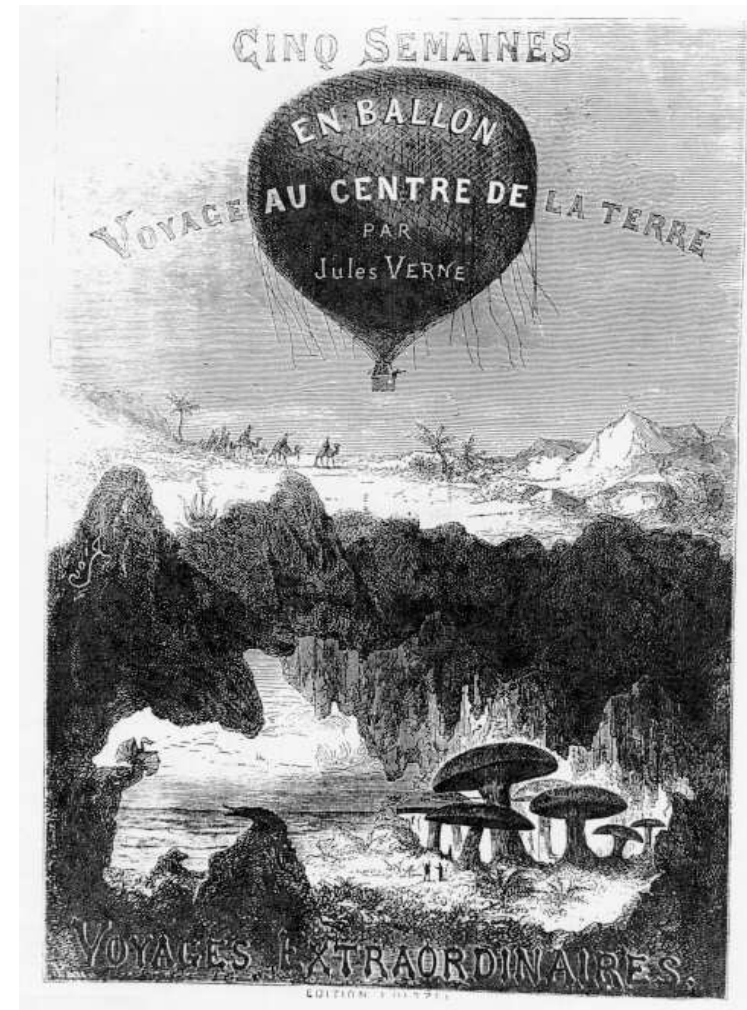
- **language histories ‘from below’**: focus on informal, *conceptually oral* registers of language spoken and written by majority of people in a language community (cf. Elspaß 2005)
- **co-existence of language varieties and variants in history** (< ‘ideology of heterogeneity’)

## 2. From present to future

### 2.1 Focus: Standardisation, normativity and prescriptivism in a view ‘from below’

- “The lesson of this tale [Professor Lidenbrock’s journey into the centre of the earth] for historians is that by burrowing ever further ‘below’, we can establish a new ‘centre’. This [...] perhaps [...] illuminates **history from below**: if we pursue what at first appears marginal with enough determination, we may establish a new core which **re-centres the historian’s angle of vision**.”

(Lyons 2012: 20, my emphases, SE)



## 2. From present to future

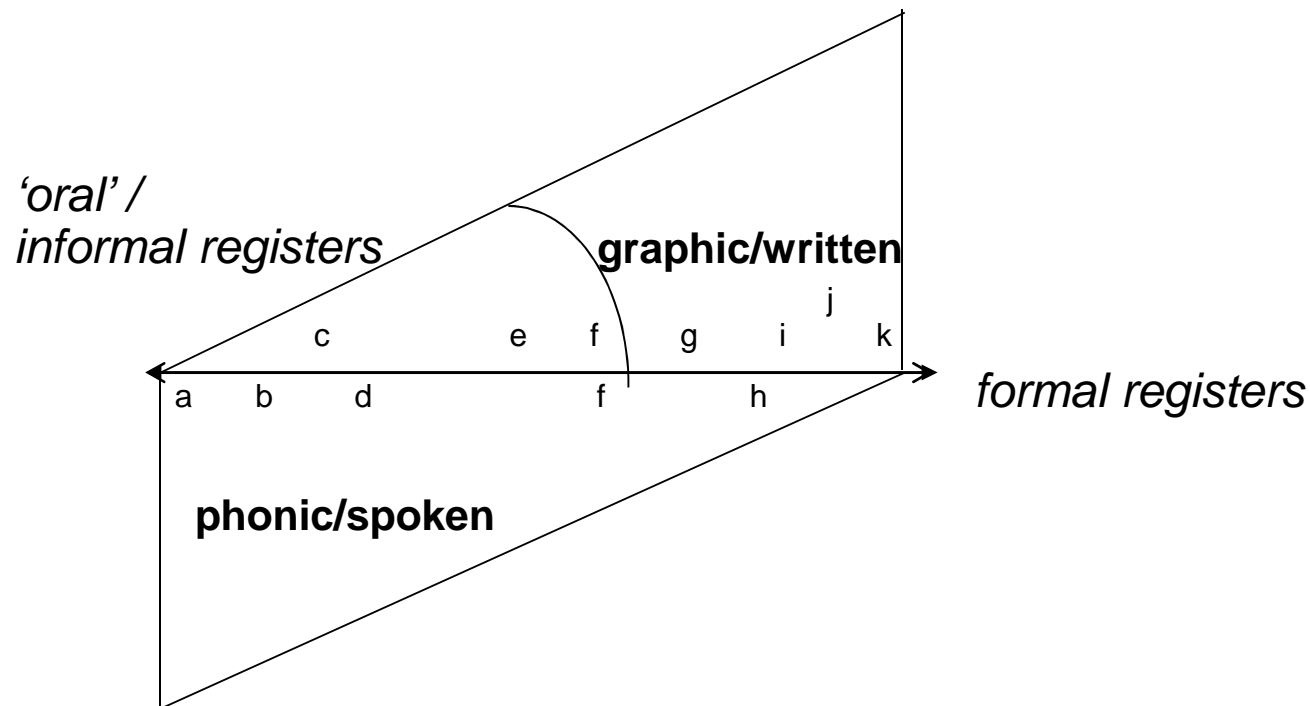
### 2.1 Focus: Standardisation, normativity and prescriptivism in a view ‘from below’

#### “re-centering the angle of vision” in language history:

1. sociologically ( $\approx$  Lyons’s ‘New History from Below’):
  - **from** the focus on the language use of **experienced writers (from the upper classes)**
  - **to** the language use of the **lower ranks of the societies** (ca. 95% of the population in 19th c.)
2. plea for a radically different starting point of the description and explanation of language in history:
  - **from ‘language of distance’** (repr. by formal registers: printed texts in ‘standard varieties’)
  - **to ‘historical orality’** (repr. by informal registers: private texts)

## 2. From present to future

### 2.1 Focus: Standardisation, normativity and prescriptivism in a view 'from below'

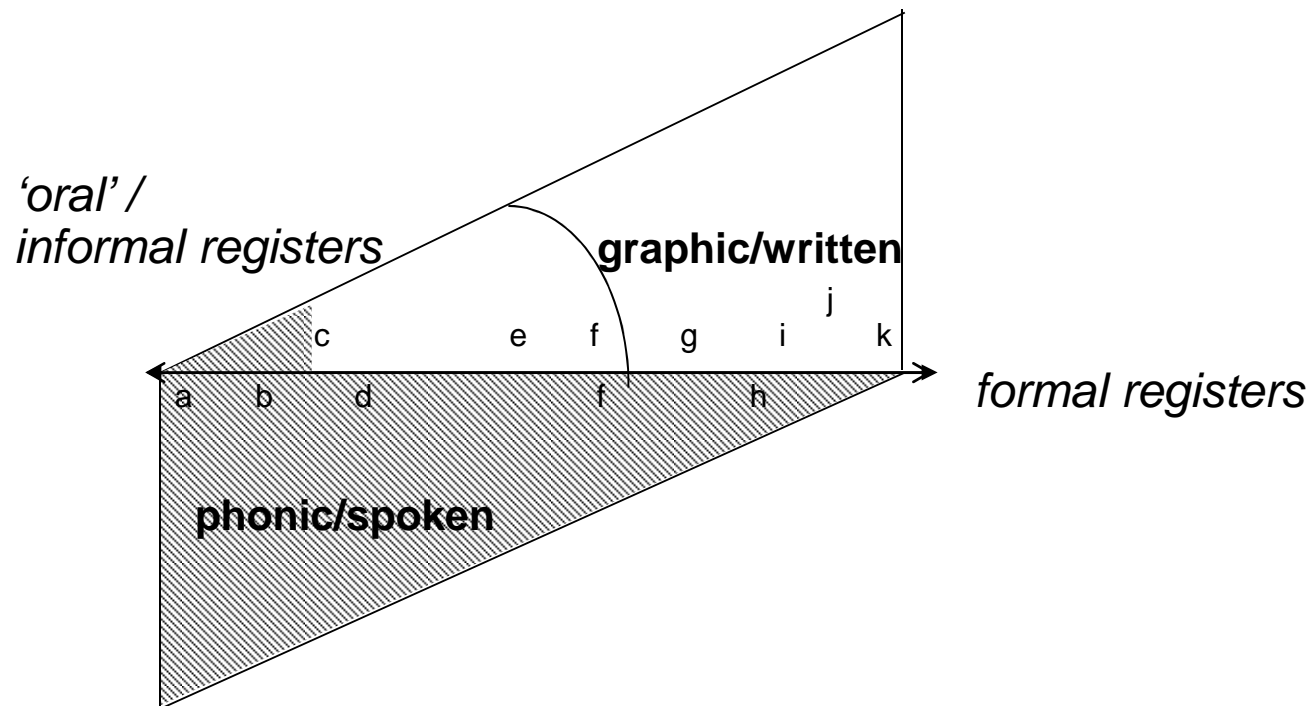


a: intimate conversation, b: telephone conversation, c: private letter, d: private interview, e: newspaper interview, f: sermon, g: business letter, h: academic lecture, i: newspaper article, j: literary language, k: law text or government document

(Koch & Oesterreicher 1985 [2012])

## 2. From present to future

### 2.1 Focus: Standardisation, normativity and prescriptivism in a view 'from below'



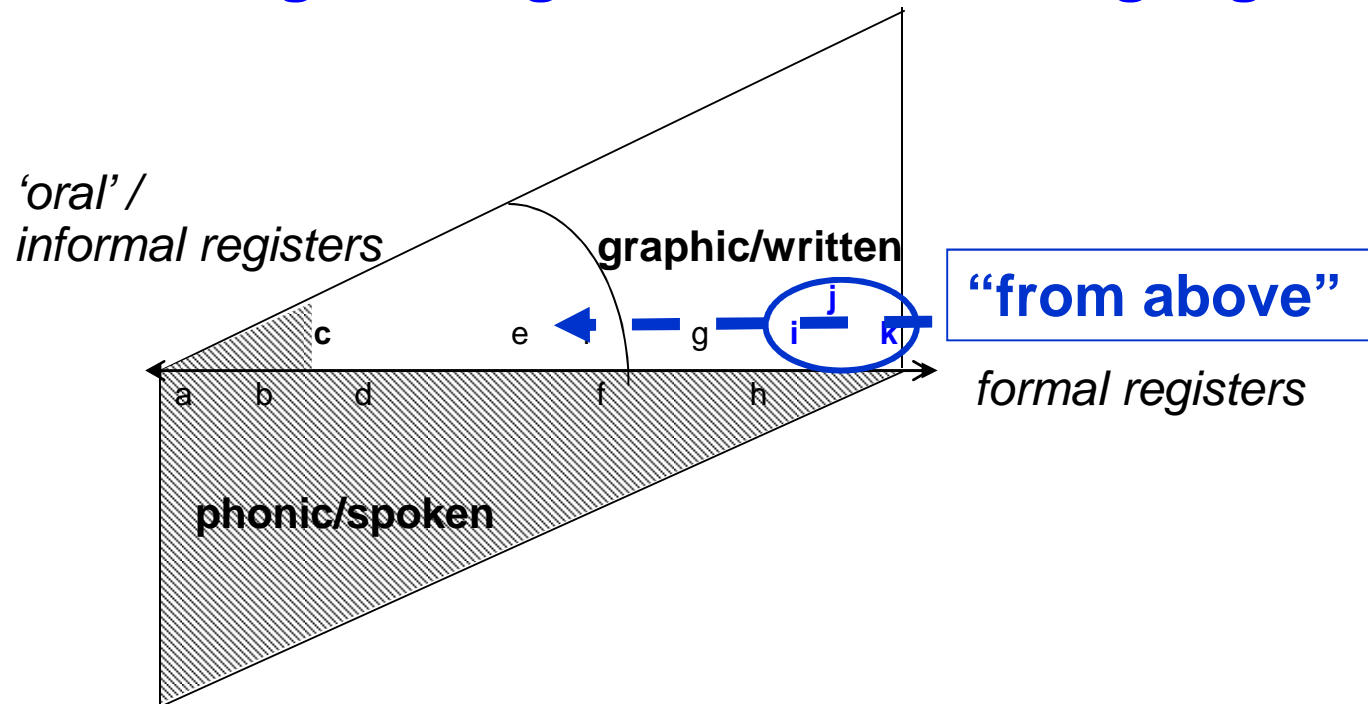
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## 2. From present to future

### 2.1 Focus: Standardisation, normativity ...

... “re-centering the angle of vision” in language history:



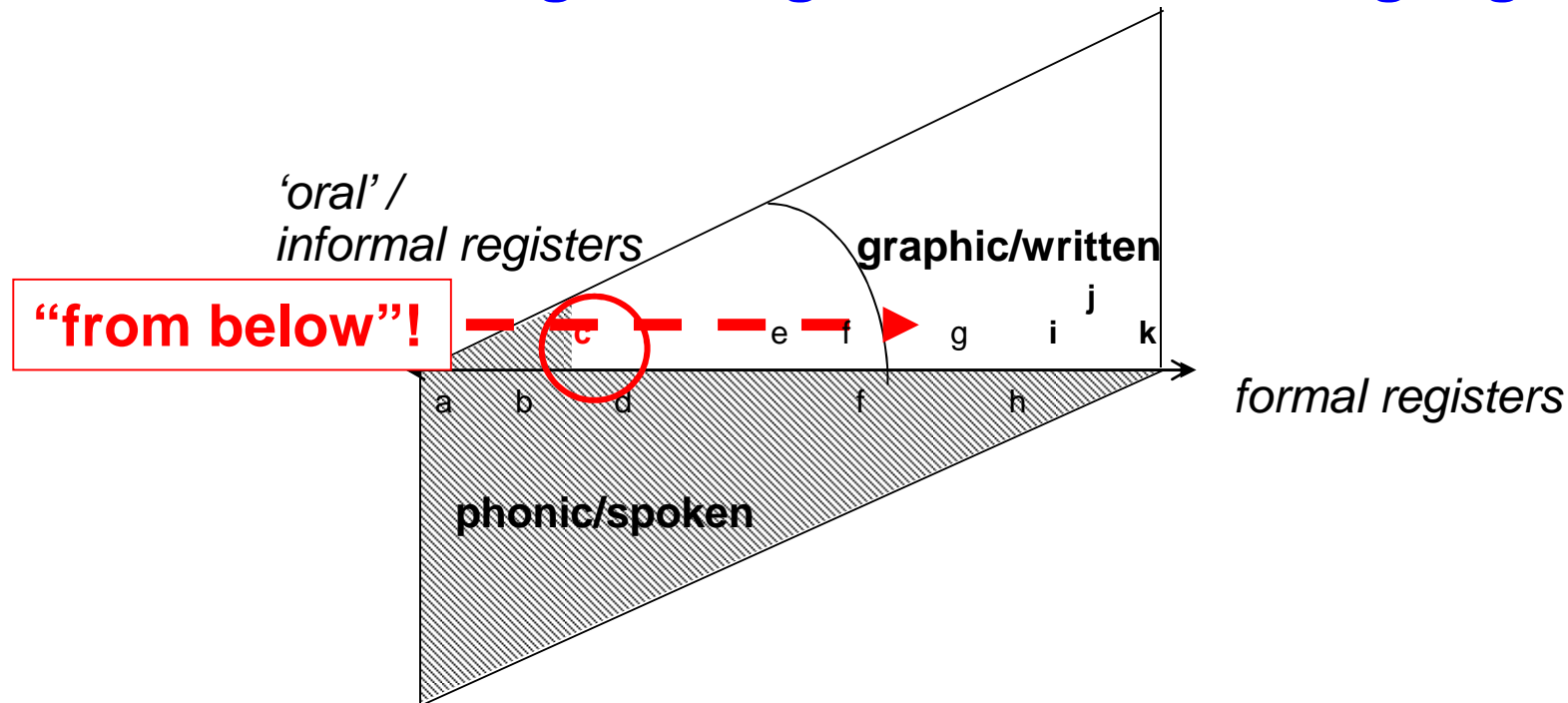
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(Koch & Oesterreicher 1985 [2012])

## 2. From present to future

### 2.1 Focus: Standardisation, normativity ...

... “re-centering the angle of vision” in language history:



(cf. Elspaß 2012)

a: intimate conversation, b: telephone conversation, **c: private letter**,  
d: private interview, e: newspaper interview, f: sermon,  
g: business letter, h: academic lecture, i: newspaper article, j: literary  
language, k: law text or government document

(Koch & Oesterreicher 1985 [2012])

## 2. From present to future

### 2.1 Focus: Standardisation, normativity and prescriptivism in a view ‘from below’

#### “re-centering the angle of vision” in language history:

- What would textbooks look like if we took, say, informal texts by members of the majority of the population as a starting point of the standardisation (hi)stories of modern languages?
- What would historical grammars look like if we considered the grammatical forms used in such texts as unmarked default forms and grammatical forms in printed texts as marked forms?
- Which consequences would such ‘alternative’ histories and grammars have on the typological description and classification of ‘SAE’ languages (like German, English or Dutch)?



## 2. From present to future

### 2.1 Focus: Standardisation, normativity and prescriptivism in a view 'from below' – the case of German

- here: (Middle) New High German (1650–1950)  
= period of standardisation of German:
- 1. What did written German look like in written registers which were less affected by normative pressure?
- 2. What would written German look like if it had been standardised in a less normative / prescriptive environment?

## 2. From present to future

### 2.1 Focus: Standardisation, normativity and prescriptivism in a view ‘from below’ – the case of German

**What if ...?** (Peter von Polenz. <sup>2</sup>2013. *Deutsche Sprachgeschichte*. Vol. II : 277)

- So liegt es nahe anzunehmen, dass die deutsche Sprache als Standardsprache heute sicher ähnlich flexionsarm, also mehr nach dem analytischen Sprachbau wäre wie etwa das Niederländische oder Englische, wenn die deutsche Sprachentwicklung in der Zeit des bildungsbürgerlich kultivierten deutschen Absolutismus nicht so stark schreibsprachlich, akademisch, lateinorientiert, flexionsfreundlich und sprachideo-logisch gesteuert verlaufen wäre. In die sprachtypologische Entwicklung ist retardierend eingegriffen worden, aber nicht nur von gelehrten Grammatikern [...].

‘So it is not too far-fetched to assume **that German as a standard language today would have definitely been less inflectional and more analytic**—similar to Dutch and English—if its development during the period of German Absolutism and cultivated by an educated middle class had not been so strongly governed by written language, academia, by a focus on Latin, by a penchant for inflection, and by language ideology. The typological development has been slowed down by this influence, but not only due to the influence of erudite grammarians [...].’ (cf. also Timm 1986)

## 2. From present to future

### 2.1 Focus: Standardisation, normativity and prescriptivism in a view 'from below' – the case of German

#### **Sociolinguistic background**

- German speech community considered as highly normative compared to other European language communities (cf. Durrell 1999, Elspaß & Maitz 2012)
- strict adherence to prescriptive linguistic norms characteristic of German
  - since 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century: early stages of formal codification
  - particularly in 19<sup>th</sup> century: increasingly codified written (later standard) German as a social symbol of the educated middle classes
  - already in the Early Modern period (as from the 17<sup>th</sup> c.): prescriptive norms modeled after Latin and the ideal of an inflectional language

## 2. From present to future

### 2.1 Focus: Standardisation, normativity and prescriptivism in a view ‘from below’ – the case of German

**Ideologies background (of strong normative attitudes)** (cf. Elspaß & Maitz 2012)

- **linguistic scripticism**: focus on written language as ‘best’ language (Ágel 2003: 4-11)
- **linguistic standardism (standard language ideology)**: standard variety (and its variants) as better, correct, aesthetically superior than non-standard varieties (and its variants) (Milroy & Milroy 1985)
- **linguistic conservatism**: perception that ‘achieved’ varieties and variants are better and that language change leads to language corruption
- **linguistic “inflectionalism”**: “perception that highly inflected languages are more advanced” (Roberge 1990: 140)

## 2. From present to future

### 2.1 Focus: Standardisation, normativity and prescriptivism in a view ‘from below’ – the case of German

“... that German as a standard language today would have definitely been less inflectional and more analytic ...”

- In what way and to what extent can normative attitudes towards language influence the development of the structure of a language – here: German?
- Hypothesis: Social factors can possibly determine not only singular grammatical structures, but possibly whole typological profile of a language.

(cf. Peter Trudgill. 2011. *Sociolinguistic Typology: Social determinants of linguistic complexity*. OUP)

## 2. From present to future

### 2.1 Focus: Standardisation, normativity and prescriptivism in a view 'from below' – the case of German

#### relation of normative attitudes and linguistic complexity

- potential impact of social factors on the degree of structural complexity of a language:
  - intensity of language contact,
  - the density of social networks
  - the size of the language community (cf. Trudgill 2011)

→ role of normativity & prescriptivism not been considered so far

**argument** here: extent of normativity can influence the development of a language with respect to loss, maintenance or increase of linguistic complexity (cf. Maitz & Németh 2014)

## 2. From present to future

### 2.1 Focus: Standardisation, normativity and prescriptivism in a view ‘from below’ – the case of German

#### What kind of evidence are we looking for?

“... that German as a standard language today would have definitely been less inflectional and more analytic ...”

→ evidence that

1. written German has (had) tendencies towards a less inflectional and more analytic language?
2. such tendencies had been slowed down in written, particularly printed Middle New High German due to ‘external’ factors?

## 2. From present to future

### 2.1 Focus: Standardisation, normativity and prescriptivism in a view 'from below' – the case of German

#### Data

comparing data from

- printed German → normative pressure
- data of 'orality in writing', → less normative pressure  
e.g. private letters in German  
by lesser educated writers (Elspaß 2005)

17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> (part. 19<sup>th</sup>) century → standardisation of German)

**focus on inflectional morphology**



## 2. From present to future

### 2.1 Focus: Standardisation, normativity and prescriptivism in a view ‘from below’ – the case of German

#### Examples

- syntagmatic redundancy (repetition of information)
  - case marking
    - prep. *wegen* ‘because of’ with genitive
    - dative-e
  - verbal agreement
    - apocope 1. P. Sg. -e
- paradigmatic redundancy in morphological categories
  - ‘mood’ in reported speech (indicative vs. subjunctive)
  - number of inflectional classes
    - strong vs. weak masculine and neuter nouns
    - regular vs. irregular verbs

## 2. From present to future

### 2.1 Focus: Standardisation, normativity and prescriptivism in a view 'from below' – the case of German

#### Examples

- syntagmatic redundancy (repetition of information)
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  - number of inflectional classes
    - strong vs. weak masculine and neuter nouns
    - regular vs. irregular verbs

## Ex. 1: PREP *wegen* + genitive

*ich bin **wegen dem** Geld nicht Soldat geworden ....*

'I haven't become a soldier **because of the-DAT money** ...'

[letter by Carl Nidenhofen, 28.09.1862]

*im Bremerhafen mußten wir ...bleiben **wegen des** ungünstigen Windes*

'we had to stay in Bremerhaven **because of the-GEN bad storm-GEN** ...'

[wife of Joseph Hartl, 27.11.1853]

**(GEN marked twice!)**

**dative** incorrect (and **genitive** correct)

**according to 19<sup>th</sup> grammars of written German  
... and in popular prescriptivist literature today**



# Ex. 1: PREP *wegen* + genitive

(Sato 2015: 140 **printed** prose texts 16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> c.,  
3960 tokens of *wegen*)

(1) grammaticalisation of the preposition:

*wegen* + N-GENITIVE

-17<sup>th</sup> c.

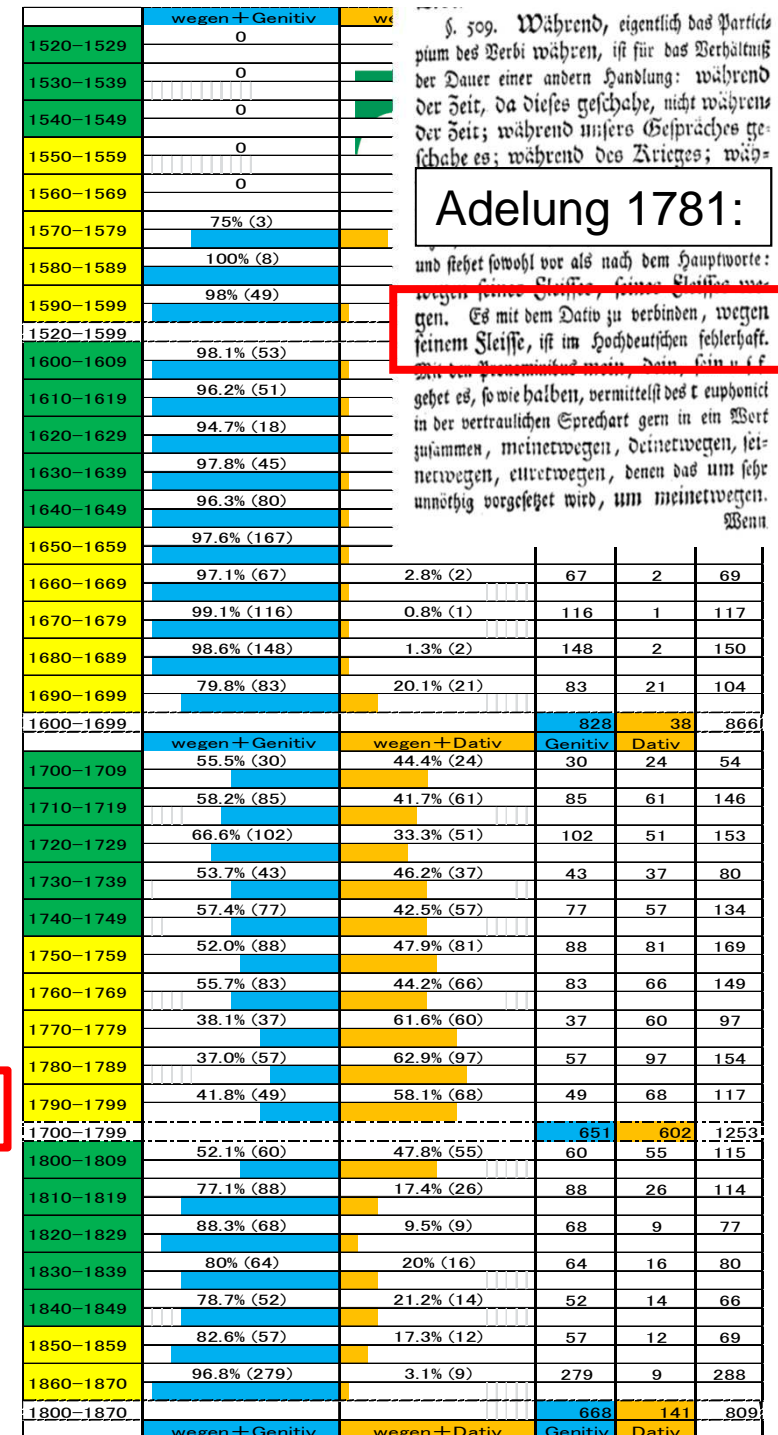
(2) increasing use of *wegen* + N-DATIVE  
decrease of *wegen* + N-GENITIVE

18<sup>th</sup> c.

Prescription of correctness of *wegen* + N-GEN →

(3) sudden decrease of *wegen* + N-DATIVE  
resurgence of *wegen* + N-GENITIVE

19<sup>th</sup> c.



# Ex. 1: PREP *wegen* + genitive

(Elspäß in print:) **“handwritten texts”** (17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> c.,  
168 tokens of *wegen*)

*wegen* + N-GEN

*wegen* + N-DAT

43

4

17<sup>th</sup> c.

18

8

18<sup>th</sup> c.

in the long run (as  
from 18<sup>th</sup> c.):  
continuation of  
“ch. from below”

26

69

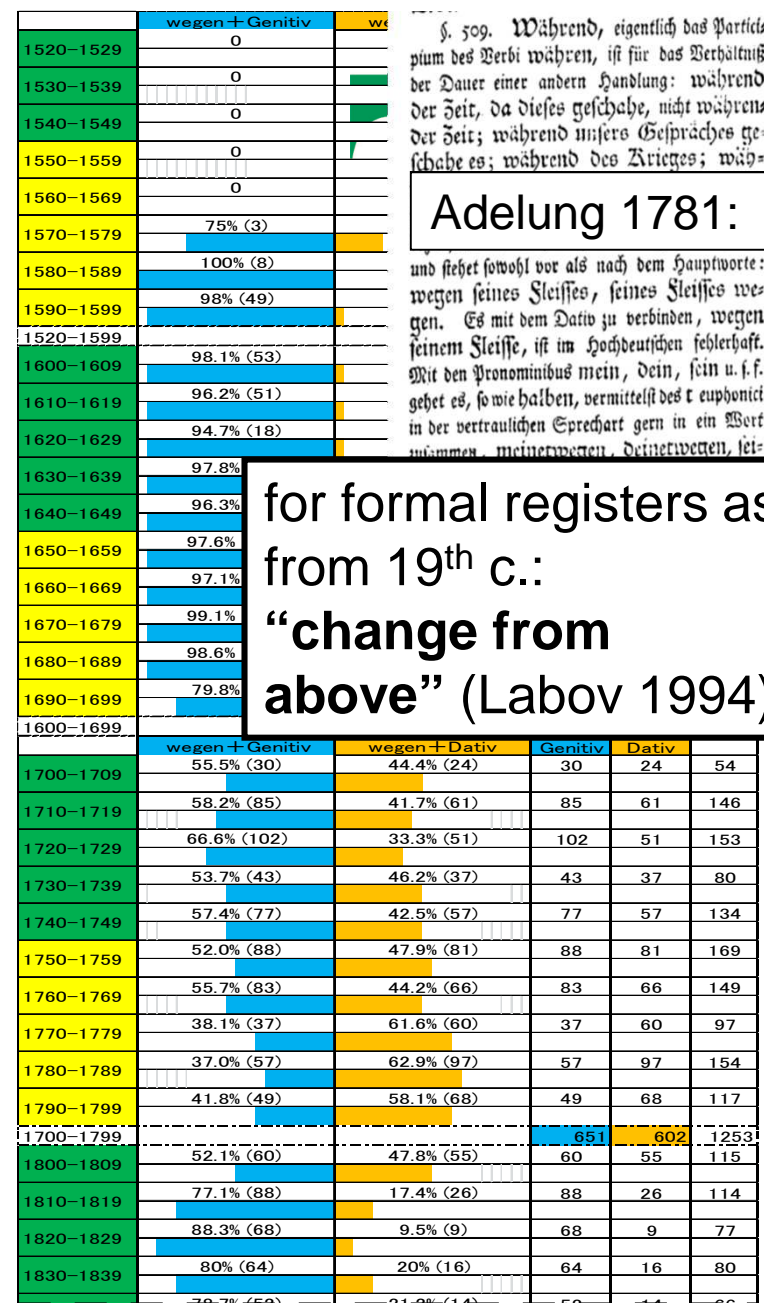
(emigrant letters)

19<sup>th</sup> c.

less frequent

dominant

spoken Ger-  
man today



## 2. From present to future

### 2.1 Focus: Standardisation, normativity and prescriptivism in a view 'from below' – the case of German

#### Examples

- syntagmatic redundancy
  - case marking
    - prep. *wegen* with genitive
    - **dative-e**
  - verbal agreement
    - apocope 1. P. Sg. -e
- paradigmatic redundancy
  - 'mood' in reported speech (indicative vs. subjunctive)
  - number of inflectional classes
    - strong vs. weak masculine and neuter nouns
    - regular vs. irregular verbs

until 1800: prevalence of -∅  
> mid-18th c.: -e as pre-  
scriptive norm

19th c.:  
printed texts: prevalence of -e  
private letters: prevalence of -∅  
(64%)

today: prevalence of -∅

## 2. From present to future

### 2.1 Focus: Standardisation, normativity and prescriptivism in a view 'from below' – the case of German

#### Examples

- syntagmatic redundancy
  - case marking
    - prep. *wegen* with genitive
    - dative-e
  - verbal agreement
    - **apocope 1. P. Sg. -e**
- paradigmatic redundancy
  - 'mood' in reported speech
  - number of inflectional classes
    - strong vs. weak nouns
    - regular vs. irregular verbs

until 1600: prevalence of - $\emptyset$   
> end of 18th c.: -e as pre-  
scriptive norm

19th c.:  
printed texts: almost 100% -e  
private letters: prevalence of -e,  
but 10% - $\emptyset$  (*hab*)

today:  
printed texts: prevalence of -e  
spoken Germ: - $\emptyset$  „advancing  
rapidly“ (Auer &  
Spiekermann 2011)



## 2. From present to future

### 2.1 Focus: Standardisation, normativity and prescriptivism in a view ‘from below’ – the case of German

#### Examples

- syntagmatic redundancy (repetition of information)
  - case marking
    - prep. *wegen* ‘because of’ with genitive
    - dative-e
  - verbal agreement
    - apocope 1. P. Sg. -e
- paradigmatic redundancy in morphological categories
  - ‘mood’ in reported speech (indicative vs. subjunctive)
  - number of inflectional classes
    - strong vs. weak masculine nouns
    - regular vs. irregular verbs

## 2. From present to future

### 2.1 Focus: Standardisation, normativity and prescriptivism in a view 'from below' – the case of German

#### Examples

- syntagmatic redundancy (repetition of information)
    - case marking
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      - dative-e
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  - paradigmatic redundancy in morphological categories
    - 'mode' in reported speech (ind. vs. **subj.**)
    - number of inflectional classes
      - strong vs. **weak masculine nouns**
      - regular vs. **irregular verbs**
- strong in  
printed sources,  
less frequent  
in oral registers**

## 2. From present to future

### 2.1 Focus: Standardisation, normativity and prescriptivism in a view 'from below' – the case of German

#### Argument:

extent of normativity in a speech community can significantly influence the development of a language with respect to loss, maintenance or increase of its grammatical complexity

#### Conclusion

normative attitudes towards language, governed by certain language ideologies (scripticism, standardism, conservatism, inflectionalism), seem to correlate with certain types of structural developments

example here:      **maintenance** of morphological redundancy in printed Middle New High German = formal registers (vs. loss or decrease in 'oral' registers)

→ printed (M)NHG and standard written German as typologically **marked** case?

## 2. From present to future

### 2.1 Future challenges

- **Data**
- **Languages and language varieties**
- **Methods**
- **Models and Theories**

## 2. From present to future

### 2.1 Future challenges

#### ■ Data

“dramatic ... increase in the availability of colloquial material”

(Joseph 2012: 76)

BUT: • mainly for (early) modern period

- many corpora still relatively small in size

	<u>letters</u>	<u>mio. words</u>
– e.g. “Letters as loot” corpus:	1,000	...
– e.g. 19h c. German emigrant letter corpus:	820	0.5
– e.g. “Projeto FLY Cartas Esquecidas” (20 <sup>th</sup> c.):	2,000	...
... compared to big corpora of hist. English, e.g. CEEC	11,700	5.3
	CACWL 6,000	...
	LALP (thousands)	...

- many corpora do not meet standards of modern text annotation
- corpora not always balanced for gender, social groups, regions

## 2. From present to future

### 2.1 Future challenges

#### ■ Data

... to meet „basic requirements for texts [= written documents] to be useful for a variationist analysis“ (Schneider 2002: 71):

Texts should ...

- “be as close to speech [...] as possible”
- “stem from several authors from different social classes”
- stem from different “age groups, and both sexes”
- “represent varying stylistic levels”
- “display variability”
- “provide reasonably large token frequencies of individual variants”

„Written documents from the past are not ‘bad data’: they become so only if contrasted strictly with contemporary oral material, gathered by methods that stress specific types of registers.“

(Martineau 2013: 145)

## 2. From present to future

### 2.1 Future challenges

- **Languages and language varieties**
  - presently: strong focus Germanic languages (part. English), some Romance languages
  - future? other languages and language families  
(→ this conference: Arabic, Cherokee, Indian Sign Language, [Classical] Greek, Sanskrit, Chinese, Tibetan)



## 2. From present to future

### 2.1 Future challenges

- **Methods**

moving beyond 'first wave' variationist analyses?

- network analyses (e.g. Bergs 2005)
- 'third wave' variationist analyses (e.g. Conde-Silvestre 2016)
- ....

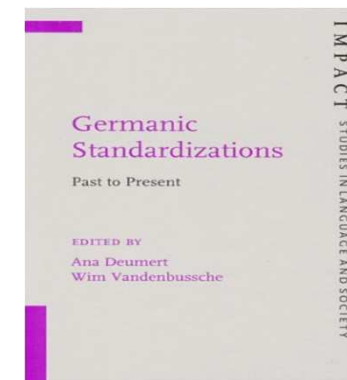
## 2. From present to future

### 2.1 Future challenges

#### ■ Models and theories

- Uniformitarian Principle – “Risk of Anachronisms in Language and Social History”? (Bergs 2012)
- “comparative standardology” (Joseph 1987)

cf. Deumert & Vandenbussche (2003),  
based on Haugen (1966) model



→ new theory of standardisation – beyond the Haugen model?  
(Panel at ICLaVE Málaga 2017)

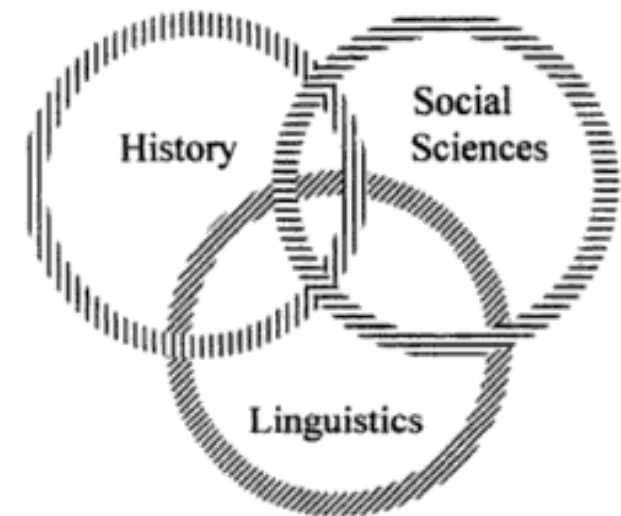
• ...

### 3. Conclusion

„It [Historical Sociolinguistics] does not suffer from a lack of natural, spoken linguistic data, or social data. Instead, historical sociolinguistics must be bold enough to loosen its ties with present-day sociolinguistics and traditional historical linguistics, and to develop its own methodologies, aims, and theories.

In doing so, it must reckon with some of the controversies that its neighbouring disciplines bring with them – and it must decide which game it wants to play.“

(Bergs 2005: 21)



. A model of historical sociolinguistics

McKinney, Ky, Nov. 7. 1886.

Wunder Cousin Christian!

Ihren wunderbaren Brief vom  
26. Oct. haben wir erhalten,  
und sind sehr dankbar dafür  
gekommen. Vergißet, daß wir  
ihn nicht sehr bald beantwortet  
haben, wollen es jetzt nachholen,  
zu spät. Ende März 1887 sind  
es denn 6 Jahre, seit wir  
von einander abgeschieden sind.  
Wir hatten eine ziemlich gute  
Reise, wir hatten einen auf  
dem Wege, und so kamen wir  
am 1. April in West Virginia  
an, wo wir auf Anrathen eines  
Landmannes zuhause gingen. Ld

*Thank you for your attention!*

McKinney 78. 26

NOV 9 1886

Mr. Christian Frautschi,  
Dealer in Furniture,  
No. 204 King Street,  
Madison, Wis.

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