INTRODUCTION

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Methods XII, the Twelfth International Conference on Methods in Dialectology, was held at the Université de Moncton in Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada, from 1 to 5 August 2005. The event was hosted by the Centre de recherche en linguistique appliquée of the Université de Moncton, and it was co-organized by colleagues from five universities located in Canada's Maritime Provinces: Atlantic Baptist University, Mount Allison University, Université de Moncton, University of New Brunswick and University of Prince Edward Island.

This special thematic issue of *Linguistica Atlantica* contains revised versions of 26 presentations made at the conference. Twenty-five of the papers are from among the 72 papers given at the general sessions. The 26th paper is based on one of four invited plenary talks. All the papers address the conference theme "Innovative approaches in dialectology" and/or its sub-theme "Contact and identity". In addition, 41 papers were presented at the conference in the context of workshops or symposia that were organized to deal with specialized topics. While the workshop papers do not appear in this volume, relevant details about their publication are mentioned below.

PAPERS PRESENTED AT GENERAL SESSIONS OF METHODS XII

Innovation in technology is perhaps the most prevalent topic of the presentations made at Methods XII, and this theme underlies many of the papers in this volume. The increasing availability and adaptability of digital technologies has brought about numerous changes in the practice of dialectology and sociolinguistics.

One example of these changes is the creation of online dialect atlases. This recent development in dialectology is exemplified in several papers in this issue. In their paper, Embleton, Uritescu and Wheeler describe tools used to transfer data from an existing Romanian atlas to an online system, focusing on issues of phonetic transcription and data presentation. Ruiz Tinoco and Ueda present data collection and automatic cartographic procedures developed for online research on lexical variation in Spanish; their project will eventually include data from a significant part of the Spanish-speaking world. Another example of digital applications

is the development of software for the analysis of dialectological data. In her paper, Fukushima demonstrates a software program that can overlay several linguistic maps; she applies it to study lexical change in Japanese. Onishi adapts GIS technology to analyze the geographical spread of a morphological feature of Japanese.

Other examples of developments in dialectology based in computer applications are multivariate statistical techniques that are used in dialectometry to calculate linguistic distances. Applying Goebl's dialectometric method, Perea analyzes features of verb morphology in Catalan. Aurrekoetxea's study of geolinguistic variation in Basque illustrates that distances can be measured not only for phonetic and lexical variation but also for morphological and syntactic features. On the other hand, Wegmann presents data from the *Survey of English Dialects* to argue for caution in the way that quantitative analyses are used to interpret concepts such as dialect boundary and focal area.

Technological innovations are also evident in the sociolinguistic papers in this volume. Acoustic phonetic analyses of large numbers of tokens are now possible thanks to the development of software such as Praat and Akustyk. In his paper, Kendall presents original software that complements Praat and that can be used to manage and present transcriptions of large amounts of naturalistic speech data, such as those found in sociolinguistic interviews. Other applications of acoustic software are demonstrated in the paper by Thomas and Coggshall; they compare vowel spaces, intonation phrase declination and rhythm in African American and European American varieties of English. Ocumpaugh and Roeder study the Northern Cities Shift in Mexican-American English using acoustic phonetic analyses of vowel space. An original application of speech synthesis to test hypotheses about the role of perception in sound change is presented by Plichta, Preston and Rakerd.

Several papers highlight other kinds of methodological innovations. An important issue is data elicitation methodology. Balcom makes use of grammaticality judgment tasks to elicit data about a specific class of motion verbs in Acadian French. In his paper, Upton describes the adaptation of the "Sense Relation Network" fieldwork elicitation tool to a radio series on the BBC. An online survey about Australian English leads Korhonen to suggest possible directions of change in verb morphology, modals and spellings. The usefulness of longitudinal (panel) studies is exemplified by Palander's analysis of the idiolect of a Finnish speaker over a period of 30 years; both local and broad dialect features show discernible changes. Finally, Maurer-Lausegger provides an introduction to the new field of audiovisual dialectology, a unique interdisciplinary approach that documents language and culture in situational context.

Many papers in this volume make original contributions to the study of variation in specific languages, often addressing the contact and identity sub-theme of Methods XII. Three papers deal with French in a European setting. Thomas analyzes the shift among speakers in Nice (in southeastern France) from southern vocalic variants toward standard pronunciations. Violin-Wigent studies the retention of regional vocabulary in a small isolated community in southeastern France.

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Scarlat and Signorini compare different designations of the arum plant and discuss how these fit into their search for semantic universals. We note that North American varieties of French were the subject of a separate symposium at the conference (see below). Other languages discussed are: Dutch, van Bezooijen traces the geographic spread of a phonetic innovation across the Netherlands; Finnish, Kokko describes innovations and changes in the morphological features of Ingrian Finnish, a "disappearing" dialect that is in contact with Russian, Estonian and standard Finnish; Japanese, Asahi provides a brief socio-historical account of Japanese-Russian contact on Sakhalin Island in Russia.

Several papers in this issue focus on variation in English and do so from a number of interesting perspectives. Hirano uses a social network approach to investigate the relation between frequent contact with Japanese and the occurrence of certain variants in the speech of native speakers of English. Remlinger presents examples from regional varieties of English spoken in different parts of North America to discuss the role of media in shaping language stereotypes. Wagner examines Irish English and Southwest English features in Newfoundland folktales. Chambers' plenary presentation "Geolinguistic patterns in a vast speech community" is an update of the findings of the *Dialect Topography of Canada* project that surveys regional variation in Canadian English. In his paper, Chambers looks at three patterns of variation — linear change, regional diversity and regional discontinuity — that illustrate the distinct diversity and homogeneity that characterize Canadian English. It is a pleasant coincidence that the Université de Moncton hosted Chambers' first public presentation of this project, in 1992 at the 16th Annual Meeting of the Atlantic Provinces Linguistic Association.

In sum, the papers in this volume represent a rich variety of approaches to current research on language variation. They reflect numerous innovative uses of computational, audiovisual and data-gathering methodologies that are shaping — and enhancing — the way that linguistic data are collected and analyzed by dialectologists and sociolinguists. The papers also contribute to a growing body of knowledge about variation in many different languages. A list of the papers that were presented at the general sessions of the conference but that do not appear in this volume can be found at the end of this introduction.

PAPERS PRESENTED AT METHODS XII WORKSHOPS

Four workshops or symposia ran parallel to the general sessions at Methods XII. These specialized sessions focused on specific areas of research in dialectology:

- New perspectives in Iberian dialectology (organized by D. Heap and E. Pato)
- North American varieties of French (Variétés de français parlées en Amérique du Nord) (organized by R. Papen and G. Chevalier)
- Finno-Ugric languages in contact with English II (organized by A. Fenyvesi, P. Hirvonen, T. Lauttamus and G. Watson)

- Progress in dialectometry: toward explanation (organized by J. Nerbonne and W. Kretzschmar).

Many of the papers given at the workshops have now appeared in print. Collections of articles based on two of the workshops are:

- Nerbonne, J. and W.A. Kretzschmar Jr., ed. 2006. Progress in dialectometry: Toward explanation. Special issue of *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 21,4.

- Papen, R. and G. Chevalier, ed. 2006. Les variétés de français en Amérique du Nord. Évolution, innovation et description. Special joint issue of *Revue canadienne de linguistique appliquée/Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics* 7,2 and *Revue de l'Université de Moncton* 37,2.

We note that Goebl's plenary address entitled "Dialectometry: Theoretical prerequisites, practical problems and concrete applications" appears in the special issue of *Literary and Linguistic Computing*.

Written versions of the presentations made at the workshop on Iberian dialectology are available online. Please see:

- Heap, D., E. Pato and C. Gurski, ed. 2006. *New perspectives in Iberian dialectology/Nouvelles perspectives en dialectologie ibérique*. London ON: University of Western Ontario. Online edition:

    `ling.uwo.ca/publications/IberianDialectology2005`

FURTHER REMARKS

Methods XII attracted 155 researchers from a dozen countries. Over two-thirds of the delegates were from outside Canada. Especially noteworthy is the fact that a large number of students — 43 — were authors or co-authors of a presentation. Also worthy of mention is the Methods prize for bilingualism that was awarded to the City of Moncton. Peter Trudgill made the announcement at the conference banquet on behalf of the (clandestine) Methods Awards Committee. Peter noted that delegates were impressed — indeed surprised — by the ease with which people in Moncton switch between French and English without hesitation or resistance.

It was a pleasure to welcome "Methods" back to Atlantic Canada, a region that has significant historical ties to this conference. The first two Methods Conferences took place in 1972 and 1975 at the University of Prince Edward Island in Charlottetown, thanks to the efforts and vision of Ron Baker (of the University of Prince Edward Island) and Rex Wilson (of the University of Western Ontario). Conferences were to continue at a regular interval of three years and several meetings later, in 1999, Methods X was organized by Sandra Clarke in St. John's, Newfoundland, at the Memorial University of Newfoundland. Thus, it seemed "natural" in 2005 to host Methods, once again, in the region where it has its origins. Other Canadian

locations of Methods Conferences have been the University of Western Ontario in Ontario (1978) and the University of Victoria in British Columbia (1984, 1993). Methods Conferences have also been held in Finland (2002), Germany (1990) and the United Kingdom (1981, 1987, 1996).