

Asymmetries in Pluricentric Language Perceptions

Gitte Kristiansen
Universidad Complutense de Madrid
gkristia@ucm.es

Keywords: cognitive sociolinguistics, pluricentricity, language identification, language perception, language attitudes

In this talk we present results from a large-scale pan-European experimental study on the identification and evaluation of native and non-native varieties of English (Kristiansen, Zenner & Geeraerts 2018). In the experiment 8 panels of over 100 listeners each first evaluated 12 native and non-native accents of English on a series of psychological attributes. For this task we implemented a 5-dimensional likert scale. The 12 speech fragments were held below a duration of 30 seconds and consisted of the same short text written in standard English. In the second stage of the experiment the listeners proceeded to an identification of the 12 accents on a multiple-choice 24 option questionnaire.

The part of the results which is brought under scrutiny in this presentation zooms in on the asymmetries detected in the data and which pertains to the two pluricentric languages: German and Swiss German on the one hand, and Netherlandic Dutch and Belgian Dutch on the other hand. In this paper we expose and examine the fact that in both cases the evaluational and identificational results exhibit striking differences that need to be explained in terms of relative social (dominant) perceptual salience. In this talk we describe these differences in detail (e.g. while the Belgians and the Swiss identified the Dutch and the German foreign accents almost to perfection, this was only true in 50 % of the cases when the Belgians and the Swiss were identified by the Germans and the Netherlandic populations). We also analyse and interpret the differences regarding the evaluational dimensions (ratings on intelligence, friendliness, trustworthiness etc.).

For a very precise type of evaluation we in addition use a very large data base (n = 391) for the Belgian simple.

References

- Kristiansen, Gitte, Eline Zenner & Dirk Geeraerts (2018). English as a Lingua Franca in Europe: The identification of L1 and L2 accents. A multifactorial analysis of pan-European experimental data. *Review of Cognitive Linguistics* 16 (2): 494-518.
- Kristiansen, Gitte (2014). Pluricentricity, language-internal variation and Cognitive Linguistics. In Augusto Soares da Silva (ed.) *Pluricentricity. Language Variation and Socio-Cognitive Dimensions*. Berlin & Boston: Mouton de Gruyter
- Soares da Silva, Augusto. 2010. Measuring and parameterizing lexical convergence and divergence between European and Brazilian Portuguese. In Dirk Geeraerts, Gitte Kristiansen & Yves Peirsman (eds.) *Advances in Cognitive Sociolinguistics*, Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter.