

Introduction

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In many parts of Europe, the years around 2020 brought the nations' existing borders into the centre of attention. About 100 years after the end of World War I, speeches and anniversaries reminded us of their volatility and raised questions about their current functions and effects. National borders usually do not coincide with borders between languages (or language varieties): They can cross dialect continua or cut multilingual zones in two. But national borders can still affect the language situation in the border zone in the way people speak and/or think about the varieties present in the area.

One of these anniversaries was held in Denmark and Germany in 2020, commemorating one hundred years of the existence of the current national border between the two countries, which came into existence after the Schleswig plebiscites in 1920. The Department of English, Germanic and Romance Studies at the University of Copenhagen seized this opportunity to hold a conference under the title "Danish and German as European neighbour languages. An international conference on language contact in border zones and multilingual cities", which took place – delayed due to the covid pandemic – in August 2021. As the title suggests, the object of the conference was not limited to national borders, but also included urban spaces where borders are less tangible. The common denominator behind the contributions was an interest in how speakers structure and/or perceive the relations towards their neighbours, both in historically multilingual linguistic transition zones and in larger cities, where new neighbours have arrived in the course of migration. One central question is, obviously, how national borders contribute to linguistic divergence, i.e. how language use and/or language attitudes become a potential marker of belonging to a nation state. Where national borders conflict with language borders, questions range between two poles: Do speakers introduce new linguistic demarcation lines where no tangible borders are present? And do speakers make existing borders more permeable through their language usage and/or language attitudes?

The contributions gathered in this volume deal with different linguistic "neighbourhoods" and approach these questions from different angles. While each of these contact situations certainly is unique to some degree, the aim of this introduction is to briefly outline some of the overarching dimensions dealt with in the descriptions of different and distant contact situations. Borders can both cross and define different kinds of concepts of linguistic space, and the term "border zone" is used here in a broad sense in order to cover different kinds of language contact situations: It designates areas close to national or language borders as well as urban contact areas that can be demarcated on the basis of language use of their inhabitants.

The first of these dimensions relates to *space*: Borders are mere lines without any geographical extension of their own, separating two adjacent areas and potentially leading to linguistic divergence. But apart from this separating effect, language use on both sides of a national border line can show signs of (sometimes cross-border) linguistic convergence and the adjacent regions can eventually become demarcated areas themselves, recognizable through some kind of specific language use that is not found outside the border zone. This geographical perspective might be particularly interesting in cases where national borders have shifted in the course of history. They can move across autochthonous populations, or it can be the population that moves and helps to redefine the linguistic space. Urban settings are an interesting field in this respect. These dynamics can lead to a rearrangement of *linguistic repertoires* on different sides of the border and change the status of the varieties involved. Roofing standard languages seem to have a tendency to confirm national borders. Substandards, that do not have a clear affiliation to the concept of nation, can follow this path and loosen their bond to a once roofing language on the other side of the border. The labelling of language

varieties (either by linguists or by speakers) can sometimes be symptomatic of the reevaluation of the varieties within the speakers' linguistic repertoire. But some of the situations presented here show that substandards can also behave differently and develop cross-border links under two different roofs. Equivalent linguistic forms and structures can correspond across borders or within newly established border zones and have the potential of becoming *indexical* of the speakers' belonging. We can see that such linguistic bonds can be manifest in many different ways: In a "monolingual mode", where traditional forms and structures are maintained across borders, or in a "multilingual mode", where innovative form-function-relations, which can be seen as compromise forms between the different language varieties involved, can become indexical. In urban youth varieties, innovative forms can acquire some kind of covert prestige, and it is intriguing to ask if a comparable border identity can be attested in border zones at national borders. Some of the innovative forms, which can be observed in the border zones described here, can be described as a mere continuation of a process of *language change* in (at least one of) the languages involved. The innovations that demarcate a linguistic area might thus be grounded historically in one of the "traditional" varieties and eventually spread to other speech communities, which blurs the demarcation in a diachronic perspective. Furthermore, linguistic forms that help to demarcate a certain linguistic area can appear in free *variation* with alternative constructions, which are not restricted to the area in question. But at some point, one of them can become salient enough to be associated with a certain prestige, and thus acquire a *normative* character, constraining the spread of innovative forms. A last dimension worth mentioning here that is covered more or less explicitly by the contributions in this volume is *age*: In some parts of the European border lands described here, it is the older speakers that keep the area unique, while in others (especially the urban ones), it is the younger ones that demarcate an area with their innovative language use, which reminds us that language situations in border zones are dynamic and subject to *demographic change*.

The papers in this volume are organized in three sections, each focusing on contact between language varieties within or between borders: 1) in the Danish-German border region and beyond, 2) in other European border regions, and 3) in European cities. The seven papers cover a wide range of methodological approaches, based on structural (phonological, morphological, syntactic, lexical) and attitudinal data. None of them addresses all of the aspects described above, but the left-out aspects might, to a certain extent, still be relevant to border zones in general and provide further basis for a comparative analysis.

The articles take us on a journey through European border lands: **Elin Fredsted** starts at the Danish-German border in Schleswig, where she presents examples of syntactic convergences between border varieties (Danish, South Jutish, North Frisian, German and Low German), which bear witness to the region's long-lasting multilingualism. It is shown how the national border of 1920 has produced new contact varieties on both sides of the border, whose status is being discussed. **Lars Behnke** stays in the region and discusses an innovative morphosyntactic construction in border zone Low German, only to compare it with another innovative construction in Eastern Polish dialects in the contact zone with Eastern Slavonic varieties. It is argued that an analysis of the variation between innovative constructions and alternative unmarked constructions is necessary for our understanding of their distribution and spread, which follows a comparable path in the two distant border zones. **Rahel Beyer** introduces the second section with a report from a study on the status of German in Eastern Lorraine in France. On the basis of interviews with speakers of different age groups, Beyer examines if the local variety of German can still be seen as being roofed by Standard German, or if the border has led to a situation where it has lost this affiliation and must be considered a foreign language. **Peter Auer** takes us further south to the border zone in the Upper Rhine area between Alsace in France and Baden in Germany. Auer investigates if the permeability of the current border corresponds to a "cognitive representation" of a common dialect, or if the national separation is reflected in different repertoire types and language attitudes on both sides of the border. The

description is supplemented by an analysis of how a perceived closer bond between Baden and Alsatian dialects might be reflected in phonology. **Silvia Dal Negro** reports from the Romance-German language border in northeastern Italy, where Standard German, Italian, Tyrolean dialects, Trentino and Ladin form different types of multilingual linguistic repertoires. It is shown that the relations between these language varieties are asymmetrical, and the linguistic repertoires hierarchically structured with regard to different contact situations. These asymmetries are reflected in different kinds and extents of contact phenomena (such as borrowing and code-switching). **Anita Berit Hansen** opens the last section, which leads us to different European urban areas. We start out in Paris, where new allophonic variants of plosives occur in a traditional working-class area of the city that has also attracted migrants with different language backgrounds (the “croissant”). This raises the question of whether the innovative pronunciation is a continuation of *français populaire* or the result of language contact or a combination of both. Hansen investigates if and how the phenomenon crosses borders and spreads into other areas with a different social structure to see if it is reallocated to mark new indexical functions not limited to the “croissant”. Last but not least, our journey ends in the Netherlands, where **Kristel Doreleijers**, **Khalid Mourigh** and **Jos Swanenberg** take us to two different urban areas with two different youth varieties: Moroccan Dutch in the city of Gouda and urban Brabantish in the city of Eindhoven. Both varieties are marked for deviant adnominal gender marking, albeit not of the same kind since the variety to deviate from is not the same (Standard Dutch in Gouda and the local Brabantish in Eindhoven). The study discusses the normative character of these deviations and the question of their indexicality on the basis of stylized on- and offline conversation.

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