

#### THE RESEARCH PROJECT SCIENTIFIC COORDINATOR

Tomaselli Alessandra, Full Professor, SSD L-LIN/14 (Lingua e Traduzione - LINGUA TEDESCA)  
Department of German and Slavic Studies, Via San Francesco 22, 37129 Verona  
tel. 045 8028315/703  
e-mail: alessandra.tomaselli@univr.it

#### THE RESEARCH PROJECT TITLE

**Cimbrian as a test case for synchronic and diachronic language variation – proposals for implementing the ASIS (Syntactic Atlas for Northern Italy).**

#### RESEARCH PROJECT SUMMARY

The German speaking varieties which are to this date spoken in the language islands of the Triveneto are of great interest to three important lines of research in linguistics: Veneto dialectology (at least at the lexical level, the language islands are particularly exposed to the influence of the dialects by which they are surrounded), German dialectology (as "Randzonen" they exhibit a high level of preservation of certain structural characteristics, at least at the morphological level), historical linguistics (the diachronic development of a variety in isolation shows a particularly interesting mixture of preservation and innovation). The interest for this linguistic context is witnessed by many studies on Cimbrian throughout the last decade and also by a recent Ph.D. thesis (BIDESE, ERMENEGILDO (2007). *Der Verlust der Verb-Zweit-Regel und die Entwicklung der "Clitic Phrase" in der Geschichte des Zimbrischen. Empirische Daten und theoretische Analysen*. Ph.D. thesis, University of Verona. Graduate program in Linguistics, 19th cycle). For this reason it is important to gather the already existing linguistic data, both diachronic and synchronic, of the Cimbrian varieties. The project will be developed in three stages: the **first stage** will consist in building up a data base containing all the available data regarding the Cimbrian varieties, determining the indexing criteria which will allow us to isolate the major morpho-syntactic phenomena. At the same time we will collect more data through field work at Giazza, Roana, Luserna, integrating the corpus with tapings which will allow us to study morpho-phonological aspects as well. During this first part of the project we will establish a collaboration with the ASIS (Syntactic Atlas of Northern Italy) of the University of Padua in order to favor a homogenous approach with respect to the classification of the data. During the **second stage** of the project we will examine the technical possibilities to connect the database on the Cimbrian language islands to the ASIS, without excluding a possible connection to other important European projects such as the TITUS project at the University of Frankfurt and the DIWA at the University of Marburg. The **third stage** of the project consists in exploring the possibilities to add to the ASIS data base an adequate cartographic implementation which will be developed starting with the Veneto region and, in particular, with the region of Verona whose dialectal situation is particularly interesting because of the presence of the Cimbrian language island of Giazza.

#### AIMS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The project pursues the following goals:

- a) we aim to build a data base of documents in Cimbrian which are already available on paper (publications in Cimbrian, M.A. and Ph.D. theses, books and scientific articles on the Cimbrian language) integrating the corpus with data obtained through questionnaires employed on field trips to Giazza, Roana and Luserna, extending this data collection if necessary also to the other language islands of the Triveneto speaking a German variety (particularly to the Mòcheno, spoken in the Fersina Valley, TN and to the Sappadino, BL);
- b) we want to explore the possibility to connect our data base to data bases with a similar research subject and research approach, especially to the ASIS in Padua, the DiWA in Marburg and the TITUS project in Frankfurt (which contains already a version of the second Cimbrian Catechism), as well as to other data bases of European importance such as the SAND project (Meertens Instituut, The Netherlands) or the SCANDIASYN project (University of Tromsø, Norvegia);
- c) we plan to evaluate the possibility to supply the data base of the ASIS with cartographic support. In this sense our ultimate aim is to realize a dialect atlas of the region of Verona which considers in detail the geographic space occupied by the minorities speaking a German variety.

#### SCIENTIFIC PREMISES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

A research project in the field of German dialectology needs a solid scientific background as witnessed by the curricula and the publications of the scientific coordinator and the other researchers involved in the project. In particular we can guarantee

- a solid background of work in theoretical linguistics which allows us to tackle the topic of linguistic variation from the synchronic point of view (background A: selection of a precise theoretical and methodological framework of reference) as well as from the diachronic point of view (background B: theory of linguistic change);
- a precise competence with respect to the methodology and the principles which are relevant for the elaboration of

questionnaires (background C) and the production of linguistic atlases (background D).

- knowledge about the peculiar sociolinguistic context of the German language islands in Northern Italy and, in particular, in the Triveneto (background E), which is necessary for the organization of successful field work.

#### References

**Background A:** the concept of linguistic variation in the theoretical framework of generative grammar, in particular with respect to work on the comparative syntax of the Germanic languages:

Abraham, W. (1983): *On the Formal Syntax of West Germania*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Abraham, W./W.Kosmeijer/E.Reuland (1991): *Issues in Germanic Syntax*. Berlin-New York: M. de Gruyter.

Abraham, W./J.W.Zwart (2002): *Studies in Comparative Germanic Syntax*. Proceedings from the 15th Workshop on Comparative Germanic Syntax. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Haider, H./S.Olsen/S.Vikner (1995): *Studies in Comparative Germanic Syntax*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.

Thrainsson, H./S.D.Epstein/S.Peter (1996): *Studies in Comparative Germanic Syntax*. Volume II. Dordrecht: Foris.

Tomaselli, A. (1990): *La sintassi del verbo finito nelle lingue germaniche*. Padova: Unipress.

- (2003), *Introduzione alla sintassi della lingua tedesca*. Bari: Graphiservice.

**Background B:** the topic of linguistic change in the framework of generative grammar and in dialectology:

Battye, A./I.Roberts (1995): *Clause Structure and Language Change*. Oxford: OUP.

Bellmann, G./J.Herrgen/J.E.Schmidt (1994-2002): *Mittelrheinischer Sprachatlas (MRhSA)*. 5 vol. Tübingen: Niemeyer.

Kemenade, A. van/N.Vincent (1997): *Parameter of Morphosyntactic Change*. Cambridge: CUP.

Lightfoot, D.W. (1991): *How to set Parameters: Arguments from Language Change*. Cambridge/Mass.: MIT Press.

Lightfoot, D.W. (2002): *Syntactic Effects of Morphological Change*. Oxford: OUP.

Schmidt, J.E. (2005): *Sprachdynamik*. In: Eggers, E./J.E.Schmidt/D.Stellmacher (a cura di): *Moderne Dialekte – Neue Dialektologie*. Akten des 1. Kongresses der Internationalen Gesellschaft für Dialektologie des Deutschen (IGDD) am Forschungsinstitut für deutsche Sprache „Deutscher Sprachatlas“ der Philipps-Universität Marburg vom 5.–8. März 2003. Stuttgart: Steiner, 15-44.

Schmidt, J.E./J.Herrgen (2001-2008): *Digitaler Wenker-Atlas (DiWA)*. Bearbeitet von Alfred Lameli, Alexandra Lenz, Jost Nickel und Roland Kehrein, Karl-Heinz Müller, Stefan Rabanus. Erste vollständige Ausgabe von Georg Wenkers „Sprachatlas des Deutschen Reichs“. 1888-1923 handgezeichnet von Emil Maurmann, Georg Wenker und Ferdinand Wrede. Marburg: Forschungszentrum „Deutscher Sprachatlas“, www.diwa.info.

**Background C:** the preparation of questionnaires for dialectological field work

Bellmann, G. (1994): *Einführung in den Mittelrheinischen Sprachatlas (MRhSA)*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.

Benincà, P./C.Poletto (1991): *Il modello generativo e la dialettologia*. Un'indagine sintattica. *Rivista Italiana di Dialettologia* XV, 77-97.

Benincà, P./C.Poletto (1997): *Introduzione al I volume*. *Quaderni di lavoro dell'Atlante Sintattico dell'Italia Settentrionale*, numero 1, 5-11.

Benincà, P./C.Poletto (2005): *The ASIS enterprise: a view on the construction of a syntactic atlas for the Northern Italian dialects*. *Nordlyd* 34, 35-52.

Cornips, L./C.Poletto (2004): *Standardisation of syntactic elicitation techniques*. *Lingua* 16, 1-19.

Hotzenköcherle, R. (1962a): *Einführung in den Sprachatlas der deutschen Schweiz*. A: *Zur Methodologie der Kleinraumatlanten*. Bern: Francke.

Hotzenköcherle, R. (1962b): *Einführung in den Sprachatlas der deutschen Schweiz*. B: *Fragebuch*. Transkriptionsschlüssel. Aufnahmeprotokolle. Bern: Francke.

Rabanus, S. (2006): *An der Schnittstelle von Morphologie und Syntax*. Einheitsformen der Personalpronomen der 1. und 2. Person Plural im Nordbairischen. *Zeitschrift für Dialektologie und Linguistik* 73/3, 301-317.

Rabanus, S. (2007): *Morphologisches Minimum*. Distinktionen und Synkretismen im Minimal Satz hochdeutscher Dialekte. Marburg: Philipps-Universität [Habilitationsschrift].

Rabanus, S./B.Alber/A.Tomaselli (2008): *Bericht zum ersten Veroneser Workshop „Neue Tendenzen in der deutschen Dialektologie: Morphologie und Syntax“* (13./14. Dezember 2007). *Vorschläge für die Ausrichtung zukünftiger Dialektsyntaxprojekte*. *Zeitschrift für Dialektologie und Linguistik* 75/1.

Schmidt, J.E. (2000): *18 Thesen zum Verhältnis von Grammatik(theorie) und Empire*. *Sprachwissenschaft* 25/4, 357-366.

Seiler, G. (2003): *Präpositionale Dativmarkierung im Oberdeutschen*. Stuttgart: Steiner.

**Background D:** the generation of dialectological maps

Barbiers, S. et al. (2005): *Syntactische atlas van de Nederlandse dialecten /Syntactic atlas of the Dutch dialects*. Vol. 1: Kaarten/Maps. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Kehrein, R./A.Lameli/J.Nickel (2005): *Möglichkeiten der computergestützten Regionalsprachenforschung am Beispiel des Digitalen Wenker-Atlas (DiWA)*. In: Braungart, Georg et al. (a cura di): *Jahrbuch für Computerphilologie* 7, 149-170.

**Background E:** the study of the German language islands in Northern Italy, particularly with respect to the Cimbrian

dialect

- Bidese, E. (2007): Der Verlust der Verb-Zweit-Regel und die Entwicklung der "Clitic Phrase" in der Geschichte des Zimbrischen. Empirische Daten und theoretische Analysen. Tesi di dottorato. Università degli Studi di Verona. Dottorato di ricerca in Linguistica, ciclo XIX°.
- Bidese, E./J.R.Dow/T.Stolz, Thomas (2005): Das Zimbrische zwischen Germanisch und Romanisch. Bochum, Brockmeyer, 164-189.
- Dal Negro, S. (2004): The Decay of a Language. The Case of a German dialect in the Italian Alps. Bern: Lang.
- Rosenberg, P. (2005): Dialect Convergence in the German Language Islands (Sprachinseln). In: Auer, Peter/Hinskens, Frans/Kerswill, Pal (a cura di): Dialect Change. Convergence and Divergence in European Languages. Cambridge, 221-235.
- Schmeller, J. A. (1838): Ueber die sogenannten Cimbern der VII und XIII Communen auf den Venedischen Alpen und ihre Sprache. *Abhandlungen der philosophisch-philolog. Classe der königlich bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* II/3, 557-708.
- Schweizer, B. (1952): Zimbrische Gesamtgrammatik. Bd. V.: Syntax der zimbrischen Dialekte in Oberitalien. Diessen am Ammersee. [unpublished ms., stored in the Institut für die Forschung der Deutschen Sprache - Deutscher Sprachatlas in Marburg an der Lahn, Katalogisierungskoordinaten: 1968-8850 (M7 Schwei 39 bd 5)]
- Tyroller, H. (2003): Grammatische Beschreibung des Zimbrischen in Lusern. Stuttgart: Steiner

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The interest for the German speaking language islands in Northern Italy (particularly in the Triveneto region) is well attested within the field of philological studies since the first half of the 19th century (a first version of the Cimbrian "Pater Noster" is already included in Adelung's *Mythridates oder allgemeine Sprachenkunde*, 1806-1817). A renewed interest for this field of research can be encountered in the last decade of the 20th century thanks to the "discovery" of the Cimbrian dialect as a natural "watershed" in the linguistic comparison between Germanic and Romance syntax (cf. bibliographic references, point 2.2, background E). This continuing interest in itself justifies the urgent need to create a data base which collects both synchronic and diachronic linguistic data from all attested Cimbrian varieties and gives us a first, strong motivation for this research project. The research program will be developed in three stages.

During the **first stage** we will define the structure of the data base and organize the the collection and digitalization of the data. In this preliminary phase, particular importance will be given to the elaboration of the questionnaire, i.e. the definition of both its contents and modalities of administration. The structure of the data base, on the other hand, will be organized in the simplest possible way in order to facilitate the subsequent connection to other relevant projects which can guarantee an adequate server administration (in terms of both management and technological updating). The elaboration of a questionnaire which will be used in dialectological field work implies precise and coherent methodological criteria with particular reference to both the identification of the relevant contents (for German varieties, a good example can be found in the *Sprachatlas der deutschen Schweiz*, cf. Hotzenköcherle 1962b) and its administration on the field (cf. Hotzenköcherle 1962a, Bellmann 1994). In the last decade, the research field of German dialectology has been characterized by a growing interest in the investigation of morphosyntactic phenomena (Seiler 2003, Rabanus 2006, 2007), which has brought about a fruitful interaction with the theoretical framework of Generative Grammar (cf. Benincà/Poletto 1991, Rabanus/Alber/Tomaselli 2008). Under this new perspective it has been possible to point out the theoretically most relevant morpho-syntactic phenomena as for example: a) the morphology of predicative adjectives; b) case marking in proper names; c) agreement and doubling phenomena of subordinating conjunctions (Agreeing Complementizers and doubly filled COMP); d) the syntax of pronominal elements (clitics versus free pronouns); e) negative concord; f) the relative order of elements within the verbal cluster. Once the structure of the questionnaire has been defined (as well as the administration modalities, like registration and transcription of data) we will be able to start in parallel both with: i) the organization of research on the field (in the first place: Giazza/VR, Roana/VI and Luserna/TN, with potential extensions to the other German islands in the geographic area of Triveneto like Sappada/BL and the Fersina Valley/TN) and ii) the selection of the most relevant Cimbrian documents which are available on paper (for example: the first and the second Cimbrian Catechism, from the year 1602 and 1813, respectively, Baragiola's novel, 1906, the Cimbrian Grammar by Cappelletti-Schweizer, 1945; certain documents from the Schweizer Archive stored at the *Sprachatlas* in Marburg, cf. Bidese 2007 for further details).

The first stage of the project will result in the creation of an organized corpus of digitalized data on which the second stage of the project will be based.

During the **second stage** of the research program we will explore the technical possibilities to connect our data base to the data bases of other relevant projects which can guarantee an adequate server administration, first of all to the ASIS data base in Padua (Atlante Sintattico dell'Italia Settentrionale - <http://asis-cnr.unipd.it>). We will however not exclude a potential interaction with other data bases with a similar research approach: the TITUS project in Frankfurt (Thesaurus indogermanischer Text- und Sprachmaterialien - <http://titus.uni-frankfurt.de>) containing already a version of the second

Cimbrian Catechism, the DiWA in Marburg (Digitaler Wenker-Atlas - <http://www.diwa.info>), as well as other data bases of European relevance such as the SAND project (Meertens Instituut, The Netherlands) or the SCANDIASYN project (University of Tromsø, Norvegia). In fact, the administration of an isolated data base is clearly too expensive in order to guarantee its technical updating and to ensure the development of the results achieved thanks to both the financial and the organizational efforts characterizing the planning and starting phase. Isolation of this type has not seldom lead to problems in similar data base projects which started with big expectations but were blocked in the initial stages if they did not completely fail (just to mention some well known examples: the Atlas projects for the dialects of Salento, Sardegna, Sicilia, as well as the NADIR project - Nuovo Atlante Dialettale dell'Italia per Regioni).

During this second stage of the project, the following tasks should be carried out: i) definition of the tagging techniques of the corpus; ii) choice of the software program; iii) tagging of the data base; iv) publication of the Cimbrian data base on the web through an adequate interface connection with the ASIS data base.

During the **third stage** we plan to pursue the main aim of dialectological research, which traditionally consists in the production of a linguistic Atlas, exploring the possibility to supply the ASIS data base with cartographic support. The transfer of the elicited data onto cartographic support implies not only particular competence and expertise but even more so an adequate financial funding. A linguistic Atlas wich cannot count on such support remains incomplete ("unfinished", so to speak) as is actually the case of the ASIS project. As for the cartographic support, both the SAND project (cf. Barbiere et al. 2005) and the *Digitaler Wenker Atlas* represent far more elaborate projects (cf. Kehrein/Lameli/Nickel 2005 and point 2.2, background D). The experience acquired in Marburg by one member of the present research project (cf. Rabanus curriculum vitae, point 1.11, attachment n. 2), who actively collaborated at the elaboration of the DiWA project, ensures the competence we need to pursue the ultimate aim of this project:

the realisation of a dialect atlas of the Triveneto, which considers in detail the geographic space occupied by the minorities speaking a German variety, starting with the geographic region of Verona.

#### SUMMARY OF THE EXPECTED RESULTS

We expect three main results from the project as described under 2.3:

- A The production of an organized corpus of digitalized data referring to the German speaking language islands in North-Eastern Italy (Triveneto). We will begin data collection with the Cimbrian varieties spoken in Giazza (VR), Roana (VI) and Luserna (TN). The collection of data will focus on morpho-syntactic phenomena without any a principled exclusion of the phonological component, whose potential analysis should be granted by the insertion of a set of interviews on the field.
- B Definition of the data base tagging techniques and publication of the "Cimbrian data base" on the web through an adequate interface connection with the server of the ASIS data base (Atlante Sintattico dell'Italia Settentrionale) in Padua.
- C The realisation of a dialect atlas of the Venetian region, which considers in detail the geographic space occupied by the minorities speaking a German variety, starting with the geographic region of Verona whose linguistic situation is particularly interesting thanks to the presence of the Cimbrian language island of Giazza.