



Place and dialect levelling in Denmark

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This paper demonstrates that processes of globalization such as urbanization and social and geographic mobility may on the one hand lead to dialect leveling and on the other hand to dialect awareness and celebration of linguistic localness (Johnstone 2010). The paper reports on a real time panel study in three towns in distinct dialect areas in Denmark. It examines language change in 18 speakers recorded in 1978 to 2010 and emphasizes the advantages of approaching ‘place’ from different angles when investigating patterns of language change.

At the time of the early recordings, the three towns were in different stages of ongoing dialect leveling processes (Pedersen 2003). In the town of *Odder*, dialect leveling was advanced (Nielsen and Nyberg 1992; 1993) informants’ language being regional dialect or regional standard (Auer, Hinskens et al. 2005). In the towns of *Vinderup* and *Tinglev*, informants’ languages featured substantial amounts of dialect features (Kristensen 1980; Pedersen 1986). In 2005 to 2010, researchers at the Danish National Research Center for Language Change in Real Time (LANCHART) and the University of Southern Denmark re-interviewed informants, thus providing data for investigating language change in real time (see www.lanchart.dk). The present paper focuses on the geographically non-mobile informants.

Quantitative analyses of morphological and phonological variables show different patterns of language change in the three towns. In *Odder*, language has changed slightly towards Danish standard. In *Vinderup*, dialect has been leveled extensively between recordings (especially among female informants), whereas in *Tinglev*, informants’ language has not changed at all. Despite the fact that these dialect areas are situated in a rather small country and have been subjected to similar processes of globalization results go in opposite directions. In order to explain the differences in language change found, attention must be given not only to space effects, i.e. distance, proximity, location as conceptualized in traditional approaches to dialect leveling (e.g. Trudgill 1974) – but also to place effects, i.e. the ensemble of sociolinguistic conditions within speech localities (Horvath and Horvath 2001; Britain 2009; Blommaert 2010). This paper examines the impact of social and structural factors of place (historic, demographic, and socio-economic) (e.g. Britain 2002) as well as phenomenological factors (conceptualizations of place, sense of belonging and sense of place) (Johnstone 2010; Quist 2010; Jørgensen, Fallov et al. 2011) on language change in real time.

Social and structural factors of place may explain why conceptualizations of – and perceived relations between – language and home town/region differ in the three towns. Qualitative analyses show that talk about talk (Johnstone 2004) is common and positive in *Tinglev*; rare and predominantly negative in *Vinderup*; and almost non-existent in *Odder*.

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