

The subjective and objective perception of the German-Dutch boundary as a dialect border

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Low-German dialects have almost lost their relevance in official situations, for example in schools (cf. Robben/Robben 1993) and were replaced by the German standard variety. Currently they are spoken - if at all - in informal contexts, where somehow a regressive tendency can be observed too (cf. Smits 2011: 271ff). The loss of function influences their structure, meaning the dialects have increasingly developed standard variety structures, which was recently proved by Berg (2013).

Such changes however were observed in Low-German and Dutch border dialects (cf. Kremer 1979 and lately Smits 2011): While the dialects diverge among themselves, they converge according to their standard variety. This is - considering their past - noteworthy, because despite the political border and language boundary between Germany and the Netherlands, they built a dialect continuum, which first started to break apart approximately at the end of the First World War.

This presentation is based on my doctoral dissertation project, which circles the question, if those linguistic divides (i.e. "sprachliche Bruchstellen", cf. Kremer 1993: 26) can also be found in other areas across the German-Dutch border such as the emsländisch-drentisch one. To investigate the influence of the border on the Dutch and German dialects, I chose linguistic phenomena of the genuine homogeneous north lower-saxon dialect and surveyed them with traditional and modern methods in four venues, which are located on an axis that runs from West to East. Thus it is possible to ascertain the influence of the border (i.e. the (potential) change of each dialect in favour of the particular standard variety) in correlation with the distance of the venues to the border, which will be shown and discussed on some selected phenomena.