

Imitation as a method of measuring salience and borrowing

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A few decades ago, dialectology began focusing on language perception and contact-induced borrowing. Salience is an especially popular field of research, but there are still no reliable methods of investigation and definition of the peculiarity of certain language structures. Our poster shows that data from imitations can help to get a clearer view on how specific parts of language perception work. Inspired by PURSCHKE (2010), who also used dialect imitations for his studies on salient features, we developed a randomized controlled trial to ensure that every test subject has the same input. Besides, the usage of many morphosyntactic features (e.g. pronominal adverbs, subjunctive mood) has a rather low frequency. Our study checks for the use of such structures by using a text containing those features. This text is translated and spoken by native speakers into different target languages and dialects (Dutch, Yiddish, Low German, North Hessian, and Bavarian). The recordings are played to test subjects from different regions. Afterwards, they are given the text in Standard German and are asked to retranslate it themselves into the dialect they had heard at the beginning. To test if there is a difference between oral and written imitation, the survey is conducted using the direct (in interviews) as well as the indirect (online questionnaire) method. By mapping the results, we can show whether different areas distinguish in their imitations of dialects. The idea is that one can only imitate salient features and the question is, whether salient features have an impact on language-induced borrowings, as SCHIRMUNSKI (1928/1929) suggests. Therefore, we will compare the results to the borrowing scale introduced by THOMASON/KAUFMANN (1988, 7476).