THE IRISH IN AUSTRALIA – ASPECTS OF LINGUISTIC ACCOMMODATION
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I THE STRUCTURE OF COGNITION, LANGUAGE AND DISCOURSE

What is Language?

This question is most controversial among linguists and probably as unsolvable as the question whether the hen or the egg was first. Every linguistic analysis is thus the direct result of certain theoretical assumptions such as the following (cf. Tobin 1990): How do you define language? How do you define a linguistic problem? What are considered relevant data?

Language is here defined as an *individual's highly structured system of linguistic signs[1] that facilitates communication among human beings*. In the following, the language of an individual will be called *lect* and its structure *langue*. Utterances, written or spoken, are called *parole*.

The Structure of Cognition and Language – Core and Periphery

That thinking should be structured like language is an old thought with most debate arising from the question whether this congruence can be attributed to either one's predominance (cf. for instance the 'Sapir-Whorf-hypothesis').

In this part of the paper, the thought that all the different concepts (*arguments*) within an individual's thinking are arranged according to a core-periphery structure will be advanced. The same structuring applies to the domain of langue and to its expression through signs (*predicates*).

Core and Periphery as a universal principle of human cognition

In the following, a number of arguments will be given that support the contention that human thinking follows a core-periphery structure.

A philosophy that distinguishes between *Substantia* and *Accidens* was first developed by Aristotle in his writings on the world' s physical nature. *Substantia* is the physical form of an object shaped by its function. *Accidens*, on the other hand, is a further moulding of an object by its surrounding environment. Modern philosophy has recurrently referred to a differentiation between integral parts and peripheral parts of an object as a valued method of hermeneutics (cf. e.g. the works of Friedrich Schleiermacher 1768-1834).

Cognitive theory is another field where a distinction between core and peripheral items proved to be very helpful (Croft 1990).

More approaches showing human cognition as distinguishing between core and peripheral properties of an object are *prototype theory* as forwarded by Rosch (1978) and *stereotype theory* (cf. Hamilton 1981).

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[1] The term *sign* or *linguistic sign* means any linguistic item, be it lexical, phonological or morphosyntactical.

Core and Periphery in linguistic theory

Up to the present, there have been several attempts to ascribe a core-periphery structure to language. These will be discussed now.

Croft (1990: 124ff) shows how prototype theory and language (both following the principle of core-periphery) can be related by treating a "word form in an utterance as representing a cluster of grammatical values on different parameters." Features that determine prototypical status are *frequency*, *unmarkedness* and the usefulness of the sign in *many contexts*.

Since "evidence for grammatical prototypes is essentially the same as evidence for markedness patterns" (Croft 1990: 124), markedness theory obviously also plays a role in an analysis relating to a distinction between core and peripheral members of a linguistic paradigm.

The concept of *markedness* was first developed in the Prague School of Linguistics and has since been adopted by both the generative and the typological approach to the study of language. "Classical" marking theory allows only for binary distinctions, a concept that has been furthered and defended recently by Tobin (1990). Modern typological theory has, however, created the notion of 'relative markedness' along a gradable scale (cf. the Greek singular-dual-plural distinction). In this context, signs that are unmarked belong to the core and are at least as frequent as their peripheral marked counterparts.

Included in markedness is the feature of *iconicity*. Iconicity here means that the structure of language in some way reflects the structure of experience. There are two aspects to this, namely the correspondence of parts (e.g. one form - one meaning) and the correspondence of relations between parts (e.g. simple grammatical structures corresponding to cognitively primitive arguments[2]) creating another link between human cognition and language. According to this, marked items are transparent (regular, 'one form – one meaning') and unmarked items are opaque (irregular, no obvious iconic relationship) (cf. Haiman 1985).

Regularity and *Frequency* are the two concepts used in the Prague School of Linguistics in an attempt to structure language systems according to notions of core and periphery (cf. Daneš 1966 and Vachek 1966b). Since the latter seems a derived category, only the first will be discussed here. As shown above, Haiman (1985) argues that core items of a language system are unmarked and therefore can be irregularly formed, while peripheral items have to follow a regular principle in order to be understood. Daneš and Vachek, however, claim exactly the opposite, namely that regularity is a property belonging to the core of language, while irregularities are found at its periphery. This is in accordance with Chomskyan thinking (cf. Chomsky, 1981: 7f).

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[2] In this context I want to refer to Kortmann's (1997: 342) important proviso that cognitive basicness and cognitive simplicity need to be kept separate. Every basic concept belongs to the core of human categorization, but not every basic concect is necessarily simple.

The two approaches can be reconciled when we recognize that they are looking at different phenomena. At the level of *parole*, regularity means, for instance, regularity of inflection. Since many of the obvious core members of English follow a rather idiosyncratic paradigm (cf. the *be*-paradigm), core status and irregularity seem remarkably intertwined. On the other hand, the inflection itself, e.g. *-ed* for past, is most certainly a core item of the linguistic system.

Chomsky (1981) also talks about core and periphery referring to the tenet that Universal Grammar determines a set of core grammars (via parameter settings) which he defines as the only viable objects for linguistic research. A more modern generative approach to this problem is followed by Joseph (1992: 327f):

> What distinguishes the three components, UG, core grammar, and periphery, is how much of each is pre-determined by nature and how much is left open to historical circumstance [i.e. to the effects of human activity]. UG is ahistorical, pure nature; periphery contains the direct effects of history [...], while core grammar is nature having left some of her facets open to historical determination.

Finally, evidence for the existence of a core-periphery structure of language comes also from the study of semantics and psycholinguistics. The first has developed the theory of lexical/semantic fields that are governed by a core member of that field, an archilexeme.

Cruse (1994: 179f) gives a possible alternative to the standard prototype model used in defining lexical relations using a "'core definition plus cosmetic features' model, in which category membership is governed by the core definition, and the cosmetic features control[ling] only centrality."

Psycholinguistic research measured the response time of informants to different linguistic tasks. The assumption was that the longer the time it took an informant to respond to a particular task, the more processing was involved. Core linguistic signs, like the past inflection -ed, were processed faster than peripheral signs, which in turn were processed faster than nonsense forms.

Towards a new theory of Core and Periphery in language and cognition

From the above, we can conclude, that cognition and language are structured alike, namely according to core and periphery structures. It remains to differentiate between the two and to describe exactly what core and periphery means. This will be done below.

Cognition and Language

It is claimed here that cognition and language are two intricately related but nevertheless different systems within a human being's mind. The question of a possible precedence of either category is not addressed here.

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[4] Note that there can be no such thing as a *community parole* since every instance of parole has to be produced by an individual (the same note applies to Figure 3).

Cognition, as a system, is made up of the sum of all concepts (arguments) within an individual mind. These concepts all differ in their importance to an individual.

Language, as a system, is made up of the sum of all linguistic signs (predicates) within an individual mind. These signs all differ in their importance to an individual. Moreover, the notion of language can be further divided into the system (langue), i.e. the relations between the different signs, and into instantiations of that system (parole).

Core and Periphery in Cognition and Language

The principal variable distinguishing core members from peripheral members in either cognition or language is the number of links it has with other items (cf. Table 1).

In the system of cognition, this means the number of links a concept has with other concepts and/or with linguistic signs. It is obvious that a concept that relates to many other concepts enjoys a core position in the thinking of an individual, whereas a rather isolated concept is situated at the periphery of thinking. Likewise, a concept that can be expressed using a great variety of signs has core status. In the paradigm *lovely, attractive, beautiful, charming, comely, exquisite, graceful, handsome, pretty, sweet,* etc., the number of predicates for the same argument [LOVELY] is very high (i.e. there is a low iconic relationship). Since core concepts of cognition will have many 'shades of meaning', a high number of predicates can be expected. On the other hand, peripheral items will have a low number of predicates, possibly only one.

TABLE 1: CORE AND PERIPHERY IN COGNITION AND LANGUAGE

	Cognition		Language	
	Core	Periphery	Core	Periphery
links with other concepts	high	low	high	low
links with other signs	high	low	high	low

In the system of language core status is attributed to those signs that have links with many different concepts and/or with many other signs. An example of the latter is the inflectional ending *–ed*.

Frequency is only a derived notion. It is core status that makes an item frequent and not *vice versa.* Its high communicative value makes a core item the preferred choice. This corresponds to the contentions formulated in Zipf's Laws (Zipf 1949), namely that signs will be frequently used when they are not complex (but cf. footnote 2) and when they relate to many different signs structurally and semantically.

In conclusion, it can be stated that the concepts of thinking and the signs of a langue differ with respect to a variables that mark these as belonging to either the *core* or the

periphery of the system under investigation. There are, however, no absolute distinctions to be observed. Items can be more or less prototypical members of either category. This will tentatively be called the Core-Periphery-Theory (COP). COP applies principally to all levels of language, e.g. phonology, lexis and syntax, and also to human cognition.

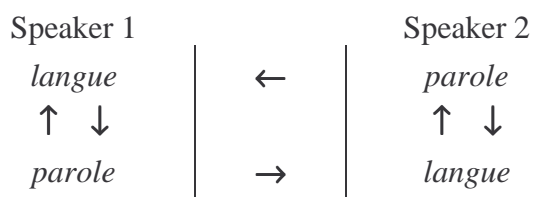*The Relations between Individual Lects – How do we communicate?*

Langues differ as much in their COP-structure as the individuals do. This means a certain langue differs to some extent from the COP-system of another individual as well as from the normed langue of a community or of a superposed variety (e.g. Standard EngE). Moreover, the langues of different speech communities differ from each other and from the langue of a superposed variety. Exactly how all the different langues interact with each other and with society at large is shown in Figures 1-3.

As shown in Figure 1, every individual speaker has his/her own COP system, here called *langue*. The production of speech (*parole*) is influenced by the individual's langue. However, each parole sets an example that changes langue. Halliday (1992) draws a superb comparison showing how langue and parole interact:

> The weather and the climate are the same phenomenon, but regarded from different time depths. If we are thinking of the next few hours, then we are thinking about the weather [...]. If the climate changes, then obviously the weather changes. But conversely, each day's weather affects the climate, however infinitesimally, either maintaining the status quo or helping to tip the balance towards climatic change. Instance and system, micro and macro, are two sides of the same coin, relative to the observer's position.

Figure 1 shows how individuals influence each other's langue via communication. Every parole adds to one's own langue as well as to the langue of the addressee.

Figure 1: Individual COP-structures influencing each other

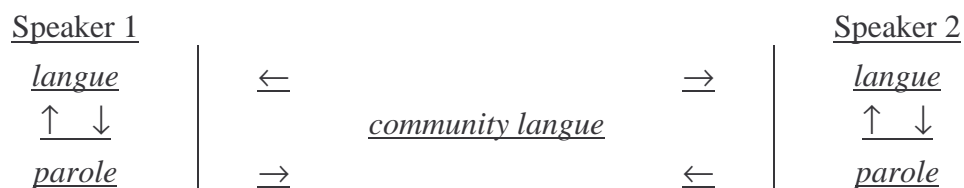| Speaker 1		Speaker 2
langue	←	*parole*
↑ ↓		↑ ↓
parole	→	*langue*

What is commonly called a 'dialect' or a 'community language' can be regarded as the lowest common denominator of the langues of the individuals that belong to that community.[4] Since such norms of langue are often codified (and are taught in schools), they can exercise a powerful influence on an individual's langue.

Such langues cannot be considered as fully fledged languages. First, they do not correspond to any individual's language system. Second, the extra-human existence of such a system is dependent on its recognition and its codification in grammars and dictionaries by
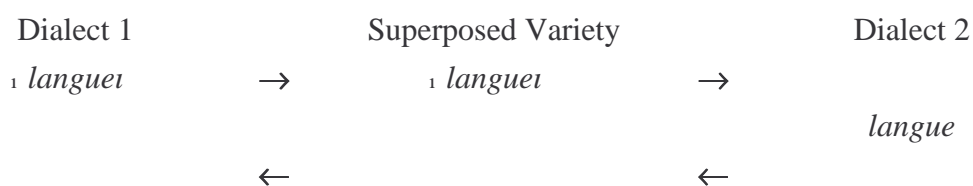
human beings. But up to now no one has yet claimed to have codified everything pertaining to a single language in a grammar or a dictionary. And that means that the 'langue' of a 'dialect' is necessarily incomplete.

FIGURE 2: INDIVIDUAL COP-STRUCTURES IN THEIR RELATION TO A COMMUNITY

Speaker 1				Speaker 2
langue	←		→	*langue*
↑ ↓		*community langue*		↑ ↓
parole	→		←	*parole*

The last figure to be discussed here shows the reciprocal influence that the langue norms of different dialects/subvarieties and the langue of a superposed variety have on each other (Figure 3). Of course, the langues of subvarieties can also influence each other.

FIGURE 3: THE INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DIALECTS AND A SUPERPOSED VARIETY

Dialect 1		Superposed Variety		Dialect 2
₁ *langueı*	→	₁ *langueı*	→	
				langue
	←		←	

II LANGUAGE, DIALECT AND CHANGE

Any theory of dialect mixing has to account for the following factors:

(1) In what *directions* and to what *extent* does accommodation take place?

(2) What is the *mode* of change?

(3) How do *variation, change* and *COP* relate?

The Direction and the Extent of Accommodation

There are two possible directions for an accommodation process. Either two langues accommodate to each other (bi-directional accommodation) or one langue is changing in the direction of another langue (uni-directional accommodation). The direction of the accommodation to a large extent corresponds to the source of the original impetus. If the aim is mutual comprehensibility, i.e. if there is a linguistic stimulus, the process is likely to be bi-directional. If, however, the motivation is social, i.e. someone tries to integrate into a certain community, the process is likely to be uni-directional.

The accommodation of langues does not necessarily affect all of its parts. An illustrative example of this comes from a hitherto unpublished study by Wolfram. He discusses the case of Julius Bryant (Wolfram 1996: 43f.), who lived on the island of Ocracoke off the coast of North Carolina. The islanders form a very closely knit community and have, until recently, lived relatively isolated lives. Julius was one of three African Americans in a population of c. 400 whites. He was well accepted by the community playing poker and going fishing with the white men. Preliminary research suggests that he adopted a salient phonological feature but did not change in grammatical features that marked him as speaking African American

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[6] In words this means:

Vernacular English. There was no reason to change more of his individual system since the abovementioned phonological feature is very prestigious and gave him the credit of belonging to the island community.

The last reasoning to be presented here that argues against a complete change of lects is what can be called the *home-ties-principle.* It primarily applies to dislocated people, for instance immigrants. The social need to blend in linguistically with the surrounding speech-community is here counter-acted by the feeling that one's original dialect should be preserved because it sustains an emotional bond between the individual and the original speech-community. Moreover, people in such a situation show a tendency to form close relationships with people from similar backgrounds as, for instance, the Irish in Australia are known to have done.

The Mode of Change

In this section the question of the *how* is addressed. The descriptive theory of Determinacy Analysis (DA), as advanced by Chesnokov and Luelsdorff (1991), is used as an explanatory model for the workings of change. DA looks at the frequency of a determinacy containing a particular argument and a particular predicate, dependent on its immediate linguistic and non-linguistic context. In this way COP and DA can work together. The first defines the place of an item within the system of *langue*, and thus provides us with general insights into the systemic effects of change. The latter explains how this item interacts with other items and with the world at large, measures the frequency of occurrence and thus deals with actual speech production, or *parole*.

Determinacies are of the form x, z $\rightarrow$ y, I = m and C = n, where x = argument, y = predicate, z = binder, and I and C are measurements of determinacy accuracy I = $N(xy)/N(x)$[6] and completeness C = $N(xy)/N(y)$[7], respectively.

DA uses the same variables that defined the COP-status of a sign. For example, it was stated that if the number of predicates for a single argument, or the number of arguments for a single predicate, were high, then the item was a core member (cf. Table 1). In terms of DA this means that arguments in determinacies with low values for I are core members and that predicates in determinacies with low values for C are also core members.

Applied to dialects in contact, DA reveals the successive stages of change in an individual langue. The original system at the point in time t_0 has a determinacy of the form:

a $\rightarrow$ b, t_0; I = 1.00 and C = 1.00; [EMPLOYER] $\rightarrow$ 'employer'.

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[7] The completeness C of x $\rightarrow$ y is calculated by dividing the number of instances where this determinacy is true by the overall frequency of y. The central question here is, if we have a predicate y, is it only determined by an argument x_0 or can it also be determined x_1 and what are their respective frequencies?

An additional determinacy is encountered at t_1 (e.g. an Irish immigrant coming to Australia), namely

a → c, t_1; [EMPLOYER] → 'governor'.

Now the originally fully accurate and complete system is in disorder. The measurements for I and C have to be recalculated. Since the argument [EMPLOYER] can now be predicated by either 'employer' or 'governor', the accuracy I of the original determinacy at t_0 is reduced from 1.00 to 0.50 at t_1.

a → b, t_1, I = 0.50 and C = 1.00

a → c, t_1, I = 0.50 and C = 1.00

Moreover, since the predicate 'governor' can also be determined by the argument [GOVERNOR], the completeness C of the new determinacy will be lowered at t_2 (with $t_1 \leq t_2$).

a → c, t_2, I = 0.50 and C = 0.50

d → c, t_2, I = 1.00 and C = 0.50

In parole such ambiguities within a langue are resolved by the choice of either of the variables. The actual observed frequencies of the outcomes of such determinacies are, however, not solely dependent on the decontextualized/mathematical values of I and C in a langue. Rather, the values of I and C are raised to 1.00, i.e. to production, by the binders that affect the utterance. Below, binders that have a bearing on paroles in a dialect contact situation are discussed.

Binding Factors

In the context of this paper, the internal and external factors of linguistic accommodation (cf. Figure 4) function as the relevant binders in language production/parole. This means that the relative strength of each binder determines whether a change will take place or not (cf. Figure 1 and Halliday's quote on the interaction between langue and parole).

First, internal factors will be looked at and then external factors will be evaluated.

Internal factors are those that derive their power from structural reasons and are therefore dependent on the COP of an individual langue. One of these is *systemic inertia*. This means that the chances of any variation leading to a general change are restricted by the already existing system.

The notion of *comprehensibility* is also easily explained. The possibility of being misunderstood, because the same item has different values and designations for two speakers, may lead to change. An example of this would be the use of *creek* in an Australian ('small stream or river') and in a British ('a narrow inlet where the sea comes in') context. It is obvious

that 'new chums' will be quick at changing their original use of the word in order to conform to the dominant usage.

The last internal factor under discussion here is the COP-value of an item in the langue accommodated to. If it is of great importance in the langue of a particular speech-community, a newcomer is under strong pressure to adapt. This explains the immediate take-over of lexical items like *kangaroo,* by immigrants to Australia. Since there is a gap in the original lexicon but a strong position of this item in the community's lexicon, it is likely to be quickly adopted.

Most external factors can be evaluated according to the principle of *social conspicuity*. This concept states that items that are very conspicuous markers of social identity are prone to be changed in a situation where an original identity is to be changed.

Another factor is the level of linguistic awareness. The stereotypical notion of what constitutes the langue of a speaker of Hiberno English (HE) can be very removed from actual usage. This is even true for observations of one's own speech behaviour or that of the speech community one lives in. Here this means that linguistic signs above the level of awareness are very often linguistic markers of social identity. These are likely to change when the social surroundings of a speaker are altered.

It seems obvious that any accommodation motivated by the need for social integration in a new society faces considerable resistance from the human need to cling to once cherished homes. "Good old Ireland", as it is very often called in emigrants' letters, functions as a focal point, even in the antipodes. This leads to a retention of features that have an associative value for some speakers, despite the fact that other factors might militate against their continued use.

The home-ties principle thus not only works against a change-over in langue but also favours the production of dialectal idiosyncrasies in parole.

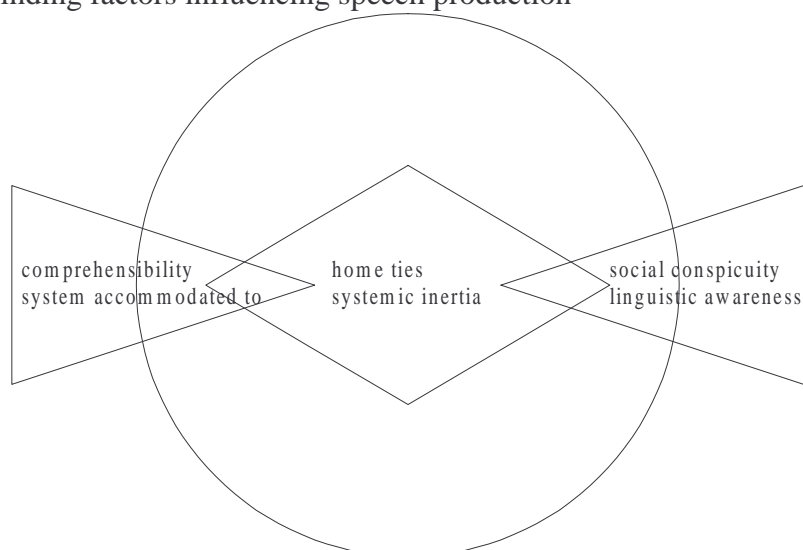Figure 4: The binding factors influencing speech production

Figure 4 shows the binding factors that affect speech production. The *home-ties principle* and *systemic inertia* stabilise the individual system, i.e. they favour *paroles* that are in accordance with the existing COP-system. On the other hand, the binders *comprehensibility*, the *system accommodated to*, the *social conspicuity* of a sign and its level of *linguistic awareness* favour paroles that will ultimately change the existing system.

We have looked at various binders that influence the frequencies of use of variable predicates. It remains to place this within the framework of DA. This will be done with the help of a short example.

t_0	1	$a \rightarrow b$, I = 1.00 and C = 1.00
t_1	2	$a \rightarrow b$, I = 0.50 and C = 1.00
	3	$a \rightarrow c$, I = 0.50 and C = 1.00

An immigrant to Australia would have (1) at t_0 as the original determinacy. Determinacy (1) is then modified and becomes (2) because of the individual encountering (3) in the new Australian environment at t_1. In order to decide which predicate will eventually be produced, it is necessary to look at the binders that raise or lower the accuracy of one or the other determinacy.

Every binder is a context dependent variable. If the predicate b endangers comprehensibility, e.g. when talking to a non-Irish person, then the frequency of (2) will be lowered, while the frequency of (3) will be raised respectively. If the same person is writing a letter home, the variable of comprehensibility will favour (2) over (3), since the addressee might not be familiar with (3) at all. By looking at every variable, an accurate prediction of the occurrence of a certain determinacy in a certain situation is possible.

It is in the nature of the binding variables that their number is in principle infinite. Some of the binders might turn out to be irrelevant, others might be added to the Dictionary of Variables (DV).

Variation, Change and COP

In an extended contact situation, two linguistic systems are likely to accommodate their differences uni-directionally or bi-directionally. The change will be gradual and follow certain principles. The fact that some signs are more prone to change than others can be explained using COP-terminology.

Change always depends on variation. In the context of this paper, variation means the number of predicates for a single argument as well as the number of arguments with a single predicate (cf. Table 1 for definitions of core and peripheral status). Variation may be already

established in the original langue or it may be created because of someone emigrating to a different country and thus getting influenced by hitherto unfamiliar paroles.

When there is great variation, change is very likely, because the choice of a particular variable then extremely depends on the number and the strength of the contextual binders as defined above. Therefore, when the system of binders changes, as it certainly does for a person that enters a new speech community, the production of a particular predicate is greatly affected. This means that core items change easily because of their many links to other items. Peripheral items change less easily since the few links they have are dependent on a smaller number of binders.

There are two possible directions for a change, namely a reduction or an extension of the number of links. For peripheral items this can mean a change into non-existence (cf. below the change of structures that contain frontings within a phrase).
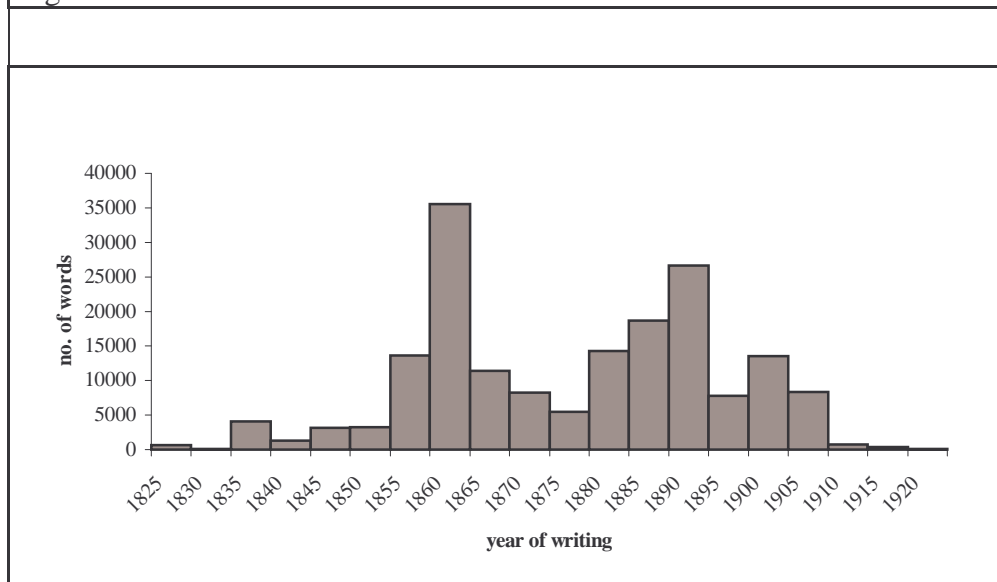
Linguistic change effects either more variation or less variation in a langue by changing the frequencies of specific paroles. All of this redefines the place of a sign within a system, i.e. its COP-status.

The self-collected corpus used in this investigation consists of 474 letters written in and to Australia from 1792 till 1921 comprising altogether 231,712 words. This corpus was subdivided into three sections for the present study. The first section holds letters written by Irish immigrants to Australia (350 letters; 137,319 words). The second contains the letters written from Ireland to emigrants in Australia (68; 39,951) and the last is a control-group of letters from and to Australia by various writers whose family origins were in either England or Scotland (56; 54,442).

The linguistic reliability of the corpus, i.e. the extent to which the letters can be judged as being close to the everyday paroles of their writers, seems high. In an age that produced literally hundreds of grammars and letter manuals, the letters show themselves to be mostly unconcerned with the prescriptive notions of these books. Since it seems rather unlikely that the rules were deliberately flouted, ignorance of polite ways of writing letters and of using language can be assumed.

The last question to be addressed here is the representativeness of the letters. Are they typical instances of Australian English, Hiberno English or 19th century British English? This question is indeed difficult to answer. The sheer number of letters would militate against the assumption that the language use shown in them is peripheral to 19th century speech. The notion of representativeness is also tied to the conceptualisation of AE as being a well-defined standard, which was clearly not the case some 150 years ago (cf. Fritz 1996).

Figure 5: Distribution over time of the Irish letters

In Figure 5, the distribution of the letters in the corpus over time can be seen. Since the letters are of extremely uneven length, the number of words in the letters of a given year provides a better insight into the composition of the corpus than the number of letters does.

The three sections of the corpus as described above were investigated for various features. The underlying assumption is that the Irish immigrants to Australia changed their speech norms during their residence there. Therefore the letters written from Ireland can be

seen as the original linguistic system the immigrants would have. The letters written back to Ireland evidence intermediate systems, the amount of change related to the time of stay and other factors. Finally, the language of the third sub-corpus is taken as the target norm of an accommodation process.

IV INVESTIGATIONS

Fronting

The fronting of whole phrases and frontings within a phrase are viable syntactic strategies in Standard English, but the frequencies of such structures is very low. In spoken contemporary HE, on the other hand, both strategies are used frequently (cf. Filppula 1991) with the first much more numerous than the latter.

The above hints at the core status of these structures in HE and at their peripheral status in Standard English. That this difference in status is also valid for the situation in 19th century Australia was borne out by an investigation of the corpus. It yielded only few examples in the control-group but many and varied examples in the Irish letters written to and from Australia.

Thus, what a speaker of HE experiences on coming to Australia is that frontings are much less frequent. Therefore, a change of status of these strcuctures is likely. Since the differences between 19th century AE and HE are only in status of the structures (and therefore in frequency, markedness, variety of use, etc.) and not in their actual existence, a process of accommodation can expected to be slow. This reasoning is also supported by the fact that the use of fronting is a not conspicuous social marker. Moreover, although they are more frequent in HE than in StE, the number of such constructions compared with the number of all sentences is still low, showing that the use of fronting in 19th century HE is much less central than the SVO sentence structure. Since fronting within a phrase is much less frequent than the fronting of whole phrases, the former can be said to be more peripheral in HE than the latter. This difference in status between these structures should also be reflected in their respective destinies, namely that the fronting of phrases should become less frequent and more restricted (because it moves to a more peripheral position) whereas frontings within a phrase should become almost extinct.

Looking at the corpus, the above reasonings are confirmed. Although there is no statistically valid correlation between length of stay in Australia and frequency of use of phrase frontings, there is a clear tendency to follow more standard patterns. This means that here we can evidence the move of a sign from a core to a peripheral position.

> Ocha3: I hope an ear you will lend to those few lines [...]. [1 year]
> Occo2: It is not always I have an opportunity of sending letters. [9 years]

Frontings within a phrase is found to be relatively frequent in letters to Australia as well as in letters written by immigrants in their first years. However, no example of such a

structure could be found in letters written to Ireland that were written more than six years after arrival in Australia. This is an example of a peripheral item that changes into non-existence.

> Iri 202: It was a struggle to keep *money enough* together to pay for them [...]. [2 years]
> Iri 209: [...] as I intend *someday going squatting* [...]. [4 years]

Lexical Accommodation

In the above we have seen how the COP-status of a certain structure changes due to contact. The small amount of data and the difficulty in evaluating such structures render an exact quantification of the process difficult. Therefore, the second investigation in this paper deals with signs that are easily countable and where little ambiguity in evaluation exists, namely lexical items.

The corpus was searched for lexical Australianisms such as *governor* [employer] and *tucker* [food] which have an obvious counterpart in 'uncontaminated' HE speech. Good indicators for this are textual references in the letters:

> Iri 189: [...] that you see a creek (a burn) flowing in towards the hill.

This constriction excludes items like *kangaroo*, *boomerang, bush* etc., where the immigrants had no choice, since the respective signifiés did not exist in Ireland. It is, however, interesting to read comments like the following, which show that the process of lexical adaptation is not necessarily a conscious decision on part of a speaker:

> Iri 168: I have to graft just as hard as him [...] (please excuse slang for you will pick it up in spite of yourselves).

The investigation concentrates on pairs like *graft* vs. *hard work* and looks how the use of either item correlates with length of stay in Australia. In particular, the semantic fields of [FOOD] and [WORK] were looked at because both are central to the life of every human being, i.e. the two *arguments* are core items of everybody's thinking with a high number of possible *predicates*, the choice of which depending on a large number of co-textual and contextual binders. Therefore change, here the increase in variation and the following changes in frequency, is likely to happen when the binding factors change. This was most certainly the case for speakers of HE emigrating to Australia.
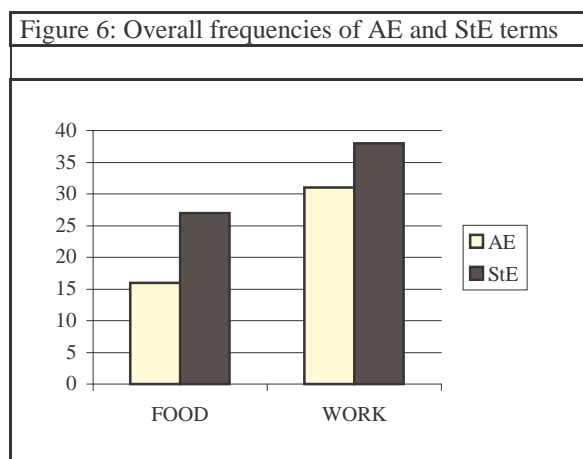
Figure 6 gives the overall frequencies of the AE and StE terms in the two semantic fields investigated. The lexical items used for the investigation were the following:

[FOOD]: *grub* (food) and *tuck* (food).

[WORK]: *billet* (employment), *blackleg labour* (strike-breakers), *crib* (employment), *governor* (employer), *graft* (hard work), and *spiff* (work incentive).

The defining criterion for inclusion in this list was that the term was not part of 19th century HE. The actual origins of the words were of no further interest in this respect.

Looking at Figure 6 it is discernible that StE terms dominate only slightly over AE terms, which is surprising and which shows the force of the impact of AE 'slang' terms on the vocabulary of the immigrants.

Figure 6: Overall frequencies of AE and StE terms

Figures 7 and 8 show how often StE and AE terms are used in letters written to Ireland depending on the length of stay of an immigrant, the x-axis giving the number of years and the y-axis giving the number of StE and AE terms.

Figure 7: AE and StE terms for [FOOD]   Figure 8: AE and StE terms for [WORK]
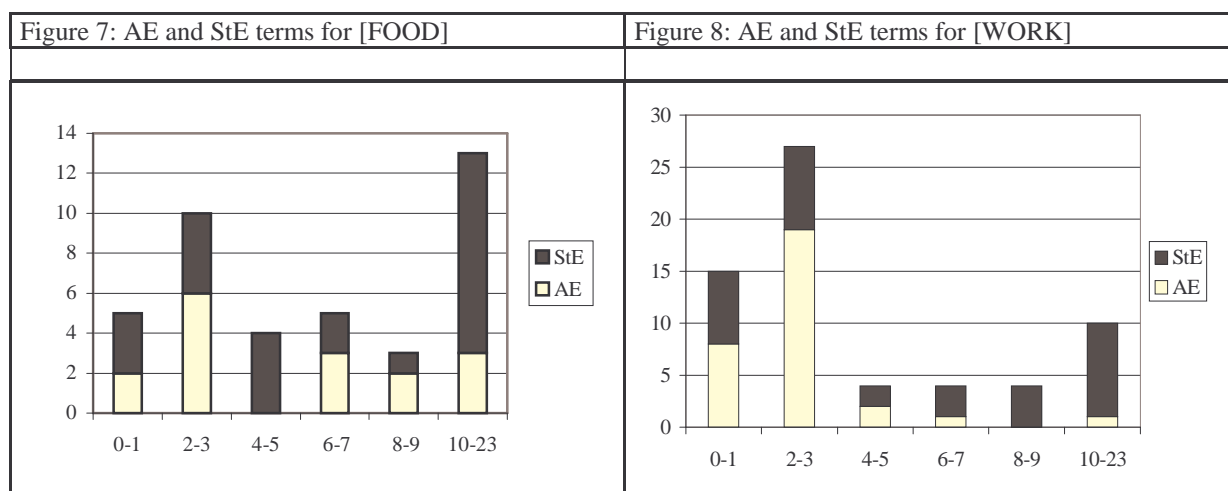

Figure 7 and Figure 8 both show an early frequent use of AE terms, which almost exceed the number of StE terms. This demonstrates how easily core arguments can acquire new predicates and that this greatly affects the status and the frequencies of the other predicates. The pressure to adapt was very hard on the recent immigrants and this is reflected in their use of language.

On the other hand, when the greenhorns become 'old hands', there is less pressure on them to show their 'Australianess' by their use of language. Consequently, StE terminology

gains ground at the expense of AE terms, again redefining the COP-status for the predicates in question.

This paper tried to establish a new way of looking at cognition, language and language change. The individual langues were defined as consisting of core and peripheral items. This was tentatively named the COP-Theory of Language. Following that, the mode of language change was explained using the framework of Determinacy Analysis (DA).

After a short presentation of the corpus used, investigations of language change respecting fronting and lexical adaptation were carried through. The langues of the immigrants had changed in the course of their stay in Australia. These changes affected the COP-status of the items in question and thus redefined the COP-structure of the langues. Change was shown to be dependent on COP-status, variation and language internal and external binders.

The investigation of fronting provided an insight into how the use of a structure of some prominence in HE assimilated to rules prevalent in 19th century AE langue, thereby becoming more peripheral in the langues of the immigrants.

Finally, the analysis of lexical adaptations in the semantic fields of [FOOD] and [WORK] disclosed the amount of pressure to adapt new immigrants must have felt and what consequences this had for the expression of these two core concepts. Moreover, decreasing pressure, i.e. the successful establishment in Australian society, led to a decreasing use of the AE terms.

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