

CHAPTER 10

State Borders and Language Change

The (Non-)Effects of Political Border Permeability on Language

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1. Introduction

It is almost a commonplace to state that the European nation state – a core element of modernity – has suffered a fundamental weakening during the recent period of what is often called late or even post-modernity. Economic globalization and the almost unrestrained flow of capital, the establishment of a supra-national governmental structure (such as the European Community), transnational migration, new and faster means of communication and transport can all be seen as a threat to the nation state and its sovereignty. The same developments have also affected the territorial aspect of the nation state: As the isomorphic mapping of states, cultures, nations and territories becomes problematic, the model of a contained national space for people, goods and symbolic resources (such as language) seems to be becoming less and less suited to capture the above-mentioned social, economic and cultural processes (Bauman, 1998). The borders that were formerly seen as protecting the ‘contents of the container’ from the outside have become less effective and have sometimes even given way to transnational (‘third’) spaces characterized by permanent border crossing (Pries, 1998). Even though this de-territorialization may be counteracted by processes of re-territorialization (Blommaert, 2010; Schroer, 2006), the new spaces that emerge and function as an attractor for cultural and economic processes are operative below the level of and/or across nation states; these include transnational ‘regions,’ diasporic neighborhoods that are a direct result of migration, ‘gated communities’ (with overt or implicit policies to keep migrants out), and older territories within nation spaces which had become marginalized over the course of the erection of the modern states and are now going through a renaissance. Often, these endogenous minorities occupy what became the periphery of these nation

states, i.e. the area towards the border (which in many cases crosscuts an earlier, pre-modern territorial unit).

Much of current thinking about space starts from the assumption that space 'normally' used to impede the circulation of people, goods or symbolic resources, either because this circulation became more difficult and more time-consuming with increasing spatial distance, or because spatial boundaries (such as political borders) presented obstacles to it. From both perspectives, late modernity makes space less relevant: space shrinks as advanced technologies make circulation over large distances easier, and space opens as state borders disappear. Upon closer inspection, however, this shrinking and opening of space is not a phenomenon of late modernity, but started much earlier. In fact, it was precisely the nation state which profited from the technological advances of the nineteenth century – the century of European nation-building par excellence – and its literally far-reaching consequences for transportation (railroads, steam engines, automobiles, planes) and the spread of information (newspapers, telephone, postal services): never before had a central political power been able to control its territory as well as the nation state did in the late nineteenth century. In addition, the colonial powers of the age of imperialism established efficient methods for the intercontinental transportation of goods, people and money. It is no wonder, then, that the experience of shrinking spaces was one of the key concepts of modernity already at its height in the early twentieth century. The national borders were only partial hindrances to trade and commerce, and national economies were dependent on each other in substantial ways (as the crises of the 1920s demonstrate) even at times when nation states were believed to be maximally sovereign. It is therefore only partly true that borders effectively imposed limitations on the circulation of people, goods or symbolic resources, and therefore functioned as a kind of shelter from outside influence – that they prevented external powers from intruding into the nation state's own power sphere. The differences are more quantitative than qualitative. In a sense, the widespread fears which underlie the discourse of globalization, i.e. that nation states and their borders do not provide shelter *any longer*, may be based more on beliefs than on facts; this, however, does not change their social relevance and does not make them less consequential.

One of the symbolic resources that are believed to have been 'contained' by state borders in the age of nationalism is language. In this paper, I will focus on the effects political borders have on the language spoken on both sides of borders. The container view of space and the circulation view of the spread of innovations predict that the divergence of linguistic resources at and across political borders is an indicator of their strength. Inversely, relinquishing of state border controls should

also lead to the convergence of linguistic resources, at least when linguistic conditions prevail which make this possible, i.e. when structurally similar varieties are spoken on both sides. Germany is a good test case for these predictions, since many of its political borders crosscut traditional dialect continua: a form of German or West Germanic is spoken on both sides. While one border – that between the GDR and the FRG – was almost impermeable for 40 years, the other borders became less relevant during the second part of the last century. As a consequence, linguistic convergence can be expected in their case.

In the first part of this paper I will summarize the evidence that falsifies the predictions formulated above on the relationship between borders and language (change). On the contrary, we observe an increase of linguistic differences, i.e. linguistic divergence, at all state borders, irrespective of whether they impede(d) communication or not. In the second part of this paper I will offer an interpretation of these facts which challenges the premise that language change is a direct consequence of communication strength (number of contacts, intensity of contacts). The counter model which I want to advocate is that language (as well as, perhaps, other symbolic systems) does not change (immediately) when communication increases or decreases, but rather lags behind, sometimes for hundreds of years. This is so because language spaces are mental constructs that are not easily overthrown by frequency of interaction. Mental representations of language spaces today continue to correspond to nation spaces. These representations are strong enough not only to prevent the increased permeability of the state borders from having an effect on language, but even to lead to language divergence. This suggests that language users continue to make use of modern instead of late modern notions of language spaces and adopt their language behavior to a view of the relationship between nation and language which is congruent with it. However, it will also be argued that the language spaces which end at the national borders of Germany are often not based on the form of the standard language, but on repertoire types in which the status of the standard language is more important than its structure.

2. Language Change at the Political Borders of Germany: Different Scenarios

The German language area is rich in examples of political (nation state) borders cutting across dialect continua. As a starting point, the following types can be distinguished:

- a variant of the German standard language is used, and dialects of German are spoken, on both sides of the border. This is the case for the borders of Switzerland/Germany and Austria/Germany,

and it also applied, during its existence, to the border between the GDR and the FRG.

- a West-Germanic dialect continuum is 'roofed' by a structurally distant standard variety on one side of the border and by standard German on the other. This is, *cum grano salis* (the below), the case of the border between Germany and Alsace, France.
- a West-Germanic dialect continuum is 'roofed' by different (endoglossic) Germanic standard varieties, as at the state border between the Netherlands and Germany.

Luxembourg, as is often the case, is difficult to classify; if *Lëtze-burgesch* is considered the national standard language, then the Luxembourg/German border is of the third type, while if we look at German as one of the official languages of the Grand Duchy, then the first type applies.¹

2.1. Dutch/German Border

For the *Dutch/German* border, there is ample evidence collected by Cajot (1989), Kremer (1990), Niebaum (1990), Gerritsen (1991), Hinskens (1993), Smits (2007) and recently by Giesbers (2008) that the dialects have diverged considerably at the national border over the last 60 years. The divergence is not only structural, but also refers to dialect use and dialect attitudes: the dialect in Germany is used more and regarded in more positive terms than the dialect in the Netherlands.

From a structural point of view, the border has increasingly become a dialect border, i.e. the Low German dialects spoken in Germany and the Dutch dialects spoken on the Dutch side have become more different. In the most recent study, for instance, Giesbers (2008) investigated the former Kleverland dialect continuum. On the basis of an analysis of lexical competence in 100 words, she found that the Low German speakers on the German side of the border know the traditional dialect better than the speakers on the Dutch side who have massively converged to the Dutch standard language. Even the traditional dialect words they still know have been transformed phonologically to sound more (Standard) Dutch. Using multidimensional scaling, Giesbers demonstrates that the dialect differences within the group of Dutch and German locations respectively are hardly noticeable today, while there is a radical rift at the state border.

The methodology of the study makes the German side appear more conservative. However, it does not capture another aspect which further

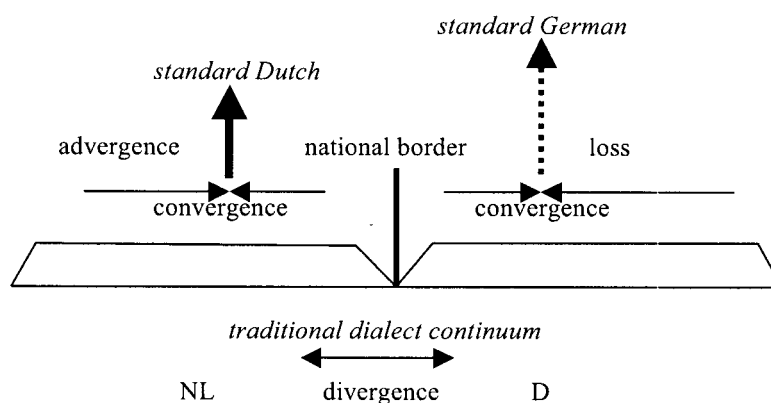
¹ There are some further cases, such as German-speaking Belgium which I will neglect here.

enhances the divergence: while on the Dutch side, regional features are still part of everyday language, many Germans have stopped speaking Low German (at least outside the family) at all, i.e. there is language shift towards standard German. This means that while Germany is structurally more conservative and the changes are stronger on the Dutch side, the usage patterns are such that the dialect is also disappearing in Germany.

Despite the fact that cross-border marriages and border-crossing activities have also diminished (as Ghisbers shows), the driving force behind this divergence does not seem to be small-scale interactions across the border (or the lack thereof). Rather, these are just side-effects of the much more powerful dynamics between dialect and standard on the national level: in both countries the dialects recede under the influence of the standard variety. Since the structural difference between standard and dialect is high in Germany (diglossia), the effect is language shift, while in the Netherlands dialect and standard are more closely related and form a continuum (diaglossia). In a diaglossic situation, dialect-to-standard advergence can be gradual, but in a diglossic one, the dialect is lost altogether.

This brings in the national dimension. In both countries, there is a strong push towards the standard variety; this is a nation-wide phenomenon which is not restricted to the border areas. In these areas, however, convergence and/or shift towards the respective standard varieties implies an increase in objective linguistic differences. More and more, the border is becoming a symbolic boundary – not because it impedes the flow of people and their language, but because two nation states with different standard languages meet at this border.

Fig. 1. Dialect divergence at the Dutch/German border as a consequence of dialect/standard advergence



2.2. Luxembourgish/German Border

A similar scenario applies to the *Luxembourgish/German* border, with some differences. The first difference relates to the status of *Lëtzebuergisch* as a relatively new, little-codified and rarely written standard variety that is still weak in comparison to standard Dutch. The second difference is that German and French are used as standard languages in Luxembourg as well; the repertoire therefore includes three standard languages of which one is exoglossic (French), one is enco-diglossic (German) and one is endo-diglossic (*Lëtzebuergisch*). These differences notwithstanding, convergence of the eastern Luxembourg dialects (at the German border) toward the central variety of Luxembourg City (which is considered to be the standard variety) has progressed considerably, and has dissolved the old dialect continuum of the Franconian dialects spoken in the border area in Germany and in Luxembourg (cf. Gilles, 1999).

2.3. French/German Border

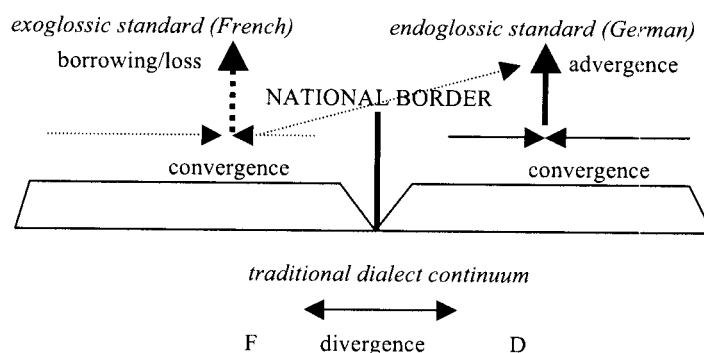
The situation at the *French/German border* obviously also differs from the Dutch/German one since French, the standard language which is used almost exclusively on the French side, is exoglossic to the Alsatian dialects. Therefore, massive dialect-to-standard advergence has only taken place east of the Rhine, where we find a diglossic repertoire with Alemannic dialects and standard German as the extremes. The main processes in Alsace (cf. Bothorel-Witz and Huck, 2000; Bothorel and Huck, 2001) are language shift towards monolingual French repertoires and horizontal convergence between the Alsatian dialects (leveling) in which the smaller dialects give in to the more widespread and more prestigious ones. In addition, Bothorel-Witz and Huck (2000: 153) mention several developments that point to an additional yet smaller influence of the standard variety spoken in Germany on the Alsatian dialects, such as the introduction of a plural schwa marker instead of older zero marking (*fischt* > *fischt+e* 'fists', *hoor* > *hoor+e* 'hair.PL') or inflected attributive adjectives instead of zero marking (*e klein kind* > *e klein+s kind* 'a small child'); in syntax the replacement of infinitival complements with *für* (lit. 'for') by the standard complementizer *um zu* (lit. '(in order) to') testifies to the same influence (cf. *ich brüch Geld, für ins Kino zu geh* > *ich brüch Geld um ins Kino ze geh* 'I need money to go to the movies').

Recent research on phonological change in the traditional dialects of southwest Germany provides ample evidence of the processes that took place during the last century on the German side of the border (cf. Schwarz in prep.; Streck, 2012). In the oldest dialect as still spoken by rural speakers who were born around or shortly after 1900, the Rhine

(the state border since 1918) was not a dialect border. Many typical Alsatian dialect features spread into German territory in a small strip east of the Rhine. Almost all of these 'Alsatian' features have disappeared in the last century: Alsace was no longer felt to be a hinterland for these forms. Examples are /a/ as a reflex of MHG *ē* in words such as *recht* and *schlecht* which changed into the more dominant (and standard) realization /ɛ/, or /oi, øi/ as the reflexes of MHG word-final /aw/ in std.G. *blau*, *grau* which was also given up in favor of the dominant form in the German Rhine valley, i.e. the std.G. diphthong /au/. In these cases, the more marked form (the one more divergent from the standard) has retreated to the state border.

On the French side, the strong pressure towards standard French has led to language shift, but also to a high amount of borrowing into Alsatian on the lexical level (cf. Klausmann, 2000), but also in grammar and prosody (cf. Gilles and Schrambke, 2000). Bothorel and Huck (2001) note several cases of the "refrancization" of old French loan words which had been integrated into the dialect already (such as *blüs* [bly:s] 'blouse' with Alsatian palatalization which is re-francized as [blu:s]).

Fig. 2. Dialect divergence at the French (Alsatian)/German border as a consequence of dialect/standard advergence and borrowing



2.4. Swiss-German Border

We now turn to the southern border of *Germany with Switzerland*. In German-speaking Switzerland, German is the national standard variety just as in Germany, i.e. the dialects on each side of the border are roofed by very similar standard varieties.

The linguistic situation at the border has been described in some detail by Schifferle (1990) and Seidelmann (1989). They agree that there is a rapid process of divergence of these traditionally very similar High

Alemannic dialects at the state border.² They disagree on the age of this divergence, however; while Seidelmann argues that it goes back to Napoleonic times when the former Habsburg area was divided along the Rhine, Schifferle believes that we are dealing with a twentieth-century phenomenon. Schifferle stresses the more conservative character of the Swiss dialects and attributes most of the divergences to northern innovations which were stopped at the border, while Seidelmann points out that the Swiss dialects in Aargau also undergo changes under the influence of the Zurich dialect. However, these differences do not touch the central argument of an increasingly felt dialect rift at the border.

One example may suffice to show the type of divergence at the border: the front vowel systems of High Alemannic as investigated by Schifferle in the area around Waldshut (also cf. Moulton, 1961). In the early 1980s, Schifferle notes a strikingly consistent difference between the southern (Swiss German) three-level long front vowel systems (/e:/ ~ /ɛ:/ ~ /æ:/) and the two-level systems (/e:/ ~ /ɛ:/) on the German side of the border (cf. northern open [ɛ]sse vs. southern extra-open [æ]sse 'to eat'). But this is a new difference: Schifferle cites a number of older studies (from the 1920s and 1930s) in which a three-level system is still attested for the southernmost part of Germany as well.³ Some 70 years ago, the dialects on the German side of the border must have started to diverge in this (as in many other) variable(s).

Again, the development is only in part a local one for which the dynamics at the border itself could be held responsible. We have to consider the whole repertoire of the speakers, which in this case includes a German standard variety and traditional dialects both in Switzerland and in Germany; however, in terms of usage domains and prestige the German and Swiss-German situations are very different. Swiss Standard German is more or less restricted to reading and writing ('medial diglossia') and is only used as an oral variety in very formal situations. By many Swiss Germans, it is considered to be a second language which they have little emotional or symbolic attachment to; if anything, the attitudes toward the standard variety are negative. The dialects on the

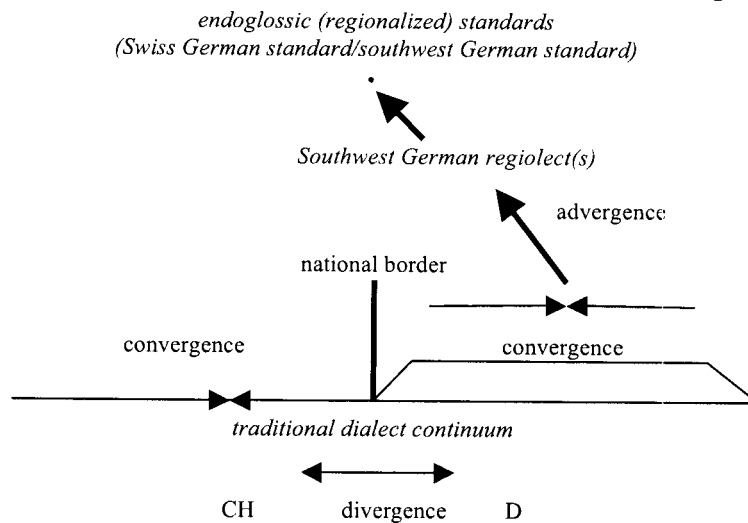
² The possible counter-argument that rather than the state border the Rhine or Lake Constance might be responsible for this divergence (the political border runs along the river most of the time) not only fails to explain why divergence only set in in the last century, it is also falsified by the very strong dialect boundary between the town of Constance in Germany and the adjoining town of Kreuzlingen in Switzerland which are both located south of the Rhine/Lake Constance.

³ The data elicitation techniques of the *Südwestdeutsche Sprachatlas* which were able to find the most archaic forms still used in the 1970s also document this older state of the vowel systems which Schifferle was no longer able to find in Germany; cf. map II-3.02, *essen* ('to eat').

other hand are widely used and have a much higher prestige than the dialects in Germany. They are at the heart of Swiss German identity and are considered the symbol of the nation.

The type of innovations that reach the border area from the south and the north (i.e., in Switzerland and in Germany) is therefore different. In Germany, where the dialects are receding and a regional variety or even the standard is used by most speakers, the changes are mainly vertical: the dialect converges towards the standard. Innovations that reach the border from the north therefore predominantly make the vernacular sound more standard-like. In Switzerland, the influence of the standard language on the dialects is small, if at all existent (at least in phonology and morphology). However, there is dialect levelling on the horizontal level, and the more prestigious urban dialects (in this case the Zurich dialect, with the city of Basel playing a somewhat special, insular role) exert an influence on the border region. As a consequence, vertical convergence in Germany contrasts with horizontal convergence in Switzerland.

Fig. 3. Dialect divergence at the Swiss/German border as a consequence of dialect/standard advergence and dialect convergence



Once more, it is not (only) the small-scale dynamics across the border which have led to dialect divergence and the dissolution of a former dialect continuum; surely, the few years of total blockage of all border traffic during the second world war cannot have been sufficient to bring about these changes. It is rather the difference between two different repertoire types, which in turn is linked to national identities (at least in

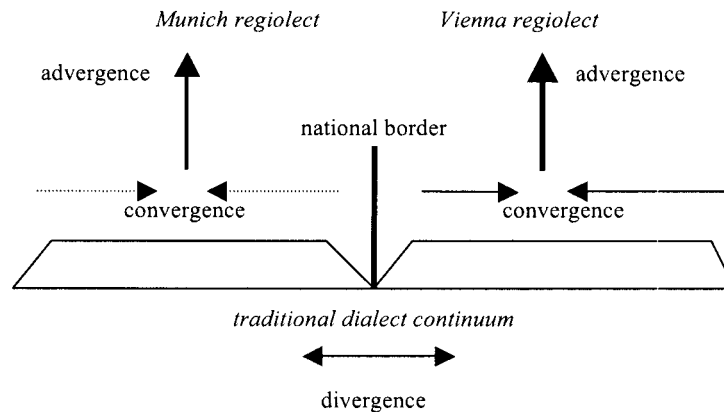
Switzerland) which seems to be the driving force. The linguistic situation on the two sides of the border is felt to be different by both Swiss and southern German dialect speakers, even though the dialects are easily mutually intelligible.

2.5. Austrian/German Border

The border between *Austria/Germany* crosscuts another dialect continuum, with two similar standard varieties of German on both sides. Scheuringer (1990) points out that the traditional dialect isoglosses in this area run north/south and do not orient themselves to the national border at all. On both sides of the border, very similar dialects of Middle Bavarian used to be spoken. Scheuringer took a closer look at the situation in the border towns of Braunau, Austria and Simbach, Germany. He observed two types of developments. In one group of dialect features traditionally shared by both towns, a gradual process of standardization has set in on both sides of the border. This process is stronger in Austria than in Bavaria. It applies to basilectal features with a wide geographical distribution such as *han* instead of Bav. *san* = std. *sind* '(we/they) are', or *kemm(t)/kimm(t)* instead of Bav. *kumm(t)* = std. *kommt/komme* 's/he, I come(s)'. The second development holds for dialect features with a more restricted range not shared by the two towns traditionally. Here, local realizations are given up in favor of more regiolectal ones. Again the process is more advanced in Austria, but the target of this regionalization process is different: while Braunau takes on Vienna features, Simbach in Bavaria assimilates to the Munich regiolect. This holds, e.g., for the various vowel changes conditioned by the vocalization of /l/ in syllable coda, where a Munich system with unrounded vowels such as in /fu:i/ = std. /fi:l/ 'a lot' contrasts with a Vienna system with rounded and also monophthongized vowels such as in /fy:/ 'a lot', as well as the realization of MHG *ei* as in std. *kein* 'no' as /koa/ in the Munich regiolect, but as /kã:/ in the Vienna regiolect.

Compared to the situation in the west or at the Swiss border, divergence is less dramatic. The repertoires on both sides of the border are similarly structured; both are diaglossic (Bellmann, 1986; Auer, 2004), which means that intermediate forms (regiolects) of speaking between dialect and standard become more and more important. In many ways, they are closer to the standard variety, but they also show features of their own, spreading from the large cities which act as radiation centres for either area. The impact of these cities – Munich and Vienna – stops at the national border. In addition, Braunau has resisted the Vienna regiolect less than Simbach has resisted the Munich regiolect.

Fig. 4. Dialect divergence at the Austrian/German border as a consequence of dialect/standard advergence



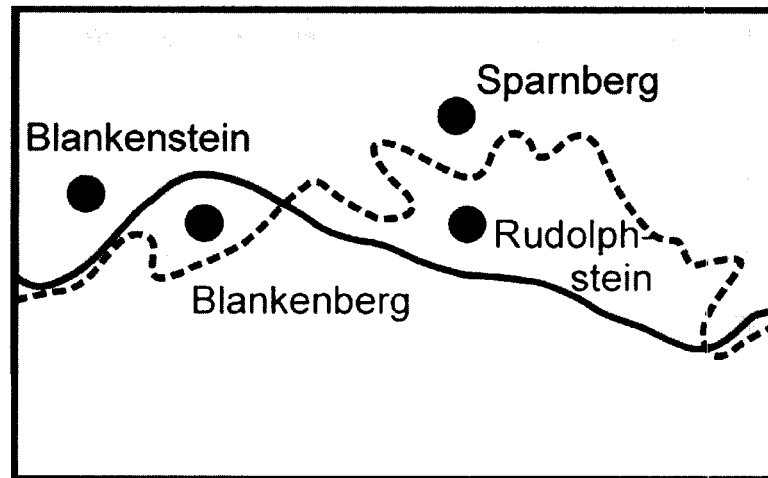
Despite these similarities, the Austrian changes have a slightly different ideological value than the Bavarian ones: in the Salzburg region, advergence towards the Austrian standard variety or the variety spoken in the capital reflect national dynamics; in Germany, the target of the divergent language changes is not so much the national standard, but the regional variety centred in Munich.

2.6. GDR/FRG Border

Finally, a look at the *GDR/FRG border* is instructive. Harnisch (2010) has investigated this former national border (and now *Länder* border between Thuringia and Bavaria), which runs across another formerly homogeneous dialect space. After the separation of West and East Germany and the erection of a quasi-impermeable border, dialect divergence seems to have set in (although the exact chronology is difficult to reconstruct). A highly salient example is syllable-initial /r/ vs. /R/. Traditionally, East Franconian apical [r] contrasted with Thuringian uvular [R]. However, this dialect border did not coincide completely with the state border, as can be seen in Fig. 5: the old /R/-area as described in traditional pre-war studies (solid line) extended somewhat into what later became the FRG in the area around Rudolphstein, and the old /r/-area reached a little into the GDR around Blankenberg. During the political separation of East and West Germany, this dialectological border became aligned with the political border, where it has remained ever since: regions in the GDR in which apical [r] had been spoken adapted to the Middle German (Thuringian) hinterland with its uvular [R] articulation, and regions in the FRG in which uvular [R] had been spoken adapted to the Upper German (Franconian) hinterland with

its apical [r] realization (the map refers to the younger speakers' realizations in 1994).

Fig. 5. Distribution of [r] and [R] along the border between GDR and FRG (from Harnisch 2010)



The solid line represents the pre-war isogloss ([r] is southern, [R] northern). The grey shading represents the uvular area in 1994, the dotted line the state border

This example looks like a clear case of divergence due to interrupted communication across an insurmountable border. However, there is another interpretation. The apical realization of /r/ in the border area was marked in many ways in the GDR. Not only did it contradict the standard pronunciation used everywhere in the GDR, it also contrasted with the entire hinterland of the border area, i.e. Thuringia, Upper Saxony and Berlin, where the uvular variant was used exclusively. The small strip next to the FRG border therefore stood out as very distinct. On the FRG side, /R/ and /r/ compete (with /R/ dominant and spreading), and /r/ is still quite widespread not only in the dialects but also in the regional standard varieties. In the area under investigation, the East Franconian as well as many Bavarian dialects have apical /r/ and are stereotypically associated with it. Given the size of the /r/-area, the salience of the feature and the prestige of the Bavarian dialects, the status of this variant was and is very different from its status in the GDR: it had a large hinterland which backed it in the West, while /r/ had no hinterland whatsoever in the East. It would be inadequate to explain the divergent changes that took place during the separation of East and West Germany without looking at these larger scale distributions of the relevant features (as will be argued further below).

2.7. *Intermediate Summary*

As an *intermediate summary* we can conclude that in all cases in which the German state border crosscuts a dialect continuum, this continuum has dissolved over the last decades. With the exception of the West German/East German border, this is an unexpected development in an approach to language change which sees as its most important cause the amount of communication between people. The permeability of all other borders has increased during the time in question. Note, however, that the type of trans-border contacts also seems to have changed. It seems that dense network contacts with friendship and intermarriage patterns have decreased, while more superficial networks (shopping, commuters) are becoming more relevant. For these latter contacts, highly mobile modern borderland inhabitants are not restricted to the villages on the other side of the border, but they reach far into the other country, more often than not to the urban conglomerates (such as Venlo and Nijmegen in Holland and Duisburg in Germany; Luxembourg City in Luxembourg and Trier in Germany; Mulhouse and Strasbourg in France and Freiburg in Germany; Basel or Zurich in Switzerland and Constance or Freiburg in Germany; or Salzburg in Austria and Munich in Germany).

We have also seen that in order to get a grasp of the ongoing development, we have to consider the speakers' linguistic repertoires as a whole. This means that in addition to the dialects, the status and prestige of the standard language, the type of relationship between standard and dialects (diaglossic vs. diglossic, endoglossic vs. exoglossic) and (in the case of Bavaria) the relevance of regional dialects (regiolects) also have to be taken into consideration. The type of repertoire is not determined by the linguistic situation in the border regions, but on the level of the nation states or larger regional units (such as Alsace, German-speaking Switzerland, Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, etc.).

3. **Pre-modern, Modern and Late Modern National Language Spaces in Europe**

The empirical results suggest that from the speakers' point of view – i.e. considering the implicit attitudes and ideologies which underlie their linguistic behaviour – the nation state continues to be the primary point of reference; the geographical space it occupies is equated with the hegemonial reach of one national standard language or, better, with one specific repertoire type which includes this national standard language. (In Switzerland, the relevant area is German-speaking Switzerland, i.e. a sub-national region, in southeast Germany, the national and the regional political – Bavarian – space seem to be both relevant.) This leads to

linguistic divergence at the national borders, although these borders are widely open and the relations between the two nations are friendly and no nationalistic antagonisms are involved.

As far as we know, the situation at other European borders is not fundamentally different, even though some of these situations are more antagonistic. Many of the east and southwest European borders that crosscut dialect continua (and even standard roofs!) are too young to have had a strong impact on language behaviour – or at least they have not been investigated thoroughly (cf. Søvik 2006 for some remarks on the Ukrainian/Russian border). Others have changed their status in the post-1989 period, such as the border between Poland and (now) Belarus (formerly the Soviet Union). Here, Woolhiser (2005) found a substantial change in the Belorussian dialects on the Belorussian side which he attributes to the replacement of the dialect by a Russian/Belorussian mixed variety as a marker of rural solidarity. On the Polish side, there is little influence from the structurally more distant roof which (like German in the Dutch/German case) seems to favour a shift to Polish, resulting in linguistic divergence. In the more stable western European states, Llamas (2010) found linguistic divergence in the eastern part of the Scottish/English border, correlating highly with speakers' distinct Scottish vs. English identities. Ryckeboer (2000) describes the growing importance of the French/Belgian state border as a linguistic border separating a former dialect continuum of Flemish dialects.

It is not difficult to see the ideology of the modern European nation state here, where language spaces are allocated to national spaces in a complete and exhaustive way, and without internal differentiation. The state (and its language) is “fully, flatly, and evenly operative over each square centimetre of a legally demarcated territory” (Anderson, 1983 [1991:19]). From this perspective, it is not the dialects on both sides of the border which cannot surmount it (as the communication frequency model suggests); rather, the state borders are *construed* as the insurmountable territorial limits of the reach of the standard varieties because of the ideological equation of one nation = one territory = one language.

Anderson referred to the spread of a *written* standard variety, but it can be argued that the full penetration of modern society by the nation state is crucially linked to the spread of a *spoken* standard. This spoken standard was not available as a unifying force in many European nation states before the late nineteenth century when compulsory schooling was established and brought not only the written but also the spoken language to even the remotest areas of the national territory – and to the speakers of the remotest dialects. It became only fully operative in the middle of the twentieth century and still has linguistic consequences.

However, two qualifications are necessary to this statement. The first qualification has been mentioned before: it is not the standard language as such which characterizes and delimits Germany and the neighboring states, but rather the repertoire type into which this standard language is embedded.

The second qualification is that in middle Europe (with the exception of Switzerland), the ongoing loss of dialect differentiation and the replacement of regional by standard ways of speaking in many domains seems to be linked less to the idea of the symbolic unity of the nation state and more to the idea that modern life and regional or even local ways of speaking are incompatible. With these two qualifications in mind, let us now look once more at the various types of old West Germanic dialect continua for which linguistic divergence has been reported.

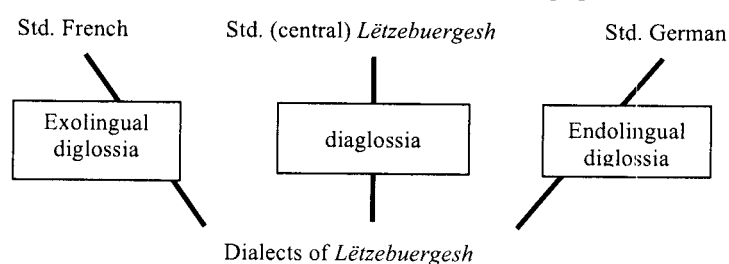
Between Germany and the Netherlands, the state border is identical with the reach of the two standard languages. In both countries, the standard languages have continuously expanded their reach at the expense of more regional ways of speaking, all debates about dialect renaissance and de-standardization notwithstanding (cf. Spiekermann 2008 for an exemplary study on standardization in Southwest Germany). This is not due to nation-building which is no longer an issue in either country. Rather, it is a consequence of modern life in which symbols of regional or local affiliation are becoming less relevant. This leads to a gradual convergence of the Dutch dialects to standard Dutch, and a gradual language shift from Low German to standard German in Germany. However, the idea of the nation state remains important and ethnolinguistically valid, since it is entirely 'natural' to all speakers that the reach of the standard varieties ends exactly at the state border. This is also confirmed by ethnodialectological representations. Informants asked by Kremer (1984) to list those neighboring villages in which "the same dialect" was spoken as in their own village with very few exceptions only mentioned villages within the same state territory. The results were confirmed by Giesbers (2008: 128-9) who showed that the perceived dialectological distance between the villages investigated grouped them together by national belonging, irrespective of their geographical distance.

The same applies to the border between France and Germany, as far as the German side is concerned. In France, the situation is different, since Alsace was for a long time considered a peripheral and potentially endangered area whose language could justify Germany's claim to this territory. The symbolic and only standard language valid in France is of course French. In order to fence off any future claims from the German side based on language, two developments were set in motion. French had to be strengthened as the only legitimate standard language and the

link between the Alsatian dialects and standard German had to be cut. The more the Alsatian dialects lost their standard German roof, the more they could be considered varieties of an independent but non-standardized regional language of France, a language ideology which was first propagated by the French central government and is nowadays shared widely by the population.⁴ Although standard German continues to exert some limited influence on the Alsatian dialects due to its presence in the media, its relevance for tourism, and job commuters' exposure to it, the region is clearly no longer considered to lie within the reach of the German standard by the French nor the Germans. At the state border, a repertoire with French as the standard (and vernacular forms of French as well as forms of Alsatian dialect below it) contrasts sharply and abruptly with a repertoire in which the dialects converge more and more with the (regional) standard variety of German. The borders of the nation states determine the reach of these repertoires, and create the ethnolinguistic impression of a strong language border, which in turn keeps the dialect from being used in cross-border communication. In addition to these developments with the aim of restructuring the repertoire in Alsace, the shift from Alsatian to French on one side of the border, and the loss of the local dialects in exchange for a regional variety closer to standard German on the other side, are once more a consequence of a modern way of life in which local ways of speaking, with their limited reach, are considered to no longer have a place.

Luxembourg is a relatively young state in which the process of linguistic nation-building is still an ongoing and incomplete process. *Lëtzebuergesch* was only declared the "national language" of the country in 1984, and it competes with the two other official languages, German and French. Its *Ausbau* is still in process, and many domains of usage otherwise claimed by a national standard language (such as most written domains) are still (and probably will continue to be) filled by German and, above all, French. The status of *Lëtzebuergesch* also suffers from the large number of French- and Portuguese-speaking migrant workers and commuters, who have little motivation to learn the language. The perceived difference between Luxembourg and the neighbouring parts of Germany nevertheless coincides with the state border; this is probably due to the French influence on the lexicon and the lacking convergence with standard German. In addition, the border is felt to coincide with an abrupt transition from the German repertoire type (with a continuum of forms from regional variety up to regional standard German) to the complex repertoire of Luxembourg:

⁴ Cf. Bothorel and Huck: "Les informateurs confèrent à l'allemand endogène les attributs d'un français régional stigmatisé" (2001: 124).

Fig. 6. The repertoire of native Luxembourg speakers

Switzerland is the only old nation in Europe for which the equation of one nation = one language has never held. Instead, Swiss German identity is very much tied to the variety of Swiss German dialects. The linguistic repertoire structure of German-speaking Switzerland therefore stands in sharp contrast to that of southern Germany, where the dialects are not symbols of national collective identity, but the standard language is. What ends at the national border between Germany and Switzerland, then, is not the reach of the standard language, but a certain repertoire type and different attitudes linked to the dialects. This leads to divergence because the dialects are no longer considered to be equivalent; the national border is construed as a language repertoire (and prestige) border. As a consequence, new developments do not cross the border.

At the Austrian/German border, the difference between German and Austrian standard German is also small. The codification of an Austrian standard German came late; the multilingual Habsburg empire (that is, until 1918, the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy) simply wasn't compatible with the idea of one national language, and from 1918 to 1945 the political and cultural developments often favored linguistic convergence with Germany rather than separation. The tendency of the last decades to establish and codify an independent Austrian standard variety does not seem, however, to have had a direct impact on the divergent processes observed in the border dialects of Bavaria. More important are the dynamics between the Vienna dialect and the rest of the country, which follow the center/periphery model (perhaps with the exception of Vorarlberg, cf. Moosmüller, 1991). The Vienna city dialect functions as a covert prestige variety which exerts its influence on the periphery of the country more than the Austrian standard with its overt prestige. Unlike the city dialects of Berlin or Munich, which equally influence their surroundings, the reach of Vienna's impact is national (only excluding Vorarlberg).

Dialect divergence between East and West Germany is particularly interesting since it is the political border which leads to language change is a new one. Again, the driving force is not a lack of communication, but

rather a question of social identity and national or regional affiliation. Harnisch (2010: 279) comments on his findings regarding the alignment of political borders and language borders as follows:

For the inhabitants of the GDR, the articulation of the apical [r] was generally associated with “Bavarian” (*Bayerisch*), here understood as the name of the political territory. [...] when “Bavarian” was used as an ethnolectal term, its meaning was “a variety spoken by people from the Federal State of Bavaria that differs from our own variety.” After the alignment of the dialectological border between the different r-articulations with the political border between East and West Germany (or nowadays between Thuringia and Bavaria), the expression Bavarian in the sense of the political term *Bayerisch* based on the feature of the apical [r] is even more justified.

The example demonstrates that speakers can be aware of the form of their own language and that of the language of others and can evaluate them in an ethnolinguistic manner: from over here vs. from over there (von hüben vs. von drüben), in the political sense of *from the East* vs. *from the West*; [...]. Thus, the change from the [R] of the elder generations to the [r] of the younger generations on the Bavarian side can be interpreted as a turning away from a shibboleth sound associated with *coming from over there* (the GDR), and as the simultaneous turning to a South German vernacular which is more prestigious in the eyes of the younger generations. It therefore seems to be rather improbable that this re-orientation took place unconsciously, i.e. as a consequence of turning to what now is heard more often and turning away from what now is heard less frequently.

In sum, it can be argued that – with the two qualifications made above – Germans and their neighbours predominantly make use of *modern* ideologies of state and language. Anderson (1983: 19) contrasts these ideologies with a *pre-modern ideology* in which “states were defined by centres, borders were porous and indistinct, and sovereignties faded imperceptibly into one another”.⁵ This pre-national “dynastic model” did not imply a kind of sovereignty which was distributed evenly over the state territory. It is built on a notion of geographical space which does not focus on boundaries, but rather on the idea of center and periphery. The modern idea of the nation state can also be contrasted with *late modern models* of space and language which dissolve the equation of spatial distributions of language varieties (or variants) and geographical areas. It has been claimed, for instance, that modern migrant communities construe language spaces with are delocalized in geographical terms by communicating with migrants in other countries and with their home country by electronic media, thereby creating new language spaces.

⁵ He refers to the Habsburg Empire as the prototypical representative of the dynastic idea of a state.

Neither pre- nor late modern notions of states and state boundaries play a role when linguistic developments at the borders are considered.

4. Concluding Discussion: Language Ideologies and Dialect Divergence at the German Borders

In his essay *Soziologie des Raums* ("Sociology of space", written in 1913) Georg Simmel argues that space is not a physical phenomenon, but a *mental* one:

Nicht die Form räumlicher Nähe oder Distanz schafft die besonderen Erscheinungen der Nachbarschaft oder Fremdheit, so unabweislich dies scheinen mag. Vielmehr sind auch dies *rein durch seelische Inhalte erzeugte Tatsachen* [...]. In dem Erfordernis spezifisch seelischer Funktionen für die einzelnen geschichtlichen Raumgestaltungen spiegelt es sich, daß *der Raum überhaupt nur eine Tätigkeit der Seele* ist, nur die menschliche Art, an sich unverbundene Sinnesaffektionen zu einheitlichen Anschauungen zu verbinden. (1995: 133, emphasis P.A.)⁶

And, with reference to borders:

Ist sie ((the border, P.A.)) freilich erst zu einem räumlich-sinnlichen Gebilde geworden, das wir unabhängig von seinem soziologisch-praktischen Sinne in die Natur einzeichnen, so übt dies starke Rückwirkungen auf das Bewußtsein von dem Verhältnis der Parteien. [...] ((dann)) wird sie zu einer lebendigen Energie [...]. (1995: 141)⁷

On the basis of a cognitive approach to space which follows the tradition of Georg Simmel, I have argued in this paper that geopolitical (above all, national) borders should be looked upon as cognitive constructs intimately linked to the "imagined communities" (Andersen) they delimit. These imagined communities are usually national ones; only rarely are larger political units within the nation states (such as Bavaria, German-speaking Switzerland) involved. The "imagined borders" can nonetheless have a strong impact on the dialect continua which they crosscut. Dialect divergence at the national borders of Germany is therefore not due to impeded communication as suggested in traditional dialectology (*Verkehr*); rather, they are the limits (boundaries) of the

⁶ "It is not the form of spatial proximity or distance which creates the specific phenomena of being neighbors or strangers, irrefutable as this may appear. Rather these are also facts which are purely caused by mental contents [...]. If we require specific mental functions for the individual formations of space in history, this mirrors the fact that space in general is but an activity of the mind, the human way to combine sensual affections into uniform ideas which as such are separate" (translation P.A.).

⁷ "However, as soon as it [the border] has become a spatial-sensual phenomenon which we draw into nature independent of its practical sociological function, it has strong repercussions on the mental representation of the parties' relationship. [...] It then becomes a living energy [...]" (translation P.A.).

perceived reach of a given repertoire type in which one (or more) standard language(s) is/are assigned a specific role and position. The restructuring of these repertoires took place in the second half of the twentieth century, during which strongly-regionalized ways of speaking increasingly gave way to close-to-standard varieties as the unmarked way of speaking. This led to the gradual or sometimes abrupt disappearance of dialects and regional dialects in most parts of central Europe (with the notable exception of Switzerland).

Since the reach of these repertoires ends at the state borders, the territories of the nation states have never before been as important for language as they are today – despite the fact that in many ways, the nation states have been weakened by globalization, the unification of Europe, migration and so on. Whatever may happen on the economic or political plane: the European nation state is still doing remarkably well as a linguistic unit.

At least in Germany and its neighboring states, neither border identities nor cross-border regions seem to play an important role. The border regions are not identified with the periphery (which is hard to identify in a country that has no proper centre anyway) and have no marginal status. Many border regions are thriving economically, and there is an intensive economic and labor exchange across the border – in both directions, but more often than not from Germany into the adjoining areas. Infrastructure has never been better, so that it is easy for Germans to commute to work in Luxembourg or Switzerland (the more prosperous economies), to live in Alsace or in the Netherlands and work in Germany, etc. All these manifold relations have not created distinct cross-border regional identities, however, despite the fact that these “Euregios” are politically wanted and officially supported in many ways. Linguistic divergence at the borders is both a cause and an effect of this ideological separation. Speaking standard instead of dialect makes the old dialect continua irrelevant for communication and erects a linguistic boundary; but the ethnolinguistic view of the other side of the border as characterized by a different standard language and/or a different linguistic repertoire also makes speakers more intensely aware of the state border.

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