

Augusto Soares da Silva (Ed.)

**Pluricentricity**

# **Applications of Cognitive Linguistics**



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## **Volume 24**

# Pluricentricity

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Language Variation and Sociocognitive Dimensions

Edited by  
Augusto Soares da Silva

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To Michael Clyne



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Gitte Kristiansen

# Introduction. Pluricentricity, language-internal variation and Cognitive Linguistics

## 1 Pluricentricity from the perspective of Cognitive Linguistics

In this introductory chapter it will be argued that Cognitive Linguistics is eminently well-prepared to deal with pluricentricity and with the specific types of language-internal variation presented by pluricentric scenarios. We shall first discuss some of the descriptive, theoretical and methodological dimensions of socio-cognitive research on pluricentricity. Next, in the second part of the contribution we provide an overview of the nine papers included in this volume.

### 1.1 Pluricentricity and Cognitive Linguistics: descriptive dimensions

From a descriptive perspective, linguistic pluricentricity is a very common and widespread phenomenon. For instance, Chinese, German, Swahili, Dutch, Spanish, Arabic, French, Portuguese, English and many other languages are pluricentric in the sense that they have different national varieties, each with its own cultivated, standard register. The “one-nation-one-language” assumption is needless to say as unrealistic as the well-known Chomskyan ideal of a homogeneous speech community.

The Ethnologue Country Index (2009, accessed May 27 2013) features 6.909 living languages for roughly 200 nations, distributed over the continents in the following manner:

**Tab. 1:** Number and distribution of languages. Source: Lewis, M. Paul (ed.), 2009. Ethnologue: Languages of the World, Sixteenth edition. Dallas, Tex.: SIL International. Online version: <http://www.ethnologue.com/>.

Languages	Continents
2.110	Africa
993	America
2.322	Asia
234	Europe
1.250	Pacific
6.909	Totals

In certain regions, spreading over a variety of different countries, many different languages are spoken. At the same time, some languages are spoken in many different countries. Portuguese, for instance, is present in Portugal, Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, East Timor, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Macau, Mozambique, Porto Tomé and Príncipe. English is spoken as a first language in 47 nation states, Dutch in 4 and Spanish in more than 20. Furthermore, according to the Ethnologue Index, 389 (or nearly 6%) of the world's languages have at least one million speakers and account for 94% of the world's population. By contrast, the remaining (and in many respects severely understudied) 94% of languages are spoken by only 6% of the world's people. These figures provided it is probably not on the wrong side to conclude that the majority of the languages spoken by the majority of the world's population are pluricentric. We therefore conclude that pluricentricity is a phenomenon that deserves due attention in its own right.

As far as the definition of pluricentricity is concerned, in the strict sense the term denotes a situation in which a language has several standard versions (Clyne 1992; Ammon 2005). Languages, according to this reading, are pluricentric when the national identities of its native speakers do not coincide. In a looser sense, a language is also pluricentric if within the frontiers of a nation state several dominant or standard varieties co-occur (such as the case of High German and Low German). In the loosest sense possible, all languages are pluricentric insofar as dialectal variation naturally emerges and evolves around regional centers where social identities come to the fore. These assumptions provided, the question is whether the same mechanisms are operative in those languages which display obvious pluricentric characteristics as in “monocentric” languages – or whether these are just more conspicuous in the former. Is a cline at work rather than separate categories? Are all languages, to the extent that they exhibit internal dialectal variation and differing local norms, pluricentric to at least some degree? As we shall discuss in more detail below, rigid categorization is the first barrier to overcome when it comes to a realistic reanalysis of language-internal phenomena: it is clear that pluricentricity and monocentricity are gradient rather than well-defined separate categories: some languages are much more pluricentric than others. Moreover, some forms of pluricentricity are approximately symmetric while others (the majority) are asymmetrical. Pluricentricity can therefore be viewed as a special case of language-internal variation, marked by questions of national identity and power. For further discussions on the definition of pluricentricity cf. the contributions by Auer, Schneider and Lüdi in this volume.

Studies into language-internal variation have precisely experienced a considerable productive increase in the last decade in Cognitive Linguistics (Geeraerts, Grondelaers and Bakema 1994; Kristiansen 2003; Geeraerts 2005; Kristiansen and Dirven 2008; Croft 2009; Geeraerts, Kristiansen, and Peirsman 2010; Kristiansen

and Geeraerts 2013). This new and burgeoning field of study, known as *Cognitive Sociolinguistics*, can loosely speaking be defined as a novel line of research which a) explores language-internal or cross-linguistic social or regional variation, either in its own right or incorporating it into an investigation with other aims, b) draws on the theoretical framework developed in Cognitive Linguistics and c) arrives at its finding by implementing solid empirical methods. From a theoretical perspective, Cognitive Sociolinguistics thus acknowledges and draws on notions from the Cognitive Linguistics framework. Thematically and descriptively speaking, Cognitive Sociolinguistics examines the social, cultural or conceptual meaningfulness of language-internal variation, including the internal structure of, distance and interaction between whole varieties and styles. Methodologically speaking it goes the empiricist way, basing findings on advanced corpus-based techniques, experimental methods or surveys and questionnaires.

Let us now turn our attention to the theoretical framework within which pluricentricity was envisaged in the making of this volume.

## 1.2 Pluricentricity and Cognitive Linguistics: theoretical dimensions

There are many compelling reasons why one would want to examine pluricentricity from the perspective of Cognitive Linguistics. Let us consider a number of such possible applications (many, but not all of which have been put to practice in the contributions in this volume).

Cognitive Linguistics has developed (or incorporated) a rich set of theoretical notions over the last 35 years. Relevant notions when looking into language-internal variation and variation across national varieties include prototype theory, cultural cognitive models, perception, awareness and attitudes, the metaphorical construal of ideological alternatives, metonymic relationships, cognitive reference point constructions, stereotyping, schematisation, profiling, framing, viewpoints and subjectification.

As a starting point, consider categorisation. Regardless of the difficulties involved in establishing taxonomical hierarchies on the basis of linguistic criteria only (cf. Kristiansen 2008b), whenever in folk perception we perceive variety Y as an instance of language X or Z we engage in linguistic categorisation. The ability to correlate a stretch of new speech (token) with an abstract model (type), to attribute speech to a given lect and speaker to a given social or regional group involves a cognitive process of categorisation. Recognising an allophonic realisation as a (standard or non-standard) instantiation of a given phoneme is also an act of categorisation.

Next, it is easy to see how lectal varieties, like most other linguistic and non-linguistic categories, constitute prototype categories (Kristiansen 2003). As such, lects naturally form chaining relationships within the general category of a language, with partially overlapping areas. Lectal varieties, in other words, form radial networks and exhibit prototype effects: some varieties of a given language will be perceived as more prototypical or representative than others, and we do not expect the boundaries between adjacent categories to be clear-cut. We speak of fuzzy areas and membership gradience when it is difficult to attribute an item, be it a natural object or a linguistic feature or variety, to a given category. In the case of a pluricentric scenario, the network of contiguous lects will of course present several prototypical centres.

If linguistic varieties form prototype categories and categories are associated with concepts, these will evoke central images: the ease with which we go from a linguistic stereotype to the corresponding social stereotype, with all its value-laden components and psychological attributes, forms part of the meaningfulness of linguistic varieties. The mechanism is fast and effective: the metonymic links between speech styles and social groups allows us to not only identify and locate unknown speakers in terms of social and linguistic space, but also characterise them socially. Linguistic stereotypes in the technical sense of the term (cf. Kristiansen 2001, 2003) are not exaggerated and distorted images, but useful cognitive reference point constructions (Rosch 1975; Langacker 1993) that allow us to navigate in a complex social world. However, the process often takes place below the level of conscious awareness, which means that it comes with certain negative side-effects. The psychological attributes associated with a social group (intelligent-unintelligent, educated-uneducated, urban-rural, wealthy-poor, brute-sensitive, etc.) are speedily attributed to an individual on the mere basis of his or her speech style.

The notion of cognitive reference point construction is also useful when considering the relationship between standard and non-standard varieties or between two standard varieties of the same language. More often than not the relationship is an asymmetrical one where one lectal variety (perceived in terms of a socio-cognitive entity) is in an inferior position, or form part of a relationship of dependency, with respect to the other, either functionally or attitudinally.

Within a perspective in which lects and styles not only *reflect* but also *construe* identities, we may also begin to reconsider the mechanisms behind phenomena such as style-shifting, which traditionally have been analysed according to linguistic context or the immediate social context, or situation (cf. Kristiansen 2008a).

The notions of awareness, perception and social stereotyping lead us to attitudinal studies and the social psychology of language. The body of research on



attitudes to linguistic varieties is impressive and still growing. Let me just mention two scholars who take an interest in pluricentric languages and also in the methodological improvement of experimental designs. Berthele (2004, 2008) has for a number of years investigated attitudes to languages and varieties in Switzerland and investigated the mental models underlying such attitudes. Research carried out in the field of perceptual dialectology (e.g. Niedzielski and Preston 1999; Preston 2004; Preston 2010) likewise involves the facet of attitudes, the other side of the coin of folk perception and dialect recognition. As Preston (2010) recently phrased it:

Researchers should carry out both perceptually and conceptually oriented forms of investigation, relate them (one often as explanatory for the other), and press on with research that determines the specific linguistic units involved in the folk “regard” for language and language variety. [...] I prefer the term ‘regard’ since it encompasses identification and positioning in the social as well as geographical space of languages, varieties, and their uses as well as the more specifically evaluative notions sought in language attitude work.

Attitudes naturally link up with the issue of national, regional and local social identities.

Scholarly literature on the relationship between language and identity has its origin in anthropology on the one hand and in social psychology on the other hand. In this latter dimension, the extensive body of work on Social Identity Theory (e.g. Tajfel 1978, 1981; Tajfel and Turner 1981) is especially interesting: social categorisation leads to the creation of social stereotyping and one of the dimensions on which groups may differentiate themselves socially is language.

Within the discipline of linguistics, since the inclusion of the notion of identity in works such as Gumperz (1982) and Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985), a wealth of studies on the topic appeared on the scene, hand in hand with an increased interest in “culture” in general – though far from always accompanied by a solid empirical framework and a technical treatment of the dimensions under scrutiny.

Within Cognitive Linguistics the language-identity link has been explored in a number of publications dedicated to the fact that dialects and accents are socially diagnostic (Kristiansen 2001, 2003, 2008a, 2010). If lects and social identities both constitute prototype categories, what is the nature of the semiotic link between them? If lectal identification involves the capacity to correlate a stretch of uncategorised speech against a series of abstract models, when and how are such models acquired in early childhood? If we can indeed go from a linguistic stereotype (in the sense of a unique, and hence identifying, cluster of perceptually salient features) directly to a social group and the corresponding social stereotype, what are the implications for this type of variation in terms of awareness, perception and attitudes? In what respects and by means of which steps do linguistic stereotypes

not only *mark* social identities but more proactively function as socially meaning-making entities? And what are the implications of such a semiotic link in processes of linguistic change?

In line with such a debate, Schneider (2003) has argued in favour of a five-stage developmental scenario governing the gradual establishment of new varieties of English. The stages posited in this theoretical model include (1) Foundation, (2) Exonormative stabilization, (3) Nativization, (4) Endonormative stabilization and (5) Differentiation. Crucial to the model is the idea that identity construction may eventually lead to dialect birth. The last stage, that of differentiation, corresponds in part to the process of consolidation (as a consequence of the success of a newly but firmly established national identity a new variety has materialised on the linguistic scenario) and in part to a new process of innovation (when national identity is guaranteed, more local identities emerge and become important issues). It is explicitly assumed that the scenario is a prototypical one to which specific varieties may conform to greater or lesser degrees.

This line of thought is certainly compatible with Eckert's (1989, 2004, 2012) idea that local identities can have lectal consequences on a large-scale regional level: the Jocks and Burnouts social types exist in most schoolyards in a vast area of cities around the great lakes in Northern USA and this sort of social and linguistic differentiation participates in the northern cities vowel shift. In a recent article Eckert (2012) describes a stepwise evolution in sociolinguistics from correlations between linguistic variables and social structure, to explanatory dimensions involving the notion of communities of practice, and then towards even more meaningful, explanatory, dimensions. The evolution covers three main phases, or "waves":

The treatment of social meaning in variation has come in three waves of analytic practice. The first wave of variation studies established broad correlations between linguistic variables and the macro-sociological categories of socioeconomic class, sex class, ethnicity and age. The second wave employed ethnographic methods to explore the local categories and configurations that inhabit, or constitute, these broader categories. In both waves, variation was seen as marking social categories. This paper sets out a theoretical foundation for the third wave, arguing that (1) variation constitutes a robust social semiotic system, expressing the full range of social concerns in a given community; (2) variation does not simply reflect, but constructs, social meaning, hence is a force in social change and (3) the meanings of variables are basic and underspecified, gaining more specific meanings in the context of styles (personae).

Likewise in line with these thoughts, in this volume Auer connects the notion of pluricentricity to the ideological construal of national varieties and to cognitive models of 'the standard', Schneider speaks of attitudes towards standard varieties of English at different stages of consolidation, Norrby and Kretzenbacher discuss

perceived identities and stereotypical representations, and Lüdi argues in favour of meaning-making and situated pluricentric practices.

When this publication was still in the making, the authors were asked to reflect on a number of topics of current interest within a socio-cognitive orientation. These were the research questions the authors were asked to consider in preparation for this volume:

1. National variation, culture and cognition: Do national linguistic differences reflect cultural differences? To what extent do the former correlate with conceptual differences? How does national variation affect linguistic meaning and linguistic categorization? How does language-internal and cross-national variation reveal the situated and social nature of cognition?
2. Cooperation, competition and conflict between national varieties: What are the interconnections between national identity, power relationships and national varieties? Can pluricentric languages be both unifiers and dividers of people and to what extent? How symmetrical can pluricentricity be in an unequally distributed world?
3. National and local varieties, styles and registers as prototype-based and radial categories of meaning: How do national/local variation and semantic variation correlate? How do prototypicality, stereotypicality and semantic normativity combine and intertwine between and within national varieties?
4. National varieties, linguistic system and linguistic change: What are the linguistic consequences of contact between national varieties? What is the impact of pluricentricity on language change?
5. Correlations between variables: To what extent do lexical, grammatical and phonological variables correlate when it comes to the convergence/divergence and stratification of national varieties? Do social identities (national, regional, local) operate as independent variables? To what extent do socio-stylistic factors correlate with semantic, grammatical and discursive factors?
6. Perception and evaluation of national varieties: How do language users perceive national varieties and how do they evaluate them attitudinally? What cultural and cognitive models are at work in the categorization and evaluation of local and national linguistic differences? What is the role of ideology in cognitive representations of national variations? How purist or pro-independence attitudes manifested and what are the consequences for the development of national varieties?
7. Mutual intelligibility between national varieties: to what extent do objective linguistic distances and language attitudes influence intelligibility?

Several chapters in this volume address issues related to a combination of attitudinal, perceptual and conceptual factors. Schneider, Auer and Norrby and Krezen-

bacher address issues related to attitudes and identity construal in their contributions, and Auer relates construal to cultural cognitive models. López-García in turn chooses to shift the focus away from cognitive models in the mind to neurological processes in the brain.

Next, as national (and regional) varieties may converge or diverge on a variety of different levels of linguistic abstractions, i.e. phonetically, morphologically, lexically, or constructionally. It is also the case of course that two related lects may at the same time converge on one dimension and diverge on another (e.g. converge lexically and diverge phonetically). The contribution by Soares da Silva looks into the divergence and convergence of the two main varieties of Portuguese by implementing a sociolectometrical method based on onomasiological profiles. Speelman, Impe and Geeraerts, on the other hand, ask the question to what extent objective linguistic distances and language attitudes influence mutual intelligibility between national varieties. Ruette et al. and De Hertog et al. both deal with lexical variation in the varieties of a pluricentric language. While De Hertog et al. present a quantitative corpus-based method that is capable of identifying lexical variation across different varieties, Ruette et al. show how a sociolectometric approach may deal in adequate manners with the multidimensional structure of the varieties in a pluricentric language

### 1.3 Pluricentricity and methodology

If numerous dimensions, social and conceptual alike, are at work when varieties converge or diverge, analytical and computational tools that can handle multiple factors and dimensions will be needed for a suitable statistical treatment of the data. Furthermore, if language-internal variation is the object of study, an additional question is whether – or to which extent – lectal variation is not just socially but also conceptually meaningful (cf. in this respect Geeraerts and Speelman 2010; see also Coleman 2010 and Szmrecsanyi 2010).

Most of the contributions in this volume are firmly based either on advanced statistical techniques that contribute to a complex analysis of the phenomena under scrutiny or based on data elicited in the form of questionnaire or survey-based research. The volume thus lines up with several recent cognitively-oriented and empirically grounded publications on language-internal variation: the contributions to the collective volume *Advances in Cognitive Sociolinguistics* (Geeraerts, Kristiansen, and Peirsman, eds. 2010) and the special issue of the *Journal of Pragmatics* entitled *Contexts in Use in Cognitive Sociolinguistics* (Kristiansen and Geeraerts, eds. 2013, vol. 52). The chapters and articles contained in these publications all address language-internal variation with a focus either on differences within

varieties of the same language across national boundaries or differences within varieties not separated by a political frontier.

## 2 Overview of the sections and contributions

This volume is thematically structured in three main sections. The first section comprises chapters that in a variety of different manners address the notion of pluricentricity from a predominantly theoretical perspective. Section two brings together contributions that explore pluricentric languages by means of advanced corpus-based techniques. The third section comprises studies that showcase experimental designs and circle in on attitudinal aspects of pluricentricity.

### 2.1 Part one. Theoretical perspectives

This section brings together three chapters that examine pluricentricity and pluricentric languages from several different theoretical perspectives. First, in “Enregistering pluricentric German”, **Peter Auer** raises the question of how Austrian and Swiss standard German become enregistered as distinct varieties. As Auer argues, the notion of pluricentricity, as introduced by Heinz Kloss and made popular by Michael Clyne, is usually defined with reference to the codified standard varieties of a language which are said to differ in the various states in which the language is used. According to this definition, standard German is beyond doubt a pluricentric language. However, while the number of Teutonisms is huge, there are only comparatively few Austriacisms and Heleviticisms, as most of the distinctive features are also found in the southern part of Germany. Auer questions the traditional definition of a pluricentric language as one which “has more than one normatively installed national standard variety”: when applied to German, such a definition merely leads to the rather uncontroversial – and fairly useless – conclusion that German is indeed a pluricentric language. Auer thus goes beyond the standard definition of pluricentricity and throws light on the ideological construction of standard varieties in Germany, Switzerland and Austria, showing that the enregisterment of certain linguistic features as part of a standard variety is – at least to some extent – independent of the way these features are geographically distributed. Rather, it is the combination of a variety of distinctive features that serves to set off a standard variety as unique. The paper thus connects the notion of pluricentricity to cognitive models of ‘the standard’ and to the ideological construction of national varieties.

In the second chapter in this section, entitled “Communicative and cognitive dimensions of pluricentric practices in French”, **Georges Lüdi** likewise challenges narrow definitions of pluricentricity and argues instead for a conceptualization that incorporates the dimension of active construal, or *situated, pluricentric practices*. While France is not a pluricentric nation in the prototypical sense of language with several clearly defined standards, nevertheless variational and multilingual practices have been present in the domain of French from the very early texts until the 21st century, and this variation also follows geographical patterns. To exemplify, Lüdi examines variation in the use of feminine forms in French and observes that different frequencies in gender neutral forms reflect different socio-cognitive priorities – more gender inclusive in Belgium, Canada and Switzerland, less in France. In line with Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008), Lüdi opts for a model according to which speaking is a “constant (co-)adaptation and enactment of language-using patterns in the service of meaning-making in response to the affordances that emerge in a dynamic communicative situation”. Lüdi thus rules out the view that “linguistic categories and structures are more or less straightforward mappings from a pre-existing conceptual space programmed into our biological nature” (Li and Gleitmann 2002: 266) and instead supports the view that “languages reflect cultural preoccupations and ecological interests that are a direct and important part of the adaptive character of language and culture” (Evans and Levinson 2009: 436).

In contrast with the socio-cognitive approaches adopted by the first two scholars, in the third contribution in this section, **Ángel López-García** argues that from a neurological perspective, intralinguistic and interlinguistic variation are rooted in the mind. In the chapter “Linguistic pluricentrism as a neurological problem”, López-García suggests a threefold classification of different types of intra- and interlinguistic variation, and argues that this classification has a cognitive basis, in the sense that it correlates with what the author sees as the three basic types of categorization, viz. classical concept structures, family resemblances, and taxonomical super/subordination: as far as the neural traces of the stimuli in the brain are concerned, whereas lexical items seem to belong to small world networks in the neocortex, syntactic-semantic patterns, like most automatic behaviors, are stored in the limbic system. Phonetic habits in turn are twofold, as they strongly depend on whether production or recognition – whose respective neural locations do not overlap – are involved. It is argued that these three neural behaviors are related to three types of prototypes: the classic model, the family resemblances model and the superordinate-subordinate model. The paper thus advances a daring and possibly controversial claim in which an alleged but not yet independently tested set of correspondences is used to arrive at a boldly reductive classification of situations of language variation.

## 2.2 Part two. Corpus-based studies

Cognitive Sociolinguistics takes a special interest in implementing – and extending – the solid empirical methods in use in sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics. The remaining two sections of the volume illustrate the impressive range of methods that are currently available to the socio-cognitive linguist. Section two showcases a set of advanced corpus-based studies into pluricentric variation that all take the variation of meaning as a starting-point. Section three in turn zooms in on perception and attitudes, or, in other words, the meaning of variation, and at the same time shifts the attention from corpora to experimental designs.

In “Lexical variation in aggregate perspective”, **Tom Ruette**, **Dirk Speelman** and **Dirk Geeraerts** use lexical variation between Belgian and Netherlandic Dutch as input data and demonstrate how a sociolectometric approach may disentangle the multidimensional structure of the varieties in a pluricentric language. The authors convincingly show that a sociolectometric analysis that includes information about concepts outperforms a computational analysis without access to meaning. The chapter compares two quantitative corpus-based methods, which differ in their conceptual control of lexical variables: on the one hand a method that ignores the conceptual relationship between the lexemes in the variable set, and on the other hand a method that incorporates knowledge about conceptual identity between lexemes.

Research questions that deal with mutual intelligibility and that investigate language attitudes in pluricentric languages rely on a correct assessment of the loci of divergence, differences in word choice being one of the most salient. In the next chapter in this section, entitled “Stable Lexical Marker Analysis: a corpus-based identification of lexical variation”, **Dirk De Hertog**, **Kris Heylen** and **Dirk Speelman** present a quantitative corpus-based method that is capable of identifying this lexical variation. The method alleviates known problems that concern the comparison of word frequencies across corpora and yields an output that not only reaffirms known lexical differences between varieties but also identifies keywords in a bottom-up fashion. The Stable Lexical Marker Analysis (Speelman et al. 2008) is based on a keyword-analysis approach (Scott 1997) but allows a graded rather than a categorical assessment of markedness and includes a mechanism to circumvent topical bias in the corpus.

The last chapter in this section, “The pluricentricity of Portuguese: a sociolectometrical approach to divergence between European and Brazilian Portuguese” is authored by **Augusto Soares da Silva**. Taking previous research into lexical convergence and divergence between European Portuguese and Brazilian Portuguese (Soares da Silva 2010) as its starting point, this study investigates the process of divergence between the two national varieties of Portuguese on three different

levels of pluricentric variation. More specifically, the study examines the extent to which lexical and constructional variables correlate as indicators of convergence/divergence between the two national varieties of Portuguese within a time span of 60 years. At the same time the study also looks into the extent to which subjective attitudinal indicators correlate with objective corpus-extracted indicators. While the study on lexical variation indicates that the two varieties diverge with regard to clothing terminology but converge with regard to football terminology, the studies on grammatical features and language attitudes both point in the direction of divergence. To arrive at these conclusions, on top of a survey-based study on attitudinal intentions, Soares da Silva implemented advanced corpus-based and sociolectometrical methods, specifically uniformity measures for language varieties based on onomasiological profiles (sets of alternative synonymous terms/constructions, together with their frequencies). The indicators analyzed reveal that diachronic divergence apply as much to one national variety as to the other, which suggests a situation of *symmetric pluricentricity* between the two national varieties.

### 2.3 Part three. Experimental and attitudinal studies

In the third section a series of leading scholars examine varying attitudes towards varieties of a number of different languages in a pluricentric setting. First, in the chapter entitled “Global diffusion, regional attraction, local roots? Sociocognitive perspectives on the pluricentricity of English”, **Edgar W. Schneider** provides the reader with an insightful survey of the current centers of English as a global language. In the second part of the chapter, the introductory overview is complemented with a questionnaire-based study of language attitudes. The paper first looks into the pluricentricity of English as based on patterns of historical diffusion and current political and regional settings. Schneider observes that two reference accents and norms, British and American English, are generally recognized, and that further varieties are on the verge of moving towards endonormative acceptance and a status as linguistic models for their respective regions: the Englishes of Australia, New Zealand (for parts of the South-West Pacific), India (for South Asia), Singapore (for South-East Asia), Jamaica (for the Caribbean) and South Africa (for southern Africa). In such a vast heterogeneous pluricentric scenario, which dimensions emerge that are of interest to the sociocognitive linguist – and how are they best examined? In order to address such questions, Schneider carried out a questionnaire-based survey in the above-mentioned countries, investigating speakers’ awareness and acceptance of standard varieties of English and their association with national iden-



tities and national cultures, together with indexical functions of - as well as overt and covert attitudes towards - regional and social varieties. The survey also looked into speakers' awareness of variability and evaluative attitudes towards varieties, and their perception of linguistic usage as an instrument in power conflicts.

In the second chapter in this section, entitled "Phonetic distance and intelligibility in Dutch", **Dirk Speelman**, **Leen Impe** and **Dirk Geeraerts** present the results of an experiment in which a lexical decision task incorporates regional variation as a variable, both on the level of the stimuli and on the level of the subjects. The authors first describe the characteristics of Dutch as a pluricentric language in the Low Countries: Dutch in the Low Countries is a pluricentric language, in the sense that Dutch in The Netherlands and Dutch in Flanders each have their own stratificational continuum. At the top level of the stratification, where Standard Netherlandic Dutch and Standard Belgian Dutch are situated, the two continua are closely related, but they are clearly recognized as different by the speakers of the language, both perceptually and attitudinally. However, as one moves downward along the stratificational continuum, the internal structure and dynamism of the two continua is different: there is a much wider gap between colloquial Belgian Dutch and Standard Belgian Dutch than between colloquial Netherlandic Dutch and Standard Netherlandic Dutch. The experiment reported on in this chapter was designed to answer the question to what extent objective phonetic distances between the varieties of Dutch influence their mutual intelligibility, and specifically also, whether the pluricentric nature of the language is reflected in the intelligibility results. The overall result is that reaction times do indeed correspond to pronunciation differences, as operationalized by Levenshtein distances.

Finally, in the last chapter in the volume, **Catrin Norrby** and **Heinz L. Kretzenbacher** focus on the pragmatic dimension of pluricentric languages, an area which has, so far, received much less attention in the literature on pluricentric languages than lexical, morphosyntactic or phonological aspects. The paper, entitled "National and regional variation of address in pluricentric languages: the examples of Swedish and German", describes an empirical study that analyzes T/V terms of address across different standard varieties of Swedish and German. Based on data from the large-scale project *Address in Some Western European Languages*, the authors investigate perceptions and attitudes that German and Swedish speakers display towards address practices in their own and other national and regional varieties of their respective languages. The findings suggest that there is substantial variation between the national varieties of German and Swedish regarding how people address others and how they expect to be addressed. The authors conclude that this national variation is

linked to issues of perceived national identity, including stereotypical representations of “the other” and related to asymmetrical power relationships between the varieties.

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Part I:  
**Theoretical perspectives**