

Documenting Argentina Danish: Discussion of methods of fieldwork and data sampling in little known rural communities south of Buenos Aires

USA and Argentina have been the primary destinations for the massive emigration from Denmark in the period 1870 to 1930: Approximately 13,000 Danes migrated to Argentina between 1871 and 1930. Around 8000 settled on the pampa south of Buenos Aires (Bjerg 2001: 32) and in a recent survey, Pærregaard (2009: 185) estimates that around 50.000 people consider themselves as Argentina Danes. This indicates that there is a relatively strong ethnic and/or cultural identity, or at least a strong knowledge about the Danish heritage.

The migration from Denmark to Argentina was characterized by family emigration, many from the island of Lolland. The Protestant Danes centered their settlements on the pampa in the so-called Danes triangle between the towns Tandil, Necochea and Tres Arroyos, 350-400 km south of Buenos Aires. They formed relatively closed rural communities, building up a reputation as capable farmers, but somewhat separating themselves from the surrounding Catholic society. The closedness of the Argentina Danish community, together with the settlement pattern, seems to explain why there are probably a few thousands Argentina Danes who still speak Danish in their daily lives. They are 2nd and 3rd generation immigrants, but it is reported that even in the 4th and 5th generation it is possible to find people of Danish origin who (to some extent) still speak Danish. Nevertheless, the situation of the Danish language today seems to one of gradual language death, triggered by the interruption of intergenerational transfer (Møller 2007; Sigvardt & Nicolaisen 2011).

One of the aims of our newly started research project 'Danish Voices in the Americas' at the University of Copenhagen is to document and describe Argentina Danish, with regard to contact-induced divergence from Denmark Danish, contact-induced stability or even reinforcement of cross-linguistically common structures and fossilized dialect features. As we are the first to do so, we would like to use *5th Workshop on Immigrant Languages in the Americas* as a discussion forum, in order to benefit from the experiences of other fieldworkers, heritage language linguists and linguists that investigate contact between Germanic and Romance languages. We would like the discussion to consider the following aspects:

Speaker types

For now, we attempt to get hold of old and oldest speakers with little contact to Denmark Danish in order to get to record genuine Argentina Danish (if there is such a thing). How should we proceed, whom should we turn the spotlight on next? As in probably every heritage situation, the speakers range from learners with a heritage motivation or heritage speakers with the heritage language as a weaker L2 to (more seldom) perfectly bilingual 2L1-speakers.

Data collection

We will present our interview guide and our questionnaire that will be implemented during the initial fieldwork in Argentina (September-October 2014). Based on the outcome of this fieldwork, the talk will discuss the success of the proposed interview strategies as well as ask for alternative data collecting methods.

For the time being, we do not plan to elicit data. However, this method has clear advantages if we want to trigger certain structures that we predict to be vulnerable to contact-induced change or contact-induced stability. Here, we would like to discuss criteria for successful elicitation.

Bjerg, María M. 2001. *Entre Sofie y Tovelille. Una historia de los inmigrantes daneses en la Argentina (1848-1930)* [Between Sophie and Tovelille. A story about the Danish immigrants in Argentina (1848-1939)]. Buenos Aires: Biblos.

Møller, Erik Dybdal. 2007. *Danskere som indvandrere – det dansk-argentinske eksempel* [Danes as immigrants – the Danish-Argentine example]. Hellebæk: Poul Kristensen.

Pærregaard, Karsten. 2009. Det etiske kneb – Dansk-argentinsk intermezzo i antropologisk optik [The ethical stratagem – Danish-Argentine intermezzo from an anthropological point of view]. In Hastrup, Kirsten (ed.) *Mellem mennesker* [Between humans]. Copenhagen: Gyldendal. 175–191.

Sigvardt, Camilla & Martin Arvad Nicolaisen. 2011. *Danmark i det fjerne. Et studie af materielle forbindelsers betydninger for dansk tilhørsforhold i Argentina* [Distant Denmark. A study of the importance of material relationships for feeling Danish in Argentina]. MA Thesis, Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen.