

Perception and production of the dialect of Poznań

Paulina Bounds (University of Georgia)

Based on the research that I have conducted on dialect of Poznań, I will show the relationship between the speech production of dialect words and their perception in Poznań. As Kretzschmar says: ‘We need to know about perceptions of speech, at least in order to consider how they might be a reflection of distributions of speech data as it is actually produced.’¹

I have used two methods, one quantitative in which I have created an online questionnaire asking about a usage of dialect words versus standard Polish words, in social situations varying from formal to casual. I have received 300 responses. This type of tool is measuring not the actual usage of language but an attitude and perception of it in the respondent’s mind. Thus, overall people admit to use more standard words than dialect; the more formal situation, the more formal words are used. One category which was designed to give the respondents a way to admit that they use dialect word, but not really committing to a frequency was the ‘I use it as a joke, humorously’. This category turned out to be very productive as people could create a picture of themselves as those who know the words and can use them in jokes. In the end, in the perception of the respondents the dialect of Poznań is very much alive and used by people from across the social spectrum.

The second method is more qualitative. In order to compare perception with usage in a conversation, I conducted 10 linguistic interviews. The modules that I have used follow the main thematic categories covered by the questionnaire. In the corpus that was created out of the transcripts, the amount of dialect words used out of all possibilities was not high. Also, a study of perception in dialects in Poland as well as in Poznań was done according with the methodology of ‘Draw-a-map’ by Dennis Preston, it revealed tendencies seen in the US. Subjects asserted that there is a perceptual concept of a dialect of Poznań, but the agreement where it is, is not easily definable. However, it is important, as Preston says: ‘to recognize that this way of looking at spatial distribution is real for the vast majority of members of speech communities.’² Here, we can see that the people from Poznań have created a schema of Poznań and its speech on a very limited and partial information and practice.

The research shows that no matter what we do with the language, the context that the language is happening at is crucial not only for the choice of variants but also to give a frame for our perception of the place, the speakers and ourselves in a given social context.

¹ Kretzschmar, William. 2009. *The Linguistics of Speech*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 199.

² Preston, Dennis. 1989. *Perceptual Dialectology. Nonlinguists’ Views of Areal Linguistics*. Providence: Foris Publications.