

Vortrag am 4. Dezember 2018, 18.15 bis 19.45 Uhr

***Sound perspectives?
Speech and speaker dynamics over a century of Scottish English***

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As in many disciplines, in linguistics too, perspective matters. Structured variability in language occurs at all linguistic levels and is governed by a large range of diverse factors. Viewed through a synchronic lens, such variation informs our understanding of linguistic and social-cognitive constraints on language at particular points in time; a diachronic lens expands the focus across time. And, as Weinreich et al (1968) pointed out, structured variability is integral to linguistic description and explanation as a whole, by being at once both the stuff of the present, the reflexes of the past, and the potential for changes in the future. There is a further dimension which is often not explicit, the role of analytical perspective on linguistic phenomena.

This paper considers a particular kind of structured variability, phonetic and phonological variation, within the sociolinguistic context of the recorded history of Glaswegian vernacular across the 20th century. Two aspects of perspective frame my key research questions:

1. What are the 'things' which we observe? How do different analytical perspectives on phonetic variation affect how we interpret that variation? Specifically, how do different kinds of observation — within segment/across a phonological contrast/even beyond segments — auditory/acoustic/articulatory phonetic — shape our interpretations?
2. How are these 'things' embedded in time and social space? Specifically, how is this variation linked to contextual perspective, shifts in social events and spaces over the history of the city of Glasgow? How do we know whether, or when, these 'things' might be sound changes (following Milroy 2003)?

I consider these questions by reviewing a series of studies (including some ongoing and still unpublished) on two segments in Glaswegian English, the first thought to be stable and not undergoing sound change (/s/), the second thought to be changing (postvocalic /r/).

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