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De Presensvervoeging in de dialecten van Nederland

ja-nee versus gradueel

Summary

This article is a survey of the distribution of present indicative affixes within and across Dutch dialects. The synchronic data are retrieved from a large database of phonetic transcriptions and were acquired in recent fieldwork.

It is argued that a quantitative and probabilistic model of linguistic structure, as reflected in dialect behaviour, is crucially more informative than a qualitative and deterministic one. Therefore, also in morphology, suffixes have to be considered as linguistic variables.

This point of view is applied synchronically and diachronically to the variation within dialects and to the geographical distribution of the variants.

It is shown that some forms that were subject to now extinct phonological reduction rules nevertheless exhibit clear traces of the original suffix.

Although uniform plural systems (Einheitsplural) do exist, the uniform singular systems, prematurely taken for granted due to disregard of variation, don't.

It is shown also that competing suffixes may have relatively stable patterns of variation across centuries, variation that does not lead to language change.