Editorial

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In recent years, an increasing focus on empirical methods in linguistics has been demonstrated by diverse methodological publications (such as Albert/Marx 2010; Dörnyei 2007; Litosseliti 2010b; Gries 2008; Johnson 2008; Meindl 2011) and conferences (besides methodological workshops at conferences, the Swiss Linguistic Society SSG/SSL organised a conference on the topic "Die Empirie in der Linguistik: Methodenvielfalt und -komplexität" in 2012, and in 2011 the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences SAHS (SAGW) hosted the first interdisciplinary "Swiss Methods Festival – Qualitative Research Methods and Mixed Methods Designs"). Empirical methods are lively discussed in introductory text books and are slowly beginning to become a regular component of linguistic curricula – at least in German-speaking countries. In this volume, scholars from various disciplines in linguistics present their current studies, each article focusing on research methods. Obviously, this volume does not intend to give a complete overview of methods in linguistics, but rather demonstrates with a few examples how a focus on methods can improve linguistic research and contribute to further discussions of the use of methods in linguistics.

The idea of a volume focused on different research methods originated in the international workshop "A Portfolio of Linguistic Methods" organised by the Peer Mentoring Group "Chaos und Methode" at the University of Zurich in October 2011. In this workshop, a cross-disciplinary group of linguistic scholars presented the methods applied in their current studies, and joint discussions provided the opportunity for reflecting on methods in a broader context and in juxtaposition with other methodological conceptions. This untraditional setting has expanded the participants' knowledge of a broad range of methods, and it has spawned the development of single studies by rearrangement of methods, integration of further methods or more thorough theorising through reflection on methods.

A research method basically consists in what we do and how we do it when we carry out research. Or, in the words of Corbin/Strauss (2008: 1), methods are "[t]echniques and procedures for gathering and analyzing data." Researchers usually distinguish between quantitative and qualitative methods. Firstly, this distinction concerns data collection. Linguistic scholars use surveys, corpus analyses, experiments, observations, and, for historical data, philological methods in manuscript and epigraphic studies. Secondly, the distinction concerns the nature of data. The complexity of quantitative data is reduced early on (e.g. in a survey: when using a questionnaire, data is limited to answers to the questions posed). Carrying out a qualitative study, the researcher usually collects a rather complex body of data (e.g. in open interviews) which is organized and reduced in the course of the analysis. Thirdly, the distinction encompasses how we analyse data, viz. with the help of statistical tests working with numerical data, or with one of the diverse qualitative methods using verbal data (e.g. content or comparative analyses), or in a combination of methods.

Due to the large amounts of data, quantitative studies enable overviews, they can usually be generalised, and the methods used can usually be standardised. Qualitative studies, by contrast, are normally characterised by thick data descriptions; they are more process-oriented and thus open to a change in research focus while the research is carried out. These characteristics are useful especially in explorative studies, because they may lead not only to answers but also to new, intriguing questions. The question of objectivity in research is sometimes related to the difference between quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative studies are often regarded as closer to being objective (Flick/Kardoff/Steinke 2009), but discussions about what objectivity is and whether objectivity can be obtained in research do not provide us with clear answers. Even findings that are considered as "bare facts" are, according to Feyerabend (2010: 3), "essentially ideational". In our opinion, this does not mean that researchers should not strive for objectivity, but rather that they should persistently reflect on ideologies, approaches and methods in relation to the goal of objectivity.

The dichotomy between elicitation of data and naturally occurring data is particularly emphasised in disciplines such as conversation analysis (e.g. Firth/Wagner 1998; Schegloff et al. 2002) and ethnographic participant observation (e.g. Spradley 1980), but not all fields offer the researcher the luxury of this choice. Norde (this volume) describes how scholars in historical linguistics must tackle the problem that only limited data are available, and that there can be crucial gaps in language history due to the lack of data. Thus, on the one hand we find historical corpora, which form relatively closed sets of data and are only occasionally augmented by newly discovered sources, whereas on the other hand there are internet corpora, which are steadily growing and thus potentially infinite. Investigations of linguistic corpora, then, can be very diverse indeed.

The choice of method is dependent on the research question, which again is dependent on the researcher's approach to the field, and his or her theoretical stance. Windberger-Heidenkummer/Ziegler (2011: 12) state that the suitability of a method depends not only on the goal of the study, but also on the pathways leading there: "Eine a priori bessere oder richtigere Methode gibt es nicht! Verschiedene Methoden können durchaus zum selben Ziel führen, aber dabei unterschiedliche Wege beschreiten." Within the social sciences, and specifically within linguistics, one can find a tendency to move away from the strict dichotomy between quantitative and qualitative research in recent years; instead, these approaches are currently regarded as a continuum and are combined in mixed methods (e.g. the collection of data by means of a combination of questionnaire and interview; see Kelle 2007). Obvious as this may seem, Litosseliti (2010a: 2) suggests that experienced researchers are "arguably more in danger of becoming entrenched in the research questions and types of methodologies they pursue." For this reason, insights into methods that one does not normally employ can be valuable both with respect to reflection on the researcher's own projects and as a source of inspiration leading to new projects. Methodological discussions in cross-disciplinary fora can be fruitful for newcomers as well as for experienced linguists.

Although the studies in this volume only demonstrate a small share of the methods used in linguistic research, they still represent quite different methods and fields (dialectology, language technology, lexicology, text linguistics, contrastive as well as historical linguistics, and foreign language acquisition). The first three contributions are quantitative in nature, the

fourth is quantitative and qualitative, and the fifth qualitative. Quantitative studies typically deal with large amounts of data, which is also the case with the quantitative studies in this volume, although "large amounts of data" is, of course, a relative term. The quantitative cluster analysis used by Jessen (this volume) deals with 71 informants and 37 video clips, whereas Bubenhofer (this volume) analyses two electronic corpora, each consisting of approximately 2.5 million words. By comparison, Ritzau (this volume) bases her analyses on three informants in a qualitative study. During the last one or two decades, the number of studies based on internet data and studies conducted online has increased dramatically. One paper in this volume specifically discusses the use of internet data (Juska-Bacher/Biemann/Quasthoff), one paper is based on online data (Bubenhofer), and one paper describes a study carried out online (Jessen). The use of computer programs for analysis is common to these papers and to the paper by Norde.

Contributions to the Volume

Juska-Bacher, Biemann and Quasthoff open the volume by giving an overview of three web-based approaches: online surveys, crowd-sourcing and web-based corpus analyses. Using examples of their own research, the authors reflect upon these methods, and present their potential and limitations. Because of the potential to produce vast quantities of linguistic data, internet-based empirical studies provide linguistic research with new opportunities and challenges. The authors conclude that there is a strong need for the development of new procedures so as to make effective use of these resources.

Bubenhofer explores the question about the characteristics of language used in mass-media reports on scandals. Using corpus linguistic methods, the author investigates data of two leading German newspapers covering a recent scandal in German politics, caused by the allegation that the former German Federal President Christian Wulff might have been corrupt. Bubenhofer extracts typical patterns used in a discourse of scandalisation and demonstrates that newspaper articles scandalising a person use more patterned language than other news texts on politics.

Jessen employs cluster analysis to pattern semantic categories of motion verbs in Danish, German, and Turkish. Her study shows that although cluster analysis is only rarely used to map out the semantic space for a given domain, it is indeed a useful method for this purpose. Her finding that German and Turkish display a higher number of semantic categories than Danish supports the observation that elaboration of the motion verb inventory as related to typological membership seems to be a tendency rather than a rule.

The paper by **Norde** deals with untagged corpora and the challenges implied by the use of corpora in historical linguistics. Because historical material is characterised by gaps and discontinuity, Norde suggests that both quantitative and qualitative methods should be applied for analysis. She demonstrates how manual handling of data uncovers needles in the haystack and thus permits new discoveries in existing data.

Ritzau's paper investigates how a longitudinal, qualitative approach can contribute to a better understanding of language learner beliefs. Inspired by Grounded Theory, Ritzau analyses the beliefs of three students learning Danish as a foreign language, and finds that the beliefs of the informants do not only change over time, but that they are also complex and partly

contradictory. Ritzau argues that these findings come to the fore because data have been collected over several stages, and because the method is qualitative in nature.

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