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Participles in Jutland – a real time study of regionalization and standardization

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The Danish speech community is a very standardized community. During the last century a strong standardization process has taken place in all areas of the country. The change has happened rather fast, and in many old dialect areas there has been a rapid shift from one generation to the next, where local linguistic forms have been substituted by standard forms.

This paper presents a real time study of standardization and regionalization processes with respect to the use of past participles of strong verbs in the western part of Denmark. Dialect variants of the past participle are among the most commonly noted linguistic differences between speakers from the western and eastern parts of Denmark, and it is also considered to be one of the most resistant dialect features in Jutland, the peninsula constituting the western part of Denmark.

Analyses of a large corpus of recordings with informants from two localities show that the use of the dialectal *en*-form of the past participle suffix has been in decline during the last 30 years. The *en*-forms are replaced by three other forms one of which is (partly) dialectal, one regional and one standard Danish. The study indicates that a regionalization process has taken place prior to the time period studied, but that it has now been overtaken by a Copenhagen based standardization process. The study also shows interesting differences between the two localities, arguably due to the geographical location and size, and to the position of the different participle forms in the traditional local dialects.

All in all, the analyses show a pattern of dedialectization, where local dialect forms are substituted by standard forms more or less from one generation to the next (but also during the life span of the individual informants), and where factors such as age, gender, social class and the frequency of the lemma all play a part in the process of change.