

Title: Bulgarian Dialect Analysis as an Evolving Tradition

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The traditional dialect atlas— providing lists of isolated words collected from various locations and/or maps that provide a simplified rendering of reflex distribution— has a number of shortcomings that inhibit a full understanding of dialectal speech. “Bulgarian Dialectology as a Living Tradition”, an ongoing project resulting from a partnership between Ronelle Alexander (UC Berkeley) and Vladimir Zhobov (Sofia University), aims to address some of the shortcomings in previous dialectology atlases by presenting transcriptions of vivid, authentic speech from thirty-three sites. The web-based environment where the transcriptions are being curated provides new opportunities for organizing, analyzing and visualizing the material in ways that would be too time-consuming to do manually.

The project data are derived from the “Sofia-Berkeley Archive of Bulgarian Dialectal Speech”, the result of a series of joint field trips starting in 1991. From this archive, audio clips 5–10 minutes long were selected and digitized from some fifty sites. Originally, these audio clips were accompanied by a set of precisely-formatted Microsoft Word files that included phonetic transcriptions, English translations, grammatical annotation, analysis of salient linguistic features, a discussion of the village, and the content of the text. In order to improve the consistency of the annotation and enable new kinds of analysis and visualization, as well as different kinds of output (new glossaries and indexes, as well as print and web-based versions), the data have now been imported into a flexible online content management system.

The paper describes the new analyses enabled by this form of digital data curation, as well as its shortcomings compared to a traditional print-publishing workflow.

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