Morpho-lexical change - grammatical or social motivation?

Reidunn Hernes

This paper will present some findings from an ongoing real time study of dialectal development carried out in *Os*, a community of 14000 inhabitants, situated 30 km south of Bergen, the second biggest city in Norway. The informants, a group of 17 adolescents from Os, have participated in my project for a period of five years, from the age of 15 to 20. I have studied the mopho-lexical changes in their language systems in this period of time. I have also compared the linguistic variation in my data with findings from a study carried out in Os 30 years ago.

The changes in distribution of linguistic variants follow an interesting pattern, and can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand the pattern of change can be interpreted within the frame of general linguistics, using the *principle of naturalness.* On the other hand, from a sociolinguistic point of view, the pattern can be understood as a result of the variables' different social value. Within both traditions, the concept of *markedness* plays a central role. In my paper, I will present and discuss these two interpretations of the empirical findings.