Methods for Comparison and Classification of Dialects

In this lecture we first discuss traditional methods which were used for finding dialect groups, such as the isogloss method and the structure geographic method. Secondly, methods are discussed that find dialect groups or dialect distances as they exist in the awareness and perception of the dialect speakers.

In the remainder of the talk we focus on dialectometry. The term ´dialectometry` was coined by Jean Séguy and means literally ´measure of dialect`. We consider work of Séguy and Goebl who measured distances between dialects by counting the number of differences or similarities respectively. We will especially pay attention to Goebl's Gewichteter Identitätswert.

In 1995 Kessler introduced Levenshtein distance as a procedure for measuring pronunciation distances between dialects using phonetic transcriptions. We discuss some refinements which were made by the Groningen school of dialectometry.

Once the relationships between local dialects are quantified, dialects can be classified by applying cluster analysis and multidimensional scaling to the matrix that contains the mutual distances between the dialects.

Results on the basis of the *Phonetischen Atlas Deutschlands* are shown. This data was analyzed dialectometrically for the first time in 2005 by Nerbonne & Siedle.