**Gradual frequency and phonetic expression of the KL>*TL cluster shift in Central Eastern German**

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In this talk I will present data regarding an areal pattern of sound change that was suggested by Blevins & Grawunder (2006). The sound change comprises a partial fronting of the cluster /kl/ to */tl/ in parts of Central East German (CEG) dialects and colloquial forms. This sub-phonemic shift goes in parallel with other cluster frontings like /gl/ to */dl/, /kn/ to */tn/ and /gn/ to */dn/, but stays usually completely out of the awareness of the speakers. The here adopted framework of a phonetic areal typology considers the variability that is given by the phonetic implementation of a phonemic contrast as it can be described and tested by means of the phonetic expression and by frequency of occurrence of the transcribed types ([kl/tl*]). The acoustically oriented analysis is based on a set of recordings from 32 localities with 3 speakers per village equally spread across the CEG area, overlapping widely the proposed area of the cluster shift.

By means of an analysis of gradual variance I argue for a higher robustness within the “shift area” than at its borders. This can in part be shown for within-speaker, between-speaker and between-locality relations. More strikingly is the S-shaped curve of transcribed type frequency on the one hand and the shift in weighted CoG of the release spectra of the cluster stops on the other. It can also be shown that the cluster shift is a truly areal pattern, specifically by its implementations in the other adjacent Southern dialects of German, but also by its pervasiveness with regard to dialect borders and historical language borders (Sorbian). Recent research on the /tl/ and */tl/ cluster perception (Halle & Best 2007) corroborate the idea that the underspecified stop+lateral cluster allows for a reduced variety of pathways to develop into, especially if we see it in the light of language contact (L2-speaker behavior, incomplete learning). This would then also explain the independence of similar cluster shifts, as we see in some varieties of English (Blevins & Grawunder 2006).