Traditional Dialectology: (source: Dialectology, by Trudgill and Chambers, 2004)

"More than a century has elapsed since the first major project in dialect geography was undertaken, and in that time there have been hundreds of projects, great and small, that have made use of the methodology. We consider here only a few of them, and particularly those that have been national in their scope. It should be readily apparent that the national scope is by no means a requisite of dialect geography. Indeed, more local projects, involving, say, a few square kilometres of Gascony or an even smaller area of northwestern Ohio or the Golden Horseshoe, can be the focus of study as well. Our predilection for the larger projects in this section merely reflects the accessibility of their documentation and the greater influence which they have exerted in the history of dialectology. The first dialect survey that can properly be called dialect geography was begun in Germany by Georg Wenker in 1876. Wenker's first attempt at a survey involved sending a list of sentences written in standard German to schoolmasters in the north of Germany and asking them to return the list transcribed into the local dialect. Between 1877 and 1887, he made successive mailings which eventually blanketed the entire nation. The breadth of coverage is staggering: he ultimately sent his list of sentences to nearly 50,000 schoolmasters, and he received completed questionnaires from about 45,000 of them.

Each questionnaire contained forty sentences, and few of the sentences were simple. For example, the first one was this: *Im Winter fliegen die trocknen Blätter durch die Luft herum* 'In winter the dry leaves fly around through the air'. Each sentence clearly offers several points at which the schoolmasters could record regional variants. The wealth of data, not surprisingly, turned out to be a hindrance rather than an advantage. In order to make any of his findings accessible, Wenker was forced to limit his analysis to the variants of certain words within a closely circumscribed area of north and central Germany. In addition, the problem of displaying the complex variants on a set of maps impeded the accessibility of his work. Wenker ended up making two sets of maps by hand, with each map charting a single feature. The maps were bound under the title *Sprachatlas des Deutschen Reichs*. One copy was deposited in Marburg and the other in Berlin in 1881. These beautiful tomes are the first linguistic atlases (*Sprachatlas*) to be published. Wenker's work did not end with the publication of his atlas. He carried on gathering questionnaires, and made them available to other scholars. However, it took more than four decades, until 1926, for the project to reach fruition. In that year, the first volume of the *Deutscher Sprachatlas* appeared, under the editorship of Ferdinand Wrede and based largely on Wenker's files. Ironically, the wealth of data gathered by Wenker turned out to be too sparse in one sense. Later dialectologists in Germany were disappointed by the few lexical variants that Wenker's questionnaire had elicited and, in 1939, W. Mitzka supplemented Wenker's files by sending a list of about 200 standard German lexical items to 50,000 schools and asking for regional synonyms for them."

MODERN APPROACHES TO DIALECT: The Border Dialect

Source: Introducing Sociolinguistics by Mesthrie, Swann, Deumert and William L. Leap, 2009)

"Trudgill has been a pioneer in applying insights from modern sociolinguistics to the study of geographical variation. One of the issues he has been interested in is the 'border dialect', that is how one variety within a dialect continuum shades off into another. Traditional dialectology never adequately explored the linguistic behaviour of people living in the linguistic borderlands. By carefully re-examining the records of the SED (Survey of English Dialects), Trudgill and Chambers (1980: 132–42) posited two types of subvarieties or 'lects' characteristic of such areas: mixed and fudged lects. (The term 'lect' is widely used by linguists for smaller groupings within

a dialect: one may speak of ‘genderlects’, ‘ethnolects’ or particular ‘sociolects’). We use the example of the major ʊ/ö isogloss separating the northern dialects from the southern dialects of England (see Map 2.4). You will recall that there is a more or less clear-cut distinction where the north, has the older pronunciation [ʊ] in the lexical set strut, cup, luck while the south has [ö] in this set. Trudgill and Chambers found some areas on the borderline of the isogloss which had mixed lects: that is, speakers used both [ʊ] and [ö]. They also found some areas where speakers produced an intermediate pronunciation between [ʊ] and [ö], phonetically [ɣ]. This sound is a ‘fudge’ (that is, a kind of compromise) since it is phonetically unrounded like [ö], but closer to [ʊ] in terms of vowel height, and intermediate between them in terms of backness. David Britain (1997) has studied the border dialect area known as the Fens in England, a marshy area about 75 miles north of London and 50 miles west of Norwich. At one time, the sparse population lived on a few islands of higher ground. Only after the seventeenth century when the marshes were drained did the Fens become fertile, arable land attracting greater human habitation. The lack of communication between the eastern and western sides of the Fens before reclamation is refl ected in the fact that this is still one of the major dialect transition zones in England.

One of the features studied by Britain was the variation between east and west with respect to the diphthong [**a**i] (i.e. the vowel sound in the lexical set price, white, right). The eastern Fens have a centralised [əi], while the western Fens have [**a**i]. Britain describes an interesting compromise in the central Fens, the part more recently opened to habitation. Here both pronunciations are found, but in a special pattern, determined by what kind of sound they are followed by. The centralised [əi] pronunciation occurs before voiceless consonants (like *p, t, k, f, s*), while [**a**i] occurs in other phonetic environments, namely before voiced consonants (like *b, d, g, v, z*) and before vowels. Britain argues that such ‘fudging’ occurred when newcomers tried to assimilate to the norms of more settled communities which were themselves divided in terms of pronunciation.”