

Introduction: German in Austria – Variation across registers and structural levels

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This talk introduces the special section ‘German in Austria – Variation across registers and structural levels’ and provides an insight into the special language situation regarding German in Austria. It also formulates research questions, which are discussed from different perspectives in the subsequent talks.

German in Austria provides a perfect research laboratory to investigate language variation across the entire ‘vertical’ variation on the dialect/standard axis. First, there is regional variation between five different dialect areas (Central Bavarian, South Bavarian, South-Central Bavarian transition zone, Alemannic, and Alemannic-Bavarian transition zone) concerning local dialects. Second, there are inter-regional differences with regard to the ‘vertical’ dialect/standard repertoires. While Bavarian dialect speakers’ typically have diaglossic repertoires, resulting from the Bavarian dialect/standard continuum, the Alemannic dialect region is characterized by diglossic spectra (Auer 2018). However, recent data suggest a restructuring of these spectra, indicating ‘concentration zones’ in Bavarian continua as well as intermediate variants in Alemannic diglossia (Lenz 2019, Fanta-Jende 2020). In addition and third, as a ‘non-dominant center’ of German (Clyne 1995), Austrians are exposed to nationally diverging standard varieties, namely the Austrian German and the German German standard variety (Muhr 2007, Krech et al. 2009, Ammon et al. 2016).

The central question discussed by the panel relates to suitable methodological approaches taken to investigate the (socio-)linguistic variability in Austria across various registers on the one hand and across various structural levels on the other hand. The different talks present multi-method approaches taken to examine variation in Austrian speakers’ repertoires with a focus on phonetics/phonology, morphology, syntax and lexis. These include, amongst others, different questionnaire-based methods, translation tasks, language production experiments, (formal) interviews and (informal) conversations with friends. Thus, in addition to the results of the individual studies, benefits and limitations of the methodological approaches are discussed.

On the one hand, the introductory talk aims at a synopsis of previous research results with regard to their assertions on individual phenomena, selected registers and individual system levels. On the other hand, it intends to identify research desiderata that still need to be addressed in future research. They form the background against which the contributions of the panel will be discussed. The discussion of the introductory talk as well as of the entire panel will be guided by the following research questions: Which (parallel and different) structures do the linguistic level of phonetics/phonology, morphology, syntax and lexis exhibit regarding patterns of areal/horizontal and vertical/social variation? Which features (from which levels) (do not) correlate with each other? Which phenomena and which structural levels show what degree of stability or dynamisms? Which methods do we need to answer these questions?

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Panel: German in Austria

Speech repertoires and varietal spectra - Eliciting phonological variation on the dialect-standard-axis

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Researchers in variationist linguistics are able to draw on a large number of established survey methods for the analysis of variation in intra-speaker and inter-speaker language use. Different survey methods yield very different types of data with respect to naturalness, comparability and their practical application in research. The exploration of the social-vertical dimension in contrast to the classical areal-horizontal dimension presents certain challenges with respect to established methodologies.

There are several thorough studies focusing on the ‘architecture’ of the dialect-standard-axis for specific regions in Germany (cf. Lenz 2003, Lameli 2004 and Kehrein 2012), comparable endeavours for the Austrian context still represent a major research desideratum. Austria, however, may be regarded as the “ideal sociolinguistic research laboratory” (Lenz 2018, 269) due to its high dynamics on the dialect-standard axis. This presentation would like to contribute to the description of the structure and dynamics of the areal-horizontal and in particular the ‘social-vertical’ language dimension in Austria.

The empirical input consists of language data from ‘autochthonous’ speakers of various sociodemographic backgrounds in rural areas of Bavarian Austria, representing different dialect regions. The data is collected in various survey settings: an interview led by a foreign academic, an unguided conversation among friends, two translation tasks and reading-aloud tasks.

Based on various selected phonological phenomena, the author likes to demonstrate how a multi-method approach enables accessing different parts of individuals’ language repertoires. Important research questions revolve around the following aspects: How do active members of the Austrian speech community “move” along their individual “spectrum of linguistic possibilities (Macha 1991). How can different parts of the vertical language spectrum be captured by a selection of various ‘natural’ and ‘standardized survey settings? In a second step, the talk will discuss the relationship of intra- and inter-individual variation: How can the individual repertoires be used to derive assumptions about the overall vertical spectra of the selected dialect regions? And how can the applied methodological insights be taken for further general research into the structure and dynamics of the complex language spectrum?

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Subjunctive II and diminutive as hedging phenomena in German in Austria Evidence from free conversation data and experimental settings

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Hedging is an interesting field of pragmatics that is characterized by various interfaces to other linguistic levels (e.g., semantics, vocabulary, syntax, morphology, see e.g., Schröder/Zimmer 1997, Reisigl/Wodak 2009). We focus on the pragmatics-morphology interface (e.g., Dressler/Merlini Barbaresi 1994) and investigate two phenomena that exhibit considerable variation not only as a function of the language variety or the participants' sociolinguistic characteristics investigated (e.g., gender), but also of the methodology employed, namely the subjunctive II and the diminutive. Both phenomena are often employed for mitigation (e.g., for being polite or for expressing one's uncertainty).

We investigate German in Austria, as Austrians are well known for their high dialect loyalty and dialect competence and for their frequent use of dialects (see Lenz 2019). In addition, the subjunctive II as well as the diminutive were identified as typical Austrian hedging strategies by previous studies on pragmatic strategies in the German-speaking area (Muhr 2008; Warga 2008). Therefore, Austria may be considered an "ideal sociolinguistic research laboratory" (Lenz 2018: 269) for investigating these two hedging phenomena: We find a broad inventory of different subjunctive II forms ranging from Standard German synthetic forms (e.g., *hätte* 'have-SUBJ2') or Standard German analytic forms (e.g., *würde sagen* 'would say') to colloquial analytic forms (e.g., *tät sagen* 'do-SUBJ2 say') or synthetic base dialect forms (e.g., *sogad* 'say-SUBJ2'), see Breuer/Wittibschlager (2020). The same holds for diminutives, which are characterized by a large range of suffixes (Standard *-chen* or *-lein*, colloquial *-(e)l*, dialect *-erl*, *-i*, *-lan*, *-le*, *-li*) that may be partially combined with umlaut (stem vowel change, e.g. *Häs-chen* 'hare-DIM', e.g., Korecky-Kröll/Dressler 2007).

We investigate language production data from 40 adult native speakers of German from five small rural locations belonging to the five main dialect regions of Austria (Central Bavarian, South-Central Bavarian, South Bavarian, Bavarian-Alemannic, Alemannic). Participants were part of two age groups (18-35 and 60+) as well as two educational backgrounds (+/- high school diploma) and were largely balanced for gender.

As subjunctive II forms as well as diminutives appear only in mid-to-low frequencies in free conversation data, it was necessary to use additional methods in order to elicit sufficient numbers of relevant data. Thus, each participant was recorded in four settings:

- 1) a more formal interview with an Austrian researcher,
- 2) a less formal free conversation with a friend from the same location,
- 3) a translation task from the local dialect into Standard German
- 4) a translation task from Standard German into the local dialect.

A main goal of this multi-method approach was to get insight into participants' individual vertical variety spectra by grasping high, intermediate and low varieties (i.e., from Standard German to the base dialect).

We will discuss effects of the dialect region, participants' gender and age group as well as individual preferences of participants followed by a critical discussion of the methods employed. We conclude that all methods have certain advantages and disadvantages, but that a multi-method approach of different spontaneous and experimental settings is most appropriate when investigating phenomena of mid-to-low frequencies in everyday speech.

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Intra- and interindividual variation on the lexical level - Analyses across Austria

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The present talk discusses so-called ‘Austriacisms’ (Austrian ‘shibboleths’), whose role for linguistic and social identity is highly debated in meta-language discourse (cf. Wodak et al. 2009). mainly concern the lexical domain, and less often also grammatical and phonetic levels (Wiesinger 2015, Auer 2014). A set of Austriacisms related to food even enjoy official protection under the Austrian EU Accession Treaty (e.g., Erdäpfel ‘potatoes’, Fisolen ‘green beans’). Despite their sociolinguistic and ideological importance, Austriacisms have to-date not been the subject of any significant large-scale studies. Our contribution addresses this research gap, presenting results from large-scale surveys carried out across Austria. Importantly, our analyses of the collected survey data implement an integrated approach in which investigations of linguistic behavior and cognitive associations are juxtaposed.

Our empirical analyses are based on two data sources: First, the “conversation corpus” features the language data of 150 speakers (from 13 rural locations of Austria), elicited in two settings (Lenz 2018): a (more formal) researcher-led interview (by an unfamiliar academic explorer) and a (more informal) conversation setting “among friends”. The aim of these two settings was to elicit different registers of the individual repertoires of linguistic variation, which enables both inter-individual and intra-individual comparisons. These data will be the basis for our analyses, which will focus on the use of lexical Austriacisms. Second, we present analyses based on nation-wide written surveys (approx. 750 participants). The questionnaire concentrated on aspects of enregisterment (cf. Agha 2007) and thus on the link between linguistic elements and social identities.

Our quantitative and qualitative analyses will provide answers to the following research questions: What role do Austriacisms play in the language behaviour of Austrian speakers? Which lexical phenomena show what kind of variation on the areal-horizontal and vertical-social dimension of variation? Which social values are attributed to which variants and which enregisterment processes (cf. Auer 2014) are these attributions based on?

The results of our analyses provide evidence for the following hypotheses: We anticipate salient inter-regional differences with regard to lexis across Austria (as we have found to be the case with regard to phonetic, morphological and syntactic variation). We also expect that inter-regional differences on the basis of lexical variation (mainly between the Bavarian and Alemannic areas of Austria) occur across the entire dialect/standard axis, including “intermediate” registers. With regard to those (mainly) lexical features which are highlighted as “Austrian peculiarities” in public and private discourses on Austrian language and which bear highly social values (revealed by our questionnaire), we expect only low usage frequencies in our “conversation corpus” (interviews and conversations among friends).

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Investigating dialect syntax in Austria. Empirical findings and methodological considerations

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Dialect syntax is a thriving field of research in modern dialectology. Relatively little work, however, has been conducted on the syntax of dialects in Austria where traditional dialectology focussed almost completely on phonetics/phonology and to some extent on morphology. The few studies available are either pilot studies (cf. e.g. Lenz, Ahlers & Werner 2014; Breuer & Bülow 2019), not based on comprehensive and systematically built corpora (e.g. Patocka 1997), or studies with a regional focus (Scheutz 2005; Breuer 2016; Breuer 2021). The scarcity of empirical studies can chiefly be attributed to methodological difficulties that researchers are confronted with when investigating dialect syntax: syntactic features are considered to be distributed less locally and less systematically in comparison to phonetic/phonological or morphological features (cf. Kortmann 2010; König, Elspaß & Möller 2019: 163;). Additionally, not only are syntactic variables less frequent in natural data but also assumed to be less salient to speakers. Therefore, traditional methods of dialectological research – observations and questionnaire-based surveys – seem to be less suitable for inquiring syntactical phenomena (cf. Fleischer, Kasper & Lenz 2012; Glaser 2014 for discussion).

This paper will present findings from an ongoing project on selected syntactic features of traditional Austrian dialects. In comparing the results on different syntactic phenomena, we want to focus on two main aspects: (1) We will re-examine some popular claims on the nature of syntactic data, e.g. on the large-scale spatial distribution of syntactic variants and their supposedly ‘unsystematic’ patterns (in terms of spatial and social variation). (2) On a methodological note, we will discuss methodical benefits and limitations of different data types and methods. In particular, we will focus on the influence of standard norms on spoken and written data and the influence of word order in stimulus sentences in both spoken and written translation tasks.

To account for these aspects, we chose eight syntactic phenomena (based e.g. on Fleischer, Kasper & Lenz 2017, Lenz 2019): (a) article use before mass nouns, proper names and indefinite plural nouns, (b) adnominal possessive constructions, (c) indefinite-partitive pronouns, (d) subjunctive II (analytic vs. periphrastic), (e) negative concord, (f) complementizer agreement, (g) relative pronouns and (h) comparative constructions. The analyses on these phenomena are based on a comprehensive survey on the dialects of 163

speakers (balanced for age and gender) in 40 localities throughout Austria. The survey consists of different questionnaire-based methods of data collection, using translation tasks, rating tasks, and cloze tasks.

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Standard-dialect variation and ideas about linguistic norms in lexicographic data

Philipp Stöckle

This paper deals with grammatical variation found in a huge data set which was originally created – and is still being used – for lexicographic purposes: the database of the “Wörterbuch der bairischen Mundarten in Österreich (WBÖ)” (Dictionary of Bavarian dialects in Austria). Large parts of the data were collected by volunteers in a questionnaire-based survey which lasted several decades (between 1913 and 1937). In the course of the survey, the so-called “Sammler” (collectors) noted the answers of the informants on little paper slips (cf. Stöckle 2021), which were later on digitized (i.e., manually transferred into an xml-format database; cf. Bowers/Stöckle 2018) and can be used for search queries. Besides lexicographic information (such as lemma, pronunciation, etc.), the paper slips contain many sample sentences in the respective dialects which contain different grammatical phenomena that can be analyzed independently (cf. Stöckle 2020). Moreover, in many cases the collectors added translations into standard German which sometimes deviate from the dialectal original versions, as the following examples illustrate:

Subjunctive II

- 1) a. *Dqssn ischt an Ockr, den vos i go nīt **heargab*** (original)
- b. *Jenes ist ein Acker, den ich gar nicht **hergeben würde*** (translation)
 ‘That’s the field I would not give away at all.’

geben/tun as PUT verbs

- 2) a. *si muəss əs kʰqarv rixtv und in t mīl **tīa*** (original)
- b. *Sie muß das Korn richten und in die Mühle **geben*** (translation)
 ‘She must prepare the grain and put it in the mill.’

The first example displays a variant of the subjunctive II, the second shows different realizations of so-called PUT verbs, in this case *tun* (‘to do’) and *geben* (‘to give’). Each of the examples includes the original dialectal form (1a and 2a) as well as the translations made by the collectors (1b and 2b). Although in both cases equivalent forms would exist in the standard variety, the translations deviate from the dialectal variant.

So why did the collectors use different constructions in their translations, especially in cases where similar constructions would be appropriate in the standard variety? It is assumed that at least one of the reasons may have been ideas about certain linguistic norms the collectors followed in order to make the “best” translation. This is especially remarkable, since recent findings show that some of the deviating variants (as the subjunctive II with *würde* or the use of *geben* as a PUT verb) are frequently used in present spoken German (cf. Breuer/Wittibschlager 2020, Lenz in print).

In a second step, the findings from the WBÖ data will be contrasted with data from recent surveys (cf. Lenz in print; Stöckle/Wittibschlager accepted), taking under consideration the different methods of data collection. In my paper I will show that there can be found a continuation between the two levels of comparison (dialect–standard within the WBÖ data vs. WBÖ data–recent data), and that – despite the different methodological standards and different purposes – the historical data can serve as a basis of comparison which can help to understand recent developments in language variation and change.

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