

MULTILINGUALISM IN THE HABSBURG MONARCHY AND SLAVIC LINGUISTIC HERITAGE IN GERMAN IN AUSTRIA

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Abstract: Multilingualism on the current territory of Austria has existed for a long period of time. Roughly since the 6th and 7th centuries, Slavs have settled in Central Europe, including much of present-day Austria. The subsequent expansion of the Magyars, as well as the Bavarianisation of the area, separated the northern and southern Slavs. For the former Habsburg state, we must reckon with eleven main languages in addition to numerous smaller ones. Moreover, already the main languages represented several widely divergent languages: German; two Romance tongues, Italian and Romanian; a range of Slavic languages from all the three branches of that family — western, eastern, and southern; and Hungarian from the Finno-Ugric group. Regarding the multilingual setting in the Habsburg state and its repercussions to this day, this paper outlines the basic assumptions, the methodological toolkit as well as the main general findings of our research projects on language contact in this area which have been running since 2016 as part of the special research programme (SFB) “German in Austria. Variation – Contact – Perception”. We conclude with possible implications for further linguistic research in multilingual historical contexts and some links to contemporary phenomena.

Keywords: historical language contact, Slavic languages, German in Austria, theory, methodology, sociolinguistics, historical sociolinguistics, contact linguistics.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper¹ presents glimpses into my own and my work group’s current research on the linguistic situation in Slovakia’s neighbour to the west – Austria – with special consideration of the historical and contemporary influence of Slavic languages.

Austria is a relatively small, but linguistically extremely diverse country in Central Europe. This diversity is characterised by “internal” as well as “external multilingualism” (see Wandruszka 1979). The external multilingualism reflects the multilingual tradition in the Austro-Hungarian Empire as well as the linguistic

¹ Written version of the eponymous keynote lecture at the 18th Annual Meeting of the Slavic Linguistics Society – SLS-18 on August 25th, 2023, in the Moyzes Hall, Faculty of Arts of the Comenius University in Bratislava.

consequences of the migration movements in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. This co-existence of different languages and the resulting language contact concur with a pronounced internal multilingualism of German that is still present today. In the light of this linguistic diversity, Austria offers an ideal research laboratory for studies on language variation, contact and change.

In my paper, I will focus on the interplay between internal and external multilingualism and present selected results from the ongoing Special Research Programme “German in Austria. Variation – Contact – Perception” that are particularly interesting from a Slavic perspective such as contact-related explanations for case variation and preposition choice, or coinciding caused motion constructions. For this purpose, I will first briefly introduce the research framework in which we are currently working and then explain what we mean by “internal and external multilingualism” in Austria. The main part of my paper will be devoted to research results and selected case studies, and subsequently, I will conclude with a few words on possible implications for further linguistic research.

2. THE RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Our work is part of a greater enterprise, namely the Special Research Programme (SFB) “German in Austria. Variation – Contact – Perception” (FWF 60-G23). The currently approved funding period runs from January 1st, 2016, to June 30th, 2026. In other words, this Special Research Programme is funded for a total duration of ten and a half years by the Austrian Science Foundation (Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung | FWF). It is the first major sociolinguistic and variationist project in Austria and consists of five strongly intertwined task clusters. Three of them are devoted to the subject areas “Variation and Change of German in Austria” (Perspectives of Variationist Linguistics), “German and other Languages in Austria” (Perspectives of Language Contact) and “German in the Minds” (Language Attitudes and Perception). The remaining two task clusters are dedicated to the administration (“Coordination”) and the processing of the collected data (“Collaborative Online Research Platform”).² In my paper, I will present results mainly from task cluster C’s project part number 06 on “German and Slavic Languages in Austria: Aspects of language contact”.³

3. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL MULTILINGUALISM IN AUSTRIA

Internal and external multilingualism in Austria is a translation of Mario Wandruszka’s (1979) concept of “innere und äußere Mehrsprachigkeit”. It claims

² For a detailed description of the entire special research programme “German in Austria. Variation – Contact – Perception” in English, see Budin et al. (2019), in German, see Budin et al. (2018) and Lenz (2018).

³ For a summary of preliminary results from a contact linguistic perspective, see Newerkla (2022; 2023).

that multilingualism is not limited to speaking several languages, but also extends to the ability of speakers to master several varieties of these languages.

To give you an idea of what this can sound like in Austria, I refer to the transcript of a short conversation recorded as part of the data collection for the Special Research Programme “German in Austria. Variation – Contact – Perception”.⁴ It is a conversation of two 17-year-old students from the westernmost province of Austria – Vorarlberg. They perform a map task⁵ in which one speaker holds a map with a pre-drawn route – and the other has a similar map, but without the route drawn in, and of course he cannot see the first speaker’s map. The first speaker (S1) then must explain the route to the second speaker (S2). The part of the route they are talking about is marked with bold arrows on the illustration below.

S1: *denn gohsch diagonal nach links – zu dem Mā*

[‘Then (you) go diagonally to the left, to the man.’]

S2: *okay. Und – gangi an eam vorbei, oder?*

[‘Okay. And do I go past him, right?’]

S1: *ne, staneš ähm u sredini tamo*

[‘No, you stop, um, there in the middle.’]

S2: *dobro*

[‘Alright.’]

S1: *onda lijevo opet*

[‘Then left again.’]

S2: *dobro*

[‘Alright.’]

S1: *jedan centimeter tak*

[‘One centimetre or so.’]

S2: *okay*

[‘Okay.’]

S1: *onda na gore malo – äh – preko njega*

[‘Then a bit upwards, er, towards above him.’]

⁴ The same example was presented by Stephan Elspaß in the unpublished joint keynote lecture with Stefan Michael Newerkla entitled “Austria as a showcase of internal and external multilingualism. Old and new linguistic frontiers” at the 11th International Conference on Language Variation in Europe (ICLaVE11) on April 11th, 2022, at the University of Vienna, Department of German Studies (<https://iclave11.dioe.at/programme/plenaries/> [cit. 25-08-2024]).

⁵ Snatched from the website of IDS | Leibniz-Institut für deutsche Sprache, subpage Korpusstruktur “Deutsch heute”, section “Interview und Map Task” (<http://prowiki.ids-mannheim.de/bin/view/AADG/KorpusTeile> [cit. 25-08-2024]).

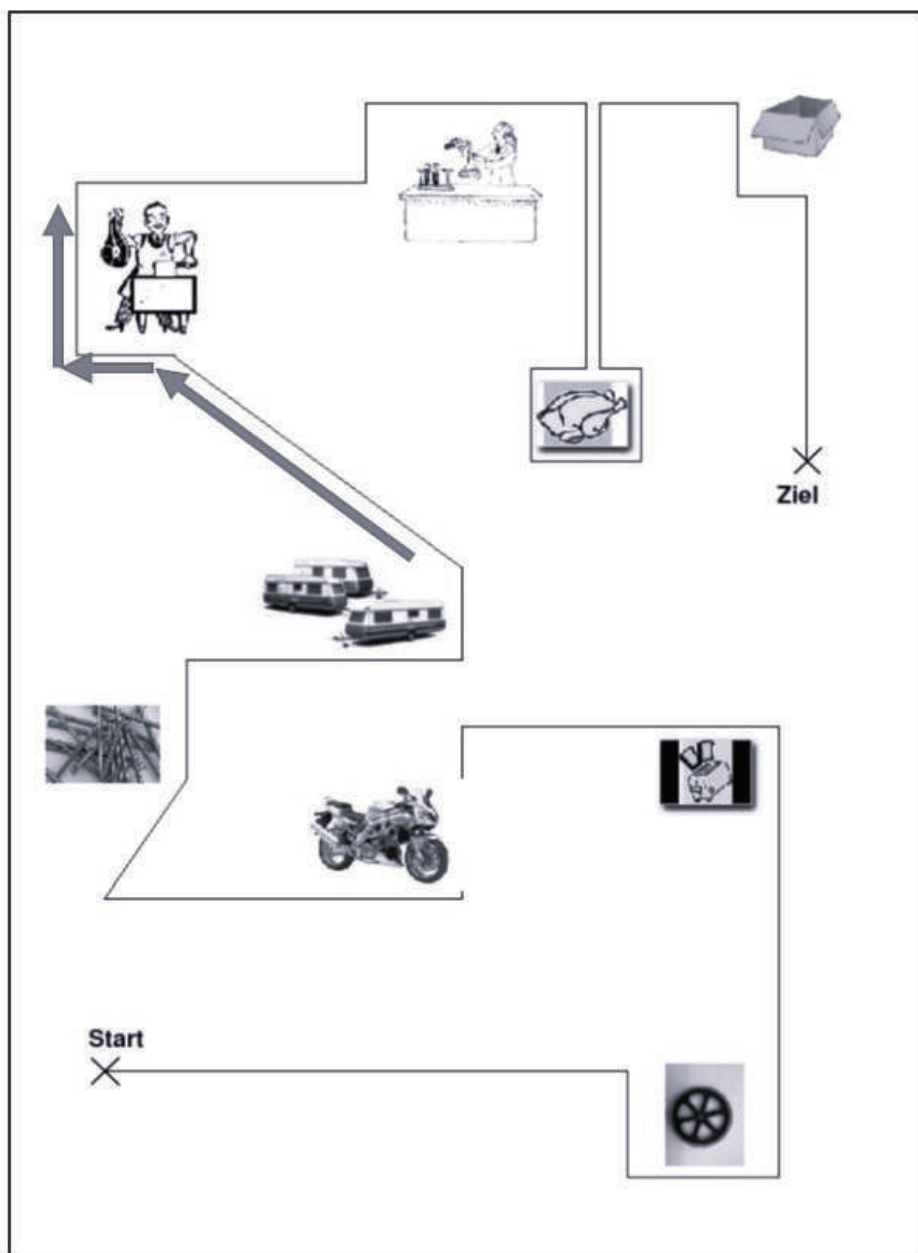


Illustration no. 1: Map task

At first, you may get the impression that both students are speakers of an Alemannic dialect. And they are. But in the third turn, the first speaker switches to an entirely different language, namely Serbian, which appears to be the L1 of the two speakers. So, in addition to a variety of Serbian they speak a dialect of German. And we can assume that they also master the variety of Standard German which is used at their school.

As for internal multilingualism in Austria, most Austrians speak at least one local or regional dialect, and this includes native speakers of such dialects as well as L2 speakers who grew up in Austria. Yet, the dialect landscape in Austria is linguistically extremely diverse. It encompasses Alemannic as well as Bavarian dialects that have existed since the early Middle Ages and, in some regions, have remained virtually unchanged over the centuries. The dialects are often not mutually intelligible. To put things into a bigger perspective, here's a dialect map of High German dialects in Austria.



Illustration no. 2: Dialect map of Austria

We can clearly see the east-west division, with Alemannic dialect regions in the far west and the much larger Bavarian dialect areas in the centre and the east of the country. The different shadings of darker grey in the west and lighter grey in the rest of the country signify further subdivisions, for instance, into the Central and South Bavarian dialect areas in the eastern part of Austria.

In addition to the geographic variation, we must account for the variation due to specific dialect/standard constellations in Austria. On the one hand, we have a diglossic language situation in the Alemannic regions in the west of Austria (similar to the neighbouring German-speaking parts of Switzerland). On the other hand, the

Bavarian dialect regions are characterised by what can be called “diaglossia” according to Peter Auer’s typology of dialect/standard constellations in Europe (see Auer 2005). This typology refers to a situation with “intermediate variants between standard and (base) dialect”.

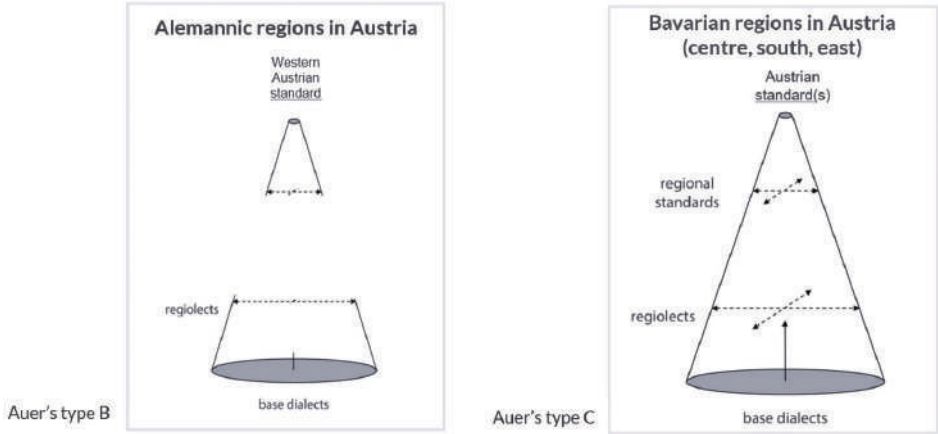


Illustration No. 3: Dialect/standard constellations in Austria

However, German in Austria does not only display a high degree of internal variation. We are also confronted with a high intensity of external multilingualism. This has historical reasons. Influences from other languages in Austria have existed for a long period of time. Roughly since the 6th and 7th centuries, Slavs have settled in Central Europe, including much of present-day Austria. The subsequent expansion of the Magyars as well as the Bavarianisation of the research area separated the northern and southern Slavs.

For the former Habsburg state, we must reckon with eleven main languages in addition to numerous smaller ones. Already the main languages represented several widely divergent languages: German; two Romance tongues, Italian and Romanian; a range of Slavic languages from all the three branches of that family — western, eastern, and southern; and Hungarian from the Finno-Ugric group. Moreover, the situation was such that in most of the Habsburg state’s Crown lands two, three and more languages were officially in use at the same time.

The multilingual situation has remained intact ever since. In present-day Austria, there are seven historical minority languages, the so-called languages of the six indigenous ethnic groups officially recognised by the Ethnic Groups Act: Burgenland Croatian, Slovene, Czech, Slovak, Hungarian and Romani plus the Austrian Sign Language (ASL). Furthermore, the 20th century brought about significant changes regarding the societal conditions for these and other minority

groups. A shift in the importance of certain groups can be observed: Whereas for example the strong influence of Czech speakers slackened, others – such as speakers of South-Slavic languages, Romanian, but also Hungarian and Slovak, Bulgarian and Italian gained in importance. Other groups, for example the speakers of Turkish and Polish, have remained of relatively stable relevance after a strong increase in the second half of the 20th century. In addition, the consequences of war have recently led to a significant increase in the number of people from Syria, Afghanistan, Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

Citizenship	01.01.2015	01.01.2022	01.04.2022
Foreign nationals together	1 146 078	1 586 709	1 642 026
Germany	170 475	216 731	218 347
Romania	73 374	138 408	140 454
Serbia	114 289	121 613	121 643
Turkey	115 433	117 625	117 944
Bosnia and Herzegovina	92 527	97 347	97 676
Croatia	66 475	95 297	96 759
Hungary	54 939	94 411	94 595
Syria	11 255	68 358	70 901
Poland	54 262	66 090	66 155
Ukraine	8 582	12 673	52 803
Slovakia	32 052	46 707	46 944
Afghanistan	16 779	45 120	45 394
Bulgaria	19 607	35 879	36 335
Italy	22 465	35 696	36 051
Russian Federation	30 032	33 926	34 392

source: STATISTIK AUSTRIA, statistics on population status.

Illustration No. 4: Top 15 foreign nationals in Austria

By far the largest minority groups to date are the migrants from former Yugoslavia (especially Serbia, Bosnia and Hercegovina and Croatia), Germany, Romania, Turkey, followed by migrants from Hungary, Syria and Poland. People from Slovakia are already in ninth place. At present, more than a quarter of the population has a migration background, which means that both parents were born abroad.⁶ What also needs to be mentioned in this context is the fact that the largest share of migrants can be found in Vienna. Here, half of all residents have a migration background.⁷ However, a similar development has already occurred several times in the history of the Austrian capital, most recently on the threshold from the 19th to the 20th century.

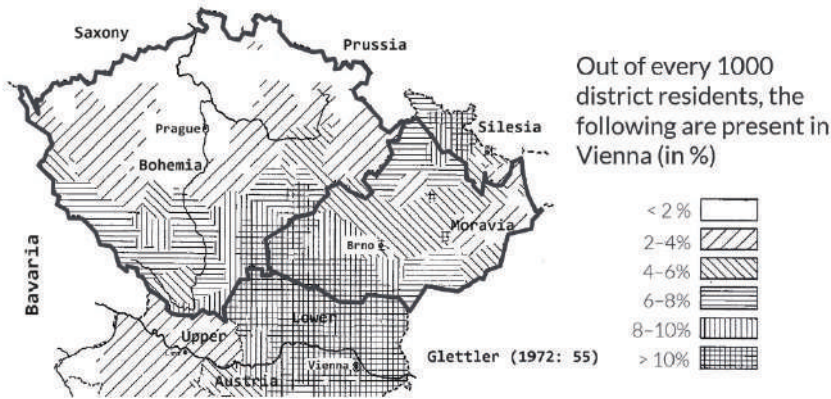


Illustration No. 5: Migration movement to Vienna

After all, the late Habsburg monarchy up to 1918 was shaped by massive socio-demographic changes, particularly in Bohemia and Moravia. This resulted in migration movements to local centres and especially to Vienna, the multilingual capital with then about two million inhabitants. These waves of migration sustainably

⁶ In 2022, the overall population in Austria comprised 8,900.800 people, the total population with migration background encompassed 2,351.800 people (26.5%), whereby 1,731.300 belonged to the 1st generation, 620.600 to the 2nd generation. In the meantime, due to migration the Austrian population has grown to 9,179.693 people with reporting date July 1st, 2024 (STATISTICS AUSTRIA, Population statistics. Compiled on 07 August 2024. –Preliminary results for the reporting date 01 July 2024, <https://www.statistik.at/en/statistics/population-and-society/population/population-stock/population-at-beginning-of-year/quarter> [cit. 25-08-2024]).

⁷ In 2022, the overall population in Vienna comprised 1,915.800 people, the total population with migration background encompassed 951.500 people (49.7%). In the meantime, due to migration the Viennese population has grown to 2,018.653 people with reporting date July 1st, 2024 (STATISTICS AUSTRIA, Population statistics. Compiled on 07 August 2024. –Preliminary results for the reporting date 01 July 2024, <https://www.statistik.at/en/statistics/population-and-society/population/population-stock/population-at-beginning-of-year/quarter> [cit. 25-08-2024]).

influenced the German varieties used in Vienna: German speaking immigrants brought with them language varieties and linguistic features that were shaped by the prolonged stable bilingualism in their places of origin. And speakers of Czech left their linguistic traces when shifting to German within a few years.⁸

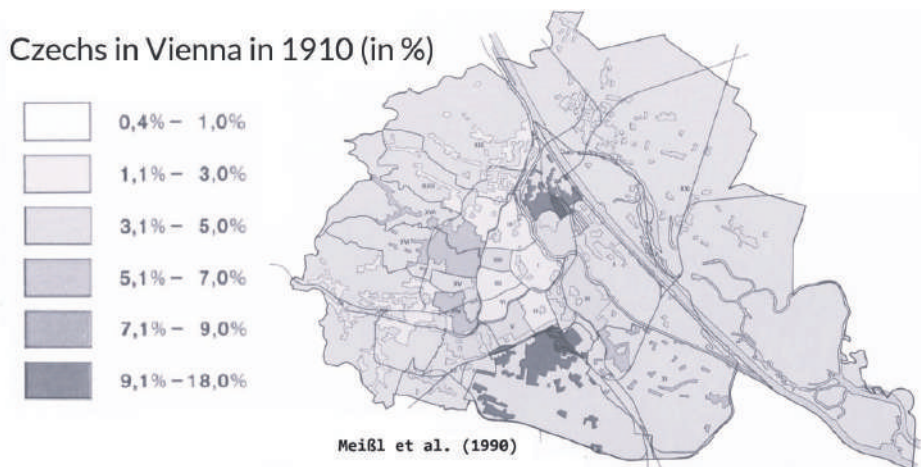


Illustration No. 6: Czechs in Vienna in 1910

It is important to keep in mind that individual and to some extent also societal German-Slavic bilingualism in Austria did not cease to exist after the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy in 1918. Nevertheless, the First Austrian Republic declared German its state language – a constitutional law that is still valid today in the same wording. This can be shown quite convincingly by Georg Wenker's questionnaires, which served as the basis for mapping spoken German dialect and involved surveying schoolmasters. These questionnaires not only contained Wenker's well-known sentences to be translated into the respective dialect, but also included sociolinguistic information to be given, such as whether other languages were spoken in the classroom. As can be seen from the data for Lower Austria, even this former Crown land and later supposedly monolingual federal state has always been far from being monolingual.⁹

4. OLD AND NEW LINGUISTIC FRONTIERS – SELECTED CASE STUDIES

Within the framework of our Special Research Programme's task cluster C on language contact, we have analysed several consequences of the contact situation with Slavic languages for the different linguistic levels of German in Austria from

⁸ For further details see e.g. Kim (2021) and Newerkla (2013).

⁹ Cf. for example Kim (2019).

the last decades of the Habsburg Empire up to the second half of the 20th century. Let us therefore shift now to old and new linguistic frontiers and some selected examples for Slavic influence on German in Austria.

As already mentioned, Vienna and its surroundings have been multilingual not only due to migration movements. A varying degree of German-Slavic bi- and multilingualism has been common in the rural areas east and north-east to Vienna for centuries. Therefore, we can conceive of the whole region as a micro-area of language contact and linguistic convergence within a larger Central European area (Newerkla 2007, 2011, 2020).

To date, a large amount of literature on Slavic-German language contact phenomena in the area has been published. Most studies focus on shared vocabulary. It developed due to the common terminology within the state structure or became manifest as colloquialisms of the Habsburg state's multilingual officials. They shaped the Austrian varieties of German in a typical way, and this led to differences from other varieties of German.

Let us give just a few examples for this phenomenon and at the same time the lexical convergence between the languages of the Habsburg state. On the one hand, there are lexemes still used in the Austrian Standard of German, e.g. *Evidenz* 'public records' (for otherwise "amtliches Register") like in Czech (Cz) *evidence*, Hungarian (Hu) *evidencia*, Slovak (Sk) *evidencia*, Polish (Pl) *ewidencja* or Slovene (Sn) *evidence*; *Malter* 'mortar' (for otherwise "Mörtel") like in Cz *malta*, Hu *malter*, Sk *malta*, Pl *malta*, Sn *malta*; *Matura* 'school-leaving certificate' (for otherwise "Abitur") like in Cz *maturita*, Hu *matura*, Sk *matúra* or *maturita*, Pl *matura*, Sn *matura*; *sekkieren* 'to pester' (for otherwise "belästigen, schikanieren") like in Cz *sekyřovat*, Hu *székal*, Sk *sekiřovat*, Pl *sekować*, Sn *sekirati*. On the other hand, there are a lot of shared colloquialisms, e.g. *Fauteuil* 'armchair' (for otherwise "Polstersessel") like in Cz *fotel*, Hu *fotel*, Sk *fotel*, Pl *fotel*, Sn *fofeltelj*; *fesch* 'dashing, chic' (for otherwise "schick") like in Cz *feš(ný)*, Hu *fess*, Sk *feš(ný)*, Pl in Silesia *feszny*, Sn *feš*; *Garçonnrière* 'one-room flat' (for otherwise "Einzimmerwohnung") like in Cz *garsoniéra*, Hu *garzonlakás*, Sk *garsoniéra*, Pl *garsoniera*, Sn *garsonjera*; *Gat(j)e(hosen)* 'long johns' (for otherwise "lange Unterhose") like in Cz *gatě* or *katě*, Hu *gatyá*, Sk *gate*, Pl *gacie*, Sn *gate*. Especially well-known are lexemes related to food, e.g. *Biskotte* 'ladyfinger biscuit' (for otherwise "Löffelbiskuit") like in Cz *piškot(a)*, Hu *piskóta*, Sk *piškóta*, Pl *biszkopt*, Sn *piškot*; *Buchtel* 'yeast roll' (for otherwise "Dampfnudel, Rohrnudel") like in Cz *buchta*, Hu *bukta*, Sk *buchta*, Pl *buchta*, Sn *buhtelj*; *Ribisel* 'currants' (for otherwise "Johannisbeere") like in Cz *rybíz*, Hu *ribiszke*, Sk *ribežle*, Pl in Silesia *rybi-z/ž-la*, Sn *ribezelj*; *Schnittling* 'chives' (for otherwise "Schnittlauch") like in Cz *šnytlik* or *šnytlink*, Hu *snidling*, Sk *šnitlink* or *šnitling*, Pl in Silesia *sznytloch*, Sn *šnitlink*.¹⁰

¹⁰ For further examples see Newerkla (2017).

Part of this shared vocabulary is also formed by Slavic loanwords typical of German in Austria. This means that it includes some Austrianisms in the narrow sense. Such lemmas spread from eastern and south-eastern Austria towards the west and comprise both “relic” words and loanwords from the 18th and 19th centuries. Such nationwide Austrianisms are for example *Jause* ‘snack’ (for otherwise “Brotzeit”) from Sn *južina*, or *Feschak* ‘dashing guy’ (for otherwise “Schönling, gut aussehender Mann, gut gekleideter Mann”) as in Cz *fešák*. A lemma confined to the eastern part of Austria is for example *Kukuruz* ‘corn’ (for otherwise “Mais”) as in Serbian *kukuruz*.

As I have said before, much research has already been done on loan words and shared vocabulary. However, comparably minimal systematic and exhaustive linguistic research has been conducted on the grammatical influences and contact phenomena between the Slavic languages (including their varieties) and the Austrian varieties of German. Therefore, within the contact cluster of our SFB German in Austria, we have tried to identify historical and current contact-induced Slavic structural influences on the varieties of German in Austria.

Apart from myself as the project part leader, the current project team consists of post-doc Agnes Kim, financed by the Austrian Science Fund (Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung | FWF), and PhD-student Maria Schinko, financed by own funds from the Rectorate of Vienna University. Another former post-doc was Katharina Prochazka, who was snatched away from basic research by financially more attractive job offers in the private sector. A highlight from her research period were certainly her joint publications with Gero Vogl on language shift in Carinthia in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* | *PNAS* (Prochazka – Vogl 2017)¹¹ and *Glottology* (Prochazka – Vogl 2018). They showed that language shift could be described as a diffusion process in accordance with the physical theory of diffusion: as spread of the dominant language and resulting retreat of the minority language. In their research, they combined a model for language dynamics based on the principles of cellular automata and agent-based modelling with detailed empirical data about language use to describe the dynamics of language shift and thereby identify the driving factors of this specific kind of diffusion. Census data as well as other data about parish and school language were used for testing the model. This made it possible to identify specific factors influencing language shift and to quantify their influence.

In Carinthia, interaction with people who spoke the same language was identified as the most important factor for language maintenance. This includes interaction with people in both the same and surrounding villages. Bilingual schools and parish language did not seem to have a noticeable impact. In fact, bilingual, or

¹¹ The article also received favourable comments by Anne Kandler and James Steele in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* (*PNAS*) (2017).

so-called “utraquist” schools had even a slightly negative impact on the maintenance of Slovenian.

Another highlight of the whole team was the poster exhibition on historical multilingualism in Austria together with post-doc Katharina Tyran from Vienna University’s Department of Slavonic Studies. This exhibition is still available online: <https://dioe.at/hist-mehrsprachigkeit> [cit. 25-08-2024].

As far as the Special Research Programme’s task cluster C is concerned, the main goal of project part 06 on perspectives of German-Slavic language contact has always been to give a comprehensive overview and detailed empirical analysis of contact-induced Slavic influences on the varieties of German in Austria over time. To answer the central research question “To what extent and how has German in Austria been and is still being influenced by contact with Slavic languages?”, we facilitate digital corpus data, such as survey data from other projects parts, corpora of present-day German and historical varieties as well as corpora of Czech, Slovak and other Slavic languages, we also utilise qualitative data from linguistic publications such as dictionaries, specialised publications on language contact, linguistic atlases, audio recordings, etc.

So far, we have described a broad range of different possibly contact-induced phenomena of German in Austria on all linguistic levels. For instance, from the field of morphology the borrowing of derivational affixes, or the conjugation with postponed pronouns, from morphosyntax phenomena of congruence and analytical verbal forms, from the field of syntax the use of connectors, the drop of pronouns or verbs, reflexive constructions, or the choice of prepositions, etc.

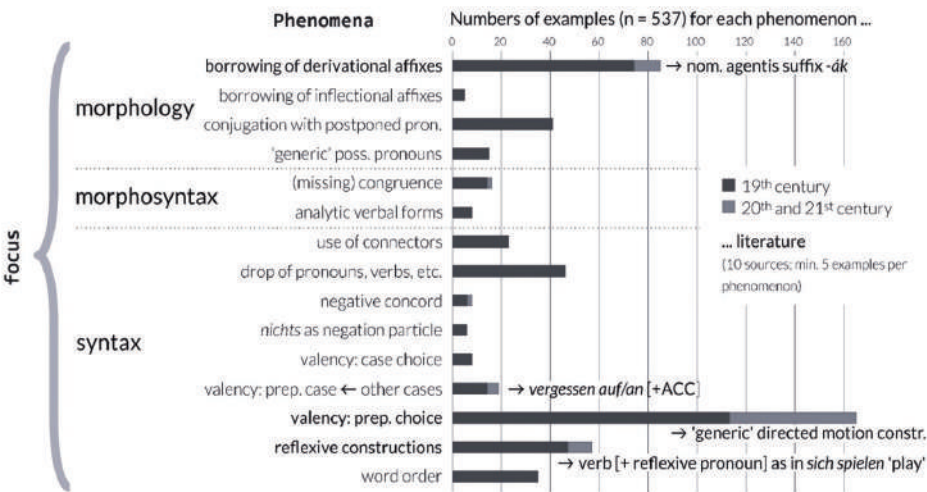


Illustration No. 7: Overview of the phenomena investigated

We analysed each phenomenon according to three groups of criteria: (a) language internal criteria, (b) language external or sociolinguistic criteria, and (c) metalinguistic criteria. Internal criteria (a) took both variationist and contrastive aspects into account. Regarding sociolinguistic criteria (b), we generally reconstructed the relevant historical language contact scenarios. Metalinguistic criteria (c) were applied to adequately reflect the nature of the primary data sources for the corpus.

Our work group assessed the plausibility of each phenomenon's contact explanation and came up with the following threefold results. In some instances, we could confirm the traceability of the contact explanation, as is the case for example in the 'generic' directed motion construction *geben* 'give' as a PUT-verb or the construction *vergessen auf* 'forget' [+acc.]. We will exemplify both these types below.

In other instances, we revealed false beliefs with respect to contact phenomena based on folk etymologies or misinterpretations passed on by generations of experts and non-experts, as is the case with the so-called Viennese e-confusion (in German "Wiener e-Verwirrung"). For this phenomenon, Agnes Kim (2021) could provide evidence for rejecting the claim that the merger of /e/ and /ɛ/ in Viennese into a single phoneme /ɛ/ was induced by contact with Czech. Moreover, the critical discourse analysis of linguistic and popular literature on Slavic influences on German in Austria over time uncovered – not surprisingly – a clear tendency to reproduce language myths.

Ultimately, the detailed results of our research will all be freely accessible in the collaborative online research platform on German in Austria, which is an integral part of the digital research infrastructure of our special research programme.

In the following lines I will present two case studies for investigated contact-related phenomena to provide you with a better impression of our research and its results. Specifically, I will talk about the two afore-mentioned phenomena, for which we could confirm the traceability of the contact explanation.

The first case study features *geben* 'give' as a PUT-verb (cf. Lenz et al. 2020). Normally, in Standard German, we use different verbs to describe situations such as putting the book into a bag, on a shelf, or onto a table, e.g. in German *stecken*, *stellen*, *legen*. Whereas in colloquial Austrian German, the universal PUT-verb is usually *tun* 'do', we can find the use of *geben* 'give' as a PUT-verb in eastern Austrian dialects of German, especially in Vienna and its agglomeration area. We can conclude that – on the one hand – from comprehensive historical data of German varieties such as from Georg Wenker's questionnaires. On the other hand, we can infer this from questionnaires of the project Syntax of contemporary Bavarian | SynBai (cf. Lenz et al. 2015).

Subsequently, we looked for evidence for the central hypothesis that this phenomenon traces back to language contact with Czech as already suggested by various scholars in the 19th century, for example also August Schleicher (1851, p. 41)

who claimed that *geben* ‘give’ for German *setzen, legen, stellen, stecken* ‘put’, etc. behaves as in Czech, e.g. Austrian German *gib es auf den Tisch, in die Tasche* = Cz *dej to na stůl, do kapsy*.

By making use of corpora of Slavic languages, we were able to confirm this assumption to a reliable degree of certainty. We find it also supported by its high frequency in both formal and informal Czech written texts and by the fact that Czech *dát* ‘give’ in PUT-function has been accounted for since the Old Czech period. Examples from this time illustrate that Old Czech *dáti* ‘give’ was already used in various PUT-contexts at that time, e.g. in the context of ‘cause to sit’; or in the context of ‘cause to lie’. Such constructions cannot be found in Church Slavonic. However, the equivalent of Old Czech *dáti* ‘give’ in Latin *dāre* ‘give’, seems to have had PUT-semantics, too. A diachronic analysis of the development of different semantics and functions of equivalents of ‘give’ in Central European languages and their varieties would therefore also have to consider a possible influence of Medieval Latin. In any case, our data analyses show that *geben* ‘give’ as a PUT-verb has been and is still areally distributed along and spreading from the contact area of Czech and Eastern Austrian varieties of German. And it is also documented for the neighbouring, formerly German-speaking areas in Czechia and Slovakia.

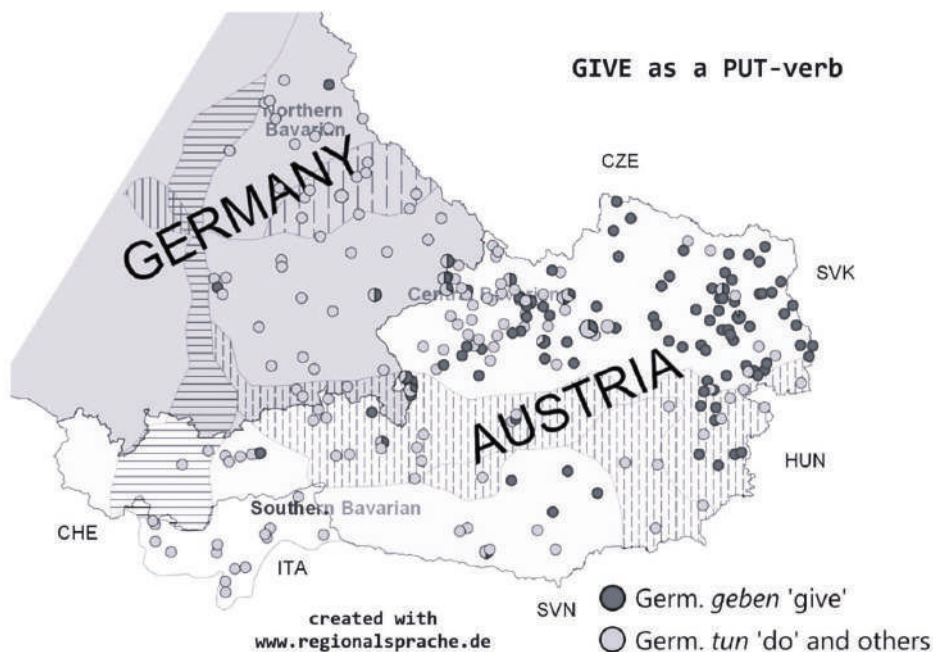


Illustration No. 8: GIVE as a PUT-verb

For details of our research and its results, consult the joint article by Alexandra Lenz, Fabian Fleißner, Agnes Kim, and Stefan Michael Newerkla in the *Journal of Linguistic Geography* (Lenz et al. 2020).

The second case study is on preposition choice (Kim et al. 2020). Prepositional phrases are among the most cited alleged Slavic contact phenomena for German in Austria. However, we also realized the lack of a systematic overview or investigation into these phenomena. Therefore, we have had to assess each case individually. Again, various scholars already from the 19th century suggested language contact phenomena in parallel constructions, for example Hugo Schuchardt (1884, p. 115) who claimed that in hardly any other domain, the foreigner would make more mistakes than in the domain of prepositions, and it would be this domain the native speakers tended to get infected easily, e.g. *auf* ‘on’ would be the favourite preposition of the German speaking Slavs. And he was right. Several examples of parallel prepositional phrases in colloquial Austrian or Viennese German and Czech most probably result from the language shift from Czech to German or at least have been supported by it, e.g. *auf Urlaub fahren* (for otherwise “in Urlaub fahren”) as in Cz *jet na dovolenou* ‘go on holiday’, *auf zwei Tage* (for otherwise “für zwei Tage”) as in Cz *na dva dny* ‘for two days’, *auf jemanden/etwas denken* (for otherwise “an jemanden/etwas denken”) as in Cz *myslet na někoho/něco* ‘think of sb./sthg.’, *Vorbereitungen auf etwas* (for otherwise “Vorbereitungen für/zu etwas”) as in Cz *přípravy na něco* ‘preparations for sthg.’, *in der Nacht auf* (for otherwise “in der Nacht zu”) as in Cz *v noci na* ‘in the night to’, or *sich auf jemanden/etwas erinnern* (for otherwise “jemanden/etwas erinnern”) as in Cz *vzpomenout si na někoho/něco* ‘remember sb./sthg.’.

For this paper, we are going to look in detail at the areal variation of the German verb *vergessen* ‘to forget’ in spoken and written standard registers. While the German standard language exclusively recognises constructions with *vergessen* and a direct argument in accusative, Austrian Standard German accepts constructions with a prepositional argument including the preposition *auf* ‘on’, too. Already since the 19th century scholars have pointed out a similar grammatical variation in case government for the Czech equivalent *zapomínat/zapomenout* ‘to forget’, considering the situation in Austrian German to reflect Czech influence.

Our research questions in this context are: Is the construction *vergessen* [*auf* + acc.] restricted to German in Austria? Do the patterns of case variation of the equivalents of ‘to forget’ correspond in Czech and Austrian varieties of German? And is a contact explanation possible and plausible?

In Austria, we are confronted with a high degree of variation in case government. Apart from examples with a direct argument in accusative, we find a lot of constructions with a prepositional argument including the preposition *auf*. During the second half of the 19th century, we even find constructions with a prepositional argument including the preposition *an*. But is the construction *vergessen* [*auf* + acc.] restricted to German in Austria? As we can see from the Word Atlas of German

Colloquial Languages (Eichhoff 1993, Vol. 3, p. 59), we must answer this question in the affirmative. The construction *vergessen* [*auf* + acc.] is significantly more frequent and almost solely restricted to German varieties in Austria.

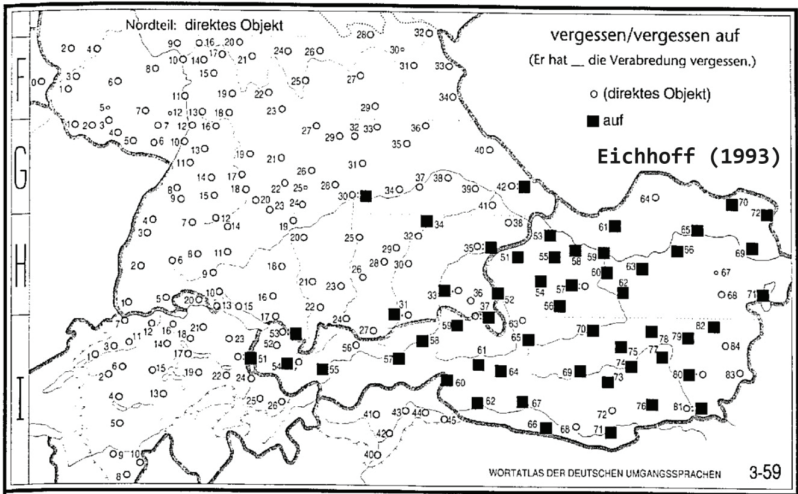


Illustration No. 9: Map 3-59 from the Word Atlas of German Colloquial Languages

This fact is impressively confirmed for the written standard by the Variant Grammar of German (*Variantengrammatik* 2018), as you can see under the keyword *vergessen* ‘to forget’ (<http://mediawiki.ids-mannheim.de/VarGra/index.php/Vergessen> [cit. 25-08-2024]).

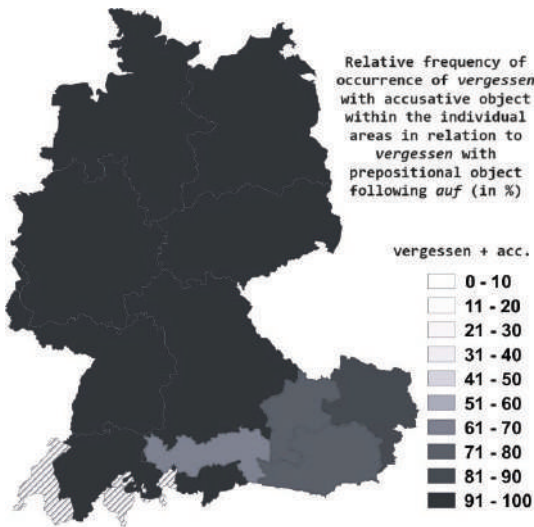


Illustration No. 10: *vergessen* in the Variant Grammar of German

Accordingly, by using contemporary German corpora composed of journalistic texts from Austria, Germany, Switzerland and Liechtenstein, we can also demonstrate that the construction with the preposition *auf* ‘on’ occurs significantly more frequently in texts from Austria.

Deutsches Referenzkorpus DeReKo – German Reference Corpus | Newspapers¹²
 Newspapers and Magazines • 2010–2015 • Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Liechtenstein
 size: 715.338.107 tokens • query: *vergessen auf* + acc. • hits: 2164

hits	relative frequency	texts	country
1539	6.323 per million words	1506	Austria
363	1.566 per million words	340	Germany
44	1.536 per million words	42	Liechtenstein
218	1.028 per million words	205	Switzerland

Moreover, we contrastively determined the relations between the two variants of case government and the meaning of the verb in particular sentences in Czech and German in Austria. The analysis of corpora of contemporary journalistic texts from Austria and the Czech Republic shows that the constructions with the prepositional object occur considerably more often with the same meaning of the verb in both languages. Of course, we also investigated into the historical development of the constructions in both languages making use of the DIAKORP corpus of historical Czech, the Old-Czech text bank, the Lexical Database of Humanistic and Baroque Czech, the Oxford GerManC Corpus, the Mannheim Corpus of Historical Newspapers and Periodicals, the Austrian Baroque Corpus AbaC:us, and the Austrian ANNO corpus of Historical Newspapers and Journals.

Having done so, we can determine whether the situation in German in Austria may be attributed to historical language contact. By considering the regional distribution of the constructions, the variation pattern in German and Czech in contrast and its diachronic development, we can eventually conclude that the contact explanation is plausible. For details of this research and its results, consult the joint article by Agnes Kim, Sebastian Scharf and Ivan Šimko in the openly accessible anthology *Areal Convergence in Eastern Central European Languages and Beyond* (Kim et al. 2020).

As already mentioned, task cluster C’s project part 06 of our Special Research Programme on German in Austria has so far focused on certain prepositional arguments, e.g. with the verb *vergessen*. Adverbials do not play a big role, because they are hardly found amongst the alleged contact phenomena. There are only a few temporal ones that require closer research. Many phenomena can, however, be attributed to local or directional arguments. By facilitating field data of other project parts, we found evidence for the over-representation of *auf* in Austrian variants of German and hints at a generic motion construction. For this purpose, we analysed

¹² See <https://www.ids-mannheim.de/digspra/kl/projekte/korpora/> [cit. 25-08-2024].

conversations among friends from three locations in the Bavarian speaking area of Austria by utilising data from the joint corpus of project part 03 and project part 08. We complemented them with a corpus of sound recordings of adult- and children-directed speech in Vienna. In only 184 out of more than 4,700 prepositional phrases another preposition was chosen than common in the German standard. There are just a few local or directional arguments in which *auf* ‘on’ was chosen over any other preposition. This pattern occurs in three locations from the Central Bavarian and the transition area. In these varieties, *auf* is slightly over-represented in comparison to Standard German. In South Bavarian dialects, however, another pattern can be observed, namely preposition (and article) drop. Our results show that preposition drop is frequent throughout the South Bavarian area, with its core region in Carinthia. For details of this research and its results, consult the joint article by Agnes Kim and Katharina Korecky-Kröll in the online journal *Open Linguistics* (Kim – Korecky-Kröll 2021).

5. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have tried to show that it is precisely the cross-linguistic comparison of historical linguistic research with synchronic linguistic research which represents an added value that has not been fully exploited yet in variationist and contact linguistics, and this despite its potential to provide a deeper understanding of ongoing linguistic processes in complex multilingual societies. By analysing contemporary language use against its historical background, we can for example shed light on how, in the context of the other languages, a certain variety was and is used and valorised as an instrument of social interaction and as a reference point for cultural construction.

In the Slavic-German context, this is especially rewarding in view of the situation in Austria, which is a showcase of internal and external multilingualism – in the past as well as in the present. There are several reasons for that.

First, present-day Austria offers a multitude of varieties of German that co-exist and have co-existed with a multitude of varieties of other – mostly Slavic – languages, including heritage as well as migrant languages.

Second, there is a range of linguistic features that varieties of German in Austria share with non-German – mostly Slavic – languages in Austria and in the neighbouring countries, such as individual lexical items, GIVE as PUT verb constructions and corresponding preposition choice. These shared features have come into being within traditional contiguous dialect areas as the result of centuries-old and intensive contact with non-German languages, especially in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and particularly in the metropolitan centre of Vienna.

And finally, the specific dialect/standard constellations in Austria are the perfect breeding ground for areal variation in German – not only on the linguistic surface, but also regarding the underlying selection criteria for grammatical constructions in language contact situations with Slavic varieties, for example with regard to preposition choice.

We hope that international research on historical multilingualism will not only profit from such findings and results, but will allow for the identification of comparable, distinct and universally applicable aspects of language contact in the areas under investigation. Thus, we can unveil the way different ethnic groups experience the use of a certain variety – mediated through the multiple linguistic-cultural practices – in their everyday life.

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