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# The Research Project (SFB) ‘German in Austria’. Variation – Contact – Perception

**Abstract:** The paper presents the Special Research Programme ‘German in Austria. Variation – Contact – Perception’. It is not only the first large-scale linguistic research project in Austria, but probably unique with respect to the study of the linguistic situation of an entire country from a variationist-linguistic, a contact-linguistic and a perceptual-attitudinal perspective. Apart from outlining the motivations and goals of the project as a whole, the paper will present the research plans of the entire project as well as of its main task clusters, which are dedicated to different aspects of variation, contact and perception.

## 1 Introduction

The present contribution seeks to outline the importance, potentials and challenges of modern sociolinguistic research on the German language in Austria. It does so by portraying the national flagship project ‘German in Austria. Variation – Contact – Perception’.<sup>1</sup> In the following, the project will be referred to as ‘SFB’ (*Spezialforschungsbereich* ‘special research programme’). The SFB addresses major topics in connection with the present-day language situation in Austria from a variationist-linguistic, contact-linguistic and perceptual-attitudinal perspective. By treating the (socio)linguistic situation in Austria as a large-scale ‘laboratory study’, general theoretical assumptions as well as methods on language variation and change, language contact and language attitudes and perception are tested.

Section 2 will explicate why this project is undertaken and what its aims are. After an overview of the entire project, section 3 will present how the major research areas of the project, language variation, contact, perceptions and attitudes, are addressed in the task clusters and individual project parts. Finally, section 4 will focus on the added value of such a collaborative research project.

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1 It is supported as a Special Research Programme (SFB F060) by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF). The first funding period is from 2016 to 2019. Cf. the project homepage: [www.dioe.at](http://www.dioe.at).

## 2 A research project on ‘German in Austria’ – why and what for

In the present section, the theoretical background, the motivations and the major goals of the project ‘German in Austria’ will be explained in detail.

### 2.1 Research background

Although a number of research projects on German language variation are currently being carried out in the German-speaking countries, the overall situation and the development of contemporary varieties of German in Austria, particularly with respect to contact-induced changes, still constitute a largely underexplored and in some respects even entirely *unexplored* research area.

As for traditional local base dialects, constituting the historical and conceptual base of the dialect/standard cone model (cf. Chambers/Trudgill 1998: 10 f.; Auer 2005), there are numerous dialectological studies, particularly studies in the neogrammarian or philological tradition, on individual localities or small regions based on descriptive and primarily phonetic or phonological analyses (e.g. Schatz 1897; Lessiak 1903; Weitzenböck 1942). Even large-scale dialect atlas projects, the dialect atlases of Upper Austria (‘SAO’, 1998–), Tyrol (‘TA’, 1965–1971) and Vorarlberg (‘VALTS’, 1985–2006), however, have as yet only covered selected areas of the Austrian dialect landscape. Predominantly, they are limited to phonetic and lexical phenomena, using different methodologies, which are sometimes difficult to compare. In the field of modern dialectology, there have to date only been a few locally restricted or individual studies on rather few phenomena and aspects (e.g. Scheutz 1985; Scheuringer 1990). At the other end of the dialect-standard axis, the most prevalent topic in the paradigm of variationist linguistics is the field of ‘pluricentricity research’, which mainly focuses on lexical phenomena in the standard language.<sup>2</sup> In addition, some studies concentrate on (socio)phonetics, with a focus on vocalic features.<sup>3</sup> By and large, neither have the present situation and changes of the dialects in Austria been investigated comprehensively, nor has there been a satisfactory answer to the question what exactly constitutes an Austrian standard variety of German (if there is one at all), with respect to both its defining differences from its neighbouring standard varieties (on the ‘areal-

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2 With a particular focus on Austria cf. Muhr/Schrodt/Wiesinger (1995), Scheuringer (1996), Pfrehm (2007), Ebner (2009), Glauningner (2013). Cf. also approaches using discourse analysis, e.g. Wodak/de Cillia/Reisigl (2009).

3 Cf. e.g. Moosmüller/Dressler (1992), Moosmüller (2007) and Moosmüller/Scheutz (2013). Wiesinger (2014) is a collection of articles by the author on pronunciation, lexis and other aspect of ‘German in Austria’.

horizontal' level) and from nonstandard varieties in Austria (on the 'socio-vertical' level). While the SFB can draw on the above mentioned (yet somewhat incomplete) foundations in the field of dialectological and standard language focused research, other 'intermediate' varieties in the diaglossic repertoire (cf. Bellmann 1997) constitute an even larger research desideratum.<sup>4</sup> Ultimately, it can be assumed that the 'linguistic repertoire' (cf. Bell 2007) or 'spectrum of linguistic possibilities' (*sprachlicher Möglichkeitsraum*, Macha 1991) of many Austrian speakers includes such 'intermediate' varieties to a significant degree.

A similarly under-explored field of study in Austria is contact linguistics in its broadest sense, i.e. research which goes beyond a mere comparison of contact between language systems. What is lacking, in particular, is research on the interplay of the acquisition of German as a second language (L2), multilingualism and dialect contact. One of the rare examples of a comprehensive study of the contact between German and the languages of regional minorities is Rindler Schjerve/Nelde (2003). However, a detailed overview of e. g. contact-induced Slavic influences on the varieties of German in Austria through time is still missing, although there are many popular descriptions of these phenomena comprising often unverified information and just handing down language myths. With regard to German as L2, research to date has mainly focused on the acquisition of 'the' standard language, on the role of first languages and, partly, their varieties (cf. Brizić 2013). A comprehensive description of the diversity of language contact, its conditions and implications for Austria is lacking, however. Further desiderata can be identified with respect to research on language perceptions and attitudes.<sup>5</sup> Earlier studies on German in Austria – and mostly *from* Austria – were limited to specific regions in Austria and/or to more general perceptual-attitudinal aspects, often only based on written questionnaires.<sup>6</sup>

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- 4 For the content, terminology and empirical evidence of 'intermediate varieties', including 'regiolects' and 'urban vernaculars', see also Auer/Hinskens/Kerswill (2005), Elspaß (2007), Lenz (2003, 2010a), Schmidt (2010), Dittmar (2004) as well as Berruto (2010). Early analyses of 'vertical-social' variety structures in Austria (with a focus on Vienna and other cities) are Moosmüller (1987, 1991), with a focus on more rural areas in Eastern Austria Scheutz (1985), Scheuringer (1990) and Unger (2014). For an overview cf. Lenz (in press).
  - 5 For an overview on perceptual and attitudinal linguistics cf. Anders et al. (2010), Auer (2012), Preston (1999), Niedzielski/Preston (2000), Lenz (2010b), Purschke (2011); with a view on Austria cf. Soukup (2009), Koppensteiner/Lenz (2017).
  - 6 Cf. e.g. Steinegger (1998), Kaiser (2006), Pfrehm (2007), Bellamy (2012).

A particular challenge for variationist-linguistic, contact-linguistic and perceptual-attitudinal studies on German in Austria arises from the complex multilingual (with respect to internal as well as external multilingualism) and multiethnic communicative settings in present-day Austria. They call for comprehensive empirical research on linguistic structures, the past and present of language contacts as well as on perceptions to and attitudes towards the different languages and varieties in Austria – and on combined efforts to conduct such a ‘laboratory study’ on language and communication in this country.

## 2.2 Motivation and major goals

The research desiderata outlined above as well as the research potential which the case of ‘German in Austria’ entails for the paradigms of variationist linguistics, contact linguistics and the research on language perception and language attitudes has encouraged the authors to address their research questions in a large-scale research project. Its scope and topics encompass the entire spectrum of variation and varieties of German in Austria, bringing together expertise from the above mentioned research fields as well as computer linguistics, corpus linguistics and text technology.

The SFB has two main long-term goals. Firstly, it conducts the first comprehensive, interdisciplinary and multidimensional linguistic research project on the varieties of German in Austria, their contact with each other and their contact with some of its non-German heritage languages<sup>7</sup> in Austria. The SFB benefits from an interdisciplinary collaboration between members of the research team, who specialise in different linguistic sub-disciplines such as variationist linguistics, sociolinguistics, dialectology, historical linguistics, research on language contact, language acquisition, multilingualism and German as L2, research on language attitudes and perception, corpus linguistics, computational linguistics, language technology. Secondly, the SFB develops a digital research platform on German in Austria, drawing on state-of-the-art methods used in the fields of text technology and corpus linguistics. The data on this platform are annotated and made available not only to members of the SFB team, but eventually to the entire research community and – to a certain extent – also to language learners and teachers and other potentially interested members of the wider public. In short, the data on the research platform will be made accessible to everyone who is interested in both general and more specific aspects of German in Austria: how it is used, how it changes, what Austrians think of it, and what impact all this has on speaker identi-

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7 On the notion of ‘heritage language’ cf. Fishman (2001) and Polinsky/Kagan (2007).

ties, language culture(s) and language policies, ranging from national language politics on a macro-level to particular or even detailed issues on the meso- and the micro-level of regional and/or local school policies. The SFB data include not only digitised questionnaires, sound recordings, transcripts, language maps, mental maps and other formats, but are supplemented with relevant metadata, including various annotation and classification levels. The research platform is set up and hosted at the digital humanities data hub of the Centre for Translation Studies at the University of Vienna in the context of the ‘Austrian Centre for Digital Humanities’ (ACDH). The data will be permanently available beyond the duration of the research project.

### 3 Major research areas of the project: language variation, contact, perceptions and attitudes

This section will present the three major research areas of the project. It will start with a synopsis of the task clusters and individual project parts.

#### 3.1 The research plan (stage I) – overview

In order to achieve these goals, the work schedule is divided into two four-year stages, and the corresponding work programme is grouped into five task clusters (cluster A to E). The research programme of the first project stage (stage I: years 1–4) encompasses a total of nine project parts (cf. Fig. 1).

Figure 1: Task Clusters and Project Parts of the SFB-project ‘German in Austria’

Project Part		Principal Investigator
PP01	<b>Task Cluster A: Coordination</b>	Alexandra N. Lenz (Vienna)
	<b>Task Cluster B: Variation and change of German in Austria – Perspectives of variationist linguistics</b>	
PP02	Variation and change of dialect varieties in Austria (in real and apparent time)	Stephan Elspaß (Salzburg)
PP03	Between dialects and standard varieties: Speech repertoires and varietal spectra	Alexandra N. Lenz (Vienna)

<b>Project Part</b>		<b>Principal Investigator</b>
PP04	Vienna and Graz – Cities and their influential force	Arne Ziegler (Graz)
	<b>Task Cluster C: German and other languages in Austria – Perspectives of language contact</b>	
PP05	German in the context of the other languages in the Habsburg State and the Second Austrian Republic	Stefan Michael Newerkla (Vienna)
PP06	German and the Slavic languages in Austria: Aspects of language contact	Stefan Michael Newerkla (Vienna)
	<b>Task Cluster D: 'German in the minds' – Language attitudes and perception</b>	
PP08	Standard varieties from the perspective of perceptual variationist linguistics	Alexandra N. Lenz (Vienna)
PP10	Perceptions of and attitudes towards varieties and languages at Austrian schools	Stephan Elspaß (Salzburg)
PP11	Task Cluster E: Collaborative online research platform 'German in Austria'	Gerhard Budin (Vienna)

### 3.2 Language variation

While language variation is a central research area and topic of the entire SFB, task cluster B, 'Variation and change of German in Austria – Perspectives of variationist linguistics', in particular, addresses the processes and tendencies of language variation in Austria in detail. This task cluster as a whole focuses on the dynamics (and stability) of varieties of German in Austria in their complex linguistic and social structures. Individual tendencies as well as those tendencies specific to certain groups are analysed in relation to one another. The principal research questions forming the basis of task cluster B can be outlined as follows:

1. For those Austrian speakers who had their primary language socialisation in German in Austria: what ways of speaking do they use with whom, and what fragments of their variational repertoire – including different varieties – do they use in which contexts?

2. What impact does the multifaceted variation of urban varieties (or specific indexicalised sections of it) have on the varieties of the surrounding communities as well as on supraregional norms, i.e. the ‘Austrian Standard(s)’ (and vice versa)?
3. What (socio)linguistic processes of language change can be identified in real and apparent time analyses?

To do justice to the complexity of these questions, not only the linguistic repertoires of individuals from various (and varying) social groups from different regions of Austria are investigated. Task cluster B also attempts to model the ‘vertical’ structures of the dialect-standard axis in various – rural and urban – regions by way of an inter-individual synopsis of language usage and patterns of competence. In order to explore aspects of language variation and change (especially dialect variation and change),<sup>8</sup> language data available from earlier decades are analysed and systematically related to ‘synchronically’ collected data of task cluster B. Both, rural regions (the majority of which is still characterised by local dialects) and urban centres are compared.

As can be seen in Figure 1, the task cluster is divided into three project parts, whose different research objects correspond to current topics of international sociolinguistic research:

- PP02: Variation and Change of Dialect Varieties in Austria (in Real and Apparent Time)
- PP03: Between Dialects and Standard Varieties: Speech Repertoires and Varietal Spectra
- PP04: Vienna and Graz – Cities and their Influential Force

PP02 focuses on the ‘Variation and Change of Dialect Varieties in Austria (in Real and Apparent Time)’. This project part presents the first ever systematic and nationwide dialect survey of its kind in a German-speaking country. The results of the study facilitate a comparison with the situation of dialect variation and change in neighbouring dialect regions in the German state of Bavaria (Middle Bavarian dialect area), in the Italian region of South Tyrol (Southern Bavarian) and the eastern parts of Switzerland (Alemannic). PP02 aims at a comprehensive investigation of recent Austrian dialects and their dynamics, which may be par-

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8 On the potential of analyses based on dialect data for a general theory of language variation and change see e.g. Auer/Hinskens/Kerswill (2005), Rabanus (2008), Auer/Baumann/Schwarz (2011), Streck (2012), De Vogelaer/Seiler (2012), Lenz (2013) and Koch (2016).

tially explained as a result of regional processes of convergence and divergence on different basilectal substrates, partially due to dialect contact and partly as a result of advergence to the standard varieties. Such dynamics are studied on the basis of data that allow for a reconstruction of change in apparent as well as real time. Hence, PP02 focuses on varieties on the dialect-standard axis that differ most from the standard language. It takes into account the dynamics of local to small-scale varieties of German in Austria, which assume central communicative and socio-pragmatic functions in Austria. The central research questions are: Which processes of dynamics among different Austrian dialect areas can be determined? Can implicational hierarchies be detected? What differences can be observed in the dynamics of dialect change in urban and rural areas? Which intergenerational dialect changes can be identified? Which gender differences are observable? Which differences emerge when comparing recent surveys and older data garnered from dialect atlases and dialect grammars? How will a comparison of apparent-time change and historical (real-time) dialect change contribute to a theory of language change?

In stage I (years 1–4) of the project, acoustic recordings of four dialect speakers per location (balanced for gender, two age groups) in a total of 40 locations, and further lab recordings from selected speakers for acoustic-phonetic analysis are conducted. Various elicitation techniques are employed (questionnaires, translation, semi-structured interviews, informal conversations), covering different speech styles and providing dialect data ranging from phonetic data to morphological, lexical and syntactic data. In stage II (years 5–8), data from an additional 100 locations (two speakers per location) are recorded. In addition to the analyses in relation to the above mentioned research questions, the density of the network of locations – 140 in all – will eventually permit an investigation of the data with dialectometric methods, allowing for a probabilistic perspective on language variation.<sup>9</sup> One particular outcome of PP02 aimed at the scholarly as well as the wider public, will be the first online ‘talking’ dialect atlas of Austria, which will be based on the new recordings.

While PP02 investigates the dialectal pole on the ‘vertical’ dialect-standard axis and its dynamics, PP03, ‘Between Dialects and Standard Varieties: Speech Repertoires and Varietal Spectra’, focuses on the entire spectrum of areal-linguistic variation ranging from dialects to ‘intermediate’ up to standard varieties. PP03 conducts the first large-scale survey and analysis of the individual linguistic reper-

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9 Cf. Rumpf et al. (2009), Pröll et al. (2015), Pickl/Pröll (in press). The dialectometric analyses will be conducted with the free software “geoling” (cf. [www.geoling.net](http://www.geoling.net)).

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toires of Austrian native speakers of German in selected rural areas of the country as well as analyses of the dynamics and the structure of variational spectra or continua on the dialect-standard axis (cf. Auer 2005; Lenz 2010a). PP03 aims at answering the following questions: How are the varietal spectra of German structured with regard to rural areas in Austria? For example, where do dialects ‘end’ and regiolects (regional vernaculars) ‘begin’, and where do regiolects ‘end’ and standard varieties ‘begin’? Can it be assumed that there is a succession of ‘density zones’ (cf. Lenz 2010a) on the dialect-standard axis, or is it possible to draw a distinction between different varieties? Which implicational hierarchies or co-occurrence restrictions between variants can be detected? Which ‘sections’ (varieties, registers, styles) of the complex German-language variation spectrum are used by ‘autochthonous’ speakers in more rural networks in which situational-pragmatic contexts and functions, and in which way? Can inter-individual linguistic behaviour patterns be identified and, if so, which social/situational/contextual variables correlate with these linguistic behaviour patterns and to what degree? Which hypotheses can be postulated as a result of the synchronic variation ‘in vivo’ with regard to processes of language change in the future? Unlike the majority of studies on ‘vertical’ variation on the dialect-standard axis, in PP03 analyses of inter- and intra-situational variation are correlated systematically: in addition to established ‘correlative-global’<sup>10</sup> methods of variationist linguistics, ‘conversational-local’ analyses of interactional data are carried out (see examples in Auer 1990; Lanwer 2015; Soukup 2009; SiN<sup>11</sup> project)<sup>12</sup>. Hence, ‘global’ structural analyses of vertical variation on the dialect-standard axis as well as ‘local’ sequence analyses of discrete passages of dialogue are conducted.

Stage I of PP03 is dedicated to large-scale surveys and analyses of the individual linguistic repertoires of Austrian native speakers of German as well as to ‘vertical’ variation spectra in their segmental-phonological, morphological and syntactic dimensions of variation. To this end, a variety of elicitation methods (e.g. conversations among friends, topic-focused interviews, questionnaires, speech production experiments) are used at selected locations in rural areas with informants from a range of socio-demographic backgrounds. In stage II, the focus will shift to other dimensions of variation (e.g. lexical variation).

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10 On the distinction between (more) correlative-global and (more) conversational-local approaches, see Gumperz (1994: 617–625) and Gilles (2003).

11 See SiN online ([www.corpora.uni-hamburg.de/sin/index.html](http://www.corpora.uni-hamburg.de/sin/index.html)).

12 On the importance of language dynamics in interpersonal interactions for processes of language change, see e.g. Auer/Hinskens/Kerswill (2005) and Schmidt (2010).

Variation on the dialect-standard axis is also the focus of PP04, ‘Vienna and Graz – Cities and their Influential Force’, which, in contrast and in addition to PP03, focuses on the urban agglomerations in Austria, investigating the two biggest cities, Vienna and Graz. This project part breaks new ground in variationist linguistics and sociolinguistics for Austria as it is the first major urban language study in this country.<sup>13</sup> The general aim of PP04 is to gain an insight into the complex processes of language variation in urban varieties and (a) their impact on the varieties of the surrounding communities as well as (b) the impact of supraregional norms and the Austrian standard variety (or varieties respectively) on urban varieties. The research programme is based on the following core questions: From the perspective of variationist linguistics, what constitutes urban varieties as opposed to varieties in more rural settings? From a socio-pragmatic point of view, what influences language behaviour and the choice of varieties, registers, styles or variants used in big cities? Do migration and speakers’ mobility have a noticeable effect on urban varieties? To what extent do dialects or other non-standard varieties influence urban varieties? What are the variants/varieties with overt and covert prestige in different situations and contexts? What are the orientation norms within urban communication settings? These questions finally shall be answered by way of (1) an analysis of discourse data of current language use in the agglomeration areas of Vienna and Graz (of speakers with and without migration background), (2) an analysis of preferred variants or groups of variants with respect to the interaction of various speaking styles and varieties, and (3) an analysis of connections between spatial and social mobility and language behaviour. In stage I, the study is mainly based on discursive spoken language data from speakers of varieties of German in Vienna and Graz. In stage II, participants with a migration background, who are not taken into account in stage I, will be included in the study to focus on issues of language contact in urban communication and on consequences for the development of an urban colloquial language.

The empirical basis of all three project parts in task cluster B provides multivariate data, collected from different locations (rural versus urban) and different social groups with various survey methods. The three project parts have been collaborating closely with regard to data collection (coordination of methods, locations, and informants), data preparation, data analyses and, eventually, their

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13 For urban language research cf. e.g. Cheshire et al. (2011), and the Copenhagen project ‘Urban sociolinguistics’ (cf. [lanchart.hum.ku.dk/research/study\\_areas/copenhagen/urban](http://lanchart.hum.ku.dk/research/study_areas/copenhagen/urban)). Research projects in the German-speaking countries have often received less attention in the international research community, cf. e.g. Schlobinski (1987), Auer (1990), Kallmeyer (1994), Löffler (2010).

dissemination to paint a conclusive picture of the areal-linguistic structures of German in Austria and the areal-linguistic registers of the individuals in rural and urban networks.

### 3.3 Language contact

While task cluster B mainly focuses on the intralingual dynamics of varieties and on the linguistic repertoires of speakers in Austria whose primary socialisation took place in one variety or even two or more varieties of German, the two project parts (PP05 and PP06) of task cluster C, 'German and Other Languages in Austria – Perspectives of Language Contact', are concerned with the contact between varieties of German in Austria and other languages and their varieties. This task cluster focuses on the following core questions: What are the sociolinguistic and contact linguistic connections between historical multilingualism and the current situation of language(s) in Austria? What are the consequences of language contact situations – past and present – for the varieties of German in Austria? What language repertoires and patterns of language attitudes have emerged in the context of multilingualism in Austria? What is the significance of institutional (especially educational) language guidelines and how are they implemented? In this context, the policies of public institutions (administrative, judiciary and especially educational systems) are juxtaposed to the effects and the recognisable diversity of multilingualism, which obviously exists despite institutional attempts to regulate language.

The goal of PP05, 'German in the Context of the Other Languages in the Habsburg State (19<sup>th</sup> Century) and the second Austrian Republic', is to provide a historically founded and multilingualism-based understanding of Austrian German's polycentricity. Starting from the assumption of specific, historically motivated polycentric dimensions of Austrian German, a central aim is to reconstruct the functional and metalinguistic dimensions of German in the multilingual Habsburg state and to relate them to the situation in Austria after World War II to date. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, German held a hegemonic position in the Habsburg state as the language of the state power and the culturally dominant elites. Whereas the non-German-speaking nationalities of the Habsburg state attempted to redefine their status by demanding recognition of their languages and cultures, German-dominated state nationalism tried to re-establish its endangered hegemony by granting linguistic and cultural autonomy to the various ethnic groups. Thus, the main motivation of PP05 is to shed light on how German was used as an instrument of social interaction and as a reference point of cultural construction. While historical multilingualism undoubtedly had an impact on the linguistic

structure of Austrian German, little is known about the characteristics of the multilingual setting in which German was embedded and which most probably continue to affect the language behaviour of German speakers in the Second Austrian Republic (since 1945). Based on the current state of research in historical sociolinguistics, socio-pragmatically informed language historiography and research on historical multilingualism<sup>14</sup> and by means of reanalyses of existing data and critical discourse analyses of official documents, journals and newspapers, the following central questions are addressed: How can the investigation of historical multilingualism deepen our understanding of polycentric Austrian German in the Second Republic? What impact does the historical legacy have on Austrian German speakers' self-awareness and perception as well as on the political discourse concerning linguistic diversity in Austria after World War II? What lessons can be learned from the historical context for German and multilingualism in present-day Austria? To find answers to these questions, PP05 focuses on aspects like bi-/multilingualism and implemented language policies in the administration, judiciary and educational system, the conflicts originating from the position of German in bilingual and multilingual constellations. Furthermore, PP05 is aimed at metalinguistic and discursive aspects concerning ideological and identity-specific 'knowledge sets' about Austrian German. In other words, PP05 tries to reconstruct how the diversity management from above and from below eventually shaped cultural encounters in place and time and thus aims at identifying the characteristics of the multilingual setting in which German was embedded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and which has most probably affected the language policies of the Second Austrian Republic as well as the language behaviour of opinion leaders in the high-contact centres (most of all Vienna) – and thus German speakers in Austria – to the present day.

German-Slavic language contact, which plays a particularly important role for German in Austria – historically as well as in the present-day –, is investigated in PP06, 'German and Slavic Languages in Austria: Aspects of Language Contact'. The motivation of this project part arises from the fact that the agglomeration area of Vienna represents a major linguistic contact area in Central Europe, influenced by the languages spoken in the Habsburg Empire. Due to substantial migration from what is now the Czech Republic, a micro-area emerged during the 19<sup>th</sup> century that was particularly affected by Czech-German language contact. Whereas the influence of Czech declined during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the importance

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14 Cf. Hernández-Campoy/Conde-Silvestre (2012), von Polenz (1999–2013) and Rindler Schjerve (2003).

of Polish, Serbian and Croatian as well as Turkish increased (cf. Newerkla 2011, 2013). Thus, the main goal of PP06 is to arrive at a comprehensive overview and detailed analysis of contact-induced Slavic influences on the varieties of German in Austria over time, especially in the urban area of Vienna. The close contacts between German in Austria and the Slavic languages spanning several centuries have most probably led to linguistic similarities on all language levels. Roman Jakobson (1938: 52) anticipated this idea by stating that the limits of language convergence seem to coincide strikingly with physical (certain rivers, mountain ranges, etc.) and political boundaries (e.g. between countries or states). However, it has not been clear so far (a) what the extent of this language contact with Czech and other Slavic languages has been and (b) what consequences it has had on the different language levels of the varieties of German in the agglomeration area of Vienna, especially during the heyday of Vienna’s Czech minority in the last decades of the Habsburg Empire. While stage I of PP06 is primarily aimed at the historic dimension of language contact and thus at finding answers to the question above, stage II will address the present-day situation and thereby enable the identification of parallels with and contrasts to the former situation by answering the following research questions: What is the effect of language contact with Slavic languages on the individual linguistic levels of the varieties of German in Vienna today? Do language myths or other misconceptions about the outlined contact situation exist and how can they be unveiled? Can we identify any comparable, distinct or universally applicable aspects of language contact in this area? The empirical basis to discuss these questions is supplied by the comprehensive collection, classification and critical linguistic assessment of existing data as well as the collection of new, present-day data. This research design provides an unprecedented and linguistically well-grounded corpus of factual contact-induced Slavic influences on the varieties of German in Austria over time. Moreover, it helps to uncover widespread language myths and refute false assumptions with respect to these phenomena, e.g. the allegedly contact-induced pronunciation of certain sounds (cf. the case of “Meidlinger L”, a lateral apical-dental consonant often mistakenly said to reflect the pronunciation of the Czech *l*-sound) or the supposedly Slavic etymology of certain expressions (cf. German in Austria *das geht sich (nicht) aus* < Czech *to (ne)vyjde* for German *das klappt (nicht)* ‘turn out well/badly, work out all right’), prepositional and other phrases (cf. areal variation in case government of the German verb *vergessen* ‘to forget’ in Austria +acc./+auf *etw./+an etw.* in contrast with Czech *zapomínat/zapomenout* ‘to forget’ +acc./+na *něco*) etc.

Eventually, the research results of task cluster C will be compared to the ‘objective’ data from task cluster B and to the more ‘subjective’ data on language

perceptions and attitudes from task cluster D. Furthermore, international research on historical multilingualism and contact linguistics will profit from task cluster C's results since the research tasks not only comprise the analysis of the characteristics of a specific historical, but also a current contact situation, dealing simultaneously with the lasting consequences and repercussions of a changing multilingual setting.

### 3.4 Language perceptions and language attitudes

Even though metalinguistic data and data about language attitudes (in differing contexts) are collected in all of the task clusters and their project parts, it is task cluster D, '*German in the Minds* – Language Attitudes and Perception', that investigates issues of language perception and language attitudes in Austria most intensely and systematically. Task cluster D focuses on the following questions, which are systematically related to one another, but also reveal how the project parts are interconnected with task cluster B and C: What attitudes towards German in Austria and its varieties, registers and styles, as well as towards other languages exist in Austria? How do speakers perceive their own possible linguistic actions and how do they cognitively structure and valorise them? What relationships can be found between the data regarding linguistic analyses of German in Austria and the data concerning speakers' attitudes and perceptions? What consequences of these relationships can be found at the institutional level, such as in schools? These questions are addressed on the basis of comprehensive empirical studies using various quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and data analysis. The studies are carried out with monolingual and multilingual informants of different language biographies and socio-demographic backgrounds. In stage I of the SFB (years 1–4), the two project parts of task cluster D focuses on language perceptions and language attitudes in present-day Austria with a special emphasis on the comparison of attitudes towards standard 'versus' non-standard varieties (PP08) and on the situation at Austrian schools (PP10). PP08 collects and analyses data from all over the country, whereas PP10 concentrates on data from selected regions and on urban-rural differences in these regions. The results of these studies on 'subjective' aspects are compared to the more 'objective' linguistic analyses of task clusters B and C.

PP08 addresses 'Standard Varieties from the Perspective of Perceptual Variationist Linguistics'. Like English, French, Dutch and Chinese, German is considered to be a pluricentric language, "i.e. a language with several interacting centres, each providing a national variety with at least some of its own (codified) norms" (Clyne 1995: 20). The fact that recent empirical studies in the field of language geography

have demonstrated that isoglosses of variants of Standard German do not always correlate with national borders but rather follow dialect boundaries<sup>15</sup> supports the view of researchers who consider German less as a pluricentric (in the sense of ‘plurinational’) but rather a pluriareal language.<sup>16</sup> The question of ‘delimiting’ – or rather identifying – the different standard varieties of a ‘pluricentric’ language requires both a system-structural and an attitudinal-perceptual perspective, since

the enregisterment of an Austrian [...] standard German cannot be based on categorical differences in language use (since there are too few Austriacisms [...]), but only by opposing the [...] Austrian forms to the *northern* German standard (a subset of the German standard forms), thus ignoring variation within German StdG [Standard German] (Auer 2014: 34).

Equally, the question of the ‘vertical’ delimitation of standard from non-standard (cf. Auer 2005) must take into account objective linguistic facts (see esp. project parts from task cluster B) as well as attitudinal-perceptual aspects (cf. e.g. Lenz 2010a, 2010b). An overview of European research reveals that frequently only one of these two levels is taken into consideration in research on standard languages, and that is predominantly the level of linguistic structure.<sup>17</sup> The important role of language perceptions and language attitudes within variationist linguistic research (cf. Garrett 2010) is also reflected in an increasing number of studies which do not only focus on the perception of non-standard varieties and variants, but take into account the entire spectrum of varieties, including standard languages.<sup>18</sup> The aim of stage I of PP08 is to carry out attitudinal-perceptual analyses of the standard(s) (against the background of language ideologies) in Austria on the basis of comprehensive data which are gathered using up-to-date methods in perceptual and attitudinal variationist linguistics, including an online survey, interviews and rating tests. In stage II (years 5–8), the dynamics of language attitudes/perceptions with regard to ‘high varieties’ of German in Austria during the New High German period will be traced, focusing on the most recent stages of the language’s history (with an emphasis on the last 120 years). The analyses in both stages will take into consideration the multilingual linguistic setting in

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15 Cf. Elspaß/Dürscheid/Ziegler (2017) and Elspaß/Kleiner (in press).

16 For a discussion of the concepts and terminology, see e.g. Ammon (2011), Scheuringer (1996), Glauning (2013), Schmidlin (2011), Auer (2014), Niehaus (2017).

17 For exemplary analyses regarding structural aspects of standard German in Austria, cf. e.g. Moosmüller (1991, 1998), Soukup (2009), Muhr/Schrodt/Wiesinger (1995), Glauning (2013) and Pfrehm (2007). Herrgen (2015) is one of the few studies which compare objective-structural and attitudinal-perceptual aspects.

18 Cf. footnote 5. For a focus on standard varieties, see e.g. Kristiansen/Coupland (2011).

Austria (which is the main focus of task cluster C) and will incorporate people with diverse linguistic biographies and competences as well as various speech communities, regions and situations of language contact.

The research questions that the project part aims to answer can be grouped into four categories: (1) concepts of language variety and language ideologies, (2) variants from an attitudinal-perceptual perspective, (3) patterns of language attitudes, and (4) attitudinal-perceptual dynamics. Some of the core research questions are:

- (1) Who perceives which standard or near-standard varieties (or sections) of the spectrum of German how, and which attitudinal-affective values are ascribed to them or to the speakers of these varieties? To what extent is the pluricentricity of (standard) German, as it is postulated by linguists, entrenched in the speakers' consciousness?
- (2) Which minimal and maximal features of the/an Austrian standard or other standards (particularly the 'German German standard') are required or not tolerated (by whom and in which contexts)? Which social values are attributed to which variants and which processes of enregisterment (cf. Agha 2003; Auer 2014) are based on these attributions?
- (3) Which connections/correlations can be identified between attitudinal-perceptual aspects and the informants' social variables (linguistic biographies, age, gender, etc.)?
- (4) Which processes of demotisation of the standard language (cf. e.g. Auer/Spiekermann 2011), destandardisation (cf. e.g. Mattheier 1997) and/or other dynamics can be detected in Austria, and how do these relate to processes in other European countries (cf. Kristiansen/Coupland 2011)?

Whereas PP08 addresses Austrian adults' views, PP10, 'Perceptions of and Attitudes towards Varieties and Languages at Austrian Schools', shifts the focus to the educational sector and to pupils' concepts, in particular. The topic of PP10 is how Austrian students and also their teachers perceive different L1- and L2-based accents of German in Austria, how they perceive varieties of German in Austria and what their attitudes towards them are. Thus, the project not only aims at analysing language perceptions, but also at reconstructing ideas about and notions of language variation, which undoubtedly form part of the linguistic reality at schools in Austria today. Against the background of the factual linguistic diversity, due to 'internal and external multilingualism' (Wandruszka 1979) at Austrian schools, it is crucial to establish what it means to write and speak 'Standard German' at Austrian schools.

The project is motivated by an obvious requirement of research on interdependencies between language perceptions and language attitudes on the one hand



and language use at schools and students' linguistic competences on the other. Although there is a considerable and increasing number of studies on the role of linguistic diversity in schools (cf. Edwards 2010), research in the German-speaking countries has to date either concentrated on the role of dialects and other varieties of German at schools<sup>19</sup> or on the impact of (external) multilingualism in the classroom.<sup>20</sup> Systematic studies on interdependencies between internal and external multilingualism at schools are completely lacking.

PP10 tries to find answers to the following research questions: How do teachers and students report on language use in various domains and situations at school and in their life outside the school gates? How do they perceive and rate their own and others' language use with respect to 'standard German'? What importance do students assign to which variety and which language in school and later on? What are their views on the use and (covert) prestige of varieties of German and other languages? Which social meanings do they attribute to different varieties? In what way can teachers' and students' language perceptions and language attitudes be traced back to their own linguistic biographies? And is it possible to establish interdependencies between attitudes towards languages/varieties, linguistic competences and actual language behaviour in class?

Data are collected at various intermediate vocational/secondary schools, both from students and teachers. Perceptions of spoken and written varieties are measured by way of ratings of speech samples from native speakers of varieties of German in Austria and from native speakers of non-German varieties. Attitudes towards different accents and varieties of German and non-German languages are elicited by way of online-questionnaires and in group discussions.

Central assumptions of the subproject are that language perceptions and language attitudes are in a reciprocal relationship and that, in combination, they can have an influence on the evaluation of linguistic and other cognitive skills of students in schools.

Given the scale of transnational migration as well as internal migration, which both have a strong impact on the school sector in Austria at present, it is expected that the results of the project will have an impact both on teacher training and on language policies at Austrian schools. They can provide information on future requirements for teaching as well as on necessary modifications to language policies at schools.

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19 Cf. Hochholzer (2004), Knöbl (2012). See also De Cillia/Fink/Ransmayr (2013) on a recent project on the role of 'Austrian Standard German' at schools.

20 Cf. Wojnesitz (2010) and Oomen-Welke/Dirim (2014).

### 3.5 The Research Platform ‘German in Austria’

All data, analyses, and materials regarding German in Austria are processed and integrated into a ‘Collaborative Online Research Platform *German in Austria*’ which is at the heart of PP11 in task cluster D. Apart from establishing a computer-linguistic foundation and from providing support in the processes of data modelling and corpus-linguistic annotations, the main task of PP11 is the development of the SFB research platform, which will be accessible online not only for scientists but also for the interested public. The short-term goals of this project part (stage I) include the development of an optimised version of the online platform and the management of the annotation framework.

Computational modelling and the annotation of linguistic data is the scientific approach used for corpus-based variationist linguistics. European and international research infrastructures have been established in recent years in order to facilitate corpus linguistic research in the context of digital humanities (cf. Moulin et al. 2011). To facilitate linguistic research, the CLARIN research infrastructure (cf. [www.clarin.eu](http://www.clarin.eu)) has been constructed with specific components such as the linguistic annotation of corpora for research purposes (cf. Declerck et al. 2011). Linguistic annotation (cf. Ide/Romary 2004) is a crucial method for linguistic research that has reached a certain stage of maturity, but has left many questions unanswered. As for the sociolinguistic study of linguistic variation and change, corpus linguistic methods have gained a central role for quantitative as well as qualitative research (cf. Baker 2010; Kiesling 2011).

The innovative aim of task cluster D is to reach a new qualitative level of collaborative research by further developing, testing, fine-tuning and implementing a comprehensive linguistic annotation framework on the basis of the international standards that have been elaborated by the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) and by the International Standards Organisation (ISO). Furthermore, it aims at embedding this methodology into an operational online research platform. Thus, the goal of PP11 is to design, implement and use a collaborative platform that facilitates coherent and interoperable modelling, processing, annotation and the focused empirical use of specific language corpora that either pre-exist or are to be created in the context of the subprojects of the SFB.

The Collaborative Online Research Platform on “German in Austria” supports different steps and tasks throughout the whole research life cycle. To this end, different case scenarios are modelled and described for which the Collaborative Online Research Platform is used. Thus, it has been and is essential to build this platform out of different components to support the entire research life cycle. Its major components are the repository, the collaborative working space and

the private working space with different tools according to the research needs of each subproject. Specific query functions are needed to search the corpora and other data, since researchers must be able to query complex data structures and relationships. Therefore, the query functions should be able to make multiple layer queries (cf. Bański et al. 2013), e.g. for data correlation. Moreover, visualisation of linguistic data (such as in language maps), sorting and selecting of the query results are made possible. The collective working space also fulfils the needs of researchers to be able to collaboratively annotate, edit and analyse data, to discuss preliminary results with peers etc. Furthermore, the collaborative working space integrates project management tools or project management functions (setting deadlines, monitoring progress etc.) to function as a backbone of the coordination project PP01 in Cluster A (cf. Fig. 1).

#### 4 Added value of the project

What is the added value of such a large-scale project in relation to the mere sum of the individual project parts? In our view, the vibrant dynamics of the (socio)linguistic and attitudinal-perceptual processes that are currently found in Austria provide a 'laboratory situation' for research that is unique in the history of Austria and the German-speaking world – or even in the Western hemisphere. In this SFB, both the object language with its structural aspects and the sociolinguistic level (in its narrowest sense, i.e. including situational pragmatics, communicative interaction, language perceptions and attitudes) are considered from a variety of theoretical perspectives and analysed both comprehensively and empirically. Thus, a large-scale project like the SFB 'German in Austria' has the potential of breaking new ground in linguistic research with respect to innovations under the following aspects:

1. *dimensions of variation*. The SFB takes into consideration the entire spectrum of German in Austria including its multifarious dimensions of variation (e.g. 'areal-horizontal' variation taking into account potential urban-rural dichotomies, 'vertical-social' variation with respect to various age groups and social groups, situational-pragmatic variation, interactional variation, and other dimensions of variation). As a consequence, the project analyses not only the entire range of regional linguistic varieties on the dialect-standard axis (dialects, regiolects, standard varieties), but also the linguistic repertoires and variation displayed in the communicative behaviour of individuals and groups.
2. *contact between varieties and languages*. The SFB accounts for internal as well as external multilingualism in Austria and hence does not restrict itself to

investigate either ‘dialects in contact’ or ‘languages in contact’. Rather, it aims at a comprehensive analysis of complex contact situations between varieties of German as well as between such varieties and the non-German heritage languages in Austria, both synchronically and diachronically (or rather pan-chronically, cf. 4).

3. *object language plus language perceptions and attitudes*. In addition to analyses on the various structural levels (primarily phonetics/phonology, morphology, syntax, lexis), the SFB – as the first project to do so – undertakes comprehensive attitudinal-perceptual analyses of language and variation in all of Austria and systematically relates the resulting ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ language data to each other.
4. *panchronic approach*. Central to the SFB is a panchronic and dynamic approach, where there is no strict distinction between synchrony and diachrony, but only variation and continuous change (which presupposes variation). In the practical research context, this approach will take effect, for instance, in the systematic correlation of ‘apparent’ and ‘real-time’ analyses.
5. *methodological pluralism*. By means of triangulation and a combination of different approaches, both established and innovative methods of qualitative and quantitative data collection, handling, analysis and presentation are used.
6. *language and gender*: At the heart of the SFB are intra-individual as well as inter-individual phenomena and processes of language variation and change. Gender as a social variable plays an essential role in the sampling of informants as well as in the sociolinguistic analyses. In particular, consideration will be given to the much discussed questions in sociolinguistics as well as in evolutionary linguistics as to whether data can be attributed to “gender determined dialect variation” (Dunn 2014) and whether there is evidence for a hierarchical structure in which one gender can be said to lead the way in instigating language change in Austria.
7. *publication and sustainability of data*. One practical outcome of the SFB will be a plethora of diverse data. The online research platform serves as the main data hub and ‘data organiser’, where all members of the SFB can exchange data and tools for analysis. By eventually making the data available to the research community via this platform, it will be ensured that the data will be accessible for further study, even after the end of the project’s funding period. Moreover, as it is a major concern of the project that its results are made available to a wider public, non-sensitive data such as dialect maps, mental maps and anonymised speech samples, will be made available to the public.

8. *collaboration across institutions and locations*. The SFB is a joint project in the field of humanities and it constitutes the first occasion on which six institutes and departments across Austria (from three universities and the Austrian Academy of Sciences) join efforts to collaborate on documenting and researching the German language in Austria.
9. *international collaboration*. The SFB opens up new pathways and opportunities for international cooperation and networking, thus supporting and/or strengthening the integration of the entire project, the project parts and its individual members into the international research community.
10. *outside and inside perspective*. The SFB consortium brings together colleagues with diverse backgrounds, some of whom have been socialised in Austria, others abroad, joining multivariate linguistic and academic biographies and thus offering an ideal mixture of 'inside and outside perspectives'.

In sum, the Special Research Programme 'German in Austria' provides a unique opportunity for a joint effort to investigate a highly dynamic linguistic situation, as we currently find it in Austria. The scope and complexity of the topic, i.e. the sociolinguistics and the current language change in an entire country, can only be managed in a large-scale research project like this, in which scholars from different research institutions and from different linguistic disciplines closely collaborate in a truly 'special' research format.

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