

## **Austria as a showcase of internal and external multilingualism. Old and new linguistic frontiers.**

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Austria is a relatively small, but linguistically extremely diverse country in Central Europe. This diversity is characterised by “internal” as well as “external multilingualism” (Wandruszka 1979). The external multilingualism – especially in the urban centres – reflects on the one hand the multilingual tradition in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and on the other hand the linguistic consequences of the migration movements in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The co-existence of different languages and the resulting language contact concurs with a pronounced internal multilingualism of German that is still present today. This internal multilingualism is shaped by Alemannic and Bavarian dialects – some of which are mutually still incomprehensible even today – that have existed since the early Middle Ages and, in some regions, have remained virtually unchanged over the centuries. The standardisation processes and the ensuing ‘internal’ linguistic contacts of the last two and a half centuries led to the emergence of new varieties between dialect and standard, but also had an effect on the linguistic structures of the traditional dialects.

In the light of this linguistic diversity, Austria offers an ideal research laboratory for studies on language variation, contact and change. In our presentation we will focus on the interplay between internal and external multilingualism and their effect on German dialects in Austria. We will present selected results from the ongoing Special Research Programme *German in Austria. Variation – Contact – Perception* such as contact-related explanations for case variation and preposition choice or coinciding caused motion constructions as well as evidence of current varietal changes on the phonetic and grammatical levels – but also of dialectal phenomena that show a remarkable stability.