

Extrapolation in German dialects and regiolects

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This paper investigates the phenomenon of extraposition in German dialects and regiolects. Extraposition, as it is defined here, is the occurrence of constituents not in their canonical inner field positions, but rather in the prosodically integrated postfield (e.g. *ich bin nach Berlin gefahren **mit dem Zug***). Despite thorough investigations of extraposition in written and spoken standard German (e.g. Lambert 1976, Zahn 1991) as well as individual dialects (e.g. Patocka 1997), no study to date has examined extraposition along the horizontal-areal and vertical-social axes simultaneously. Therefore, the goal of the present study is to determine the extent of quantitative and qualitative differences in extraposition cross-dialectally and along the axis extending up from the base dialects approaching the standard. The empirical basis consists of data from the Low, Central, and Upper German regions in 60 recordings of the Zwirner and Pfeffer Corpora (Institut für Deutsche Sprache).

Preliminary results indicate that PPs and adverbs account for the vast majority of extraposed constituents in both the dialect and regiolect data, though PPs are extraposed at a higher rate in the latter than in the former (75.2% vs. 66.8%). Furthermore, an ANOVA indicates no statistically significant difference in rates of extraposition among the three dialect areas, contrary to findings in Brode (1970) that suggest a slight increase from north to south. Finally, the differences between the dialect and regiolect data in rates of extraposition are small (10.9% vs. 7.6%), though statistically significant as determined by an independent t-test. This result stands in contrast to Westphal-Fitch (2011), who finds a much larger difference between North German Pfeffer data and Central German dialect data (18.1% vs. 8.2%). Overall, the analyses indicate that extraposition is a general feature of spoken German, one that is not subject to substantial variation along either the horizontal or vertical axis.