

Morphological Change in German Dialects Two Cases of Plural Verbs in Alemannic

Stefan Rabanus

Deutscher Sprachatlas, Marburg

1 Preliminaries and method

The sociolinguistic situation in the German-speaking countries in central Europe is not homogeneous at all. Peter Auer (forthcoming) distinguishes three main dialect–standard constellations: medial diglossia with an endoglossic standard in German-speaking Switzerland; diaglossia with intermediate varieties between dialect and standard in the most regions of southern Germany and Austria; and dialect loss in many regions of middle and northern Germany. Additionally, there are special cases like the Walser German language islands in northern Italy which are embedded in Italian, i.e., an exoglossic standard variety.

This paper is concerned with morphological change in the rural base dialects which represent the lowest sphere of the substandard continuum (cf. Bellmann 1998: 23). The type of dialect–standard constellation is nonetheless relevant because today – and this already held true for the 20th century – there are no longer any monolingual dialect speakers. Language islands like the Walser villages aside, everyone knows the corresponding standard language,¹ and most dialect-competent speakers additionally use some sort of intermediate variety in situations which are not strictly local. Thus, dialects are always in contact with other varieties within the speakers' minds. More sociolinguistically oriented dialectology has been intensively engaged in the study of the accommodation and koineization processes that lead to the evolution of regional dialects or other compromise languages.² In social dialectology, less attention is paid to the development of the base dialects themselves. This is partly justified by their decreasing communicative importance vis-à-vis the rapidly increasing importance of the intermediate varieties. However, the study of base dialects remains crucial for an understanding of language change. Firstly, because they have been empirically documented over at least the past 120 years, the base dialects are well suited to the study of long-term processes. Secondly, in that they form the foundation of the modern regional dialects and other intermediate varieties and are thus in interaction with them, the base dialects both affect and are affected by varieties ranked more highly on the substandard continuum.

My approach forms part of the extensive geolinguistic research carried out at Research Institute for German Language in Marburg. The data for the paper are provided by the ‘Digital Wenker Atlas’ (DiWA) which enables the analysis of dialect change via the electronic superimposition of dialect maps from different points in time.³ Hence, the paper participates in the “technologically driven” revival of dialect cartography. As Britain (2002: 610-611, 633) reasonably points out, the mapping of the geographical distribution of features and patterns represents in the first instance a (vivid) display of the data - not necessarily an explanation for it. However, spatiality can account for morphological change, as shall be illustrated below using two examples of Alemannic verbal morphology. As a method, the comparing of maps implies that the social factors which serve as barriers or amplifiers to the diffusion of innovation and the variation within the base dialects resulting from the interaction with other varieties in the substandard continuum mentioned above must remain secondary here.

The point of departure is the survey of German dialects undertaken by Georg Wenker between 1876 and 1887 who sent out questionnaires to more than 40,000 locations across the entire former German Empire. The data were extracted and distilled onto detailed geographic maps which became the 1,643 hand-drawn maps of the *Sprachatlas des deutschen Reichs* (‘Linguistic Atlas of the German Empire’), brought to an end in 1923 by Wenker’s successor, Ferdinand Wrede.⁴ In the present paper, Wenker’s maps are contrasted with maps from two modern linguistic atlases: the *Südwestdeutscher Sprachatlas* (SSA, ‘Southwest German Linguistic Atlas’, surveyed 1974–1986) and the *Sprachatlas von Bayerisch-Schwaben* (SBS, ‘Linguistic Atlas of Bavarian Swabia’, surveyed 1984–1989). These two atlases cover large parts of the Low Alemannic, Middle Alemannic and Swabian dialect areas in southwest Germany and feature 763 locations which are directly comparable to Wenker’s atlas (abbreviated here as WA). Since the latter was primarily intended to be a phonetic atlas, the plural paradigms were not completely surveyed, except for the paradigm of *haben* ‘to have’. Thus, the auxiliary *haben* occupies a special place in the analysis.⁵

2 Plural verbs in Alemannic dialects

In the Alemannic dialect region, depicted in Map 1, several different plural verb paradigms can be found in the present indicative. In most of the northern dialects under investigation here (Low and Middle Alemannic, Swabian) and in the eastern High Alemannic dialects (around Zurich) the category of person is not formally expressed in the verbal plural: in the so-called *Einheitsplural* (‘uniform plural’) all persons have the same plural ending. The western High Alemannic dialects (around Berne) show a two-form plural with a distinct



Map 1: Extents of Alemannic dialects.

marker for the second person. The southern Highest Alemannic dialects including the Walser language islands have usually conserved the Middle High German three-form plural. Table 1 below gives examples of the different plural types, whose allomorphic realization depends on verb class and dialect area.⁶

Concerning the *Einheitsplural*, in central Swabian and eastern High Alemannic the plural suffix for auxiliary, contracted, and root verbs (which are always monosyllabic in the present tense here: *haben* ‘to have’, *sein* ‘to be’, *tun* ‘to do’, *gehen* ‘to go’, *stehen* ‘to stand’, *wollen* ‘to want’, *lassen* ‘to let’, *schlagen* ‘to beat’ and few others) is NT, the plural suffix for all other verbs is ET. The Low Alemannic dialects display the same verb-class distinction, but the final plosive has been deleted (thus, the suffixes are N and E, respectively).⁷ Additionally, there are two areas in northern and Bavarian Swabia that exhibit a two-form plural in which the first person has a special marker (see Table 2 in section 2.2).

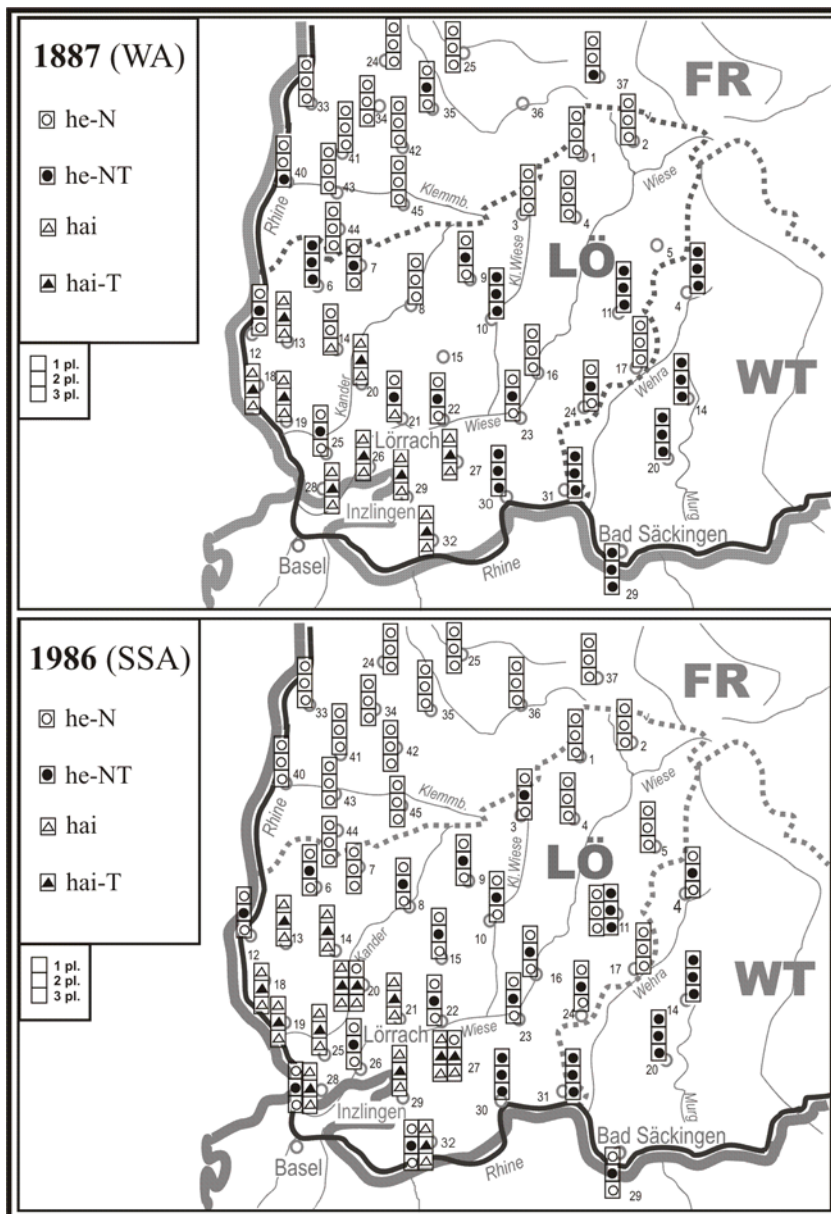
Whereas the large *Einheitsplural* area to the north principally remains unchanged as such in the base dialects, some remarkable morphological changes have taken place in the transition zones between plural types. Two of them shall be examined below: the transition between Low Alemannic *Einheitsplural* and High Alemannic two-form plural in the county of Lörrach and the transition between Swabian *Einheitsplural* and Bavarian two-form plural in Bavarian Swabia.

2.1 County of Lörrach

Consider first the western High Alemannic system which is exemplified by the dialect of Inzlingen (location LÖ 29 of the SSA, see Map 2) in Table 1. All verb classes have two markers in the plural: the first and third person endings are the same, but the second-person suffix is different (2 pl. vs. 1 = 3 pl.). This makes the High Alemannic system coincide with the Standard German system. However, the High Alemannic markers differ from the standard markers. In Standard German the first and third-person marker is N (with or without a preceding *schwa*, depending on the stem-final sound) and the second-person marker T. This holds for all verb classes except the auxiliary *sein*, which has NT for the first and third person and vowel variance in the second person plural (Table 1).

Table 1: Plural verbs *tragen* ‘to carry’, *haben* ‘to have’, and *sein* ‘to have’ in Alemannic dialects.

Dialect area	‘to carry’	‘to have’	‘to be’	Category
Standard German	<i>trag-EN</i>	<i>hab-EN</i>	<i>si-NT</i>	1 pl.
	<i>trag-T</i>	<i>hab-T</i>	<i>sei-T</i>	2 pl.
	<i>trag-EN</i>	<i>hab-EN</i>	<i>si-NT</i>	3 pl.
Low Alemannic	<i>drag-E</i>	<i>he-N</i>	<i>si-N</i>	1 pl.
	<i>drag-E</i>	<i>he-N</i>	<i>si-N</i>	2 pl.
	<i>drag-E</i>	<i>he-N</i>	<i>si-N</i>	3 pl.
Swabian, Eastern High Alemannic	<i>drag-ET</i>	<i>he-NT</i>	<i>si-NT</i>	1 pl.
	<i>drag-ET</i>	<i>he-NT</i>	<i>si-NT</i>	2 pl.
	<i>drag-ET</i>	<i>he-NT</i>	<i>si-NT</i>	3 pl.
Western High Alemannic	<i>drag-E</i>	<i>hei</i>	<i>si</i>	1 pl.
	<i>drag-ET</i>	<i>hei-T</i>	<i>si-T</i>	2 pl.
	<i>drag-E</i>	<i>hei</i>	<i>si</i>	3 pl.
Highest Alemannic	<i>drag-E</i>	<i>hei-N</i>	<i>si-N</i>	1 pl.
	<i>drag-ET</i>	<i>hei-T</i>	<i>si-T</i>	2 pl.
	<i>drag-ENT</i>	<i>hei-NT</i>	<i>si-NT</i>	3 pl.



Map 2: Plural verb *haben* ‘to have’ in the County of Lörrach.

In High Alemannic the auxiliary, contracted, and root verbs also have T as second-person suffix, but the first and third person lack a proper marker. Additionally, in *haben* ‘to have’ and *wollen* ‘to want’ the plural stem is diphthongized with respect to the singular.⁸ The auxiliary *sein* shows the same suffix structure, but its stem vowel is a monophthong.⁹ All other verbs have E in the first and third person and ET in the second person plural. The extent of this two-form plural lies mainly in western Switzerland and the Alsatian Sundgau but also encloses parts of the county of Lörrach which have been surveyed in both Wenker’s and the SSA project.

The situation in the county of Lörrach is particularly interesting because here the High Alemannic two-form plural meets both the Low Alemannic and the Swabian *Einheitsplural*. Map 2 shows the paradigm of *haben* in the county of Lörrach (LÖ) and the neighbouring parts of the counties of Waldshut (WT) and Freiburg (FR). The two-form plural with diphthongized stem is represented by triangles and occupies the southwestern part of the county. The Low Alemannic *Einheitsplural* (suffix N, three open circles) dominates in the north, the Swabian *Einheitsplural* (suffix NT, three black dots) in the east. In between the areas there are locations which display a two-form plural with N suffix for the first and third person and NT suffix for the second person (black dot between two open circles). I consider this configuration a compromise paradigm: it has the morphological distinctions of the High Alemannic system (2 pl. vs. 1 = 3 pl.) but the markers of the Low Alemannic and Swabian areas (N vs. NT). Comparing the two points in time in the county of Lörrach we may note a minor difference with respect to the *Einheitsplural* areas: the distribution picture in 1986 is more uniform than in 1887, and the extent of the northern type (suffix N) has become a little larger in the course of a century. But the main difference can be found in the extension of the compromise paradigm. In 1887 it occurs in just eight locations, rather isolated from each other. In 1986 it is documented for 15 locations which form a continuous belt running between the northern *Einheitsplural* and the High Alemannic two-form plural.

What has taken place here is a sort of regional dialect levelling, but of a very special kind. In the literature, the notion of dialect levelling is usually used to refer to accommodation processes which involve “the loss of marked and/or minority variants” (Trudgill 1986: 126). The adoption of the notion of dialect levelling¹⁰ to the case in question here is problematic since it was developed and tested for phonetic, not morphological change. But under any circumstances, in the SSA area the High Alemannic *haben* paradigm is a highly marked system in that the distinctions (2 pl. vs. 1 = 3 pl.) and the markers (1/3 pl. without suffix, 2 pl. with T suffix, diphthongized stem) have a very limited geographical extension. Nevertheless, there is no replacement by the dominating *Einheitsplural*. On the contrary, the compromise paradigm spreads in all directions, either becoming a new variant or replacing the old one completely. Note that the town of Lörrach (LÖ 26) is the only location in which the replacement of the High Alemannic two-form plural by the compromise paradigm has already been completed. The vigour of the compromise paradigm consists in its combination of characteristics from all of the neighbouring dialects. Additionally, it converges towards the standard language in terms of the morphological distinctions.

The result for normal (non-auxiliary, non-contracted, non-root) verbs is not directly comparable because the High Alemannic paradigm differs from the Low Alemannic/Swabian paradigm only with respect to *t* as part of the suffix. So, the only possible compromise involves the occurrence of *t* in the Low Alemannic and the Swabian *Einheitsplural* markers (N vs. NT). An incomplete *t*-deletion or *t*-addition implies the loss of the *Einheitsplural*. And, in fact, there is almost no *Einheitsplural* left in the county of Lörrach.¹¹

The southern Alemannic dialects cannot be analyzed in the manner demonstrated above because Wenker's atlas stops at the Swabian border and does not cover Switzerland. However, Lorenz Hofer (2002: 175-181) reports a strongly analogous case of recent morphological change in the city dialect of Basel. While Basel traditionally forms an *Einheitsplural* island in the two-form plural area, more recently speakers tend to use a two-form plural. However, they do not adopt the High Alemannic markers from the surrounding rural base dialects, but rather they use the compromise paradigm. Thus, the stages of and explanation for the morphological change discussed are, in principle, independent of national boundaries (Germany vs. Switzerland).

2.2 Bavarian Swabia

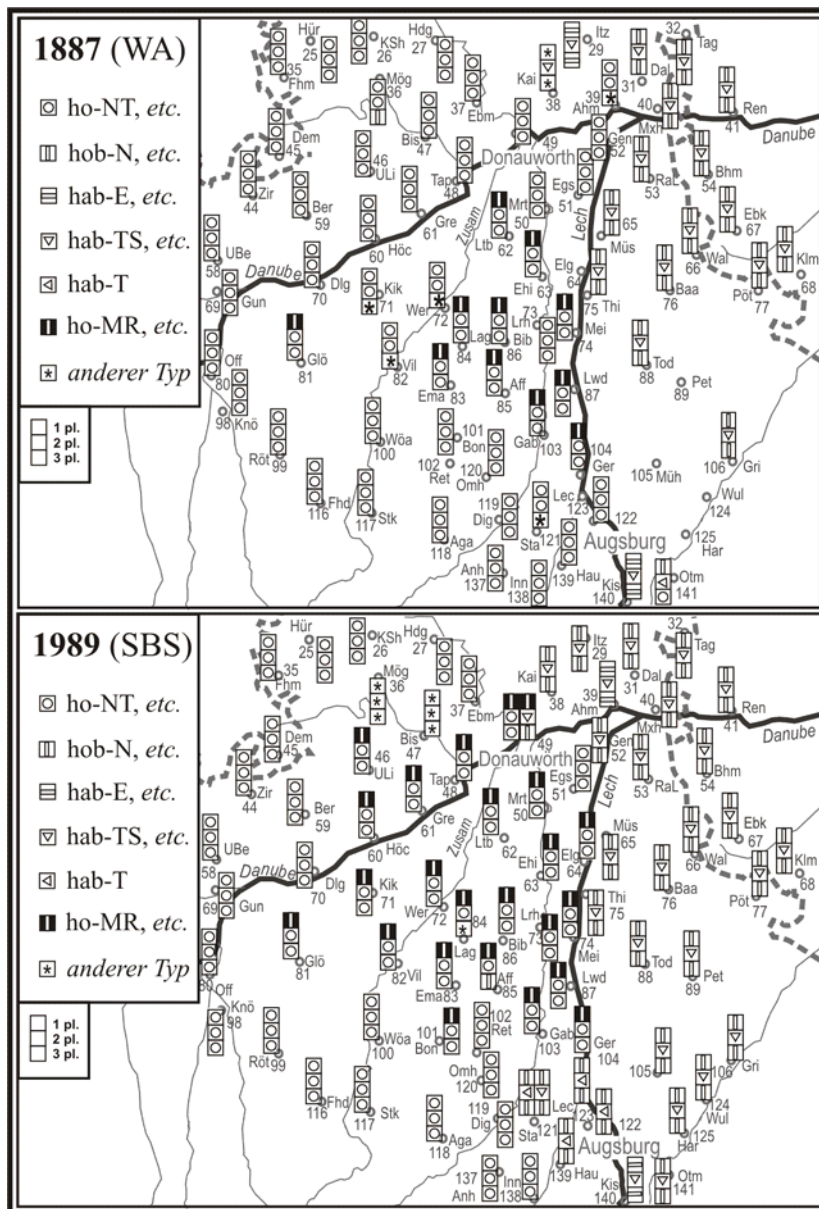
In Bavarian Swabia the easternmost Swabian dialects border on the Bavarian dialect area (see Map 1 and Table 2). Since Bavarian Swabia politically forms part of the Bavarian State and the Bavarian capital (Munich) is much closer than the Swabian capital (Stuttgart), Bavarian features are advancing in the modern regional dialect (e.g., Kleiner 2002, Renn 1994). However, with respect to the structural properties of the rural base dialects plus some exceptions which will not be discussed here,¹² the river Lech remains a stable isogloss dividing Swabian and Bavarian. But for the plural verbs there is a special paradigm on the Swabian side. This paradigm (labelled "Bavarian Swabian" in Table 2) is a two-form plural in which the first person has a distinctive marker (1 pl. vs. 2 = 3 pl.). The type holds for all verb classes. The marker for the first person is the MR suffix (symbolized by a white bar in a black field in Map 3). Historically, the MR suffix is the product of the cliticisation of the inverted first-person plural pronoun *wir* 'we' which took place in four steps: (1) inversion of the pronoun for syntactic or pragmatic reasons; (2) loss of the first person's nasal suffix; (3) cliticisation of the pronoun; (4) 'morphologicalisation' of the pronoun and addition of a new subjective. For *wir tragen* 'we carry', that implies the following derivational process:¹³

wir trag-EN > *trag-EN wir* (1) > *trag- wir* (2) > *trag-wir* (3) > *wir trag-MR* (4)

Wiesinger (1989: 37–38; Map 8) reports the MR suffix for large areas in northern Bavaria (mainly the Lower Bavarian dialects) and southern Austria. Yet, a distinctive feature of the Bavarian Swabian dialects is the usage of the oblique pronoun *uns* ‘us’ as the first-person subjective pronoun: *uns trag*-MR ‘we carry’. Whereas this ‘pronoun exchange’ in the first person is attested for a large number of Germanic and especially English varieties (e.g., the dialects of Essex, Devon, Dorset, and especially Tyneside English)¹⁴, it renders the corresponding Bavarian Swabian dialects almost unique among the German dialects.¹⁵ Map 3 shows the paradigm of the auxiliary *haben* ‘to have’ in central Bavarian Swabia. Since the verb classes do not differ with respect to the plural paradigm, what follows holds for the whole verbal system. The two-form plural area (indicated in the map by the columns with the white bar in black field on top of it) is located in the eastern triangle formed by the rivers Lech and Danube, in a rural landscape between Augsburg and Donauwörth. One would expect language change to eliminate the *uns*+MR construction since it is an isolated phenomenon with a restricted geographical extension. But the comparison of the two points in history leads to a different result. The MR marker has spread north, crossing the river Danube and even reaching the county seat of Donauwörth (location 49).

Table 2: Plural verbs *tragen* ‘to carry’, *haben* ‘to have’, and *sein* ‘to have’ in German varieties.

Dialect area, variety	‘to carry’	‘to have’	‘to be’	Category
Standard German	<i>trag</i> -EN	<i>hab</i> -EN	<i>si</i> -NT	1 pl.
	<i>trag</i> -T	<i>hab</i> -T	<i>sei</i> -T	2 pl.
	<i>trag</i> -EN	<i>hab</i> -EN	<i>si</i> -NT	3 pl.
Bavarian	<i>drog</i> -N	<i>hob</i> -N	<i>sa</i> -N	1 pl.
	<i>drog</i> -TS	<i>hab</i> -TS	<i>sei</i> -TS	2 pl.
	<i>drog</i> -N	<i>hob</i> -N	<i>sa</i> -N	3 pl.
Bavarian Swabian	<i>drag</i> -MR	<i>ho</i> -MR	<i>se</i> -MR	1 pl.
	<i>drag</i> -ENT	<i>ho</i> -NT	<i>se</i> -NT	2 pl.
	<i>drag</i> -ENT	<i>ho</i> -NT	<i>se</i> -NT	3 pl.
Swabian	<i>drag</i> -ET	<i>he</i> -NT	<i>si</i> -NT	1 pl.
	<i>drag</i> -ET	<i>he</i> -NT	<i>si</i> -NT	2 pl.
	<i>drag</i> -ET	<i>he</i> -NT	<i>si</i> -NT	3 pl.



Map 3: Plural verb *haben* ‘to have’ in Bavarian Swabia.

Consequently, the two-form plural area has grown larger: the replacement of NT by MR in the first person implies the disappearance of the *Einheitsplural*. The 11 locations showing MR in the first person and two-form plural in 1887 have more than doubled in number to 23 in the SBS data of 1989. This is a remarkable increase, although the type makes up less than 10 % of the 236 locations attested in both Wenker’s atlas and the SBS. The process can be referred to by the notion of “contagious diffusion” (cf. Bailey et al. 1994: 366), i.e., the progressive feature MR radiates out evenly from south to north. However, in reaching the town of Donauwörth, which has more inhabitants

(18,020) than the villages in the area in which it originates (e.g., Ehingen [Ehi 63]: 983; Emersacker [Ema 83]: 1,364), its diffusion even runs against the urban hierarchy according to which innovations spread out from urban centers, reaching rural locations later on (cf. Bailey et al. 1994: 361).

Given the uniqueness of both the two-form plural with the distinctive marker in the first person and the MR suffix, two questions are raised: (1) what triggers the spread of MR, and (2) why does it spread northwards? The answer to (2) is the range of the *uns* subjective pronoun which extends beyond the northern margins of the area depicted in Map 3.¹⁶ Those speakers who are inclined to morphological change and make use of the *uns* subject pronoun find a readymade template in the southern *uns*+MR construction, and modify their system accordingly.

Question (1) is trickier and only a preliminary answer can be offered. Note that by adopting the MR suffix, the speakers introduce the category of person into the verbal plural. Person marking in plural verbs is an important feature of both the confining Bavarian dialects and of Standard German. Both varieties realize the person marking in the second person and none of them use the MR marker. However, person marking as abstract property is a shared feature of Bavarian, Standard German and Bavarian Swabian – in contradistinction to Swabian. Both Bavarian and Standard German are more prestigious varieties than Swabian in the area in question. The prestige and the communicative importance of the standard language need not be discussed here, and the westbound progression of Bavarian features has already been noted by Bohnenberger (1928: 262–266). Thus, the progression of the MR suffix is not just a Swabian-internal process but is also affected by both horizontal contact with the confining Bavarian dialects and vertical contact with the standard language. It is another example of a compromise paradigm, even more elaborate than the one found in the county of Lörrach presented above.¹⁷ In the case of Donauwörth (location 49) the spread of MR and the migration of Bavarian features even occurs in parallel. In 1887, Donauwörth has Einheitsplural with NT. In 1989, NT has been completely replaced by MR in the first person, but in the second and third person either the Swabian NT or the Bavarian TS (2 pl.) and N (3 pl.) occurs.

This interpretation might account for the fact that the speakers introduce person marking but it does not explain why they use MR instead of a Bavarian marker. Hence, an additional explanation should be provided which refers to language-external factors only. Keep in mind that this paper is about the rural base dialects, which have surrendered most of their functional domains to regional dialects and the standard language. Today, the instrumental usage of base dialects is restricted to the narrowest circle of local communication (family, old friends). But that which on the one hand is a loss, opens up new

possibilities on the other. The decreasing instrumental usage makes the base-dialectal features more suitable as markers of local identity. The *uns*+MR construction is strictly local and highly salient. Thus, it may have been chosen for the purpose of person marking for precisely that reason: because it is neither Bavarian nor Swabian – but uniquely Bavarian Swabian.

The interpretation squares exactly with the results of the analysis of Oklahoma dialects by Bailey and colleagues (1994). In the only progressive grammatical feature under investigation (the spread of the quasi-modal *fixin to*) they too found diffusion in contrahierarchical fashion, and draw a conclusion which also holds for the the Bavarian Swabian data studied here: “The instances of contrahierarchical diffusion in our data involve the spread of features that reassert traditional speech norms. They serve to demarcate natives from newcomers to an area and are badges of identity with the local culture” (Bailey et al. 1994: 385).

3 Summary and conclusions

The present paper examined two cases of morphological change in transition zones between Alemannic dialect areas. The results can be summarized as follows.

- (a) Morphological change occurs mainly in transition zones between different dialect areas. The centers of the dialect areas show a high degree of stability.
- (b) Morphological change often lead to compromise forms. In the county of Lörrach the compromise consists in the unification of the High Alemannic two-form plural with the Low Alemannic/Swabian markers N and NT. In Bavarian Swabia the compromise occurs at a higher level of abstraction: it is the introduction of the category of person in the paradigm as such, but without adoption of markers or plural types from other varieties. The category of person is marked with a proprietary Bavarian Swabian marker and paradigm type.
- (c) Morphological innovations which revitalize traditional speech norms against the standard language usually progress contiguously across a region in a non-hierarchical fashion. This is the case in the Bavarian Swabian example. In contrast, standard-convergent innovations are likely to diffuse hierarchically. This holds for the replacement of the High Alemannic two-form plural which is completed first in the county town of Lörrach, and then progresses evenly in the countryside. Again, the results correspond with the findings of Bailey and colleagues (1994: 386).
- (d) The function of the base dialects shifts from a primarily instrumental to a primarily expressive usage. Variationist studies (e.g., Lenz 2003) show how base dialectal communication is increasingly restricted to family

contexts or communications among friends. Exempted from the many requirements of instrumental usage, today's base dialects today are thus freer vehicles for the expression of local identity than were yesterday's.

References

- Auer, P. (1997): 'Co-occurrence restrictions between variables: A case for social dialectology, phonological theory and variation studies'. In F. Hinskens et al. (eds.), *Variation, change and phonological theory*. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 71–102.
- Auer, P. (forthcoming): 'Europe's sociolinguistic unity, or: A typology of European dialect/standard constellations'. In N. Delbecq et al. (eds.), *Perspectives on variation*. Berlin: Mouton/de Gruyter.
- Barbour, S. & Stevenson, P. (1990). *Variation in German. A critical approach to German sociolinguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bailey, G. & Wikle, T. & Tillery, J. & Sand, L. (1994). 'Some patterns of linguistic diffusion'. *Language Variation and Change* 5, 359-390.
- Bellmann, G. (1998). 'Between base dialect and standard language'. *Folia Linguistica XXXII/1-2*, 23-34.
- Bleiker, J. (1969): *Zur Morphologie und Sprachgeographie der Verben <haben, sein, tun> im Schweizerdeutschen*. Frauenfeld: Huber.
- Bohnenberger, K. (1928). 'Über die Ostgrenze des Alemannischen. Tatsächliches und Grundsätzliches'. *PBB* 52, 217-291.
- Britain, D. (2002). 'Space and spatial diffusion'. In J. K. Chambers et al. (eds.), *The handbook of language variation and change*. Oxford: Blackwell, 603-637.
- Gilles, P. (1999): *Dialektausgleich im Lëtzebuergeschen. Zur phonetisch-phonologischen Fokussierung einer Nationalsprache*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- Herrgen, J. & Lenz, A. & Pennay, M. (2003). 'The Research Institute for German Language – *Deutscher Sprachatlas* (Marburg)'. *Dialectologia et Geolinguistica* 11, 94-109.
- Herzog, M. L. (1965). *The Yiddish language in northern Poland. Its geography and history*. The Hague: Mouton & Co.
- Hinskens, F. (1996). *Dialect levelling in Limburg. Structural and sociolinguistic aspects*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- Hofer, L. (2002). *Zur Dynamik urbanen Sprechens. Studien zu Spracheinstellungen und Dialektvariation im Stadtraum*. Tübingen/Basel: Francke.
- Jacobsson, B. (2003). 'Notes on pronominal case in English'. *Studia Neophilologica* 75, 21-32.
- Kerswill, P. (2002). 'Models of linguistic change and diffusion: new evidence from dialect levelling in British English'. *Reading Working Papers in Linguistics* 6, 187-216.
- Kleiner, S. (2002): 'Bairisches in der Regionalsprache Bayerisch-Schwabens: Die Übernahme des Flexionssuffixes {-ts} für die 2. Person Plural'. In E. Funk et al. (eds.), *Sprachgeschichten. Ein Lesebuch für Werner König zum 60. Geburtstag*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 137-151.

- Lenz, A. (2003): *Struktur und Dynamik des Substandards. Eine Studie zum Westmitteldeutschen* (Wittlich/Eifel). Stuttgart: Steiner.
- Milroy, J. & Milroy, L. (eds.) (1993). *Real English: the grammar of English dialects in the British Isles*. London: Longmann.
- Philipp, M. & Weider, E. (2002). *sein und haben im elsass-lothringischen Mundartraum*. Stuttgart: Steiner.
- Rabanus, S. (forthcoming). 'Dialektwandel im 20. Jahrhundert: Verbalplural in Südwestdeutschland'. In E. Eggers et al. (eds), *Moderne Dialekte - Neue Dialektologie*. Stuttgart: Steiner.
- Rabanus, S. & Lameli, A. & Schmidt, J. E. (2002). 'La geografia linguistica tedesca e la Scuola di Marburg'. *Bollettino dell'Atlante Linguistico Italiano* 26.
- Renn, M. (1994): *Die Mundart im Raum Augsburg. Untersuchungen zum Dialekt und zum Dialektwandel im Spannungsfeld großstädtisch-ländlicher und alemannisch-bairischer Gegensätze*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter.
- SBS = *Sprachatlas von Bayerisch-Schwaben* (1997ff.). Ed. by. W. König & H. Wellmann. Vol. 6: *Formengeographie I: Verbum*, compiled by. E. Funk. Vol. 9.1: *Formengeographie II: Nomen I*, compiled by A. Zeisberger. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter.
- Schmidt, J. E. (forthcoming): 'Sprachdynamik'. In E. Eggers et al. (eds), *Moderne Dialekte - Neue Dialektologie*. Stuttgart: Steiner.
- SDS = *Sprachatlas der deutschen Schweiz* (1962-1997). Ed. by R. Hotzenköcherle. Vol. III: *Formengeographie*, compiled by D. Handschuh et al. Bern: Francke.
- SSA = *Südwestdeutscher Sprachatlas* (1989ff.). Ed. by. H. Steger et al. Marburg: Elwert.
- Trudgill, P. (1986). *Dialects in contact*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Trudgill, P. (1990). *The dialects of England*. Cambridge, Mass./Oxford: Blackwell.
- Weinhold, K. (1867). *Bairische Grammatik*. Berlin: Ferd. Dümmler's Verlagsbuchhandlung.
- Wiesinger, P. (1989). *Die Flexionsmorphologie des Verbums im Bairischen*. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.
- Wildfeuer, A. (2001). *Der Dialekt im Kirchdorfer Land: Stand und Tendenzen eines zentralmittelbairischen Subdialektes*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- Zürner, P. (1999): *Sprachinseldialekte. Walserdeutsch im Aostatal (Italien)*. Aarau/Frankfurt/Salzburg: Sauerländer.

Notes

¹ In the Walser villages, even the interviews for the 'Linguistic Atlas of German Switzerland' (SDS) have been conducted in French or Italian - not in Standard German! Cf. Zürner 1999: 38.

² For example, Auer 1997, Hinskens 1996, Gilles 1999, Kerswill 2002, Lenz 2003.

³ The 'Digital Wenker Atlas' is a comprehensive, web-based tool for German dialectology which is currently being realised at the Research Institute in Marburg. For further information or to view the WA (Wenker Atlas) maps quoted in the present paper, please consult <http://www.diwa.info>.

⁴ For a detailed description of the history of the so-called ‘Marburg School’ see Rabanus et al. 2002 (in Italian). A brief English overview of Wenker’s method is provided by Herrgen et al. 2003: 98-103, Barbour & Stevenson 1990: 61-65.

⁵ The analysis is based on the following maps: WA, Maps *haben* [1.Pl.], *habt*, *haben* [3.Pl.], *sind* [1.Pl.], *sind* [3.Pl.], *woll[en]*, *[woll]en*, *[mäh]en* (available online on <http://www.diwa.info>); SSA, Maps III/1.006-1.009, 1.021-1.024, 1.505, 1.506, 1.514, 1.515; SBS, Vol. 6, Maps 134-139, 169-171, 182, 183. Additionally, maps of Switzerland and Alsace are considered: SDS, Vol. III, Maps 31-34, 44-47, 50; Philipp/Weider 2002, Maps 10-13.

⁶ Suffixes are symbolized by small capital letters. Note that the letters indicate sound classes which contain sometimes very different sounds (e.g., E stands for [e], [ø], [ɪ] etc.).

⁷ Cf. Rabanus (forthcoming, section 3.1) for the process of *t*-deletion in Alemannic dialects.

⁸ Cf. Bleiker 1969, 208ff. for the history of the form.

⁹ This holds with the exception of a small area near Lucerne in central Switzerland (see Map 1) where the plural stem of *sein* also has a diphthong. Cf. SDS, Vol. III, 50.

¹⁰ Cf. Hinskens 1996: 6-13, Kerswill 2002: 188-189 for a discussion of the terminological problems.

¹¹ Cf. the SSA, Maps III/1.006-1.009. The scarcity of “normal” verb maps in Wenker’s atlas disables a proper diachronic analysis.

¹² The exceptions concern especially the Augsburg and Donauwörth area. With respect to the pluraverbs, in some locations within these areas the Swabian *Einheitsplural* suffix NT is replaced by the Bavarian markers TS (2 pl.) and N (3 pl.) even in the base dialects. Cf. Map. 3.

¹³ Note that this is not just a hypothetical process: all steps are attested, cf. e.g. Weinhold 1867: 290. There is an ongoing discussion as to whether the grammaticalization of the clitic MR to proper verbal suffix is already completed. I agree with Wildfeuer 2001: 143-146 who argues for the suffix assumption.

¹⁴ Cf. Jacobsson 2003, Milroy & Milroy 1993: 205-206, Trudgill 1990: 89-93.

¹⁵ The only other German variety that displays *uns* ‘us’ as subjective pronoun is the Yiddish spoken in northern Poland before World War II. In some of these Yiddish dialects the oblique in subjective function even co-occurs with the MR suffix. Cf. Herzog 1965: 147; Fig. 4.79.

¹⁶ Cf. WA Map *wir* [Satz 23] and SBS, Vol. 9.1, Map 233.

¹⁷ Schmidt (forthcoming, section 2.2) reports a similar compromise on the phonological level: [o:] replaces [ɔ̃e] in *Brot* ‘bread’ because [ɔ̃e], in Bavarian Swabia, is derived from both Middle High German <ô> and <ei>. Thus, [brɔ̃et] can mean both the noun *Brot* ‘bread’ and the adjective *breit* ‘broad’ (!). Since [ɔ̃e] can only be traced back to <ei> in Bavarian and only to <ô> in Swabian, its elimination prevents misunderstandings in the transition zone of Bavarian Swabia.