



KATHOLISCHE UNIVERSITÄT
EICHSTÄTT-INGOLSTADT

Exploring Phonological Variation in Riograndense Hunsrückisch:

First Results from a Corpus-Based Study

Kerstin Dierolf

22 July 2026

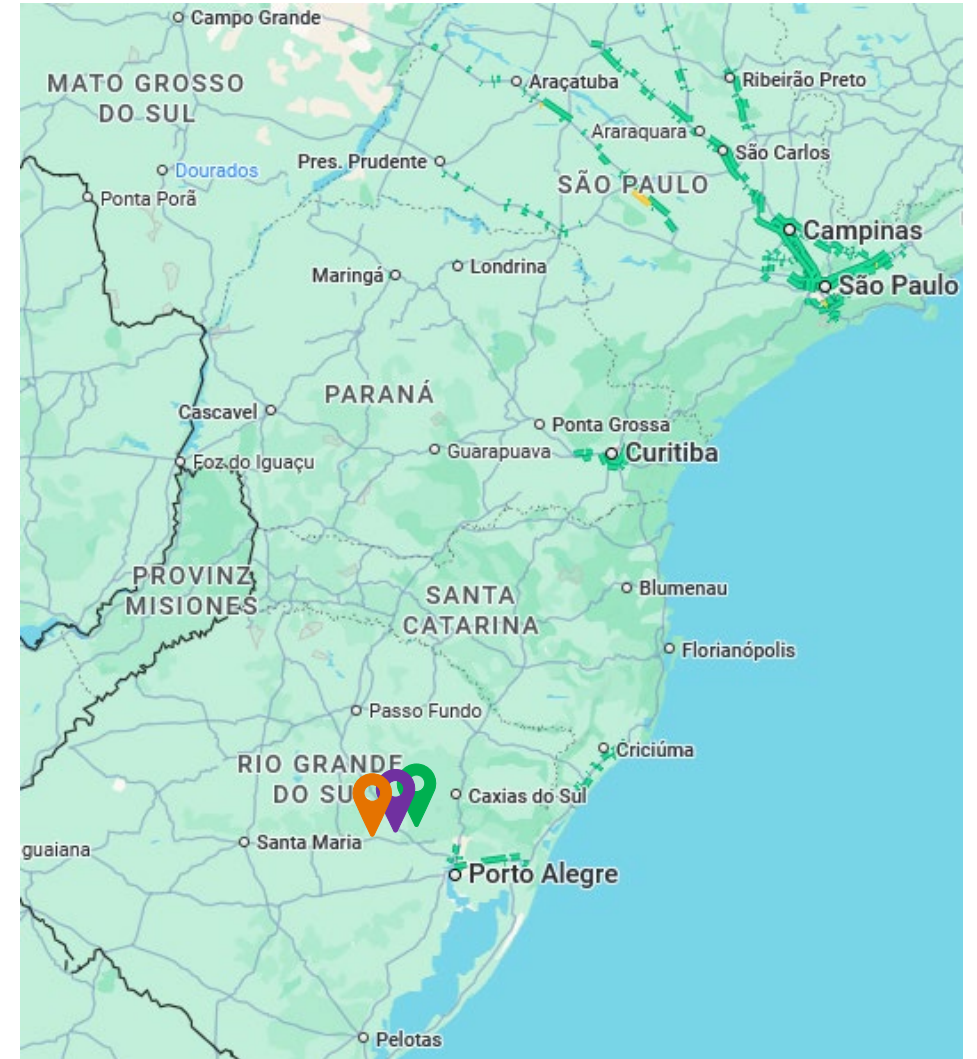
Workshop “Variation and Idiosyncrasy in Germanic
and Romance.” (LMU Munich)

Emigration from the Former Bohemia to Brazil

- Emigration mainly took place in the second half of the 19th century
- Settlement in the three southernmost Brazilian states Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, and Paraná leading to a process of “horizontal territorialization” (Altenhofen 2014)
- Focus of this presentation:
the linguistic situation in Rio Grande do Sul (RS), particularly in the localities of

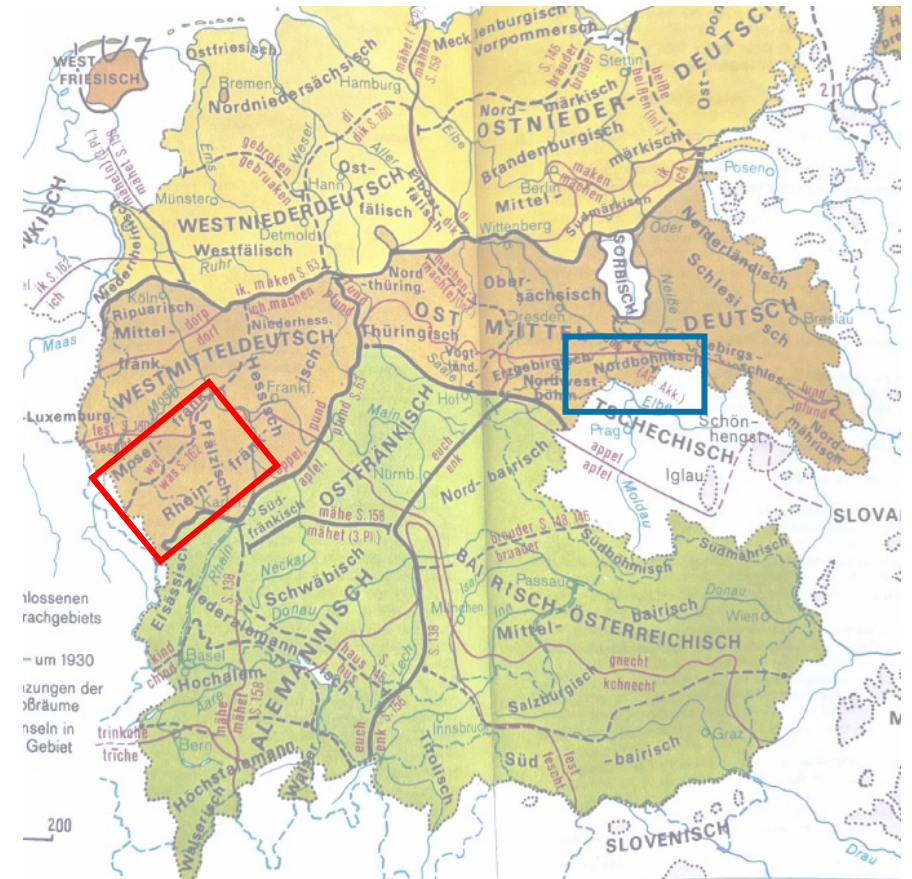
- Imigrante,
- Venâncio Aires,
- Agudo

Corpus RS2019



Corpus RS2019

- 70 structured interviews
- 33 free informal conversations guided by predefined topics (school, occupation, ancestors/family, holidays and celebrations, Germany, agriculture, nicknames, etc.)
- Mostly group-interviews, 155 informants
- Data collected in 2019 by Prof. Dr Sebastian Kürschner (KU) in Imigrante, Venâncio Aires, and Agudo
- Descendants of emigrants from Northern Bohemia
- Original dialect: Upper Saxon-Silesian transition zone (characterized by East Central German features)
- Largely levelled towards Riograndenser Hunsrückisch / a standard-oriented variety as acrolectal reference varieties (Altenhofen 2016; Habel 2017; Prediger 2019; Prediger & Kürschner 2021; Kürschner 2025)



Corpus RS2019



conversation between I04, I14, and G80 in the informant's garden

Venâncio Aires



Venâncio Aires



Agudo



Imigrante



Imigrante



Venâncio Aires

Phonological Variation in RS2019

- Original dialect: Upper Saxon-Silesian transition zone
 - Today, hardly any traces of the original Northern Bohemian dialect remain (Altenhofen 2016; Habel 2017; Prediger 2019; Prediger & Kürschner 2021; Kürschner 2025)
 - Largely levelled towards Riograndenser Hunsrückisch / a standard-oriented variety as acrolectal reference varieties
 - Portuguese, as the dominant language, also plays a role
 - Phonological features of Hunsrückisch present (Altenhofen 1996, 2016), e. g.
 - Unrounded vowels ([y:] > [i:] and [ø:] > [e:]), such as *grien* (StG. *grün*) ‘green’, *scheen* (StG. *schön*) ‘beautiful’
 - Raised vowels ([a] > [ɔ]), such as *kold* (StG. *kalt*) ‘cold’
 - Lenition ([p] > [b], [t] > [d], [k] > [g]), such as *Ernde* (StG. *Ernte*) ‘harvest’
 - Spirantization ([g] > [ç]), such as *Griech* (StG. *Krieg*) ‘war’
- Apocope of final *-n*, such as *bringe* (StG *bringen*) ‘(to) bring’, *make* (StG *machen*) ‘(to) make’

Research Questions (RQ): *n*-Apocope

RQ1: Is *n*-apocope realized in the data under investigation, and if so, how frequently?

RQ2: Which inter-individual factors influence the realization vs. non-realization of *n*-apocope?

RQ3: Are there intra-individual differences in the use of *n*-apocope?

→ Combination of quantitative approach with qualitative case studies

Data and Informants

- 11 free informal conversations (5–15 minutes each)
- 16 speakers (8 female, 8 male)
- 3 localities: Imigrante, Venâncio Aires, Agudo
- Generation: children, younger adults (18–49 years), older adults (+50 years)
- Education: tertiary education, secondary education
- Pilot dataset, restricted to verb tokens, e. g. *spreche/sprechen* ‘speak’, *fehle/fehlen* ‘be missing’, *make/machen* ‘make’, *respondiere/respondieren* ‘answer’ (< port. *responder*)
- n = 100 *n*-apocope vs. n = 106 no apocope (N = 206 tokens)

Results: Group-Level Variation (Inter-Individual Variation)

Generalized linear mixed-effects model (GLMM)

- Dependent variable: realization of *n*-apocope (binary: 0/1)
- Fixed effects tested: locality, generation, gender, verb type (native vs. non-native), verb form (infinitive vs. inflected forms)
- Random effects tested: speaker, verb lemma (motivated by likelihood-ratio tests)
- Best model: $\text{apocope} \sim \text{locality} + \text{generation} + (1 \mid \text{verb lemma})$
- Gender, verb type, verb form, and speaker as random effect did not improve model fit and were excluded

Results: Group-Level Variation (Inter-Individual Variation)

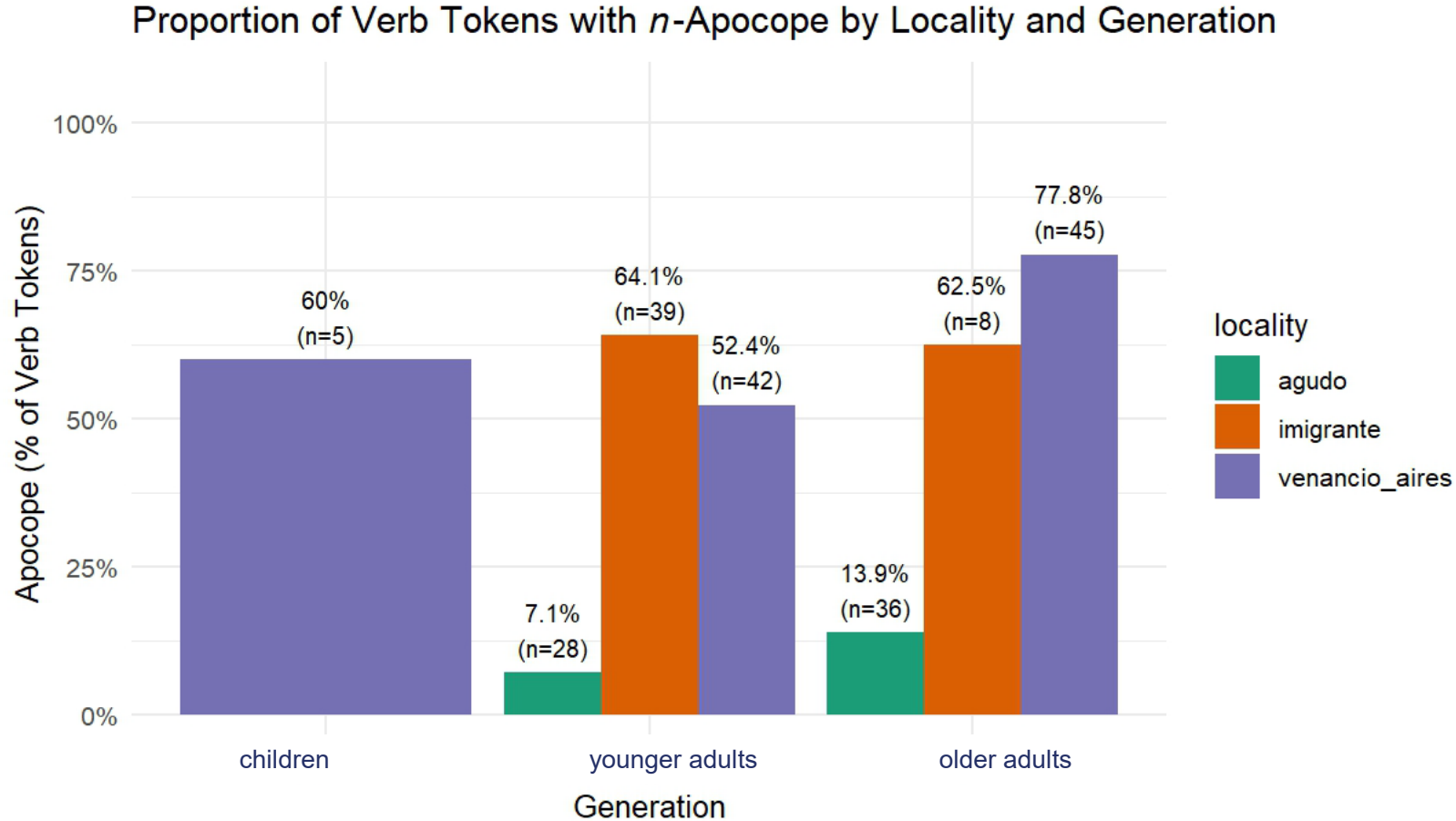
Fixed effects	β	SE	z	p
Intercept	-2.97	1.32	-2.24	.025 *
Locality: Imigrante	3.90	0.80	4.86	<.001 ***
Locality: Venâncio Aires	3.42	0.68	5.04	<.001 ***
Generation: younger adults	-0.09	1.20	-0.07	.941
Generation: older adults	1.21	1.20	1.01	.315

Likelihood-ratio test for generation: $\chi^2(2) = 7.48$, $p = .024$ *

Random effects	Variance	SD
Verb lemma (intercept)	2.01	1.42

Marginal $R^2 = 0.346$ | Conditional $R^2 = 0.594$

Results: Group-Level Variation (Inter-Individual Variation)



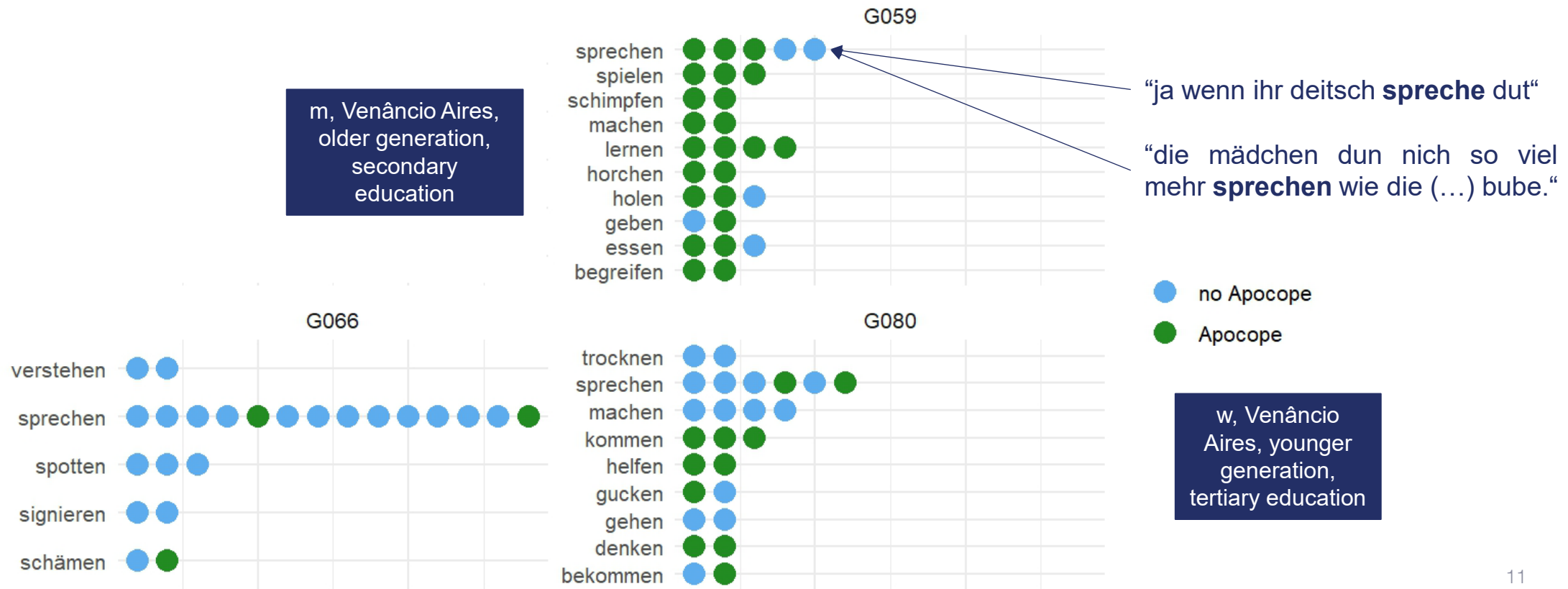
Results go along with findings by Prediger & Habel (2024) on the lexical level

Conditional $R^2 = 0.594$

Results: Intra-Individual Variation and Individual Differences

= variability of individual speakers in the same situation or the same style of speech (Bülow et al. 2021)

Distribution of Tokens with and without *n*-Apocope by Informant and Verb Lemma



Summary and Outlook

- Summary of findings:
 - *n*-apocope is realized in the data under investigation (RQ1)
 - It shows a clear locality gradient: Agudo remains closer to the standard, while Imigrante and Venâncio Aires show a stronger tendency towards Hunsrückisch (RQ2)
 - Generation contributes to inter-individual variation, though individual contrasts remain statistically uncertain given sample structure (RQ2)
 - Intra-individual variation is present to varying degrees: speakers vary, sometimes even in their use of the same lemma (RQ3)
- Explanation for the random effect of verb lemma: word frequency? phonological environment?
- Extension of the dataset:
 - Integration of nouns
 - Integration of additional questionnaire data (structured tasks) (as a fixed effect variable?)
- Further linguistic patterns: Investigation of *a*-final forms alongside *n*-apocope,
e. g. *macha* – *make* – *machen* ‘make’ and *helfa* – *helfe* – *helfen* ‘help’



KATHOLISCHE UNIVERSITÄT
EICHSTÄTT-INGOLSTADT

Thank you – danke, thankschee
and obrigada!

Kerstin Dierolf

Literature

- Altenhofen, Cléo V. (2016): Standard und Substandard bei den Hunsrückern in Brasilien: Variation und Dachsprachenwechsel des Deutschen im Kontakt mit dem Portugiesischen. In: Alexandra Lenz (Hrsg.), *German Abroad. Perspektiven der Variationslinguistik, Sprachkontakt- und Mehrsprachigkeitsforschung*. Wien: Vienna University Press, 103–129.
- Bülow Lars, Andrin Büchler, Nicolai Rawyler, Christa Schneider & David Britain (2021): Linguistic, Social, and Individual Factors Constraining Variation in Spoken Swiss Standard German. In: Alexander Werth et al. (Hrsg.), *Intra-individual Variation in Language*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 127–173.
- Habel, Jussara M. (2017): „*Das böhmische Deutsch*“: *perda e coineização de variantes do alemão de imigrantes boêmios no Rio Grande do Sul* [Verlust und Beibehaltung deutscher Varietäten böhmischer Einwanderer in Rio Grande do Sul]. Porto Alegre: Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul. [Dissertation]. <https://lume.ufrgs.br/handle/10183/172378>, 17.07.2026.
- Habel, Jussara M./Angélica Prediger (2024): Die Weiterentwicklung einer Intermediate Variety des Deutschen bei Nachfahren nordböhmischer Herkunft. In: *Linguagem & Ensino* 27 (1), 154–170.
- Kürschner, Sebastian (2025). Süd- und nordböhmische Sprachminderheiten in Brasilien. In: *Germanistische Werkstatt* 14, 69–85.
- Prediger, Angélica (2019): *Topodinâmica do alemão falado em comunidades de imigração do norte da boêmia no Brasil* [Topodynamik des gesprochenen Deutschen in nordböhmischen Einwanderergemeinschaften in Brasilien]. Porto Alegre: Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul.

Literature

- Prediger, Angélica & Sebastian Kürschner (2021). Die Dynamik des gesprochenen Deutschen in Südbrasilien: Sprachkontakt, Variation und Normbildung. In: Csaba Földes (Hrsg.): *Kontaktvarietäten des Deutschen im Ausland*. Tübingen: Narr, 215–237.
- Thun, Harald (2005): Variation im Gespräch zwischen Informant und Explorator. In: Alexandra Lenz/Klaus J. Mattheier (Hrsg.), *Varietäten – Theorie und Empirie*. Frankfurt a.M. (u. a.): Peter Lang, 97–126.
- Thun, Harald (2011). Pluridimensional cartography. In: Alfred Lameli/Roland Kehrein/Stefan Rabanus (Hrsg.), *Language and Space. An International Handbook of Linguistic Variation*. Volume 2: Language Mapping. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton (HSK 30.2), 506–523.