



Inter- and intraindividual variation in the realization of diphthongs in the Bavarian variety of São Bento do Sul

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Variation and idiosyncrasy in Germanic and Romance
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São Bento do Sul: Location





Data

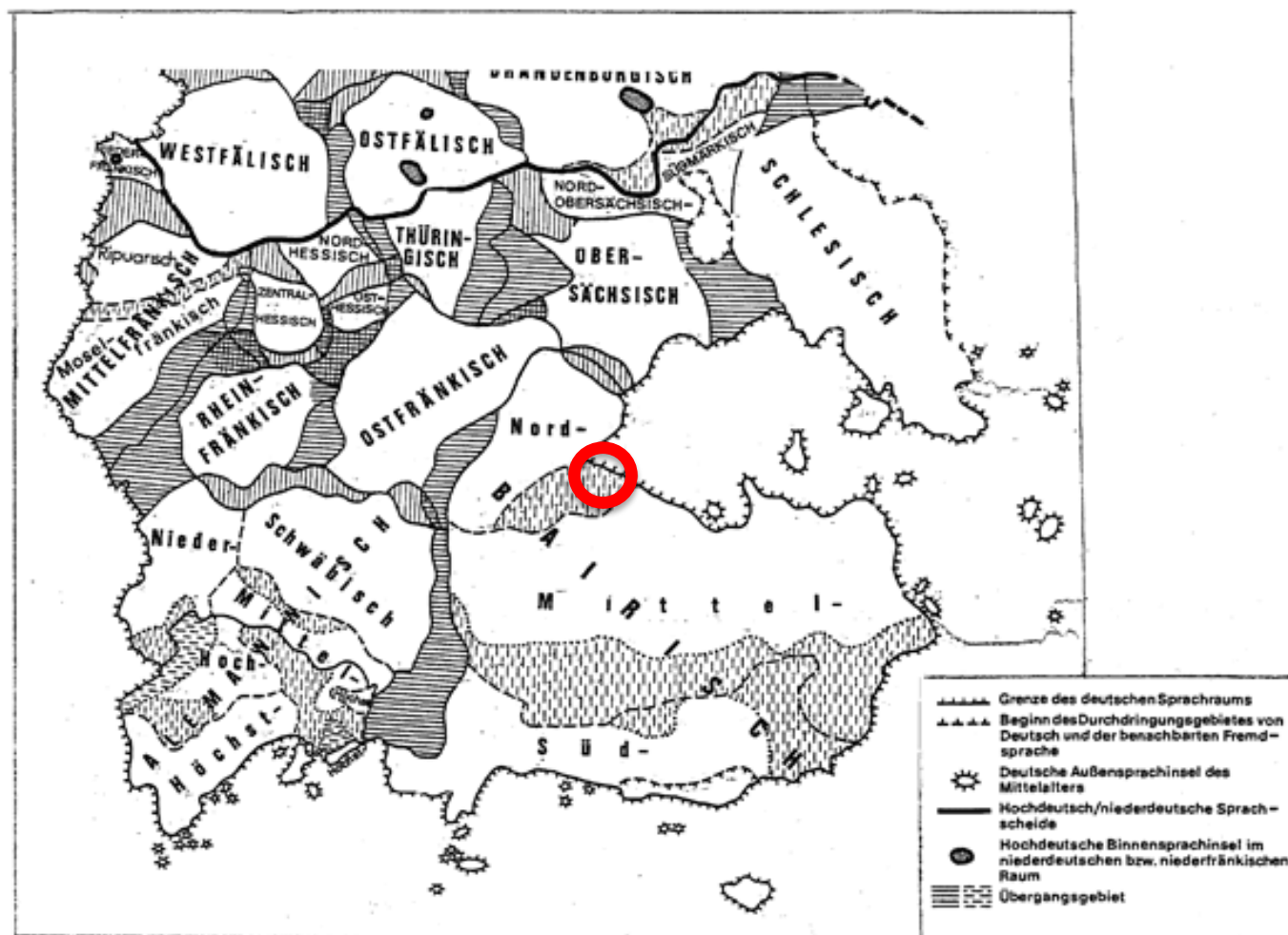
- Interviews from 2002, 2004, and 2005
- Project „German and Germans in São Bento do Sul 1873–2003“ (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg; Bernd Naumann)
- mostly informal biographical interviews (5-45 minutes)
- some structured questionnaires
- c. 38.5 hours in interviews with 157 persons
- mostly in Bavarian, sometimes in Standard German (or both)

Gärtner (2011), Habermann/Kürschner (2022),
Kürschner (2025), Kürschner et al. (in press),
Naumann (2004), Rastelli (2025)

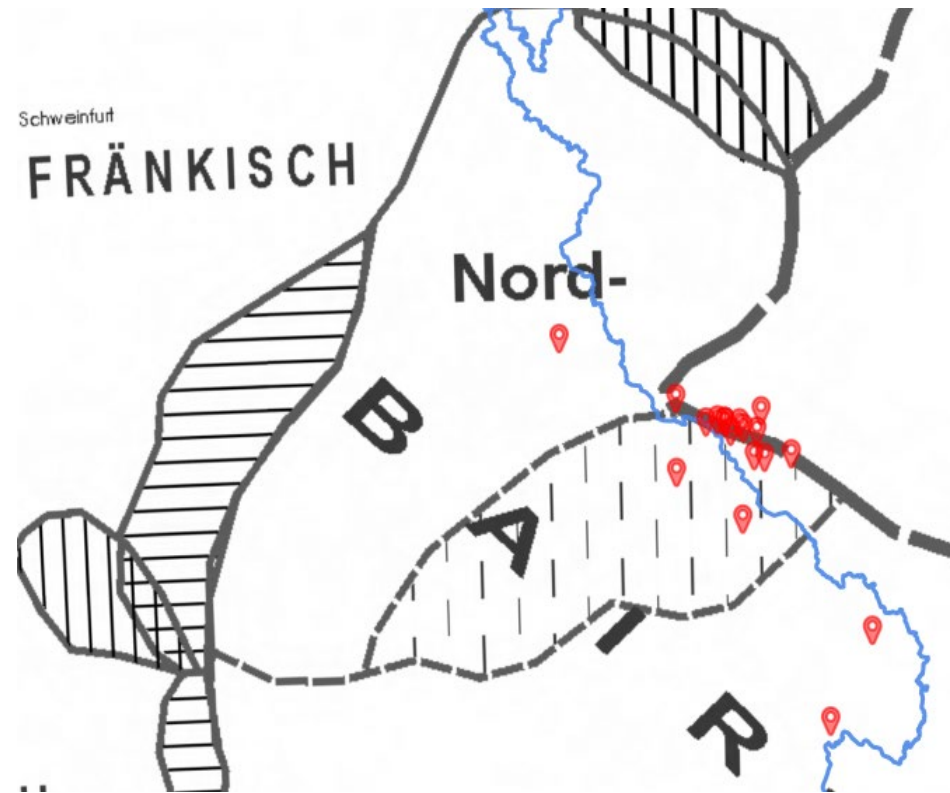
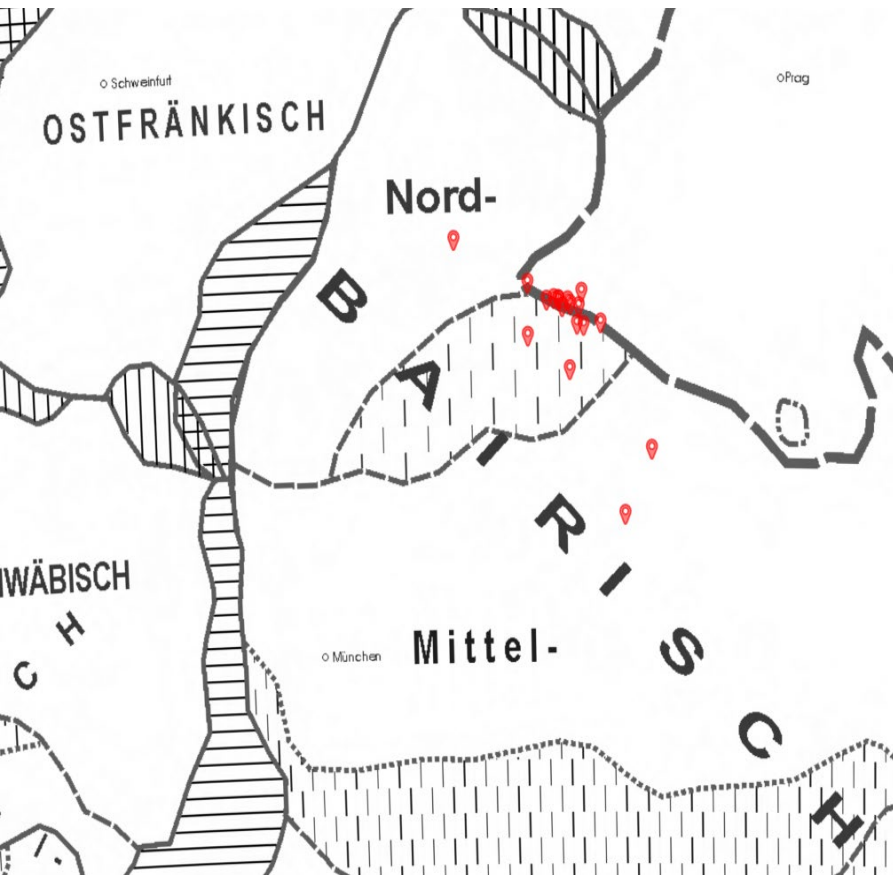
on other data from São Bento do Sul: Stöckle (2021)



Area of emigration (according to Blau 1958) using Wiesinger's (1983) account of dialect areas



Zoom into area of emigration



Transitional zone between North and Central Bavarian

- important marker of North vs. Central Bavarian:
different development of Middle High German falling diphthongs
ie, üe, uo
- process towards standard variety: monophthongization,
cf. *liebe guote brüeder* > *liebe gute Brüder*
- Bavarian varieties retained diphthongs, but these vary between
falling and rising realization

Development in Bavarian

Middle High German	ie	üe	uo
Central Bavarian	ia	ia	ua
North Bavarian	ej	ej	ou
Standard German	[i:]	[y:]	[u:]

so-called „gestürzte Diphthonge“ ‚subverted diphthongs‘ in North Bavarian

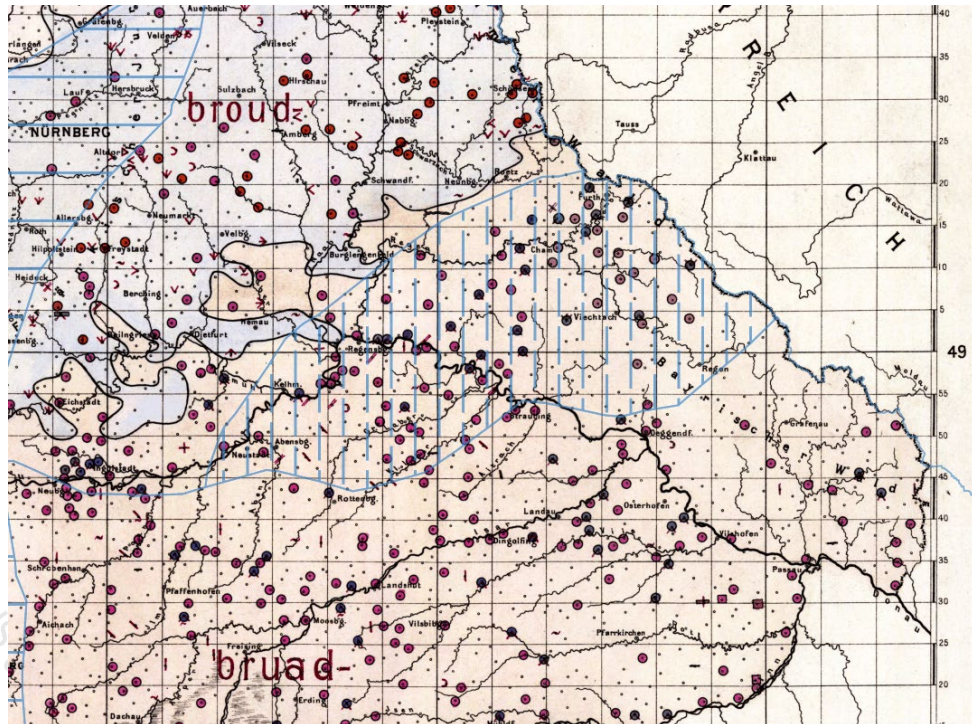
⇒ local variants (seldom):

⇒ *öj*: *wöj* ‚how‘, *köj* ‚cows‘ (rising)

⇒ *oj*: *woj* ‚how‘, *koj* ‚cows‘ (rising)

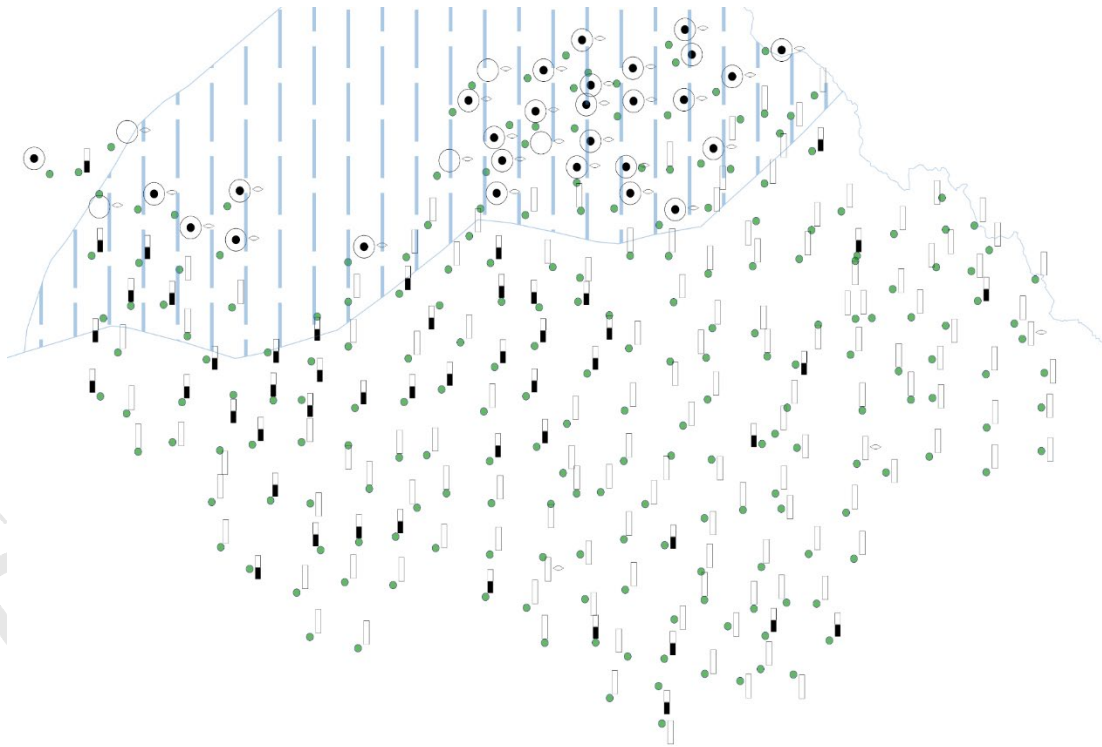
⇒ *ea*: *neamand* ‚nobody‘ (falling)

MHG *uo* in *Bruder* ‚brother‘ (Wenker atlas)



bruader vs.
brouder

Mhd. *uo* in *Kuh* ‚cow‘ (SNiB vol. 3)



kua vs. *kou*

Mhd. *uo* in »Kuh«

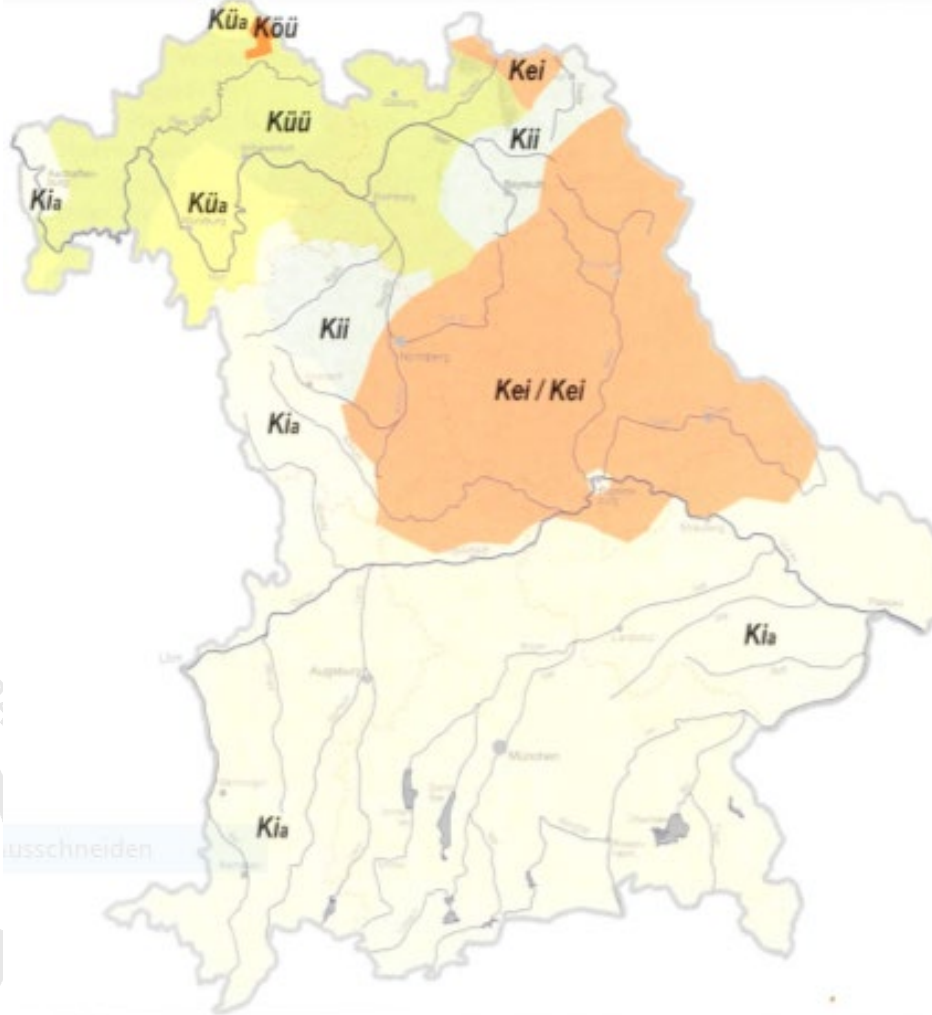
Diphthonge

- ◻ >uα</>uα<: (z.B. kh̥uα, kh̥u̯α, gh̥uα)
- ◼ >uα<: (z.B. kh̥uα, gh̥uα)
- >ou</>ou<: (z.B. kh̥·u, kh̥ou, gh̥ou)
- ◉ >ou<: (z.B. kh̥ou, kh̥ou)

Zusatzzeichen

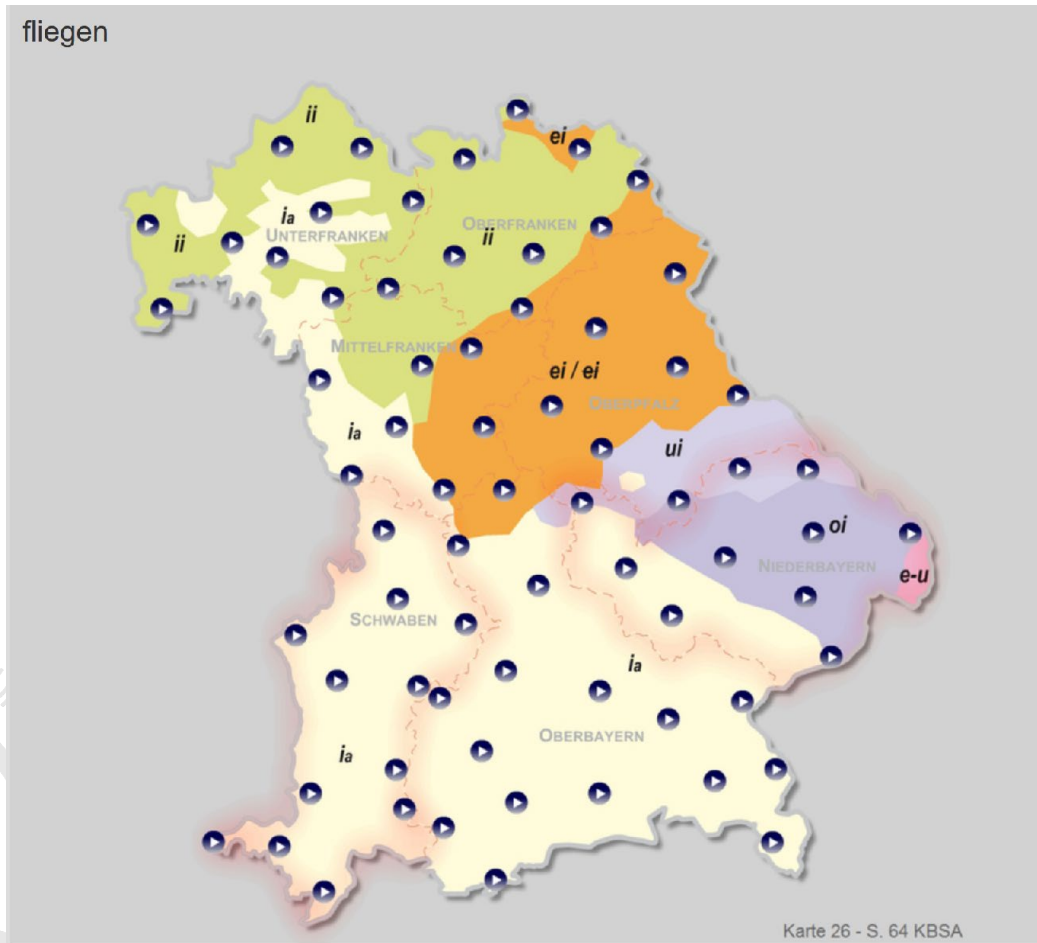
- ◊ Zentralisierung eines Diphthongelements oder Zentralisierung beider Diphthongelemente

MHG *üe* in *Kühe* ‚cows‘ (Kleiner Bayerischer Sprachatlas)



Kia vs. *Kei*

MHG *ie* in *fliegen* ‚fly‘ (Kleiner Bayerischer Sprachatlas)



fliagen vs. *fleigen*



Research questions

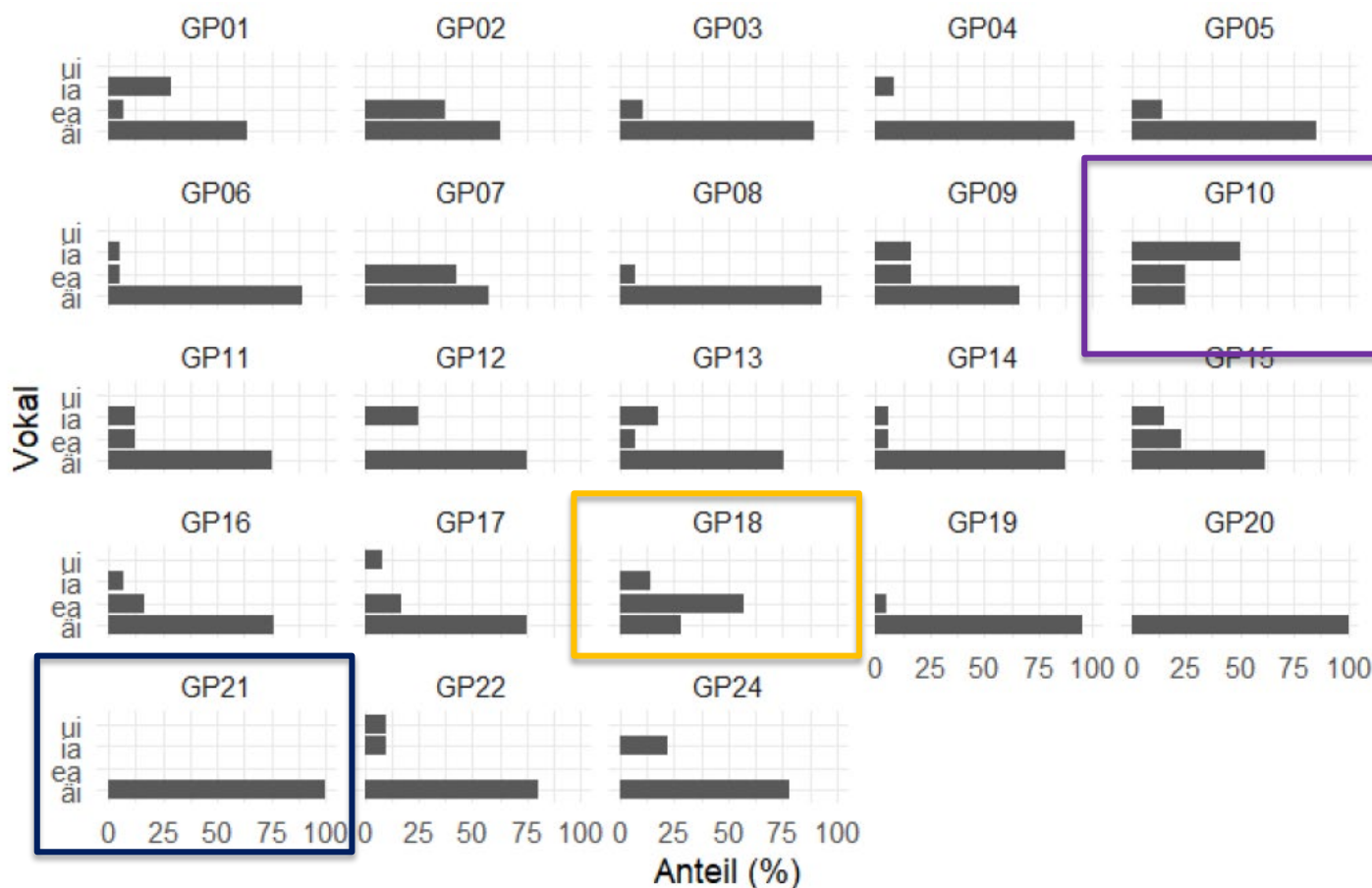
- Does the variation between diphthongs known from Central and North Bavarian change in Brazil where no surrounding German dialect areas can influence the direction of changes?
- Does the high contact between speakers in Brazil result in one variant winning out (dialect leveling)? Or does the standard variety play a role (vertical leveling)?
- Is variability retained?
 - intra-individually
 - inter-individually
 - item-related
 - related to social factors (sex, age (3 age groups))



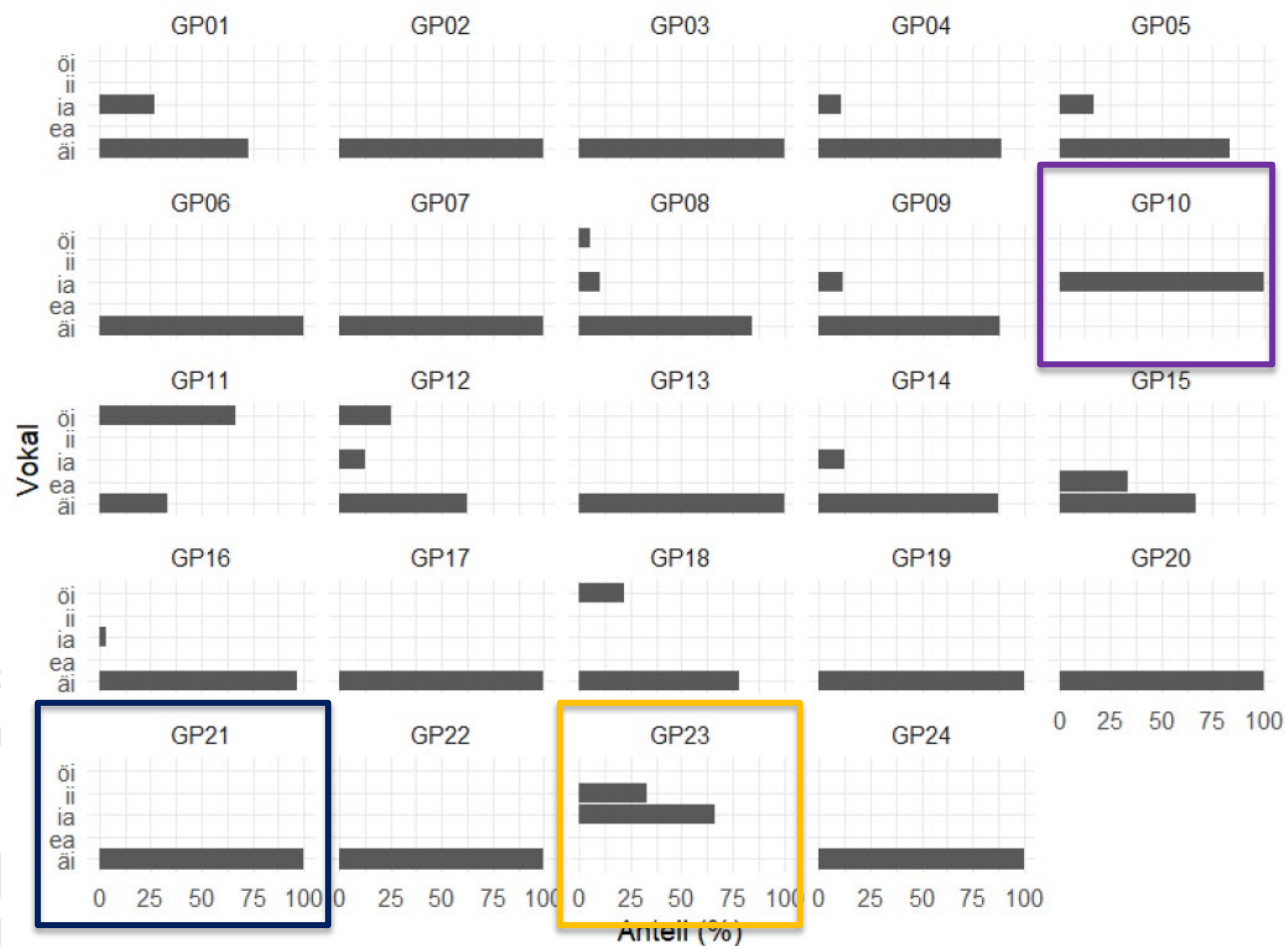
Variation found

Varianten	Beispiele
Mhd. <i>ie</i>	
<i>ie, ia</i> [ɪə]	<i>iema</i> ‘immer’, <i>liawa</i> ‘lieber’, <i>niema</i> ‘nimmer’, <i>wia</i> ‘wie’, <i>siebazg</i> ‘siebzig’, <i>wieda</i> ‘wieder’
<i>ea</i> [ɛə]	<i>Greach</i> ‘Krieg’, <i>greagt</i> ‘kriegt’, <i>neamand</i> ‘nie- mand’, <i>Veacha</i> ‘Vieh’
<i>äi</i> [æɪ]	<i>greigt</i> ‘kriegt’, <i>Veicher</i> ‘Vieh’, <i>wei</i> ‘wie’
<i>ai</i> [aɪ]	<i>graing</i> ‘kriegen’, <i>laiber</i> ‘lieber’, <i>wai</i> ‘wie’
Mhd. <i>üe</i>	
<i>ia</i> [ɪə]	<i>Briada</i> ‘Brüder’, <i>fian</i> ‘führen’, <i>friars</i> ‘früher’, <i>mi- assn (mian)</i> ‘müssen’, <i>riaren</i> ‘rühren’
<i>ea</i> [ɛə]	<i>meassn</i> ‘müssen’
<i>äi</i> [æɪ]	<i>freias</i> ‘früher’, <i>Keichel</i> ‘Küchlein’, <i>Kej</i> ‘Kühe’, <i>mej/meysn</i> ‘müssen’
<i>ai</i> [aɪ]	<i>fraias</i> ‘früher’
Mhd. <i>uo</i>	
<i>uo</i> [ʊo], <i>ua</i> [ʊə]	<i>Bua</i> ‘Bube, Junge’, <i>Bruada</i> ‘Bruder’, <i>doa(n)</i> ‘tut, tun’, <i>guot/guad</i> ‘gut’, <i>gsuacht</i> ‘gesucht’, <i>mua/muaß</i> ‘muss’, <i>Muoda</i> ‘Mutter’, <i>zua</i> ‘zu’
<i>ou</i> [ʊʊ]	<i>Bou</i> ‘Bube, Junge’, <i>darzou</i> ‘dazu’, <i>doun</i> ‘tun’, <i>Fous</i> ‘Fuß’, <i>mou</i> ‘muss’, <i>Schouh</i> ‘Schuh’

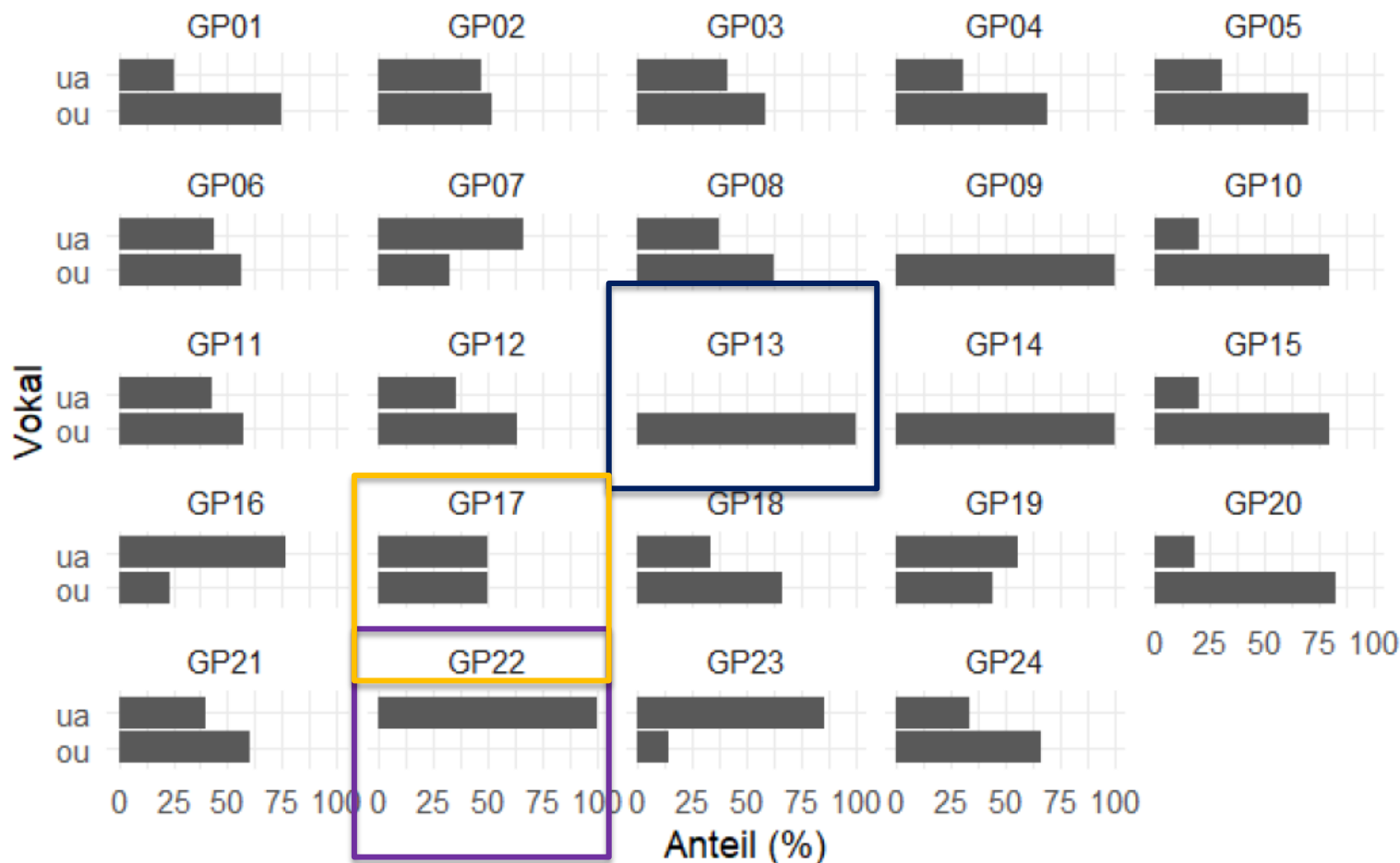
Intra-individual variation in MHG *ie*



Intra-individual variation in MHG *üe*



Intra-individual variation in MHG *uo*



Intra-individual variation per item

Alfonso: *nima, niema; griagt, graing* ‘kriegen’; *wia, wei, wai* ‘wie’;
freias, fraias ‘früher’;

doa, doan, doun ‘tun’; *zum, zuo* ‘zum’;

Erna: *ima, iema* ‘immer’; *wia, wei, wai* ‘wie’;

miassn, mian, meassn, mei, meisn ‘müssen’;

doa, doan, doun ‘tun’; *zum, zuo, darzuo* ‘(da)zu’;

Leopoldo: *nima, nema* ‘nicht mehr’; *griagt, greagt* ‘kriegen’; *Veacha, Veicher* ‘Vieh’; *wia, wei* ‘wie’;

frias, freias ‘früher’; *miassn, mian, mei, meisn* ‘müssen’;

Bua, Bou ‘Bube’; *doa, doan, doun* ‘tun’; *muss, mua(ß), mou* ‘muss’;

zum, za ‘zum’

Example from Habermann/Kürschner (2022: 330)

some variants are bound to frequent phrases: *mua(ss) mä song* (Alfonso)

Data used for quantitative analysis

- 23 transcribed interviews
(speaker age: 41-78 years; mean age: 60 years)
- words/word forms with falling diphthongs in Middle High German
- all diphthongs categorized and number of used variants counted
- diphthong categories: CB (falling), NB (rising), SG (monophthong)
- *ie*: 9 items
(e.g., *immer* ,always‘, *kriegen* ,get‘, *Viech/Vieh* ,animal‘, *wie* ,how‘)
- *üe*: 9 items
(e.g., *Brüder* ,brothers‘, *früh/früher* ,earli(er)‘, *Kühe* ,cows‘, *müssen* ,must‘)
- *uo*: 14 items
(e.g., *Bruder* ,brother‘, *Bube* ,boy‘, *Kuh* ,cow‘, *muss* ,must‘, *tun* ,do‘)
- *müssen* and *muss* clear outliers, removed from further analysis

Results

	MHG <i>ie</i>	MHG <i>üe</i>	MHG <i>uo</i>	Sum
Central Bav. variant (falling)	31 (7%)	13 (10%)	101 (22%)	143 (14%)
North Bav. variant (rising)	275 (59%)	115 (88%)	189 (40%)	571 (54%)
Std. German variant (monophthong)	159 (34%)	2 (2%)	181 (38%)	342 (32%)
significance (ANOVA)	$p < .001$ (all groups)	$p < .001$ NB – CB NB – SG	$p < .05$ NB – CB SG – CB	$p < .001$ (all groups)

Analysis of variation, post-hoc:

- no measurable effects for factors person, sex, age group
- measurable effect for factor item (word) ($p < .001$)

Results: Variation regarding person

- nearly all informants use both Central and North Bavarian and Standard German variants
- ⇒ high intra-individual variation

Tendencies

- 11 persons mostly use North Bavarian and Standard German variants (avoiding Central Bavarian)
- 5 persons with tendency to use North Bavarian variants only
- 5 persons use all three variants interchangeably
- 2 persons use both Central and North Bavarian variants, but avoid Standard German variants



Example: *Bou* ,boy' (son)

Ja, do hamman se nachand ((.)) hams
nachand ((.)) gwochn de kinder, ne
Dann hod se oana vaheirad, hod se da
anda no vaheirad, ne

Nachand mei Naal ((.)) de hodn hoid
nachand mit en jüngstn ((.)) **Boum**
gwohnt, ne

bis dann gstorm is, ne
oda Neel, ne

Ja, da haben sie nachher ((.)) haben sie
nachher ((.)) gewachsen die Kinder, ne.
Dann hat sich einer verheiratet, hat sich
der andere verheiratet, ne

Nachher meine Großmutter ((.)), die hat
halt nachher mit dem jüngsten ((.)) Sohn
gewohnt, ne

Bis sie dann gestorben ist, ne
Oder Großvater, ne

Yes, so the children grew up. Then one got married and the other got married.
Later my grandmother lived with my youngest son
until she died. Or grandfather.



Example: *Bua* ‚boy‘ (son)

I: und kenna die alle no deitsch

da zua de zwoa Derndla, muss i imma, de
red no bairisch.

und da **Bua**, der wohnt in Song Paulo, der
red a no bairisch. ja. ((-))
aba seine Kinda nimma mehr.
na.

I: Und können die alle noch deutsch?

Da zu den zwei Mädchen, muss ich
immer, die reden noch bairisch.

Und der Bub, der wohnt in São Paulo,
der redet auch noch bairisch.
Aber seine Kinder nicht mehr.
Nein.

I: And do they all still know German?

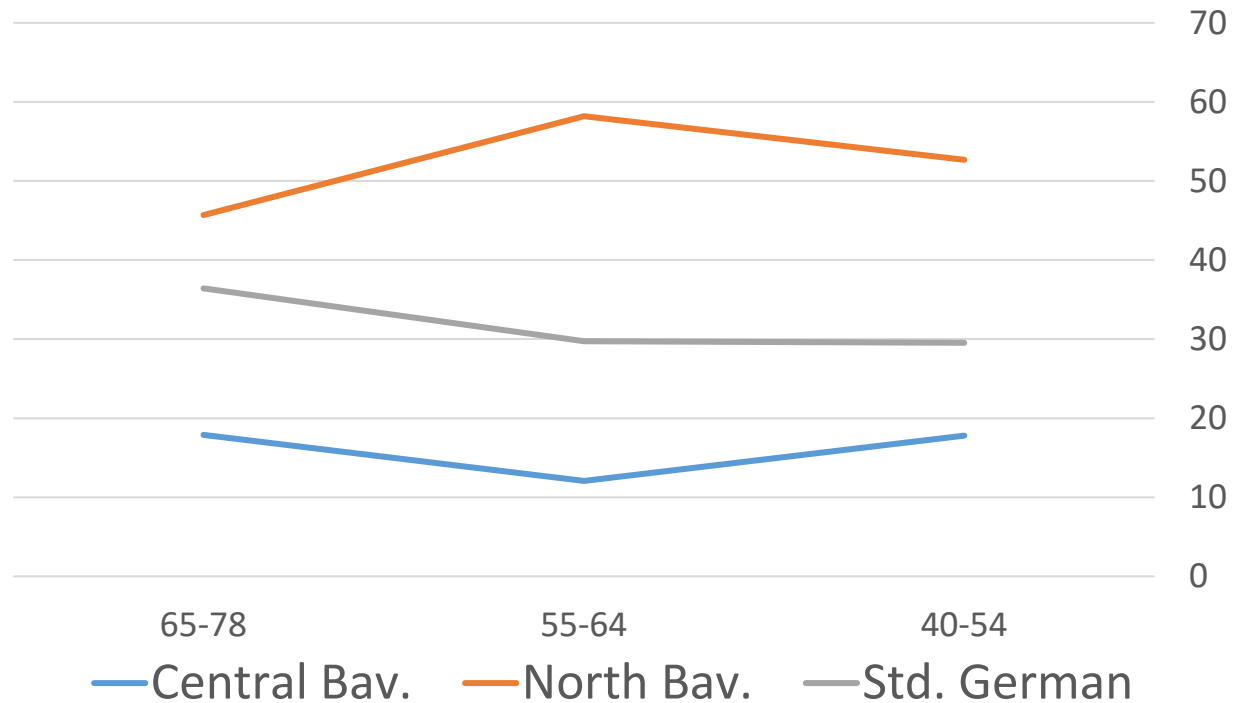
The two girls still speak Bavarian.

And the boy, he lives in São Paulo, he also still speaks Bavarian. But his children
don't. No.

Results: Variation regarding item

- MHG *ie*:
 - tendency towards *ia* only with *lieb* ‚dear‘ (but often standard variant)
 - tendency towards *ej* with *Krieg* ‚war‘, *kriegen* ‚get‘, *Viech* ‚animal‘, *wie* ‚how‘
 - mostly standard variant with *immer* ‚always‘, *nimmer* ‚never‘, *nie* ‚never‘
- MHG *üe*:
 - strong tendency towards *ia* with *Brüder* ‚brothers‘, *führen* ‚lead‘, *rühren* ‚mix‘
 - always *ej* with *früh(er)* ‚earli(er)‘, *Füße* ‚feet‘, *Kühe* ‚cows‘
 - all other words with clear tendency towards *ej*
- MHG *uo*:
 - strong tendency towards *ua* with *Bruder* ‚brother‘, *gut* ‚good‘, *Mutter* ‚mother‘
 - strong tendency towards *ou* with *Bube* ‚boy‘, *Fuß* ‚foot‘, *Kuh* ‚cow‘, *Schuh* ‚shoe‘, *suchen* ‚seek‘, *tun* ‚do‘
 - always *u* with *fuhr* ‚drove‘, *Kuchen* ‚cake‘, *Schule* ‚school‘ *zu* ‚to‘

Results: Variation regarding age



relative values (percent per variant) regarding age group

(no statistical significance)



Conclusions

- Variation between Central and North Bavarian variants is retained, with clear dominance of North Bavarian
- variation retained despite high contact in the city of São Bento do Sul and lack of contact towards surrounding dialect areas
- apart from Bavarian, Standard German variants play a significant role
→ however, neither horizontal nor vertical leveling results in homogeneous varieties
- some items (words) are restricted to one of the variants
⇒ item-related variation as only explaining factor
- variation mainly independent of social and situational factors
⇒ high degree of intra-individual variation
(cf. Bülow/Wallner 2019, Bülow/Pfenninger 2021, Ulbrich/Werth 2021)
- only few individuals with clear tendency towards a specific realization (North Bavarian)



Thank you for your attention!

