Relativization strategies in the Bavarian dialects

Although relative clauses are undoubtedly among the most intensively researched syntactic phenomena in various linguistic disciplines (e.g., language typology, language acquisition research), they have – like the entire level of syntax – long been neglected in German variationist sociolinguistics. As a result, very little is known about variation and change and the underlying linguistic, cognitive, and sociolinguistic variation-controlling factors in the realm of relative clause formation for the germanspeaking dialects. This dissertation aims to contribute to closing this research gap by examining attributive and free relative clauses in the Bavarian dialects of Austria, South Tyrol, and Bavaria.

Focus is on the structuring of variation, addressing a systematic investigation of the following linguistic factors, which also allows conclusions to be drawn about interaction effects: gender, number, case (mis-)matching, animacy and (in-)definiteness of the antecedent as well as the syntactic position of the relativizer in the typological field. This also accounts for cognitive factors such as the adjacency between the antecedent and the relativization variant, and the positions (SU > DO > IO > OBL > GEN > OCOMP) on Keenan and Comrie's (1977, 1979 a,b) well-known Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy. With regard to sociolinguistic factors, dialect area, age, gender and formal education level of the informants are taken into account.

Data will be collected through a mix a methods, including a specifically for the elicitation of relative clauses designed card game, a language production experiment that consists of animated videos (both spoken), and a syntax-questionnaire (written).

Each method aims at controlled data. Therefore, the innovative value of the dissertation lies not only in the comprehensive investigation of the variable relative clause in the whole Bavarian dialect area, but also in innovative methods such as the previously described card game.