German as a Standard Average European Language

1. Introduction: What is Standard Average European?

In this chapter, we will focus on German as one of the core Standard Average European (SAE) languages (Haspelmath 2001; Haspelmath et al. 2005) and review some of the results of previous investigations, yet from a different angle: By also taking into consideration older stages of this language (most notably Old High German, spoken/written in the period between 750–1050) and several modern dialects, we offer a more nuanced perspective. What is more, we address several problems that arise with the definition and scope of the SAE features mentioned in the literature.

1.1 Areal typology

Ever since the advent of modern linguistics at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, geographic areas have played an important role in linguistic theorizing. As one prominent example, we can take the wave theory developed by Hugo Schuchardt and Johannes Schmidt, i.e. the idea that linguistic innovations can spread over geographical space across different languages/dialects and even lead to superposition of

grammatical features and the developments associated with them (Schuchhardt 1900; Schmidt 1872; see Hurch 2009 on the genesis of this concept). A closely related concept is the one of a sprachbund, a term coined by Trubetzkoy (1930), whose origins stem from the observation, dating back to the 19th century, that there are apparent structural similarities across the neighboring (but not closely related) languages of the Balkans (cf. Tomić 2006 for a recent survey).

The sprachbund notion is one of the different sources of the modern concept of a linguistic area. According to Campbell (2017: 24), its central feature is "generally held to be the existence of structural similarities shared among languages of the geographical area in question, usually coupled with the assumption that the reason the languages of the area share these traits is because at least some of them are borrowed". Although there is much initial plausibility to such a characterization, it is surprisingly difficult to define this concept precisely, e.g. in the sense of necessary and sufficient conditions. Campbell (2017: 24–26) discusses several criteria that have been put forward (e.g. number and/or bundling of shared traits, number of language families[1] involved, etc.), arriving at two important dimensions that have not been distinguished with sufficient care in previous research, namely (p. 28):

1. *Linguistic area sensu stricto* (LASS): This concept captures "a geographical region defined by shared diffused traits mostly contained within and shared across the languages of a clearly delimited geographical space"; in mathematical terms, this corresponds to a set-intersection perspective.
2. *Trait-sprawl area* (TSA): This concept focuses on "the shared traits themselves regardless of whether they show up in all the languages thereabouts or coincide in their distribution within some bounded geographical space"; the mathematical analogy would be set union.

[1] Interestingly, there seems to be no consensus as to whether the number of language families found in the putative area of interest is a valid criterion for defining a linguistic area (Campbell 2017: 25).

Both dimensions beg the question of how these shared traits came about, thus necessitating a historical perspective (Campbell 2017: 28).

A well-known case of such an areal constellation is “Standard Average European” (SAE), a term coined by Whorf (1941: 77–78) that is inspired by the suspicion that many European languages seem to have features in common that are rather rare or “exotic” outside this continent. Subsequent work, in particular the EUROTYP projects (see e.g. van Riemsdijk 1999), substantiated this hunch and yielded several grammatical “Euroversals” (Haspelmath 2001; Stolz 2006; Cysouw 2011). Large-scale databases like the *World Atlas of Language Structures* (Haspelmath et al. 2005) further strengthened areal typology, but it also became apparent that the focus on standard languages affected the validity of these findings: If one flips (or, for that matter, clicks) through the many maps of the WALS, one instantaneously realizes that each (European) language included in its samples is represented by a single dot, thus abstracting away from internal variation as well as from earlier stages of the language. Modern dialectological work from a theoretically informed perspective suggests that some of the apparent SAE traits are blurred or even vanish when nonstandard varieties are considered (see e.g. Murelli and Kortmann 2011 for an overview).

Against this general background, a look at the diachrony on the one hand and at the dialects on the other hand has much to offer when it comes to assess the status of SAE as a linguistic area.

1.2 Extending the perspective to dialects and diachrony

Including a variationist perspective has at least three benefits: First, including more varieties (dialects and historical stages of a language) has the empirical benefit of making the basis of cross-linguistics comparison of European languages more robust. Second, such a perspective allows us to understand better how SAE features came into being and which factors influenced their diffusion. This is what Weinreich et al. (1968: 183) call the *constraints problem*, i.e. “to determine the set of possible changes and

possible conditions for change" (see also De Vogelaer und Seiler 2012: 20 on the importance of dialectal evidence in this respect). Thus, we have the chance to uncover specific properties of nonstandard varieties (cf. Chambers' 2004 "vernacular universals") but also those of the codified standard varieties (e.g. due to standardization and concomitant processes like stigmatization; cf. Davies and Langer 2006). Third, a "micro-typological" perspective that takes into account dialectal evidence will help us clarify what areal-typological features actually are and how they can be quantified. Simple discrete distinctions (feature *X* with the dimensions d_i to d_n) might be useful for quantitative investigations (cf. Cysouw 2011), yet we also need a qualitative perspective, meaning that it must be ensured that feature values cover relevant aspects of grammatical organization. Such an endeavor turns out to be very difficult because even basic grammatical concepts are highly theory-dependent (take, for example, the different meanings notions like "head", "dependent", or "basic word order" can have in different grammatical frameworks). All we can hope for is that including fine-scaled variation aids us in refining the respective features and gaining a deeper understanding of their dimensions.

The structure of this chapter is as follows: Firstly, we will revisit and review the status of German as a "core" SAE language and the features underlying this classification (Section 2). Then, we present a detailed survey of SAE features proposed in the relevant literature (Haspelmath 2001; Stolz 2006; Cysouw 2011) and assess their validity on the basis of a bundle of German varieties (Section 3). Finally, we wrap up our findings and offer some reflections on the relationship between typology, dialectology, and the role of diachronic evidence (Section 4).

2. German as a core SAE language

There is general agreement among researchers in the field that German belongs to the core of SAE (van der Auwera 1998; Thieroff 2000; Haspelmath 2001; van der Auwera 2011; Drinka 2017, Ch. 7).
The idea of a linguistic area having a core presupposes that membership in an area is a gradual matter. That is, linguistic areas neither have clear-

cut boundaries nor are they homogeneous internally (cf. Campbell 2017 for general methodological issues in defining linguistic areas). The reason for this lies in the fact that, strictly speaking, a linguistic area does not consist of a set of languages in the first place, but rather it is defined on the basis of individual linguistic features that may or may not be present in a set of geographically more or less contiguous languages. The greater the number of the relevant feature values is in a particular language, the more central a member of the linguistic area the language is. Ideally, a linguistic area has a core (where one or several languages share the greatest number of relevant features), and, moving away from the core, languages with fewer and fewer relevant feature values appear in more or less concentric circles. This feature-based approach has been applied to SAE in the context of the EUROTYP projects and subsequent synopses (see Haspelmath 2001 and Drinka 2017: Ch. 7 for an overview).

The geographical extent of features can be drawn on isopleth maps, depicting which languages share a feature value and which ones do not. As for SAE, such maps can be found e.g. in van der Auwera (1998) on the tense/aspect domain (eight features, based on an earlier manuscript of Thieroff 2000) or Haspelmath (2001) on various grammatical phenomena, see Fig. 1–2.

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Fig. 1: Isopleth map for eight tense/aspect features (van der Auwera 1998: 826, based on an earlier manuscript of Thieroff 2000). “The features selected for this trait complex are the following — for details and terminology, see Thieroff (in press) [= 2000]: (i) the ‘present anterior’ has developed into a ‘past’ (stages 1–3); (ii) there is no stable present anterior; (iii) there are supercompound pluperfects; (iv) the language has a future, however weak its grammaticalization, which is compatible with a past or an anterior; (v) there is a progressive; (vi) the progressive is not highly grammaticalized; (vii) there is no habitual; (viii) there is no ‘Slavic aspect’” (van der Auwera 1998: 833).

(Figure removed due to copyright reasons; please contact us if you are interested in the complete version.)

Fig. 2: Isopleth map for nine “major SAE features” (according to Haspelmath 2001: 1505), namely definite and indefinite articles, relative clauses with relative pronouns, “have” perfect, participial passive, dative external possessors, negative pronouns and lack of verbal negation, relative-based equative constructions, subject person affixes as strict agreement markers, intensifier-reflexive differentiation.

As can be seen on both maps, German (together with French and, to a somewhat lesser degree, Dutch) shares the greatest number of depicted features. Van der Auwera concludes that German and French are at the center of an area for which he coins the term *Charlemagne sprachbund* (van der Auwera 1998: 824). The term expresses the idea that the French-German core area roughly corresponds to the extent of the Carolingian Empire of the early Middle Ages (but also the idea that contact between Gallo-Romance and Continental West German during that era was a central factor in the development and distribution of SAE, cf. Haspelmath 1998, 2001). Thus, the *Charlemagne* area is clearly one of, or probably *the* core area of what is referred to as SAE. Haspelmath (2001: 1505) points out that the features depicted in Fig. 2 above “have not been selected randomly and are thus by no means representative of the morphosyntactic features of European languages. They were included precisely because they were known to show a distribution that supports the SAE hypothesis”. Note, however, that depending on the selection of features other smaller core areas may show up as well, e.g. the Balkans (van der Auwera 1998: 827), the North Sea (van der Auwera 1998: 828) or the Circumbaltic Area (Koptjevskaja-Tamm & Wälchli 2001). Cysouw (2011) proposes a way to circumvent the potential circularity in the selection of features by calculating an index that is based on crosslinguistic rarity of features and geographical proximity. There is not a perfect, but some considerable overlap between Cysouw’s (2011) top ten European rarity features and Haspelmath’s (2001) nine major SAE features.

Both isopleth maps selected here for illustration of German's core SAE status (cf. Fig. 1–2 above) deal with the German language as a monolithic block. Implicitly, the term refers to the codified standard variety (similar limitations apply to other European languages). More recent work on the areal typology of Europe criticizes this limitation and advocates for including nonstandard varieties in the analysis, too, arguing that the picture based on codified standard languages is certainly incomplete and perhaps even misleading (Murelli & Kortmann 2011; van der Auwera 2011; Seiler 2019). It is misleading insofar as a more systematic inclusion of nonstandard varieties may well reveal that putative SAE features are more articulate at the level of codified standard varieties than in vernacular dialects, as a consequence of which Europe may appear less "exotic" from a crosslinguistic perspective than previous research into SAE has shown: Is the conglomeration of typical SAE features predominantly an artifact of shared strategies of codification? Is Standard Average European in reality "Standard" Average European (Seiler 2019)? Another limitation discussed by Seiler (2019) is the lack of inclusion of historical stages of European languages. Historical, pre-codification varieties may shed light not only on the potential effects of codification but also on the diachronic depth and origin of SAE features and their spreading trajectories. Whereas there is some consensus that different SAE features come from different sources and are of varying age (Stolz 2006: 294; van der Auwera 2011: 297), the inclusion of historical and nonstandard varieties of European languages may allow us to draw a more detailed picture of these facets of SAE. If it turns out indeed that many SAE features are specific to modern standard varieties, Chambers' (2004) concept of "vernacular universals", i.e. the idea that "a small number of phonological and grammatical processes recur in vernaculars wherever they are spoken" (Chambers 2004: 128), would become obsolete (see also Seiler 2019: 542). They would simply reflect typological preferences, whereas it is mainly the standard varieties where specific features concentrate ("standardversals" in Seiler's 2019: 542 terminology).

These lines of reasoning constitute a research program that is complementary to existing work on SAE in general and the SAE-ness of

German in particular, which we might call a “realistic areal-typological profile of European languages” (cf. Murelli and Kortmann 2011: 525; Seiler 2019: 552). In what follows we present a programmatic sketch as a potential starting point for this research program: We discuss a number of putative SAE features in Modern Standard German, one historical variety (Old High German), and three vernacular dialects (Alemannic, Hessian, Low German). We will also discuss methodological issues and draw preliminary conclusions on the SAE-ness of German, the possible age of SAE features and their potential relation to codification.

3. SAE features in historical and nonstandard varieties of German

3.1 A list of SAE features

Haspelmath (2001) proposes a total of 26 structural features whose worldwide distribution exhibits a striking accumulation in Europe. Additional compilations can be found in Stolz (2006) [six features] and Cysouw (2011) [ten features], however, with a certain amount of overlap. In the following, we will be listing the features from Haspelmath (2001) [H], Stolz (2006) [S], and Cysouw (2011) [C], grouped according to the grammatical level they represent. Each feature is followed by the respective author abbreviation and page number.

- Phonology

  1: Front Rounded Vowels (C 424, S 285)
  2: Uvular continuants only (C 424)
  3: Phonemic quantity (S 286)
  4: Weight-sensitive, right-oriented stress (C 424)
  5: Discourse pragmatic notions expressed primarily by sentence stress and word order differences (H 1504)

- Nominal morphosyntax

  6: Loss of case inflections on nouns (S 288)
  7: Inflectional comparative marking of adjectives (H 1501)

8: Definite and indefinite articles (H 1494)
9: Relative pronouns (C 424, H 1494)
10: Obligatory subject pronouns (H 1500)
11: Nominative experiencers (H 1495)
12: Dative external possessors (H 1498)
13: Intensifier-reflexive differentiation (H 1501)
14: Comitative-instrumental syncretism (H 1502, S 289)
15: Lack of an alienable/inalienable opposition in adnominal possession (H 1503)
16: Lack of an inclusive/exclusive opposition in first person non-singular pronouns (H 1503)
17: No distance contrast in demonstratives (C 424)
18: Suppletive second ordinal (H 1503, S 290)

- Verbal morphosyntax

19: Perfect of the “have” type (C 424, H 1495)
20: Preterite decay (H 1504)
21: Participial passive (H 1496)
22: Just one converb (H 1504)
23: Modal morpheme for evidentiality (C 424)
24: Anticausative prominence (H 1497)
25: Verb fronting in polar interrogatives (C 424, H 1501)

- Additional features

26: Negative pronouns and lack of verbal negation (C 424, H 1498)
27: Special construction for negative coordination such as English *neither A nor B* or Italian *né A né B* (H 1504)
28: Particles in comparative constructions (H 1499)
29: Relative-based equative constructions (H 1499)
30: Symmetric conjunction of the type “A and-B” (H 1502)
31: Lack of morphological reduplication (H 1503, S 291)
32: S(ubject)-V(erb)-O(bject) basic word order at the level of the

clause (H 1504) or no dominant order of V and O (C 424)

33: Phasal adverbials as described by van der Auwera (1998: 64–65) (H 1504)

3.2 Necessary qualifications

A number of features come with certain problems. Very broadly, they fall into two categories: With some, there are conceptual problems that arise independently of the individual language or variety they are applied to. With others, there are empirical problems specific to the data situation for individual varieties.

Among the conceptual problems, we can distinguish two subtypes. First, in their current form, certain features require further clarification or elaboration to be applied successfully to our sample. Wherever possible, we tried to adjust the relevant definition; where it did not seem possible, we decided we had to dismiss the feature in question.

As a first example, take the feature “front rounded vowels” (Maddieson 2013a; Cysouw 2011: 424, 426; Stolz 2006: 285–286). Front rounded vowels (e.g. [y] or [ø]) are rare among the languages of the world, and the few languages that do have them are mostly found in languages of northern Eurasia, including e.g. German and French. When applying the feature, it should be clarified whether it is required for the vowels to be phonemic or whether they count even where they are merely allophonic. Of the varieties from our sample, East Hessian is the only one that does not have any front rounded vowels at all (cf. Hertel 1888: 10; Salzmann 1888: 44; Birkenes and Fleischer 2019: 444). Nonetheless, there are important differences even among the remaining varieties. In Modern Standard German (Duden Grammar 2016: 36), modern Alemannic (Weber 1987: 25) and modern Northern Low German (Höder 2010: 8), rounding is distinctive, whereas in Old High German, rounding (umlaut) is only

allophonic (Braune and Heidermanns 2018: 84, referring to Twaddel 1938). Thus, depending on the status of phonemicity, the historical variety would group either with East Hessian or with the other three modern varieties. In the present context, we decided to count front rounded vowels only where they are phonemic. This appears to be in line with (Cysouw 2011: 424, 426; Stolz 2006: 285–286) in so far as they, too, speak of "phonemes". Thus, according to our classification, Old High German patterns with East Hessian rather than with Modern Standard German, Alemannic, or Low German.

As a second example, take the feature "loss of case distinctions on nouns" (cf. Stolz 2006: 288–289). As Stolz shows, nominal case morphology is largely typical of languages in the east and far west of Europe, whereas "[a] small strip extending from Norwegian in the north via French in the middle down to Maltese in the south" – but excluding German – does not mark case distinctions on nouns. When it comes to a close-up comparison of different varieties of German, it is desirable not to restrict the analysis to nouns but also to include other potentially inflecting categories within the noun phrase (see e.g. Shrier 1965). That is because a given variety may well have lost case distinctions on the head noun but nonetheless continue to mark case on full NPs, namely on determiners and adjectival modifiers. Alsacian Alemannic (Rünneburger 1992) is a case in point: Similar to e.g. English, Norwegian, and French, and unlike Standard German, it has completely given up case distinctions on head nouns. Unlike English, Norwegian, and French, however, it does continue to mark case on determiners. In the present study, we will therefore define morphological case on the basis of a noun phrase that contains (at least) a noun and a determiner. Consequently, despite the absence of case marking on head nouns in Alemannic, we do not classify it as completely lacking morphological case.

As a third example, take basic word order. There are (at least) two problematic aspects here. First, there is disagreement whether this value should be considered typical of SAE. According to Haspelmath (2001: 1504), it is “SVO basic word order at the clause” that correlates well with the other SAE features. For Cysouw (2011: 424, 427), on the other hand, it is “variable order of verb and object” that is characteristic of northwestern Europe. Second, it is not obvious what feature value the varieties from our sample should be assigned. Like most of Continental West Germanic, they show SOV order (typical of subordinate clauses) as well as V2 order (typical of independent declarative clauses). V2, actually a typological parameter in its own right, means that any constituent may occur in first position, followed by the finite verb in second position. As noted by Mallinson & Blake (1981: 129), in German, “SV(O) and Adverbial VS(O) are common patterns. OVS is possible. ... The order used for a stylistically unmarked version of ‘John saw Mary’ in German would be SVO, too, but to simply call German an SVO language would disguise the verb-second nature of its word order”. Due to these problems, we decided to dismiss the feature basic word order.

Let us next turn to the second type of conceptual problem: In their existing form, the feature definitions are blind to the possibility that a given variable may exhibit varying degrees of prominence across different languages or varieties. Haspelmath (2001), for example, usually treats the SAE features as categorical variables, i.e. they are either present or absent. Often, however, it appears fruitful to make finer distinctions. As a first example, let us revisit the expression of morphological case. As shown by Shrier (1965: 431–432), there is no dialect of German that has completely lost this category. Nonetheless, the dialects differ significantly not just with respect to the types of nominal elements that mark case (see above), but also with regard to the number of distinctions. While Standard German has four cases (nominative, accusative, dative, genitive), most dialects either have a two-case-system (nominative, oblique), mainly found among the Low German dialects, or a three-case-system (nominative, accusative,

dative), mainly found among the High German dialects, with a tendency towards merger of nominative and accusative in the southwest. To do better justice to more nuanced differences of this type, we decided to operate with ternary rather than binary feature values. With respect to the feature “morphological case distinctions”, we will assign the value 1 to varieties with no case distinctions in NPs containing (at least) a noun and a determiner, 0.5 to varieties with maximally two cases and 0 to varieties with three or more cases.

Another example of a feature where it seems appropriate to distinguish different degrees of prominence is “preterite decay” (Haspelmath 2001: 1504), i.e. “the loss of the old preterite and its replacement by the former present perfect”. The availability of the present perfect in contexts previously reserved for the preterite is widespread across varieties of German. Crucially, it is not restricted to southern (Upper German) varieties that have completely given up the preterite, but it can also be observed in more northern (Central and Low German) varieties that preserve the preterite (Fischer 2018: 394) as well as in spoken Standard German (Hennig 2000). In other words, in addition to varieties that use the present perfect instead of the preterite obligatorily (because it is the only remaining past tense), there are also varieties where this replacement is possible but only optional. We will be assigning the value 1 to varieties of the former type and 0.5 to varieties of the latter type; 0 will be given to a variety with a present perfect that has not at all expanded into the functional domain of the preterite.[2]

[2] It should be pointed out, by the way, that the gradualness problem is by no means specific to the comparison of closely related varieties. It also arises when comparing standard languages. For example, while it is of course true that both German and English have relative pronouns (German *der/die/das*, *welcher/welche/welches*, English *who(m)*, *whose*, *which*), their degree of prominence is different across the two languages: While in German there are pronouns only, in English they compete with an invariant particle (*that*). In a similar vein, even though both languages feature comparative suffixes on adjectives, their distribution is much more restricted in English (being confined to a subset of all adjectives) compared to German (where they attach to any adjective).

In addition to those conceptual problems, there are empirical ones. Despite the growing interest in the grammatical structure of nonstandard varieties (take the booming field of European dialect syntax[3] as an example), there are still quite a few empirical gaps when it comes to the list of SAE features. An example is “anticausative prominence” (Haspelmath 1993; Haspelmath 2001: 1497–1498). This property refers to the formal relationship between the members of a pair of verbs that express a causative-inchoative contrast as in English *get lost* (‘inchoative’) vs. *lose* (‘causative’). According to Haspelmath (2001: 1497), there are three types: The inchoative may be derived from the causative (as in the English example), the causative may be derived from the inchoative (e.g. Mongolian *xajl-uul-ax* ‘melt (tr.)’ < *xajl-ax* ‘melt (intr.)’, Haspelmath 1993: 89), or neither may be derived from the other (e.g. Russian *goret’* ‘burn (intr.)’ vs. *žeč’* ‘burn (tr.)’, Haspelmath 1993: 92). Haspelmath (1993) investigates this feature based on 31 verb pairs in 21 languages and finds that in SAE languages a high percentage of the pairs belong to the first type, i.e. SAE languages are “anticausative prominent”.[4] For the varieties from our sample, comparable data simply do not exist (yet). In the present study, we only included those features for which we could provide a full data set for each of the varieties investigated. Wherever there was an empirical gap for at least one variety, we decided to dismiss the feature.

Another empirical problem arising in particular with dialects is that the data often have to be gathered from sources of fairly different types as well as different ages (sometimes reaching back as far as 19th-century descriptions). Depending on which of those sources are being consulted, the results (i.e. the typological profile) that we arrive at for a given variety may vary considerably. This becomes evident, for example, in the case of Low German, which has been converging towards the standard language since the end of World War 2 (see e.g. Hansen-Jaax 1995; Elmentaler 2009). As an example, take the feature “negative pronouns and lack of

[3] See e.g. http://www.dialectsyntax.org/wiki/Welcome for an overview [last accessed on 30 April 2021].
[4] According to Haspelmath (2001: 1497), German is representative of the SAE type, i.e. it is anticausative prominent. See, however, Plank & Lahiri (2015) for a more nuanced assessment.

verbal negation" (Haspelmath 2001: 1498; Cysouw 2011: 424): According to the *Niederdeutsche Grammatik* (Lindow et al. 1998: 284–285), Low German – unlike Standard German – has both negative doubling (combining verbal negation with a negative indefinite) and negative spread (combining multiple negative indefinites) so that it would clearly have to be classified as non-SAE in this regard. More recent studies (Elmentaler & Borchert 2012: 122), however, find that the relevant negation patterns are apparently no longer in use in present-day Low German.[5] Thus, whether or not a variety is classified as SAE or non-SAE with respect to a given feature is certainly also a matter of the age and conservativeness of the sources that we (can) consult.

3.3 The variety sample

We will be looking at a total of five varieties: four contemporary and one historical. The contemporary ones include the standard language and three dialects, each taken from one of the three major dialect groups standardly distinguished in German dialectology (Wiesinger 1983): Zurich German (Alemannic, Upper German), East Hessian (Central German), and Northern Low German. The historical variety is Old High German, i.e. the oldest attested predecessor of three of our contemporary varieties, namely all except Low German (whose oldest attested stage is Old Saxon). By comparing the four contemporary varieties, we aim to determine whether the SAE-ness of German stays the same if in addition to the standard variety we also include nonstandard varieties. By comparing Old High German to some of its contemporary successors, we aim to study the historical development of the SAE-ness of German, with particular attention to the question of whether the development is the same across the standard language and the nonstandard varieties.

[5] See Breitbarth (2014) for the history of Low German negation from Old Saxon to Middle Low German.

Our study is based on the following main sources: For Standard German, we consulted the authoritative *Duden Grammar* (Duden 2016); in some cases we refer to the typological surveys by Haspelmath (2001), Stolz (2006), and Cysouw (2011) or their respective sources.

For Old High German we consulted the grammars by Braune & Heidermanns (2018) on phonology/morphology and Schrodt (2004) on syntax. Occasionally we referred to the online dictionary by Köbler (2014), which also contains a Modern Standard German index and Latin translation equivalents.

Zurich German data are based on the grammatical description by Weber (1987), which contains an extensive part on syntax, too. Occasionally we consulted the *Swiss German Idiotikon* (ID) (dictionary). When necessary, data were supplemented by the native competence of one of the co-authors.

For Northern Low German, we mainly consulted Höder (2010) for phonology, Lindow et al. (1998) and Thies (2010) for morpho-syntax, and the *Hamburgisches Wörterbuch* (HWB) (dictionary) for lexis. Höder (2010) is a phonetic-phonological description of the (by now practically extinct) local dialect of Altenwerder, an Elbe island to the Southwest of the urban area of Hamburg, now part of the Port of Hamburg. Lindow et al. (1998) and Thies (2010) are the two major reference grammars of (in particular: Northern) Low German.

For East Hessian, we mainly relied on the grammatical descriptions by Salzmann (1888) on Bad Hersfeld and Hertel (1888) on Bad Salzungen,

which is situated in the West of the modern German state of Thuringia. Additional information was drawn from the recent overview article on Hessian dialects by Birkenes and Fleischer (2019). For several syntactic phenomena, we used data that were collected in the project *Syntax hessischer Dialekte* (SyHD). The results of this project are documented in the collection by Fleischer et al. (2017), and we quote from the individual chapters on the phenomenon in question, but all the maps can also be accessed via an interactive web interface.[6] We chose the following SyHD locations as reference points: Ludwigsau/Rohrbach, Hauneck/Rotensee (both in the vicinity of Bad Hersfeld), Heringen/Lengers, Wildeck/Bosserode (both ca. 30 km from Bad Salzungen), and Hintersteinau. For this latter location, there is also a transcribed audio recording available (Müller 1958), which turned out to be helpful in some cases. Lexical information was drawn from the *Hessen-Nassauisches Volkswörterbuch* [HNWb] (Berthold et al. 1943–2015).

3.4 Results

Starting from the list of 33 SAE features (see Section 3.1 above) we examined Old High German, Modern Standard German, Zurich German, East Hessian, and Northern Low German. We excluded nine features from our analysis, either due to conceptual difficulties in applying them to our varieties, or due to empirical gaps.[7] For each of the remaining 24 features we coded an SAE value: 1 for presence of the putative SAE feature value, 0 for its absence. For some features it was necessary to define intermediate values (0.5), e.g. due to optionality (see Section 3.2 above for discussion). Feature numbers refer to those assigned in Section 3.1 above. Table 1 summarizes the results:

[6] URL: http://www.syhd.info/startseite/index.html [last accessed on 30 April 2021].
[7] Features 5, 22, 32 were excluded due to conceptual issues, features 4, 10, 11, 17, 23, 24 due to empirical gaps.

Feature number	Coding	Old High German	Modern Standard German	Zurich German	East Hessian	Northern Low German
1	1 = presence of front round vowel phonemes; 0 = absence thereof	0	1	1	0	1
		Braune & Heidermanns (2018: 41, 84)	Duden (2016: 36)	Weber (1987: 25)	Hertel (1888: 10); Salzmann (1888: 44); Birkenes & Fleischer (2019: 444)	Höder (2010: 8)
2	1 = presence of uvular continuants but absence of uvular stops; 0 = all other combinations; 0.5 = variation between the situations described by 1 and 0	0	1	1	1	0.5
		Braune & Heidermanns (2018: 113, 114)	Maddieson (2013b)	Weber (1987: 25)	Hertel (1888: 84); Salzmann (1888: 66)	See commentary[8]
3	1 = presence of phonemic vowel quantity contrasts; 0 = absence thereof	1	1	1	1	1

[8] Höder (2010: 7) finds that /r/ (where not vocalized) is most often realized as an alveolar sound. This can be considered the more traditional realization. More recently, alveolar [r] has been being replaced by “back r.” Reershemius (2004: 38), who focuses on an East Frisian variety of Low German, refers to this as “uvular” [R]; Elmentaler (2009: 353), describing a Holstein variety, refers to it as “velar” [ʁ].

		Braune & Heidermanns (2018: 31)	See commentary[9]	Weber (1987: 25)	See commentary[10]	See commentary[11]
6	Possible case distinctions of a Noun Phrase consisting of a determiner + noun: 1 = only one case; 0.5 = maximally two cases are distinguishable; 1 = three or more cases are distinguishable	0	0	0.5	0.5	0.5
		Braune & Heidermanns (2018: 247)	Duden (2016: 292)	Weber (1987: 102)	Hertel (1888: 91–92); Birkenes & Fleischer (2019: 455)[12]	Lindow et al. (1998: 144)[13]
7	1 = presence of inflectional comparative marking of adjectives; 0 = absence thereof	1	1	1	1	1

[9] The phonemic status of vowel quantity in Standard German is subject to debate, due to the strong connection between length and tenseness. Whereas Wurzel (1981) and Giegerich (1985) assume a phonemic tenseness contrast (with lengthening of tense vowels if stressed), Hall (1992) and Wiese (2000) see quantity as the phonemically relevant contrast (with shortening of unstressed long/tense vowels). An argument for the latter analysis (which we adopt here) is that in /a/ vs. /a:/ and /ɛ/ vs. /ɛ:/ the contrast is based on length only. See Hall (2011: 69–70, 131) for discussion.

[10] Salzmann (1888: 22, 37–38) gives minimal pairs like *pēn* 'bee' vs. *pen* '(I) am' or *son* 'sun' vs. sōn 'son'. Vowel quantity contrasts that are sensitive to simplex vs. complex codas are mentioned by Hertel (1888: 11). This state of affairs can lead to minimal pairs in inflectional forms like *lā̄d* 'I load' (1SG) vs. *lådd* 'you load' (2PL) or *lîd* 'I suffer' (1SG) vs. *lidd* 'he/he suffers' (3SG) (Hertel 1888: 115). In large parts of East Hessian there is a quantity law that leads to vowel shortening or lengthening in different phonological contexts (see Birkenes & Fleischer 2019: 444 and the references quoted by them).

[11] Many descriptions attribute a quantity opposition to most monophthongs (e.g. Stellmacher 1983: 254–255). Höder (2010: 9–10), on the other hand, argues that those contrasts are better described with reference to vowel quality. However, even according to Höder, quantity is still distinctive in the cases of /a/ and /ɔ/ (2010: 10).

[12] Weak nouns and proper names show a dative-accusative distinction; strong masculine and neuter nouns can show subtractive forms of the DAT.SG, yet these forms are not productive anymore.

[13] Lindow et al. (1998) describe the traditional system with a nominative-oblique opposition. See, however, Berg (2013) on the emergence of a new separate dative case under Standard German influence, in particular in the neuter of the definite article (2013: 219–220).

		Braune & Heidermanns (2018: 312–314)	Duden (2016: 340)	Weber (1987: 126)	Hertel (1888: 98–99); Salzmann (1888: 87–88)	Thies (2010: 194)
8	1 = both definite and indefinite articles exist; 0.5 = only one article exists; 0 = absence of articles	0	1	1	1	1
		Schrodt (2004: 19)	Duden (2016: 291–302, 331–339)	Weber (1987: 101, 104)	Hertel (1888: 100, 106); Salzmann (1888: 71–72)[14]	Lindow et al. (1998: 151–153)
9	1 = relative pronouns are the only relativization strategy; 0.5 = relative pronouns compete with relative particles; 0 = relative pronouns are absent	0.5	1	0	0.5	0.5
		Schrodt (2004: 173)	Duden (2016: 302–305)	Weber (1987: 298–301)	Birkenes & Fleischer (2019: 466); Hertel (1888: 16); Salzmann (1888: 84); SyHD data	Lindow et al. (1998: 172)
12	1 = presence of dative external possessors; 0 = absence thereof	1	1	1	1	1

[14] The respective paradigms are listed in Birkenes & Fleischer (2019: 451).

		Schrodt (2004: 86)	Duden (2016: 830–831)	Weber (1987: 163)	See commentary[15]	Lindow et al. (1998: 283)
13	1 = presence of intensifier-reflexive differentiation; 0 = absence thereof	1	1	1	1	1
		Köbler (2014)	Haspelmath (2001: 1501)	Weber (1987: 242)	HNWb (3: 585–586) (*sich*), 573–574 (*selb-*)	HWB (4: 251, 658–659)
14	1 = absence of comitative-instrumental differentiation; 0 = presence thereof	0.5	1	1	1	1
		Braune & Heidermanns (2018: 247); Schrodt (2004: 95) (instrumental case vs. *mit* in early OHG)	Zifonun et al. (1997: 45) (*mit*)	ID (4: 558–560)	HNWb (2: 345–346) (*mit*)	Thies (2010: 226) (*mit*)
15	1 = absence of alienable-inalienable possession differentiation; 0 = presence thereof	1	1	1	1	1
		Our inference (no such distinction	Duden (2016: 837–840)[16]	Weber (1987: 212–215)[17]	See commentary[18]	Lindow et al. (1998: 144, 165,

[15] A relevant example can be found in Müller (1958: 23): *homm'r sich de Ranse rechd volgelore von dem Wasr als* 'we used to always fill our bellies entirely with water' (note that many Hessian dialects use the reflexive *sich* also in the 1PL).
[16] Duden (2016) provides examples of both the adnominal genitive and the *von* construction expressing both alienable and inalienable possession; the dative construction is not considered part of the standard (Duden 2016: 840).
[17] Weber (1987: 212–215) provides examples of both the adnominal dative and the *von* construction expressing both alienable and inalienable possession.
[18] There is a preference for the dative construction with inalienable possessors, yet the *von* construction also seems possible (see Kasper 2017: 306–308). In our SyHD reference locations, the possessive

		mentioned in Schrodt 2004)				270, 269)[19]
16	1 = absence of inclusive-exclusive differentiation; 0 = presence thereof	1	1	1	1	1
		Our inference (no such distinction mentioned in Braune & Heidermanns 2018: 331–333)	Our inference (no such distinction mentioned in Duden 2016: 263)	Our inference (no such distinction mentioned in Weber 1987: 160)	Our inference (no such distinction mentioned in Birkenes & Fleischer 2019: 450; Hertel 1888: 103; Salzmann 1888: 81)	Our inference (no such distinction mentioned in Thies 2010: 155–157; Lindow et al. 1998: 154–156)
18	1 = suppletive second ordinal 0 = regular second ordinal	1	0	0	0	0
		Braune & Heidermanns (2018: 327)	Haspelmath (2001: 1503)	Weber (1987: 130)	Hertel 1888: 107); Salzmann (1888: 86–87)	Thies (2010: 201)
19	1 = presence of a “have” perfect; 0 = absence thereof	0.5	1	1	1	1
		Schrodt (2004: 16)	Duden (2016: 472)	Weber (1987: 196–196)	Birkenes & Fleischer (2019:	Thies (2010: 60–61)

dative appears both with alienable and inalienable possession. Salzmann (1888: 72) only gives examples of the dative with alienable possession.

[19] Lindow et al. (1998) provide examples of both the dative construction (or rather: oblique construction) and the *von* construction expressing both alienable and inalienable possession.

					462); Fischer (2018: Ch. 2)	
20	1 = absence of a preterite; 0.5 = presence of a preterite that can often be replaced by perfect; 0 = presence of a preterite that cannot be replaced by perfect	0	0.5	1	0.5	0.5
		Braune & Heidermanns (2018: 351)	Duden (2016: 517–518)	Weber (1987: 194, 253–254)	See commentary[20]	Lindow et al. (1998: 70); Thies (2010: 57)
21	1 = presence of a participial passive; 0 = absence thereof	1	1	1	1	1
		Braune & Heidermanns (2018: 351)	Duden (2016: 478–479)	Weber (1987: 197–198)	Salzmann (1888: 99)	Lindow et al. (1998: 69); Thies (2010: 85)
25	1 = presence of fronting in interrogatives; 0 = absence thereof	1	1	1	1	1
		Schrodt (2004: 200)	Duden (2016: 900–901)	Native competence (no information in Weber 1987)	See commentary[21]	Lindow et al. (1998: 251)

[20] Salzmann (1888: 88–98) assumes a full inventory of preterite forms; Hertel (1888: 110) notes that this tense is still abundantly attested. However, there is some indication of preterite decay in Eastern Hessian (Fischer 2018: 61–72; 62, Map 17).

[21] Weiß (2013: 769–774) notes that regarding the basic properties of interrogatives there is complete parallelism between Standard German and the dialects; in the latter, differences can occur in choice and function of modal particles.

26	1 = absence of double negation; 0.5 = presence of only one type of double negation; 0 = presence of both types: (i) negative indefinite + verbal negation, (ii) negative indefinite + negative indefinite	0	1	0.5	1	1
		Schrodt (2004: 135–136); cf. Jäger (2008); Jäger & Penka (2012)	Duden (2016: 925–926)	Weber (1987: 270: only negative indefinite + negative indefinite)	See commentary[22]	See commentary[23]
27	1 = presence of a special construction for negative coordination; 0 = absence thereof	1	1	1	1	1
		Köbler (2014)	Duden (2016: 632)	ID (15: 476–477)	HNWb (4: 568) (*weder*)	Thies (2010: 232–233)
28	1 = presence of comparative particles; 0.5 = comparative particles in competition with other constructions; 0 = absence thereof	0.5	1	1	1	1
		Schrodt (2014: 155)	Duden (2016: 377–379)	Weber (1987: 290)	Birkenes & Fleischer (2019: 466)	Thies (2010: 195)

[22] In none of the reference locations from SyHD, double negation was recorded spontaneously (see also Weiß 2017).
[23] According to Lindow et al. (1998: 284–285), Northern Low German does have double negation. However, Elmentaler & Borchert (2012: 122) find that it is apparently no longer used in spontaneous speech.

29	Relative-based equative	1	1	1	1	1
		See commentary[24]			See commentary[25]	Thies (2010: 195)
30	1 = “A and B” conjunction; 0 = “A with B” conjunction	1	1	1	1	1
		Köbler (2014); cf. Latin translation equivalents of OHG *mit*	Duden (2016: 633) (*und*)	Weber (1987: 281) (*und*)	HNWb (4: 230–231) (*und*)	Thies (2010: 233) (*un*)
31	1 = lack of any morphological reduplication; 0 = presence of at least some morphological reduplication	1	1	1	1	1
		No morphological reduplication mentioned in our sources	Stolz (2006: 292)	No morphological reduplication mentioned in our sources[26]	No morphological reduplication mentioned in our sources	No morphological reduplication mentioned in our sources[27]

[24] Jäger (2019: 62–63) considers the Old High German equative construction *so … so* (where the first *so* is a degree/manner demonstrative and the second *so* is an equative particle) as an instance of the relative-based SAE type in the sense of Haspelmath & Buchholz (1998); the Old Saxon construction *so … so* is considered a parallel case. Both in High German and in Low German, *so* was later replaced by *als(o)*, a strengthened form of the original particle (Jäger 2019: 371). In most Low German dialects, this form (reduced to *as*) is found until today, whereas in Standard German and in most High German dialects, it has come to be replaced by *wie* (Jäger 2019: 328–329). The *wie* type, too, is considered relative-based (cf. Haspelmath & Buchholz 1998: 292).

[25] The SyHD reference locations exclusively note *wie* ‘as’ (see also Jäger 2017).

[26] There is, however, syntactic verb doubling, cf. Weber (1987: 245–247).

[27] There is, however, syntactic doubling of prepositions (Fleischer 2002: 357–361). E.g. *an de Dẹrn is ni vẹl an* ‘the girl is no good,’ literally ‘on the girl is not much on’ (SHWB 4: 114), cited according to Fleischer (2002: 357), our translation.

33	1 = phasal adverbs according to van der Auwera's (1998: 64–65) SAE type; 0 = deviations thereof	1	1	1	1	1
		See commentary[28]	van der Auwera (1998: 64–65)	See commentary[29]	See commentary[30]	See commentary[31]
Sum		**16/24**	**21.5/24**	**21/24**	**20.5/24**	**21/24**

Table 1: 24 SAE features in Old High German, Modern Standard German, Zurich German, East Hessian, Northern Low German.

With respect to the overall SAE scores of the five varieties, Table 1 reveals that Old High German is clearly less SAE than any of the modern varieties. We infer that a relevant (but still minority) proportion of SAE-ness is relatively young as it must have developed only after the early Middle Ages. This is remarkable insofar as this partly contradicts Haspelmath's (2001: 1507) claim that SAE predominantly developed during the period of the Great Migrations (i.e., *before* Old High German times). A second important finding is the surprising similarity between the four modern varieties. It contradicts the suspicion that Modern Standard German as a codified written variety might have a more articulate SAE

[28] Continuative *noh* 'still'; discontinuative *jû ni* 'not anymore'; continuative negative *noh danne* 'not yet'; inchoative *sâr* 'already' (Köbler 2014).
[29] Continuative *no* 'still,' more frequently occurring in the combination *immer no* 'still always' (native competence; surprisingly, ID (4: 641–642) does not mention the continuative meaning of *no(ch)*, nor is the frequent combination *immer no(ch)* mentioned); discontinuative *nüme* 'not anymore' (ID 4: 753); continuative negative *nanig* 'not yet' (ID 4: 642); inchoative *scho* 'already' (ID 8: 853).
[30] Continuative *noch* 'still' (HNWb 2: 475); discontinuative: *nemę̄* 'not anymore' (HNWb 2: 458); continuative negative *noch nicht* 'not yet' (HNWb 2: 475); inchoative *schon* or *all-* 'already' (HNWb 3: 400).
[31] Continuative *noch* 'still' (HWB 2: 85); discontinuative *ne mehr* 'not anymore' (HWB 3: 281); continuative negative *noch nich* 'not yet' (HWB 3: 500–501); inchoative *al* 'already' (HWB 1: 85).

profile as compared to the vernaculars (Murelli & Kortmann 2011; van der Auwera 2011; Seiler 2019).[32]

Furthermore, it is possible to group certain SAE features together. We propose groupings along two dimensions, namely "diachrony" and the vertical dimension "standard vs. vernacular". As for diachrony, we distinguish between three groups: constant, expanding, and recessive features. Within the expanding group, we differentiate, with regard to the vertical dimension, between "expansion from above" vs. "expansion from below" vs. "indifferent". In the following classification, we do not take into account *Low* German since it is not a diachronic descendant of Old *High* German (but of Old Saxon, not included in the present study).

Constant features are those where, within the data set examined above, no differences between varieties are found. These features have been present (or absent) since Old High German times. 13 of 24 analyzed features belong to this group, namely: 3 (phonemic vowel quantity), 7 (inflectional comparative marking), 12 (dative external possessors), 13 (absence of intensifier-reflexive differentiation), 15 (absence of alienable-inalienable differentiation), 16 (absence of inclusive-exclusive differentiation), 21 (participial passive), 25 (fronting in interrogatives), 27 (negative coordination), 29 (relative-based equative), 30 ("A and-B" conjunction), 31 (lack of reduplication), 33 (phasal adverbs).

Expanding features have been becoming more prominent since Old High German in at least some modern High German variety. A total of ten (of 24) features are expanding. Five features expand indifferently, i.e. in all

[32] It is interesting to note that focusing on Haspelmath's (2001: 1493–1501) "major" SAE features changes the picture insofar as the standard variety now appears as a perfect SAE language, displaying the full extent of SAE values, whereas the others stand behind a bit: OHG = 5.5/9, Standard German = 9/9, Zurich German = 7.5/9, East Hessian = 8.5/9, Northern Low German = 8.5/9 (values based on features 8, 9, 12, 13, 19, 21, 26, 28, 29).

modern High German varieties under scrutiny, namely: 2 (uvular continuants in absence of uvular stops), 8 (articles), 14 (absence of comitative-instrumental differentiation), 19 (“have”-perfect), 28 (comparative particles). We might infer that these features of German varieties are still relatively old, i.e., they have been in place for centuries, at least before the differentiation between written standard and dialects. Other features are expanding from above: They appear in the standard language but less so or not at all in the dialects. Only two (of 10 expanding) features belong to this type: 9 (relative pronouns) and 26 (lack of double negation) (see below for 1). As for double negation, it must be added that in Hessian (as well as Low German) we do have evidence for double negation in older materials (e.g. Wegera 1978: 224), but in the most recent data it has disappeared, presumably due to standard influence. On the other hand, we observe feature expansion from below in two cases, where the feature is more prominent in (some) dialect(s) than in the standard variety: 6 (case syncretism: all High German dialects under scrutiny) and 20 (preterite decay: Zurich German).

Recessive features are those that are disappearing in at least one of the modern High German varieties. Two features belong to this class, 9 (relative pronouns, from Old High German to Zurich German) and 18 (suppletive second ordinal). Note that according to these criteria, 9 belongs to both expanding and recessive features: expanding insofar as relative pronouns became obligatory from Old High German to Modern Standard German, recessive insofar as Zurich German has given up this option altogether.

Feature 1 (“front round vowel phonemes”) is difficult to classify. Mechanically applying the procedures outlined above, the feature falls into the “expanding from above” class: expanding due to its absence in Old High German and presence in some modern High German variety, from above due to its presence in the standard variety but absence in one

dialect (Hessian). However, we know that most Hessian dialects have lost front round vowels due to a later, secondary process of unrounding (Birkenes & Fleischer 2019: 444). Unrounding applied to many High German dialects but not to the standard variety. In the face of these observations, we should correctly classify the process of unrounding as a from-below process of de-SAE-ation. However, we classify feature values, not diachronic processes. We therefore include feature 1 in the "expanding from above" class.

Figure 3 summarizes the proposed classification:

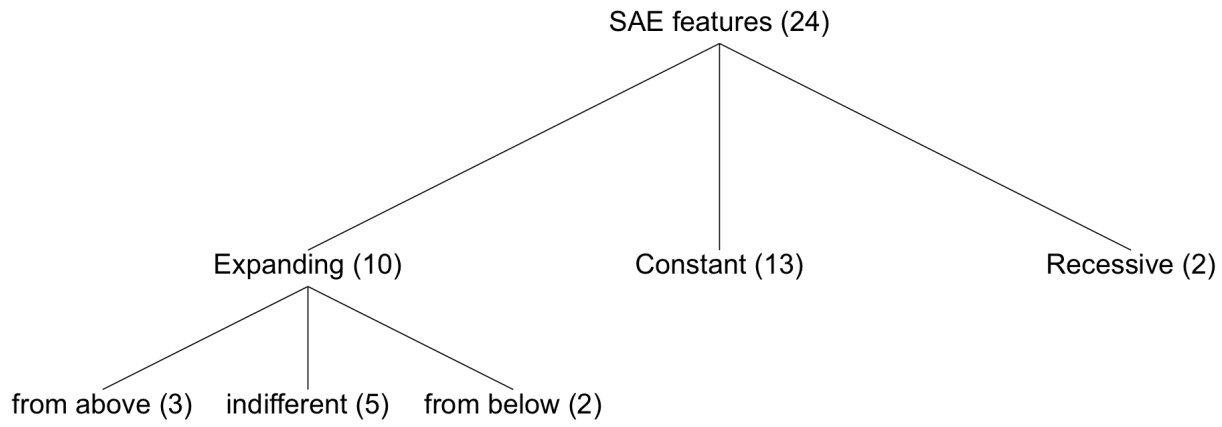

Fig. 3: A classification of 24 SAE features across High German varieties. Note that feature 9 (relative pronouns) is counted as both expanding (from Old High German to Modern Standard German) and recessive (from Old High German to Zurich German).

In sum, about half of the examined features are constant across the variety sample. Among those features where we find differences between varieties, the great majority is diachronically expanding. With regard to the vertical dimension, all types of expansion occur (whereby expansion in both dialect and standard variety is slightly more frequent than expansion from above or from below).

4. Discussion and future perspectives

Re-evaluating the status of German as a SAE language by including dialectal and historical evidence has led us to the following conclusions:

- From a synchronic perspective, the differences between Standard German and the three dialectal variants under its roof (Zurich German, East Hessian, and Northern Low German) turned out to be smaller than expected. This means that even though dialects might be more unassuming in some typological features (e.g. in terms of their relativization strategies, i.e. using relative particles instead of pronouns, cf. Fleischer 2005), they still show a substantial overlap in their "SAE-ness", as it were. German is indeed a prototypical SAE language, and with some qualifications this applies to all of its contemporary varieties investigated. However, although overall SAE scores are remarkably close to each other, there are still considerable differences at the level of individual feature values.
- In diachronic terms, we arrive at a different picture: Old High German shows a significantly lower amount of "SAE-ness" than its modern counterpart, pointing to a convergence process in the further development of German (including its different varieties). This highlights the importance of what Campbell (2017: 24) calls a "historicist approach" seeking "concrete evidence that the shared traits of an area are diffused (borrowed)" instead of a "circumstantialist approach ... that mostly just lists similarities found in the languages of a geographical area and allows the list of shared traits to suggest diffusion and to define the linguistic area accordingly". Observing closely related varieties may indicate that borrowing is not the only relevant factor when it comes to the spread of typological features, though. They could very well be parallel innovations caused by other factors, a point we shall address below. In any event, the prototypicality of German as an SAE language is comparatively young. This puts a question mark on Haspelmath's (2001: 1506–1507) assumption that contacts during the transition

from late antiquity to the early Middle Ages (in particular during the Great Migrations) are a plausible source for core Europeanisms.[33]

- Focusing on the methodological side, microvariation, as encountered in these different, comparatively closely related varieties, demonstrates that some of the features used in (areal) typology might be too coarse to reveal similarities or differences in the grammatical organization of different languages. This can lead to serious confounds in large-scale typological surveys, in particular when they are approached from a quantitative perspective (which seems to be gaining greater and greater importance in current research).
- On a related note, the common typological practice of conceptualizing feature values as binary is often unsatisfying since a value can be present *to varying degrees*. Thus, two languages may well share a given form or construction but still differ typologically as it may, for example, be obligatory in language A but optional in language B.

A final reflection: It should have become obvious that dialectology and typology share several interests, yet they still do not have a common research agenda. One of these overlaps, perhaps the most important one, is areal variation. Chiefly from a language-internal perspective, dialectology has almost been obsessed with this topic. By meticulously identifying and analyzing constellations of isoglosses, detailed information on the diffusion of linguistic innovations can be retrieved (cf. Nerbonne 2010; Girnth 2011). Basic structural similarities between the dialects of a language, despite all differences, allow for “a kind of micro-study in depth of data that are homogeneous enough to be cohesive, but also heterogeneous enough to be interesting and revealing” (Moulton 1968: 461).

Isoglosses, albeit on a large scale, were also employed as a criterion in areal typology, yet their often overlapping and scattering properties arose

[33] Unless, of course, it were to turn out that OHG is, for some reason, strikingly less SAE than its contemporaries (e.g. Old French, Old English, etc.). We leave this question to future research.

suspicions as to whether it would be possible to identify discrete isogloss bundles that set apart specific linguistic areas (Campbell 2017: 26; Emeneau 1980: 1366). This notwithstanding, typologists have always been well aware that shared innovations across genetically unrelated (or at least more remotely related) languages are indispensable when it comes to understanding the genesis and distribution of typologically relevant features. The background is the ongoing discussion on whether typological generalizations are *attractor states*, the result of converging structural solutions to similar functional pressures (e.g. parsing), or *attractor trajectories*, i.e. all but a by-product of recurring historical developments (e.g. grammaticalization paths) (Schmidtke-Bode 2019).

Irrespective of whether we view Standard Average European as a "linguistic area in the strict sense" (LASS) or as an areal prototype ("trait-sprawl area" [TSA] in Campbell's 2017 terminology), including dialectal and historical evidence allows us to gain a much more nuanced picture, and it may well shed light on how and when SAE convergences came about and how they had a chance to spread. Such a perspective aids us in stating typological features more precisely by giving us a clearer idea about their dimensions, and it allows us to trace back convergence processes and their trajectories.

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