
„Mechtich scheen“: Intensity particles in German as a minority language in America

Angélica Prediger
Universität Heidelberg
prediger@idf.uni-heidelberg.de

This article presents the initial findings of a corpus-linguistic study on the expression of intensification in varieties of German spoken in South and North America, based on a syntactically annotated sample of both spoken and written data. The data sources include existing corpora such as the BOBR corpus of Bohemian German in Brazil and the MEND corpus of Mennonite German in North and South America — both housed in the Database for Spoken German (DGD) of the IDS Mannheim — as well as the TGDP corpus of Texas German in the USA, and additional data come from self-collected materials on Volga German in Argentina (Prediger et al.) and from Hunsrückisch posts on Brazilian social media. Private letters further supplement the analysis, offering insights into whether the identified particles were already present in 19th-century written language.

The questions of which lexemes have developed into particles in the varieties mentioned, how intensity particles (PTKI) from contact languages have been integrated into German, and whether a semantic scale of intensification can be identified, represent a desideratum for further research. This article focuses on describing the PTKIs in use and their degree of grammaticalization. It is hypothesized that increased contact with dominant majority languages has contributed to the growing productivity of certain borrowed expressions. At the same time, language shift may have led to the decline of previously existing PTKIs. The study investigates the extent to which an interplay of extralinguistic and intralinguistic factors has led to the reanalysis of specific lexical items (e.g., the adjective *scharmant*), which in later stages increasingly exhibited morphological characteristics of PTKIs (*scharmant* as an intensifier).

Preliminary findings suggest that intensification is realized through locally productive, partly older, German lexemes (e.g., *arich* (*arg*), *mechtich*) as well as through innovative, reanalyzed expressions from heritage varieties (e.g., *scharmant*, *derekt*), which often exist alongside contact-induced variants.

References: • IDS, Datenbank für Gesprochenes Deutsch (DGD), BOBR / MEND [http://dgd.ids-mannheim.de, letzter Zugriff: 01.10.2025]. • Prediger, A., Szczepaniak, R. & S. Lindenfelser (2023): Deutsch in Argentinien: Gebrauch, Struktur, Varietäten, Identitäten, Ideologien – Aufbau eines multimodalen Korpus: Methoden und Auswertungsperspektiven. *Germanistische Linguistik* 260-262. Hildesheim [u.a.]: Olms, 395–447. • TGDP, Texas German Dialect Platform. Version 2.0. [https://tgdp-zumult.la.utexas.edu/, letzter Zugriff: 01.10.2025].