

## **The Vowel System(s) of German Dialects in South Tyrol**

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South Tyrol is characterized – at least as far as German dialects are concerned – by local dialects with a small-scale distribution, that belong to the (sub)group of (South) Bavarian dialects. In Neogrammarian and dialect-geographical studies the description of these dialects always was (and still is) carried out diachronically, i.e. depending on a historical reference language, and atomistically, i.e. depending on single units of this historical reference language. These studies make it difficult to recognize that the vowel inventories are identical for (almost) all German dialects in South Tyrol. Diatopic differences between various dialects concern less the single phon(em)es of the respective vowel inventories, but rather the formation of these inventories themselves by phonemic merger and phonemic split. These differences only become recognizable in a structuralist diasystem. In this talk, an overview of the basic vowel inventory of German dialects in South Tyrol will be given, before presenting different diachronic paths of the formation of this inventory by comparing selected local dialects.