

# Reconstructing an oral lexicon

The analysis of pronominals in talk-in-interaction and its implications for didactics of spoken German as a foreign language

*Jens Philipp Lanwer (University of Duisburg-Essen)*

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The use of pronominals in German talk-in-interaction is characterized by enormous phonetic variation. However, this variability shows a high degree of systematic patterning, too – primarily with respect to the distribution across different linguistic contexts. For example, in the everyday speech of native speakers (from Northern Germany) we can observe relatively stable usage patterns varying between the independent and the clitic use of *wir* ‘we’ as exemplified by [viɛ.ham] ‘we have’ vs. [ham.va] ‘have\_we’. Moreover, these patterns show small functional differences (cf. Lanwer 2015a). ‘Traditionally’, such usage patterns have been modelled by way of construing phonological rules identifying different variants on the phonetic surface with one and the same phonological form in the underlying lexicon, mostly the standardized pronunciation of the written analog. Consequently, functional differences between alternating spoken variants like [viɛ] and [va] have been usually overlooked or reduced to matters of style (cf. Lanwer 2015a and b). Because of the longstanding dominance of such a rule-based, writing-biased account of language variation, significant features of the system of pronominals in spoken German have also been excluded from teaching German as a foreign language (cf. Lanwer 2015a). However, from the point of view of usage-based construction grammar, it seems to be possible and even more plausible to interpret recurrent patterns like the alternation of [viɛ] and [va] as supporting evidence for the existence of different form-meaning pairings resp. different lexical constructions. It will be shown that the analysis of form-varying pronominals in the framework of usage-based construction grammar will lead to a more ‘realistic’ account of the oral lexicon of native speakers of German on the one hand and might lead to a more ‘realistic’ understanding of spoken German in the context of applied linguistics on the other.

## References

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