

# *Äugl* or *Äuglein*?

## Diminutive Forms in Austrian Pop Songs

*Ulrike Thumberger*<sup>1</sup>

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### **Abstract**

The usage of diminutive forms has been widely described for spoken and written German in Austria. However, data for the use of diminutives in sung German remains scarce. This study investigates the use of diminutives in Austrian pop songs from two different periods of Austrian pop music, the 1970s and the 2010s. It determines the types and tokens of diminutives in 40 Austrian pop songs, thereby highlighting changes and developments which may be meaningful for the construction of national identity in Austrian pop music.

### **Keywords**

Diminutives, language variation, language change, German in Austria, Austrian pop music, national identity

## **1. Introduction**

The considerable degree of variance in diminutive forms in the German language has been amply elucidated (Lameli 2018, Korecky-Kröll 2022). Likewise, it has been shown that the use of diminutive forms is considerably higher in the south than in the north of the German-speaking area. In other words, in Switzerland, Southern Germany and Austria, speakers have a greater tendency to use diminutive forms, especially in spoken language. This is especially true of the Upper German dialects such as Bavarian and Alemannic (Schirmunski 1962/2010, Korecky-Kröll 2022).

The use of diminutives in Austria has been described for the written language (Schwaiger et al. 2019) as well as for the spoken language (Ziegler et al. 2021). These studies show the aforementioned variation in diminutives insofar as standard diminutive forms are commonly used alongside non-standard diminutive forms

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<sup>1</sup>Pázmány Péter Catholic University, [uthumberger@gmail.com](mailto:uthumberger@gmail.com)

typical for the German-speaking south. German which is sung, e.g. the language used in pop songs, is still a research gap in this regard. This prompts the question of whether diminutives do not just occur in German in Austria when it is written or spoken, but also when it is sung. This paper will therefore deal with the issue of diminutives in Austrian pop songs by means of three questions:

1. Do Austrian pop songs use diminutives?
2. If so, which types of diminutives are most frequent in Austrian pop songs?
3. Are there differences in language use when comparing an older period of Austrian pop music, e.g. the 1970s, to a newer period, such as the 2010s?

These questions will be examined through a small pilot study of forty Austrian pop songs.

## 2. German and Its Varieties

German is a pluricentric language, i.e. it is spoken in different countries and regions throughout Europe, and the German-speaking countries – Austria, Germany and Switzerland – each have their own standard variety of German. In general, German-speaking sociolinguistics differentiates between three varieties used in German: the standard language, which is in everyday speech termed “Hochdeutsch,”<sup>2</sup> the traditional dialects, which are bound to a certain region, and the colloquial language, which ranges in between the two.

### 2.1. Standard Austrian German (SAG)

The standard language in Austria is referred to by terms such as Austrian German, Austrian Standard German or Standard Austrian German (SAG) by linguists. It is considered a variety with high social prestige in Austria (Soukup & Moosmüller 2011). Wiesinger (1990) defines it as “the regional realization of the written language” (445). Moreover, it represents “a ‘non-dialectal’ variety spoken by the educated people from the middle-Bavarian region” (Soukup & Moosmüller 2011, 41), including the cities of Vienna and Salzburg. The wording “non-dialectal” indicates that the variety is not perceived as standard language if a speaker’s accent contains any salient regional

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<sup>2</sup>Diachronically, “Hochdeutsch” (“High German”) characterises the difference between the German language spoken in upland central German lands, whereas its counterpart “Plattdeutsch” (“Low German”) was used as the language of the northern lowlands of the German speaking area.

features. It must be mentioned here that in the German language the word “dialect” can never be used to refer to the standard language (Wardhaugh & Fuller 2015, 29). This is different from English, in which the expression “standard dialect” is common, as the following quote from the Cambridge Dictionary shows:

The standard dialects of the language are used by governments, in the media, in schools and for international communication. (Cambridge Dictionary 2025)

SAG is a fully developed variety with a number of different norms across all levels of system linguistics, such as lexis, morphology, grammar, phonology and phonetics, as well as differences in pragmatic usage. These differences largely have to do with its history and embedding in the Upper German dialects (for details see Ebner 2019, 24–77).

## 2.2. Traditional Austrian Dialects

The traditional Austrian dialects are varieties spoken only locally or regionally; additionally, they may also work as sociolects. All are non-standard varieties which are fully developed on all linguistic levels, just like the standard language.

Traditional dialects of Austria belong to one of two groups: either the Bavarian group or the Alemannic group (including a transition zone ranging from Western Tyrol to the Arlberg pass). Both are part of the so-called Upper German dialect group, which is in turn a subset of the High German dialect group (i.e. the dialects spoken in the German uplands). Most Austrian dialects are in fact of Bavarian origin, because the Bavarian group stretches from the federal province of Burgenland in the east to the Tyrol in the west (Wiesinger 1990). Therefore, Bavarian dialects are spoken in eight out of nine federal provinces. Vorarlberg, the federal province in western Austria, is the exception, along with a small area called “Außerfern” in the Tyrol, which has been isolated from Bavarian-speaking Tyrol for centuries. In these areas Alemannic dialects are spoken.

Within Austria, Bavarian dialects can be further divided into Middle Bavarian (or Central Bavarian) and Southern Bavarian dialects, with a transition zone in between called Southern Middle Bavarian (see Figure 1 below). Similarly, Alemannic dialects can be further divided into smaller groups, namely Low, Middle, High and Highest Alemannic. The Alemannic spoken in Vorarlberg is categorised as part of Middle Alemannic.

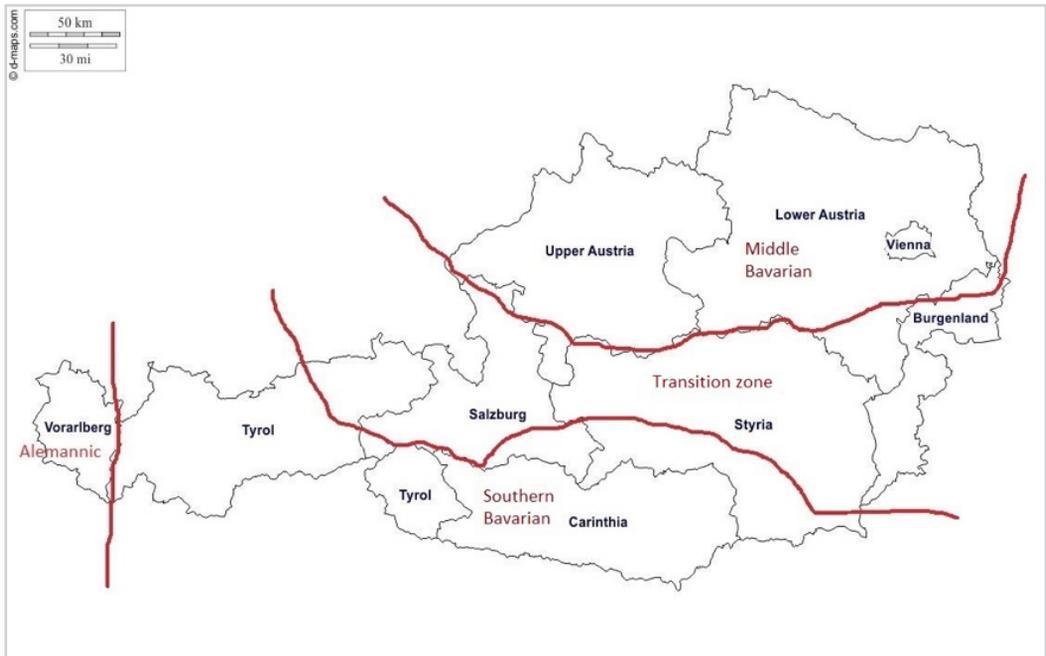


Figure 1.

### 2.3. Colloquial Language

The colloquial language in Austria does not represent one single variety but rather a bundle of colloquial varieties ranging from the Bavarian dialects<sup>3</sup> to the standard, the so-called ‘standard-dialect continuum’ (Ender & Kaiser 2014). Still, it is a variety which is recognized by speakers in Austria and is considered important (Ender & Kaiser 2009).

It is probably best described as a variety used when the standard language is perceived to be too formal, while a traditional dialect is not deemed appropriate (for reasons of communicative range or for reasons of social acceptance). The colloquial language may vary with regard to accent. In certain communicative situations its pronunciation may be closer to that of a traditional dialect while in others the accent used will approximate that of the standard language.

<sup>3</sup> For speakers of Alemannic dialects, colloquial varieties are not assumed, cf. Ender & Kaiser, 2021. This situation is similar to Switzerland, where speakers use either standard German or traditional Swiss dialects but no variety in between.

## 2.4. Language Attitudes and Language Use in Austria

Wodak et al. (2009) and de Cillia et al. (2020) assert in their works on national Austrian identity the importance of the German language for the Austrian nation. Especially after World War II, it was vitally important for Austria to differentiate itself from Germany (Wodak et al. 2009, 5), and the use of the German language played a role in this. Larkey (1993) indicates that “Austrian German,” by which he denotes all traditional Austrian dialects in his work, became popular with the beginning of the Austropop period in the 1970s because it was suitable for establishing a clear demarcation between Austrian and German pop music (176). Similarly, with reference to de Cillia (1996), Wodak et al. (2009) recognize a low awareness of Standard Austrian German among speakers; instead, they point out that “the primary linguistic level of identification of German speaking Austrians is the dialect” (2009, 5). This perception is supported by de Cillia et al. (2020, 93 and 104–105).

At the same time, Austria is experiencing a language change, as far as the use of traditional dialects is concerned. Ziegler et al. (2021) and Glauninger (2010) note that speakers from urban centres such as Vienna and Graz tend to avoid dialect features because these are linguistically marked, and keep closer to the standard instead. This leads to a gap between rural Austria, which is more dialect-prone, and urban Austria, which is more standard-prone. Furthermore, the contact situation with Germany, especially via television and all other types of electronic media, also affects the Austrian standard. In the 2010s, SAG has adopted a number of features which are associated with a German German standard, as Wiesinger (2015) and Ernst (2015) record. Their findings are in line with a fear of language loss in Austria as expressed in Leidinger et al. (2010). They assert, however:

Gute Überlebenschancen werden immerhin den Diminutiva prophezeit, die alles zu handlichen Proportionen schrumpfen lassen, damit wiederum gängigen Klischees vom österreichischen Hang zur ‘Verzweigung’ entsprechen und gut in die ‘kleine’ Alpenrepublik passen. [translation: At least, good chances of survival are predicted for the diminutives, which shrink everything to manageable proportions, thus corresponding to common clichés about the Austrian tendency towards ‘dwarfism’ and fitting well into the ‘small’ Alpine Republic.] (Leidinger et al. 2010, 183)

This statement refers directly to German diminutives, and especially the way they are used in Austria.

### 3. Diminutives in German

According to standard grammars, German nouns can form diminutives by means of two suffixes, namely *-chen* and *-lein*. Apart from their expression of smallness, they usually convey a positive emotional meaning such as affection, familiarity or harmlessness. For this reason, diminutives like *\*Rättchen* ‘rat-DIM’ or *\*Giftschlänglein* ‘poisonous snake-DIM’ are normally not formed (they may only be used in an ironic sense), while diminutives such as *Pferdchen* ‘horse-DIM’ and *Mäuslein* ‘mouse-DIM’ are (Hentschel & Weydt 2013). The components mentioned may be a reason why diminutives tend to occur frequently in child-centred speech (Korecky-Kröll 2022). Altogether, diminutive forms may have several pragmatic functions, including, for example, politeness, sympathy, empathy, familiarity and irony (Dressler & Mellini Barbaresi 1994). Due to the pragmatics of diminutives, they may seem inappropriate to some speakers, and are thus often stigmatized, which can make it difficult to elicit them in language experiments (Korecky-Kröll 2022).

It has been documented that diminutives are usually observed as properties of the German-speaking South (Ziegler et al. 2021). While they are rarely used in Northern Germany (Elmentaler 2013), their use increases from the north to the south of the German-speaking area. Hence, in Switzerland, Southern Germany and Austria, speakers have a greater tendency to use diminutive forms, especially in spoken language. This is especially true of the Upper German dialects such as Bavarian and Alemannic (Schirmunski 1962/2010, Ziegler et al. 2021).

#### 3.1. Diminutive Use in Austria

Altogether, the use of diminutive forms has been shown to be very common in Austria (Dressler & Mellini Barbaresi 1994, Glauninger 2005). Likewise, the range of diminutive forms present in Austria is high: with reference to Dressler and Mellini Barbaresi (1994), Ziegler et al. (2021) enumerate five superordinate diminutive forms, namely *-chen*, *-lein*, *-erl*, *-(e)l*, and *-i*, most of which feature sub-variations.

The suffixes *-chen* and *-lein* are the standard variants. While primarily of Northern German origin, the suffix *-chen* has since spread all over the German-speaking area. The suffix *-lein* largely covers the German-speaking South, but is still not as frequently used as *-chen* (Hentschel & Weydt 2013). Originating in *-lein*, the Upper German non-standard forms can be described as diminutives ending in *-(e)l* or *-erl*, which feature variation by themselves: for the diminutive ending in *-(e)l* the forms

*-l*, *-el*, *-ele* and *-le* are known, for *-erl* forms such as *-erl*, *-tscherl*, *-al* and *-erle* can be recognized (Ziegler et al. 2021).

In Middle Bavarian dialects, the diminutive is usually realised as *-(e)l* or *-erl*. Since diminutives ending on *-(e)l* have partly lost their meaning of diminishment in Bavarian, this has led to the formation of a second diminutive ending in *-erl*, pronounced as [-ɐl] (Lenz 2019). Clyne (1995) assigns particular productivity to the suffix *-erl* (39), but in fact, both the suffixes *-(e)l* or *-erl* are highly productive in Austria, in the Bavarian dialects as well as in colloquial varieties. Type *-chen* is depicted as one of the two most dominant forms in Austria, along with the Bavarian suffix *-erl* (Ziegler et al. 2021, 207).

In Southern Bavarian dialects, two ways of forming the diminutive can be found, namely *-(e)l* and *-le* (Wiesinger 1990, 475). In Alemannic dialects, the diminutive is usually realised as *-le* or *-li* (Lenz 2019). In addition, there is the diminutive ending in *-i*, which shows variation with the forms *-li* and *-tschi*. The suffix *-i* is usually associated with child-centred speech, e.g. *Papi* ‘daddy,’ while it also occurs in the formation of nicknames (Ziegler et al. 2021). Nicknames are not treated in this paper, however.

The choice of standard vs. non-standard diminutives touches the topic of accent insofar as the different suffixes are embedded in different phonological processes. The standard suffixes often require an alternation between a vowel and its umlaut, such as <a> and <ä>, which turn out phonetically as [a] and [ɛ]; the same process applies in Alemannic dialects. Thus, in the German standard we find words such as *Garten* ‘garden’ [ˈgartn̩] and *Gärtchen* ‘garden-DIM’ [ˈgɛrtçən] or *Gärtlein* ‘garden-DIM’ [ˈgɛrtlain], which are realised in Alemannic accents as *Garte* ‘garden’ [ˈgarta] and *Gärtli* ‘garden-DIM’ [ˈgɛrtli]. Bavarian accents, however, show an alternation between [ɔ] and [a], so in Bavarian, the responding forms are realised as *Goatn* ‘garden’ [ˈgɔɐt̩n̩] (e.g. in Vienna) or *Gortn* ‘garden’ [ˈgɔɔxt̩n̩] (in Tyrol), while the diminutives become *Garterl* ‘garden-DIM’ [ˈgɑ:tɐl] (in Vienna) and *Garlt* ‘garden-DIM’ [ˈgax̩t̩l] (in Tyrol) (Hornung and Roitinger 2000, 134; Wiesinger 1990). Umlaut-accented forms such as *\*Gärterl* or *\*Gärtl* do not exist except for lexicalised forms which may have entered the Austrian standard language, e.g. *Mädl* (or *Mädel*) ‘girl’ or *Gröstl* ‘dish containing roast potatoes’ (see section 3.2.).

That said, it is very uncommon for the standard suffixes *-chen* and *-lein* to turn up in any other context than Standard Austrian German or a colloquial variety which is phonetically close to the standard. In contrast, there is more variation with the non-standard forms *-(e)l* and *-erl*, as well as the child-centred suffix *-i*, as the latter three

may be used both in Bavarian dialects and in several colloquial varieties, no matter whether they are phonetically closer to the dialects or to the standard language. Furthermore, the Bavarian suffixes also show a tendency to turn up in the Austrian standard, especially in lexicalised forms.

### 3.2. Lexicalisation of Diminutives

Apart from real diminutives, which genuinely express smallness or feelings of affection, diminutives may also occur in lexicalised form, i.e. they have lost their diminishing meaning and are stored in the lexicon as lexical items of their own (Dressler & Mellini Barbaresi 1994). Bussmann et al. (1996) describe the process under the headword ‘Lexicalization’ as follows:

Fully lexicalized expressions form a (new) semantic unit; their original motivation can only be deduced etymologically. This process is often also called *idiomatization*, to distinguish it from lexicalization. (1996, 682)

In this sense, *Mädchen* and *Madl*, both meaning ‘girl,’ were originally derived from the outdated word *Magd* ‘maid,’ which is not present in today’s meaning of the words anymore. Such lexicalised (or *idiomatized*) forms are usually recorded in dictionaries as they are not part of productive morphological processes anymore but represent a part of the *lexis* of a language. Within Austria, a number of lexicalised diminutives of Bavarian origin are registered in the dictionary *Österreichisches Deutsch: Wörterbuch der Gegenwartssprache in Österreich* (‘Austrian German: Dictionary of the Present-Day Language in Austria’) by Ebner (2019). Ebner (2019) makes a special reference to lexicalised forms in a chapter called “Regionale Wortbildungselemente” (‘Regional elements of word formation,’ 62–64), where he enumerates several examples in which the suffixes do not express any feature of diminution. Such examples are *bissel* ‘a bit,’ *Madel/Mädel* ‘girl,’ *Gstanzl* ‘mocking song,’ *Gröstl* ‘dish containing roast potatoes,’ *Zuckerl* ‘candy,’ *Pickerl* ‘sticker,’ and *Stockerl* ‘stool, podium’ (Ebner 2019, 63–64).

Occasionally, lexemes may obtain both a real diminutive and a lexicalised diminutive, as the headword *Häusl* shows: the first entry denotes the meaning “Einfamilienhaus, Häuschen” ‘single family home, house-DIM’ whereas the second entry is paraphrased as “Toilette” ‘toilet’ (Ebner 2019, 238). The same is true of the word *Blattl*, which can be used either to refer to a diminished form of the word *Blatt*, designating “Blatt” ‘leaf,’ or to the lexicalised form meaning “Zeitung” ‘newspaper’ (Ebner 2019, 140).

### 3.3. Diminutives Used in German-Language Pop Songs

There are presently no studies on the use of diminutives in pop songs sung in German. A search in the online *Corpus of Song Lyrics* (“*Songkorpus*”) using the word strings \*chen and \*lein provides some marginal results, though.

The word string \*chen produces 14653 references on sentence level, of which only the first 200 references are presented. Among them we find mainly verbs such as *machen* ‘make,’ *brauchen* ‘need’ or nouns like *Menschen* ‘humans’ as well as lexicalised diminutives such as *Märchen* ‘fairy tale.’ As for real diminutives, seven tokens can be found within the 200 entries: *Tütchen* ‘joint-DIM’ (ID 15721-16, song “Zeitlos,” 1997), *Männchen* ‘man-DIM’ (ID 15605-8, song “...Hölle losgeht,” 1997), *Stückchen* ‘piece-DIM’ (ID 15820-11, song “Seit der Himmel,” 2001), *Hühnchen* ‘chicken-DIM’ (ID 15797-1, “Mehr als sie erlaubt,” 1993), *Säckchen* ‘bag-DIM’ (ID 15810-1, “Ofen aus Glas,” 1991), and *Stündchen* ‘hour-DIM’ (twice, IDS 15789-2 and 15798-6, song “Mein dein Tag,” 1994).

The same is true of the string \*lein, which produces 3482 references. Again, only the first 200 entries are displayed. Most forms are adjectives such as *allein* ‘alone,’ or *klein* ‘small.’ Concerning real diminutives, the 200 entries show eight tokens, namely *Bäuchlein* ‘tummy’ (ID 15834-7, song “Wahr und gut und schön,” 1991), *Tänzlein* ‘dance-DIM’ (ID 8266-11, Song “All die unerhörten Klänge,” 2005), *Schwänzlein* ‘tail-DIM’ (ID 8312-5, Song “Der Herr Richter,” 1988), *Töchterlein* ‘daughter-DIM’ (ID 10105-9, Song “Schieb es auf die Brote,” 2008), *Entlein* ‘duckling’ (ID 10035-42, Song “Falsche Entscheidung,” 2005), *Brünnlein* ‘well-DIM’ (ID 1379-0, Song “Wenn alle Brünnlein fließen,” 1990), *Ängelein* ‘eyes-DIM’ (ID 12868-32, Song “Kinderlied,” 2016), and *Blümelein* ‘flower-DIM’ (ID 8026-5, Song “Frau Schmitz,” 1988). These examples may serve to show that the use of diminutives in German-language pop songs seems in general to be rather rare.

## 4. Research Design

This study uses a corpus of songs based on those aired on the Austrian radio station Ö3 in the year 2021. From this corpus, 40 songs from two different periods of time were collected and analysed according to their use of diminutive forms. Both types and tokens were analysed so as to provide a meaningful description. Details on the corpus and the diminutive forms are provided below.

## 4.1. Corpus

The corpus was created using the website *Radiostats* (Winkler 2018–). *Radiostats* is an online project which selects current songs from Austrian radio stations by means of a Python script. All these songs are then saved in a database, and the most frequently played songs over a certain period (e.g. a day, a week or a month of a certain year, such as 2021) are shown in a list on the website.

The monthly lists for the year 2021 from the Austrian radio station Ö3 were saved from the page *Radiostats*, covering the whole year of 2021. The timeframe for the study contains songs released between 1970 to 2021, which were aired on Ö3 in 2021. All songs of Austrian origin<sup>4</sup> that appeared in these playlists and were sung in German were entered into an Excel file, together with their year of release. Subsequently, all monthly airplay numbers were added so as to arrive at totals for the whole year. The songs were then listed by their total airplay amount and ranked according to their frequency in the file.

Since diversity was considered an important factor within the chosen timeframe of 51 years, the two top-ranked songs from each year were respectively selected and grouped into a list. Ö3 is rather biased towards songs from the past ten years, however; therefore, some years were missing. To address this, missing data was supplemented by the top-ranked songs from adjacent years or, if this proved impossible, by the top-ranked songs from the whole decade (e.g. the 1970s). This way, a corpus was assembled containing 20 songs from each of the five decades ranging from the 1970s to the 2010s, along with four songs from the years 2020 and 2021. The whole corpus therefore comprises 104 songs by 43 Austrian artists or bands from 1970 to 2021. Out of this corpus, 20 songs from the 1970s were chosen, and 20 songs from the 2010s were selected for a meaningful comparison.

Subsequently, all selected songs for the study will be listed by a keyword so as to facilitate reading. Songs from the 1970s (1970–1979) are given in Table 1:

Keyword	Artist	Song	Release
Glock'n	Marianne Mendt	Wie a Glock'n	1970
Haus	Arik Brauer	Sie hab'n a Haus baut	1971
Köpferl	Arik Brauer	Sei Köpferl in Sand	1971
Hofa	Wolfgang Ambros	Da Hofa	1971
Wintasunn	Wolfgang Ambros	Du bist wia de Wintasunn	1972

<sup>4</sup> The Austrian origin of musicians and bands was determined by means of the Archive of Austrian Popular Music, accessible via <https://sra.at/> (accessed February 14, 2025).

Ziwui	Wilfried	Ziwui, ziwui	1973
Vorarlberg	Ray & Mick	Oho Vorarlberg	1973
Lauf	Wilfried	Lauf Hase lauf	1974
Bleiben	Wolfgang Ambros	A Mensch möcht i bleiben	1974
Zentralfriedhof	Wolfgang Ambros	Es lebe der Zentralfriedhof	1975
Jö	Georg Danzer	Jö schau	1975
Zwickt's	Wolfgang Ambros	Zwickt's mi	1975
Gatsch	Georg Danzer	Hupf in Gatsch	1976
Weihnachten	Georg Danzer	Wie woa Weihnachten	1976
Aufgeh	Georg Danzer	Lass mi amoi no d'Sunn aufgeh' segn	1976
Ruaf	Georg Danzer	Ruaf mi net an	1976
Schifoan	Wolfgang Ambros	Schifoan	1976
66	Udo Jürgens	Mit 66 Jahren	1977
Gemeindebau	Wolfgang Ambros	Die Blume aus dem Gemeindebau	1977
Ruckn	Ludwig Hirsch	I lieg am Ruckn	1978

Table 1

The songs from the 2010s (2010–2019) are shown in Table 2:

Keyword	Artist	Song	Release
Schoppornou	Holstuonarmusigbigbandclub	Vo Mello bis ge Schoppornou	2010
Moment	Christina Stürmer	Wir leben den Moment	2010
Her	Hubert von Goisern	Nit lang her	2011
Brenna	Hubert von Goisern	Brenna tuats guat	2011
Berlin	Keiner mag Faustmann	Wien-Berlin	2012
Spielberg	Julian Le Play	Mr. Spielberg	2012
Millionen	Christina Stürmer	Millionen Lichter	2013
Maschin	Bilderbuch	Maschin	2013
Anker	Julian Le Play	Mein Anker	2014
Ham	Seiler und Speer	Ham kummst	2014
Tagträumen	Tagtraeumer	Tagträumen	2015
Feiah	Krautschädl	Feiah fonga	2015

So	Lemo	So wie du bist	2016
Himmel	Lemo	Der Himmel über Wien	2016
Columbo	Wanda	Columbo	2017
Mama	Pizzera & Jaus	Mama	2017
Cordula	Josh.	Cordula Grün	2018
Ala	Seiler und Speer	Ala bin	2018
Inspektor	Seiler und Speer	Herr Inspektor	2019
Principessa	Seiler und Speer	Principessa	2019

Table 2.

## 4.2. Diminutive Forms

For this study, five types of diminutive suffixes were chosen. These suffixes are the following:

1. Type *-(e)l*: *-(e)l* is one of two Bavarian suffixes which has entered the colloquial language and occasionally, in lexicalised form, the standard language. It is often perceived to be typical of German spoken in Austria.
2. Type *-erl*: like *-(e)l*, *-erl* is principally of Bavarian origin but also frequently used in colloquial language. Just like *-(e)l*, it can be described as a marker for German in Austria.
3. Type *-le*: *-le* is the usual suffix used in Alemannic dialects. In addition, it may also turn up in Southern Bavarian dialects.
4. Type *-lein*: *-lein* is one of two standard German suffixes. Originating in the German-speaking south, it has become a supra-regional form but is not as frequent as *-chen*.
5. Type *-chen*: *-chen* is the standard German suffix most frequently used in diminution. Originating in the German-speaking north, it has spread to all areas of the German-speaking countries.

These five types were counted in all song lyrics. In general, audio versions of songs were used as the source for identifying each type. However, the written version of the lyrics was used as an aid in order to mark all diminutive forms. In the course of this process, a number of tokens for each type could be determined. Take for example the following text sample from the song “Vorarlberg” (1973) by Ray & Mick as shown both in standardised orthography and English translation:

Standardised text	English translation
Woh-woh Vorarlberg, <b>-bergl</b> , -berg, bist zwar als Land ein Zwerg, <b>Zwergl</b> , Zwerg, klein, aber oho, jodeljo, hollodrio.	Woh-woh Vorarlberg, <b>-berg-DIM</b> , -berg, as a state you are indeed a dwarf, <b>dwarf-DIM</b> , dwarf, small but powerful, jodeljo, hollodrio {yodelling}.

Table 3.

In these lines, type *-(e)l* can be found in the words *-bergl* ‘mountain-DIM’ and *Zwergl* ‘dwarf-DIM,’ so type *-(e)l* appears in two tokens in this extract. A second sample from the same song’s lyrics provides more data:

Standardised text	English translation
Wenn wir dereinst die <b>Änglein</b> schließen, ein <b>Glöcklein</b> klingt im Abendrot – in Wien.	When we close the <b>eyes-DIM</b> someday, a <b>bell-DIM</b> rings in the afterglow – in Vienna.

Table 4.

Here, type *-lein* occurs in the words *Änglein* ‘eyes-DIM’ and *Glöcklein* ‘bell-DIM,’ hence the extract shows two tokens for *-lein*. It can thus be determined that the song “Vorarlberg” uses at least the diminutive types *-(e)l* and *-lein*, and it contains at least two tokens for each.

## 5. Results

The analysis of the songs is presented in two tables: Table 5 shows the songs from the 1970s while Table 6 displays the songs from the 2010s. The songs from both periods of Austrian pop music are listed by their keywords to facilitate readability.

In both tables, the types and the tokens of the selected diminutives are presented. All diminutive forms found in the lyrics are listed by their relevant type. The examples of each type were then added in order to reach the number of tokens for each type within the decade. Lexicalised forms are marked by the abbreviation “lex.”. As they are actually lexical items and not real diminutives, they are listed in the table (marked in grey colour), but only partly included in the analysis.

## 5.1. Usage of Diminutive Forms in the 1970s

The types and tokens of diminutives in Austrian pop songs from the 1970s are presented in Table 5:

	<i>-(e)l</i>	<i>-erl</i>	<i>-le</i>	<i>-lein</i>	<i>-chen</i>
Glock'n (1970)	Madl (lex.)	nd	nd	nd	nd
Haus (1971)	nd	Herzerl, Henderl, Schwefelhölzerl, Aschenköpferl	nd	nd	nd
Köpferl (1971)	Häusl; bissl (lex.)	4x Köpferl	nd	nd	nd
Hofa (1971)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Wintasunn (1972)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Ziwui (1973)	nd	Pfeiferl	nd	nd	nd
Vorarlberg (1973)	6x Bergl, 6x Zwergl	nd	nd	Äuglein, Glöcklein	nd
Lauf (1974)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Bleiben (1974)	2x Stückl	Kugerl	nd	nd	nd
Zentralfriedhof (1975)	bissl (lex.)	Grablaternderl	nd	nd	nd
Jö (1975)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Zwickt's (1975)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Gatsch (1976)	Äugl	Schnoferl (lex.)	nd	nd	nd
Weihnachten (1976)	nd	Schneeflockerl	nd	nd	nd
Aufgeh (1976)	Madl (lex.)	nd	nd	nd	nd
Ruaf (1976)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Schifoan (1976)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
66 (1977)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Gemeindebau (1977)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Ruckn (1978)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Tokens incl. lex. forms	20	13	0	2	nd
Tokens of real diminutives	16	12	0	2	nd

Table 5.

Within the 20 songs from the 1970s, the quota of songs containing a diminutive is 50% (10 songs). However, 10% of these songs contain lexicalised forms such as *Madl* ‘girl’ or *bissl* ‘a bit,’ thus only 40% of these (eight songs) include real diminutives.

Types used in this period are *-(e)l*, *-erl*, and *-lein*. Of all the songs from the 1970s, 15% (three songs) use only one type of diminutive, namely *-erl*. By contrast, combinations of types are used in 30% (six songs): 10% (two songs) feature *-(e)l* plus *-erl*, and five per cent (one song) use *-(e)l* plus *-lein*. As far as the number of songs is concerned, type *-erl* appears most frequently in the 1970s, appearing in 30% (six songs). It is followed by type *-(e)l* with 20% of songs (four songs). Type *-lein* is less frequent: it is represented by five per cent (one song).

The total number of tokens for diminutives in the 1970s amounts to 35, and without the lexicalised forms the number of tokens reaches 30. Regarding the number of tokens for the different types, the frequencies look different: here, *-(e)l* is the most frequent type with 53.33% (16 tokens), while *-erl* comes second with 40 (12 tokens). Type *-lein* holds 6.67% (two tokens).

## 5.2. Usage of Diminutive Forms in the 2010s

The types and tokens of diminutives in Austrian pop songs from the 2010s are displayed in Table 6:

	<i>-(e)l</i>	<i>-erl</i>	<i>-le</i>	<i>-lein</i>	<i>-chen</i>
Schoppornou (2010)	nd	nd	Gläsle	nd	nd
Moment (2010)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Her (2011)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Brenna (2011)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Berlin (2012)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Spielberg (2012)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Millionen (2013)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Maschin (2013)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Anker (2014)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Ham (2014)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd

Tagträumen (2015)	nd	nd	nd	nd	bisschen (lex.)
Feiah (2015)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
So (2016)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Himmel (2016)	nd	nd	nd	nd	bisschen (lex.)
Columbo (2017)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Mama (2017)	Mädl (lex.)	Sackerl (lex.)	nd	nd	nd
Cordula (2018)	nd	nd	nd	nd	nd
Ala (2018)	bissl (lex.)	nd	nd	nd	nd
Inspektor (2019)	Madln (lex.)	Kasperl	nd	nd	nd
Principessa (2019)	Büdl; bissl (lex.)	nd	nd	nd	nd
Tokens incl. lex. forms	5	2	1	nd	2
Tokens of real diminutives	1	1	1	nd	0

Table 6.

In the 2010s, diminutive forms can be observed in 35% of songs (seven songs). Of these, 20% show lexicalised forms, so that 15% (three songs) can be said to contain real diminutives.

Types that occur in this period are *-(e)l*, *-erl*, and *-le*, while the type *-chen* only occurs in lexicalised form. In 15% of songs (three songs), only one type of diminutive form can be found; 5% (one song each) feature type *-(e)l*, type *-erl*, and type *-le*, respectively. Combinations of different types do not occur. As far as the number of songs is concerned, types *-(e)l*, *-erl* and *-le* are equally frequent, with each being found in 5% of songs (one song each).

The total number of tokens for diminutives in the 2010s amounts to ten, while there are three tokens for the real diminutives. The percentages are 33.33% for *-(e)l*, *-erl*, and *-le* each (one token respectively).

### 5.3. Interpretation

Given that pop lyrics are not a category of text or speech act in which diminutives seem particularly typical, it is remarkable that they are present to such a degree in Austrian pop songs. As far as the 1970s are concerned, the numbers can even be deemed high: in 40% of songs (eight songs) real diminutives can be found, and the number of tokens of these diminutives amounts to 30. The distribution of diminutives is also interesting: type *-erl* is used in the largest number of songs and type *-(e)l* in the second highest. At the same time, in terms of number of tokens, type *-(e)l* is most frequent (16 tokens) and type *-erl* comes second (12 tokens). Thus, the non-standard suffixes of Bavarian origin prevail in the lyrics. The standard type *-lein* is represented as well, but reaches a considerably lower number, both in terms of the number of songs (one) and in tokens (two). What comes as a surprise is the fact that type *-chen* does not occur at all in the 1970s. Since *-chen* is the most frequent type used in German standard language and also one of the two most frequent types in spoken German in Austria (Ziegler et al. 2021), this finding can be considered striking.

Regarding the 2010s, it is obvious that the number of diminutive forms has decreased radically when compared to the 1970s. Not only has the number of songs with real diminutives dropped to 15% (three songs), the number of tokens has also declined to three. There is no preferred type of diminutive in the 2010s, but types *-(e)l*, *-erl*, and *-le* are equally frequent with one token each. So again the non-standard suffixes are the dominant types in Austrian pop lyrics, but in the 2010s both the Bavarian suffixes *-(e)l* and *-erl* and the Alemannic suffix *-le* occur. As in the 1970s, standard type *-chen* does not occur as a real diminutive at all, and only appears in the lexicalised form *bisschen* ‘a bit’ (two occurrences). How can these considerable differences in the two periods be explained?

A recent study by Thumberger (forthcoming) shows that German-language pop songs in Austria are experiencing a change, as far as their variety is concerned. While pop songs in the 1970s were largely sung in an Austro-Bavarian non-standard pronunciation, by the 2010s the preferred accent had switched to standard German. In the 1970s, 85% of songs (17 songs) show a clear preference for a dialect accent, whereas in the 2010s, only 45% do (nine songs). The preference for an Austro-Bavarian accent in the 1970s may serve as an explanation for the high number of tokens for the types *-(e)l* and *-erl*; after all, these two types are of Bavarian origin and they are the only types used in Middle Bavarian pronunciation (except for *-i*). Likewise, the fondness for an Austrian dialect accent may also partly explain why *-chen* does not occur at all: as only 15% of songs (three songs) are sung in standard pronunciation, which does

not provide much context for suffix *-chen*. However, even if there is a preference for singing Austrian pop songs in a standard accent, as in the case of “Vorarlberg” by Ray & Mick (Thumberger, forthcoming), they seem to have a preference for suffixes which can be related to Austria. Otherwise, they do without diminutives at all, as the songs “Lauf” (1974) by Wilfried and “66” (1977) by Udo Jürgens show.

Concerning pop songs from the 2010s, the prevalence of non-standard accents has sharply decreased. Thus, one may conclude that the context for suffixes *-(e)l* and *-erl* has diminished as well, since these types are only productive in Bavarian dialects and Austrian colloquial language. However, non-standard accents are still heard in 45% of songs, while the proportion of songs using diminutives only amounts to 15%. What comes as an even greater surprise is the fact that, even though the proportion of those sung in standard has risen to 55%, real diminutives with suffix *-chen* do not occur at all. Therefore, while *-chen* is very frequent in spoken language (see Ziegler et al. 2021), this is definitely not the case in songs. Instead, even though their numbers are low both in songs and tokens, the non-standard types *-(e)l* and *-erl*, along with *-le*, are still the preferred forms. But, given the high tendency for diminutive use in Austria, one would expect either more diminutives using the non-standard suffixes *-(e)l* and *-erl* or more diminutives using the standard suffix *-chen* in the lyrics of the 2010s. These are discrepancies which cannot be fully explained by the data. A theory could be that diminutives are more stigmatized in Austrian pop songs in the 2010s than they were in the 1970s, but this remains speculative. More surveys on language attitudes, especially with reference to pop music, might be needed to elucidate such questions.

In addition to the productive suffixes, both decades feature a few lexicalised forms of *-(e)l* and *-erl*. In the 1970s, the lyrics contain forms like *Madl* ‘girl’ (occurs twice), *bissl* ‘a bit’ (occurs twice), and *Schnoferl* ‘snout’; similarly, the lyrics of the 2010s show forms such as *Mädl* ‘girl,’ *Madln* ‘girls (pl.),’ *bissl* ‘a bit,’ and *Sackerl* ‘bag.’ While these words cannot be regarded as diminutives as they have lost their function of diminution and have become part of the Austrian lexis (be it colloquial or standard), they add to an ‘Austrian sound’ of the lyrics and may contribute to the construction of national identity.

Summed up, the research questions can be addressed as follows:

1. Yes, Austrian pop songs use diminutives.
2. The types of diminutives most frequent in Austrian pop songs are *-(e)l* and *-erl*.
3. Yes, there are differences in language use. In the 1970s, the proportion of songs with diminutives amounted to 40% (eight songs) whereas in the 2010s

the proportion is just 15% (three songs). The use of diminutives in Austrian pop songs is thus clearly decreasing, which seems to be in line with a greater prevalence of standard language use. However, when diminutives are used in songs, they show a preference for *-(e)l* and *-erl* rather than *-chen*, which does not occur in real diminutives at all.

## 6. Conclusion

In general, diminutive forms are used very frequently in the South of the German-speaking area. Previous research on Austria shows that the Bavarian suffix *-erl* is most frequently used alongside the supra-regional standard form *-chen*, both in spoken and written language. This paper tried to answer the question of whether the distribution of diminutives in Austrian pop songs mirrors these results. This was done by analysing five diminutive suffixes which are relevant to Austrian language use across a total of forty Austrian pop songs. These forty songs were split into two periods: twenty songs were taken from 1970–1979 and the other twenty were taken from 2010–2019.

The findings of this analysis reveal that the 1970s featured a rather high number of songs with real diminutives, namely 40% (eight songs). The overall number of tokens for real diminutives amounts to 33. Types *-(e)l* and *-erl* are the two most frequent types, with 48.48% of tokens (16 tokens) and 36.36% of tokens (12 tokens) respectively. Type *-lein* is also represented by 6.06% (two tokens), while types *-le* and *-chen* do not appear at all. In addition, 10% of songs (two songs) show lexicalised forms.

By the 2010s, the numbers of diminutives have clearly decreased. In this period only 15% of songs (three songs) use real diminutives. The overall number of tokens for real diminutives amounts to three. Types *-(e)l*, *-erl* and *-le* are all equally frequent, with 33.33% (one token each). The standard types *-lein* and *-chen* do not occur. Furthermore, 20% of songs (four songs) have lexicalised forms, and type *-chen* is only represented in lexicalised forms (twice).

Altogether, the use of diminutives in songs is obviously decreasing. However, when they have to choose, Austrian singers and songwriters still tend to opt for the Bavarian diminutive suffixes *-(e)l* and *-erl* rather than the suffixes *-lein* and *-chen*, which is visible in a higher use of *-(e)l* and *-erl*. Among certain singers, this may be one strategy of adhering to Austrian language use instead of using supra-regional German forms and through this expressing their Austrian identity.

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