

**Elisabeth Fink**

**Language loyalty to the Austrian variety of  
the German language  
Conclusions of a research project at Austrian  
schools**

FWF-Project No. P23913–G18

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Unterrichtssprache  
Bildungssprache

- Research project „**Austrian Standard German as a language of instruction and education**“ FWF-Project No. P23913–G18 (September 2012-February 2015)
- Based on the theory of pluricentric languages
- Investigates:
  - the role of the Austrian standard variety of German in the context of schools
  - the knowledge about the pluricentricity of German and Austrian German among teachers of German in Austria
  - which concepts of linguistic norms prevail among Austrian teachers and pupils (pluricentric/monocentric)
  - the attitudes of Austrian teachers/pupils towards ASG

## Research Questions (selection)

- One of the numerous objectives of the project was to explore the **attitude of Austrian teachers and pupils** towards the **Austrian standard variety of German**
- Literature provides evidence of an **ambivalent attitude** among Austrians towards their own variety and a **less marked language loyalty** in comparison to speakers of the German variety. In addition, a **linguistic inferiority complex** is assumed (e.g. Muhr 1989, 2005)
- Some of the issues investigated in this context were:
  - How do teachers and students conceptualize Austrian German? (monocentric/pluricentric views?)
  - What is the **attitude of teachers/students** as regards **correctness** of ASG?
  - Are there tendencies toward **exonorm-oriented correction**?
  - Preferences in language use for Austriacisms/Deutschlandisms

# Project design

## Data gathering

- data- and methodological triangulation

## Data

- study of sources
- qualitative and quantitative surveys
- in-class participatory observation

## Analysis of data

- statistical analysis (SPSS)
- content and discourse analysis

## Data Sets:

School curricula:	primary school, secondary level I and II
Curricula for teacher training:	(German) at universities and pedagogical institutes
German text books used at schools:	basic level, secondary level I and II
Questionnaires:	pupils (secondary level II), n=1253 teachers (basic level, secondary level I and II), n=164 all federal states
Interviews:	n=21 with teachers of all school types in all federal states
Group discussions:	1 teachers' group, 1 pupils' group
In-class participatory observation:	7 classes

## Results of document analysis (curricula, textbooks)

- **Austrian German** generally no issue, pluricentric concept is not mentioned
- Texts contain country-specific standard variation, but specific and unspecific **Austriacisms/Helvetisms/Deutschlandisms** remain **uncommented** for pupils
- No references to **dictionaries** (ÖWB, Variantenwörterbuch)
- **Ancillary teaching material**: no references to more extensive materials or theoretical background information on ASG or standard linguistic variation within German

# Ausdrücke in Deutschland und Österreich

Wir Österreicherinnen und Österreicher sprechen zwar Deutsch – aber vieles hört sich doch ganz anders an als in Deutschland. Während wir von einem „Sessel“ und einem „Kasten“ sprechen, sagen die Deutschen zu denselben Möbelstücken „Stuhl“ und „Schrank“.

**5** Versuche einer/einem Deutschen das „österreichische Deutsch“ Schritt für Schritt beizubringen!

## Für Anfängerinnen und Anfänger: ... heißt auf gut Deutsch ...

„Extrawurst“ – _____	Dippel – _____
Flasche – _____	Beistrich – _____
Nickerchen – _____	Grant – _____
Gschaftlhuber – _____	Gschau – _____
Gschlader – _____	Gschrapp – _____
Gstätten – _____	Gupf – _____
Häferl – _____	Hutsche – _____
Jauckerl – _____	Kampel – _____
Bartwisch – _____	Bosnigel – _____

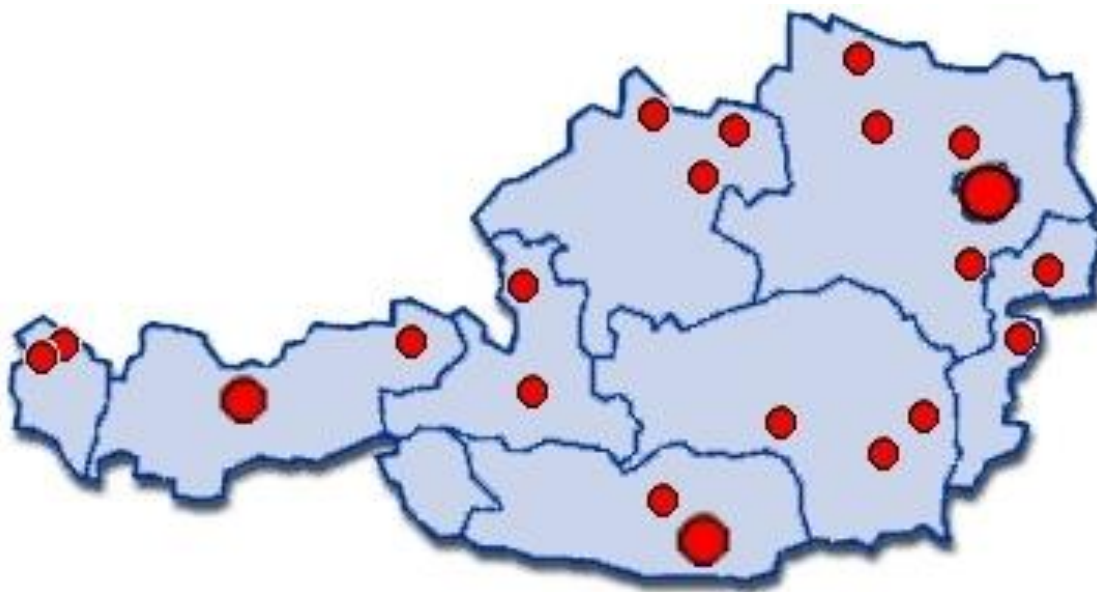
üble Laune, Blick, Spaß,  
kurzer Schlaf, Komma,  
Ohrfeige, Beule,  
Wichtigtuere, Ausnahme,  
Erhebung, Kind, Kamm,  
Injektion, kleiner Besen,  
boshafter Mensch,  
Tasse, Schaukel, unge-  
nießbares Getränk,  
ungepflegtes  
Grundstück

# Findings of the survey in reference to the research question



## Results of the survey

- Survey among 1253 pupils of secondary level II at 27 schools in all of Austria (2-4 schools per federal state), of which 85.3% native German speakers, 3.4% BCS, 2.5% Turkish and 8.8% others



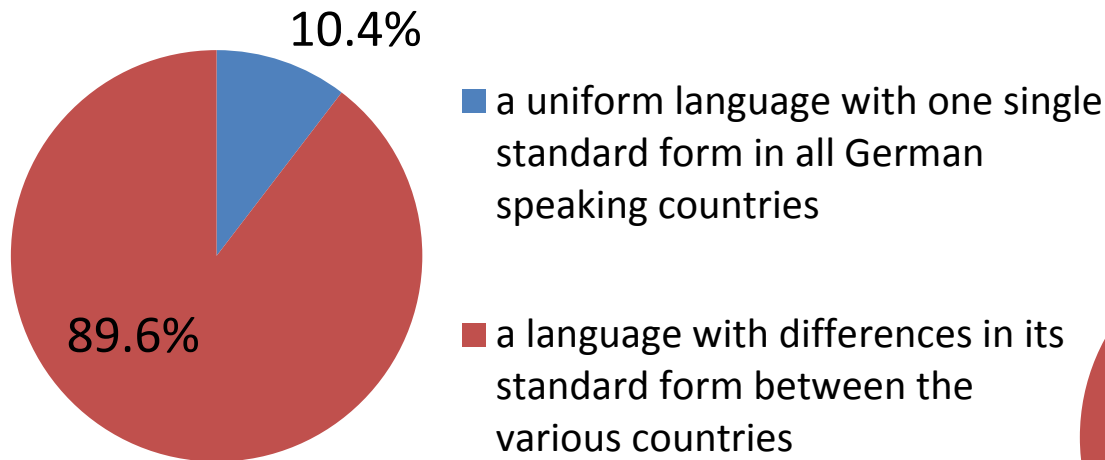
- and among among 164 teachers at various types of schools (primary schools, Hauptschulen (general secondary schools)/ NMS (new secondary schools), secondary levels I and II, vocational training schools) from all federal states

# Conceptualisation of linguistic variation in Austria

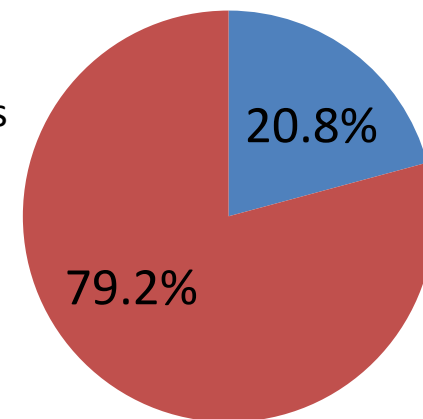
How would you describe German? Please mark:

- a uniform language with one single standard form in all German speaking countries
- a language with differences in its standard form (in High German) between the German-speaking countries

**teachers**



**pupils**



# Conceptualisation of linguistic variation in Austria

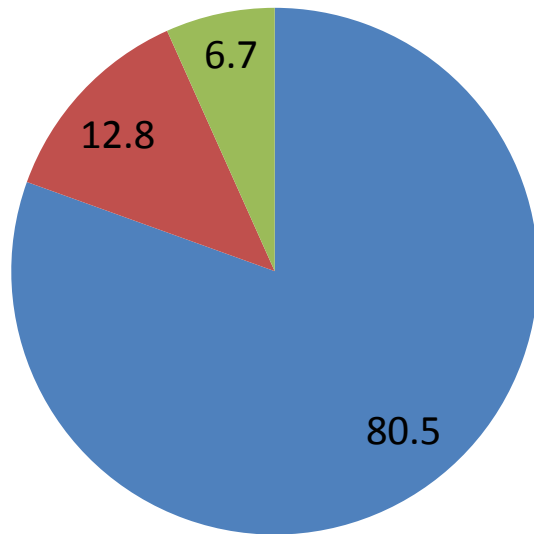
Would you say that Austrian Standard German (High German) exists?

yes

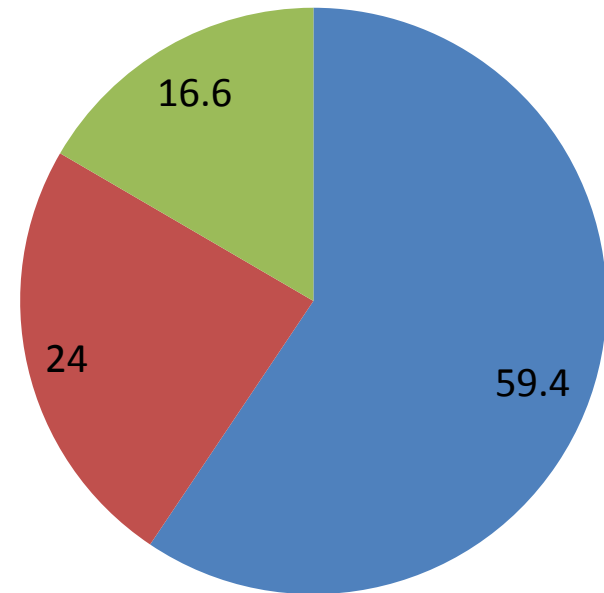
no

I don't know

**% teachers**



**% pupils**



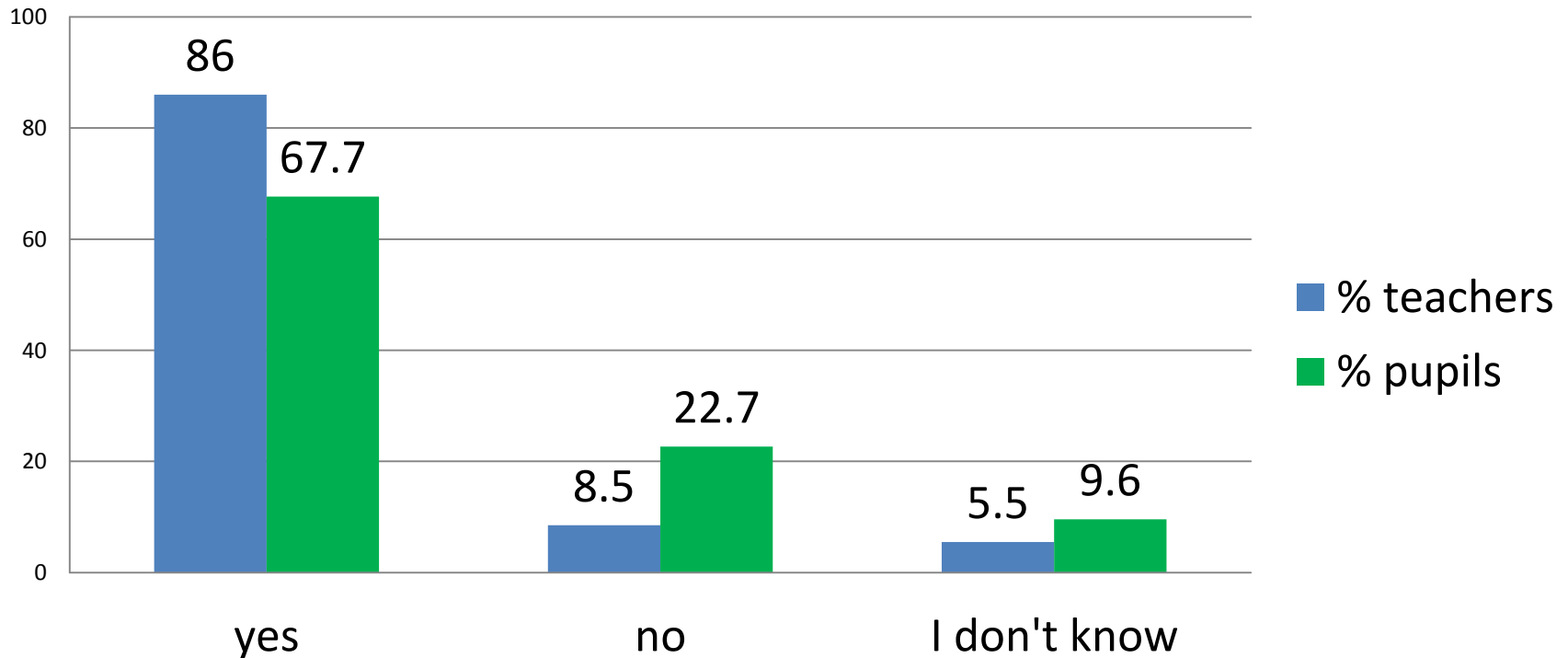
■ yes

■ no

■ I don't know

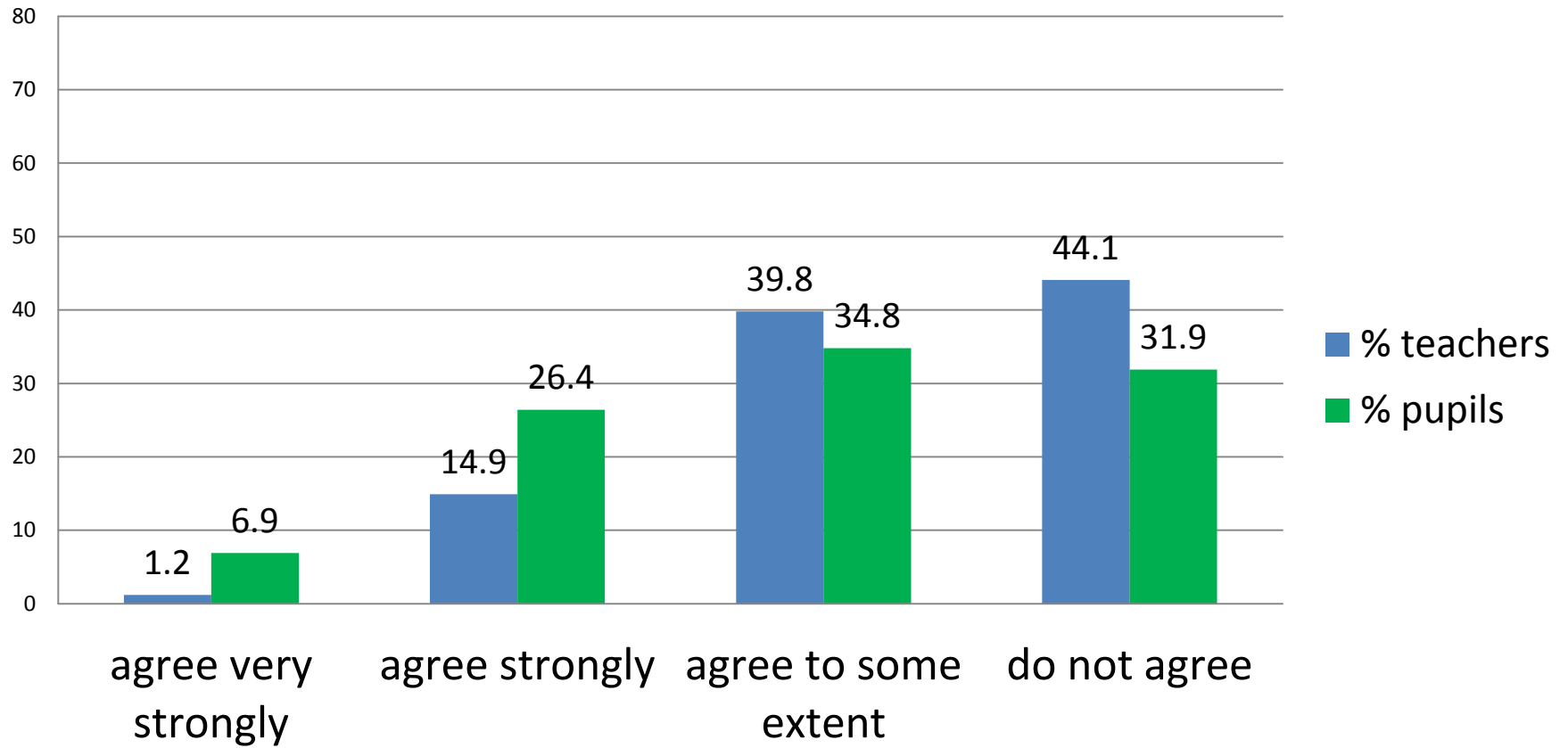
## Comparison between teachers' versus pupils' attitudes:

**Do you consider Standard German (High German) as used in Austria to be equally correct as the German variety?**



## Comparison between teachers' versus pupils' attitudes:

**„German German is more correct than Austrian German“ – Approval:**



# Preference for variants in sample sentences

# Preference for variants in sample sentences

**30 example sentences in the questionnaire**, containing options between

two variants each (Austriacisms/Deutschlandisms):

- options contain among other things: f.ex. lexical variants, e.g. der Junge/der Bub, use of perfect tense and articles, use of prepositions, gender, linking elements etc.
- Reference literature: Variantenwörterbuch, ÖWB, Ebner (2009)

Analysis of:

- Frequencies of selected variants (teachers/pupils)
- Relation between preferred variants and various variables

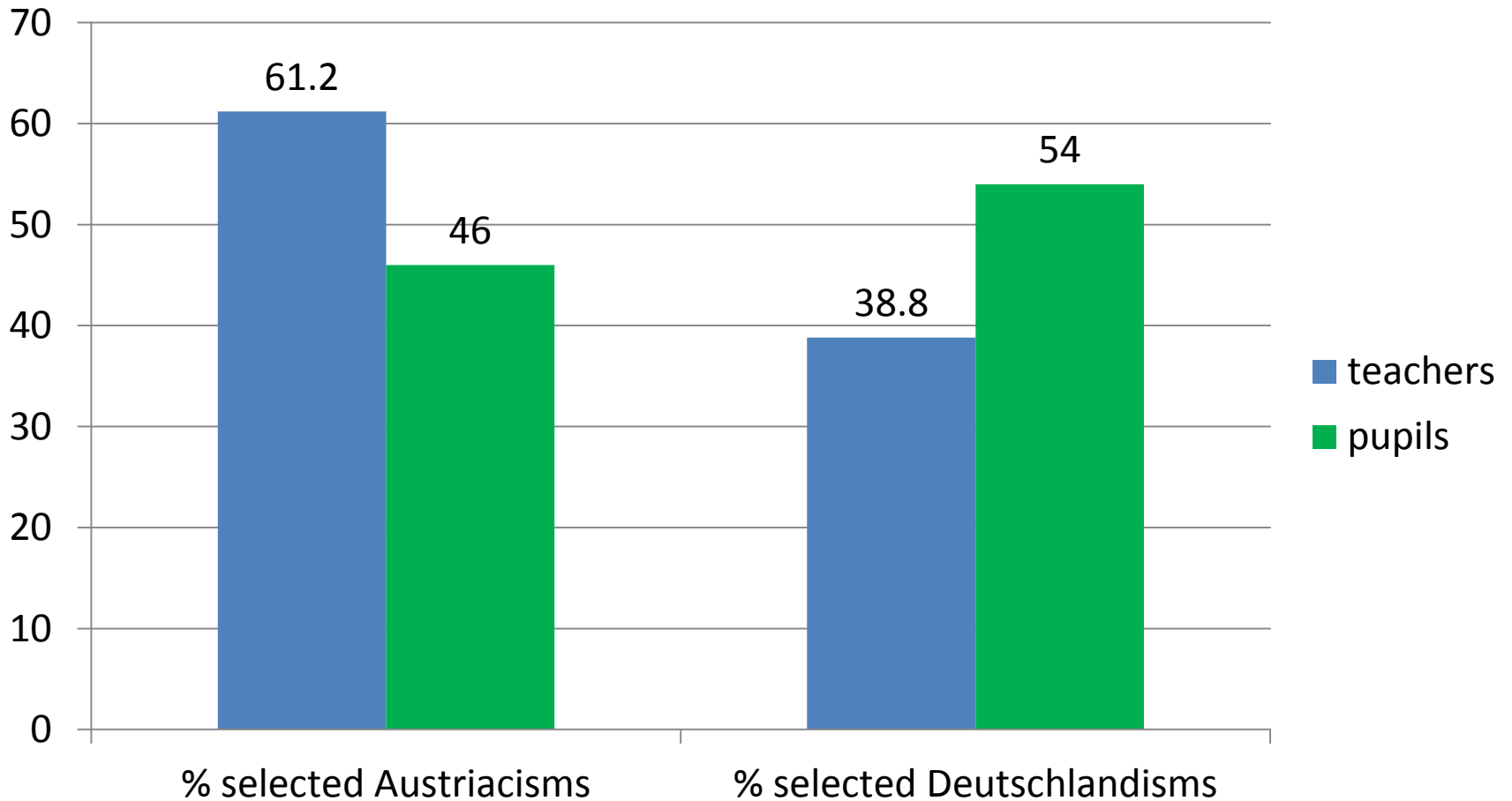
Please read the following sentences and underline the expression which you would prefer to use in a written text . Please underline only one expression per sentence.

1. Nach dem Aufstehen trinke ich gerne **ein Cola/eine Cola**, um wach zu werden.
2. Zum Geburtstag bekam **der Junge/der Bub** endlich seine ersehnte Modelleisenbahn.
3. Sie hat ihm gestern noch **eine Email/ein Email** geschrieben.
4. Die **Wimmerl/Pickel** in seinem Gesicht sind ihm sehr unangenehm.
5. Tut mir leid, ich habe **die SMS/das SMS** nicht erhalten.

.....



## Percentage of preferred variants (teachers/pupils, mean value)



# Most frequently selected Austriacisms: differences between teachers versus pupils

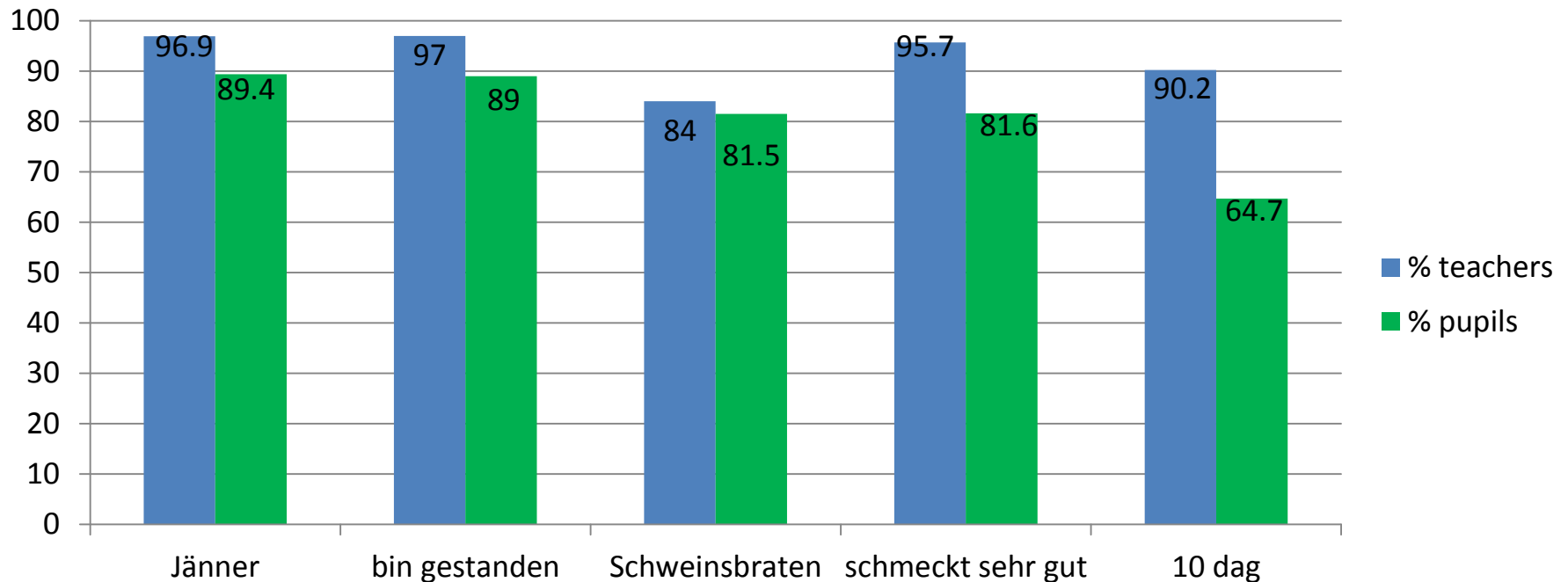
Jänner (A) – Januar (D)

bin gestanden – habe gestanden

Schweinsbraten – Schweinebraten

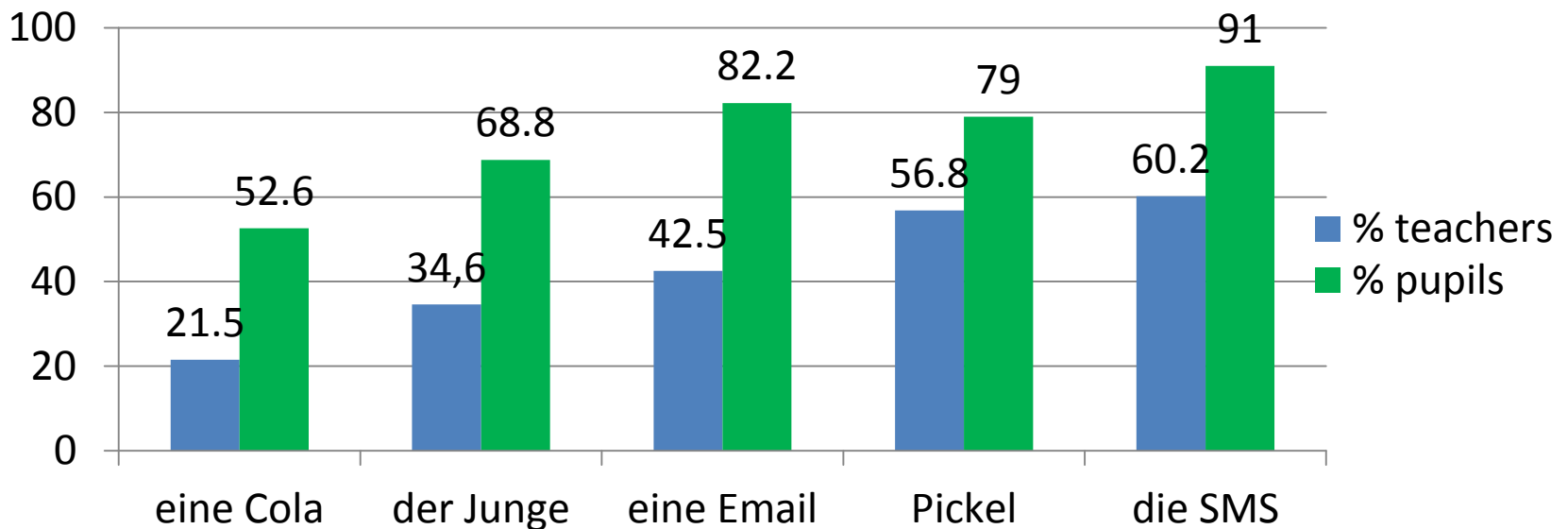
schmeckt sehr gut – ist sehr lecker

10 dag – 100g



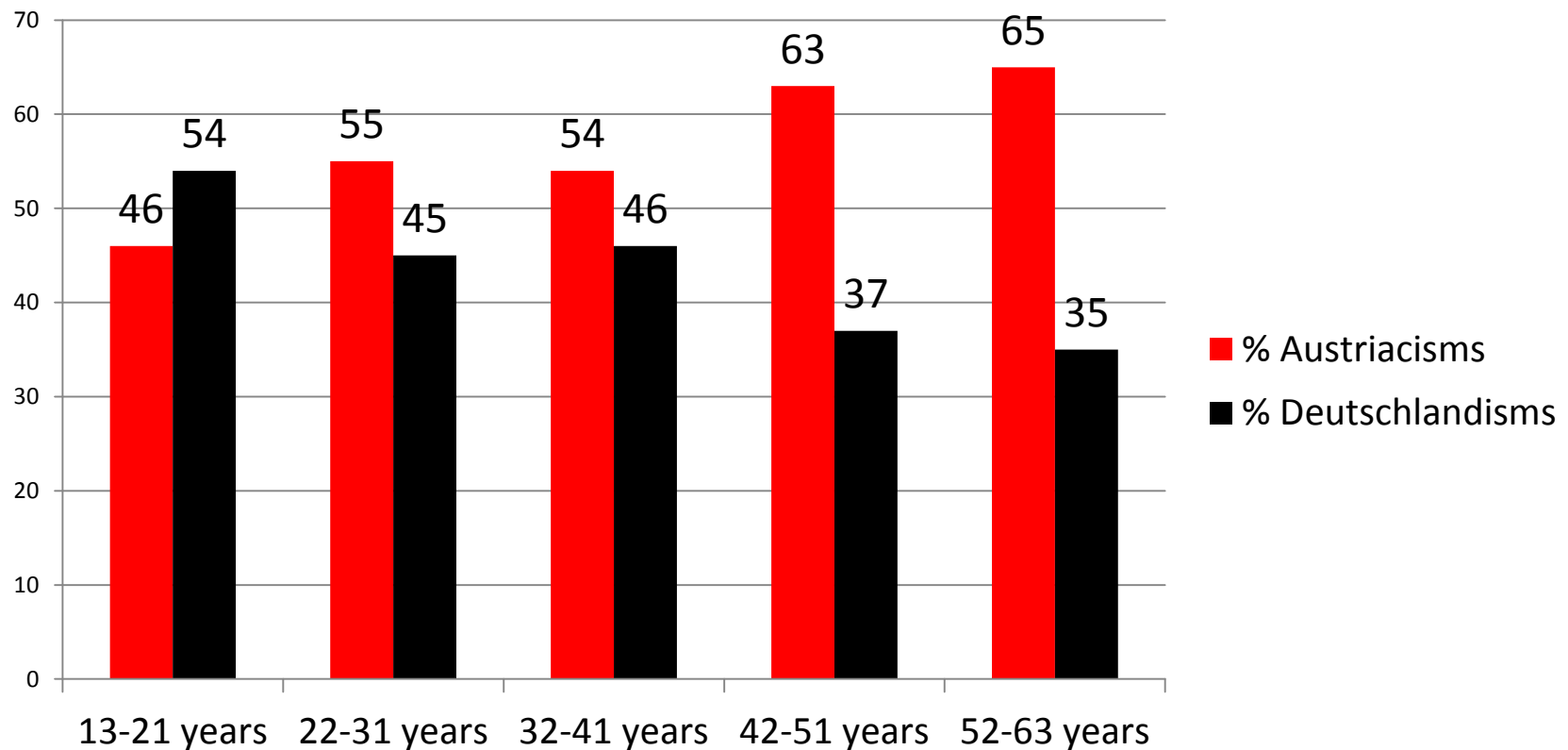
## Most frequently selected Deutschlandisms: differences between teachers versus pupils

eine Cola (D) – ein Cola (A)  
der Junge – der Bub  
eine Email – ein Email  
Pickel – Wimmerl  
die SMS – das SMS



# Preference of Austriacisms and Deutschlandisms by age (teachers versus pupils)

Number of selected variants by age (mean value)



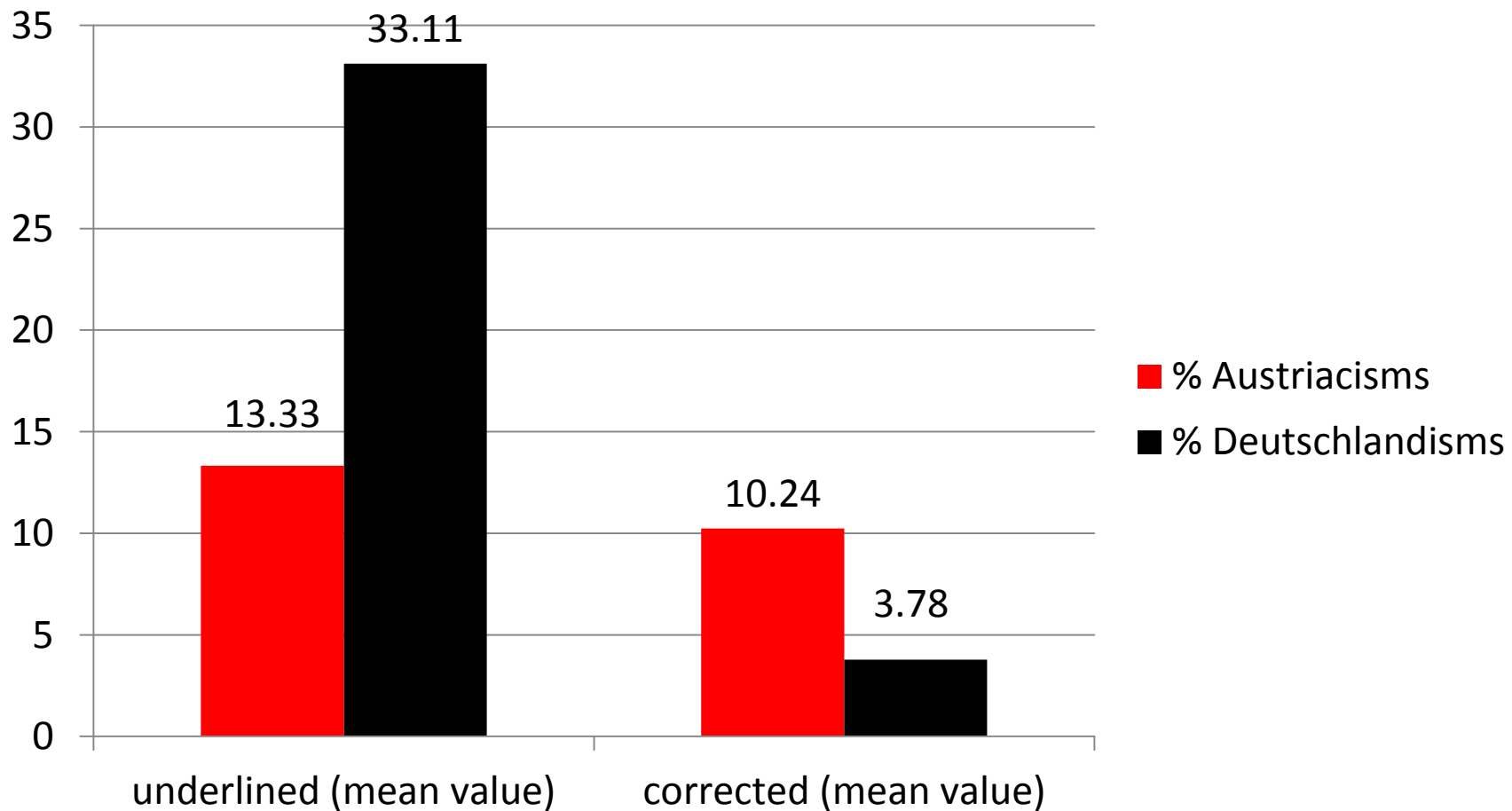
significant Kruskal- Wallis-Test

How do Austrian teachers of  
German correct a student essay  
as regards Austriacisms and  
Deutschlandisms?

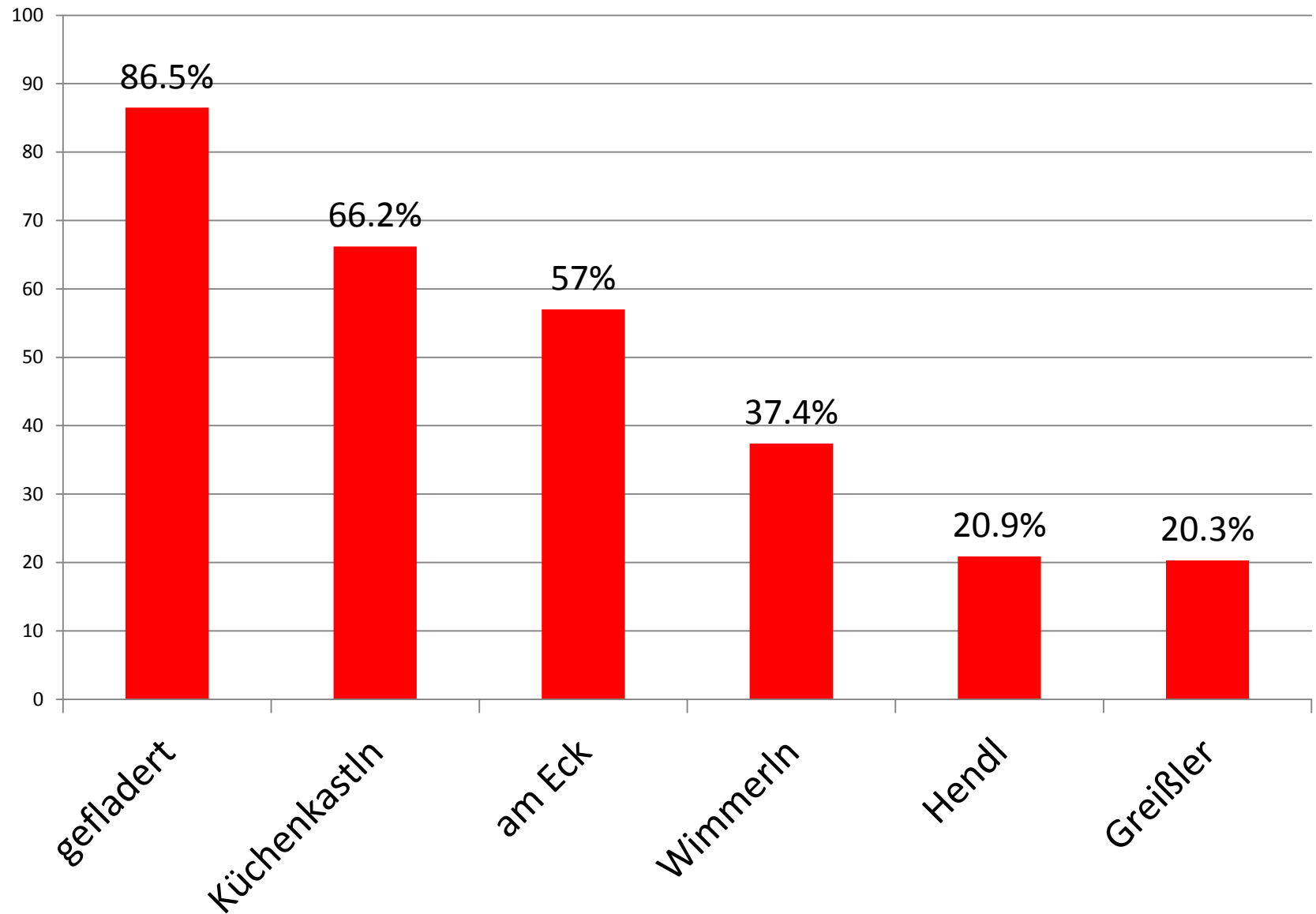
# Analysis of teachers' corrections

- Questionnaire: fictitious student essay
- **Analysis of corrections according to**
  - marked, but not crossed out
  - corrected (crossed out)
  - not corrected
- **Additionally, all corrections were recorded**
- **Analysis of data using SPSS**
- **Among other things, the following analyses were conducted:**
  - Frequencies
  - Different correction patterns by various variables

# Underlined/corrected variants in student essay (mean values)

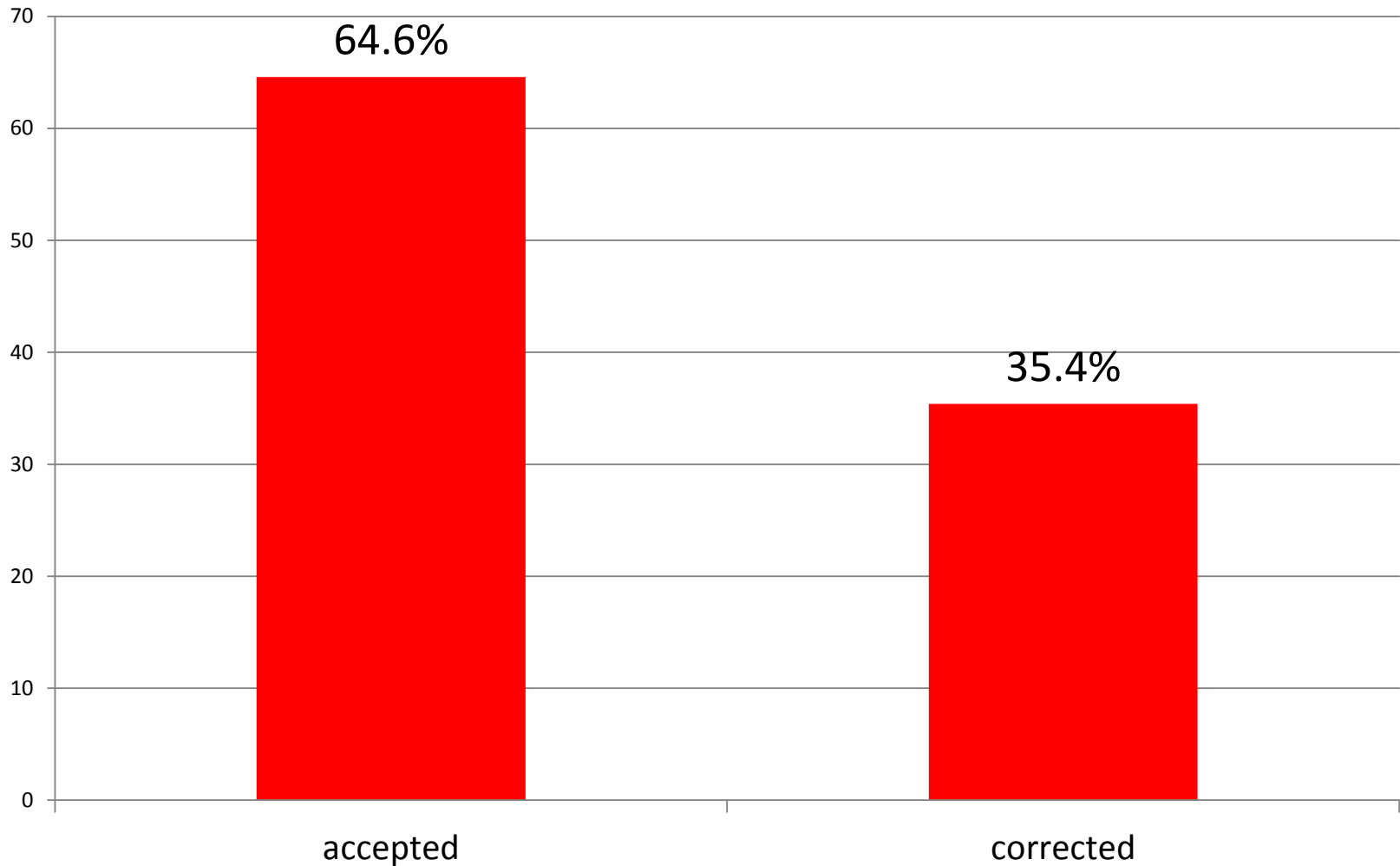


## Corrected or underlined Austriacisms / lexical items





## Percentage of teachers who corrected or accepted the perfect tense as narrative tense



# Interview with a teacher from Lower Austria

„Well the Germans are lucky in that their dialect has been proclaimed the standard language by accident. This is what I tell my students. They should not feel ashamed, it's such a big language space, there are so many varieties and East-Central German was selected as standard language and in that sense the Germans appear as more eloquent when they use naturally what they have grown up with. And we always sound like peasants.“

„Naja, die Deutschen haben das Glück, dass ihr Dialekt zufällig zur Standardsprache erklärt worden is. Sog i a meine Schüler. Sie brauchen si net genieren, das is so ein großer Sprachraum, da gibt's viele Varietäten und die ostmitteldeutsche is hoit gewählt worden ois Standardsprache und insofern wirken die Deutschen dann eloquenter wenn sie des womit sie aufwochn donn a natürlicherweise onwenden. Und unsaans klingt immer wie so a Bauer.“

# Group discussions

„Ah, I guess that ..er..people in Germany..er...obey the grammar rules probably a little more. Well, I think of sentence structure, er, subordinate clause, which begins with „because“, I guess that most Austrians construct it the wrong way. Grammatically incorrect, so to speak.“  
(teacher)

„Ah, ich glaub [...] dass, äh, Menschen in Deutschland, äh, sich eventuell ein: w:enig stärker an die Grammatikregeln halten. Aso, ich denk jetzt an Satzbau, ah Nebensatz, der mit weil beginnt, ich glaub, dass ein Österreicher oder eine Österreicherin den eher folsch baut. Sozusagen nicht grammatikalisch korrekt.“ (Lehrerin)

# Group discussions

„Well, in terms of grammar, I would almost say that Austrians are incorrect, but apart from that properly not at all“ (student)

„Also grammatisch würd ich fast sagen, dass die Österreicher inkorrekt sind, aber sonst eigentlich gar nicht.“ (Schülerin)

# Summary

- **ASG/pluricentric concept are not mentioned** in curricula, academic programs or text books: do they represent a monocentric concept?
- Although the concept of pluricentricity is unknown, it appears that teachers and pupils **implicitly adopt pluricentric ideas**
- Correction patterns: **tendency to correct Austriacism** less marked than assumed but still exists
- Surveys of linguistic attitudes yield **contradictory results**: on the one hand socially desirable answers, on the other hand devaluation of Austrian variety
- This is a clue evidencing a very **ambivalent attitude** with many speakers in relation to the Austrian variety and in some cases a **low degree language loyalty**

# Summary

- In view of the fact that the issue of the **variation of the German language and the pluricentric concept** is neither taken into consideration in curricular and teacher training nor in text books, this is unsurprising
- Therefore, it should be urgently demanded that school instruction deals with **the issue of varieties in the German language** and conveys **respectful handling** of different varieties as well as their acceptance
- Critical awareness should be raised for the linguistic situation in Austria, implying awareness about the **equality of national varieties** of the German language and a **confident use of the Austrian variety**

Thank you for your attention!

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