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
http://oesterreichisches-deutsch.bildungssprache.univie.ac.at/

Jutta Ransmayr – Elisabeth Fink – Rudolf de Cillia

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• 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
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Sets:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>School curricula:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>primary school, secondary level I and II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Curricula for teacher training:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(German) at universities and pedagogical institutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>German text books used at schools:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>basic level, secondary level I and II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Questionnaires:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pupils (secondary level II), n=1253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teachers (basic level, secondary level I and II), n=164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>all federal states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interviews:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n=21 with teachers of all school types in all federal states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group discussions:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 teachers‘ group, 1 pupils‘ group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In-class participatory observation:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 classes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Austrian Standard German as a language of instruction and education
• **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“ – _____________
Flasche – _____________
Nickerchen – _____________
Gschäftshuber – _____________
Gschlader – _____________
Gstättten – _____________
Häferl – _____________
Jauckerl – _____________
Bartwisch – _____________
Dippel – _____________
Beistrich – _____________
Grant – _____________
Gschau – _____________
Gspf – _____________
Hutsche – _____________
Kampel – _____________
Bosnigel – _____________

üble Laune, Blick, Spaß, kurzer Schlaf, Komma, Ohrfeige, Beule, Wichtigteuer, Ausnahme, Erhebung, Kind, Kamm, Injektion, kleiner Besen, boshäfter Mensch, Tasse, Schaukel, unge- niesbares 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

Austrian Standard German as a language of instruction and education
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**

- a uniform language with one single standard form in all German speaking countries: 10.4%
- a language with differences in its standard form between the various countries: 89.6%

**pupils**

- a uniform language with one single standard form in all German speaking countries: 20.8%
- a language with differences in its standard form between the various countries: 79.2%

Austrian Standard German as a language of instruction and education
Conceptualisation of linguistic variation in Austria

Would you say that Austrian Standard German (High German) exists?
- ☐ yes
- ☐ no
- ☐ I don’t know

% teachers
- yes: 80.5%
- no: 12.8%
- I don’t know: 6.7%

% pupils
- yes: 59.4%
- no: 16.6%
- I don’t know: 24%
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?

Austrian Standard German as a language of instruction and education
Comparison between teachers’ versus pupils’ attitudes:

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agreement Level</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Pupils</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>agree very strongly</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agree strongly</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agree to some extent</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do not agree</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Austrian Standard German as a language of instruction and education
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.


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)

Austrian Standard German as a language of instruction and education
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

Austrian Standard German as a language of instruction and education
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

Austrian Standard German as a language of instruction and education
Preference of Austriacisms and Deutschlandisms by age (teachers versus pupils)

Number of selected variants by age (mean value)

13-21 years
1. 13-21 years
   - % Austriacisms: 46
   - % Deutschlandisms: 54
2. 22-31 years
   - % Austriacisms: 54
   - % Deutschlandisms: 45
3. 32-41 years
   - % Austriacisms: 45
   - % Deutschlandisms: 54
4. 42-51 years
   - % Austriacisms: 63
   - % Deutschlandisms: 37
5. 52-63 years
   - % Austriacisms: 65
   - % Deutschlandisms: 35

significant Kruskal-Wallis-Test

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

Austrian Standard German as a language of instruction and education
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

Austrian Standard German as a language of instruction and education
Underlined/corrected variants in student essay (mean values)

Austrian Standard German as a language of instruction and education
Austrian Standard German as a language of instruction and education
Percentage of teachers who corrected or accepted the perfect tense as narrative tense

Austrian Standard German as a language of instruction and education
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 aufwochsn donn a natürlicherweise onwenden. Und unsaans klingt immer wie so a Bauer.“

Austrian Standard German as a language of instruction and education
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. Sozusogen 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 desireable 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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