

Contrastive Sociolinguistics



Contributions to the Sociology of Language

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Contrastive Sociolinguistics

Edited by

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Contrastive Sociolinguistics: An introduction

Marlis Hellinger – Ulrich Ammon

In the following¹, we will briefly outline the scope of sociolinguistics (SL) and discuss recent developments in contrastive linguistics (CL), as both disciplines provide the theoretical as well as empirical basis for the studies included in the present volume. It will also be necessary to address the relationship between contrastive sociolinguistics (CSL) and contrastive pragmatics; this discussion will clarify the principles on which we have selected the papers. Generally, our model of contrastive sociolinguistics attempts to integrate various theoretical and methodological orientations, a position shared by most of our contributors.

1. Sociolinguistics

In 1974, Hymes distinguished between three types of sociolinguistics which are all fundamentally different from what he calls “conventional” linguistics. All three types define language as a social phenomenon.

Type 1 (Hymes 1974: 195f) is a kind of sociolinguistics which is both *social as well as linguistic*. Relevant studies simply apply the findings of “structural linguistics” (Hymes 1974: 79) to social contexts, e.g. to multilingual situations, language teaching, or the description of unknown languages.

A more sophisticated level of social awareness is represented by type 2, which Hymes calls *socially realistic linguistics*. Using empirical data from the speech community, this type of sociolinguistics attempts to integrate linguistic variation and change into linguistic theory. Clearly pursuing theoretical goals, it departs from the idea of homogeneity and replaces the *ideal speaker* by the *real speaker*. Of course, the paradigmatic example of type 2 sociolinguistics is the work as carried out by Labov (e.g. Labov 1966).

Thirdly, Hymes thinks of a *socially constituted* linguistics which identifies social functions as primary, while linguistic structures merely serve these functions. Thus, theories of grammar will eventually lead to theories of language, which are inherently concerned with an explanation of the ori-

gin, development, maintenance and loss of ways of speaking, and beyond that, with what this means for the individual. The final goal of sociolinguistics, as Hymes (1974: 206) sees it, is “to preside over its own liquidation”. Similar positions are held by a number of researchers, among them, e.g., Helbig (1988: 265) and Hudson (1980: 19). Hudson argues that the “socio” in sociolinguistics is redundant since linguistics must necessarily include the study of language in society. Therefore, no clear boundaries can be established separating sociolinguistics from general linguistics.

A future theory of language, i.e. one that is socially constituted, will incorporate “a kind of explanatory adequacy complementary to that proposed by Chomsky” (Hymes 1974: 203):

Chomsky’s type of explanatory adequacy leads away from speech, and from languages, to relationships universal to all languages, and possibly inherent in human nature [...] The complementary type of explanatory adequacy leads from what is common to all human beings and all languages toward what particular communities and persons have made of their means of speech. It is comparative and evolutionary in a sociocultural, rather than a biological, sense.

Interestingly, Hymes discusses the notion of *contrast* as a complementary term to *variation* and thus provides a direct link to contrastive linguistics. Among the examples given to illustrate the notion of contrast in sociolinguistics, he mentions both intralinguistic as well as cross-linguistic issues, e.g., “gross contrasts in speech activity, from great volubility to great taciturnity” or “gross contrasts in the complication, or simplification, of the obligatory surface structure of languages themselves” (1974: 203). Explanations for such surface contrasts must be sought at a deeper level.

Trudgill (1978: 11) sees sociolinguistics as being primarily concerned with the methodological and descriptive problems of variation, the mechanisms of language change and the structure of linguistic systems, defining the improvement of linguistic theory as the ultimate goal of sociolinguistics. Trudgill insists, however, that a linguistic theory account for socially determined variation and change.

Trudgill (1978: 4f) accepts discourse analysis and *the ethnography of speaking* as genuinely sociolinguistic concerns, pointing out that the investigation of ways of speaking in different cultures tends to require a cross-cultural – and necessarily, a cross-linguistic or contrastive – perspective. Examples for relevant topics range from politeness, formulaic speech and storytelling to kinship terminologies and linguistic relativity.

According to Trudgill, what has been called *the sociology of language* (cf. Fishman 1968) also falls within the scope of sociolinguistics, with such topics as bilingualism, diglossia, code-switching, language planning, and language attitudes. On the other hand, he excludes *ethnomethodology* from sociolinguistics on the grounds that its goals are purely social scientific and not at all linguistic. Thus, the study of language in social interaction uses linguistic data only “to get at the social knowledge that lies behind it” (Trudgill 1978: 3f), a goal which in Hymes’ classification would eminently qualify as belonging to sociolinguistics, presumably of type 3.

Of course, Trudgill admits to the problematic character of determining the boundaries between sociolinguistics and social scientific or anthropological research that uses linguistic data. It is no less problematic to decide whether a particular study belongs to general linguistics or to sociolinguistics. To take an example from pidgin and creole linguistics, a study such as Bickerton’s *Roots of Language* (1981) may be described as “purely” linguistic in nature since the bioprogram hypothesis seeks to contribute toward the understanding of language universals; at the same time, it may be called genuinely sociolinguistic, since it rests on empirical data that reveal the mechanisms of variation and change in creole speech communities.

We will close this section with a brief look at Fasold’s (1984/1990) comprehensive overview, which can be viewed as a kind of continuum with two, presumably fuzzy, endpoints. At one end of the scale we find *language* as the central notion, and a concern with language structure and language function as both are influenced by social forces. Typically, the focus is on the individual (as member of a social group or network), who uses language for many other purposes than simply for the transmission of messages:

... the speaker is using language to make statements about who she is, what her group loyalties are, how she perceives her relationship to her hearer, and what sort of speech event she considers herself to be engaged in. (Fasold 1984: IX)

At the other end of the continuum the central notion is *society*, with large-scale sociopolitical issues ranging from societal multilingualism, language choice, maintenance and shift, to language planning and standardization, vernacular language education and language attitudes. Fasold calls the two main sections of the continuum *the sociolinguistics of language*, and *the sociolinguistics of society*, respectively.

The concept of *continuum* is compatible with our integrative view of sociolinguistics, but may not be acceptable to Fasold, who insists on a

clear separation between macro- and micro-sociolinguistic issues. At the same time he supports the distinction between *language* (“grammar”) and *language use*. In the preface to her recent introduction to sociolinguistics, Romaine (1994: viii) argues that this is an artificial and arbitrary division of labor, a position shared by the editors of this volume.

Our own understanding of sociolinguistics can ultimately be derived from Hymes’ three types, and we believe that most of the papers in this volume can be characterized as being socially realistic, irrespective of the wide range of topics chosen for investigation. Topics include more form-oriented phenomena such as address forms, politeness markers or speech act categories, as well as large-scale issues such as multilingualism, language choice or language planning. In practically all cases, papers reveal a high degree of social awareness; beyond contributing to the description of particular languages, they seek to relate findings to underlying social, cultural or political structures.

2. Contrastive linguistics

2.1. The scope of contrastive linguistics

There is a similar diversity of approaches to Contrastive Linguistics (CL), ranging from a definition of contrastive linguistics as merely an application of linguistic theory to the practical problems of language teaching, to a type of contrastive linguistics that feeds into linguistic theory. The first approach can be illustrated by a quotation from Ferguson, who introduced the Contrastive Structure Series in 1959 claiming

... that a careful contrastive analysis of the two languages offers an excellent basis for the preparation of instructional materials, the planning of courses, and the development of actual classroom techniques. (Stockwell & Bowen 1965: V)

The second approach is represented by Hawkins, who believes that

The contrasts between English and German can therefore contribute to an important goal of recent linguistic theory, which is to discover the “regularities in the ways languages may differ from one another” (Keenan 1978: 90). By imposing principled limits on this variation, the theory will define the notion “possible human language”. (Hawkins 1982: xiii)

Much of traditional contrastive linguistics can be described as having the following properties (cf. Bausch 1973; James 1980: 1f):

- it is synchronic rather than diachronic;
- it is interlingual or cross-linguistic rather than intralingual;
- it involves two different languages rather than varieties of one language;
- it is unidirectional, taking one of the two languages as frame of reference;
- it focuses on the differences rather than the similarities between the two languages.

While studies within such a narrow framework dominated contrastive linguistics from its beginnings into the 1970s, there have been more comprehensive approaches to contrastive linguistics (cf. Bausch 1973). An early model is Trager (1949), which extends most of the dimensions of traditional contrastive linguistics. The major principles of this type of contrastive linguistics are the following:

- it describes the differences as well as the similarities of two or more linguistic systems;
- the notion *linguistic system* may refer to different languages (cross-linguistic perspective), or to varieties of one language (intralingual perspective); in other words, variation – a central object of sociolinguistics – represents a genuine concern of contrastive linguistics also;
- it may be synchronic or diachronic; on the diachronic level, the phylogenetic development of languages as well as the ontogenetic development of individual language acquisition are possible issues.

More than traditional contrastive linguistics, which has frequently taken a keen interest in “interference phenomena” as found in L2 learners’ languages, Trager’s model is open to include sociolinguistic perspectives.

Recent developments in contrastive linguistics have increasingly sought to move beyond more structurally oriented analyses. Sajavaara (1981: 5) suggests that in order to account for an individual’s communicative competence, contrastive linguistics must be expanded into discourse analysis, psycholinguistics, and sociolinguistics. Liebe-Harkort (1985: 24) believes that “the linguist cannot compare languages without comparing the cultures in which they are spoken”. Thus two languages, e.g. Mountain Apache Indian and English, may share the same surface phenomenon, such as the use of compliments regarding the other person’s possessions, but unlike in English, ‘paying a compliment’ is interpreted as a request for the object concerned in

Apache. It is apparent that an Apache speaker's "socio-cultural competence" (cf. Sajavaara 1981: 46; Olshtain 1983) includes knowledge of the socio-linguistic conditions under which 'paying a compliment' is appropriate. On the other hand, a non-Apache speaker's failure to observe these rules might be explained as negative cross-linguistic transfer (cf. Odlin 1989: 25f). The concept of cross-linguistic transfer derives from Weinreich's (1953) notion of interference which was originally used as a general category covering all kinds of transfer.

2.2. Equivalence

One of the basic notions of contrastive linguistics is *equivalence*. Definitions of equivalence (for an overview, cf. Oleksy 1986), which are based on formal, especially syntactic and lexical-semantic similarities, and which cover only pairs of sentences or even smaller units, have been criticized for quite some time. Such definitions cannot capture the fact that two items in L1 and L2 may display formal similarity, but may nevertheless be n-ways ambiguous each. Also, formal definitions of equivalence can make no statements about how these items are appropriately used in communication.

This has led to a number of alternative approaches to equivalence (for a discussion of the terms *functional* (formal) and *communicative equivalence*, cf. Hansen 1985: 127). Kalisz (1986) and others see equivalence as a relative concept, which can best be described in terms of a cluster of formal and functional properties. The degree of equivalence between items may then be determined on the basis of how many of these properties are shared. Such a view of contrastive linguistics focuses on language use rather than structure, selecting utterances instead of sentences as the central units of analysis.

A large body of literature has been produced on the notion of *pragmatic equivalence*. Fillmore (1984) distinguishes between general pragmatic phenomena, among them politeness systems and patterns of indirectness, and the "small facts" of pragmatics such as the use of the past tense in a particular situation in Swedish and English, or the use of the German particle *schon* and possible equivalents in English. Often, these small facts are linguistic items that do not translate well. Fillmore maintains that all these items vary across languages, and are therefore genuine topics of what he calls *Contrastive Pragmatics* (CP). He insists that non-linguistic parameters of the social context such as setting or speakers' attitudes, must be part of any theory of Contrastive Pragmatics.

Oleksy (1984), who suggests the term *Pragmatic Contrastive Analysis*, also maintains that it is impossible to make statements about the felicitous use of a speech act unless the relevant sociocultural restrictions are considered. If, e.g., the goal of a contrastive analysis is to find out how to perform a direct request in two languages, one must specify how and to what extent such sociolinguistic parameters as age, sex, social class, status of participants, etc., interact with felicity conditions. Equivalence can then be established in terms of shared illocutionary force and felicity conditions.

Finally, equivalence can no longer be defined only in qualitative terms, it must also be recognized to have a quantitative dimension. Statistical as well as pragmatic/functional equivalence are in fact two of seven types of equivalence suggested by Krzeszowski (1984).

3. Contrastive sociolinguistics

In the previous sections, the need for a contrastive sociolinguistics has implicitly become apparent. We pointed out that the notion of *contrast* has always played a central role in sociolinguistics, and that in contrastive linguistics there is a clear tendency away from structural comparisons to studies that account for functional and social characteristics.

The term contrastive sociolinguistics has not been used much. Fisiak (1983: 27) devoted only a few lines to contrastive sociolinguistics, simply mentioning a few papers by Janicki as “programmatically”. Similarly, Hansen (1985: 126) does not elaborate on contrastive sociolinguistics, which he calls “a new branch of contrastive studies” illustrating “the immense broadening of outlook” of contrastive linguistics.

Among the few researchers who have attempted a description of contrastive sociolinguistics as an independent field of inquiry, is Janicki (1979; 1984). In 1979, Janicki criticized “orthodox” contrastive linguistics for comparing unspecified varieties of two languages, and for making illegitimate generalizations on the basis of introspective, and therefore unreliable data. He expressed the need for a contrastive sociolinguistics, whose goals should be (a) the systematic comparison of sociolinguistic patterns, and (b) the development of a theory of language use. Janicki’s criticism is reminiscent of the objections Hymes raised against “conventional” linguistics.

Of course, the crucial point is the question of how sociolinguistic patterns can be considered to be equivalent. Janicki employs traditional sociolinguistic categories to solve the problem, based on the distinction between

variety according to user and *variety according to use*. For the language user, Janicki lists up such well-known parameters as social class, professional group, regional origin, age, and sex. Surprisingly, he considers the last factor largely irrelevant for languages such as English, German, or Polish. On the level of language use, he resorts to the classification of styles (registers) by Joos. An alternative would have been Labov's classification, with casual, formal and reading of word lists as the basic "styles".

Equivalence between varieties across languages is established in terms of their functional profiles (Janicki does not use this term). And while it seems plausible that standard varieties make an easy choice for contrastive analysis, the selection of comparable varieties becomes more difficult as one departs from the standard towards increasing social and regional diversification.

Janicki says nothing about how *social class* can be established as an independent criterion across national and cultural boundaries; nor does he elaborate on the notion of *function*. There exist a number of models in sociolinguistics that take function as their central notion. Ferguson (1959) and Fishman (1971) incorporated the distinction between *high* and *low functions* into models of diglossia, which are still relevant today. A more complex typology of functions comes from Ammon (1989), who distinguishes between linguistic, sociological and psychological dimensions of function (and status). One of eight dimensions is "use in the domains", which contains no fewer than 58 subcategories. Such models can be used to develop function and status profiles of languages and language varieties. A simpler model was used in Hellinger (1992) in a contrastive sociolinguistic study of three creole-speaking countries.

Janicki (1984) repeats much of what he said in 1979, emphasizing that a set of sociological indices must serve as the criterion of comparability. He insists that contrastive sociolinguistics cannot be taken as an extension of contrastive linguistics (1984: 17), because traditional contrastive linguistics does not recognize language as a social phenomenon, an assumption which is fundamental to both sociolinguistics and contrastive sociolinguistics.

Janicki (1984: 28) finally offers the following definition of contrastive sociolinguistics: "... contrastive sociolinguistic analysis ... may be tentatively defined as systematic juxtaposition of linguistic items as they are distributed in the multi-dimensional (multi-parameter) social space." "Linguistic items" include smaller structural categories as well as larger pragmatic units, e.g. speech acts; "multi-dimensional social space" relates to the functional status of these linguistic items and the sociolinguistic profiles of

users. This is a more narrow definition of sociolinguistics in that it does not account for all the phenomena that have been studied under the heading of *sociology of language*.

It appears that currently contrastive sociolinguistics may best be defined as a branch of sociolinguistics, and the topics discussed in the present volume generally fall within the scope of sociolinguistics as outlined above, or, as presented in the comprehensive *International Handbook* (cf. Ammon et al. 1987/1988). On the methodological level of data collection and processing, the papers tend to apply or refine methodologies developed in (empirical) sociolinguistics. Similarly, on a theoretical level, and in the absence of a socially constituted theory of language in the sense of Hymes, our authors tend to rely on existing sociolinguistic theories, including pragmatic and discourse models. In a number of cases, new theoretical orientations have been developed; cf., e.g., Wierzbicka (this volume), who proposes a theoretical framework that accounts for the comparison of cross-cultural sociopragmatic data.

Generally, however, one of the urgent needs for future research is the explicit formulation of the theoretical basis on which sociolinguistic structures (from politeness phenomena to patterns of functional/status change and language policies) can be compared.

As in sociolinguistics, the concept of social awareness should also play an important role in contrastive sociolinguistics (as an example, cf. Hellinger (1990) for a comparison of mechanisms of linguistic discrimination and patterns of gender-inclusive language in English and German). The papers of this volume display different degrees of social awareness, e.g. from assumptions about the social nature of contact situations in two regions on the basis of a contrastive analysis of attitudes and patterns of dialect use to more explicitly political evaluations of phenomena of language change or language planning models in different countries. Thus, a study's goals may range from an improvement of the description of sociolinguistic patterns to a contribution towards social change.

Considering the overall structure of this volume, we have created three large sections, without contending that clear boundaries can be drawn between Parts I, II, and III. In Part I, the focus is on a comparison of (individual or societal) multilingualism in different countries/communities. Included are papers with a more theoretical interest (e.g. Ammon; Eichinger; Ornstein-Galicia), but also studies which concentrate on the comparison of selected multilingual issues, such as code-switching (Jacobson), attitudes (Bister-Broosen, Vandermeeren) or divergent developments among different groups of migrants (Lüdi).

In Part II, authors take a contrastive look at language planning and language politics. The first three articles approach the topic from a more theoretical point of view, illustrating the comparison of global categories such as the status of minority or non-standard languages, or language maintenance by examples from different speech communities. Skutnabb-Kangas, Mühlhäusler, and Coulmas also suggest new lines along which language planners might work in the future. Willemyns compares the different developments of the same language on both sides of a political border between two countries with a fundamentally different language policy.

The remaining three papers of Part II prefer a more explicitly descriptive/empirical approach. Pauwels compares recent changes in the (Australian) English and Dutch address systems for women as a result of feminist language planning in both countries. Romaine is concerned with status and function change of four Anglophone pidgins/creoles, arguing that the development of literary and poetic functions is sensitive to different degrees of autonomy (distance from English) and elaboration (standardization). Finally Görlach compares a number of pidgin/creole dictionaries discussing their role in processes of standardization/language planning.

The seven articles of Part III focus on cross-linguistic discourse analysis. In recent years, discourse analysis has become a major area of investigation in sociolinguistics, pragmatics and, of course, intercultural communication. Of particular interest have been categories of politeness which are described for several pairs of languages in this volume: Chinese vs. English; Japanese vs. German; French vs. Italian; German vs. English (Yamashita et. al., Matoba, Held, House). Whereas some authors use or extend frameworks, that have been developed e.g., in conversational analysis or speech act theory, others are involved in the elaboration of new models (cf. Wierzbicka's theory of cultural scripts).

Günthner uses a number of linguistic categories (phonological, syntactic, discourse phenomena, etc.) for her comparison of female and male speech behavior in different languages, while Quasthoff discusses the universal base of storytelling.

4. Conclusion

Though sociolinguistics has often implicitly been working on a contrastive basis, doing it explicitly can be a very useful methodological exercise. It helps sociolinguists to sharpen concepts, to build systematic theories, to

develop adequate and consistent research methods and to arrive at comprehensive empirical findings. The editors hope that the present volume will open up a path of sociolinguistic questioning that will be followed with vigor and enthusiasm in the future.

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Note

- 1 The following is based largely on material first presented in Hellinger (1993).

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Part I
Bilingualism – Multilingualism

On comparing the centers of plurinational languages: The example of German

Ulrich Ammon

1. Concepts and terminology

In recent years, the concept 'pluricentric language' has become firmly established in sociolinguistics. Term and concept were developed partially by Heinz Kloss (1967: 31) and partially by William Stewart (1968: 534). The complementary concept 'national variety', however, derives from Soviet sociolinguistics (e.g.: Stepanov 1960; Riesel 1962). The concept 'language center' has had a long tradition in dialectology. It has mainly been used in reference to the large cities of a language region which tend to play a dominant role in language change and whose linguistic variants tend to be adopted by their surroundings. In the context of pluricentric languages such *language centers* are not, however, single towns but entire nations or entire countries. The term 'language center' can still be used as a generic term for all kinds of centers which can then be specified as national, communal or as otherwise necessary. With respect to national centers further distinctions are possible and indeed useful, in particular between whole nations (e.g. Austria), parts of nations within one state (e.g. the German-speaking part of Switzerland), and parts of nations in separate states (former Federal Republic of Germany and German Democratic Republic).

Only if the borders of nations and states coincide, do we have nation-states. What we mean by states, seems to be clear enough. The concept 'nation', however, is not so clear. It is inappropriate to identify 'nation' with 'state' or ('country'), although this is widespread practice, as we could not then conceive multinational states. With respect to the former Soviet Union for instance, we could only speak of a nation and not – as seems more adequate – of a multinational state. In addition, the conceptual specification of a nation-state would then be superfluous. Another concept of 'nation' which has been fostered in Germany appears equally inadequate, namely equalizing 'nation' with 'language community' (in German *Sprachnation*). If we accepted this concept, all German-speaking states (countries)

would belong to the same “nation”. Instead, I want to make a clear distinction between (1) states (or countries), (2) language communities and (3) nations. An essential criterion for the difficult concept ‘nation’ is the will of the great majority of its population to live together in one more or less autonomous state (country) and to decide about their own political fate. A common language is not a necessary requirement (cf. Switzerland with its four languages), nor is the actual existence of a separate state; thus, the Ukraine was a nation even under Soviet rule (for conceptual details see Ammon 1995: chapter 2). The examples of the former Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic show that not only different nations but also different states of the same nation can be different centers of the same language. One could, accordingly, distinguish “national centers” (in a strict sense) from “state centers” which extend over different states of the same nation. The latter are restricted to cases of divided nations. National centers of a language (in the strict sense) can, furthermore, either be entire nations (e.g. Austria) or part of a nation, i.e. the members of a language community within a nation (e.g. German-speaking Switzerland). Languages which comprise of several such centers can, more specifically, be called *plurinational languages*. It is obviously easy to find examples of such plurinational languages, e.g. English, Spanish, French, German and others (c.f. Clyne 1992b). Depending on the number of their national centers these languages can be specified as bi-, tri-, quatro-national etc.

That a language extends over several nations is only a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for its plurinational centrality or plurinationality. In addition, it is necessary for such a language to have various national language varieties. This is the case only if there is noticeable language diversity between the various nations. An important difference becomes apparent here between the nations over which a language extends and its national centers. The latter are a subset of the former, comprising only of nations with their own specific national varieties. Thus, German extends over at least seven nations where it is an official language either on the national or on a regional level (Austria, Germany, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Belgium (the East), and Italy (South Tirol)). There are, however, only three clearly distinguishable national varieties, and accordingly only three national centers: Austria, Germany, and (German-speaking) Switzerland. Therefore, German is only a tri-national, not a septa-national language.

A final remark is necessary in order to define what exactly constitutes a ‘true’ national variety. We follow here the widespread idea that a national

variety has to be a standard variety not some non-standard dialect, slang or the like. A nation's true national variety, therefore, has to contain at least a number of specific standard forms. This immediately raises the question how such specific standard forms can be identified. The simplest way is to refer to what has been called a nation's *linguistic codex* (dictionaries, grammars and the like). There we can find specific standard forms or variants which are not marked as non-standard ("dialect", "slang", etc). The identification of specific standard forms is more difficult, if codification is missing or only rudimentary. In this case the language use of model speakers or writers has to be analysed for specific features.

It goes without saying that the identification of *specific* standard forms requires comparison between the various nations of a language, either of their linguistic codices or their model speakers and writers or both. Let us now focus on these questions of comparison, in accordance with the overall topic of this volume.

2. Comparing different plurinational languages versus comparing the centers of a single plurinational language

Any contrastive description of plurinational languages should carefully distinguish between the following two levels of comparison: the comparison of the various national centers of a single plurinational language versus the comparison of different plurinational languages. In some cases it may even be interesting to compare different national centers of different plurinational languages. Even the answer to the question, which of the various nations over which the languages extend are actually national centers, requires comparison. How else should specific national features of a standard variety be identified? After such an identification one can, for instance, rank order the languages according to the number of their nations (the nations over which they extend) or, more specifically, the number of their national centers.

A comparison of the various national centers within a single national language presupposes an answer to the question: "Which nations really are national centers?" One can, for instance, rank order these centers by means of different criteria, depending on research interests, e.g. numerical or economic strength, size or quality of linguistic codices etc. I will proceed in this article to concentrate on the comparison of different national centers within one and the same plurinational language.

3. Comparing centers: An overview

There are numerous ways of comparing the centers of a plurinational language not all of which are of immediate relevance to sociolinguistics. From a sociolinguistic viewpoint, the following four aspects are of particular interest:

- political and sociological aspects,
- aspects of the sociology of language,
- sociolinguistic aspects,
- linguistic aspects in the narrower sense.

The distinction between these levels is not always easy to draw and remains to some degree arbitrary.

Politically and sociologically important distinctions are for instance: the numerical and the economic strength of the centers and their political structure. As to their numerical strength, one can, for instance, distinguish between the number of citizens and the number of inhabitants, or the number of native and the number of foreign speakers of the national variety. With respect to any of these numerical parameters one would, for instance, arrive at the following rank order for the German language: Germany > Austria > Switzerland.

From a sociology-of-language viewpoint one can, in particular, compare attempts at cultivating or modernizing the various national varieties. One would then, among other things, pay attention to the institutions or societies (clubs) involved in endeavors to “purify” the national variety. The comparison between the various national centers of German reveals that Austria, and to a lesser degree also Switzerland, try to keep their own national varieties “clean” of language imports from Germany. Thus, in the government-supported Austrian dictionary (*Österreichisches Wörterbuch*) or in the Swiss dictionary (*Unser Wortschatz* 1987), a number of words are marked as being not Austrian or, respectively Swiss, but German (German German). These words are well-known in Austria or Switzerland and even, to some extent, used there. However, the authors of the dictionaries have identified them as being imports from Germany. This opinion was also shared by the more aware Austrian or Swiss language user.

Another question of the sociology of language or of sociolinguistics, as some researchers may prefer to clarify it, is the comparison between the different social forces on which a standard variety is based. This question is intricately connected to the definition of the national varieties. In order

to tackle this question, it is important to be aware of the fact that there are various factors which define what is standard in a language. These include not only the linguistic codex, the codifying individuals or institutions, and the model speakers and writers. Rather, there are at least two other social forces which are involved in this sort of decision. These are the expert linguists on the one hand, and the norm authorities, who correct other peoples' (the "norm subjects") language behaviour, on the other. Figure 1 illustrates the interaction between the four social forces on which a standard variety is based and their interaction with the rest of the population.

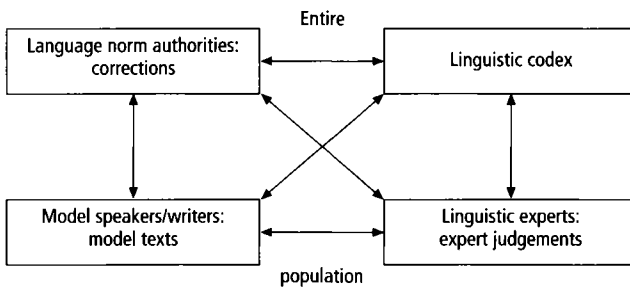


Figure 1 The social forces on which a standard variety is based

Linguistic forms which are unmarked in the linguistic codex, i.e. not marked as non-standard, count as standard – but only in terms of the linguistic codex. It may very well happen that the norm authorities, the teachers for instance, do not accept them as standard, at least not all of them, but follow their own idea of what is standard in the respective community. Their corrective behaviour may be supported by the linguistic experts against the linguistic codex, which the linguists may for instance consider partially outmoded. The corrective behaviour of the teachers, or of other norm authorities like superiors in offices, or the judgements of the linguistic experts, may later be taken as a point of orientation in the revision of the linguistic codex. On the other hand, the norm authorities or the model speakers and writers will usually follow the linguistic codex in their corrective behaviour or, respectively, their language behaviour to some degree. Even linguists often accept what the linguistic codex defines as standard. In fact, all the components of figure 1 tend to interact and thereby influence the definition of what is standard, or more or less standard.

One can even compare the various national centers of a language as to the role which these components play in the definition of the standard variety in

each case. Thus, for instance, Austria's linguistic codex (*Österreichisches Wörterbuch*) has mainly been based on the intuition of its authors. In comparison, Germany's linguistic codex, the core of which are the volumes of the *Duden Verlag* (e.g. *Duden. Rechtschreibung* 1991), has largely been based on extensive empirical analysis of model speakers and writers. One can also compare the centers as to which degree the various components of figure 1 converge or diverge in their definition of the standard. Accordingly, the researcher will have to decide which linguistic forms should be counted as elements of the various national varieties.

The comparison of the respective populations' attitudes towards their national varieties, or the use they make of them in various situations or domains, is the more genuinely sociolinguistic research approach. Thus, for the Austrians their national variety is an important means of national identification. In comparison, for the German-speaking Swiss, their national variety does not carry much weight as a national symbol. They only use it in very formal situations and otherwise speak in their dialect. The Germans are hardly aware of having a national variety of their own but only know about Austrian and Swiss linguistic peculiarities of German. There are, of course, particular reasons for these differences which should be explained in the context of such a comparison.

Finally, the national varieties can be compared linguistically in the narrower sense. This presupposes, of course, their precise definition which, as has been demonstrated, is in most cases by no means self-evident. There are even more problems in defining national variants, i.e. elements of national varieties, than have been mentioned above. These shall be treated in chapter 5 below. Linguistically, the national varieties of a language can be compared on the various linguistic levels:

- graphy (writing system and orthography),
- phony (phonology and subphonemic peculiarities),
- grammar (morphology and syntax),
- lexicon including compounding and idioms,
- pragmatic aspects (e.g. greetings, address forms or even text structures).

The national varieties of German show differences on all these levels, even in the writing system. Thus, the letter <ß> is only used in Austria and Germany, while it is substituted for <ss> in Switzerland. Pragmatic differences have been researched very little so far but peculiarities have been observed informally. An example is the Austrians' inclination to use titles extensively in all situations (*Frau Doktor, Herr Hofrat*, etc.).

4. Comparing the linguistic codices

A national variety does not strictly require codification. It may exist only as the preferred language use of model speakers and writers, or in the form of model texts, or on the basis of corrective behaviour of language norm authorities. In such cases it would, as a rule, be quite variable and hard to define. Through codification it gains stability and also usually more general recognition.

It can be rewarding to compare the linguistic codices of the various national varieties of a pluricentric language. There are numerous interesting aspects of comparison. One of them is simply the size or the comprehensiveness of the codices. Often the numerically stronger national centers, i.e. those with a larger population, have at the same time the larger or the more comprehensive codex for their national variety. This is very obvious in the case of German where Germany's linguistic codex is considerably larger and more comprehensive than the codices of Austria or Switzerland. Germany has produced numerous volumes, in particular large-size dictionaries, which constitute its linguistic codex. The *Duden* volumes of Germany, which are part of this codex, are far more comprehensive than either the linguistic codex of Austria or Switzerland. They comprise of no less than twelve different volumes each of which is dedicated to a special aspect of the national variety: orthography, pronunciation, grammar, stylistic questions etc. In contrast, the Austrian linguistic codex consists of only one relatively small dictionary which contains the description of all aspects of the Austrian national variety: spelling, pronunciation, grammar etc. (*Österreichisches Wörterbuch*). German-speaking Switzerland also has a linguistic codex of only a very limited size: a couple of dictionaries, of a similar type as the Austrian dictionary but even smaller (*Unser Wortschatz* 1987; *Schweizer Schülerduden* 1976; 1980), and a thin brochure for its particular pronunciation (Boesch 1957a). There is, however, a more comprehensive coverage of the Swiss-German standard pronunciation in print (Hofmüller-Schenk). In contrast, Germany has three different dictionaries of pronunciation alone, each of considerable size (*Siebs* 1969; *Duden. Aussprachewörterbuch* 1990; *Großes Wörterbuch der deutschen Aussprache* 1982).

There are various other aspects of linguistic codification which are interesting to compare. One important difference can be made between *internal* and *external codification* of a national variety. The national variety of Germany, i.e. German German, is exclusively internally codified, i.e. all its variants or forms can be found in the numerous volumes of the lin-

guistic codex which has been produced in Germany. This is, however, not the case for Austrian or Swiss German. The *Duden* volumes also contain detailed information about the Austrian and the Swiss national German variety. This information is even more detailed than what can be found in the linguistic codices produced in the respective national centers of Austria and Switzerland. While the *Duden* volumes have been declared valid as linguistic codex for German-speaking Switzerland (in addition to their validity for Germany), this is not true for Austria. In the case of conflicting definitions the Austrian dictionary (*Österreichisches Wörterbuch*) is the sole valid source of information for the Austrian national variety, i.e. it overrules the *Duden* volumes. Nevertheless, the *Duden* volumes are also used extensively in Austria as works of reference (linguistic codex). This can be explained by the depth of general information on the German language which exceeds the Austrian linguistic codex.

It is not hard to imagine that the extensive use of the *Duden* volumes in Austria and German-speaking Switzerland can result in language imports from Germany into these other national centers of German. On the other hand, the linguistic codices of Austria or Switzerland are, for obvious reasons, not used at all as works of reference in Germany. It seems possible to measure the comprehensiveness of linguistic codices of national varieties for comparative purposes on the basis of a proposal which I have submitted elsewhere (cf. Ammon 1989: 89). This proposal, which is given in table 1, can be refined further, if necessary, e.g., by fractions for incomplete items (1/2, 1/3 etc.).

Table 1 Scale for degree of codification

| | | |
|---|------------|-------|
| Existence of model speakers (=spoken model texts) | 0 | |
| Existence of model writers (=written model texts) | 1 | (1/2) |
| Existence of a codex of spelling (orthographic dictionary, explicit rules of spelling) | 1 | (1/2) |
| Existence of a defining dictionary (codex of lexis) | 1 | (1/2) |
| Existence of a codex of pronunciation (pronouncing dictionary, explicit rules of pronunciation) | 1 | (1/2) |
| Existence of a codex of morphology/syntax (grammatical description) | 1 | (1/2) |
| Existence of a codex of style (e.g. stylistic dictionary) | 1 | (1/2) |
| | $\Sigma =$ | 6 (3) |

On the basis of table 1 we can determine how comprehensively a national variety has been codified on the one hand, and to which degree it has been internally or externally codified on the other.

5. The comparison of national varieties and their comparative description

Any national variety can of course be described separately as a linguistic system. If, however, one wants to identify its special features which distinguish it from the other national varieties of the same language, one has to compare it to all other national varieties. Some useful suggestions with respect to German have been presented by Haas (1982: 113–124), Meyer (1989: 18 f.), Wiesinger (1988b; c) and Ebner (1980: 11). Notwithstanding, all the descriptions of the national varieties of German have so far been based only on bilateral comparison: Austria – Germany or Switzerland – Germany. This kind of comparison, however, cannot provide a comprehensive picture in the case of a trilingual language. With a bilateral comparison it remains unavoidably unclear whether any of the variants discovered are valid in the third center or not. For a comprehensive picture trilateral comparisons are required (cf. figure 2).

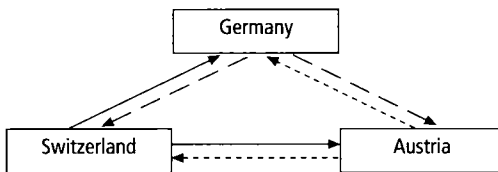


Figure 2 Necessary comparisons in the case of a trilingual language:
The example of German

The various types of arrows demonstrate the comparisons one has to make when one wants to identify the specific variants of each national variety. In the case of the Austrian national variety one has to make comparisons with the German and the Swiss national varieties, and analogously in the case of the German and the Swiss national varieties. This example of comparison is relevant to all three national varieties. If one deals

with plurinational languages with even more national varieties the number of necessary comparisons increases accordingly. Generally speaking, a language with n national varieties requires $n - 1$ comparisons. When one proceeds with these comparisons one soon finds that national varieties have still other features than purely linguistic ones which have to be taken into account. Some of them are incorporated in the following typology. We arrive at these features by comparing the national varieties of plurinational languages like German. The various types of national variants can be illustrated most easily by examples from the lexicon; they occur, however, just as well on other levels of linguistic description. Not all of the following types are based on comparisons of the kind illustrated by figure 2; some also draw on distinctions made in figure 1 above.

Let us start with one of the latter types (cf. figure 1). One can distinguish (1) *codified national varieties* from those which are *not codified* but are standard only on the basis of any of the other social forces which define a standard variety (model speakers and writers, norm authorities, expert linguists).

An example of the former is the Swiss pronunciation $-\text{[ik]}$ of the unstressed word final syllable $-\text{<ig>}$ in words like *König*, *wenig* etc. (codified in Boesch 1957). An example of the latter is the German fricative pronunciation of word final $-\text{<g>}$ in other phonetic contexts than unstressed word final $-\text{<ig>}$, for instance in *weg*, *Duisburg* etc. which is common usage of model speakers only in Germany but is not standard according to any codification (only of $-\text{<ig>}$ is the fricative pronunciation codified standard). The uncoded national variants are of course borderline cases of standard but there are sound reasons for incorporating them in the national variety on the basis of a somewhat comprehensive concept of a standard variety.

Another important distinction can be made between those national variants which are only used in that center where they are valid as standard and those which are also used elsewhere. The latter could be termed (2) *national variants only according to validity* and the former *national variants according to validity and use*.

A German example of the former is the word *Sahne* 'cream' which is not only valid standard in Germany but also widely used, or at least well-known, in Austria and Switzerland. It is, however, explicitly ruled out as part of the national variety of either Austrian or Swiss German by the linguistic codices of both national centers (marked as "binnendeutsch" which means German German). (The valid standard variants are for Austria *Obers* or *Rahm* and for Switzerland *Rahm*) *Sahne* is a "teutonism" according only to validity but not according to use. There are, in addition, numerous teutonisms or

variants of German German which are not used or known in Austria and Switzerland, e.g. the words *Feudel* 'rag (for cleaning)' or *Harke* 'rake', i.e. national variants according to validity and use.

A third typological distinction can be made between those national variants which retain their status as national variants in all situations or domains and those which are national variants only in particular situations. The former could be termed

(3) *absolute* (or *situationally invariable*) and the latter *situational* (or *stilis-tic*) *national variants*.

Words like *Sahne* or *Feudel* given as examples under (2) are at the same time examples of situationally invariable (absolute) national variants, since they are specifically German German or teutonisms independent of the situation in which they are used. This is different, for instance, in the case of the voiced pronunciation of <s> in syllable initial position before a vowel (e.g. in *sehen* 'to see'). It is only a teutonism when it is not used in the presentation of verbal art (singing, classical drama, poetry). In these domains it is general German and can occur in any of the national centers of German. It would, however, be odd or even downright wrong if it occurred in Austria or Switzerland for instance in teachers' communication with students, in speeches of politicians or, even more so, in informal private communication. In such situations it is restricted to Germany, even to Northern Germany. [z] in syllable initial position before vowel is therefore a situational national variant.

Still another typological distinction can be made between those national variants which within their own national centers can be exchanged for another variant and those which cannot. This distinction is a little confusing since the different national centers of a language define their national variants differently. The typological distinction made here relates, however, to variation within one national center. This variation can either occur between a national variant and a nationally neutral variant which is valid in all centers, or between a national variant of center A and a national variant which is valid as standard in A and some, but not all national centers of the respective language. Terminologically one can make a distinction between (4) *exchangeable* versus *inexchangeable national variants*.

An example of an exchangeable "austrianism", an Austrian national variant, is the word *Paradeiser* 'tomato', which is variable in Austria with the common German word *Tomate* (cf. *Österreichisches Wörterbuch* 1990). The word *Karfiol* 'cauliflower', however, is not exchangeable for the German or Swiss *Blumenkohl* and is, therefore, an example of an inexchangeable national variant. Figure 3 presents an illustration of both types with the

help of a simplified drawing of the three national centers of German. The various patterns illustrate the regional extension of validity as standard for the two types of variants. Exchangeability is illustrated by the combination of patterns. It is accidental that the center named A which is the point of reference of the illustration corresponds to Germany; any of the three national centers depicted could serve as the point of reference, which is also true of the following illustrations.

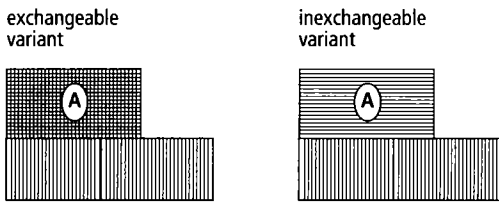


Figure 3 Exchangeable – inexchangeable national variants

The importance of this distinction lies in the fact that the inexchangeable variants guarantee the national peculiarity of texts, while the exchangeable variants can always be avoided. If a national variety only contained exchangeable variants its speakers could use it without even being recognized as members of the respective national center.

I have already in point (3) given an example for what lends itself to another typological distinction. The example was the regionally restricted use of a teutonism, namely the [z]-pronunciation of <s> before vowel (in informal communication) to Northern Germany (in words like *sagen* ‘to say’ etc.). There are in fact numerous national variants which are used or, more precisely, valid as standard only in part of their national centers, e.g. *Aschantinuß* ‘peanut’ which is limited to Eastern Austria, or *Metzger* ‘butcher’ which is limited to Western and Southern Germany. In contrast, other national variants like for instance *Flugpost* ‘air mail’ or *Abitur* ‘high school graduation’ are valid as standard in entire Austria or, respectively, Germany.

We can therefore distinguish terminologically
 (5) *national variants of only part (or restricted to part) of their national center* versus *national variants of their entire (or extending over the entire region of their) national center*.

Figure 4 illustrates both types of national variants with reference to center A.

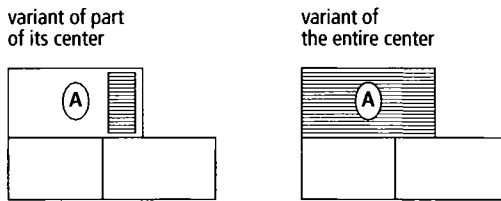


Figure 4 National variants of only part of their center – of their entire center

One would assume that the national variants of only part of their center would certainly be specific for the center. However, this is not necessarily true, as the next to final typological distinction shows, which I want to specify here, namely between those national variants which are specific for a national center, i.e. are valid as standard only in this center and nowhere else, and those which are not specific. Examples of the first type are the words *Marille* ‘apricot’ for Austria or *Velo* ‘bicycle’ for Switzerland; they are nowhere accepted as standard German except in these national centers (specific austrianism or, respectively, “helvetism”). Examples of unspecific national variants are the words *aper* ‘not covered with snow’, which is standard in Austria and in Switzerland (but not in Germany), or *Aprikose* ‘apricot’, which is German German and Swiss German (but not Austrian German).

The necessary terminological distinction is easy in this case; we have already mentioned it above, namely

(6) *specific* versus *unspecific national variants*.

A closer view reveals a number of problems which are connected to the latter distinction. Their solution will result in still another typological distinction, the last which will be proposed here, and at the same time in a more precise definition of the concept ‘national variant’.

It is easy to subdivide the unspecific national variants even further. The following distinction combines criteria from (6) with criteria from (5). It refers, as before, to center A which stands for any center of a plurinational language:

- (6a) valid in the entire region of A + valid in the entire region of another national center,
- (6b) valid in the entire region of A + valid in only part of another national center,

- (6c) valid in only part of the region of A + valid in the entire region of another national center,
- (6d) valid in only part of the region of A + valid in only part of another national center.

All these distinctions can be shown to be relevant in the case of German as a plurinational language. An example for (a) is *Fahrrad* ‘bicycle’ (Austria/Germany), for (b) *Kren* ‘horse radish’ (Austria/Southeast Germany), for (c) *Fraktion* ‘section (of a community)’ (Western Austria/Switzerland) and for (d) *Zugeherin* ‘(female) houseworker’ (Western Austria/Eastern Switzerland). It should, however, be added that types (c) and particularly (d) are quite rare in the case of German, though there are numerous non-standard variants with this kind of regional extension.

Figure 5 illustrates those types which are most important for German.

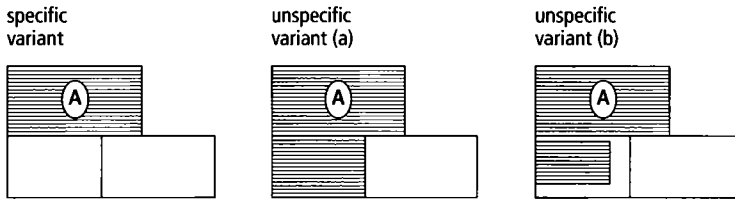


Figure 5 Types of variants: specific – unspecific

It goes without saying that the specific national variants contribute more specific features to a national variety than do the unspecific national variants. The latter even pose the problem of delimitation from those variants which cannot be called national at all, since they are not limited to any of the national centers of the language. Interestingly, the solution to this problem is not entirely easy, rather it poses a bit of a challenge. One might think at first that one would only need to draw a distinction between those variants which are not valid in all national centers and those which are valid in all of them, classifying the former as national variants and the latter as general (not limited to any nation or set of nations of the language in question). It is, however, easy to find examples whose usual classification contradicts this simple distinction. Thus, it is common practice to classify the present and past perfect forms with the auxiliary *sein* ‘to be’ of the verbs *liegen* ‘to lie’, *sitzen* ‘to sit’, *stehen* ‘to stand’ as national variants of Austria and Switzerland. These forms are, however, also valid as standard in Southern

Germany. They are therefore valid as standard in all the national centers of the German language. Is there any justification for the usual classification of these forms as austrianisms or helvetisms which we can capture in a definition of the concept 'national variant'?

The following definitions are attempts at a solution. In order to understand them one has to be aware of the difference between the *entire region* and only *part of the region* of a national center and the difference between *all* and only *some* of the national centers of a language. It should, in addition, be clear that specific national variants pose no problems of delimitation from general variants but that the following definitions only aim at the unspecific national variants. The definitions should be valid for plurinational languages of any number of national centers. It goes without saying that the national centers to which the definitions refer are meant to be part of one and the same plurinational language.

(i) A linguistic variant is a national variant of the center A ($A \in \{A, B, \dots, N\}$) even when it is only valid as standard in part of the region of A and in addition also in other centers, even in their entire regions, if only it is not valid in all the centers B, C, ..., N. It has, in other words, to be invalid as standard in at least one of the other centers and must not even be valid as standard in part of its region (cf. for illustration figure 6: type (i)).

Thus, the variant *Kren* 'horse radish' which is only valid as standard in Southeast Germany, or even only in Bavaria, is still a national variant of Germany (inspite of the fact that it is also valid as standard in entire Austria) because it is not valid as standard in Switzerland, not even in part of it.

If we look back we notice that the latter example is at the same time a case of (6c) above and that our definition (i) serves to delimit this particular type from those linguistic forms which can no longer be called national variants at all. We can now also make our final typological distinction, namely between type (6c) on the one hand and types (6a) and (6b) on the other hand. Terminologically we can refer to them as

(7) *very unspecific* (type 6c) and *simply unspecific national variants* (types 6a and 6b).

The decisive difference between both types is that the very unspecific variants are valid as standard only in part of their national centers while the (simply) unspecific types are valid as standard in their entire centers. In addition, both are valid standard in other national centers of the language.

The following definition refers to another subtype of the *very unspecific* national variants, namely those which are valid in all national centers of a

language. Remember that these cases stimulated us to make an attempt at a general definition (perfect tense forms of *liegen* etc. with *sein*).

(ii) A linguistic variant *b* is still a national variant of the center *A* ($A \in \{A, B, \dots, N\}$), though a very unspecific one, if it is valid as standard in the entire region of *A* and additionally in all the regions of the national centers *B, C, \dots, N*, but not in the entire regions of all of them. At least in one of these centers the validity of *b* as standard has to be restricted to part of the region.

This definition justifies counting the perfect-tense-forms of *liegen*, *sitzen*, *stehen* with *sein* as national variants of Austria as well as Switzerland but not of Germany. They are, namely, valid as standard in the entire regions of Austria and (German-speaking) Switzerland but only in part of the region of Germany. It seems to me that both definitions (i) and (ii) stretch the concept of a ‘national variant’ to its utmost limits without overextending it. Any step further would actually make it senseless to call the language variant in question still a *national* variant, for it would then be valid as standard to the same degree in all the other national centers as it is in our center of reference *A*.

Figure 6 illustrates the two types of very unspecific national variants and figure 7 illustrates three cases where it would not, in my opinion, make sense to speak of national variants of the center *A* any longer.

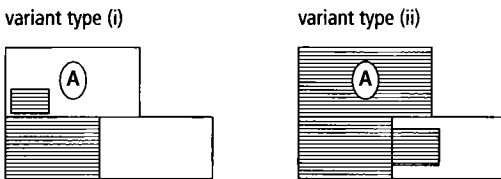


Figure 6 Very unspecific types of variants

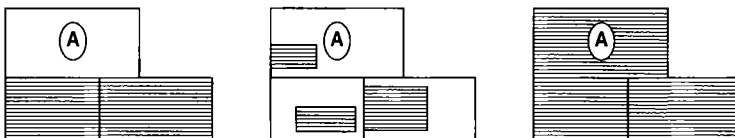


Figure 7 Variants which can no longer be called “national” variants

The question now arises which of the different types of national variants distinguished so far are of particular importance for a national variety and, consequently, deserve particular attention in linguistic descriptions of national varieties. Although this question has been dealt with above, it seems worthwhile to ask it again. Generally speaking, those national variants are particularly important which guarantee the peculiarity of a national variety on the one hand and those which guarantee its autonomy on the other hand. Its peculiarity distinguishes it from the other national varieties of the same language, and its autonomy guarantees its independence of them. It seems obvious enough that specific variants contribute more to a national variety's peculiarity than do unspecific variants, and that inexchangeable variants contribute more to its autonomy than do exchangeable variants. The following list shows to which of the two attributes the various types of national variants distinguished above contribute more, and are therefore the more important ones for a linguistic description of a national variety:

- (1) codified national variants more than uncoded ones (autonomy);
- (2) national variants according to validity and use more than those only according to use (autonomy);
- (3) absolute national variants more than situational ones (autonomy);
- (4) inexchangeable national variants more than exchangeable ones (autonomy);
- (5) national variants of their entire national center more than those of only part of their national center (autonomy and peculiarity);
- (6) specific national variants more than unspecific ones (peculiarity);
- (7) simply unspecific national variants more than very unspecific ones (peculiarity);

If one follows these evaluations it seems possible to construct something like the *core* of a national variety which, of course, can be delimited in different ways depending on additional weighting of the various preferred types (1) to (7). It should be clear, however, that the description of a national variety should focus mainly on the codified, the inexchangeable and the specific national variants. A detailed application of this typology in the description of the national varieties of German has been presented in Ammon (1995). Our typology is not invalidated by the fact that in many cases exact empirical data are missing and that, therefore, for the time being, it cannot be decided to which of the various types a particular variant belongs. Such cases present research questions for the future whose solution should in principle be possible.

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Sociolinguistic characters: On comparing linguistic minorities

Ludwig M. Eichinger

1. Preliminaries

Linguistic minorities can be understood as complex interactional networks. These networks are marked by the use of linguistic forms different from the ones used by the surrounding society, and they are defined in relation to it. This surrounding society itself is to be perceived as a majority type of organization when compared with the focused minoritarian group.

When comparing such complex interactional networks, which we call linguistic minorities, one has to get hold of the salient features of such a situation. This is not an easy task, because at first sight you only get differences: every minority is a special case. Of course it is not that way. Salient features of a situation can be described as specific entries into a paradigm of variables which are characteristic for a set of multilingual communities. A set of comparable social entities is put together by a shared historical and social experience which in turn leads to comparable attitudes concerning one's own place in the majority-minority constellation. Linguistic minorities in Western and Middle Europe have experienced the appearance of the nation state as the normal case of political organization as well as the development of liberal-democratic means of decision finding. These experiences lead to a specific way of dealing with the minority problems and to specific attitudes toward them.

Though rooted in the European experience this type of discourse has obviously had consequences for analogous situations in other parts of the world. But these analogies only refer to the objective data as for example the existence of a larger and a smaller linguistic group in one and the same organizational entity. But if one considers the minority situations as communicative networks they are social phenomena and as such characterised by their cultural and historical development. A comparison on this level then needs a shared experience of crucial developments, as it is laid down in the collective memory of such groups. The shared historical expe-

rience produces a number of typical constellations, which allow to reduce the colourful complexity of the existing minority situations to stereotyped patterns (cf. Eichinger 1983).

2. Prerequisites of comparison

The communicative network of linguistic minorities which are of the European type is nevertheless characterized by a remarkable amount of diversity. This diversity of the phenomena can be reduced by a model summing up different phenomena which can be understood as different values of a variable. These variables represent relevant factors in a communicative network and range from the kind of languages used to the legal regulations to be found. Thereby the variety of phenomena is mapped onto a finite paradigm of relevant factors. In addition to this the values for the different factors are governed by the general character of the minority in question, which means that they are not independent of each other: only certain correlations occur in our cultural frame and certain choices rule out a lot of theoretically possible combinations. So even if many of the factors used for the description of these situations may claim to be of universal importance for the description of minority situations, cultural and historical restrictions shape the sociolinguistic characters we want to describe. In the following chapters of this paper the relevant factors for such a description will be discussed and an outline of salient constellations will be given. It is to be shown as well that such a description is suitable to model the change of minorities as complex systems.

The predominance of liberal democratic thinking which developed during the last decades has totally changed the situation of minorities, even if the identity of minorities to a large extent still mirrors the experiences within the discourse of the ethnic type of nation state.

3. Relevant factors

In this chapter the relevant factors for describing the minority type "linguistic minority in Western and Middle Europe" is to be sketched. Especially the correlation between the value the different variables assume and the cultural embedding shall be stressed.

3.1. Size

The factor of absolute and relative size of the linguistic minority at first sight looks rather absolute and not specific of a single culture. But contrary to this expectation it is strongly dependent on certain features reflecting the state of the society in question. In societies of the European type we usually find the command of the standard variety of the respective national language being of high importance (cf. Baum 1987). Concerning the medium, in which standard languages of this type are typically used, the communication within such societies is characterized by a preponderance of written communication (cf. Giesecke 1992: 61–66). European societies are marked by being a *Schriftkultur* ‘written culture’ and by *Standardsprachlichkeit* ‘standard language predominance’ (see Besch 1983: 983). The latter is to say that written forms of the language are no longer to be seen as secondary to the spoken varieties, but exercise themselves an influence on the spoken form. The changing relation between the written and spoken varieties must be seen in the light of most people being successfully schooled in the use of the standard language. The electronic media in addition to this produce types of texts which are ambiguous with respect to their structural and medial characteristics. The type of speaking exhibited there leads to an adaptation of the spoken language to written forms. This process corresponds to the growing range of the communicative network in which the individual in modernized societies acts.

With reference to this development it is possible to divide linguistic minorities into two groups, using communicative criteria. Small minorities are only able to meet parts of the communicative demands of modern societies within the range of the varieties of the minority language, large minorities are independent in this respect. With the real size of societies in Western and Middle Europe the borderline between small and large minorities may be drawn around 100,000 speakers. Somewhere at about 20,000 there seems to be another borderline. Groups smaller than that show communicative patterns which are only partly diglossic with an accordingly decreasing amount of bilingualism. There surely is a borderline at the top of the scale for minorities too: if groups taking their identity out of the use of their own specific language are bigger than that absolute size, size ceases to be a problem and a criterion for minoritarian status (cf. Coulmas 1992: 88).

Relative size of a minority has to be measured in comparison with the extent and the structural properties of the relevant political or social entity. “Relevant” in this context means being responsible for the rules by which the use of the different languages is governed. The amount in which the

minority language is represented is not simply parallel to the relative size of the group. Relatively small groups often do better than one would expect from their percentage of the whole population. It is easier to maintain coherence and unanimity in small groups, and it is comparatively easy for small groups with a strong identity to be the strongest minority in the process of democratic decision finding. The larger the group the more difficult it is to get a unanimous decision on a special problem: Sartori (1992: 224–227) in this context speaks of the factor of intensity. Nevertheless it is useful for the minority to be in an organisational unit where it represents a reasonable percentage of the population. As an example of this one may cite the case of the smaller language groups in Switzerland: the Italian speaking group just seems to be of a critical relative size, which makes it difficult to be seen as equal with the German and French speaking population (see Camartin 1982: 339–343), and Rhaeto-Romance has severe problems to be seen as a normal means of communication. This is true despite strong political and financial support for this language and is in part due to the small relative size of the group of its speakers (cf. Kraas 1993: 99/100).

3.2. Cultural and geographic embedding

Absolute and relative size obviously are not interesting as mathematically observable facts but as factors in a model of linguistic economy. Economy in this context does not just mean usability in the organization the minority belongs to but includes other aspects. First one has to look over the borders of the state the minority group is part of: one has to get a picture of the cultural und geographic embedding on a larger scale. A small minority area within a country may just be the margin of a much larger language area which by some historical incident has been organizationally cut off. Under these circumstances the economy question looks quite different from what the classification as a small minority would suggest. Supposing that there is the normal contact between democratically organized neighbouring states, the adjacency of the main language area could outweigh the factor of intrastate small size (cf. Schiffman 1993: 137). This case is not that unusual, as many minorities in Europe are border area minorities. The position at the borders of the national states implies a marginal status of such areas with regard to the centres of political organization and power. Though being a member of a marginal group nowadays – with growing federalism – may be less harsh a fate than it was, the collective memory of groups is still marked by this experience. The political and attitudinal marginality typi-

cally corresponds to geographic facts which can be interpreted with respect to their communicative consequences (cf. Kraas 1992: 182). It is not by accident that linguistic islands tend to survive in remote mountain valleys, remote areas, which can be covered totally by the minority and its type of communication. These facts as on the other hand the dissolving of minorities in other geographic circumstances can be related to the preferred type of settlement chosen by the minority. This factor obviously interferes with geography and economic structures. Minorities in the European context tend to live in economically weak regions. Furthermore, a rather traditional type of economy is prevalent there. As a consequence personal mobility for members of the minority is restricted, which on the other hand tightens the coherence of the minority group. As a negative consequence, however, the continuous and subtle adaptation of minoritarian communication and minority language to the needs of modernized societies is blocked: under these circumstances acts of language planning tend to be seen as unnatural. This effect appears with comparatively new attempts to create written standards for languages hitherto only spoken, as for example the dialects of Rhaeto-Romance or the Croatian spoken in the Austrian Burgenland.

This effect can be avoided by minorities which can rely on connections with the main area of their language. Examples of this case are the German speaking population in South Tyrol/Italy or – in principle – the Slovene minority in Carinthia/Austria, but also smaller and more isolated minorities as the remains of the medieval language islands in the Trentino/Italy, who have always taken advantage of their idiom by working as migrant traders in German speaking countries.

3.3. Political identity and representation

Political organization or representation of the minority are getting more and more relevant with the growing importance of democratic ways of decision making. Especially with the further development of the European Union it is important for an adequate representation of a group to try and turn the principle of subsidiarity to its advantage (see Gellert-Novak 1993). To reach this, a minority has to achieve a type of political and organizational structure within the state which is adapted to the needs of the minority. This concerns the regional adaptation of administrative districts and their provision with satisfactory competences. The German speaking minority in South Tyrol is an example of a minority which has been very successful in getting the political organization adapted to the wishes of the minority.

Leaving aside the problems implied by this solution (see Eichinger 1988: 186/187) it is obvious that not all groups have the opportunity to get as far as that. One specific reason for the success of the South Tyrolians lies in their compact group identity which is perhaps the most salient quality of this group. This strong group identity is – by means of the intensity-principle mentioned above – a prerequisite for getting an overproportional representation in political issues concerning the status of the minority. In the case of South Tyrol this identity forms its organisational body in a political party, the Südtiroler Volkspartei (SVP), which defines its goals through the ethnic interests of the minority. This party succeeded – on the one hand – in being accepted as the speaker of the group interests and – on the other hand – in representing itself in the democratic game of conflicting interest-groups as a partner who plays this game according to its rules. This approach which takes into account the change in the kind of political reasoning which is accepted nowadays and which nevertheless refers to the foundation of the collective memory of the group is without any doubt better adjusted to the modern type of political struggle than pure antimodern ethnic parties which try to negate the advances in the democratic organization in Western Europe.

3.4. History

It seems to be a trivial statement to say that the possibilities and limits of a minority group as we see them today are to a certain extent determined by their history. But it is not simply the facts of history which are laid down in the identity of a group. Certain phases and events in the history of a group are regarded as critical and therefore supply elements which the collective memory of the group is made of. History occurs as a more or less coherent set of stories made of historical material. These stories, of course, do not belong to the past but to the present and are as such often used as reasons for political action. This type of reasoning reduces by far the objectivity of so-called objective factors resulting from the history of a linguistic minority. Take for instance the concept of autochthony. This romantic idea, which identifies “older” with “better”, is nowadays used in a slightly different way: one argues about which period in the history of a state or region can be seen legitimately as source of the modern culture prevalent in this area. Finding an adequate place for this argument in the concept of liberal and democratic thinking is not easy (cf. Brunkhorst 1994; Taylor 1993). As far as Europe is concerned, pure anciennity, i.e. the search for primo-

geniture, does not make much sense. The regions we talk about have been characterised by the cohabitation of different culturally defined groups and by intercultural and interlingual exchange as far as historical remembrance allows us to look back. So there is often no reasonable answer to the question who was there first, and even if there is such an answer its relevance for modern problems is rather doubtful (cf. Fraas 1992: 182). Of course this may look different within constellations where historical dislocation is an essential item in the collective memory of a group. The appearance of the ethnicity discussion in the USA has to be understood in this way as well as certain developments in societies which conceive themselves as postcolonial (e.g. Africa) or postimperialist (e.g. the former USSR). In single cases phenomena of this type are found in the Western European model too. For the Croatian minority in Burgenland immigration some 400 years ago is part of the collective memory (cf. Eichinger – Jodlbauer 1987: 139).

Other cases – the so called language islands – are even defined by the self-assessment to be dispersed from a community and region of origin (see Mattheier 1994: 334). In the average Western and Middle European type, however, historical reference is normally used as an argument between different groups about the validity of the stories which form the groups' collective memories. Each group in this constellation tries to get appropriate representation of their respective cultures and traditions. Speaking within the old context of nation states the consequences of such arguments are rather clear, in modern democratic societies one has several options. As far as democracy can be understood as a formal means of organizing the distribution of power, restricted only by the general rights of man, it is difficult to give a reason for which cultures should be officially represented in a society and which ones should not. Democratic societies have to tolerate and balance difference; the question is if there are any and if so, where there could be reasonable limits for differences still tolerable within one society. The widely accepted political model of liberal democracy offers a rather abstract frame for the solution of these problems: there is no good reason within this system to judge cultural expressions or traditions as far as the democratic consensus is not endangered (cf. Brunkhorst 1994; Beck 1994: 473/474). As can be seen by the examples of the Basques in Spain or by the fights between ethnic groups within the former eastern block, these abstract remarks about democratic values are not seen as adequate or helpful for dealing with such multilingual constellations by a number of minorities (cf. Haarmann 1993: 22–24). This point will not be discussed in detail here.

3.5. Legal status

The questions of the historical foundation of minority rights immediately lead to the question of laws and legal regulations in general by which the representation of minorities in a state and society is ruled.

Minority policy can be considered successful, if it reaches a compensatory shift of the principle of equality which is one of the prerequisites of a democratic procedure (see Sartori 1992: 340ff). All types of autonomy regulations on the political and the cultural levels can be described in this way. Representation in the bodies of political organisation is especially relevant. So the Danish minority in Schleswig-Holstein/Germany does not have to stick to the rule to have at least 5% of the vote to send a representative into the regional parliament. Equally important are the cultural and educational facilities and institutions, where the use and the teaching of the different languages is prescribed (cf. Ammon et alii (eds.) 1993). As in our society administrative and legal procedures have become so important, regulations for the use of languages are frequent in these domains too (cf. Schiffman 1993: 137 for an example). Regulations in the field of economy are rather powerful means of protecting minorities, as may be seen by the regulations for public employees in South Tyrol, which are known under the name of *Proporz* 'proportion'.

3.6. Status and use of languages

The central point of interest for the linguist who tries to study the communicative networks spread out by the minority are the structures and the use of the languages found in the situation. The typical minority language of the European type is not fully accommodated to the communicative demands imposed by modernized western societies. On the other hand this language or variety of a language gets its importance more from its symbolic than from its functional value. Where the symbolic value of a language for group coherence is very high, markers of exclusivity are brought forward which may even be detrimental to the functional value (cf. Markey 1987: 5/6). The changing functions of the varieties of German used in Switzerland, especially the rise of Swiss German [Schweizerdeutsch], can be interpreted this way, because there is a tendency to exchange intercommunication for a strong sign of identity (Watts 1988: 330; Koller 1992). This may be surprising, since Switzerland, as all the European societies we are talking about, is characterized by a pattern of language use which belongs to the standard-language type sketched above.