

Linguistic Purism in the Germanic Languages



Studia Linguistica Germanica

Herausgegeben
von
Stefan Sonderegger
und
Oskar Reichmann

75

Walter de Gruyter · Berlin · New York

Linguistic Purism
in the Germanic Languages

Edited by
Nils Langer and Winifred V. Davies

Walter de Gruyter · Berlin · New York

© Printed on acid-free paper which falls within the guidelines of the ANSI to ensure permanence and durability.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Linguistic purism in the Germanic languages / edited by Nils Langer and Winifred V. Davies.

p. cm. — (Studia linguistica Germanica ; 75)

ISBN 3-11-018337-4 (alk. paper)

1. Germanic languages — Standardization — History. 2. Germanic languages — History. 3. Germanic languages — Social aspects. 4. Germanic languages — Dialects. I. Langer, Nils, 1969– II. Davies, W. V. (Winifred V.) III. Series.

PD74.7.L56 2005

430—dc22

2004030892

ISBN 3-11-018337-4

Bibliographic information published by Die Deutsche Bibliothek

Die Deutsche Bibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data is available in the Internet at <<http://dnb.ddb.de>>.

© Copyright 2005 by Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co. KG, D-10785 Berlin
All rights reserved, including those of translation into foreign languages. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Cover design: Christopher Schneider, Berlin.

Printed in Germany.

Acknowledgements

This book contains the proceedings of a conference held in Clifton Hill House at the University of Bristol in April 2003. As with all such projects, the editors could not have presented you with this book had it not been for the help of a number of colleagues and friends who supported us in the process of organising and running the conference as well as editing this volume. We are especially grateful to Maria Lange (Bristol) and Patrick Honeybone (Edinburgh) as fellow organisers, to our student helpers Louise Hughes, Sarah Spencer Bernard, Emily Vigliar, and Rebecca Wills for looking after the delegates and their many needs, to Bertha Garrett in the Department of German (Bristol) for being there when we needed a clear head, to Anne Simon (Bristol) for some of the translations of medieval German into English, to Jim Milroy (Ann Arbor) for academic help in the editing of this volume, and to Louise Hughes (again) for compiling the index and help with the production of the camera-ready copy. Thanks also to Angelika Hermann, Susanne Rade, and Heiko Hartmann from Walter de Gruyter for their assistance with the publication of this book. Furthermore, our gratitude goes to Professors Sonderegger (Zürich) and Reichmann (Heidelberg) for accepting this volume as a contribution to the Series *Studia Linguistica Germanica*. Finally, thanks to the *Institute for Advanced Studies* (Bristol), the Faculty of Arts Research Fund (Bristol), the *Linguistics Association of Great Britain* (LAGB) and the *British Academy* for their generous financial support.

Nils Langer, Bristol
Wini Davies, Aberystwyth

February 2005

Contents

Nils Langer (Bristol) & Winifred V. Davies (Aberystwyth)
An Introduction to linguistic purism..... 1

I. Historical Prescriptivism and Purism

Stephan Elspaß (Augsburg)
Language norm and language reality.
Effectiveness and limits of prescriptivism in New High German..... 20

Wim Vandenbussche, Roland Willemyns, Jetje De Groof & Eline Vanhecke (VU Brussel)
Taming thistles and weeds amidst the wheat:
language gardening in nineteenth-century Flanders 46

Maria Lange (Bristol)
Bad language in Germany's past –
The birth of linguistic norms in the seventeenth century? 62

Joachim Scharloth (Zürich)
The Revolutionary Argumentative Pattern in Puristic Discourse:
The Swabian dialect in the debate about the standardization
of German in the eighteenth century..... 85

Maria Geers (Tvar State University)
A comparative study of linguistic purism in the
history of England and Germany 97

II. Nationhood and Purism

Felicity Rash (Queen Mary, London)
Linguistic purism in German-speaking Switzerland
and the *Deutschscheizerischer Sprachverein* 1904-1942..... 110

Evelyn Ziegler (Marburg)
Language nationalism in the Schiller commemoration addresses of 1859 124

Ria van den Berg (Potchefstroom)
Standard Afrikaans and the different faces
of 'Pure' Afrikaans in the twentieth century..... 144

Kristine Horner (Luxembourg)
Reimagining the Nation: Discourses of language purism in Luxembourg 166

III. Modern Society and Purism

Dieter Stein (Düsseldorf)

On the role of language ideologies in linguistic theory and practice:
purism and beyond..... 188

Peter Hohenhaus (Nottingham)

Elements of traditional and 'reverse' purism
in relation to computer-mediated communication 205

Patrick Stevenson (Southampton)

Once an *Ossi*, always an *Ossi*:
Language ideologies and social division in contemporary Germany..... 221

IV. Folk Linguistics and Purism

Betsy Evans (Cardiff)

'The Grand Daddy of English': US, UK, New Zealand
and Australian students' attitudes towards varieties of English..... 240

Nancy Niedzielski (Rice University, Houston)

Linguistic purism from several perspectives:
views from the 'secure' and the 'insecure' 252

Klaus J. Mattheier (Heidelberg)

Dialect and written language:
Change in dialect norms in the history of the German language 263

Zoë Boughton (Exeter)

Investigating puristic attitudes in France:
Folk perceptions of variation in standard French..... 282

V. Linguists and Purism

Katja Leyhausen (Heidelberg)

"Caution is not always the better part of valour" –
Purism in the historiography of the German language..... 302

James Milroy (Ann Arbor, Michigan)

Some effects of purist ideologies on historical descriptions of English..... 324

Oskar Reichmann (Heidelberg)

Usefulness and uselessness of the term *Fremdwort*..... 343

Index 361

Nils Langer and Winifred Davies

An Introduction to Linguistic Purism

1. Introduction

Purism is an aspect of linguistic study which appeals not only to the scholar but also to the layperson. Somehow, ordinary speakers with many different mother tongues and with no formal training in linguistics (a group referred to as *folk* by Niedzielski & Preston 2000, a term which we will adopt in this book) share certain beliefs about what language is, how it develops or should develop, whether it has good or bad qualities, etc. But not only that: there is the recurrent phenomenon that speakers of a language agree that the state of their language is in decline, that it contains too many words from informal varieties, that it is threatened by modernising and foreign influences: in short, that it was better in the olden days and that nowadays something needs to be done to restore it to its former glory. It is surely significant that the opening pages of Crystal's *Encyclopedia of Language* (²1997: 2) are devoted a discussion of the interest shown by laypeople in language, a topic which is part of linguistic purism. Language is distinguished from other academic disciplines such as astronomy, Roman mythology, or physics because all speakers consider themselves to be experts in the field of language. In addition, linguistic skills are highly valued in society and linguistic behaviour is a very public affair (ibid.) – hence there are many reasons and opportunities to form, reaffirm and argue about views on language, much more so than for example in the field of Roman mythology cited above.

Professional linguists have often ignored the study of folk attitudes to language, dismissing them, perhaps rightly, as ill-conceived and fundamentally flawed due to a lack of understanding of how language works (cf. Milroy & Milroy 1999: 2-9). Whilst the increased general interest in the interaction between language and society since the 1960s has led some scholars to the phenomenon of linguistic purism as a prominent instance of folk linguistics, so far comparatively little work has actually been carried out in this field. Recently, scholars such as Cameron (1995) and Milroy & Milroy (1999) have called for more academic research into attitudes towards language and have

urged academic linguists to take folk evaluation more seriously rather than to dismiss it as being unworthy of their interest as has tended to be the case.

As regards the specific issue of purism, there is as yet only one monograph which aims to provide some theoretical underpinning (Thomas 1991), although there are several collections of articles which either focus on purism or contribute to our understanding of it by presenting important research in related fields, for example the process of standardisation or the historiography of language. Amongst some recent works in the field of Germanic linguistics, we can cite the conference proceedings by Brincat et al. 2003 and Linn & McLelland 2002, the collection of articles on individual languages found in van der Sijs 1999, Deumert & Vandebussche 2003, and Bex & Watts 1999 and the monographs by Jones 1995 and Niedzielski & Preston 2000.

The present volume contains a selection of papers given at a conference at the University of Bristol in April 2003. The conference was entitled *Linguistic Purism in the Germanic Languages* and by restricting it to Germanic¹ we hoped to retain a certain thematic focus, rather than have a much greater number of languages which would then have made comparisons between findings difficult. However, it became very clear very quickly that despite the fact that the conference was organised around a common theme, the topic of linguistic purism covers a very wide range of issues. Whilst in its very essence purism is about the desire to keep a language pure (cf. Thomas's (1991) definition below), it can also affect folk-linguistic attitudes in general (cf. Niedzielski's and Evans et al.'s contributions), the relationship between standard and non-standard varieties, preserving older varieties and rejecting younger ones, the role of language in nationalist ideology (cf. the papers in the section on Purism and Nation as well as Leyhausen's and Milroy's contributions) and the very concept that a new, borrowed word can be alien to a language (cf. Reichmann's contribution).

We felt that this resultant range of topics was a very positive outcome of the conference. Scholars with a similar general interest, namely linguistic purism, had to engage with the complexity of the field, and cross-fertilisation took place both across languages and subject specialisms. In this publication, we hope to achieve the same for our reader: to show, on the one hand, the diversity of the topics covered and, on the other hand, to point out the *roten Faden*, the continuous thread that gives cohesion to all the contributions.

1 For purism in respect to non-Germanic Languages cf for example van der Sijs 1999 and Brincat et al. 2003. In this volume we have included one article on a non-Germanic language (Boughton, on French) for the sake of comparison.

In this introduction, we will firstly review some of the most prominent definitions of linguistic purism before discussing the views regarding the benefits and disadvantages of purism for a language. Finally, we will briefly introduce all the contributions.

2. What is purism?

General definitions of the concept will always be rather vague but, before discussing our topic in more depth, it seems sensible to see what the agreed common ground is as regards linguistic purism. Larry Trask restricts his definition of purism to foreign influences, highlighting in particular puristic activity towards words, though not excluding other features:

purism The belief that words (and other linguistic features) of foreign origin are a kind of contamination sullyng the purity of a language. [...] (Trask (1999: 254))

By contrast, George Thomas's definition does not restrict itself to foreign elements but includes varieties such as dialects and particular styles of a language:

[purist activity is] "a desire on the part of the speech community [...] to preserve a language form, or rid it of, putative foreign elements or elements held to be undesirable elements (including those originating in dialects, sociolects and styles of the same language). It may be directed at all linguistic levels but primarily the lexicon. Above all, purism is an aspect of the codification, cultivation and planning of standard languages." (Thomas (1991: 12))

Importantly, purism is concerned not only with the removal of (unwanted) linguistic features but also with the preservation of desirable elements. Here we note the importance of the subjective evaluation of elements of a language by (influential) members or groups of the speech community: who is to say what is desirable or unwanted? Purism does not occur automatically at any particular stage in the development of a language, but is rather triggered by folk-linguistic perceptions, for example that the language is going into decline or is being corrupted. How this is caused is still unclear (but cf. *the timing of purism* below). The second important claim in Thomas's definition is that purism is not solely directed at foreign influences, but also at indigenous forms, for example dialectal features. Presumably this is only possible once a prestige variety has been agreed upon in a given speech community, but even then the actual selection and de-selection of acceptable and unacceptable features is a process which varies from language to language, the mechanisms

of which are not yet clear. In particular, we need to know more about how stigmatized features are selected – and who has the power to select them. David Crystal's definition (1997: 316) follows similar lines to Thomas's. He defines purism as a "school of thought" which sees a linguistic variety as being in need of protection from external pressures. Such pressures are not just foreign ones but could also be influences from varieties like dialects or colloquial speech. Thus, again, purism refers to keeping a language *pure*, but, contrary to lay perceptions of purism, impure elements are not simply foreign loan words but also features from non-prestigious varieties, and therefore one would expect the existence of linguistic purism to presuppose the existence of a prestige language variety.

Finally, van der Sijs's definition (1999: 11) refers rather generally to the 'language-making' (*spraakmakende*) section of the speech community which has the power to decide which linguistic features are considered undesirable (*ongewenst*). Purism, according to her, is deliberate resistance to such elements. Hence, she makes no specific reference to foreign or indigenous words but simply refers to them as undesirable.

Overall, we can say that the three definitions above largely agree on what purism is: an (influential) part of the speech community voices objections to the presence of particular linguistic features and aims to remove them from their language. Academic linguists have a problem with this since no language is a precisely defined entity with a unique history and a closed set of linguistic features. Hence any attempt to purify a language must be ill-conceived since no language has ever been pure in the first place. Nonetheless, the phenomenon of linguistic purism does exist and our study of this phenomenon can help us understand the role of language in society – an aim certainly worth pursuing.

3. Purism and standardisation

We saw above that purism not only attacks foreign elements but also non-prestigious indigenous ones. By implication, this means that a purist will have an awareness of a prestige variety of his/her language: this brings us to the topic of purism and standardisation. Van der Sijs (1999: 11) argues that purism only affects languages which are standardised or are in the process of standardisation since, before one can remove elements from a linguistic norm, one has to have a linguistic norm.

But, as the studies in Brincat et al. (2003) show, purism can occur even where there is no standard and codified norm:

“[W]e especially disagree with [van der Sijs’] emphasis on the interdependence of the rise of puristic tendencies and the creation of a standardised language norm. Thus purism is depicted as a predominantly conscious process triggered by the agents of official language policy. [...] however] purism need not be connected with conscious standardisation, and it should not be separated from a broader concept of ‘pure language’. [...] purism is an issue that can come up in societies where literacy is heavily restricted and institutions which could organise purist movements are largely missing.” (Boeder et al. 2003: viii)

For Boeder et al. (2003: x), purism can take place in languages which are not standardised and where speakers are illiterate: they might still be aware of a prestige or stigmatised form of their language despite the fact that such a form might not be formally codified or agreed. Thus purism is not restricted to standard languages in the “modern, technical sense” (loc. cit.) but rather can be found in all those linguistic varieties where language evaluation occurs. Which variety or feature is favoured or stigmatised is arbitrary in the linguistic sense – famously, *polynegation*² is a “normal” grammatical feature in medieval German, Dutch and English, as well as in modern languages such as Low German, but also, importantly, in the standard varieties of Italian and French, whereas it is seen as illogical and bad (by folk linguists) in standard English, German and Dutch. Despite the fact that the stigma of *polynegation* in West Germanic standard languages may seem justified on grounds of *propositional logic*, the purists involved in its stigmatisation during the seventeenth and eighteenth century felt there to be no inconsistency with the grammaticality of *polynegation* in the equally prestigious French or Ancient Greek.³ Hence we must carefully distinguish between a purist’s “official” reason for stigmatising a particular word or grammatical construction on the grounds that it is illogical or alien to the indigenous language, and her / his “hidden” motivation, namely a general fear of foreign (cultural) elements or a concern that one’s advanced culture might be in danger of decline due to the rise of the lower classes. Whether such a foreign invasion or general cultural decline is actually taking

2 The realisation of *negation* by more than one negatively-marked morpheme, for example Low German:

De Hund hett em ni nich höört. (Lindow et al. 1998: 285)
 the dog has him never not heard
 “The dog never heard him”

3 Langer 2001 contains an account of the stigmatisation of *polynegation* in German in the eighteenth century. It demonstrates that prescriptive grammarians were very well aware of the fact that, whilst their stigma of *polynegation* followed the pattern of Latin (a prestigious and ancient language), it nonetheless contradicted the grammar of Ancient Greek (also a prestigious and ancient language).

place is irrelevant – what matters is whether such things are *perceived* to be happening by influential members of society who will then use emotive factors and symbolic values to represent their concerns.

We find these triggers for linguistic purism in Germany both in the seventeenth and eighteenth century in the resistance towards Gallicisms and again, since the 1950s, in the concern that American English will replace German as the main means of communication even in Germany, hence creating insurmountable linguistic barriers between Germans – despite the fact that the grammar of German is not affected⁴ by the source languages and the fact that German, like all other languages, is a *product* of language contact (cf. Reichmann's contribution in this volume on the usefulness of the concept *Fremdwort*). The purists' fear of foreign influence is thus linked to a more general fear of losing national or regional cultural identities. We can see this in this volume in the contributions by Stevenson, who explores the use of language to create East German identity, and Mattheier, who sketches a history of the changing status of German dialects from being seen as peasants' language to their current perception as symbols of local pride and identity.

Van der Sijs (1999: 11) mentions another important socio-political use of language purism: to support the formation of a national or cultural identity. This can be seen in many instances, for example the current debate in Low German circles as to whether the language should be protected from High German influences, or the case of Flemish in the nineteenth century, where one camp of purists preferred a Flemish cleansed from French words to distinguish themselves from the French, whereas another camp felt that French (and regional) features were integral to the Flemish character and could be usefully employed to distinguish the language from that of their northern neighbours in the Netherlands (cf. Vandenbussche et al. in this volume).

Importantly, the prestige or stigma of a language is never absolute but is judged in relation to another language, be that a dialect, a foreign language or even the language of a particular individual, famed for his or her rhetorical ability (or lack thereof). "Famous" individuals who are often named by folk

4 All foreign words have grammatical gender, often a German plural, all adjectives have German endings, all verbs are formed according to German patterns of morphology: for example *Die coolen Typen haben die flashende Bilddatei downgeloadet.* and cf. an authentic example from a German hiphop band *Wir sind die Coolsten, nie am losen, weil wir rulen, wenn wir Cruisen.* (Massive Töne, MT3, 2002)

Foreign influences on German grammar are much more limited and oft-cited examples such as the increasing use of {-s} for plural or *in 1992* instead of *1992* or *im Jahre 1992* simply exploit patterns which are already present in the grammatical system of German.

linguists as the creators or protectors of a particular standard language include the translator Martin Luther and the national poets Friedrich Schiller for German (cf. Ziegler's contribution), Pentsjo Slavejkov for Bulgarian (Moskova 1999), William Shakespeare for English, and Klaus Groth for Low German, the linguist and author Ivar Aarsen for Norwegian (Jahr 2003), the lexicographers Azkue for Basque (Jansen 1999) and Samuel Johnson for English, to name but a few. Often, too, particular institutions are, or are seen to be, the preservers of a prestige variety, for example the *Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft* in seventeenth century Germany, the *Academie Française* in France, the *Accademia della Crusca* in Italy, but also, the BBC in the United Kingdom. However, for many other languages, it is not individuals or institutions who have symbolic linguistic status but rather particular geographical areas (Tuscany, Hanover, Île de France, Oxford) or cultural artefacts for example the Welsh translation of the Bible (cf. Löffler 2003).

5. Purism and prescriptivism

Purism and prescriptivism are closely related concepts since any attempt to purify a language will be a form of prescribing what the correct or better form of a language is. Whilst the term *prescriptivism* is more general than *purism* the two are often used interchangeably when applied to the folk-linguistic activity of defining and striving for a better variety of a particular language. There are two strands to the academic's rejection of prescriptivism: on the one hand, it is considered to be ill-conceived in principle to apply such emotive terms as *good*, *bad*, *rational*, *elegant* etc. to language. Linguists aim to understand, explain and describe language, they do not evaluate it – in the same way that zoologists will not classify and compare different species with regard to their ugliness or friendliness (Milroy & Milroy 1999: 5). This does not mean that linguists do not distinguish between the levels of appropriateness of certain varieties for particular contexts. In particular, academic linguists do accept the usefulness of having a standard language, i.e. a *prestige* variety for particular domains, for example in national communication (but cf. Trudgill (1975) who argued against the need for an English standard pronunciation in any context). However, and this is the second main objection to prescriptivism, linguists reject the arbitrariness of how prestige and stigmatised forms are selected. This is spelled out in very clear terms in Trask's definition of prescriptivism, aimed at the trainee academic linguist:

prescriptivism The imposition of arbitrary norms upon a language, often in defiance of normal usage. [...] Prescriptivism consists of the attempts, by teachers and writers, to settle [...] disagreements [about which forms should be part of a

standard language] by insisting upon the use of those particular forms and usages which they personally prefer by condemning those others which they personally dislike. [...] [T]he problem is that many prescriptivists go too far, and try to condemn usages which are in fact perfectly normal even for educated speakers [...]. (Trask 2004: 246)

The crucial notions in this definition are clearly the term *arbitrary* norms and *personal* like and dislike of a particular form. It is not the “best” forms which are selected but rather those forms which are used by the “best” group of speakers, i.e. the educated upper and middle classes. Here we see how prescriptivism and standardisation are closely intertwined, since the latter crucially involves a stage where features are *selected* from the whole range of linguistic forms. This selection process is never neutral in that any form could qualify to become a standard feature, but rather, selection will favour only those forms which are considered to be part of “good usage” (cf. Vaugelas’s concept of *bon usage* in seventeenth-century France), i.e. language that is used by educated or prestigious speakers. The selection process is followed by the codification of a prestige language variety⁵ in normative grammars, dictionaries and style guides and thus grammarians often occupy an important role in the petrification of norms: in German, the editors of the *Duden-Grammatik* have normative power due to the prestige of the *Duden* as a guardian of good German even though the editors may not wish to be prescriptive.⁶ When the most recent edition of the orthographical *Duden* (2000), seen by most German as *the* dictionary which includes all and only German words, included a substantial increase of Anglicisms – chosen because they occurred with a sufficient frequency in authentic German texts – there was an outcry amongst folk linguists, suggesting that the *Duden*’s editors had somehow corrupted the German language. A similar reaction occurred in 1961, when the editors of the Webster’s Third International Dictionary had removed “all traces of value-judgment from their work and refuse[d] to label particular usages (such as *ain’t*) as ‘colloquial’ and others as ‘slang’” (Milroy & Milroy 1999: 4). In both cases we can make the interesting observation that, on the one hand, “linguistic folk” are happy to accept the existence of a particular grammar or dictionary (written by real *people* and not somehow God-given!) as the sole reference or instantiation of a standard or prestige language, but that on the other hand, the editors are challenged or considered to be unfit for their

5 Cf. Haugen 1997/1966 for a comprehensive model of standardisation.

6 Wermke argues that whilst the *Duden* aims at providing guidance towards the use of norms inherent in language use (*sprachimmanente Gebrauchsnormen*), it does not strive for a strict and prescriptive setting of norms (Wermke 1998: 16).

tasks when this grammar or dictionary deviates too much from what linguistic folk expects to be standard. The contradiction is thus: linguistic folk turn to a standard dictionary to find out what standard is, but when they find things that they do not consider to be standard they reject the dictionary – hence the question is, why do they *ever* turn to the dictionary rather than trust their own judgement in the first place! This contradiction is of course resolved when we realise that linguistic folk consider such items as *English* or *German* or *Dutch* to be things that exist in the real world as singular, clearly defined entities and which existed in a pure and uncorrupted form at some stage in history: despite the fact that those who should know, namely academic linguists whose job it is to know about language, fundamentally disagree with this.

Apart from the question of the initiation and instantiation of linguistic prescription, another interesting but as yet rather under-researched topic is the transmission of linguistic norms, i.e. how does a language user acquire knowledge about what forms are standard and hence acceptable in formal discourse and which forms are not. Prescriptive grammarians who set or codify the norms for the standard or prestige language often did not have a lot of contact with “normal” language users and prescriptive grammars and style-guides are usually books that can be found on the shelves of every household but are rarely taken down and read.⁷ One particular group of speakers are often cited as norm transmitters: school teachers. But as Cameron (1995) pointed out, this is simply assumed in the academic literature – very few studies have actually been conducted to see to what extent the teachers’ perception of norms corresponds to what the grammars prescribe. Davies (1999) shows, based on her study of secondary school teachers of German in South-western Germany, that school teachers are often more lenient in their expectations than is currently assumed. More than 50% of her informants reported that they would not insist on the use of Standard German in the classroom, and when they were asked to identify grammatical errors in a set of 20 example sentences, none of the “mistakes” were found by all teachers and hence the teachers would not penalise certain deviations from the language norm as prescribed in normative grammars such as the *Duden-Grammatik*.

In current research-in-progress, Davies & Langer (forth) found that the opposite is also true: the use of *wo* “where” as a relative pronoun for temporal adverbs⁸ has been considered to be standard by normative style guides and grammars (for example *Duden Richtiges und Gutes Deutsch*, 2001) since the

7 Cf. Schraeder 1987 and Davies 1999 on the use of normative dictionaries by school teachers in determining (un-)acceptable forms of German.

8 [...] besonders die letzten Stunden, wo es feinen Regen im Winde trieb
 “especially the last **hours**, **where** fine rain was driven in the wind”
 (J.W. Goethe, as cited in Paul 2002: 1179)

nineteenth century but school teachers more or less uniformly reject the construction as ungrammatical. Here the teachers are *more* prescriptive than the prescriptive grammars! Thus it seems important not to simply note that languages are standardised by means of a selection of forms and their codification in grammars but also by the transmission of such norms to language users.

6. The timing of purism

In the publisher's announcement for van der Sijs (1999), we read that

Iedere taal bezit woorden die uit een andere taal zijn geleend. Wanneer hun aantal te groot wordt, treedt een mechanisme in werking om hun invloed te temperen: taalzuivering of purisme. [from publisher's announcement for van der Sijs 1999]
[every language contains words which were borrowed from another. Whenever their number becomes too high, a mechanism sets in to reduce their influence to an acceptable degree: language-cleansing or purism]

Thus we hear that the instantiation of purist activities is a mechanism triggered if certain conditions are satisfied: it would be quite remarkable if that were true, but neither van der Sijs (1999) herself nor for example Boeder et al. (2003) agree. Boeder et al. aimed to address this very issue of "whether puristic tendencies were determined by or went along with certain constellations in grammar or lexicon" (2003: ix) in their book; however, despite the findings of their publication "[r]esearch on purism is simply not yet prepared for an evaluation of the subject at hand." (ibid.). What is crucial is not the quantifiably measurable degree of influence but the subjective perception of the speakers (van der Sijs 1999: 23), and which language is considered to have a worrying influence is determined by extra-linguistic factors: when Turkish speakers objected strongly to French and other western influences, they turned towards Arabic/Persian loanwords as being part of their true heritage. On the other hand, when Bulgarians objected to Turkish dominance, they had no problem with and even endorsed western loan words as showing educatedness (van der Sijs 1999: 24). Similarly, the debate in German is aimed at removing the influence of American English, despite the fact that most foreign loanwords come from Latin and Greek: the use of the latter, however, is evaluated particularly highly as demonstrating a classical education. In this book we will not address the question of whether we can abstract a model of triggers for purist activity since we feel that research into the subject has not advanced enough yet. However, we are also rather sceptical to what extent

such a model can ever be developed: the data and scenarios presented in van der Sijs (1999), Brincat et al. (2003) and this volume include so many different factors and rest crucially on the notion of folk-linguistic ‘perception’ by ‘influential’ members of a language community with *perception* and *influential* both being highly subjective notions. Thus we will have to be satisfied for the moment with presenting case studies covering a range of languages, periods and topics.

7. Purism: good or bad?

So far we have shown how linguists view purism as a generally futile endeavour, based on a naïve and ultimately ill-conceived notion of what language is, how it develops and, crucially, how it first emerges: whilst purists often see the birth of a language as the emergence of a unique (and therefore pure) form, uncorrupted by outside influence, linguists believe that individual languages⁹ are the product of language contact and that there is no such thing as a pure language.

However, some of the articles in Brincat et al. (2003) as well as in Linn & McLelland (2002) and Deumert & Vandenbussche (2003) which discuss minor(ity)¹⁰ languages argue that purism and other standardising activities serve a useful purpose when applied to minor and regional languages. Given that these are rarely codified in the sense of Einar Haugen’s four steps of standardisation¹¹ and that most speakers are bilingual, often using the dominant language for public purposes (at work, school, etc.), the lack of agreement over one prestige variety may facilitate the decline of minor languages, since for example it makes the use of the language in writing or broadcasting difficult. Löffler (2003: 63f.) reports that purist tendencies have been part of the cultivation of a Welsh standard since medieval times for the simple reason that the language used by the bards could be understood at the courts throughout Wales. The case of Low German, a regional language in Northern Germany, is interesting in this context, too. Despite the fact that there is no codified norm of Low German,¹² the use of Low German in broadcasting

9 Let’s assume for the sake of convenience that *individual* languages do exist.

10 Both *minor* and *minority* languages are used in the secondary literature. For our purposes, the distinction is not important.

11 Selection, Codification, Implementation, and Elaboration.

12 Note that the recent *Niederdeutsche Grammatik* (1998) does aim to provide guidance in the use of Low German and hence may act as a standardising factor in the use of Low German in public discourse. However, whilst there is a clear “default” use of a particular variety of Low German, namely North Low Saxon (NLS; *Nordniedersächsisch*), in the choice of example

is standardised by the fact that the radio and TV station – situated in Bremen, geographically more or less in the centre of the Low German-speaking area – which receives manuscripts for broadcasting, discretely checks the language for particularly salient regional features (D. Stellmacher, p.c.): this is in no way in order to erase “undesirable” elements along the lines of the types of purism referred to above. But, nonetheless, it is a type of linguistic purism which, given the popularity of the station’s programmes, will no doubt cause some levelling of Low German diversity, and it is worth investigating whether *Radio Bremen* removes not only ‘strange’ regional words which would not be understood elsewhere, but also High German words in order to preserve the Low-Germanness of the language.¹³ Thus purism could serve to counter-balance the current process of the levelling of linguistic diversity (Boeder et al. 2003: vii), and the creation of a prestige variety or *Leitvarietät* of a minor or regional language might well help it to survive. On the other hand, however, having a prestige variety will often lead to the suppression and eventual stigmatisation of local features which in itself can accelerate the decline of the language, as shown for example by the elimination of regional features in the attempt to create a standard Welsh (Jones 1998).

However, given what we know about language and linguistic development, we feel that the academic linguist might be compromising his or her position as an observer and describer of languages.¹⁴ Whilst nobody would wish for a language to die, the only people to stop such a trend are not linguists but parents who decide which language to use with their children and whether to send their children to a monolingual or bilingual school.

After these more general remarks on purism we will conclude this introduction by briefly presenting the papers contained in this book.

The first group of papers deals with the relationship between *Historical Prescriptivism and Purism*.

The starting point of Elspaß’s contribution is the obvious fact that prescriptivism and purism have not always been successful and forms that have been stigmatised by grammarians, in some cases for centuries, seem to be re-appearing, even in writing. By examining letters written by German immigrants to the US in the nineteenth century, Elspaß shows that these forms

sentences for particular constructions, other regional varieties are also recognised in that they are mentioned without stigma when they deviate from NLS.

13 However, further research is required to find out to what extent standardising tendencies can be witnessed in the use of Low German in public discourse (Haugen’s step of *implementation*).

14 Note, of course, that the notion of academic linguists as ‘neutral’ observers in the description of language is severely challenged by the contributions of Leyhausen and Milroy in this volume.

never died out in informal written German, even if they were almost completely eradicated from the formal written standard.

Vandenbussche, Willemys, De Groof & Vanhecke's paper discusses the debate for and against an integrationist (i.e. with reference to Dutch) and a particularist approach to the standardisation of Flemish in nineteenth century Flanders. The battle was won by the integrationists, which meant that the variety that was codified was the northern one, which was regarded as 'purer' since it was freer of French and dialectal influences.

Lange examines a period – the seventeenth century – which has always been considered crucial for the emergence of a standard German variety, but she shows that the grammarians working at this time were not as prescriptive or as influential as has been assumed in histories of German. They may well have subscribed to the notion that a standard variety was desirable but they did not contribute much to the actual codification of specific rules.

Scharloth picks up on two types of purism described by Thomas (1991) and, on the basis of an analysis of discourse on language and culture in eighteenth century-Germany he shows how the notion of standardising German by conserving a particular state of the language and defending it from foreign intrusions was contested for a while by those who argued that, rather than tinkering with a corrupt variety, a completely new variety should replace the current one.

Geers investigates different types of linguistic purism. In her study of English and German, she sheds light on the similarities and differences of linguistic purism in the two languages, based on evidence from the sixteenth, seventeenth and nineteenth century.

In the second section, *Nationhood and Purism*, the paper focuses on the links between nationhood or nation-building and -maintenance and purism.

In the case of Switzerland, Rash describes how important dialects are in the construction of Swiss identity for the German-speaking Swiss (who form the vast majority of the population). They symbolise values like democracy seen as essential to Swissness. This has been a major motivation for purist activities vis à vis French, also demonstrating that purism is not restricted to standard varieties.

Ziegler presents a study of a particular contribution to nation-building in nineteenth century-Germany and demonstrates how civic festivities were used to create a national cultural identity. References to the language of Friedrich Schiller, the German national poet from the eighteenth century, and equating it with standard German were central to these particular festivities, although we find little information about any specific usages. His status was however enhanced by the fact that he seems to have come along at the right moment to save German from overwhelming French influence.

In van den Berg's contribution we see how attitudes toward what is 'pure' Afrikaans have (not surprisingly) vacillated as the socio-political situation has changed. A study of dictionaries and wordlists shows how attitudes have shifted from total opposition to English loan-words, to a matter-of-fact acceptance of them as part of Afrikaans.

Horner's paper, too, shows how attitudes towards linguistic varieties are influenced by socio-political events, in this case World War 2, but also more recent immigration to Luxembourg. Negative attitudes towards German and the wish to distance Letzebuergesch from it by stressing its status as a language rather than a dialect of German can be instrumentalised in order to withstand French pressure, too. Processes of external (directed at other languages) and internal purism (standardisation) are described.

The third section, *Modern Society and Purism*, is devoted to papers which examine the role of purism in contemporary society. Stein's paper examines how a particular ideology of language - the fixed-code theory - has implications for practice, for example amongst lawyers or language teachers. In the latter case he shows how the ideology of standard and purism (which are linked to the fixed-code notion) means that British English is still privileged in German universities and 'mixed' varieties are discriminated against.

Hohenhaus deals with purism in a new domain of linguistic usage - computer-mediated communication. This is not a domain without norms, but the traditional notion of purism is often turned upside down here and we find a reverse purism with stress on being innovative and creative.

Stevenson introduces the notion of sociolinguistic purism. This is linked to the notion that west German speech norms are set up as norms with eastern features being seen as exotic deviations. As Stevenson points out, the linguistic differences (often minimal), are clearly being used to represent social differences, and alleged difficulties of comprehension (usually on the part of westerners) have to be interpreted as, in reality, expressions of a social rather than a linguistic divide.

In the fourth section, the authors deal more explicitly with *Folk Linguistics and Purism*.

Evans et al. describe an investigation into attitudes towards different varieties of English. Despite what Stein says about German university departments of English, it seems that, in general, there is a perception that British English is becoming less popular than US English. However, Evans et al. show that this is not the case, since informants from a range of other English-speaking countries perceived US English quite negatively.

Niedzielski's paper discusses certain theoretical and methodological issues which have to be confronted by researchers into language attitudes, for

example how do speakers conceptualise the standard form of their language? It seems that there will be differences of perception between secure and insecure speakers, with the latter often being more accurate in their judgements of their own usage.

Mattheier's contribution deals with an area which he feels has been marginalised in many histories of the German language, namely the changing place of non-standard regional dialects in the linguistic value system of German-speakers since the Middle Ages. We see that dialects may have been stigmatised as the language of farmers and peasants, but there is also evidence of its positive evaluation in identity formation and as a symbol of the in-group. Boughton's article is the only one focusing on a non-Germanic language, namely French. Her data, collected in the northern French cities of Nancy and Rennes, show that in folk linguistic perceptions, there continues to be deep reverence for the standard language and the preservation of its 'correctness'.

The final section, *Linguists and Purism*, demonstrates how even linguists, who like to think of themselves as objective recorders of facts, have not been free of ideological influences, specifically purism.

Leyhausen examines a selection of histories of German to show how the presentation of the topic of borrowing or language contact often reveals an underlying (conscious or otherwise) nationalist agenda. The link between nation and national language appears to be still relatively strong.

Milroy's contribution shows that a certain bias is not restricted to writers of histories of German, but is also evident in histories of English. He describes two kinds of purism: sanitary purism, which is retrospective and erases alleged impurities from the record, and genetic purism, which is concerned to construct a glorious and ancient heritage for the present-day standard variety.

The final paper, by Reichmann, addresses the usefulness of the term *Fremdwort* in the description of lexical semantics. Instead of classifying instances of lexical borrowing as *foreign* influence, they should be seen more neutrally as products of mutual language contact. Reichmann argues for a more holistic approach to the languages of Europe, one that will stress what they have in common and the way in which they (i.e. their speakers) have been open to each other for centuries.

8. References

- Bauer, Laurie & Peter Trudgill (eds.). 1999. *Language Myths*. London: Penguin.
- Bex, Tony & Richard Watts (eds.). 1999. *Standard English: The Widening Debate*. London: Routledge.

- Boeder, Winfried, Brincat, Joseph & Thomas Stolz. 2003. 'Preface.' In: Brincat et al. viii-xiv.
- Brincat, Joseph, Boeder, Winfried & Thomas Stolz (eds.) 2003. *Purism in Minor, Regional and Endangered Languages*. Bochum: Brockmeyer.
- Cameron, Deborah. 1995. *Verbal Hygiene*. London: Routledge.
- Crystal, David. ²1997. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia to Language*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Davies, Winifred. 1999. 'Linguistic norms at school: a survey of secondary-school teachers in a Central German dialect area.' In: *Zeitschrift für Dialektologie und Linguistik* 67. 129-147.
- Davies, Winifred & Nils Langer. forth. *Bad German - Past and Present*. Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang.
- Deumert, Ana & Wim Vandenbussche. 2003. *Germanic Standardisations*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Duden ²²2000. *Die deutsche Rechtschreibung*, edited by the Dudenredaktion. Mannheim: Dudenverlag.
- Duden ⁵2001. *Richtiges und gutes Deutsch. Wörterbuch der sprachlichen Zweifelsfälle*, edited by the Wissenschaftliche Rat der Dudenredaktion. Mannheim: Dudenverlag.
- Haugen, Einar. 1966 (1997). 'Language Standardization.' In: Coupland, Nicholas & Adam Jaworski (eds.). *Sociolinguistics. A reader and coursebook*. London: Macmillan. 341-352.
- Jahr, Ernst Håkon. 2003. 'Norwegian.' In: Deumert & Vandenbussche. 331-353.
- Jansen, Wim. 1999. 'Zuiverheid en zuivering in het Baskisch.' In: Sijs. 287-290.
- Jones, Mari C. 1998. *Language Obsolescence and Revitalization*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Langer, Nils. 2001. *Linguistic Purism in Action. How Auxiliary tun was stigmatised in Early New High German*. Berlin, New York: De Gruyter.
- Linn, Andrew & Nicola McLelland (eds.). 2002. *Standardization. Studies from the Germanic Languages*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Löffler, Marion. 2003. 'Purism and the Welsh Language: a matter of survival?' In: Brincat et al. 61-90.
- Milroy, James & Lesley Milroy. ³1999. *Authority in Language*. London: Routledge.
- Moskova, Anna. 1999. 'Taalzuivering in het Bulgaars.' In: Sijs. 252-257.
- Lindow, Wolfgang et al. 1998. *Niederdeutsche Grammatik*. Leer: Schuster.
- Paul, Hermann. ¹⁰2002. *Deutsches Wörterbuch. Bedeutungsgeschichte und Aufbau unseres Wortschatzes*, edited by Helmut Henne, Heidrun Kämper & Georg Objartel. Tübingen: Niemeyer.

- Niedzielski, Nancy & Dennis Preston. 2000. *Folk Linguistics*. Berlin, New York: De Gruyter.
- Schaeder, Burkhard. 1987. *Germanistische Lexikographie*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- Sijs, Nicoline van der (ed.). 1999. *Taaltrots*. Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Contact.
- Trask, R. Larry. 1999. *Key Concepts in Language and Linguistics*. London: Routledge.
- Thomas, George. 1991. *Linguistic purism*. London: Longman.
- Trudgill, Peter. 1975. *Accent, Dialect and the School*. London: Arnold.
- Wermke, Matthias. 1998. 'Aus der Praxis der Dudenredaktion.' In: Greule, Albrecht & Franz Lebsanft (eds.). *Europäische Sprachkultur und Sprachpflege*. Tübingen: Narr.

I. Historical Prescriptivism and Purism

Stephan Elspaß

Language norm and language reality.
Effectiveness and limits of prescriptivism in
New High German

1. Some real written German

This paper is concerned with grammatical features in contemporary German that purists would regard as ‘bad language’. Consider the following examples from newspapers, magazines, literary works and the internet:


- (1) **Keine Macht für Niemand**
[‘No power to **nobody**’]
(headline of a book review of Ulrich Beck’s book *Macht und Gegenmacht im globalen Zeitalter*,
URL¹: http://www.changex.de/d_a00817.html, quoting the title of a 1972 album by the German rock group *Ton Steine Scherben*)

- (2) Ich wähle **Doris**’ [!] **ihren Mann seine Partei**
[‘I vote for Doris’ husband’s party’
(literally: ‘I vote for **Doris her husband his party**’)]
(Slogan from the SPD election campaign 2002)

- (3) **kauft hab** ichs wegen Turn The Tide – aber die anderen Tracks sind auch ganz ok Kuhhirt
[‘I bought it because of the track “Turn the Tide” ...’
(literally: ‘**Ø-bought** have I-it because-of *turn the tide*...’, Standard German *ge*-prefix on past participle missing)]
(Private internet review of the CD *Clear Vision*,
URL: <http://www.medienkonverter.de/kritik.php4?KritikNr=198>)

1 All internet sites were accessed in February 2004.

(4)

tu
mich nicht  ver-
gessen! **tu mich nicht vergessen**

['do me_{ACC} not **forget**' instead of Standard German: 'forget me not!']
(ready-made text message offered by T-Mobile,
URL: <http://b2b.ucpag.com/t-mobile-at/pm/177/17.html>)

(5) zurück über das penser joch; tankstellenautomaten getestet (der um 10.000 ITL 5,81 l diesel hergibt & sonst nur 50.000 ITL-scheine **nehmen tät** ...).

['... tested a petrol pump ... which would only take 50,000 Italian lira notes'
(non-standard *nehmen*_{INF} + *do*_{SUBJ-II})]
(Private homepage, URL: <http://www.comodo.priv.at/cgi-bin/journal/journal.cgi?folder=archaeologie&next=8>)

(6) Es war Abend, der rote Glanz auf der Mauer **war am Verlöschen**.

['It was dusk, and the red shine on the wall **was fading away**.'
(non-standard *sein*_{FIN} + *am* + *VERB*_{INF} for progressive aspect)]
(Elias Canetti: *Die Stimmen von Marrakesch*. München & Wien 2002, p. 7)

(7) Zum Kommentar von S. D., 'Trittin vor der Tür' ... wäre zu ergänzen, daß diese von Trittin in wenigen Jahren herangezogene Lobby ständig **am Wachsen ist**.

['... that this lobby ... **is constantly growing**.'
(non-standard *sein*_{FIN} + *am* + *VERB*_{INF} for progressive aspect)]
(letter to the editor, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 27.08.2003, p. 8)

(8) Dasselbe in Grün: Erik Zabel **besser wie** Lance Armstrong

['... Erik Zabel better than Lance Armstrong'
(**comparative** + non-standard *wie*-particle instead of *als*)]
(newspaper headline from *Frankfurter Neue Presse*, quoted in *Der Spiegel*, 06.08.2001, p. 186)

(9) **Teurer wie** ein Schulbuch

['More expensive than a textbook'
(**comparative** + non-standard *wie*-particle instead of *als*)]
(headline from *Hessisch-Niedersächsische Allgemeine*, quoted in *Der Spiegel*, 17.06.2002, p. 210)

- (10) Ein Quartierplan wirft **wegen dem** Verkehr hohe Wellen
 [‘District plan creates a stir **because of the**_{DAT} traffic’
 (non-standard dative instead of genitive after the preposition *wegen*)]
 (headline from *Volksstimme Sissach*, 21.09.2000, p. 3)
- (11) Abmahnung **wegen dem** Begriff „Telekom“
 [‘A note of caution **because of the**_{DAT} term “Telekom”’
 (non-standard dative instead of genitive after the preposition *wegen*)]
 (headline from the Internet Magazine *ZDNet*, 22.08.2003,
 URL: <http://news.zdnet.de/story/0,,t110-s2138753,00.html>)
- (12) Sechzig Jahre. „**Da** kann der Schröder sich eine Scheibe **von** abschneiden.“
 [‘Sixty years. “Schröder can take a leaf from this book.” ...’
 (literally: ‘**There** can the Schröder himself a slice **from** of-cut’)]
 (*Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger*, 28.06.2002, p. 36, on the diamond wedding
 anniversary of former chancellor Helmut and Loki Schmidt)
- (13) „**Da** darf man gar nicht **drüber** nachdenken“
 [‘You don’t want to think about it.’
 (literally: ‘**There** must one not **there-over** about-think’)]
 (headline from *Osnabrücker Zeitung*, 03.06.2003, on the consequences of
 fowl pest for farmers)
- (14) „Aber jemandem **dann** den Lebensstandard weg zu nehmen, aus Geiz oder
 weil man sagt, das Geld ist nicht vorhanden, **da** halte ich nichts **davon** [...]“
 [‘... I don’t think very much of this’
 (literally: ‘**There** think I nothing **there-of**’)]
 (Dorothee Mantel, MP [CSU], in an interview on *Deutschlandfunk*,
 07.08.2003, <http://www.dradio.de/cgi-bin/es/neu-interview/3640.html>)

In these examples, the phrases highlighted in bold print have one thing in common: they appear in standard German texts, but according to normative grammar books, they are not standard German. Some grammarians would dismiss examples like these with the comment that people do make mistakes and linguistic errors do happen. However, in the cases presented here (except examples 6 and 7) we are confronted with grammatical features that have been considered ‘incorrect’ in written High German² for at least two hundred years.

2 In this paper, I will use “written High German” (*hochdeutsche Schriftsprache*) to refer to the high variety of German which was established as a written form in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century, particularly as a language of literature (Blackall 1959), whereas “standard German” (*Standarddeutsch/deutsche Standardsprache*) will exclusively refer to the standard

When eighteenth- and nineteenth-century grammarians strove to ban them from what they considered ‘good’ and ‘correct’ German, these features clearly were in use – otherwise nobody would have bothered to declare them ‘incorrect’. The interesting thing, however, is that they are still widely employed in informal spoken German and – as we can see – sometimes also in written German, in spite of the prescriptive work of eminent grammarians like Johann Christoph Gottsched, Johann Christoph Adelung, Karl Ferdinand Becker and their followers. There is, however, one important difference between examples (1)-(5) and examples (6)-(14): The ‘deviations’ in the first group are used in a humorous way or to mark colloquial language use, whereas the ‘mistakes’ in the second group were probably not produced intentionally.

In this paper, I will be concerned with the question of how and why in some cases language regulation has led to the almost complete disappearance of certain grammatical features from written High German, i. e. why in some cases it *has* had an effect on language use, whereas in other cases features that have been declared ‘incorrect’ for two and a half centuries seem to emerge in contemporary standard German, suggesting that prescriptivism in the German-speaking communities may have had little or no effect at all on language use.

After an outline of some of the main ideas and motivations behind prescriptivism that are relevant in this context, I will briefly address the impact of traditional data selection and data purification on language historiography and then identify the methodology and the text sources of the present study. The main part of the paper will be devoted to a discussion of grammatical features which have disappeared from High German – possibly due to the influence of prescriptivism – and examples of features which are banned from High German but which have resurfaced in it or rather, as I will attempt to prove, never actually disappeared from it.

2. Prescriptivism – ideas and motivations

In the history of prescriptivism, at least three different motivational strands can be identified, which will be illustrated with examples from the history of New High German:

1. The most important and certainly most legitimate idea behind language regulation is the *standardization*³ of a national language. Its motivation may be characterised as rationalist, as it firstly aims at facilitating communication

variety (mainly written, but also as a spoken form) which developed not earlier than the twentieth century (cf. section 4 of this paper).

3 For different aspects of standardization processes in the Germanic languages cf. Linn & McLelland (2002).

between the members of a national community which is split up into various dialect groups, and secondly at making this variety fit for use in various domains such as education, administration, jurisdiction, literature and so on. This was certainly one of the main ideas behind the work of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century grammarians in Germany who tried to establish German in domains which had previously been dominated by Latin and French.

2. A second factor is *purism*, “the manifestation of a desire on the part of a speech community (or some section of it) to preserve a language from, or to rid it of, putative foreign elements or other elements held to be undesirable (including those originating in dialects, sociolects and styles of the same language)” (Thomas 1991: 12). As has been pointed out frequently, purism often goes hand in hand with nationalist ideologies. “It may be directed at all linguistic levels”, as George Thomas wrote (*loc. cit.*), but primarily affects the lexicon. – A well-known and remarkable example of successful language purism in late nineteenth-century Germany is the introduction of ‘Germanised’ technical terms in the areas of post and rail, when *Couvert*, *Correspondenzkarte*, *Coupé*, *Passagierbillet* and *Perron* became *Briefumschlag*, *Postkarte*, *Abteil*, *Fahrschein* and *Bahnsteig* (‘envelope, postcard, compartment, ticket, platform’, cf. von Polenz 1999: 296). This ‘change from above’ can be directly linked to late nineteenth-century francophobic and nationalist movements in Germany. Nineteenth-century purism with its aim to purify German from ‘foreign’ elements is markedly different from the movements in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which involved weeding out archaisms and provincialisms (von Polenz 1994: 199ff.).

3. A third motivation for language regulation might be termed *segregational*, as it results in the separation of those ‘who know’ from those who never have the chance to gain full competence in the high variety – and probably never need or desire to master it. Particularly the conservative factions of the educated bourgeoisie (*Bildungsbürger*), who created and upheld the standard language ideology in Germany (cf. Durrell 2000), were certainly not interested in sharing their newly achieved social power with the masses. In establishing an ideal of correctness and connecting ‘correct’ speech and writing with cognitive abilities, language regulation has served as a language barrier to put members of the lower and lower middle classes ‘in their place’. – In late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Germany, the enforced codification of grammar and style was aimed at written German and based on ‘official’ language and the language of ‘the best writers’ (von Polenz 1994: 199ff.). Nineteenth-century school grammars, textbooks and also guides to letter writing (*Briefsteller*) can be divided into two groups: those which were directed at students of grammar-school level and educated writers, aimed at guiding those people to master and perfect the written language (e. g. Becker 1831), and those which catered for primary-school children and people with elementary

education to give them basic instruction in reading and writing and helping them to formulate simple letters (e. g. Bohm/Steinert 1851). Mass literacy was undoubtedly a major achievement in the nineteenth-century German-speaking states. But the high variety which was a prerequisite to climb the social ladder clearly remained a domain of the upper and upper middle classes – with the exception of the old nobility, who often did not care very much for linguistic norms and correctness (cf. von Polenz 1994: 209ff.). The sociolinguistic situation is described in a nutshell in a scene from Theodor Fontane's novel *Irrungen, Wirrungen*, where a young nobleman receives a letter from his mistress, a girl from the lower classes:

Dann durchlas er den Brief noch einmal. An zwei, drei Stellen konnte er sich nicht versagen, ein Strichelchen mit dem silbernen Crayon zu machen, aber nicht aus Schulmeisterei, sondern aus eitel Freude. „Wie gut sie schreibt! Kalligraphisch gewiß und orthographisch beinah ... Stiehl statt Stiel ... Ja, warum nicht? Stiehl war eigentlich ein gefürchteter Schulrat, aber, Gott sei Dank, ich bin keiner. Und ‚empfehlen‘. Soll ich wegen f und h mit ihr zürnen? Großer Gott, wer kann ‚empfehlen‘ richtig schreiben? Die ganz jungen Komtessen nicht immer und die ganz alten nie.“

[‘Then he read again through the letter. At two or three points, he could not help underlining with his silver pencil, but not in a schoolmaster's manner but for pure joy. “How good her writing is. Certainly in calligraphic respect, and orthographically it is almost right ... *Stiehl* instead of *Stiel* ... Well, why not? *Stiehl* was actually a dreaded Inspector of Education, but I am not, thank God. And *empfehlen*. Should I be angry with her because she confuses *f* and *h*? Good Lord, who can possibly spell *empfehlen* correctly? Certainly, the young countesses not always, and the old ones never.”] (Theodor Fontane: *Irrungen, Wirrungen*. Ch. 6)

The “dreaded Inspector of Education”, Ferdinand Stiehl, was an influential Secretary in the Prussian Ministry of Education who was responsible for one of the most reactionary decrees in the aftermath of the failed 1848 revolution. The so-called “Stiehlsche Regulative” were a setback in national education as they virtually restricted written language instruction in primary schools to calligraphy, orthography and the drawing up of basic business letters (cf. Fertig 1979: 25). Meanwhile, grammar instruction in higher education contributed to an alienation of written High German, the high variety, from everyday language, as nineteenth-century (high) school grammars in Germany sometimes insisted on rules that no longer applied to everyday language. Examples from German grammar are the strict verbal bracket or elaborated inflectional paradigms, particularly with the genitive and the subjunctive. Otto Behaghel, a leading linguist of that time, noticed, however, that the genitive as well as the

subjunctive as a productive means of inflection had by and large disappeared from everyday spoken German already by the beginning of the New High German period, “während es in der Schriftsprache blüht und gedeiht, gehätschelt von vergangenheitsfreudigen Sprachlehrern“ [‘while it blossoms and flourishes in written language, pampered by language teachers who indulge in the past’] (Behaghel 1900: 219).⁴

3. The impact of data selection and data purification on language historiography – the German case

Remarks on developments in everyday language like Behaghel’s comments on the genitive and the subjunctive are scarce in standard grammars of the time, as grammars as well as traditional studies in historical grammar have focussed on written language. Moreover, their data comes primarily from printed texts, such as fiction (particularly novels), newspapers, scientific and academic texts, encyclopaedias etc. – sometimes also letters and autobiographical texts from artists, politicians, the nobility and other prominent writers. These texts, however, represent the language use of well-educated, experienced writers or even language specialists only. As for the nineteenth century, it has to be remembered that these people accounted for less than 5% of the population.

Furthermore, texts written by such authors, particularly eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature, were usually not edited in their original but in a purified version, so that grammatical and orthographical variants in the works of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Friedrich Schiller, the nineteenth-century ‘poetic realists’, etc. were smoothed out. This editorial practice has not changed very much even today. Texts resulting from such practice seem, of course, to confirm the commonly held view that German grammar has not changed since the second half of the eighteenth century (Admoni 1990: 219f.) – or even worse: they support the view that the German language reached its peak at the time of the classics and has been in constant decline ever since. From this perspective, ‘mistakes’ such as in examples (1) to (14) are considered as the result of language corruption and decay.

Traditional textbooks on the history of German grammar, which mostly follow a teleological approach to language history, have done very little to change this view. In fact, they have rather reinforced it by basing their historical outline on analyses either of printed literary texts or ‘pure’ dialects,

4 It is largely the excessive use of such forms and constructions in school grammars and literary works which foreign learners of German mocked, such as Mark Twain in his famous essay on “The awful German language”.

and they have frequently discarded linguistic mongrels such as colloquial or everyday language. In other words: language historians and grammarians have condoned the suppression of substantial evidence in the history of modern languages.

4. Text sources and method of the present study within the framework of a 'language history from below'

It is a much easier task to uncover historical language norms than historical language reality. To assess norms, it suffices to study historical sources of prescriptive work. To learn about the full range of actual language use, however, it is imperative to find 'uncensored' texts from a wide variety of text types from all social classes and all regions. To a certain extent, this methodological path has been taken by Historical Sociolinguistics. Many German studies in the context of Historical Sociolinguistics, however, have more or less adopted the teleological view in which language variation is measured against a supposed standard of the time. In Elspaß (2002), it was denied that such a standard existed for nineteenth-century German, as the variety that in linguistics has traditionally been regarded as *the* standard was known and accessible only to a small elite. To the vast majority of people, some of the prescriptive norms of the 'standard' variety were most probably *not even known*. Instead, these people relied very much on regional norms of usage, which they could even have learned in school – from primary-school teachers who did not know better themselves.

In Elspaß (2003), I elaborated on this argument and pleaded for a drastic and fundamental change of perspective in historical linguistics, exemplified in the language history of New High German. In a 'language history from below' approach, it is necessary to come down from the *bel étage* of traditional historical linguistics and view language use and language change from the basement, or – to use a different metaphor – to change from a bird's to a worm's eye view. From the perspective of the majority of people who lived, spoke and also wrote texts without any knowledge of the work of 'classical' authors or, in fact, hardly any other books, the history of language use appears to be much more complex than grammars and textbooks have presented so far. From this point of view, the history of a language has sometimes taken completely different routes from the history of its literary language.

How can the language used by the broad mass of the population be unearthed? In historical linguistics, it has appeared to be difficult to exemplify a variationist approach to language change with data other than those from modern dialect studies (cf. Milroy 1992: 45ff.). In recent years, however, written documents, in particular private letters by semi-literate writers

(Schneider 2001: 75ff.), have come into focus and have proved to represent the most reliable source of ordinary people's use of written language in modern history. Whenever we get the chance to get hold of such texts, we should seize it and make those texts available for linguistic analysis.

In my research on everyday language of 'ordinary people', I have concentrated on the private correspondence of nineteenth-century farmers, artisans, soldiers, housemaids, etc. – people who had received elementary education only and for whom writing was not a daily task. Two of the rare occasions when people from the lower and lower middle classes had reason to write private letters were war and migration. From within the context of mass emigration to the USA in the nineteenth century, when six million people from Germany alone left for the New World, I have assembled 648 letters by writers from all German speaking countries and regions. 60 of these letters were written by people (mostly men) with secondary or higher education, and 588 letters by writers – men and women – with primary education only. Figure 1 is a rather schematic map of the German-speaking areas and the regional distribution of the letter-writers' home areas. It shows the number of writers per traditional dialect area.

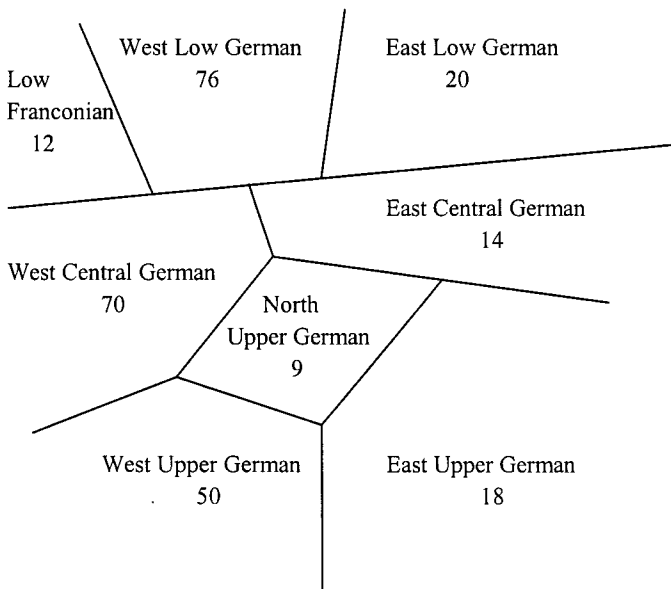


Figure 1: Regional distribution of 19th century letter writers' hometowns (German dialect areas)

In the present analysis, two different groups of text sources will be used: Firstly, text sources of prescriptive work are referred to, such as grammars,

particularly school grammars, dictionaries, treatises and similar texts on linguistic matters, but also fictional texts in which linguistic weaknesses and shibboleths of people from certain social classes or different German regions are exposed. Secondly, to measure the *effectiveness* of this prescriptive work, the actual language use in the letter corpus and in data from present-day colloquial German will be analysed.

The results of the comparison between language norms and language reality will be assessed in the following manner: if certain features have fully or virtually disappeared from standard or colloquial German, this may well be attributed to the effectiveness of prescriptivism. On the other hand, if certain grammatical features and patterns which were and still are considered 'incorrect' are still widely used in today's colloquial German (and from there gradually sneak into the written standard), this clearly demonstrates the limited effect of prescriptive grammatical rules on language use in these cases. To put it more positively, this use may be regarded as an indicator of the hidden but far-reaching influence of non-standard norms of usage.

5. Effectiveness of prescriptive work

In this section, examples of grammatical features will be presented which have disappeared from the standard variety of German, but which have survived in substandard varieties.

5.1 Double negatives

Double negatives are well known in Germanic, but also in Romance languages and in Ancient Greek. It is one of the popular language myths that double negatives are illogical (Cheshire 1998). The belief that a double negative is wrong "is perhaps the most widely accepted of all popular convictions about 'correctness'" (Aitchison 2001: 12). In early German grammars, however, double negation was presented as a "legitimate, sometimes even positive [...] rule of German" (Langer 2001: 167). Influenced by rationalist thinking, late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Grammarians considered double negatives as ungrammatical and succeeded in creating the myth that such constructions are illogical (*ibid.*, 171f.). The author Heinrich August Schötensack (1856: 557), for example, claimed that New High German had adopted the "law" in Latin grammar that a double negative makes a positive, i. e. an affirmative statement. It seems ironic then, that West Germanic languages like English, Dutch and German have banned the double negative from their standard varieties, whereas it is fully integrated into Romance languages, which are somewhat closer to Latin.

According to standard textbooks, double negation had virtually vanished from written German by the beginning of the eighteenth century (Admoni 1990: 187). So why did nineteenth-century grammarians like Schötensack bother to pronounce a ban on double negatives when they were supposed to be non-existent? Most probably because they still existed and were still in frequent use. Wladimir Admoni, one of the leading experts on the historical syntax of German, provides us with a brief but revealing comment on double negatives in nineteenth-century German: “Im modal-affirmativen Bereich des Satzes kommt die doppelte Negation nur bei der Wiedergabe der gröberen Umgangssprache vor.” (‘In modal-affirmative contexts, double negation only occurs in the representation of crude colloquial language.’ *ibid.*, p. 225.) In that the use of double negatives in colloquial language does not seem to matter, we are confronted here with the elitist view that non-standard varieties (other than dialects) do not have a legitimate place in the history of language and language change (cf. Milroy 1999: 30f.). However, in such colloquial language and in certain substandard varieties of German – as in English (Cheshire 1998) and Dutch (Haegemann 2002) – double negatives never ceased to exist. It is noteworthy that even Schiller, Goethe and some nineteenth-century writers employed double negatives repeatedly in their works, as they seem to have appreciated the stylistic nuances that the use of double negatives can create (Paul 1920: 334). In informal nineteenth-century German letters, they were frequently used – though exclusively by writers with primary education only and, as figure 2 shows, particularly by writers from the south of Germany.

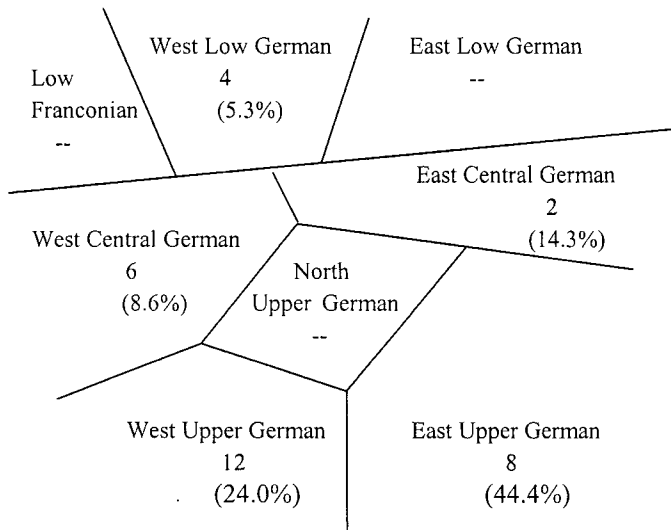


Figure 2: Number of 19th century letter writers using double negatives

In present-day German dialects and colloquial language, again chiefly in the south,⁵ double negatives are still widely used, whereas in standard German they only appear occasionally for specific stylistic effects, as in example (1) (*Keine Macht für Niemand*). Thus, the prescriptivists' work seems to have been successful in banishing this grammatical construction from the standard variety; it has, however, never caused double negatives to vanish from actual language use altogether.

5.2 Past participle without *ge*-prefix

The *ge*-prefix became a compulsory word-formation morpheme in written German no earlier than the eighteenth century (von Polenz 1994: 261). The only indigenous stem/root verb without *ge*-prefix is *werden* in verbal complexes like *ich bin bestohlen worden* ('I was robbed').

Other than that, only verbs with inseparable prefixes and verbs ending in *-ieren* in German (unlike Dutch!) are without *ge*-prefix.⁶ Up to the late eighteenth century, participles without the *ge*-prefix from frequently used verbs like *kommen*, *finden*, *gehen*, *essen*, *bringen*, etc. appear even in printed texts. Hoffmann (1988: 179) has shown that until the mid eighteenth century, grammarians merely proposed using the *ge*-prefix uniformly for indigenous verbs. The most influential grammarian of the late eighteenth century, Johann Christoph Adelung (1781: 274), however, declared forms without *ge*-prefix "pöbelhaft" and "widerwärtig" ('vulgar' and 'disgusting'). In line with Adelung's view, nineteenth-century grammars treated these forms as incorrect.

In nineteenth-century letters, once again an interesting regional distribution of such forms emerges: writers from the North and the South of Germany use forms without *ge*-prefix more frequently than writers from the Central German dialect areas. Forms without prefix in the North can be directly attributed to interference from West Low German dialects which do not have past participle prefixes at all. An illustrative example of the linguistic struggle for the correct form is the following excerpt from a letter by a writer from Westphalia (15):

5 A similar regional pattern appears in the Dutch language area: most of the double negative (or polynegative) dialects can be found in the south, in particular in the dialects of West Flanders (Haegemann 2002).

6 In Early New High German, even verbs in *-ieren* could have the *ge*-prefix. Albert Ölinger in his *Vnderricht der Hoch Teutschen Sprach* from 1574 writes that with these verbs as with verbs beginning with *g-/k* „augmentum additur vel omittitur [...] *Passieren/gepassiert* vel *passiert*, *Kommen/gekommen* vel *kommen*“ (cited in Hoffmann 1988: 178).