

Austrian Standard German Struggling between Language Change, Loyalty to Its Variants and Norms: A Study on Linguistic Identity of Austrian Teachers and Students

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Abstract : The German language is known to be one of the most varied and diverse languages in Europe. This variance in the standard language can be conceptualized using the pluricentric concept, which has been useful for describing the German language for more than three decades. Up to now, there have hardly been any well-founded studies of how Austrian teachers and pupils conceptualize the German language and how they view the varieties of German and especially Austrian German. The language attitudes and norms of German teachers are of particular interest in the normative, educational language-oriented school context. The teachers' attitudes are, in turn, formative for the attitudes of the students, especially since Austrian German is an important element in the construction of Austrian national identity. The project 'Austrian German as a Language of Instruction and Education' dealt, among other things, with the attitude of language laypeople (pupils, n = 1253) and language experts (teachers, n = 164) towards the Austrian standard variety. It also aimed to find out to what extent external factors such as regional origin, age, education, or media use to influence these attitudes. It was examined whether language change phenomena can be determined and to what extent language change is in conflict with loyalty to variants. The study also focused on what norms prevail among German teachers, how they deal with standard language variation from a normative point of view, and to what extent they correct exonym-oriented, as claimed in the literature. Methodologically, both quantitative (questionnaire survey) and qualitative methods were used (interviews with 21 teachers, 2 group discussions, and participatory observation of lessons in 7 school classes). The data were evaluated in terms of inference statistics and discourse analysis. This paper reports on the results of this project.

Keywords : Austrian German, language attitudes and linguistic identity, linguistic loyalty, teachers and students

Conference Title : ICACCL 2021 : International Conference on Applied, Computational and Contrastive Linguistics

Conference Location : New York, United States

Conference Dates : December 09-10, 2021