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The German Language and the Real World

*Sociolinguistic, Cultural, and Pragmatic Perspectives
on Contemporary German*

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5 Directions of Change in Contemporary German

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I INTRODUCTION

The German language is currently changing rapidly, perhaps more rapidly than at any other time in its history. Innumerable radio programmes and almost twenty television channels are available in almost every household and extensive use is made of them. Most people own several radios and at least one television set. The sales figures show that the publishing houses are in a state of crisis, while the figures for newspaper sales are also sinking. Listening comes before reading, and speech affects linguistic usage infinitely more than written texts. For centuries, however, standard norms were derived from the written language. Until recently, dictionaries basked in reflected glory by taking their corpus predominantly from literary texts, and illustrating it with passages by distinguished authors of the last two hundred years. There were admittedly a few selected quotations from some of the higher-quality newspapers, but this was merely paying lip service to modern developments, and colloquial language was taboo, even in its spoken form.

This situation has changed slightly, as is shown by newer editions of current monolingual dictionaries (such as the *Deutsches Universalwörterbuch* (1989), published by the Dudenverlag. But how can this fact be reconciled with the existence of a *Wörterbuch der deutschen Umgangssprache* (Dictionary of Colloquial German), boasting almost a thousand pages? This work contains the vocabulary which is used above all in oral communication and which is often at variance with what is considered 'good' German. We do not wish to give the impression that colloquial speech should be the primary yardstick for descriptions of current German usage. To describe current trends on this basis alone would mean rejecting substantial parts of the prevailing norms. We shall merely try to depict certain linguistic changes which

indicate trends away from accepted grammatical conventions, and which seem to us to be representative of the ways in which the language is changing.

In our discussion of trends in contemporary German, we shall deal with some of the topics which are normally described in grammars, but our examples will be drawn from observation of German as it is actually used. We do not claim to portray all the changes currently taking place in standard German, merely some of the most significant developments. We have already dealt with this subject, with different emphases, on several occasions (see Glück and Sauer 1985, 1987, 1990) and believe we can now distinguish between the accidental and the systematic in this respect. We shall not, therefore, document each individual example; references come from written texts (fiction and non-fiction), periodicals, newspapers, advertising brochures, etc., while examples drawn from spoken sources (radio and television) are indicated as such.

Our system is not set out in a way comparable to any particular grammar. Grammar writers may complain that what follows is not their concern, or that what is central for them has been omitted: in the space available here we have necessarily adopted a selective approach, and in these circumstances it is impossible to please everyone. Nevertheless, it would be gratifying if writers of future grammars found our discussion stimulating.

2 WORD-FORMATION PATTERNS

2.1 Nouns

Processes of truncating polysyllabic words in German are as productive today as they ever were. In most cases, this creates bisyllabic abbreviations in which the first syllable carries meaning while the second functions as a derivative element, indicating an emotional or gender-specific characteristic. The first syllable thus refers back to the first morpheme of the original word, without necessarily reproducing it identically. In this way, semantic references are more likely to be obscured than emphasized. Thus *der Ostdeutsche* (East German) mutates into *Ossi*, *der Westdeutsche* (West German) becomes *Wessi*, and *der Bundesbürger* (federal citizen) becomes *Bundi*. The use of these abbreviations is widespread and they are even to be found in the columns of serious newspapers. *Ossi* and *Wessi* appear in the 1991 Duden dictionary.

The description *Wossi* has only recently been coined, and is a blend of *Wessi* and *Ossi*, used to describe those people who come from the

West, but are not *Besserwessis* (a 'blend' of *Besserwisser*, know-all, and *Wessi*); rather, they concern themselves with the difficulties and problems of the East Germans, and are thus accepted by them. Other words following the same pattern include *Ziggi* (for *Zigarette*), and it even extends to proper names, such as the once popular *Gorbi* (for Gorbachov, the former Soviet leader) and *Ötzi* (for *Ötztaler*, the recently discovered mummified man from the Stone Age). Bisyllabic words can also be abbreviated in this fashion: for example, *Putzi* (for *Putzfrau*, cleaning-woman) or *Touri* (for *Tourist*).

This morphological model has, amongst other things, long been used to produce diminutive forms of forenames: for example, *Siegfried* becomes *Siggi*, *Gabriele* becomes *Gabi*. The *-i* morpheme thus expresses a sense of informality and familiarity, forming what Fleischer (1983: 201) calls 'expressiv-kosende Formen' (expressive, affectionate forms), that are consciously contrasted with the source form. This popular pastime of creating new diminutive forms continues unabated. For several years, for example, manufacturers have been calling the simple match *Zündis* (from *Zündholz*), and a lavish advertising campaign transformed heavily polluting juggernauts into harmless *Brummis* (from *brummen*, to rumble or drone). Peter Tomuscheit (1992: 24) talks of an 'infantilen Trend zum Kosewort' (infantile trend towards terms of affection), going as far as to accuse advertising psychologists of launching a nation-wide '*Verschnullerungskampagne*' (literally 'a campaign to flood the country with dummies/pacifiers (*Schnuller*)', here meaning to reduce everyday language to 'baby-talk').

However, the *-i* has no positive emotional connotations in abbreviations such as *Ami* (for *Amerikaner*), *Nazi* (for *Nationalsozialist*) or the recent *Stasi* (for *Staatssicherheitsdienst*, the secret security force of the former GDR). Bisyllabic abbreviations with specific sex indicators include *Fascho* (for *Faschist*) or *Macha* as the female equivalent to *Macho*. *Reala* and *Realo* are descriptions of female and male members respectively of the pragmatic wing of the German Green Party. Even comparative and superlative forms can be derived from them: for example *Realissima/o*. Monosyllabic abbreviations following the pattern *Prof* (from *Professor*) and *Kat* (from *Katalysator*, catalytic converter) are less common than those with the *-i* ending. A new word in this category is *Rep* (from *Republikaner*, a member of the right-wing Republican Party in Germany), which is now included in the *Duden*.

All of these abbreviations form their plurals, where necessary, with the suffix *-s*. The suffix *-e* is also common in the formation of feminine nouns which are derived principally from verbs. The bisyllabic words formed in this way are of a very informal, colloquial character. For instance, *Leihe* (from *leihen*, to lend) is the name of a car-hire

company; *Putze* is an alternative to *Putzi* (from *Putzfrau*, cleaning-woman); and *Denke* (from *denken*, to think) was used in a magazine interview by the head of the German rail service in the context 'die Denke muß sich ändern' (the thinking must change). Formations of this kind have long been a distinctive feature of the Berlin dialect in particular: *Sause* (from *sausen*, to charge, race) for a pub-crawl, *Plätte* (from *plätten*, to iron, press) instead of *Bügeleisen* (for iron), for example, have in turn influenced forms such as *Glotze* (from *glotzen*, to stare), a derogatory term for the television. They are often considered brash and vulgar.

A further type of abbreviation is the contraction of syllables, which has always been a popular way of creating company names, such as *Hertie*, a chain of department stores named after its founder Hermann Tietz. *Azubi* (from *Auszubildende/r*, trainee) has recently gained acceptance as an alternative term for *Lehrling* (apprentice), which is no longer used officially. As these syllable contractions often occur in terms used by state security agencies, they have uncomfortable associations for some people: for example, *Kripo* (for *Kriminalpolizei*, police), *Schupo* (for *Schutzpolizist*, policeman), *Gestapo* (for *Geheime Staatspolizei*, secret state police under National Socialism) or *Stasi* (see above). The term *stino* (from *stinknormal*, utterly/boringly ordinary), used by young people to describe the petit bourgeois, has equally negative connotations.

Formations ending in *-itis* also tend to have a predominantly negative aspect. In standard German the suffix is commonly used in connection with diseases (for example *Gastritis*, *Hepatitis*), and in medical terms indicates some form of inflammation. The words thus formed are often unique, but the model is very productive, as its judgemental undertones are widely understood. For instance, someone who has a manic craving to play the clarinet could be said to have *Clarinetitis*, whilst *Betonitis* (from *Beton*, concrete) is an apt description of the traffic minister's predilection for smothering the country in roads (and the development itself might be called *Autobahnisierung*). The *-isierung* suffix is used in a similar fashion to *-itis*, and also has negative associations. It is used to warn against those trends specified in the root of the word: for example 'Keine Verboutiquisierung unserer Wohnviertel' is how a local paper opposes the proliferation of boutiques in its area. The 'Europäisierung der nationalen Währungen' (Europeanization of national currencies) is also understood in this same negative light.

Even the common *-ismus* suffix, which originally had no negative connotations, is now used mostly in a denigratory fashion. The connotations attached to words such as *Bürokratismus* and *Militarismus* are

transferred to new constructions such as *Koblistmus*, analogous to Thatcherism, a policy of redistribution of wealth in favour of the already wealthy. On the other hand, *Genscherismus* is seen as positive, as the West German foreign secretary from 1974 to 1992 was very popular; but then hardly anyone can really explain what Genscherism actually entails.

Some morphemes are intended to create the opposite effect, especially those which are used increasingly in advertising and politics. The pseudo-prefixes *Euro-*, *Öko-*, and *Bio-* invite approval, as do the suffixes *-team*, *-partner*, and *-mat* and those magic words which can be used in either position: *Service*, *City*, and *System*. They may also be combined in various ways: for example *Europartner*, *Ökosystem*, and *Service-Team*. These forms generally have virtually no denotative meaning, but have connotations ranging from chic to extremely positive. *Biosocken* and *Ökoküchen* (eco-kitchens) are the glorious fetishes of the modern German lifestyle, *Cityhopper* and *Intercitys* its indispensable components. The cashpoint is called a *Bancomat* and a condom-machine is the *Condomat* (but, as the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* reported, the products themselves cannot be called *McCondoms*, as McDonalds has banned this particular neologism).

2.2 Adjectives

The creation of new adjectives, using both straightforward compounding and certain derivative processes (such as using affixes, or 'free' morphemes used as affixes), is very popular in contemporary German. The root is either an adjective or a participle, and the modifier may be an adjective, a verb, a noun, or an abbreviation. This type of formation has a long history, and already occurred in Gothic: for example *gastigops* (hospitable). Examples of this type of compounding, which again occur frequently in advertising, are:

Adjective	+ Adjective	leichtflockig, vollschmeckend (light and fluffy, rich-tasting)
Verb	+ Adjective	pflegeleicht, knitterfrei (easy-care, crease-resistant)
Noun	+ Adjective	hautverträglich, babyzart (easy on the skin, baby-soft)
Abbreviation	+ Adjective	pH-neutral, PVC-beschichtet (pH-neutral, PVC-coated)

Compounds whose first element reinforces and intensifies the second are particularly common: for example *supergut*, *megagut*, and *spitzentoll*

(incredibly good). These intensifiers are also found as free morphemes in colloquial speech:

Das finde ich mega/super/spitze
(I think that's mega/fantastic/brilliant)

Some of the root words in this category occur so often that they almost assume the character of derivative suffixes (Römer 1980: 47). This group includes examples such as *-fertig* (-ready), *-frisch* (-fresh), and *-sicher* (-proof).

As far as adjectival derivatives are concerned, the productivity of individual suffixes is very variable. Thus the *-sam* suffix has gone entirely out of fashion, with words like *achtsam* (attentive, careful) and *ehrsam* (respectable, honourable) sounding archaic to many ears. The *-bar* suffix, however, although not far removed semantically from *-sam*, is enjoying a boom because it can be used with almost every transitive verb. It is even used nonsensically for the sake of effect: for example, a soft-drinks firm advertised its unbreakable plastic bottle as *unkaputtbar* (unbustable). Two other suffixes, *-haft* and *-lich*, are facing strong competition from *-mäßig*, with well-known forms such as *schulmeisterhaft* (schoolmasterly) and *amtlich* (official) being replaced, particularly in spoken German, by new forms. For example, one hears 'amtsmäßig brauch' ich noch einen Stempel' (officially I still need a stamp) or 'sei nicht so schülermäßig' (don't be such a schoolkid). Another common feature of the spoken language is the positioning of adverbs formed with *-mäßig* at the end of a clause, normally together with the particle *so*, in a sense that is similar to (American) English forms with *-wise*:

Hamburg ist prima, so stadtmäßig
(Hamburg is great, as towns go)

Die Leute müssen noch 'ne Menge lernen, so abfallmäßig
(People still have a lot to learn, rubbish-wise)

Ich hab' viel zu tun, (so) unimäßig
(I've got a lot to do, university-wise)

This construction may also be used at the beginning of clauses:

Urlaubsmäßig hab' ich Bock auf England
(I quite fancy England for a holiday)

Essensmäßig gibt's bei Toni die beste Pizza
(Foodwise, the best pizzas are at Toni's)

The rampant advance of *-mäßig* is viewed negatively by many Germans, but it is none the less not entirely confined to youth or particularly informal usages.

The *-ig* suffix is one of the most productive adjective suffixes of modern German (Fleischer 1983: 259). The words formed with it are informal and modern-sounding, with examples such as *poppig* (trendy), *fetzig* (mind-blowing), and *flippig* (cool), and are often used in advertising as expressive neologisms: examples are *schokoschmackig* (chocolatey), *kartoffelig* (potatoey), and *pfandig* (used for a returnable bottle, the word is reminiscent of *pfundig*, a once popular word for 'great, fantastic'). Finally, there is a large group which may be regarded as examples of neutral denominalization, for example:

trendige Blusen (trendy blouses)
formatiger Mann (a man of stature)

Formations of this sort usually replace expressions using prepositions or relative clauses, showing the tendency towards abbreviation. So, instead of being sold *zum alten Preis* (at the old price) before a price rise, cigarettes are offered as *altpreisig*, and the characteristics of punks, freaks, and hooligans are embodied in the adjectives *punkig*, *freakig*, and *hoolig*.

2.3. Verbs

The creation of new verbs is less common than that of nouns. It occurs overwhelmingly in attempts to integrate words of English origin into German, and not only those which are derived from nouns. Considerable effort may be expended in making these English verbs manageable within the German syntactic system. They follow the same conjugation pattern as weak verbs, and the orthographical form of the English stem is retained. The degree to which these forms are adapted to the German system can be measured by such features as the form of prefixes and participles or personal/temporal inflections.

The model is not new (forms such as *du hast gejazzt* have appeared in dictionaries since the war), but the number of these verb forms has grown dramatically in recent years: *coachen*, *talken*, *leasen*, *joggen*, and *scannen*, for instance, are frequently used and fully conjugable. The 'importation' of some forms may lead to complications, as for example in the case of English verb forms ending in *-le*, which may appear to be similar to the German verbal infix *-el-* (for example *lächeln*, to smile): this sometimes results in duplicate forms such as *recyclen* and *recyceln*, and may introduce uncertainties of inflexion, as in the participles *recycled*, *recycelt*, and *gērecycelt*. In other examples, however, the English structure has disappeared, and the word is fully adapted to the German paradigm, as in *geleast*, *gescannt*, and *gebootet*.

The extent to which words can be integrated appears to depend on

how alien the original English orthography is to German. For example, *recyclen* and *designen* are more foreign-looking than *joggen* or *pushen*. *Hübsch designed* (nicely designed) is more common than *hübsch designt*; we have no attested examples of *hübsch gedesignt* or *heftig pushed* (violently pushed): *gepusht* would be normal for the latter. The *Deutsches Universalwörterbuch* (1989) records a Germanized form *puschen* in the sense of 'to drive, set in motion', but it is used less often than the competing form. Other duplications include *surfen/sörfen* and *anturnen/antörnen* (to turn on in the sense of 'their music really turns me on').

Forming verbs by adding prefixes to English root forms always follows the German pattern: for example *anpowern* (to warm up, get going — as of an audience), *aufstylen* (to make more chic), *ausflippen* (to freak out), *reinmoven* (to visit, check out), and *vertrusten* (to form into a trust). English progressive forms ending in *-ing* replace the nominalized form of the German infinitive with some verbs, for example *Recycling*, *Relaxing*, *Sharing*, and *Sponsoring*. In some cases, newly formed verbs derived from English replace older verbs (as in *sponsern* instead of *sponsieren*), or provide some difference in meaning from the extant form, for example *promovieren* (to promote, now only used in the sense of achieving a doctorate) and *promoten* (to promote in the sense of 'advertise'). *Faksimilieren* has the same meaning as *faxen* (to make a facsimile), which is now used as an abbreviation of *telefaxen* (to fax) instead of the Germanized *fernkopieren*.

3 THE MORPHOLOGY OF NOUNS

3.1 Genitive

The genitive is the case used to indicate dependent relationships within complex nominal expressions, often with possessive or partitive meaning. In some instances the genitive is the object case, that is, verbs or adjectives govern the genitive, for example 'Bernd bedarf eines Helfers' (Bernd needs a helper), 'Eva erinnert sich des Vorfalls' (Eva remembers the incident), 'Annette ist des Lateinischen kundig' (Annette has a good knowledge of Latin), 'Elisabeth war des Lobes voll' (Elizabeth was full of praise). The genitive also indicates adverbial and predicative relationships, for example 'erhobenen Hauptes' (with one's head raised), 'eines schönen Tages' (one fine day), or 'er ist des Todes' (he is doomed). Some prepositions govern the genitive, for example *wegen* (because of), *trotz* (in spite of), *dank* (thanks to). The 'subject genitive' (that is, the expression of a subject in the genitive) is very rare, although it is occasionally demanded by certain idioms

or phrasal verbs, as in 'Der Worte sind genug gewechselt' (Enough words have been exchanged).

Peter Braun points out a sociolinguistic peculiarity of the genitive, namely its close relationship with the written language. For that reason 'sind Volkssprache und Mundarten zu keiner Zeit ein Feld für Genitivobjekte gewesen' (everyday speech and dialects have never been an area for genitive objects) (Braun 1987: 111). From that it is easy to conclude that the genitive is not the most popular feature of contemporary German, because the strict writing-based norms of the standard language from the first half of the twentieth century are no longer fully applicable to today's colloquial language.

The decline of the genitive is lamented by the representatives of these strict norms. Ludwig Reiners, the author of several widely distributed works on 'good style' and self-appointed 'specialist in medical diagnoses of the German language' (Braun 1987: 143), believes the genitive is actually dying out (Reiners 1949: 213). This is certainly not the case. The object genitive is undoubtedly in decline, but this can be explained mainly by the fact that the verbs concerned, such as *jemandes harren* (to await someone) and *sich jemandes schämen* (to be ashamed of someone), are obsolescent. In other cases, the genitive forms compete with prepositional objects:

sich jemandes erinnern/sich erinnern an jemanden
(to remember someone)

The same applies to some adjectives which are governed by the genitive:

einer Sache begierig/begierig nach
(eager for something)
einer Sache voll/voll von
(full of something)

Accumulations of genitive attributes in noun groups remain common, particularly in administrative, legal, and academic texts, but expressions like 'im Zuge der Folgen dieser Zeit des Umbruchs . . .' (in the course of the consequences of this period of radical change . . .) are seen as unwieldy and unattractive.

In both written and spoken language, the possessive genitive (in the form of the so-called Saxon genitive) is used in the initial position: for example, 'Hannovers Kassen sind leer' (Hanover's coffers are empty). In second position the use of the possessive genitive alternates with prepositional expressions using *von*: for example, 'Die Kassen Hannovers sind leer'/'die Kassen von Hannover sind leer'; however, the pre-positioned dative/genitive 'der Stadt ihre Kassen sind leer'

would be considered decidedly colloquial or dialectal (see Heringer *et al.* 1980: 66 ff.).

The prepositions *wegen* and *trotz*, which can take either the genitive or the dative, are further evidence that the genitive is not disappearing altogether. Which case is used depends on the textual or pragmatic context. With *trotz* the genitive has become the rule (see Schröder 1986: 189), although it originally took the dative. *Wegen*, however, is now used with genitive only in formal texts, such as seminar papers, radio news reports, or official announcements. A sentence like 'wegen eines Bieres brauchen wir uns doch nicht zu streiten' (let's not argue over a beer) is clearly dysfunctional: indeed, if you were to utter it in the pub it might actually cause an argument!

One last observation about the genitive's orthographical realizations: until recently, if she opened a fast-food shop, Gabi would have been quite happy calling it *Gabis Imbiß*. Now it would be *Gabi's Imbiß*. In the new *Länder* in particular, the apostrophe is seen as proof of a modern lifestyle: out of forty newly registered businesses in eastern Germany in 1990, all but two clearly felt it was *de rigueur*. Furthermore, it seems that the adoption of the apostrophe following the *-s*, also taken from English, is even more stylish: for example, *Abramskis' Farbenshop* or *Berlins' nettester Biergarten*. These trends thus run counter to current English practice, where the possessive apostrophe is rapidly disappearing in this context.

3.2 Accusative

The accusative is the case of the direct object, the accusative object. It is the basis for classifying verbs as transitive or intransitive. The accusative object in active sentences corresponds to the subject in passive sentences, as long as the verb concerned allows a passive construction: for example 'Maya begrüßt Jenny' (Maya greets Jenny) corresponds to the passive construction 'Jenny wird von Maya begrüßt' (Jenny is greeted by Maya), but 'Bernd bekommt einen Brief' (Bernd receives a letter) cannot become '*Ein Brief wird von Bernd bekommen': Many verbs and prepositions govern the accusative, sometimes even two accusatives: thus 'Das Spiel in Rostock kostete die Eintracht 1992 die Meisterschaft' (the game in Rostock cost Eintracht the championship in 1992); or in addition to another case, for example the dative (*bieten*, to offer someone something), the genitive (*berauben*, to rob someone of something), or various prepositional cases. In some instances, adjectives used predicatively require the object to be in the accusative: for example 'er ist solche Schwierigkeiten gewohnt' (he's used to such difficulties).

In some contexts, the accusative object reflects or complements the meaning of the verb: for example 'sie kämpfte einen schweren Kampf' (she fought a hard fight). The accusative can also be used as the adverbial case: 'er arbeitete die ganze Nacht' (he worked all night long), or 'das kostet 100 Mark' (that costs 100 Marks). With some verbs, the accusative still competes with the dative object, and duplicate forms are common: for example 'es ekelt mir/mich vor dem Geruch' (the smell of it disgusts me). However, with several verbs, the accusative has become so dominant that the dative has been displaced, and the accusative is now used exclusively: thus 'mich friert/freut/hungert' (I'm freezing/pleased/hungry). In a few instances, the accusative also competes with other forms: 'ich erinnere das Buch' instead of 'ich erinnere mich des Buches' or 'ich erinnere mich an das Buch' (I remember the book).

The accusative is the case least affected by the trend for grammatical features to lose their distinctive form, and it is generally correctly marked. With some indefinite pronouns, it is becoming increasingly common for the ending to be omitted in the accusative: for example 'Der Oberst kennt niemand(en)/jemand(en)' (the colonel knows no one/someone). There are some uncertainties in agreement between elements, with either the marking disappearing in the second marked element, for example

einen stark illustrierter Bericht erhalten unsere Kunden
(our customers will receive a well-illustrated report)

or false agreement being established between the two, as in this headline from the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*:

Den Künstler braucht heute niemanden
No one needs an artist nowadays)

However, it is worth pointing out that in colloquial speech certain articles (in the sense of the classification in Helbig and Buscha 1989) may be used without an ending: 'hast du mal ein Groschen?' (have you got a penny?), 'Kein Schutt abladen' (no tipping), and 'gib mir mal mein Mantel' (give me my coat, will you?). This practice is sufficiently widespread and systematic not to be dismissed as 'careless pronunciation'.

3.3 Dative

The dative case marks indirect objects (dative objects). Many verbs and prepositions govern an obligatory (*begegnen*, *vertrauen*) or an optional object in the dative (*helfen*, *versprechen*), often in addition to the

accusative (*bieten*, *rauben*) and various prepositional objects. In some cases adjectives used predicatively require the dative as the object case: for example 'das sieht ihm ähnlich' (that's just like him) or 'die Dame ist mir nicht bekannt' (I don't know the lady, literally 'the lady is not known to me').

Like the accusative, the dative has no specific case-meaning. There are none the less various special functions, such as the possessive dative, which expresses belonging, scope, or possession: thus 'dem Opa fallen die Zähne aus' (Grandpa's teeth are falling out), 'ihm ist der Vater gestorben' (his father has died), 'ihnen wurde das dritte Kind geboren' (their third child was born); and the *Trägerdativ* (dative objects used in descriptions concerned with the wearing of some form of clothing): for example 'der Tante rutschen die Strümpfe' (auntie's stockings are slipping). The dative also competes with prepositional objects to express the beneficiary of certain actions: 'er holt dem Vater ein Bier' (he fetches his father a beer) instead of 'er holt ein Bier für den Vater'. Optional elements that indicate, for example, the addressee of the action expressed by the verb are represented by the so-called free dative: for example 'der Einserkandidat trägt seinem Professor die Tasche' (the star pupil carries his teacher's case) or 'der Kellner schüttet dem Gast die Suppe auf die Hose' (the waiter spills soup on the customer's trousers).

The decline of the dative *-e* ending, which began in the early nineteenth century, is now almost complete. This ending occurred very often with masculine or neuter nouns and is historically the case marker of the so-called strong declension of these two genders. The *-e* still occurred in polysyllabic words in the middle of the nineteenth century: for example *vor Gerichte* (in/before the court), *im Zusammenhange mit* (in connection with), *beim Abschiede* (on departure). However, although it no longer appears in these contexts, it is sometimes still used with monosyllabic words, mainly for stylistic reasons: thus 'meinem Kinde soll es besser gehen' (my child is said to be getting better). On the whole, though, the use of the dative *-e* is limited to certain fixed expressions, where it either always occurs (as in *im Falle eines Falles*, 'if it comes to it'; or *zu Hause*, 'at home') or occurs more frequently than the form without the ending (as in *im weitesten Sinn(e) des Wortes*, 'in the broadest sense of the word'; or *zum Wohl(e)*, 'cheers').

Like the genitive object, the dative object faces competition from prepositional objects: for example *jemandem schreiben* versus *an jemanden schreiben* (to write to someone). This tendency is sometimes reinforced when the verb itself is obsolescent: for example *jemandem entfliehen* becomes *vor jemandem (ent)fliehen* (to run away from someone). However, the number of verbs which take an obligatory dative

object is larger and more stable than those which require the genitive object. Peter Braun (1987: 113) lists some 220 verbs which either take a dative object exclusively or can take one in addition to an accusative or prepositional object: for example 'Die Maid begegnet dem Wolf. Der Wolf bietet dem Mädchen seine Freundschaft an. Rotkäppchen verhilft dem Wolf zu einer Mahlzeit' (The girl meets the wolf. The wolf offers her his friendship. Little Red Riding Hood helps him to a meal). The possessive dative ('dem Wolf seine Freundin', the wolf's friend) is often used in colloquial speech, but according to Jung (1984: 271) should be avoided in the written language.

3.4 Plurals

The formation of plurals is the 'poor relation' of grammars and guide-books on style (see Glück and Sauer 1990: 60 ff.). Admittedly, the former do cover the regular patterns of plural formation of nouns as well as some doublets, such as *der Strauß* > *die Strauße* (ostriches)/*Sträuße* (bunches). Both, however, ignore the uncertainties and violations of the normal forms, which are so extensive that they even have an impact on the Duden orthographical dictionary, which has the headword *Visa* (the plural of *Visum*). This suggests that as a result of English influence the form *Visa* has actually become established in popular usage as a singular, and there are many other examples of this: for example 'du mußt das Errata korrigieren' (you must correct the error; *Errata* is in fact the plural form of *Erratum*), 'die Rarissima ist...' (the extremely rare item is...; again, *Rarissima* is actually the plural form of *Rarissimum*). Confusion between the plural *-a* suffix of Latin neuter nouns with the *-a* suffix of the Latin feminine singular is probably responsible for the incorrect gender assignment in these examples. The plural of these incorrectly constructed words is formed by adding an *-s* (thus *die Visas*).

With other loanwords there are many duplicate forms to be found where the derivative in the source language does not correspond to the German paradigm. In this case, German falls back on more familiar endings:

Atlas	Atlanten/Atlasse
Kaktus	Kakteen/Kaktusse

The Graeco-Roman plural in these and the following examples is seen by some people as an indication of superior education:

Thema	Themata/Themen
Komma	Kommata/Kommas

However, this ignores the functional aspect: the *-ta* forms are correct in technical registers, but they seem somewhat out of place in everyday texts. None the less, forms such as *die Genusse und Modusse des Deutschen* (the genders and moods of the German language) are scarcely more acceptable, despite being created by analogy to other words, than are hypercorrections (*Boni* instead of *Bonusse*). Uncertainties that occur, for example, with 'exotic forms' such as Italian food and drink, which are now no longer confined to Italian restaurants, are covered by the trusty *-s* plural: even the Duden records *Pizzas*, *Espressos*, and *Cappuccinos*. Indeed, Duden editors have become increasingly liberal with the use of these *-s* plurals in recent years (Glück and Sauer 1990: 62). Some South Germans complain about the growing popularity of this form, seen as 'North German', but the process cannot be stopped. The plural *-s* is the rule with the many abbreviated words in contemporary German: for example *Promis/Prominente* (VIPs), *Nudos/Nudisten*, *Profs/Professoren* all follow the old paradigms established by words like *Pullis/Pullover*, *Autos/Automobile*, and *Loks/Lokomotiven*. The normally unmarked plurals of the many new words ending in *-er* (such as *Computer*, *Composer*, and *Scanner*) are sometimes given the *-s* ending, again because of influence from English.

Those plural forms which we have elsewhere ascribed to a *Bewegungssprache* (difficult to translate as it is intentionally ambiguous, referring both to 'the movement' (of the left) and to 'the emotions'; Glück and Sauer 1990: 64) are still popular: for example 'ich habe Ängste' (literally, 'I have anxieties'; the normal expression using the singular 'ich habe Angst' means 'I am afraid'), 'Boris muß mentale Widerstände überwinden' (Boris has to overcome mental obstacles, literally 'resistances'). New examples of this include: 'Literatur ist ein Ensemble vergangener Zukünfte' (literature is an ensemble of past futures) and 'X—ein Paradies von Einkaufswelten' (X—a paradise of shopping worlds).

4 COMPARISON OF ADJECTIVES

Comparative forms of adjectives are changing visibly, with the so-called regular form of the comparative and superlative ending in *-er* and *-st* respectively being applied more generally. In this way semantically nonsensical comparatives and superlatives are created (e.g. *das weißeste Weiß*, the whitest white), words that in themselves express a superlative are made 'even more superlative' (e.g. *die optimalste Lösung*, the most optimal solution), and English adjectives become declinable (e.g. *der softere John Major*). Other adjectives previously classified as

indeclinable may also now be declined and have comparative forms (e.g. *der superste Held*, the most super hero). Conversely, comparatives are sometimes formed for the sake of emphasis by using the particle *mehr*: thus *mehr leicht als andere* (lighter than others) instead of *leichter als andere*. As this example shows, some neologisms and adjectives derived from English follow this pattern even where the English itself would use an *-er* comparative.

Other recent trends include the use of pseudo-prefixes to give adjectives a superlative colouring: *megagut*, *superbillig*, *spitzentoll* (mega good, super cheap, incredibly fantastic); and the use of adverbs as 'comparative particles' to indicate degrees of intensity: *total gut*, *echt gut* (really good), *durchaus erfreulich* (entirely gratifying). The pattern itself is old (cf. *recht*, *sehr*), but the number of comparative particles is increasing.

5 SYNTAX

There are three positions for the finite verb in German sentences. The possible sentence patterns depend to a large extent on the position of the finite verb, and its displacement may alter the mode of the sentence, as in:

'Peter lernt Englisch'/'Lernt Peter Englisch?'
(Peter is learning English/Is Peter learning English?)

where the inversion creates a question, or it may lead to constructions which without hesitation would be deemed totally incorrect by German speakers: for example *'Peter Englisch lernt'. The finite verb can only appear in the first or second position in most main or dependent clauses. An exception is the subordinate clause introduced by certain conjunctions, where the finite verb moves to the end.

The verb occurs most commonly in second position, as in 'normal' main clauses, in yes/no questions requiring confirmation (e.g. 'Peter lernt doch Englisch?', Peter's learning English, isn't he?), in complementary questions ('Was lernt Peter?', what is Peter learning?), and in subordinate clauses which are not introduced by a conjunction and function either as a subject or as an object ('Ich glaube, Peter lernt Englisch', I think Peter is learning English). The finite verb occurs in first position in all other yes/no questions, imperatives, postpositional main clauses, optative clauses not introduced by a conjunction (e.g. 'Lernte Peter doch Englisch!', if only Peter learned English!; the particle *doch* is obligatory here), and in conditional or concessive clauses not introduced by a conjunction ('Lernt Peter Englisch, darf

er nach Neuseeland fahren', if Peter learns English, he can go to New Zealand).

In all the above cases the position of the verb is strictly adhered to. The final position of the finite verb in a subordinate clause introduced by a conjunction is also rigidly adhered to in standard written German. However, for many years now there have been signs that this practice is changing. In some subordinate clauses introduced by a conjunction the finite verb appears in the same place as it would in a main clause, that is, in the second position: 'Peter hat keine Zeit, weil er *lernt* Englisch' (Peter has no time because he's learning English). This change has spread throughout the spoken language, and is now heard increasingly even in situations where the standard language might be expected, such as in radio and television broadcasts. It occurs mainly after the conjunction *weil*, but can also be observed after *obwohl* (although) and *während* (while). Recently, this change in verb position has also begun to affect other conjunctions, and the verb may now occasionally be found in the second position after *falls* (in case), *ob* (whether), *sobald* (as soon as), and *wenn* (when, if).

Actual examples of this subordinate clause pattern in print are largely restricted to the reproduction of speech, especially in advertisements. A detailed explanation of this phenomenon may be found in Ulrike Gaumann's study 'Weil die machen jetzt bald zu' (1983). Her comment that both possibilities—finite verb in second or final position in the subordinate clause—were possible until the sixteenth century does not entirely stand up under close scrutiny. An examination of three sixteenth-century texts (*Historia von D. Johan Fausten* of 1587, the *Lalebuch* of 1597, and the *Fortunatus* of 1509) shows that clauses using *weil* occur only very rarely anyway, and that in subordinate clauses introduced by a conjunction the traditional final position of the finite verb is kept to throughout. Only Hans Sachs uses the conjunction *weil* with a causal meaning. Thus in *Ein Kampfgespräch* (1532) both 'weil Ihr Euch bübisch stellt' and 'weil Ihr seid bübisch' appear. In the latter instance the position of the verb may be determined by the demands of metre, but other examples occur in Hans Sachs.

Peter Eisenberg (1989) treats these 'incorrect' *weil* clauses as a major problem for any attempt to establish fixed linguistic norms, stressing the discrepancy between the concept of a norm and structural descriptions of actual utterances. His explanation that the speaker uses *weil* 'dann, wenn er eine Begründung eher zögerlich vorbringt oder sie gar nicht erst sucht, so daß nach *weil* leicht eine Pause entsteht' (when he expresses a reason only tentatively or is not even looking for one, so that it is quite likely that a pause will follow) is only plausible at first sight. This argument cannot be extended to the other conjunctions

mentioned above, and must therefore be modified. Speakers tend to introduce a pause if they are about to begin a complex subordinate clause construction in which they wish to express something which is not closely related to the content of the main clause. However, there remains the question of why this variation in the position of the verb has not occurred after conjunctions such as *bevor* (before), *nachdem* (after), and *soweit* (as far as). Other grammars either do not deal with this change (Duden, Erben, Helbig-Buscha) or simply dismiss it as incorrect (Engel 1988: 730). Should grammarians not instead acknowledge that different constructions exist in written and spoken German, and accept their use in appropriate contexts? (For a detailed discussion of *weil* clauses in functional and pragmatic terms, see Günthner 1993 and Schlobinski 1992: 315–44.)

Violations of the norm will always occur as long as the standard form of the language is based on the written language. The sentence unit so beloved of grammars is, whatever the descriptive model may be, still a structure that primarily applies only to the written language. Spoken forms are characterized by what the grammarians term anacoluthon or ellipsis. The 'sins' of those who use the language horrify prescriptive grammarians, whose maxim is 'speak as we write'. We prefer to take Fritz Mauthner's view:

Man sollte nie vergessen, daß die Sprache nicht der Grammatiker wegen da ist. Das scheinen aber die Grammatiker zu glauben, trotzdem nicht einmal die bescheidene Umkehrung berechtigt wäre. (1913: 208)

(We should never forget that language is not there for the grammarians. They, however, seem to think that it is, despite the fact that not even the converse would be entirely justified.)

Mauthner's *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache* (Contributions to a Critique of Language) offers a wealth of stimuli to the non-normative but nevertheless judgemental writers of more modern grammars. As Mauthner (1913: 207) also says: 'Es ist gar nicht auszudenken, wie langweilig eine vollständige Sprache nach dem Herzen der Grammatiker wäre' (It is almost inconceivable how boring a complete language designed to suit the grammarians would be). He spells out what the grammarians think

wenn ich in der Kneipe auf mein Glas klopfe, anstatt zu sagen 'Ein Bier'. Sage ich aber ausdrücklich 'Ein Bier', so nennt das der Grammatiker wirklich eine Ellipse. (1913: 207)

(if I knock on my glass in the pub, instead of saying 'a beer'. If I actually explicitly ask for 'a beer', then the grammarians would say that really is an ellipsis.)

How his conception of order can be fulfilled can be gleaned from the rest of Mauthner's treatise. The fundamental lesson is that if you are really thirsty, you must recognize the difference between pragmatic and grammatical utterances.

6 CONCLUSIONS

We would like to conclude our exposition of the changing grammatical norms in contemporary German with a point which may be generalized as 'the influence of English'. There are two distinct strands to this, one of which is based more on non-linguistic reasons (gender-marking), while the other is more an internal linguistic matter (borrowing or adaptation). Both are hardly dealt with in current grammars as they are considered marginal to the subjects with which such works are concerned.

We have dealt at length with gender-marking in 'Welfengarten EINS' (1990). The issue here is the problem of how to indicate natural and grammatical gender. There is considerable popular demand for some consistency between these two disparate entities. This trend started in the USA and reached Germany several years ago (see also the chapters by Sauer and Glück and by Hellinger in this volume). The practical consequences have been most obvious in the designation of human nouns, where the unmarked form, indicating both men and women, is disappearing in many fields. Until recently, *der Grammatiker* was used generically for both female and male authors of grammars. If this chapter were written in German, we would in fact use this form intentionally, as none of the grammars we have mentioned had a female editor. However, even if there had been authors of both sexes, we would not have chosen the popular form *VerfasserInnen*. The use of this economical device (using the feminine plural form but with a capital I at the beginning of the suffix to mark it as a special form) may be convenient in writing, but in the spoken language it obviously has to be dissolved into *Verfasserinnen und Verfasser*. The bakery which advertises for a 'nette Verkäuferin für unser Team' (nice sales assistant – the form is marked as feminine – for our team) does not want to employ a male assistant and can thus omit the capital 'I'. Even if a job is not advertised gender-specifically, companies rarely choose to use the form with the capital 'I', usually preferring to use forms with parentheses or a stroke:

Wir suchen ein(e) Ingenieur(in)
Wir suchen ein/e Ingenieur/in
(We are looking for an engineer)

However, in both of these alternatives the masculine form of the article is in the wrong case: it should be *einen*, but the only way to incorporate the correct form (other than by using the passive) would be to use a more long-winded formulation such as:

Wir suchen eine/einen Ingenieurin/Ingenieur

None of these versions is particularly easy to read, and all of these solutions to the problem of explicit reference become rather unwieldy in longer texts, whether the nouns themselves are repeated or they are replaced by pronouns: for example 'Ihr/ihm wird ... geboten' (she/he will be offered ...), 'der Nachweis ihres/seines Abschlusses' (evidence of her/his qualifications).

The introduction of the neuter form as a solution to this problem (for example *das Student* as a means of combining *die Studentin* (fem.) and *der Student* (masc.) in one form) has found little favour outside the works of feminist authors (see especially Pusch 1984: 46–68). The baker round the corner persists obstinately with the masculine noun *der Lehrling* (apprentice) even if the person concerned is actually female. Universities and left-wing/Green ministers prefer, even in official documents, to use clearly unmarked terms deriving from participles such as *die Studierenden/Lehrenden/Gelehrten* (students/teachers/scholars). Official forms often have two alternatives, of which the one that does not apply is to be crossed out, as in English with Mr/Mrs/Ms.

This desire to make gender-marking explicit is significantly affected by social and age factors. Older graduates tend to do so consistently, whilst people in 'practical' occupations tend to show as little interest in the issue as 20-year olds. The same is true of *frau*, the 'feminine alternative' to the indefinite pronoun *man* (one); the alternation between *man* and *frau* is nowadays more likely to be found in advertisements for large banks than in young students' seminar papers.

These students are much more inclined to colour their language by borrowing or adapting words and patterns from English. English word formation patterns and inflectional forms derived from English, as described above (especially in Section 2) are found most frequently in the language of younger people: for example 'Welche sweet mouse kann Basic von Unix unterscheiden?' (which sweet mouse can distinguish between Basic and Unix?) asked a 'Lonely Heart (18)' in a personal column, and 'genug gesingelt' (single for long enough) appeared on the same page.

Technical terminology is particularly affected by the use of loan words. Advertising copy-writers, who seem to shrink from hardly any

verbal barbarisms, are immensely influential and have produced a multitude of English, pseudo-English, and hybrid descriptions of consumer goods. Many women wear *bodies*, *leggings*, *leisure-shirts*, and *french knickers* in *Trendcolors*, many cyclists have become *Mountainbike-Piloten*, riding a *Checker Pig* or a *Mountain-Goat* with *Upside-down-Teleskopgabeln* and *Aerospace Rahmendämpfung* and wearing an *Airtech Radhelm* on their heads (these cycling terms are taken from the *Streiflicht* column of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* of 11 June 1991). Electrical shops advertise *CD-Players*, *Tuner*, *Hifi-Midi-Systeme*, *Super-VHS-Video-Movies*, and *Portable-Komponenten-Systeme*. Occasionally, daily newspapers even publish glossaries to help their readers understand editorial articles; the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, for example, compiled a vocabulary for *Terminmarktgeschäfte* (26 January 1990), so that one could find out what expressions such as *Arbitrage*, *at the market*, *at the money*, *in the money*, *out of the money*, *Basistitel*, *call*, *future*, *hedge*, *margin*, *Optionsfrist*, *put*, *switching*, *Volatilität*, and *Zeitwert* meant in this context.

These latter phenomena will inevitably have an effect on grammatical norms. And apart from individual matters of personal judgement, these norms are changeable. Mauthner realized eighty years ago:

daß die Worte oder Sprachbewegung sich zwar vom Menschen auf Menschen übertragen, nicht durch Fortpflanzung, sondern durch Nachahmung, und daß eine konservative Tendenz vorhanden ist, daß jedoch neben dieser Tatsache . . . das Anpassungsvermögen der Sprachen, das heißt die Willkür des Menschen, seine Bewegungen zu ändern, unbegrenzt ist. (Mauthner 1912: 113)

(that words or linguistic changes are passed on from person to person not by reproduction but rather by imitation, and that there is a tendency to be conservative, but that despite this fact . . . the adaptability of languages, that is, the arbitrary tendency of human beings to change their habits, is unlimited.)

Perhaps it is only the grammars that still have to change?

Further Reading

- Braun (1987)
- Eisenberg (1989)
- Engel (1988)
- Glück and Sauer (1990)
- Keller (1990)
- Mauthner (1913)

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