

# Austrian German in Teaching the German Language

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**Abstract-** The German language and German speaking countries are the center of attention of all teachers of the German language worldwide. Teachers of the German language master the German language in the course of their studies and then they teach it to their students or adult learners. In the process of preparing and giving their lectures they come across a lot of issues and, consequently, they do their utmost to handle them. Understandably, the main reason why both students and adult learners try to master the German language is to be able to communicate effectively with native speakers of the German language in their own country or in the German speaking countries. Bearing in mind the fact that approximately 100 million people speak German, it is not difficult to assume that there are many diverse dialects of the German language. However, this fact is not too alarming as the same is the case with many other languages in the world. What is relevant for the German language are the variants of the German language alongside with terms such as: language community, nation, the German language as an official language, dialect regions, pluricentricity of the German language, national variant, Austrian German and Swiss German etc., as well as to what extent these variants, i.e. Austrian German and Swiss German are necessary in the German language teaching process as a foundation for successful communication with the inhabitants of the Republic of Austria and the German speaking inhabitants of Switzerland, respectively. The German language is spoken throughout the entire territory of the Republic of Austria, which, in return, has turned the Republic of Austria into the national center of the German language. Hence, not surprisingly, the following question emerges: "To what extent does Austrian German differ from the standard German language spoken in the Federal Republic of Germany?". More precisely, this paper tackles the following issues: a) How many Austrian German entries do German textbooks used in the secondary education in the Republic of Macedonia contain?; b) How many Swiss German entries do German textbooks used in the secondary education in the Republic of Macedonia contain?; and c) To what extent have the students in the final year of their secondary education mastered Austrian German and Swiss German? In order to ascertain the number of Austrian German and Swiss German entries used in the German textbooks we carried out an analysis which encompasses German textbooks endorsed by the Bureau of Pedagogy of the Republic of Macedonia at the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Macedonia. According to the Common European Framework of Reference the analyzed German textbooks are compatible with B1 level. Additionally, taking into consideration the fact that the textbooks are not the only segment of the teaching process, and aiming to determine the extent to which the students in their final, fourth, year of secondary education have mastered Austrian German and Swiss German and how they have mastered them, a survey was carried

out. The results indicate that there is inadequate application of the DACHL Concept and the pluricentricity of the German language, which, consequently, implies the necessity of utilizing additional language teaching materials which would alleviate not only the mastering of the German language but also the process of adaptation of students and adult learners of German in the German speaking countries. This would also prevent the occurrence of cultural and linguistic shocks, as well as the emergence of empathy towards the German language and culture.

**Index Terms-** language community, nation, the German language as an official language, dialect regions, pluricentricity of the German language, national variant, Austrian German and Swiss German

## I. INTRODUCTION

The German language is used in many countries such as, for instance, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, South Tyrol, Eastern Belgium etc. However, this paper takes into consideration the German language used only in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. This restriction is made on the basis of the fact that the standard German language is characterized by certain differences in these three countries. In the standard German language used in Germany the equivalent term for the term dinner is "Abendessen", in Austria - the term "Nacht Mahl", in Switzerland the term - "Nachtessen".

Since ancient times there have been discussions on the meaning of the term "nation" as well as its connection with the term 'linguistic community'<sup>1</sup>. During the French Revolution both terms "nation" and "state" were associated with the term "national state" and this interpretation has been applied to date. The main idea was for states and nations to congregate within their own borders<sup>2</sup>. A linguistic community includes all people who speak the same native language, consequently, thus, all native speakers of the German language belong to the same linguistic community. According to Ammon, unlike the term 'nation' (linguistic nation or cultural nation), the terms 'linguistic community' and 'cultural community' do not suggest political association. Therefore, the people from the German-speaking part of Switzerland belong to the same linguistic community with people from Germany, but not to the same nation, i.e. the same linguistic and cultural nation. The people from the German-speaking part of Switzerland belong much more to the same nation as the people from the French-speaking, Italian-speaking, Romansh-speaking parts of Switzerland. Austria also does not

<sup>1</sup> (H. Haarmann, 1993:12)

<sup>2</sup> (U. Ammon, 1995:19)

belong to the German nation, at least not recently, as it has been establishing itself as a new nation<sup>3</sup>.

What is important for this paper is the definition of the German language as an official state language. According to Ammon's<sup>4</sup> there are seven countries where German is the official language. However, in only three of these countries, Germany, Austria and Liechtenstein, German is the only official language on a national level, i.e. in parliament, government, administration and so on. In the rest of the countries German is a co-official language, i.e. it is used as an official language alongside with other official languages. For instance, this is the case with Switzerland (official languages: German, French and Italian, and Romansh which is a regional official language) and in Luxembourg (official languages: German, French and Luxembourgish).

German as a regional official language is used in the German-speaking community in Belgium alongside with the French language, and the autonomous province of Bozen-South Tyrol in Italy alongside with Italian and Ladinian (in some areas). The most important regional dialects and national varieties of German, according to Ammon, are Niederdeutsch-Low German in north Germany, Mitteldeutsch-Middle German in central Germany, Oberdeutsch-Upper German in central and western Germany, Bairisch-Bavarian in southern Germany and Austria, Alemannisch in western Germany, Liechtenstein and Switzerland. Kretschmer has done significant research on the standard spoken language on the basis of which he concluded that the written forms which are avoided orally do not belong to the spoken language<sup>5</sup>.

There is one example provided by Kretschmer which deserves attention in this context, as it illustrates the differences between "the literary vernacular," and the "common language of the educated" in Berlin and Vienna, the capitals of the two major German-speaking countries.

*"A resident of Berlin enters a hat shop in Vienna and requests a Reisemütze. The seller corrects him: "Ah, you're looking for Reisekappe travel hat ". He places it on the table. The Berliner notes "I don't like the colorful ones". The seller interprets this to his German assistant "He is not fond of the colorful ones" because the Viennese like only people, not objects. The Berliner finally asks: "How expensive is the hat?" and again unintentionally makes a mistake because of the rude Berlinian expression 'expensive' which means a price that is above the normal rate, i.e. excessive price. The Viennese says only: "How much does it cost?" The Berliner seeks the cashier die Kasse, but only finds the sign Kassa. He leaves the store, and because it is early in the morning, he uses the greeting: "Good morning!" which instigates the Viennese to raise eyebrows as such a greeting is used only on arrival and not on departure. The Viennese response is: "It was my honor! Good day!" which, in turn, takes the Berliner by surprise, because the greeting: "Good day!" as far as he knows is used only on arrival and not on departure."*

<sup>3</sup> (U. Ammon, 1995:33)

<sup>4</sup> (U. Ammon, 1995:12)

<sup>5</sup> (P. Kretschmer, 1918:17)

Evidently, the German language has many linguistic centers, namely Germany, Austria and the German-speaking part of Switzerland, and is, therefore, a pluricentric language.

It is not easy to establish whether countries such as Liechtenstein, Luxembourg and parts of some countries such as South Tyrol in Italy, the German-speaking community in Belgium, where the German language is the official language have a special variant of the standard German language<sup>6</sup>. Languages are pluricentric if they are the official and administrative language of several major countries. Kloss mentions "the German language in the West Germany, East Germany, Switzerland, Austria" (without reflecting on the difference between the state and the nation)<sup>7</sup> as an example of such a pluricentric literary language. Reiffenstein agrees with Kloss about his description of the German language as a pluricentric language, but disputes the existence of different national varieties. This could be allowed only if "a coherent system of norms is codified for certain varieties"<sup>8</sup>. Contrarily, Clyne states that "German (...) is an instance of what Kloss terms a *pluricentric* language, i.e. a language with several national varieties, each with its own norms"<sup>9</sup>. A national variety cannot be recognized only as non-standard, it must be distinguished from the other national varieties of the same language, which are also standard. According to Ammon there is a vertical separation of the standard from the non-standard (in a social and stylistic sense) and a horizontal separation (non-standard in terms of regional restrictions)<sup>10</sup>.

Duden<sup>11</sup> considers Austriacisms as Austrian linguistic variants (e.g. Paradeiser for tomato). Stedje<sup>12</sup> points out some of the peculiarities of the German language in Austria represented by certain expressions (A / G) for example Obers / Sahne; Jause / Zwischenmahlzeit; Sessel / Stuhl; Fauteuil / Sessel; Trafik / Tabakladen; Jänner / Januar etc. Stedje mentions the impact of media and tourism. She also mentions the existence of expressions limited only to Bavaria and Austria, for example, *Grüß Gott* for *Guten Tag*, Topfen for Quark. She also notes the frequent use of diminutives from the Austrian-Bavarian dialect Stamperl / kleines Schnapsglas, Kasperl / Kasper, Backendl / Backhähnchen etc. which have spread even to northern Germany. Helvetisms are Swiss language features<sup>13</sup>. In German-speaking Switzerland the Schwyzerdütsch dialect functions as a spoken language understandable to all social strata<sup>14</sup>. The standard German language is largely a written language (called Swiss German) and is spoken only-but not always-in schools and churches, on television and radio, in court and classes.

All these differences clearly point to the need for acquiring Austriacisms and Helvetisms as significant features of the German-speaking countries.

<sup>6</sup> (U. Ammon, 1995:13)

<sup>7</sup> (H. Kloss, 1978:67)

<sup>8</sup> (I. Reiffenstein, 1983:23)

<sup>9</sup> (M. Clyne, 1984:1)

<sup>10</sup> (U. Ammon, 1995:89)

<sup>11</sup> Deutsches Universal Wörterbuch A-Z, 3, neu bearbeitete Auflage S. 195

<sup>12</sup> (A. Stedje, 2007:241)

<sup>13</sup> Deutsches Universal Wörterbuch A-Z, 3, neu bearbeitete Auflage S. 686

<sup>14</sup> (A. Stedje, 2007:243)

## II. THE LAYOUT OF THE RESEARCH

In the Republic of Macedonia, pursuant to a decision of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Macedonia, the following three books have been approved for teaching German on high school level (level B1 according to the European Framework of Reference):

a) *Ausblick* - Hueber Verlag (decision number: 22-3635/1, dated from 1<sup>st</sup> June, 2010) - intended for teaching German as a second foreign language to forth-year high school students,

b) *Delfin* - Hueber Verlag (decision number: 11-6261/1, dated from 3<sup>th</sup> November, 2004) - intended for teaching German as a third foreign language to forth-year high school students,

c) *Ping Pong 3* - Hueber Verlag (decision number 22-3652/1, dated from 1<sup>st</sup> June, 2010) - intended for teaching German as a second foreign language to second and third year high school students.

The textbook *Ausblick* is intended for young people who are at B1 level or had already passed A2 level according to the European Framework of Reference. This textbook contains topics which are relevant for and of interest to young people. The program contains a textbook with two CDs; a workbook with a CD and online teachers' book posted on Hueber publishing house's website.

The textbook *Delfin* offers a one-volume, two-volume and three-volume edition, which contain 20 lessons in total. The program has a clear structure with five double pages for each lesson: *introduction-reading-listening-speaking-writing*. The transparency of the textbook enables clear distribution of the material. The workbook can be used for doing intensive exercises during class hours and/or flexible individual studying at home. Moreover, Hueber publishing house's website<sup>15</sup> offers additional online activities.

The textbook *Ping Pong 3* enables students, by means of fun activities and games, to systematically target and reach the level required for obtaining a Certificate of German as a foreign language.

The workbook offers extensive exercises which accompany each and every lesson in the textbook. These exercises are suitable for developing all the necessary skills, however, a special accent is put on developing students' reading comprehension skills. Additionally, not only are the topics of the exercises compatible with the topics discussed in the textbook, but also they are very useful for developing students' global, detailed and selective reading skills which are necessary for obtaining a Certificate of the German.

The Bureau of Education Development of the Republic of Macedonia as an institution authorized by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Macedonia is responsible for preparing the syllabi for all the respective courses at all educational levels.

What is relevant for our research is the syllabi of two German courses within the framework of the reformed high school education intended for the fourth year students, namely German as a second foreign language and German as a third

foreign language. The syllabi for these two courses were adopted in 2003 and published on the Ministry of Education and Science's website<sup>16</sup>. They contain a list of the most important information that the teachers of German should know about German as a second foreign language course (with projected 2 class hours per week, or a total of 72 hours per school year); and German as a third foreign language course (with projected 3 class hours per week or a total of 99 hours per school year).

The syllabi outline the objectives, skills and contents of the courses in a clearly structured manner. There are two types of course objectives: general and specific. The general objectives, *inter alia*, include the fact that "the students who have successfully completed these courses will be able to use the German language in everyday life situations"<sup>17</sup>. The specific objectives, *inter alia*, include that "the students will gain a certain amount of sociolinguistic knowledge which will help him overcome various communicative problems and familiarize themselves with the cultural characteristics of the Federal Republic of Germany as well as the other German-speaking countries, which, eventually will facilitate the creation of intercultural exchange and tolerance as a critical application of knowledge".

Taking all these objectives into consideration, it becomes evident that both the process of teaching German and the German textbooks should contain vocabulary typical of the other German speaking countries such as, for instance, *Austriacisms* and *Helvetisms*.

## III. THE RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS

The textbook *Ausblick* includes the following terms associated with Austria and Switzerland: Austria on page 52; Austria and Switzerland on page 99; Switzerland and information regarding the Swiss writer Peter Bichsel on page 102; the map of Switzerland on page 106 and page 107; Austria on page 108; Switzerland page 108; Swiss on page 108; Austria, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, cities in Switzerland and Austria on page 109. In the workbook the following terms were detected: Austria on page 7, Austria on page 107; Austria and Switzerland on page 148.

These findings suggest that only names of geographic places in Austria and Switzerland have been mentioned in this book.

From a linguistic point of view, certain *Austriacisms* and *Helvetisms* were detected in: the audio exercises in Lesson 10 on page 106, where an Austrian-Bavarian greeting, "Servus Österreich", the Swiss term "Velo" for bike, and the Swiss greeting "Grüezi" have been mentioned but only in oral form as there is no written record of these terms in the textbook or the workbook.

In the textbook *Delfin* the terms Austria, Switzerland, some cities in these countries, celebrities and the education system have been mentioned in almost all the lessons. The workbook, on

<sup>16</sup>

<http://bro.gov.mk/docs/gimnazisko/zadolzitelniPredmeti/GermanskijazikIVg.vtorstranskijazik.pdf>

<sup>17</sup>

<http://bro.gov.mk/docs/gimnazisko/zadolzitelniPredmeti/GermanskijazikIVg.vtorstranskijazik.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.hueber.de/ausblick>

the other hand, contains Austriacisms and Helvetisms which are presented in the table below. Namely, the table lists the number of the page where each of these terms has been found as well as their German equivalents.

Seite	In Deutschland sagt man	In Österreich sagt man	in der Schweiz sagt man
41	die Kartoffel, Kartoffeln	der Erdapfel, Erdäpfel	
41	die Tomate, Tomaten	der Paradeiser, Paradeiser	
41	der Pilz, Pilze	das Schwammerl, Schwammerln	
41	die E-Mail, E-Mails		das E-Mail, E-Mails
41	Prost!		Gesundheit!
60	der Junge, -n	der Bub, -n	
60	der Schreibtisch, -e		das Pult, -e
60	der Stuhl, -e	der Sessel, -	
60	die Telefonkarte, -n	die Telefonwertkarte, -n	die Taxcard
78	ausmachen	abdrehen	
78	abschließen	absperren	
78	zumachen	zusperrern	
78	die Anzeige, -n		die Annonce, -n
78	die Kleidung (Sg.)		die Kleider (Pl.)
78	das Fahrrad, -er		das Velo, -s
78	bunt		farbig
78	prima	super	
99	die Arztpraxis, Arztpraxen	die Ordination, -en	
99	der Briefträger, -		der Pöstler, -
99	der Fahrer, -		der Chauffeur, -e
99	die Haltestelle, -n	die Station, -en	die Station, -en
99	das Krankenhaus, -er	das Spital, -er	das Spital, -er
99	die Telefonzelle, -n		die Telefonkabine, -en
99	klingeln	läuten	läuten
99	laufen	rennen	
125	das Brötchen	die Semmel	
125	das Frühstück		das Morgenessen
125	der Reifen		der Pneu
125	Ich habe gerade die Betten gemacht.	Ich habe eben die Betten gemacht.	
145	der Bürgermeister, -	der Bürgermeister, -	der Stadtpräsident, -en/ der Amman, -er
145	der Führerschein, -e	der Führerschein, -e	der Führerausweis, -e
145	der Glückwunsch, -er	der Glückwunsch, -er	die Gratulation, -en
168	die Bohne, -n	die Fisolet, -n	
168	die Cola	das Cola	das Cola
168	das Brötchen, -	die Semmel, -n	
168	die Dose, -n	die Büchse, -n	
168	das Eis		die Glace
168	das Gericht, -e	die Speise, -n	
168	der Joghurt	das Joghurt (auch: die Joghurt)	das Joghurt
168	die Kartoffel, -n	der Erdapfel, -	
168	die Kasse, -n	die Kassa, Kassen	
168	die Marmelade, -n		die Konfitüre, -n
168	das Päckchen, -	das Packerl, -n	
168	der Pilz	das Schwammerl, -n	
168	die Sahne	der Schlag, das Schlagobers	der Rahm
168	die Tüte, -n	das Sackerl, -n	
193	an sein	brennen	
193	ansehen	anschauen	
193	die Couch, -en	das Sofa, -s	das Sofa, -s

193	der Kasten, -"	die Kiste, -n	
193	der Prospekt, -e	das Prospekt, -e	
193	der Schrank, -"e	der Kasten, -"	der Kasten, -"
193	der Sessel, -		der Fauteuil, -s
193	der Stuhl, -"e	der Sessel, -	
219	aussehen	ausschauen	
219	bunt		farbig
219	der Friseur, -e		der Coiffeur, -e
219	die Kleidung		Kleider (Pl.)
219	der Rock, -"er		das Kleid, -er
245	das Abitur	die Matura	die Matura
245	das Gehalt, -"er	der Lohn, -"er	der Lohn, -"er
245	die Praxis, Praxen	die Ordination, -en	
245	inzwischen		unterdessen
275	die Kneipe, -n	das Beisl, -n/s	Gasthaus, -"er
275	die Metzgerei, -en	die Fleischhauerei, -en	
303	Auf Wiedersehen/Tschüs	Servus	Uf Wiederluege
334	der Mülleimer, -	der Mistkübel, -	
334	die Jugendlichen (Pl.)		die Jungen (Pl.)
364	die Krankenkasse	die Krankenkassa	
364	genau		exakt
397	das Erdgeschoss, -e	das Parterre	das Parterre
397	die Werbung, -en		die Reklame, -n
397	die Gebrauchsanweisung, -en		die Gebrauchsanleitung, -en
421	die Eintrittskarte, -n		das Billet, -s
421	die Illustrierte, -n		das Heft, -e
421	treten	steigen	
474	das Kissen, -	der Polster, -	
474	der Bahnsteig, -e		der/das Perron, -s
474	erscheinen		herauskommen
474	blass		bleich
503	anfassen	angreifen	
503	umziehen	übersiedeln	
503	die Klingel, -n	die Glocke, -n	
503	der Pfannkuchen, -	die Palatschinke, -n	
503	beeilen		pressieren
503	Prost!		Gesundheit!

**Table 1**

On the basis of this analysis it could be concluded that the authors of the textbook Delfin, Hartmut Aufderstrasse, Uta Müller and Thomas Storz, have adequately observed and implemented the DACHL concept. They supported this by claiming that "although most of the German terms listed in the table above could be understood in Switzerland and Austria, yet it could be quite helpful if students know their Swiss and Austrian equivalents as well"<sup>18</sup>.

The survey was conducted among randomly selected 45 fourth-year high school students from the town of Bitola. The majority of the students were female and they have been studying German for 7 or 8 years. Thirty five of the students were studying German as a second language, whereas only nine of them were studying German as a third language.

All of the respondents knew the fact that German is spoken in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

However, an interesting fact is that 29 students cited the expression *Griß Gott* and *Semmel* as specific Austrian terms, while 14 students were not aware of the Austricisms. One student identified the term *Velo* as a Swiss term, which is true, but another student thought that the term *Sackerl* is a Helvetism – when, in fact, is an Austricism. The students successfully recognize the German greeting terms, which is not surprising given the fact that all textbooks contain the most prevalent forms of greetings used in Germany. Eleven students have partially recognized the forms of greetings used in Austria (*Griß Gott*, *Servus*). They are not familiar at all with the forms of greeting used in Switzerland, obviously, due to their omission from the textbooks. Twenty five students are familiar with *Die Semmel* and that it was used for *bun* in Austria. The others thought that it

<sup>18</sup> Delfin, Huber Verlag. Lehrerhandbuch S.28

is used in Switzerland or Germany, or they did not know anything about it. Sixteen students were familiar with *Der Erdapfel*, i.e. with the fact that it was used for *potato* in Austria. The others thought that it was used in Switzerland or Germany or they knew nothing about it. Fifteen students were familiar with *Der Paradeiser* and the fact that it is used for *tomato* in Austria. The others thought that it was used in Switzerland or Germany or did not know anything about it. Twelve students were familiar with *Das Velo* and that it was used for *bike* in Switzerland. The others thought it was used in Austria or Germany or they did not know anything about it. Eight students were familiar with *Das Sackerl* and that it was used for *bag* in Austria. The others thought it was used in Switzerland or Germany or they did not know anything about it. Eight students were familiar with *Das Bussel* and that it was used for *kiss* in Austria, seven students knew that it was used in Germany, and others thought it was used in Switzerland or they did not know anything about it.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Austriacisms and Helvetisms are not adequately represented in the analyzed German textbooks (level B1) used in high school education in the Republic of Macedonia or in teaching German in general. An exception to this is the textbook *Delfin* which is used in teaching German as a third foreign language. These results indicate that the students who study German as a second foreign language are less exposed to Austriacisms and Helvetisms, in comparison to those who learn German as a third language. However, the number of the latter group is significantly lower than the number of the former group. In summary, knowing the varieties of the German language allows students to improve their communication with people from the German-speaking countries whereas ignoring them could result in very uncomfortable situations. Hence, it is highly recommended that both textbooks' authors and teachers of German should incorporate Austriacisms and Helvetisms in their books and teaching, respectively. The starting point, understandably, could be some specific forms of greetings used

in Austria and the specific Austrian terms used in general everyday communication.

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