Introduction: Standard languages in Germanic-speaking Europe – Attitudes and perception

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BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES OF THE VOLUME

Questions and issues concerning the social dynamics and ideologies centering on standard language varieties, both from a linguistic and an attitudinal/perceptual point of view, are currently the subject of intensive research across all of Europe, in national and international projects. This heightened interest in the topic represents a notable shift in focus within sociolinguistics, from its traditional occupation with the vernacular towards (more or less) codified, super-regional, and normative language forms and uses. One reason for this shift arguably lies in the acknowledgement and appreciation of the social (and hence sociolinguistic) tensions arising between forces of globalization vs. localization, mass/social media vs. face-to-face communication, and their concomitant effects on language-driven processes of identity construction, presentation, and fractionality.

In the quest for a consolidation of pan-European insights on the topic of standard language attitudes and perceptions, first important contributions have already come out of the SLICE ('Standard Language Ideology in Contemporary Europe') network of international scholars, especially in the form of the first three books preceding the present volume in the SLICE series (Kristiansen and Coupland 2011; Kristiansen and Grondelaers 2013; Thøgersen, Coupland and Mortensen 2016).[1] As a result, different types of processes regarding fundamental tendencies of standard language dynamics under a European perspective have been identified and investigated that are not restricted to but transcend standard language varieties of single languages or specific sociolinguistic contexts. These include processes of destandardization, whereby 'old'/'established' standard languages (and their standard varieties respectively) lose their status as 'highest language/variety'.[2] Destandardization

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[1] See SLICE-related publications at https://lanchart.hum.ku.dk/research/slice/publications-and-news-letters/publications/ (March 1, 2022).

[2] For research and reports on destandardisation in general cf. Auer (1997); Coupland and Kristiansen (2011); Daneš (1976); Daneš (2006); Deumert and Vandenbussche (2003); Lenz (2010); Mattheier (1997); Mattheier and Radtke (1997); for Dutch cf. Stroop (1998); Wil-

typically goes hand in hand with processes of democratization and liberalization that "can lead to a 'value levelling' that will secure access to public space for a wider range of speech varieties" (Coupland and Kristiansen 2011: 28). In extreme cases, destandardization might lead to "a radical weakening, and eventual abandonment, of the 'standard ideology' itself" (Coupland and Kristiansen 2011: 28). By contrast, in processes of demotization, "the 'standard ideology' as such stays intact while the valorisation of ways of speaking changes" (Coupland and Kristiansen 2011: 28).[3] Thus, while the fundamental idea remains that there exists something like a 'highest' or 'best' language (or variety), the notion of the linguistic characteristics representing this prototype is modified. The processes of reevaluation inherent in demotization might lead to "revalorization", i.e. a kind of "ideological upgrading" of former low(er) languages/varieties. Following Auer and Spiekermann (2011: 162),

> *de*motisation and *de*standardisation refer to two different processes. If a variety (such as the standard) becomes demoticised, it becomes popular (*demōs = populus* 'people'), i.e. it is used by the masses of the people. This, as we shall see, can imply both large-scale structural and attitudinal reorganisations. The term itself, however, does not imply any kind of strengthening or weakening of the status of that variety.
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> 'Destandardisation', on the other hand, denotes some kind of structural dissolution or attitudinal debasement of the (once more focussed or more esteemed) standard variety. In theory, then, destandardisation does not exclude the demotisation of the standard variety, and vice versa. We argue that both terms are useful for the description of the European standard languages, but they should not be seen as opposite developments.

The rise of so-called 'new standards' (or 'neo-standards') is closely related to processes of demotization. Neo-standards

> are distinct from the traditional standards in terms of structure and attitudes: the new standards are considered to be 'more relaxed', 'more personal', 'more subjective', 'more creative', 'more modern'. It is possible that the new standards

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lemyns (1997, 2003); for Italian cf. Scholz (1997); for German cf. Auer (2018a); Mattheier (1997, 2003); Spiekermann (2005); for Danish cf. Kristiansen (2003); for English cf. Nevalainen (2003); for Swedish cf. Sandøy (2002); Teleman (2003); for Norwegian see Røyneland (2009); for Polish cf. Mazur (1997).

[3] For further reference on demotization see also e.g. Ayres-Bennett (2021); Ghyselen, Delarue and Lybaert (2016); Kristiansen (2021); Mattheier (1997); Ó Murchadha (2021).

will finally replace the traditional standards, but for the time being, the two standards co-exist. (Auer 2018b: 37)

From a broader perspective, these general tendencies do not only have an impact on the European *standard* languages, but of course on the *entire* language repertoires of individuals and speech communities. As diglossic and diaglossic repertoires[4] are disappearing, monoglossic repertoires are increasingly becoming the norm. This means that we more and more encounter stylistic variation *within* the realm of the standard rather than variation between standard and other varieties of one and the same language.[5] Instead of internal or intralingual multilingualism, external multilingualism is on the rise. Parallel to these more structural/linguistic processes, what often takes place is a revaluation of regional, national and social identity – and thus, on the whole, 'sociolinguistic change' (e.g. Coupland 2014).

Even though this cursory overview can sketch the state of research on standard language dynamics within Europe schematically at best, it already indicates how closely standard linguistic dynamics on the level of actual language use are related to language attitudinal and perceptual dynamics. Further, it has become clear that attitudinal-perceptual dynamics within the standard language realm are always accompanied by processes of reevaluation in the entire varietal spectrum of the language concerned. In other words, again, dynamics within the standard language realm always affect dynamics within the non-standard realm of a language, too (cf. Lenz 2010).

Yet, across different socio-linguistic contexts in Europe, comprehensive language attitudinal and perceptual analyses still remain central research desiderata, including the necessary expansion and updating of a critical juxtaposition, comparison, and synthesis of current language attitudinal and perceptual findings from a range of sociolinguistic settings, also in view of testing our hitherto accumulated knowledge on the broad basis of ever-larger datasets. The present volume sets out to address this issue. It includes reports of empirical studies from across Europe, in the endeavor to throw into relief the differences and commonalities obtaining with regards to attitudes towards and perceptions of standard language varieties, with a focus on Germanic languages, but in socio-culturally distinct contexts with diverg-

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[4] where "in a diaglossic repertoire, the gap between standard and traditional dialects is filled by intermediate forms, such as regional dialects. In a diglossic repertoire, by contrast, the speakers can only choose between the H ('high') and L ('low') varieties, without the possibility of compromise" (Auer 2018b: 164).

[5] Though this does by no means incur a loss of socio-symbolic functionality across a system: as especially pluricentricity research reveals (Clyne 1991; cf. Lenz, Soukup and Koppensteiner; Schmidlin; Ghyselen this volume), not only nonstandard but also particular standard language features may function as strong anchors for personal and group identification.

ing linguistic dialect–standard spectra and constellations. In particular, the volume conjoins studies on the sociolinguistic settings of Austria, Germany, Germanophone Switzerland, Belgium (specifically: Flanders), the UK (specifically: England) and Denmark. Their common thread, apart from a shared typological ancestry, is a focus on bottom-up approaches to research on standard language varieties, based on cutting-edge empirical methodology that takes both emic (inside, bottom-up) and etic (outside, system-oriented) aspects into account. For orientation, the chapters feature brief descriptions of the sociolinguistic-attitudinal situation at hand.

In assembling and drawing on this jointly focused yet diverse body of work, the central goal of this edited volume is to shed light on the following questions:

1) What similar or different configurations and dynamics of (socio)linguistic standard–dialect/non-standard constellations or spectra are currently manifest in the different settings? How can perceptual-attitudinal linguistic research inform, complement, and shape formal-structural work in the investigation thereof?

2) What conceptualizations of 'standard language' do we find in and across the various settings, and according to the various stakeholders (laypersons, linguists, decision-makers)? What are the functions of these concepts? How do they relate to attested linguistic features, phenomena, and behavior?

3) What kinds of similar or different attitudes towards and perceptions of standard language varieties can be observed in the different settings? To what extent is 'multiattitudinism' (Schmidlin this volume), that is, the simultaneous presence of different language attitudes in a community, manifest? What generalizations regarding attitudinal and perceptual patterns and dynamics can be drawn up that may apply across settings?

4) What methodologies can be harnessed in the investigation of attitudes towards and perceptions of standard language? What kinds of data are most useful? What can we as researchers learn from certain methods and data, and what kinds of innovations are currently being explored?

THE CHAPTERS OF THIS VOLUME

The authors contributing to this volume were first assembled as keynote speakers at the international symposium "Standard Languages in Europe: Attitudes & Perception", organized by the University of Vienna and the Austrian Academy of Sciences, and taking place in December of 2018 in Vienna. This meeting, held in the context of the large-scale, multi-year Special Research Programme 'German in Austria – Variation, Contact, Perception', funded by the Austrian Science Fund (F60) – (cf.

Lenz 2018), had the purpose of bringing together leading experts on the topic for exchange and discussion on current activities as well as innovative empirical approaches in research on standard languages in Europe, centering on Germanic languages and focusing on attitudes and perceptions. The outcome of this discussion is manifest as the present volume, whose individual chapters are now summarized in turn.

The volume opens with Lenz, Soukup and Koppensteiner's critical assessment of standard German in Austria, based on an overarching theoretical framework viewing (communicative) meaning-making as socially interactive and equally incorporating both speakers' and listeners' perspectives. The authors compare conceptualizations of standard language in Austria under an academic and a lay perspective, aiming to disentangle the issues involved in and central to these. Their review of the current sociolinguistic situation is aligned to Ammon's (1995) *Soziales Kräftefeld* ('matrix of social forces') of standard language, including the discussion of (the role of) language norms, codices, and model speakers for standard German in Austria and its parameters of 'standardness'. In addition, key issues regarding the concept of pluricentrism are picked out, drawing on data acquired within the above-mentioned multi-year Special Research Programme 'German in Austria. Variation – Contact – Perception'. The authors detect several aspects of standard language culture in comparing academic and lay perspectives. In the academic discussion, these culminate in sometimes heated debates on pluricentrism and its related notions of plurinationalism or pluriarealism. By contrast, the lay perspectives are shaped by different standard language ideological (SLI) evaluations. The authors show that key aspects of the academic linguistic discourse on German standard language are in fact heterogeneously nuanced in folk attitudinal-perceptual evaluations; and they call for the intensification of multidimensional research on folk linguistic perspectives in order to cope with the heterogeneous and complex parameters of standard German in Austria and beyond.

Buchner, Fuchs and Elspaß tie in here and shed light on standard and non-standard varieties in Austrian (internally and at the same time externally multilingual) school contexts, in which notions of standard oscillate between the poles of perceived 'standards of usage' (*Gebrauchsstandards*), i.e. actual language use in classroom interaction, and some (possibly) idealized form(s) of 'Standard German'. They tackle conceptualizations of (German) standard language use based on interview data of 82 students and 12 teachers of secondary schools in two Austrian locations (the city of Salzburg as urban region, contrasted with Zell am See as a rural setting). The data are drawn from a larger corpus within the SFB 'German in Austria. Variation – Contact – Perception'. Online questionnaires completed by the same informants add insights on actual language usage in class. In light of partly vague normative requirements (official guidelines, curricula, regulations) for lan-

guage use at school, heterogeneous conceptualizations of standard language and contextual parameters turn out to be decisive for actual language use. Thus, linguistic reality at Austrian schools is strongly tied to complex social interactional situations that guide attitudinal-perceptual evaluations. As a general result, the usage of non-standard varieties prevails in – especially rural – school contexts, while 'standard German' is predominantly evaluated as a 'written language'. However, in the urban setting (the city of Salzburg), standard might also be used in everyday conversations. The authors conclude that standard language usage in schools is, despite curricula guidelines, strongly connected to conversational practices in everyday life situations: if these are dominated by dialectal varieties, the odds of non-standard usage in school contexts increase as well.

The linguistic situation in Switzerland differs significantly from the ones in Germany or Austria, as there are different (standard) languages (German, Italian, French, and Romansh) distributed over the country, resulting in a unique constellation of societal multilingualism. As Schmidlin points out in her contribution, this circumstance allows for intensified language contact on various linguistic levels, and the development of heterogeneous attitudinal conceptualizations, along with varying normative evaluations of (different) standard languages. In her chapter, Schmidlin discusses the (Swiss) German standard language from both an etic and an emic perspective. With regard to the former, she analyzes a representative sample of (newspaper) texts used as sources for the (standard language codifying) lemmata of the *Variantenwörterbuch* (cf. Ammon, Bickel and Lenz 2016), and shows that national origin and text genres influence the amount of (national and regional) variants in the documents considerably. However, national and regional variants of German standard language make up only 5% of the total lexical German items available (cf. also Schmidlin 2013). These variational aspects lead Schmidlin to elaborate on the concept of pluricentricity, tying into the discussion in Lenz, Soukup and Koppensteiner, and discussing the impact of (administrative and dialectological) borders on the sub-concepts of plurinationalism and pluriarealism. Schmidlin pays equal attention to the emic perspective on the German standard language, presenting selected results of a large-scale study involving over 900 informants in which data e.g. on usage and language 'loyality' regarding national and regional variants were collected via online questionnaires. Schmidlin shows that there are distinct country-specifics with regard to the choice of (national) variants, varying both between countries and with regard to the linguistic level (phonological, lexical). The author concludes that attitudinal conceptualizations of the German standard language distinctively deviate from the linguistic conceptualizations, once more emphasizing the interconnections with and thus the need for attitudinal/perceptual research.

The German standard language in Germany is of high importance within the attitudinal realm of the German language area (see also Lenz, Soukup and Koppen-

steiner, and Schmidlin, this volume). This makes attitudes tied to the German standard language in Germany itself, and its status in lay linguists' usage, particularly relevant for any discussion of standard German as such. Plewnia addresses these aspects in his chapter, based on a survey representative of the German population and featuring interview data as well as online questionnaires of more than 4,300 participants. Previous findings indicate difficulties in assessing what German standard language constitutes from a non-linguist's point of view (see also the comparable results for Austria reported in Koppensteiner and Lenz 2020). Thus, it has been shown that definitions rely rather on 'negative' approaches that use dialect as point of reference ('standard is what dialect is not'). In other words, in popular conception, one of the most prominent features of German standard language is the absence of any features of regional linguistic variation. This negative view is explored in the representative survey Plewnia reports here, where he infers, for one, standard competence from the individual dialectal one. Results in Plewnia's survey indicate that (self-reported) standard language use dominates the everyday life of, on average, two thirds of the German informants (a number that is much higher in large areas of Austria and Switzerland). However, there is also regional variation within Germany in this regard, with the South being oriented more towards dialectal varieties than the northern parts. In addition, evaluative aspects, such as likeability, to a certain extent correlate with parameters like individual competence and regional origin. Even though the standard-dialect-axis is typically assessed as bipolar without intermediate 'varieties', the informants assess their own standard as 'regionally colored', adding a hitherto still underexplored facet to the complexities of standard language use and perception in Germany.

In her chapter, Ghyselen critically reviews the situation of Belgian Dutch, presenting both theoretical and methodological approaches for delineating and defining standard language on the one hand, and assessing the interplay of emic and etic perspectives on the other. She identifies parameters that at present highly affect conceptualizations of (Belgian Dutch) standard language and its normative 'components'. Amongst these, she lists pluricentrism (Belgian vs. Netherlandic standard), a complex linguistic situation (diaglossic spectra and a multilingual situation due to three official languages in Belgium), a broad range of stakeholders and the public broadcasting media (the Flemish 'VRT', held to propagate an 'artificial' standard language, 'VRT-Dutch'), as well as concerted efforts to promote 'proper' standard. *Tussentaal*, a widely used (colloquial) varietal concept falling in-between standard and dialect, has been found to compete with standard language norms to certain (ideological) extents. This leads to (linguistic) discussions on processes of destandardization, demotization, as well as restandardization. However, Ghyselen once more underlines the fact that language attitudes and corresponding perceptions are key factors in determining a standard language's functions and its underlying nor-

mative notions. She proposes usage-based models of language varieties from both the point of view of production and perception as an approach to addressing key functions and categories of standard language(s). In this context, she particularly focuses her discussion on the issues of widespread social meanings of language use, socio-situative behavior/interaction, heterogeneous (linguistic) identities and ascriptions, cognitive representations of regularities/norms, inherent varietal inhomogeneity, as well as prototypes. Ultimately, Ghyselen pleads for interweaving both attitudinal-perceptual and production data, and for their triangulation – a plea that, indeed, is a common thread throughout the present volume.

Montgomery's chapter changes the scene to England, where folk-linguistic views on Standard English have been found to center on attributions such as 'best' and 'most educated' – such that status-stressing and socio-evaluative parameters are found in academic linguistic approaches to standard languages, too. In the perceptual approach Montgomery proposes, however, folk-linguistic, (standard) ideologically biased parameters of 'standardness' are put to a critical test. The author evaluates perceptions of regional variation/non-standardness in an experiment that makes use of a certain variety of English found on the Isles of Scilly (located to the south-west of England), which is popularly perceived as very close to Standard English. The informants' task was to indicate regional markers in Scillonian speech in four different audio samples presented to them, by clicking on a button in a web browser interface at instances they perceived as distinctive. Afterwards, the individual choices were reviewed by the (over one hundred) informants. This step included the opportunity to indicate why they had selected the corresponding fragments as regional. Contrary to what the popular idea of Scillonian as standard-like would predict, then, stimuli using Scillonian speech did not generate fewer clicks than non-standard stimuli; in fact, the opposite was the case. According to Montgomery, this suggests that regional features are not necessarily excluded in the conception of varieties of high(er) status, and thus, probably, from more general concepts of 'standardness'. At the same time, he discusses potential methodological effects: one possible explanation for the (near-)standard samples generating more clicks (i.e. including more features perceived as regional) can be based on effects of 'surprise', such that listeners did not expect a (near-)standard variety to include regional features at all. This may have increased saliency in these stimuli, contrary to the non-standard samples, where regional features met informants' expectations. In all, then, Montgomery's chapter proposes a highly innovative instrument and approach to accessing lay-linguists' perceptual sensitivity for regional features, with, however, still more application and testing needed to assess the power and scope of the tool for standard language research.

Recent findings on Danish standard language from an attitudinal-perceptual perspective indicate major differences between overt and covert norms, the former

being (also) tied to local varieties, whereas the latter clearly point to Copenhagen-based (standard) speech (cf. Grondelaers and Kristiansen 2013; Kristiansen 2009). Nicolai Pharao sheds light on these selected aspects of (perceived) Danish standard speech in his chapter, presenting another methodologically highly innovative approach, this time drawn from the toolkit of psycholinguistics. Under the premise that selected reduced word forms (e.g. the reduction of intervocalic /g/) are broadly considered non-standard (and, thus, not 'proper' forms of 'standardness'), while at the same time being more difficult to process for language users, Pharao conducted and in his chapter describes a series of listener judgement tests operationalizing reduced segments, regional segmental variation, and regional prosodic variation in the stimuli. Based on his results, Pharao demonstrates, for one, that segmental reduction increases mental processing. This is not the case for word forms corresponding to standard 'norms'. He concludes that there are considerable differences with regard to the encoding of 'standard'/'non-standard' word forms in the mental lexicon, and further critically discusses the implications of these results for related evaluations of 'standardness' within the Danish attitudinal-perceptual realm.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Not entirely unexpectedly, results from the different countries and languages show diverging, heterogeneous configurations of varietal constellations and spectra, with significant effects on and implications for attitudinal-perceptual research and its results. As a short summary of the volume's contribution, then, we would like to tackle the research questions above in a 'lessons learned' manner, both including the findings of the chapters in this book as well as the discussions during the conference held in Vienna where this volume originated.

First, non-linguists basically make use of varieties as categorization tools for classifying their life world, for reducing complexity, handling social meaning. As such, standard varieties are *grosso modo* used for discrimination purposes in the same manner language varieties are generally used. Evidently, in varietal surroundings with dominant non-standard/dialectal varieties, non-standard varieties fulfill such functions as well. However, in contrast to the latter, the remarkable feature of standard – at least in the language areas tackled in this volume – turns out to be its entanglement with the parameter 'language norms'. In the quest for speakers' orientation, standard stands out in this respect. Yet this primarily applies for the written standard, and attitudinal results raise reasonable doubts about whether this is the case for (all) types of spoken standard as well – a question to be taken up by future research. This brings us to the second point: do speakers actually 'need' standard?

On the one hand, this implicates the vast field of standard language ideology already intensely researched by previous SLICE efforts. The 'need' for standard strongly depends on socialization, which differs from one language (area) to another. Here, we are dealing with the complex interaction of, e.g., situational-contextual, evaluative-prestigious, as well as indexical-linguistic phenomena and parameters that generate highly distinctive linguistic situations across the different standard languages and language areas. However, to compare the differences with regard to these phenomena and parameters from context to context, from country to country, widens the interpretational scope in attitudinal-perceptual research considerably, yet necessarily, if we are to learn from and about common patterns and dynamics.

In this interest, and in sum, the chapters in this volume showcase the challenges tied to the elicitation and interpretation of attitudinal-perceptual data, and hence call for a multidimensional empirical framework in standard varieties research.

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