



Standard and non-standard varieties in Austrian schools: The perspectives of teachers and students

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INTRODUCTION: BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The linguistic situation in Austrian schools is currently undergoing significant change. Due to growing national and transnational migration, ‘internal’ as well as ‘external multilingualism’ (“innere und äußere Mehrsprachigkeit” – see Wandruszka 1979) are becoming increasingly relevant in everyday interaction. Reflecting the sociolinguistic situation in Austria in general, the majority of students (and also teachers) in Austrian schools are native speakers of non-standard varieties of German, while there is also a rising number of native speakers of non-German languages.¹ In these linguistically multidimensional circumstances, teachers and students alike are confronted with an official school policy which, on the one hand, calls for a register-sensitive use of language varieties, but, on the other hand, purports and propagates the use of a standard variety of German as the main language of instruction.

In real life, however, any implementation of this standard language policy faces two main difficulties. Firstly, curricula and official guidelines lack a clear definition of ‘standard’. While there seems to exist a widespread and relatively consensual idea of what written Standard German is – traditionally, it corresponds to the language of print and its norms –, the concept of a spoken Standard German has remained notoriously vague (cf. Barbour and Stevenson 1990: 147). A specific facet of the language situation in Austria is that the use of an ‘Austrian standard language’ at school has been demanded and actively promoted by the Federal Ministry

¹ According to the 2001 census, which was the last to include the relevant question, the percentage of citizens with a non-German ‘family language’ (*Umgangssprache*) rose from 1.2% in 1971 to 4.5% (330,612 people) in 2001 (see Statistik Austria 2007). Though no longer recording ‘family language’, more recent data show that, in 2019, 23.7% of the Austrian population had a (1st or 2nd generation) migrant background, up from 17.4% in 2008 (Statistik Austria 2020). The Ministry of Education reports that, in the academic year 2018/19, more than 26% of pupils and students at Austrian schools used languages in addition to German in their everyday life (BMBWF 2020).

of Education and Women (cf. *Österreichisches Deutsch als Unterrichts- und Bildungssprache* 2014). The question of whether such a national variety is not only a theoretical concept but also an empirical reality has been a highly controversial issue in the sociolinguistic literature for more than twenty-five years (cf. e.g. Scheuringer 1996; Wodak 1994). Secondly, despite a general societal consensus that the language of instruction at schools ought to be Standard German (cf. Steinegger 1998; Soukup and Moosmüller 2011: 43f.),² it has been shown that the use of non-standard varieties in the classroom is widespread among both teachers and students, its extent depending on factors such as region as well as urban or rural setting (cf. de Cillia 2018: 74–79). For some forms of classroom interaction, such as group work, even the use of non-German languages has been reported (cf. e.g. Redder 2018: 268–276).

These two aspects lead to the question of whether the use of a standard language in Austrian schools is “an idea in the mind rather than a reality”, borne out by a strong standard language ideology (Milroy and Milroy 1991: 22–23; cf. also Lippi-Green 2012: 67). As the reality of classroom interaction seems to allow for the use and coexistence of different varieties and even languages, depending on registers and situational needs, we began to wonder what teachers and students consider as ‘Standard German’ in general – and whether and how this might differ from their *perceived* ‘standards of usage’ (*Gebrauchsstandards*), i.e. varieties which are de facto applied and accepted in classroom interaction.³

We present results from an ongoing project on the perceptions of and attitudes towards varieties and languages at schools in Austria.⁴ At the heart of the project are data which were collected at fourteen vocational schools in Austria in 2017 and

² The present discussion is limited to German-language schools in Austria. Austrian indigenous minority law makes provisions for the additional languages of instruction of Slovene, Croatian and Hungarian (BMBWF 2020).

³ By applying the term *Gebrauchsstandards*, translated here as ‘standards of usage’, we adopt a concept that can be defined as “geographically defined patterns of language use which carry a correspondingly high prestige in the respective regional context and which are appropriate and accepted in both informal and formal language use” (‘geographisch definierte Varietäten- und Sprachgebrauchsmuster [...], die im jeweiligen regionalen Kontext ein entsprechend hohes Prestige tragen und die sowohl im informellen als auch im formellen Sprachgebrauch angemessen sind und akzeptiert werden’, cf. Berend 2005: 143). Recent German language compendia such as the *AADG*, cf. Kleiner (2011ff.), the *Varietätenwörterbuch* (2016) and the *Varietätengrammatik* (2018) are operationalisations of the concept of formal ‘standards of usage’ and, correspondingly, account for areal standard variation.

⁴ The project “Perceptions of and Attitudes towards Languages and Varieties at Austrian Schools” has been funded since 2016 by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF, project number F 6010). It is part of the FWF Special Research Programme (SFB) F 60 *Deutsch in Österreich* (= *DiÖ*). *Variation – Kontakt – Perception* (‘German in Austria. Variation – Contact – Perception’) (cf. Budin et al. 2019).

2018. In view of the particular sociolinguistic landscape of Austria, with a (rather) diglossic situation in the western parts, where Alemannic dialects are spoken, and a diaglossic situation in the other parts, which are part of the Austrian-Bavarian dialect regions, schools in the west, in the centre and the urban centre of Vienna in the east of Austria were selected for study. Data were elicited via speaker evaluation tests, interviews and focus group discussions with students and teachers, and were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

This chapter addresses the following research questions: What status does ‘Standard German’ have for teachers and students given the presence of other varieties of German at schools? Which varieties and registers do they consider appropriate and acceptable for which situations? What concepts of ‘standard’ do they have? Is ‘standard’ seen rather as an ideal norm or a norm of usage? What are the students’ notions of language norms, in general, and how are these defined? And, finally, how, if at all, do students conceptualise ‘Austrian German standard’ and what role does it play in everyday classroom interaction?

The following section outlines some relevant contemporary concepts of standard in the German-speaking countries with a special focus on schools. We will then introduce the data and methodology of the present study. The main part of this chapter presents the results of the study, which comprise analyses of quantitative as well as qualitative data. The chapter closes with a recap and discussion.

NOTIONS OF STANDARD IN THE GERMAN-SPEAKING COUNTRIES – WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON SCHOOLS

The emergence of present-day notions of ‘standard’

In order to better understand present-day notions of standard, it is necessary to take a look at the standardisation process of German in Switzerland, Germany and Austria, its ideological roots, and older as well as more recent discourses on ‘Standard German’.

Like many other standard languages, Standard German, in the sense of a supra-regional and virtually homogeneous language variety, can be viewed as an ideological construct of the 19th century – the century of nation-building in Europe (cf. Durrell 2017). After the French Revolution, a close linking of language and nation became an instrument in the construction of national identity (cf. Coulmas 1985: 41ff.). The ideologisation of the national-language concept in the 19th and early 20th centuries was effective in three ways, in particular. Firstly, it resulted in a growing sociolinguistic and political bias towards minority languages and neighbouring languages – in the case of German, especially towards French and the Slav-

ic languages. Secondly, it promoted efforts not only to further standardise but also to codify the ‘national’ written language, essentially based on “national print-languages” (Anderson 1983: 67). In fact, the 19th century saw a surge of school grammars and the first codifications of spelling and pronunciation of German, which basically declared variants as deviances from a mainly prescriptive norm (von Polenz 1999: 231f.). Thirdly, and based on the construction of a ‘standard language’, the strict distinction between standard and non-standard languages was established by codifiers on all linguistic levels (orthography, grammar, pronunciation) and monitored by norm authorities such as teachers (cf. von Polenz 1999: 230f.).

It has been noted that in German-speaking countries, very purist and defensive attitudes towards the standard language prevail (for Germany cf. Durrell 1999: 298; for Austria cf. Koppensteiner and Lenz 2017: 26–28). The sometimes fierce public debates about spelling reforms and the purism discourse which have taken place since the end of the 19th century are often cited as symptoms of and evidence for this attitude. There is a widespread consensus in the research literature that such sensitivities can to a large extent be attributed to a comparatively ‘late’ standardisation of German, which may be explained by the absence of a dominant political and cultural centre, such as London in Great Britain and Paris in France (Durrell 1999; von Polenz 1999: 232ff.). Thus, not only the linguistic form of the present-day Standard German variety (or varieties), but also the ambiguous attitudes towards variation and varieties in German are deeply rooted in historical and ideological developments in the late modern history of the German-speaking nation states.

While the standardisation process of German from the end of the 19th century until the middle of the 20th century was marked by a language policy emphasising “monocentric” tendencies (von Polenz 1989: 15, 1999: 419), the German-speaking countries have not only seen the emergence and recognition of different standard varieties of German after the Second World War, but also divergent developments in the relationships between standard and non-standard varieties. While a relatively stable functional diglossia between dialects and standard language has become established in German-speaking Switzerland, there has been a considerable decrease in the use of dialectal varieties in favour of standard varieties in Austria (Wiesinger 1990), and even more so in Germany (Auer 2005; Schmidt 1998). In Germany as well as in Austria, regional differences, and differences between urban and rural regions, in particular, apply. Germany has seen a rapid decline of Low German and Low Franconian dialects in the northern parts of the country, while dialects and regiolects in the south have shown a stronger pertinence. As for Austria, a mainly diglossic language situation has prevailed – similar to the situation in Switzerland – in the westernmost part of the country (Vorarlberg), where Alemannic dialects are spoken. In contrast, the centre and east of Austria, which belong to the large Bavari-

an-based dialect area, are characterised by a diaglossic situation, i.e. a co-existence of (base) dialects, standard varieties and intermediate varieties, often modelled as a continuum between dialect and standard (cf. Auer 2005: 22f.; Lenz 2019; Fanta-Jende 2020). Thus, while it is comparatively easy for speakers in Vorarlberg to identify ‘standard’ as the variety which is maximally different from their native dialects and is used mainly in formal contexts, speakers in other parts of Austria, living in a diaglossic context, tend to shift between standard varieties and regiolects even in formal situations (cf. Ender and Kaiser 2014).

These areally diverse linguistic developments in the German-speaking countries and the dynamic tendencies in recent decades have called for a more flexible concept of ‘standard’ – less monocentric, less homogenous and less prescriptive, even in the established codices of written Standard German. Motivated by both pragmatically and sociolinguistically informed approaches, recent codices have adopted the concept of *Gebrauchsstandards* / ‘standards of usage’ (e.g. *Duden Zweifelsfälle-Wörterbuch* 2016), some of them also accounting for areal variation in German (*Duden Aussprachewörterbuch* 2015; *Variantenwörterbuch* 2016; *Variantengrammatik* 2018).

However, there is as yet no established codex of register variation in spoken Standard German (for Austria, cf. Lanwermeyer et al. 2019). Schneider, Butterworth and Hahn (2018) have attempted to model the syntax of spoken Standard German on a corpus consisting partly of data from political talk shows and partly of data from classroom interaction in two schools in the west of Germany. Taken to its logical extreme, this approach would classify all forms of actual verbal interaction in political talk shows and in the classroom as ‘standards of usage’. In the Austrian case, this means that even regiolectal as well as dialectal conversations in class would have to be considered ‘standard of usage’ at schools. Our current state of knowledge about language attitudes, however, suggests that such a model of standard language would very likely not be accepted in the general public (cf. Koppensteiner and Lenz 2017, 2020). Thus, while the concept of ‘standards of usage’ offers an etic perspective – based on ‘objective’ and verifiable data –, a fully adequate sociolinguistic account of ‘standard’ also has to consider an emic dimension, based on data on people’s notion of what constitutes a standard – in this case ‘Standard German’.

We return to this at the end of the chapter, as we discuss and contextualise our own findings. Meanwhile, the next section will look into concepts of ‘Standard German’ specifically in school curricula and official guidelines.

The concept of ‘Standard German’ in school policies

The school as an educational institution is considered to be the central location for secondary language socialisation (cf. Baquedano-López and Kattan 2008). In the

German-speaking countries, one of the the main aims of all schools is to enable students to acquire a certain level of competence in Standard German. In Austria, the focus of educational politics is increasingly on the acquisition and development of German as a ‘language of education’ (“Unterrichts- und Bildungssprache Deutsch”), as Standard German is labelled in official documents of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF 2019). Even though the importance of linguistic diversity (‘the realm of first and second languages, languages of origin and foreign languages as well as minority languages’⁵) is referred to, ‘German as a “language of education”’ is central, indicated, for example, by the inclusion of German skills in the subjects of the school readiness criteria (cf. BGBl II 2018). It can be assumed – also based on the recent discourse on the term ‘language of education’ – that “Standard German, at least in writing, is the undisputed normative authority, which also has an impact on the oral language use of German” (Dirim 2018: 25).⁶ Hence, the quite complex and diverse linguistic reality in school with respect to spoken language is often viewed by school policies from an angle of prescriptive-normative standards based on the written standard.

But on which official guidelines from school authorities can teachers, as ‘language authorities’ (cf. Ammon 1995; Davies 2005; Davies and Langer 2014), base their – actually powerful⁷ – role, necessary for the educational success of their students? Where can they find the crucial specifications for the reality of teaching? Official documents relevant to teaching such as curricula for German (and other subjects) or school textbooks offer little assistance. Indeed, sociolinguistic varieties such as standard varieties, colloquial vernaculars or dialects (the common term for dialect in primary school curricula is *Mundart*) or in many cases categories such as ‘linguistically correct – compliant with the standard – but also: appropriate to the situation’ are mentioned, although unsystematically and without any terminological clarification or substantiation (cf. most recently the analysis by de Cillia and Ransmayr 2019, building on Griesmayer 2004). When it comes to clarifying the relevant terms, teachers are often left to their own devices, because ‘language variation’ has long been a marginal topic in the curricula of universities and teacher training institutes (cf. de Cillia and Ransmayr 2019). This finding is alarming – and

⁵ “Bereich der **Erst-, Zweit-, Herkunfts- und Fremdsprachen** sowie auch der Minderheitensprachen” (BMBWF 2019; emphasis in the original text).

⁶ Original quote: “Auch wenn in österreichischen Schulen nicht nur das Standarddeutsche gebraucht wird (...), steht das Standarddeutsche zumindest im schriftlichen Bereich als normierende Instanz im Raum, mit Auswirkungen auf den mündlichen Sprachgebrauch.“

⁷ Cf. Gogolin and Lange (2011). For a more general discussion on questions of language discrimination or language norms as a means of exerting power in school cf. Elspaß and Maitz (2011).

in this respect, the situation in Austria is as unsatisfactory as that in Germany and in the German-speaking parts of Switzerland (Davies 2017; Wyss 2017).

In everyday classroom reality, teachers are confronted with quite an array of different native language varieties of their students – varieties of German and non-German languages.⁸ The teachers' role, among other things, is to negotiate different areas of potential linguistic conflicts in the classroom: on the one hand, teachers have to monitor students' compliance with prescriptive language norms (orthographic and grammatical norms in writing, a desired use of near-standard varieties in spoken language); on the other hand, teachers have to exert a certain norm tolerance in dealing with the language reality in the classroom, and, at the same time, they have to guide students to a situation- (and addressee-) appropriate language use.

Studies of actual (oral) language use in school – e.g. the performance of students in class – present an important desideratum for future research projects in Austria.⁹ Until recently, there have been only few studies on the relation of norm and variation in oral classroom interaction (cf. Dannerer and Esterl 2018). One recent project and one ongoing research project provide empirical data on these issues on a larger basis for the first time, including standard concepts of students and pupils and standardisation issues. Whereas the research project “Austrian German as a Language of Teaching and Education” (cf. de Cillia and Ransmayr 2019)¹⁰ concentrated on “Austrian German” as a specific national variety and its role as opposed to other varieties of German, the (ongoing) research project at the University of Salzburg, which the present contribution is based on, focuses on “Perceptions of and Attitudes Towards Varieties and Languages at Austrian Schools” and will eventually contrast perceptual and attitudinal data with data from classroom interaction.¹¹

DATA AND METHODS

The present study examines concepts of standard in school contexts, building on the expectations and attitudes of teachers and students in Austrian schools. To this end, survey data were analysed, in which normative expectations, evaluations and attitudes towards the use of varieties in school – especially towards the use of standard varieties – were obtained by use of a questionnaire. To consolidate the quantitative

⁸ Cf. on forms of bilingualism/multilingualism in schools e.g. de Cillia (2010: 247–249).

⁹ Cf. for Germany Knöbl (2012) and for German-speaking Switzerland Steiner (2008)..

¹⁰ Cf. <https://oesterreichisches-deutsch.bildungssprache.univie.ac.at/home> (March 1, 2022).

¹¹ Recordings and analyses of classroom interaction are presently conducted in the second funding period of project part of PP10 (2020–2023).

findings, qualitative data were analysed. The qualitative data were elicited from selected informants in semi-structured, guided interviews.

For data collection, a direct discursive as well as an indirect approach to eliciting the language attitudes of the respondents was chosen (cf. the discussion of methods by Liebscher and Dailey-O’Cain 2014; Soukup 2014). For the indirect survey, the socio-biographical data of the informants as well as their evaluations of the appropriateness of different varieties in certain contexts (and to provide the reasons for their ratings) were collected by means of an online questionnaire. The semantic differential procedure (following Soukup 2014: 153f.) was used to indirectly elicit attitudes toward internal and external multilingualism. The questionnaire data were collected by means of the open-source software LimeSurvey. The quantitative data were analysed in MS Excel and IBM SPSS.¹² For the direct survey, 325 partly narrative, guided interviews at seven locations in Austria were carried out. For instance, the informants were invited to articulate their perceptions of and attitudes towards their concepts of ‘standard’, or how they feel when they are required to speak standard in certain contexts, and their understanding of language norms (e.g. ‘Is the following speech style (in)appropriate for group work | class discussion | presentation?’). Thus, the qualitative interview data provide substantial in-depth information and insights into the informants’ reasons and substantiations regarding attitudes towards and expectations of the standard language. The conversation sequences were transcribed using the software ‘f4transkript’, and the contents were analysed for repeating themes using the program ‘MAXQDA’.

The indirect method does not openly ask for the perceptions and attitudes of the informants (cf. e.g. Cuonz 2014; Garrett 2005; Soukup 2014). This method also ensures that the same ways of speaking are assessed, whereas the direct approach gives rise to the problem that different informants may have different understandings of the different terms for varieties, such as *Hochdeutsch* (the meaning of which can range from ‘uniform standard written German’ to ‘close-to-standard spoken varieties of German in Austria’, cf. Vergeiner et al. 2019 and the “Results” section below) or *Dialekt* (potentially ranging from ‘base dialect’ to ‘intermediate varieties between base dialects and close-to-standard spoken standard’, cf. Vergeiner et al. 2019). This applies to the ‘close-to-standard’ area in particular where, for example, pluricentric as well as pluriareal concepts compete.¹³ However, different categorisa-

¹² In addition, the online questionnaire contained a rating task in which the informants were asked to evaluate verbal stimuli (in the form of audio samples from students) from different registers according to their appropriateness in various situations in school. However, the analysis of this task is not part of the present study (but see Vergeiner et al. 2019: 297–300 for results).

¹³ Whereas “[t]he term *pluricentric(ity)* indicates that a language has more than one centre, i.e. several centres, each providing a national variety with its own norms” (Clyne 1989: 358),

tions can also occur in the close-to-dialect area (Lameli 2010: 395). Nevertheless, further phenomena such as justifications for the use of standard can only be captured via direct methods – for this reason, the directly collected data are paramount in the current study (cf. the “Results” section for further descriptions of methods used for individual results).

Data collection for the present investigation took place between March 2017 and April 2018 in vocational middle and high schools in Austria. Data were collected at seven *Handelsschulen* and *Handelsakademien*¹⁴ at seven locations in four Austrian states: Bregenz and Bludenz in Vorarlberg, Innsbruck and Wörgl in Tyrol, the City of Salzburg and Zell am See in the state of Salzburg¹⁵ were chosen as locations in areas of Austria in which there is still a widespread use of dialect. Vienna was chosen in order to compare these three areas with a metropolitan area in which the use of dialect has already declined considerably (cf. Lenz 2019: 341). One of the two locations each in Vorarlberg, Tyrol and Salzburg represents a more urban and the other a more rural context.

In the present study, the focus is placed on the federal state of Salzburg. The reason for this is that, according to the data, the comparison of the City of Salzburg and Zell am See is quite emblematic of the differences between western and eastern regions of Austria as well as between urban and rural locations. Thus, results on a small scale in this region reflect, to a certain extent, tendencies for the whole of Austria. The data for Vorarlberg, Tyrol and Vienna are subsequently omitted from discussion in the present study.¹⁶ In Salzburg and Zell am See, a total of 82 students from the 10th grade of different subjects and twelve teachers both responded to the questionnaire and were interviewed. Approximately half of the students are speakers of German as a second language. Two thirds of these are native speakers of Bosnian, Serbian, Croatian, Macedonian or Turkish. The remainder were mainly made up of other European languages, but also a few Asian languages. The focus of

the term “*pluriareal(ity)*” indicates that a language has more than one standard variety with its own norms of usage. There may be more than one standard variety within a nation. In contiguous language areas, standard varieties may also transcend national borders” (Elspaß accepted). For a discussion of the different concepts with respect to the German-speaking countries cf. Elspaß and Niehaus (2014), Herrgen (2015), Schmidlin (2011), Vergeiner (2019).

¹⁴ The focus of this type of school is on commercial and business education. Business academy (*Handelsakademie*) students complete the *Matura* after five years; business school (*Handelsschule*) students complete a technical examination after three years.

¹⁵ The reason for the concentration on schools in the middle and west of Austria arose on the one hand from the fact that other sub-projects of the SFB “German in Austria” focus on the (south) east of the country and on the other hand from the fact that the “western half” of Austria exhibits a broader range of varieties (cf. de Cillia 2018: 77–78, 81–82).

¹⁶ For results from all of the survey locations cf. Fuchs and Elspaß (2019); on further differences between schools in western and eastern regions in Austria cf. de Cillia (2018: 77–78, 81–82).

the present study was on regional peculiarities, differences between urban and rural areas as well as between different school types. With regard to the role of language standards, the study is guided by a particular interest in the comparison between learners and teachers, allowing us thus to compare the perceptions and attitudes of language norm authorities and language norm mediators with those of the ‘recipients’ or addressees of such norms, whose language perceptions and attitudes are assessed in relation to the prescribed norms.

RESULTS

In general, the results show that both teachers and students have certain ideas and expectations about the use of standard as well as non-standard varieties in school, which they consider to be very dependent on the context.

Below, as a first step, ‘students’ and teachers’ conceptualisations of standard language are presented. These were obtained through content analysis of the guided interviews and are grouped by topic. Results from the interviews in the urban schools in the City of Salzburg are contrasted with results from the schools in the small town of Zell am See, which are mostly attended by students from more rural areas.

As a second step, the results of the quantitative analysis of the students’ online questionnaire are presented in terms of perceptions of and attitudes towards the use of ‘standard’ and non-standard varieties in class.¹⁷ This will be followed by a brief reflection on the notion of an ‘Austrian Standard German’ in the minds of the speakers.

In addition to students’ and teachers’ concepts of ‘Standard German’, the interviews brought to light their reasons for the use of ‘standard’ and other varieties in class, as discussed in the last part of the “Results” section. Thus, the quantitative data on perceptions as to which varieties are used in which communicative situations in school and the levels of acceptance of different varieties in class can be complemented and analysed in depth by direct data from interviews.

¹⁷ Because of the small number of teachers in the Salzburg panel only the results based on the students’ assessments are presented here (Salzburg: N = 45 Zell am See: N = 37). For a comparison of teachers’ and students’ assessments in the entire Austria study cf. Buchner, Elspaß and Fuchs (2022).

Students' and teachers' concepts of 'Standard German' (qualitative analysis)

'Standard' as the everyday language: Our analysis of the guided interviews shows that, in the City of Salzburg, different concepts of 'standard language' exist. The terminology also varies. This standard variety is termed *Standardsprache* ('standard language') as well as *Hochdeutsch* (literally 'High German').¹⁸ Many of the informants from the City of Salzburg¹⁹ conceptualise the 'Standard' as *Alltagssprache* ('everyday language') in the sense of the language of everyday use. According to student SA47,²⁰ it is a "completely normal language" which is spoken in "everyday communication" (12:14-13:21). SA10 confirms this by saying that this variety is something "which everyone speaks" and "at the end of the day, is understood by everyone" (19:35-20:21). SA21 goes further in that she states that the standard language is the variety which is "spoken universally in Austria" and "in daily interaction" – whether that is "in working life" or "during leisure time" and constitutes the most important form of communication (15:50-19:22). Student SA23 is also of the opinion that the standard is an "pre-established language for everything" which should therefore also be used universally. According to him, there are no dialects spoken in Salzburg, which has "only advantages". There are thus no comprehension difficulties and communication is "much less complicated" (20:21-21:15). Interestingly, the standard is much more clearly defined as the everyday language by the students in the City of Salzburg than by their teachers. The latter remain considerably vaguer. Nevertheless, for most teachers, the standard is also a "kind of colloquial language" which is appropriate in most interactive situations but also has potential for variation.

'Standard' as a foreign language: In contrast to the City of Salzburg, the variety reportedly used in everyday spoken communication in the rural parts of Salzburg is dialect. According to the informants from Zell am See, dialect plays a central role in leisure time and at school. Nevertheless, according to teacher LC4, it is essential that students are also confronted with Standard German (*Hochdeutsch* in her terminology), in particular with regard to the oral exams in the *Matura*, i.e. the general certificate of university entrance qualification in Austria. However, it was "a kind of

¹⁸ *Hochdeutsch* is a widespread term for Standard German in the German-speaking countries, used to refer to the most 'elevated' variety or register in speakers' repertoires of German. Terminologically, it conflates with the dialectological umbrella term for the central and upper German dialect areas which have undergone the Second ('High German') Sound Shift (cf. Salmons 2018: 118–124).

¹⁹ Similar notions were expressed by students from Vienna.

²⁰ The labels read as follows – e.g. SA47: S = student (L = teacher), A = city of Salzburg (C = Zell am See), 47 = respondent code number. The respondent code number may be higher than the total number of actual participants from the individual location (e.g. for Salzburg N = 45), as not all individuals who received a code actually participated.

foreign language” for her, which shows “only a little similarity” to the local dialect. Student SC22 confirms that *Hochdeutsch* comprises a “completely different vocabulary” to dialect, and, in contrast to the latter, it is “grammatically correct”. According to SC22, this would make comprehension difficult outside of one’s own region. For this reason alone, “learning the standard language is essential” (15:22-15:47). As with the acquisition of a foreign language, the transition from dialect to the standard language is “a process”, according to LC2; standard competence is built up little by little and used in different situations.

‘Standard’ as the ‘language of educatedness’, as the ‘formal’ or ‘high variety’ (overt prestige): According to the perception of students and teachers from the City of Salzburg, the language variety used in their classes is almost exclusively Standard German. They attribute this to the fact that the Standard is generally viewed as being “clearer”, “more articulate” and also “more educated”. According to SA45, one tries to use High German to “represent”, “position yourself well” and therefore “be taken more seriously” (17:03-17:55). SA52 also supports this argument. For her, High German shows “respect, high regard”. By speaking standard, one indicates that one “accepts” and “values” the other person. She also draws a comparison with the language of Goethe and thus makes it clear that she sees High German as something that is spoken by more educated people. For SA2, the standard language is something “that is prescribed in this way”, which “conforms to the rules, which one must follow” (13:28-14:50). According to SA6, it is also important “to pronounce the words as they are”. Only then would it be “proper High German”; she concedes that it “isn’t bad”, if a few words in dialect appear in between, although it shows “less intelligence” and is also “not so nice [nett]” (13:58-14:32). In this respect, for SA20, it is not appropriate to speak dialect at school. High German is the “polite form”, which is “more formal” than dialect and which “should always be spoken outside of your own family and circle of friends” (07:52-09:19). For SA32 the standard is “an official language”, which should also be used in everyday life (13:12-14:02). For the informants from the rural part of Salzburg as well, High German is a variety with a high prestige, concomitant with a higher level of education. SC5 describes it as “higher, more educated” (12:05-12:35). SC25 reiterates this opinion, by labelling the standard language as an “elevated form of dialect” which is “more cultivated and more beautiful”. For him, it is directly related to “nobleness”. The standard is a “clean language, without errors, in which you can express everything clearly”. Above all, “the educated” would speak High German, whereas dialect is more at the forefront in the family or with friends. He has “great respect” for people who use the standard language in daily life. In his opinion, this variety also contributes to success in later working life. If you are able to “express yourself well in High German”, you will be “better perceived” and thereby “more

successful" (21:14-21:57). This argument was supported by SC41, who is also of the same opinion that the standard language is "essential in business" (19:18-21:03).

'Standard' as a rather exoglossic variety (not genuinely 'Austrian'): In part, in the City of Salzburg, our informants make a distinction between the standard which is the "highest variety" possible in Austria, and proper *Hochdeutsch*. The latter is a form of language which is spoken "purely in Germany" and "not achievable" for Austrians. According to SA33, this is also not necessary. SA33 thinks that *Hochdeutsch* is not used very often in Austria anyway. It is important that one "knows German" and "is proficient in the grammar". Should one enter "a phase of life" where *Hochdeutsch* is essential, one could always "take a couple of lessons to have it in the back of your mind" (16:45-17:23). This also goes hand in hand with the perception of a separate Austrian Standard of German. SA52 compares the language situation in Germany and Austria with America and England, for example. According to her, American English is comparable with Austrian German. "The same words are used" in Austria as in Germany, but these are "pronounced more sloppily" in Austria. In contrast, High German as spoken in Germany sounds "much more highbrow" and is "closer to the orthography and the norm" (15:33-16:25). For SA40 there is also a large difference between the German and Austrian Standard. She first became aware of this when her four-year-old German cousin asked her why she could not speak "proper German"; the child declared not being able to "understand her well" because she spoke "so strangely" (20:16-20:49). Still, in the City of Salzburg, the informants are largely convinced that Austrian Standard German and German Standard German exist side by side, on an equal footing, although there are in part large linguistic differences. The picture is completely different in the rural part of Salzburg. In this region, dialect is virtually the only everyday language. As we reported earlier, the standard language is generally seen as a "foreign language", which is certainly "desirable" but is "difficult to achieve". Despite the conviction that different centres exist and that a "universal German" can never be achieved, it is an "ideal" which stands out above all other varieties, according to our informants. 'Austrian Standard German' on the other hand, which represents the "highest level of language" within Austria, is subordinate to the 'German Standard'. "German German [Standard]" is perceived as flawless compared to the unpolished 'Austrian [Standard] German'. In general, Germans appear "more competent", "rhetorically better" and are in a much better position to get to the point.

'Standard' as written language, which students learn at school: As already mentioned, the informants in the rural part of Salzburg assume the existence of a "uniform Standard German" which is difficult to achieve in oral communication for Austrians. Student SC37 regards High German as "the written" language which is "not relevant" to everyday communication (13:22-14:01). According to him, the standard is therefore considered to be "the standardised and codified written lan-

guage” which is used in textbooks. According to SA12, High German is exactly “how one writes and formulates”. In terms of grammar, it is “exactly how you learn it at school” (15:14-15:46). For SC12, as well, the Standard language is exactly that which is found “in the dictionary”. It is a “very objective and grammatically correct German”, which is the “official language” in Austria and therefore has to be learned at school (23:30-24:45).

Standard domains: Perceptions of the use of ‘standard’ in relation to non-standard varieties (quantitative analysis)

In order to compare the notions of standard language and non-standard varieties, the informants were given typical types of texts or conversational situations from outside the school environment in the questionnaire and were asked to grade the language typically used in such written and oral genres on a scale between the two poles *Hochdeutsch* (‘Standard German’) and *Dialekt* (‘base dialect’).

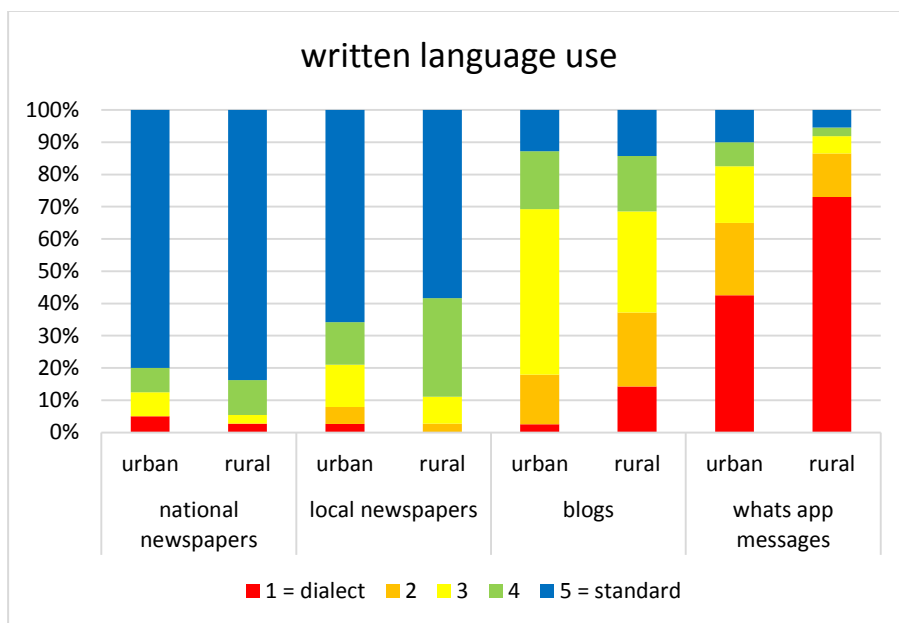


Figure 1: In your impression, are the following text types written mostly in dialect (*Dialekt*) or in standard (*Hochdeutsch*)?

Figure 1 presents the results for the *written* level. In general, the results show that the students from the City of Salzburg (in Figure 1 represented under the label ‘urban’), like those from the rural part of Salzburg, differentiate clearly between the

types of texts in the written field which they regard as representative of the standard language, and those which they rate mostly as non-standard language. (On a five-point-scale, we consider the ratings from 1 to 3 as ‘non-standard’.) In the view of the respondents, newspapers are written almost exclusively (national newspapers) or mainly (regional newspapers) in High German or close-to-standard (= rating number 4 on the five-point-scale). For types of text such as blog posts or private WhatsApp messages, which (can) also differ medially from newspapers, the impression of the respondents is that dialect is clearly used more frequently, most often in private WhatsApp messages with peers, i.e. in text types with presumably the lowest degree of formality (cf. dialect as the “language of immediacy”, cf. Koch and Oesterreicher 2012). Students from the rural part of Salzburg differ in their perceptions from those from the City of Salzburg in that they gravitate more strongly to one pole of the dialect–standard-continuum, e.g. for newspapers towards the standard pole and for blogs and WhatsApp messages towards the dialect pole.

In comparison, the evaluations of *spoken* genres by the respondents show a more diverse picture (cf. Figure 2). In the rural region as well as in the city, the national ORF news broadcast ZIB 1 (i.e. the primetime evening news) would use language which is perceived as ‘standard’ or ‘close-to-standard’ by the vast majority (nearly 80%). A job interview in the business field in the City of Salzburg would also be conducted in (near) standard in the opinion of almost all students (urban over 80% / rural slightly under 80%), there were no indications for the use of ‘dialect’. All

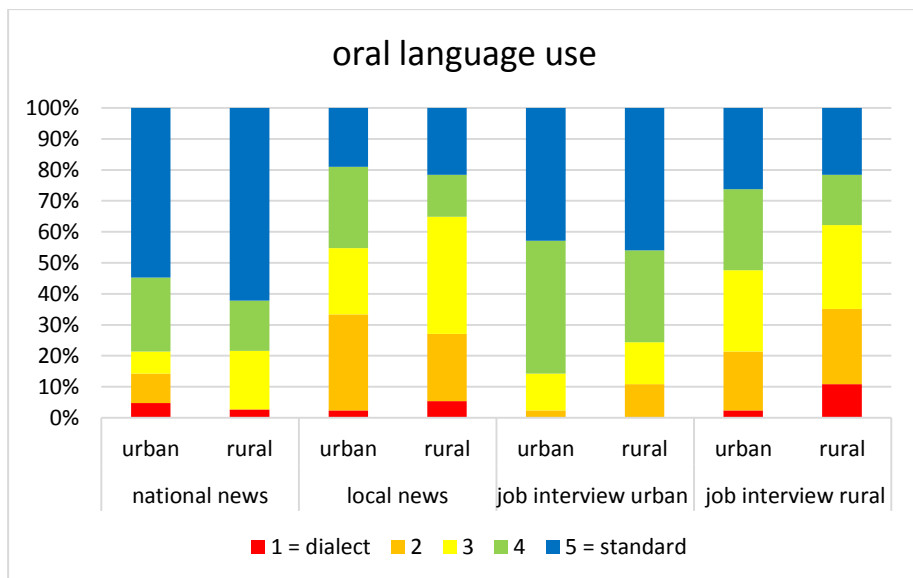


Figure 2: In your impression, do people predominantly use dialect (*Dialekt*) or standard (*Hochdeutsch*) in the following genres?

varieties are represented for local news broadcasts and job interviews in the rural part of Salzburg. However, students from the City of Salzburg assume more often that ‘standard’ or ‘close-to-standard’ would be used in these spoken genres. Both groups also agree that there are regional differences in the choice of varieties: as for job interviews in the city and national news broadcasts, respondents think that both professional speakers (radio) as well as they themselves speak closer to the ‘standard’ than in comparable communication situations with a regional focus.

Now that it has been clarified which extra-curricular conversational situations the interviewed students from urban and rural areas associate with the terms *Hochdeutsch* (‘Standard German’) and *Dialekt* (‘base dialect’), we consider the question in which school situations and with which conversational partners *Hochdeutsch* (‘Standard German’) and other varieties are used. For this purpose, a comparison is drawn between more formal (oral examinations) and more informal conversational situations (class discussion), whereby a distinction is also made between conversational partners (students vs teachers) and subject (German class vs other subjects).

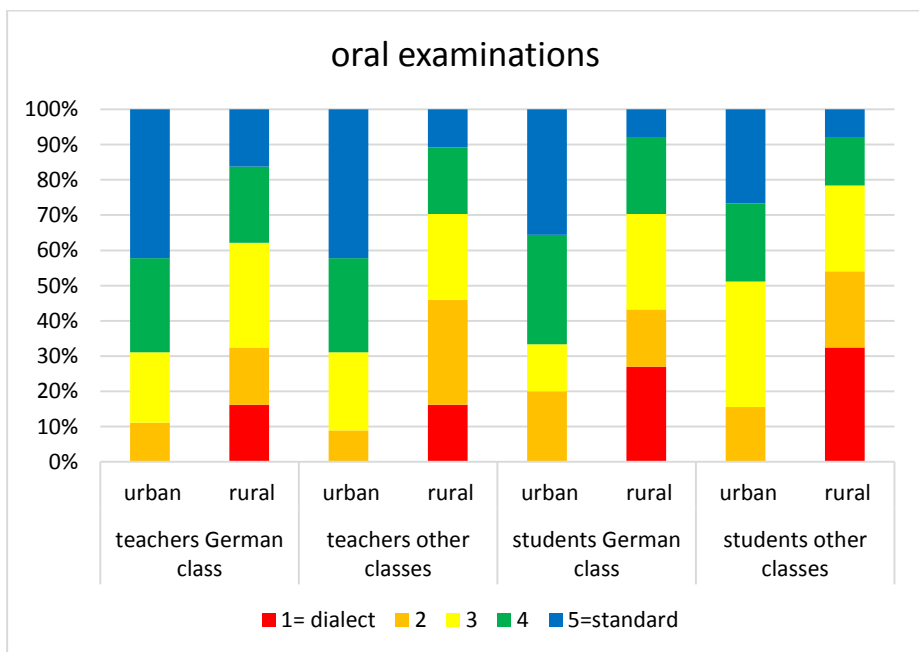


Figure 3: In your impression, do people predominantly use dialect (*Dialekt*) or standard (*Hochdeutsch*) in oral examinations in your school?

In terms of the perceived choice of varieties in examination situations, there are once again clear differences between urban and rural respondents. Students from the city more often refer to the variety used in these situations as ‘standard’ or ‘close-

to-standard', whereas students from rural areas more often refer to it as 'dialect' or 'close-to-dialect' ways of speaking. Urban students state that they do not observe the use of dialect in the specified situations, a perception which rural students do not share.

Interestingly, the clearly discernible differences in ratings according to subject in the other states, i.e. Vienna, Tyrol and Vorarlberg (e.g. that German teachers speak closer to standard than teachers of other subjects and students in German lessons speak closer to standard than in other subjects), or groups of persons (teachers speak closer to standard than students), cannot – or only to a very limited extent – be confirmed for Salzburg.

In comparison to formal oral examinations (cf. Figure 3), the respondents – in all categories – perceive less use of 'standard' in classroom interactions between teachers and students (cf. Figure 4). Again, the two groups of interviewees differ greatly from one another. Students from the city state more often than their rural

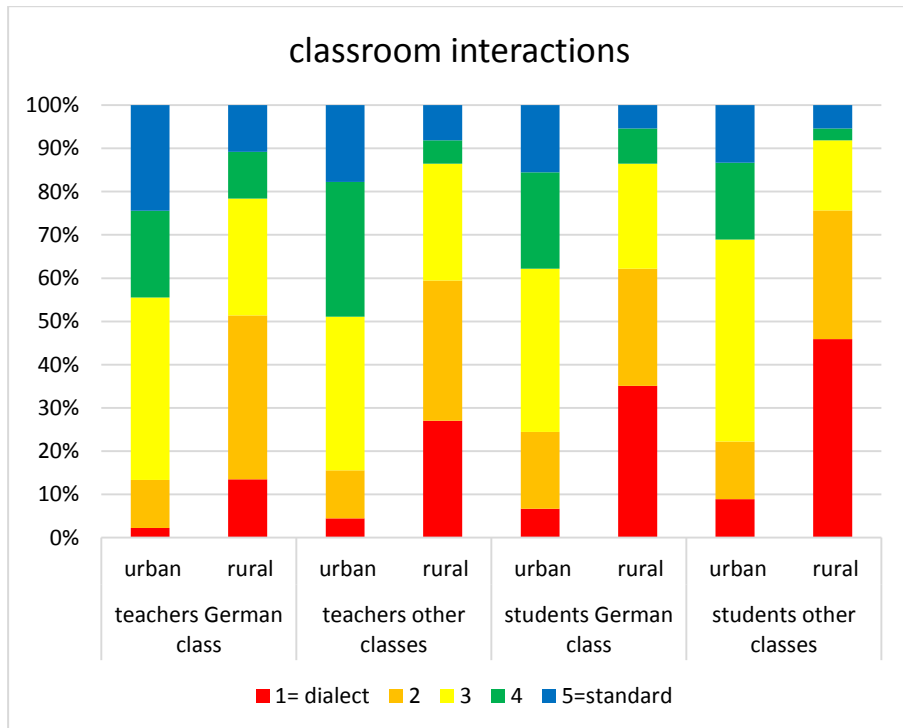


Figure 4: In your impression, do people predominantly use dialect (*Dialekt*) or standard (*Hochdeutsch*) in classroom interactions between teachers and students in your school?

colleagues – and teachers of other than German classes even up to four times more often –, that in their view ‘standard’ or ‘close-to-standard’ language is spoken in class. As for the use of non-standard varieties, the opposite picture arises. According to students in the rural part of Salzburg, ‘dialect’ or ‘close-to-dialect’ is spoken by teachers and students alike to a large extent (from 50% of the German teachers up to 75% of the students in other subjects). Urban-rural differences can therefore be seen even more clearly.

Attitudes towards the use of ‘standard’ and non-standard varieties in class (quantitative analysis)

After analysing the perceived use of language in the previous sections, the question arises as to which varieties should be used when, according to students, and which are accepted in different situations in school.

Firstly, we asked students to respond to the following statements on a five-point-Likert scale between 1 “yes” and 5 “no”:

- (a) *Im Schulunterricht sollte Hochdeutsch geschrieben werden.* (‘In class, Standard German should be written.’)
- (b) *Im Schulunterricht (= in Lehrer-Schüler-Gesprächen) sollte Hochdeutsch gesprochen werden.* (‘In class, i.e. in teacher-student interaction, Standard German should be spoken.’)
- (c) *Im Schulunterricht sollten Hochdeutsch und Dialekte nicht miteinander vermischt werden.* (‘In class, Standard German and dialects should not be mixed.’)
- (d) *Solange es den SchülerInnen hilft, ist es egal, ob in der Schule auch mehr Dialekt als Hochdeutsch gesprochen wird.* (‘As long as it helps the students, it is unimportant whether more dialect or Standard German is spoken in school.’)
- (e) *Im Schulunterricht an österreichischen Schulen soll österreichisches Hochdeutsch gepflegt werden.* (‘In classrooms at Austrian schools, Austrian Standard German should be cultivated’)

Figure 5 shows the results of this task, again divided by responses from students from rural and urban schools.

The approval rating for the use of *Hochdeutsch* (‘Standard German’) in written tasks (statement (a)) is the highest (between 80 and 90%), with both groups of students being in agreement. This result, however, does not apply to spoken usage (statement (b)): the approval rates for the use of ‘(close-to-) standard’ varieties in

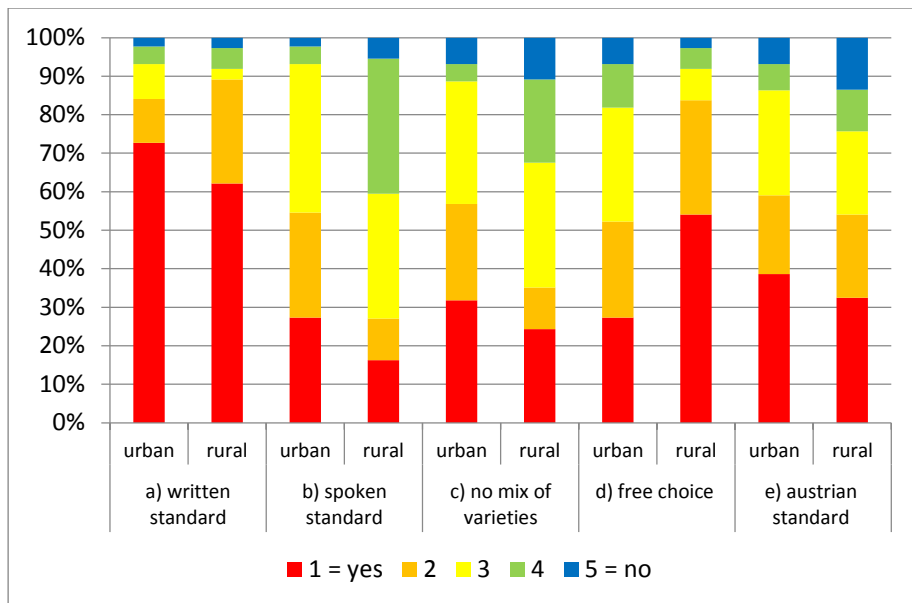


Figure 5: Level of acceptance of statements on whether only Standard German (*Hochdeutsch*) or also other varieties of German be used in class

teacher-student interaction is twice as high for students from urban schools as for students from rural schools; up to 40% of students from rural schools oppose this statement (including category 4, “rather not”). The difference according to the degree of urbanisation in the perceived use of language in oral teaching situations (cf. Figures 3 and 4) is reflected in the respective acceptance rates. It is not surprising, then, that the overwhelming majority of students from rural schools (over 80%) favour the use of dialect in lessons, “as long as it helps the students” (statement (d)). While over half of the students at urban schools oppose a mixing of ‘dialect’ and ‘*Hochdeutsch*’ in class (statement (c)), students from rural schools present a two-part picture – rejection and approval were effectively equal (ca. 30% each). The call for the cultivation of an ‘Austrian Standard German’ (*österreichisches Hochdeutsch*) in Austrian schools was supported by students to a large extent (50–60%), irrespective of school location.

Attitudes towards the concept of ‘(Austrian) Standard German’ (quantitative analysis)

In order to explore whether there is a notion of ‘Austrian Standard German’ in the minds of our informants and, if so, what that notion is, we asked about the concept

of ‘Austrian Standard German’. Firstly, students were asked to respond to the following statement: “Es gibt ein eigenes österreichisches Hochdeutsch.” (‘A standard variety of German called ‘Austrian Standard German’ does exist.). The vast majority answered with a ‘no’ (urban schools: 75%, rural schools: 73%). Interestingly, de Cillia’s and Ransmayr’s (2019: 138) study produced exactly the opposite result. However, in de Cillia’s and Ransmayer’s study, the respondents were confronted with a – differently worded – question, not with a statement: “Glauben Sie, dass es ein österreichisches Standarddeutsch (Hochdeutsch) gibt?” (‘Do you think that there is an Austrian Standard German (*Hochdeutsch*)?’)

To find out how homogeneous or heterogeneous Standard German in Austria appears to our informants, we further asked where the ‘best’ and the ‘most beautiful’ *Hochdeutsch* in Austria is spoken. Figure 6 shows the results of the students’ responses. All nine federal states of Austria as well as “everywhere the same” and “don’t know” were given as answer options.

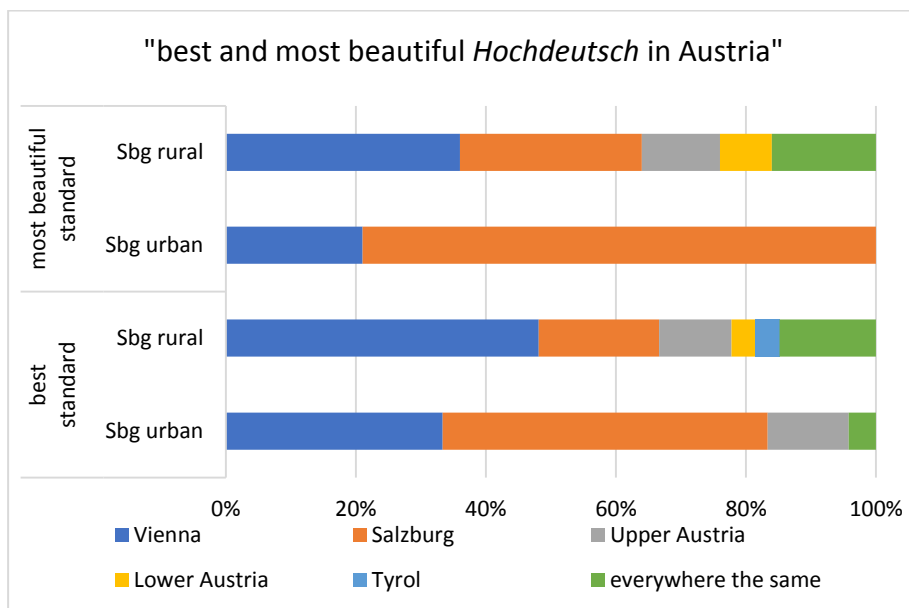


Figure 6: The ‘best’ and the ‘most beautiful’ Standard German (*Hochdeutsch*) in Austria is spoken in ...

For many students from the City of Salzburg, the answer in both cases was that the ‘best’ and ‘most beautiful’ *Hochdeutsch* is to be found in their own state (or to a small extent in neighbouring Upper Austria) and in the capital Vienna. The vast majority (over 60%) of students from the rural part of Salzburg also named their

own state and Vienna in both cases. One in seven students from rural schools stated that there are no differences between the states. Although there are notable differences between the responses of students from urban Salzburg and rural Zell am See, the overall picture shows very clearly that there is no consistency in terms of the notion of a ‘best’ High German in Austria. This makes it seem unlikely that there is a notion of a uniform ‘Austrian Standard German’ in the students’ minds.

Reasons for the use of ‘standard’ at school (qualitative analysis)

In addition to students’ and teachers’ concepts of ‘Standard German’, the interviews brought to light their purported reasons for the use of ‘standard’ and other varieties in class. Thus, the quantitative data on perceptions as to which varieties are used in which communicative situations in school (cf. Figures 3 and 4) and the levels of acceptance of different varieties in class can be complemented and given additional perspective by drawing on direct data from interviews.

First of all, the students’ and teachers’ expressed expectations regarding the use of the standard and other varieties in school differ considerably depending on region. Teachers frequently report a discrepancy between the ‘officially’ (i.e. in school curricula) expected use of ‘the Standard’ in school (especially in the upper grades) and the frequent use of non-standard varieties by students in their everyday life. Below, we list the main arguments provided for the use of ‘Standard German’ in school.

Comprehensibility as an argument for standard use: For most respondents, the importance of comprehensibility is a strong argument for orientation towards the standard. For teacher LC1, it is explicitly “desired”, that “written language” (“*Schriftsprache*”) is spoken. According to her, primarily students from (rural) regions strongly characterised by the use of dialects often have difficulties at first with “adapting linguistically”. It would be “desirable” for them to adapt, however, especially since students with social backgrounds where little dialect is used often have difficulties understanding a “strong dialect”. According to SC5, the large numbers of students with German as a second language make it necessary to adapt to the standard language. LA2 supports this with the following statement (cf. Interview Sequence 1):

Interview Sequence 1 (Salzburg LA2 – 05:17-06:02)

01 LA2: *das ist auch NOTwendig, (-)*

01 LA2: this is also necessary, (-)

02 °h äh: *weil wir halt sehr viele mit migrationshintergrund haben.*

02 °h eh: because we have so many (students) with a migratory background.

- 03 (--) *und mir fällt dann auch auf, (-)*
 03 (--) *and I notice that, (-)*
- 04 *wenn man hin und wieder mal so in den diaLEKT verfällt, (.)*
 04 *when you drop into dialect now and again, (.)*
- 05 *°hh äh:: dann verSTEHEN sie das einfach nicht. (---)*
 05 *°hh eh:: they simply don't understand it. (---)*
- 06 *also insofern ist es NÖTIG; (.)*
 06 *so in this respect, it is necessary; (.)*
- 07 *°h gehobene umgangssprache zu sprechen.*
 07 *°h to speak a more elevated colloquial language.*

According to this teacher, in many cases dialect can constitute “a linguistic barrier” which is very difficult to overcome for students from a migratory background. In this respect, it appears to be “necessary” to her to speak a “more elevated colloquial language” (*gehobene Umgangssprache*) to make it easier for such learners to understand. She does not use the term *Hochdeutsch* or *Standard* here; as she only differs between “more elevated colloquial language” and “dialect” here, we can assume that by *gehobene Umgangssprache* she means a variety oriented towards the standard.²¹

Degree of formality and use of the standard: In the opinion of many teachers as well as students, exclusive use of standard should be aimed for primarily in particular situations in class, such as “technical parts” of presentations or oral examinations in school. According to student SA1, speaking dialect during a presentation “has no part” (06:58-07:03). A similar opinion is expressed by teacher LC3, who reaffirms that “dialect-coloured” speech during a final examination “can’t happen, of course” (04:28-04:55). The ultimate goal of oral language proficiency in Standard German is the oral *Matura* examination in the business academy or the oral professional examination in the business school. Interestingly, there are no indications of sanctions, such as poor school grades, for infractions of the prescribed use of language. In the interviews, several teachers mention that they or their colleagues raise awareness for “more appropriate” (more standard) ways of speaking after presentations only.

²¹ *Umgangssprache* is a notoriously difficult term in German linguistics because of its polysemy. The meaning relevant here refers to the notion of ‘intermediate’ varieties between standard varieties and dialects (cf. Dutch *tussentaal*; for the concept of *Umgangssprachen* in the Austrian context cf. Scheutz 1999).

The informants also have particular expectations regarding the use of the standard at university. Some respondents emphasise that in university (and subsequently professional) situations, a certain level of sophistication in the use of the standard language is essential. That is a reason why LA3 prepares her students for this: back in the day, and in comparison to “German or East Austrian fellow students”, who “did not have to think about the appropriate language first”, she often found herself in a “linguistic crisis” at university, because the “grammar and lexis” with which she was familiar from the dialect were no longer appropriate for formal situations. To spare the learners such difficulties, she tries to “give them recommendations based on her own experiences” and to train them in the standard variety with a view towards their course of studies (09:37-10:18). A few of the interviewed teachers broached the issue that the time and location of their own university studies expanded their knowledge of linguistic variation. LC5 remarks that linguistic diversity was “quite an issue” at the University of Salzburg. Through interaction with students and staff from different regions, the awareness of other varieties and languages was increased and in the course of this she became “more tolerant” of other language forms (15:41-16:12).

Aside from educational institutions, the importance of speaking ‘Standard German’ is mentioned in connection with post-educational professional life. Learning *Hochdeutsch* (‘Standard German’) in school as a supraregional variety appears to be considered an advantage in the professional life for the majority of the informants, especially in business or those professions which require an academic degree. The medical or teaching professions were often mentioned as prototypical examples. For LA2, it is a requirement in a “globalised world” that one “speaks in a language where you also understand someone in the north of Germany”. This is even more important for her type of school, where the majority of graduates will work in business fields in the future, as SC5 states (05:20-05:42) (cf. Interview Sequence 2):

Interview Sequence 2 (Zell am See SC5 – 05:20-05:42)

01 SC5: *wei wonn i hiatz zum beispü waos in mein dialekt saog?*

01 SC5: because if I say something in my dialect now for example?

02 (--) *vasteht mi jo so koana.* (-)

02 (--) no one understands me (-)

03 *°hh äh:: und eigentlich is hochdeutsch scho,*

03 *°hh eh:: and actually High German is,*

04 (--) *fi ins hiatz, (--) so irgendwia a a fremdsproch wie*

04 (-) in our view, (--) somehow a foreign language

- 05 (---) °h äh:: jo (--). owa mia soitns hiatz scho kunna; (-)
 05 (---) °h eh:: yes (--). but we should be able to do it; (-)
- 06 *wei mia sand a wirtschoftsschui,*
 06 because we are a business school,
- 07 (.) *und mia mochen zoig mit wiatschoft, (.)*
 07 (.) and we want to do things in business, (.)
- 08 °h *und sust versteht ins jo spada in berufslem koa mensch.*
 08 °h otherwise nobody will understand us later in our professional life.

Job interviews were also mentioned as a domain in which it is crucial to speak standard, and, thus, the interview comments confirm the quantitative results (cf. Figure 2). For instance, SC4 asserts that she “tends to speak High German” in such situations. Apart from the fact that this student wants to “express herself well”, the standard is a means for her to be *understood* well by the other person (03:30-04:05). Therefore, not only is a higher prestige of the standard variety assumed, but also comprehensibility comes into play. This aspect is also highlighted in school when interacting with fellow students who have a poor or insufficient knowledge of German. With regard to the effects of language use outside of the school as an educational institution, the use of dialect is at times presented negatively as a stigma: according to LC3, standard is necessary because “it is important that you can also move outside of your comfort zone” without being immediately labelled as “a farmer from the country” (07:13-07:26).

It is striking that teachers often speak of a “*gehobene Umgangssprache*”, i.e. an ‘elevated colloquial language’, in place of the ‘standard’ as the target variety. This variety is generally reserved for more formal situations. This becomes clear in the statement by LC3. It is important for her to communicate in a “manner appropriate to the situation”. Thus, her talks to management about private things are conducted entirely in dialect, whereas for “official topics” an “elevated colloquial language” is appropriate to her (cf. Interview Sequence 3):

Interview Sequence 3 (Zell am See LC3 – 02:42-2:52)

- 01 LC3: *mit kollegen spri:ch i (---) äh:, °h äh im haus*
 01 LC3 With colleagues in-house I speak (---) eh
- 02 *natürlich eher tiroler (--)* also *diaLEKT?*
 02 naturally more Tyrolean (--) thus, dialect?

- 03 °h mit kollegen äh (.) von ONderen schulen,
03 °h with colleagues (.) from other schools,
- 04 weil ich bin auch monchmal unterwegs
04 because sometimes I'm on the go
- 05 und in der lehrerbildung tätig,
05 and (I) work in teacher education,
- 06 °hh do:: (---) gehobene UMGANGSsprache;
06 °hh do:: (---) elevated colloquial language;
- 07 °h a je noch dem wies ZO:mpasst jo? (---)
07 °h depending on the situation? (---)
- 08 situationsangepasst. ((lacht))
08 appropriate to the situation. ((laughs))
- 09 mit da frau direktor sprich i offiZIELLE sochn (-)gehobene
umgangssprache,
09 with the headteacher I speak (-) an elevated colloquial language
for official matters,
- 10 °h priVATE sochn (--) °h diaLEKT.
10 °h (when it comes to) private matters (--) °h (I speak) dialect.

School subject and standard use: Apart from the domain and the degree of formality, the school subject also plays a significant role in relation to the use of ‘Standard German’: from the point of view of many students and teachers who do not teach German classes, it is the task of German lessons and the teachers of German to require the use of the Standard. In other subjects, conversely, paying attention to the language is only a part of the duties of the teacher. As long as mutual understanding is guaranteed, dialect is entirely adequate there. This argument is made by SA1: whereas in other subjects, language serves merely as a medium of instruction which explicitly “has hardly anything to do with the subject matter”, in German lessons the language is the focus. In this respect, “High German” must be spoken in order to develop a feel for “how to write” and “how words are pronounced” (03:52-04:07). This is closely connected to students’ notion that teachers of German are role models with respect to the use of the standard. According to student SA7, they should “tend to speak High German” in order to set an example in terms of language use (10:20-11:06).

Situation-appropriate use of standard and other varieties: Although the standard variety appears to be deeply interwoven with everyday school life and, according to some teachers, is indispensable in more formal situations, the respondents often argue for the use of non-standard varieties in day-to-day school life. One argument, put forward by LC4, is aimed at considering all variety competencies and their situational use (cf. Interview Sequence 4):

Interview Sequence 4 (Zell am See LC4 – 05:34-06:37)

01 IV: *äh:m i:hre schüler im unterricht (--)*

01 IV: *eh:m your students, (when they are) in class (--)*

02 *welche (.) SPRACHformen verwenden denn die (-) überwiegend?*

02 *which (.) forms of language do they use predominantly?*

03 LC4: *(1.5) se:hr viel diaLEKT (1.5)*

03 LC4: *(1.5) a lot of dialect(1.5)*

04 IV: *hm_hm*

04 IV: *hm_hm*

05 LC4: *und (.) ich erlaube es ihnen a (---) natürlich mit grenzen=*

05 LC4: *and (.) I allow them (to speak dialect) (---) but within limits, of course=*

06 *=weil (-) MIR wichtig is (.) sie sprechen dialekt=*

06 *=because (-) it's important to me (.) they speak dialect=*

07 *=und sie müssen se a nit verstellen*

07 *= and they don't have to pretend*

08 *sie soin ja trotzdem auTHENTISCH bleiben*

08 *they should nevertheless remain authentic*

09 IV: *ja*

09 IV: *yes*

10 LC4: *und der wechsel is sehr sehr schwierig*

10 LC4 *and this change is very very difficult*

11 *wenn man so EXTREM dialekt=*

11 *if you (speak) an extreme dialect=*

- 12 =*es is jo schon relativ a STARker dialekt (-)*
 12 =it is a relatively strong dialect (-)
- 13 *mit großen unterschieden (--)*
 13 with big differences (--)
- 14 *und sie so in den WECHsel erlernen=*
 14 and they should learn this switch =
- 15 =*sie müssen des codesch' code switching sozusagen beWUSST anwenden können*
 15 =they have to be able to consciously code-switch, so to speak

According to LC4, using different linguistic varieties and registers for formal and informal contexts is a prerequisite for comprehensive linguistic competence. This also includes dialect. Learners should be prepared for different linguistic requirements and be sensitised to behave in a linguistically suitable manner in various social contexts. German lessons, in particular, should serve as a “training ground” for this. However, some teachers as well as students also equate ‘the standard’ with the standardised, codified written language which is subject to certain “grammatical restrictions” (*grammatikalischen Zwängen*). Some respondents portray it as a variety that has the “greatest communicative range” but is actually “difficult to achieve orally”. According to some teachers’ as well as students’ views, the use of non-standard varieties in class is legitimate as general (external) expectations placed on the use of ‘the standard’ are too high and the (ideal) standard norms can scarcely be met. Most of students’ everyday communication takes place exclusively in dialect. Thus, switching into Standard German in school presents a big challenge to them which is for many difficult to face. According to LC2, “this switch is very difficult”. As a measure of support for her students, she would accept the use of dialect in class, “within limits, of course” (06:15-07:22).

Working relationships as an argument: Conceding to the use of non-standard varieties, which is seen as authentic, is often also regarded as a tribute to the pedagogical relationship between teacher and student – as long as it is not in official situations. For LA2, it is a mark of a “good relationship” when students speak dialect with her. The students would feel “comfortable” and “accepted”, which is imperative for a “good basis of trust”. However, she requires them to speak “properly” in examination situations, “of course” (05:10-06:04). Overall, dialect has a positive connotation for students as well as teachers. SC6 associates dialect with “home”. In this respect, it is an “important, integral part” of her life (09:46-10:01). This argument is also supported by LC2 as follows (cf. Interview Sequence 5):

Interview Sequence 5 (Zell am See LC2 – 05:10-06:04)

- 01 LC2: *äh: wenn die schüler mit mir im diaLEKT re:den, (--)*
 01 LC2: eh: when the students speak dialect with me, (--)
- 02 *donn is a gute beZIEHUNG a da; (-)*
 02 then there's a good relationship there; (-)
- 03 *donn fühlen sie sich a WOHL; (-)*
 03 then they feel comfortable; (-)
- 04 *donn fühlen sie sich ANgnommen; (--)*
 04 then they feel accepted; (--)
- 05 *donn fühlen sie sich vertraut. (---)*
 05 then they feel familiar. (---)
- 06 *°h äh: äh: dialekt is für mi die WURzel, (.)*
 06 °h eh: eh: dialect is the root for me, (.)|
- 07 *des is die wirkliche MUTTERSprache. (---)*
 07 it is the true mother tongue. (---)
- 08 *°h wenn ma des (.) woher man kommt (-)*
 08 °h when you (understand) it (.) where you come from (-)
- 09 *wenn ma des versteht? (-) °h wenn ma des KONN, (.)*
 09 when you understand this? (-) °h when you can do it, (.)
- 10 *donn kann ma vielleicht a des große ganze a besser sehen. (--)*
 10 then you can perhaps see the bigger picture better. (--)
- 11 *°hh also donn kann man gehobene UMGANGSsprache oder*
 11 °hh so you can speak the elevated colloquial language or
- 12 *HOCHdeutsch sprechen beziehungsweise irgendeine zweite dritte*
 12 High German or you can learn a second or third

- 13 *fremdsprache NO leichter lernen.*²²
 13 foreign language even more easily

For LC2, regional roots are revealed in the use of dialect. Dialect is “the root” for her, the “true mother tongue”, in which one can express “nearly everything” better, but especially “emotions and feelings”. For LC2, it is exactly this “mother tongue” which is the basis for the acquisition of further varieties and languages. The regional language contains “additional information”. Developed over decades or even centuries, this variety has “a particular tradition”. If you understand “where you come from”, you can also understand “the bigger picture” better. Regardless of whether one learns “an elevated colloquial language”, “standard” or even a “second or third foreign language”, with dialect as a basis, one has far fewer difficulties. LC4 confirms this by emphasising the importance of dialect for young people. The regional variety gives them a “certain confidence”, they have the feeling “of belonging to something”. Accordingly, dialect has much to do with “identity, with personality”. In her classes, it is therefore important that students remain “authentic” and don’t “pretend” (15:14-15:23).

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The present contribution combined analyses of quantitative and qualitative data in an attempt to, firstly, reconstruct the concept of ‘Standard German’ and other varieties in the minds of teachers and students in Austrian secondary schools, and, secondly, to establish what their perceptions of and attitudes towards the use of ‘Standard German’ and other varieties in different communicative contexts in school are.

First of all, our results clearly show that, while official guidelines and curricula tacitly assume that the language of instruction at schools in Austria is Standard German, in the perception of teachers and students, the linguistic reality at schools in Austria is much more diverse. There is a widespread notion that teachers and students alike use non-standard varieties of German in classroom interaction to a considerable extent. In rural schools, the majority of teachers and students have the impression that classroom interaction is conducted in non-standard varieties; even in oral exams, the use of non-standard varieties seems to be quite common in rural schools.

With respect to notions of ‘Standard German’, the qualitative (cf. Buchner and Elspaß 2018) as well as the quantitative data reveal clear regional differences. In the

²² For a positive correlation between nonstandard competencies and the acquisition of familiar foreign languages cf. Berthele (2008), Papapavlou and Phili (2009).

rural part of Salzburg, where dialects are still very much in use as the spoken everyday language, the standard language is considered primarily as the written language or even as the first L2. However, in the urban centre of the City of Salzburg, in particular, the concept of Standard German ranges from an ‘exoglossic variety’ to a ‘variety of everyday interaction’. Common to all regions is, maybe not surprisingly, the notion of the standard as a variety with a high public prestige and an ‘educated-sounding aura’.

With respect to terminology, it is noteworthy that teachers and students hardly use the terms “Standard” or “Standard German”. Their lay concepts for spoken German basically comprise the two poles *Hochdeutsch* (‘High German’) and *Dialekt* (‘(base) dialect’). Additionally, teachers use the term *gehobene Umgangssprache* – perhaps best translated as “more elevated colloquial language” – quite frequently in the interviews. In the interview data, this term is conceptually linked to formal contexts and situations that require a high degree of comprehensibility, thus contexts and situations which would elsewhere be reserved for ‘the standard’. Since the interviewees repeatedly express that, for them, *Hochdeutsch* is an ideal, unattainable ‘(official) standard’, the term *gehobene Umgangssprache* thus seems to represent the ‘standard of usage’ in formal contexts.

The analyses show that teachers and students alike have both very different and differentiated notions of ‘(official) standard’ and ‘standards of usage’ at school. The notion of ‘standards of usage’ seems to be most closely associated with the concept of ‘appropriateness’, i.e. appropriate language use depending on the situational context at school. For the written language, the use of (written) Standard German remains unchallenged. For spoken interaction, however, a far wider range of varieties is employed and accepted. Close-to-standard varieties (such as *Hochdeutsch* or *gehobene Umgangssprache*) are considered more apt for formal situations in the classroom (e.g. presentations), whereas non-standard varieties (even dialect) appear to be appropriate for more conversational situations (e.g. during group work), and for many are even considered as the only acceptable varieties in informal conversations (e.g. during breaks). Again, regional differences apply.

To sum up, the data clearly indicate that the use of the standard language and non-standard varieties is viewed differently in urban and rural schools (and even by individual teachers) and with a high awareness of appropriateness for certain situations and requirements inside and outside the classroom. However, the assessment and handling of the different varieties in schools does neither follow any official guidelines that would be laid down in curricula or regulations (and which actually do not exist), nor pedagogical recommendations from the educational sciences. At large, it seems, teachers as well as students follow their own assessments and norms of usage, which have been negotiated over time in a quasi-autonomous way. At the same time, these reflect the kinds of language attitudes time and again elicited in

survey studies (e.g. Steinegger 1998; de Cillia 2018). However, whereas the majority of the teachers interviewed certainly appreciate this autonomy, certain teachers would find “positive guidelines” desirable. According to these teachers, language in education is too important to be allowed to be left to the whims of individuals. Given the variety of factors that can influence the choice of linguistic varieties and registers in class – the specific teaching situation, the composition of the class, etc. –, they would welcome few but consistent guidelines which can offer some orientation.

Our results make it very clear that teachers’ and students’ perceptions of and attitudes towards language use in Austrian schools differ from statements in official guidelines and curricula. Language variation (as well as multilingualism) has long been marginalised in the curricula of universities and teacher training institutes, so that teachers were and are often left to their own devices when confronted with language reality in class. The findings of our studies can therefore contribute to a differentiated picture of the language situation in schools in a country which is shaped not only by growing (external) multilingualism, but also by traditional and still very dynamic standard-dialect/non-standard constellations. In this respect, comparisons with other countries in Germanic-speaking Europe with similar constellations can be beneficial (cf. Ghyselen, Pharo, and Schmidlin in this volume).

On a more general note, the results from our study underline that a *practical* concept of ‘standard language’ has to take different perspectives into account. Like in our study on schools in Austria, data gained from questionnaires, ratings of audio stimuli and interviews with teachers and students can shed light on their perceptions of and attitudes towards standard and non-standard varieties, thus on their emic dimension of their relation. In order to get ‘the full picture’, these emic aspects would have to be complemented by the etic perspective. Thus, further studies, in our case recorded data from classroom interaction, will be needed.

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