Exploring the German Language

If we want to understand how German speakers think about themselves and the world in which they live, then a useful place to begin is by looking at the language they use. This fully revised and updated edition provides a systematic approach to the study of the German language and an introduction to social aspects of the language, including its dialects, its history and the uses of the language today. This edition includes a brand new section on gender, purism and German unification, fresh examples for analysis and an updated chapter on the geography of Germany today. The book will help students not only to find new ways of exploring the German language, but also of thinking and talking about German-speaking cultures.

SALLY JOHNSON is Professor of Linguistics in the School of Modern Languages and Cultures at the University of Leeds, and is a Fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. Her recent publications include *Gender, Group Identity and Variation in the Berlin Urban Vernacular* (1995), *Spelling Trouble: Language, Ideology and the Reform of German Orthography* (2005) and a special issue of *German Life and Letters* on the German spelling reform, co-edited with Oliver Stenschke (2005).

NATALIE BRABER is a lecturer in the Department of Linguistics at Nottingham Trent University. She has published on a range of linguistic topics, including speech disorders, sociolinguistics, language and inter-cultural communication, and emotional language in post-unification Germany.

Exploring the German Language

Second Edition

SALLY JOHNSON and NATALIE BRABER

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

© Sally Johnson & Natalie Braber 2008

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published by Edward Arnold Publishers Ltd 1998
Second edition 2008

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or
accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to
in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such
websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

v

Figures

Maps

Tables

Preface to the second edition

This second edition has provided us with the opportunity to respond to some of the suggestions and comments made by readers of the original text published in 1998. To this end, we have aimed as far as possible to correct errors and clarify explanations wherever necessary. We have also updated suggestions for further reading following each chapter as well as the bibliographical references at the end of the book. The second edition has also been expanded in some chapters to allow the incorporation of new sections illustrating changes taking place in relation to the German language over the past ten years. Although revisions have been made throughout the book, particular examples of interest may include the section on `Contemporary language debates' in chapter 2, which introduces discussions of language and sexism, the recent reform of German orthography and linguistic purism. In addition, there is a new section on the `German language and the internet' in chapter 10, illustrating some of the changes affecting the German language in the context of recent technological innovations. Finally, this new edition has allowed us to update facts and figures about the German language and its speakers which have taken place over the past decade.

<div align="right">Sally Johnson (Leeds) and Natalie Braber (Nottingham)</div>

Preface to the first edition

As is often the case with books of this kind, this volume has been written primarily with the needs of my own students in mind. For the past few years, I have been teaching German linguistics and sociolinguistics at Lancaster University. I have used many excellent textbooks but have failed to identify any one volume which fulfilled all our needs simultaneously. These included: (a) coverage of the diverse areas which I wanted to introduce to students; (b) a style which was accessible, in particular, to first years; and (c) the provision of exercises, which students could pursue in their own time. Now that the book is finished, I sincerely hope that students other than those at Lancaster will also be able to benefit from it in the future.

Recent developments in British university teaching of foreign languages remain something of an enigma. Students (we are told) are increasingly opting for 'practical' degree schemes with *language* as their primary focus. Yet despite this perceived demand, the kind of structured teaching which can be offered by specialist linguists seems sadly lacking. Too few courses, for example, dedicate sufficient time to formal training in pronunciation. We send students abroad, largely unprepared for the considerable linguistic variation they are certain to encounter (at least in German-speaking countries). And we espouse communicative approaches to grammar teaching using 'real texts' yet, for the most part, fail to pass on to students the enormous insights afforded by discourse analysts into the properties of the very texts we work with. In short, the focus on practical language teaching does not appear to be matched by the provision of linguistic and sociolinguistic approaches which see language as a meaningful and worthwhile object of study in its own right.

Students are requesting 'practical' degree schemes which concentrate on language. *Culture* – which frequently and ironically goes by the name of *content* – is then presented under the separate rubric 'option'. Ongoing disputes about whether these options can be taught in the foreign language are a further illustration of the artificial opposition between language and culture. Moreover, the continuing debate on the state of students' grammatical knowledge fails to take into account that if you all but erase the one area of study which has traditionally bridged the language/culture divide, namely, literature, *and* fail to teach in the foreign language, then it is no surprise that students struggle to absorb the grammatical structures they so desperately need. Where is their extended exposure to the language going to come from?

x

Like its sister volume, *Exploring the French Language* (Lodge *et al*., 1997), this book is an attempt to provide an alternative approach – one where language is simultaneously conceived of as *form* and *content*. Though no single text can transform the scenario I have somewhat polemically sketched, it can nonetheless help in a small way to change it, by providing students with a systematic framework for studying both the German language and the German language *as* culture. When writing this book, therefore, it has been my aim to introduce students of German not only to the insights of linguistics and sociolinguistics generally but also to try to dismantle from the outset the notion that language and culture are somehow discrete objects of study. It is my hope that, after reading this book, they too will appreciate, first, that the German language cannot be learned adequately without reference to the culture(s) of the German-speaking countries and, second, that many fascinating cultural insights can be accessed by exploring the language used in those countries.

Sally Johnson (Lancaster)

Acknowledgements

There are many people we would like to thank personally for their help, advice and support in the preparation of the second edition of this volume, previously published by Edward Arnold in 1998. We would particularly like to express our gratitude to Martin Durrell, Wini Davies and Bill Jones for their constructive comments on the first edition – comments that we have aimed as far as possible to incorporate into the revised version. We would also like to thank Andrew Winnard at Cambridge University Press for his enthusiasm in commissioning a second edition of the book and his keen support throughout the writing and production processes. Special thanks go to Mark Louden at the University of Wisconsin-Madison for giving so generously of his time to review both the initial proposal and revised manuscript. We would also like to thank the numerous members of the Forum for Germanic Language Studies who responded to our queries on numbers of German speakers throughout the world. Finally, we would like to thank Sarah Green, Elizabeth Davey, Linda Matthews and Joanna Breeze at Cambridge University Press for their support throughout the production process and Kay McKechnie for her advice during the copy-editing process. It goes without saying that any remaining errors and omissions are our own responsibility.

Both authors owe a considerable debt of gratitude to our colleagues in the Departments of Linguistics and Phonetics at the University of Leeds and in the Team of Communication, Culture and Media at Nottingham Trent University. We each received generous periods of study leave from our respective institutions during the academic year 2006/7 and Sally would especially like to thank Barry Heselwood for taking on the role of Head of Department during her absence. Natalie was also given additional funding from Nottingham Trent in order to work at the Institut für deutsche Sprache in Mannheim in the summer of 2006, where Sally had similarly spent time researching the first edition a decade previously. We would both like to thank the library staff there, especially Eva Teubert, for making us so welcome and the Institute more generally for making available a wealth of expertise and materials without which it would not have been possible to complete either edition of the book.

We need to acknowledge the origins of a range of examples that we have used in both editions of the book. Examples in section 5.1 are taken from Fox (2005). All the examples in section 5.2 (with minor modifications) are taken from Hall (2003), whilst the majority in sections 5.3 and 5.4 are taken from

xii

Last but by no means least, Sally would like to thank her partner, best friend and critic, Frank Finlay, for his enduring love, kindness and good grub, and Ben for simply being the ray of sunshine that he is. Natalie meanwhile would like to thank her parents, particularly her dad for all his proofreading – and finally, her husband Leon Jackson for all his love, support and patience.