

GERMAN LANGUAGE AS A GEOPOLITICAL FACTOR

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Annotation. One of the major languages of the world, German is a native language to almost 100 million people worldwide and the most widely spoken native language in the European Union. German is the third most commonly spoken foreign language in the EU after English and French, making it the second biggest language in the EU in terms of overall speakers. German is also the second most widely taught foreign language in the EU after English at primary school level (but third after English and French at lower secondary level), the fourth most widely taught non-English language in the US (after Spanish, French and American Language), and the second most commonly used scientific language as well as the third most widely used language on websites after English and Russian. The German-speaking countries are ranked fifth in terms of annual publication of new books, with one tenth of all books (including e-books) in the world being published in the German language. In the United Kingdom, German and French are the most sought-after foreign languages for businesses (with 49% and 50% of businesses identifying these two languages as the most useful, respectively).

Key words: Spanish, French, American Language, Germanic, Indo-European language, family, Modern English, Austrian and Swiss Standard German.

Basic provisions

German is an inflected language with four cases for nouns, pronouns and adjectives (nominative, accusative, genitive, dative), three genders (masculine, feminine, neuter), two numbers (singular, plural), and strong and weak verbs. It derives the majority of its vocabulary from the ancient Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family. A portion of the words are derived from Latin and Greek, and fewer are borrowed from French and Modern English. With standardized variants (German, Austrian and Swiss Standard German), German is a pluricentric language. It is also notable for its broad spectrum of dialects, with many unique varieties existing in Europe and also other parts of the world. Italy recognizes all the German minorities in its territory as national historic minorities and protects the varieties of German spoken in several regions of Northern Italy besides South Tyrol.

Introduction

Due to the limited intelligibility between certain varieties and Standard German, as well as the lack of an undisputed, scientific difference between a "dialect" and a "language", some German varieties or dialect groups (e.g. Low German or Plautdietsch) are alternatively referred to as "languages" or "dialects".

Modern Standard German is a West Germanic language descended from the Germanic branch of the Indo-European languages. The Germanic languages are traditionally subdivided into three branches: North Germanic, East Germanic, and West Germanic. The first of these branches survives in modern Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, Faroese, and Icelandic, all of which are descended from Old Norse. The East Germanic languages are now extinct, and the only historical member of this branch from which written texts survive is Gothic. The West Germanic languages, however, have undergone extensive dialectal subdivision and are now represented in modern languages such as English, German, Dutch, Yiddish, Afrikaans, and others.

Within the West Germanic language dialect continuum, the Benrath and Uerdingen lines (running through Düsseldorf-Benrath and Krefeld-Uerdingen, respectively) serve to distinguish the Germanic dialects that were affected by the High German consonant shift (south of Benrath) from those that were not (north of Uerdingen). The various regional dialects spoken south of these lines are grouped as High German dialects, while those spoken to the north comprise the Low German/Low Saxon and Low Franconian dialects. As members of the West Germanic language family, High German, Low German, and Low Franconian can be further distinguished historically as Irminonic, Ingvaeonic, and Istvaeonic, respectively. This classification indicates their historical descent from dialects spoken by the Irminones (also known as the Elbe group), Ingvaeones (or North Sea Germanic group), and Istvaeones (or Weser-Rhine group). Standard German is based on a combination of Thuringian-Upper Saxon and Upper Franconian and Bavarian dialects, which are Central German and Upper German dialects, belonging to the Irminonic High German dialect group. German is therefore closely related to the other languages based on High German dialects, such as Luxembourgish (based on Central Franconian dialects – *no.* 29), and Yiddish. Also closely related to Standard German are the Upper German dialects spoken in the southern German-speaking countries, such as Swiss German (Alemannic dialects), and the various Germanic dialects spoken in the French region of Grand Est, such as Alsatian (mainly Alemannic, but also Central- and Upper Franconian dialects) and Lorraine Franconian.

After these High German dialects, standard German is (somewhat less closely) related to languages based on Low Franconian dialects (e.g. Dutch and Afrikaans) or Low German/Low Saxon dialects (spoken in northern Germany and southern Denmark), neither of which underwent the High German consonant shift. As has been noted, the former of these dialect types is Istvaeonic and the latter Ingvaeonic, whereas the High German dialects are all Irminonic; the differences between these languages and standard German are therefore considerable. Also related to German are the Frisian languages—North Frisian (spoken in Nordfriesland), Saterland Frisian and West Frisian (spoken in Friesland—as well as the Anglic languages of English and Scots. These Anglo-Frisian dialects are all members of the Ingvaeonic family of West Germanic languages which did not take part in the High German consonant shift.

Old High German

While there is written evidence of the Old High German language in several Elder Futhark inscriptions from as early as the 6th century AD (such as the Pforzen buckle), the Old High German period is generally seen as beginning with the *Abrogans* (written c.765–775), a Latin-German glossary supplying over 3,000 OHG words with their Latin equivalents. Following the *Abrogans* the first coherent works written in OHG appear in the 9th century, chief among them being the *Muspilli*, the *Merseburg Charms*, and the *Hildebrandslied*, as well as a number of other religious texts (the *Georgslied*, the *Ludwigslied*, the *Evangelienbuch*, and translated hymns and prayers). The *Muspilli* is a Christian poem written in a Bavarian dialect offering an account of the soul after the Last Judgment, and the *Merseburg Charms* are transcriptions of spells and charms from the pagan Germanic tradition. Of particular interest to scholars, however, has been the *Hildebrandslied*, a secular epic poem telling the tale of an estranged father and son unknowingly meeting each other in battle. Linguistically this text is highly interesting due to the mixed use of Old Saxon and Old High German dialects in its composition. The written works of this period stem mainly from the Alamanni, Bavarian, and Thuringian groups, all belonging to the Elbe Germanic group (Irminones), which had settled in what is now southern-central Germany and Austria between the 2nd and 6th centuries during the great migration.^[11]

Description of materials and methods

In general, the surviving texts of OHG show a wide range of dialectal diversity with very little written uniformity. The early written tradition of OHG survived mostly through monasteries and scriptoria as local translations of Latin originals; as a result, the surviving texts are written in highly disparate regional dialects and exhibit significant Latin influence, particularly in vocabulary.¹At this point monasteries, where most written works were produced, were dominated by Latin, and German saw only occasional use in official and ecclesiastical writing.

The German language through the OHG period was still predominantly a spoken language, with a wide range of dialects and a much more extensive oral tradition than a written one. Having just emerged from the High German consonant shift, OHG was also a relatively new and volatile language still undergoing a number of phonetic, phonological, morphological, and syntactic changes. The scarcity of written work, instability of the language, and widespread illiteracy of the time thus account for the lack of standardization up to the end of the OHG period in 1050.

Middle High German

While there is no complete agreement over the dates of the Middle High German (MHG) period, it is generally seen as lasting from 1050 to 1350. This was a

period of significant expansion of the geographical territory occupied by Germanic tribes, and consequently of the number of German speakers. Whereas during the Old High German period the Germanic tribes extended only as far east as the Elbe and Saale rivers, the MHG period saw a number of these tribes expanding beyond this eastern boundary into Slavic territory (this is known as the *Ostsiedlung*). Along with the increasing wealth and geographic extent of the Germanic groups came greater use of German in the courts of nobles as the standard language of official proceedings and literature. A clear example of this is the *mittelhochdeutsche Dichtersprache* employed in the Hohenstaufen court in Swabia as a standardized supra-dialectal written language. While these efforts were still regionally bound, German began to be used in place of Latin for certain official purposes, leading to a greater need for regularity in written conventions. While the major changes of the MHG period were socio-cultural, German was still undergoing significant linguistic changes in syntax, phonetics, and morphology as well (e.g. diphthongization of certain vowel sounds: *hus* (OHG "house")→*haus* (MHG), and weakening of unstressed short vowels to schwa [ə]: *taga* (OHG "days")→*tage* (MHG)). A great wealth of texts survives from the MHG period. Significantly, among this repertoire are a number of impressive secular works, such as the *Nibelungenlied*, an epic poem telling the story of the dragon-slayer Siegfried (c. 13th century), and the *Iwein*, an Arthurian verse poem by Hartmann von Aue (c. 1203), as well as several lyric poems and courtly romances such as *Parzival* and *Tristan*. (Also noteworthy is the *Sachsenspiegel*, the first book of laws written in Middle Low German (c. 1220)). The abundance and especially the secular character of the literature of the MHG period demonstrate the beginnings of a standardized written form of German, as well as the desire of poets and authors to be understood by individuals on supra-dialectal terms. The Middle High German period is generally seen as ending with the decimation of the population of Europe in the Black Death of 1346–1353.

Early New High German

Modern German begins with the Early New High German (ENHG) period, which the influential German philologist Wilhelm Scherer dates 1350–1650, terminating with the end of the Thirty Years' War. This period saw the further displacement of Latin by German as the primary language of courtly proceedings and, increasingly, of literature in the German states. While these states were still under the control of the Holy Roman Empire and far from any form of unification, the desire for a cohesive written language that would be understandable across the many German-speaking principalities and kingdoms was stronger than ever. As a spoken language German remained highly fractured through this period with a vast number of often mutually-incomprehensible regional dialects being spoken throughout the German states; the invention of the printing press c.1440 and the publication of Luther's vernacular translation of the Bible in 1534, however, had an immense effect on standardizing German as a supra-dialectal written language.

The ENHG period saw the rise of several important cross-regional forms of chancery German, one being *gemeine tiutsch*, used in the court of the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I, and the other being *Meißner Deutsch*, used in the Electorate of Saxony in the Duchy of Saxe-Wittenberg. Alongside these courtly written standards, the invention of the printing press led to the development of a number of printers' languages (*Druckersprachen*) aimed at making printed material readable and understandable across as many diverse dialects of German as possible. The greater ease of production and increased availability of written texts brought about increased standardization in the written form of the German language.

Results

One of the central events in the development of ENHG was the publication of Luther's translation of the Bible into German (the New Testament in 1522 and the Old Testament, published in parts and completed in 1534). Luther based his translation primarily on the *Meißner Deutsch* of Saxony, spending much time among the population of Saxony researching the dialect so as to make the work as natural and accessible to German speakers as possible. Copies of Luther's Bible featured a long list of glosses for each region that translated words which were unknown in the region into the regional dialect. Concerning his translation method Luther says the following: One who would talk German does not ask the Latin how he shall do it; he must ask the mother in the home, the children on the streets, the common man in the market-place and note carefully how they talk, then translate accordingly. They will then understand what is said to them because it is German. When Christ says 'ex abundantia cordis os loquitur,' I would translate, if I followed the papists, *aus dem Überflusz des Herzens redet der Mund*. But tell me is this talking German? What German understands such stuff? No, the mother in the home and the plain man would say, *Wesz das Herz voll ist, des gehet der Mund über*.

With Luther's rendering of the Bible in the vernacular, German asserted itself against the dominance of Latin as a legitimate language for courtly, literary, and now ecclesiastical subject-matter. Further, his Bible was ubiquitous in the German states with nearly every household possessing a copy. Nevertheless, even with the influence of Luther's Bible as an unofficial written standard, it was not until the middle of the 18th century after the ENHG period that a widely accepted standard for written German appeared.

Austrian Empire

German was the language of commerce and government in the Habsburg Empire, which encompassed a large area of Central and Eastern Europe. Until the mid-19th century, it was essentially the language of townspeople throughout most of the Empire. Its use indicated that the speaker was a merchant or someone from an urban area, regardless of nationality. Some cities, such as Prague (German: *Prag*) and Budapest (Buda, German: *Ofen*), were gradually Germanized in the years after their incorporation into the Habsburg domain. Others, such as Pozsony (German: *Pressburg*, now Bratislava), were originally settled during the

Habsburg period, and were primarily German at that time. Prague, Budapest and Bratislava as well as cities like Zagreb (German: *Agram*), and Ljubljana (German: *Laibach*), contained significant German minorities.

Discussion

In the eastern provinces of Banat and Transylvania (German: *Siebenbürgen*), German was the predominant language not only in the larger towns – such as *Temeswar* (Timișoara), *Hermannstadt* (Sibiu) and *Kronstadt* (Brașov) – but also in many smaller localities in the surrounding areas.

Standardization

The most comprehensive guide to the vocabulary of the German language is found within the *Deutsches Wörterbuch*. This dictionary was created by the Brothers Grimm and is composed of 16 parts which were issued between 1852 and 1860.¹ In 1872, grammatical and orthographic rules first appeared in the *Duden Handbook*.

In 1901, the 2nd Orthographical Conference ended with a complete standardization of the German language in its written form and the *Duden Handbook* was declared its standard definition. The *Deutsche Bühnensprache* (literally, German stage language) had established conventions for German pronunciation in theatre (*Bühnendeutsch*) three years earlier; however, this was an artificial standard that did not correspond to any traditional spoken dialect. Rather, it was based on the pronunciation of Standard German in Northern Germany, although it was subsequently regarded often as a general prescriptive norm, despite differing pronunciation traditions especially in the Upper-German-speaking regions that still characterize the dialect of the area today – especially the pronunciation of the ending *-ig* as [ɪk] instead of [ɪç]. In Northern Germany, Standard German was a foreign language to most inhabitants, whose native dialects were subsets of Low German. It was usually encountered only in writing or formal speech; in fact, most of Standard German was a written language, not identical to any spoken dialect, throughout the German-speaking area until well into the 19th century. Official revisions of some of the rules from 1901 were not issued until the controversial German orthography reform of 1996 was made the official standard by governments of all German-speaking countries. Media and written works are now almost all produced in Standard German (often called *Hochdeutsch*, "High German") which is understood in all areas where German is spoken.

Geographic distribution

Due to the German diaspora as well as German being the second most widely spoken language in Europe and the third most widely taught foreign language in the US and the EU (in upper secondary education)^[29] amongst others, the geographical distribution of German speakers (or "Germanophones") spans all inhabited continents. As for the number of speakers of any language worldwide, an assessment is always compromised by the lack of sufficient, reliable data. For an exact, global

number of native German speakers, this is further complicated by the existence of several varieties whose status as separate "languages" or "dialects" is disputed for political and/or linguistic reasons, including quantitatively strong varieties like certain forms of Alemannic (e.g., Alsatian) and Low German/Plautdietsch. Mostly depending on the inclusion or exclusion of certain varieties, it is estimated that approximately 90–95 million people speak German as a first language, 10–25 million as a second language, and 75–100 million as a foreign language. This would imply approximately 175–220 million German speakers worldwide. It is estimated that also including all persons who are or were taking German classes, i.e., regardless of their actual proficiency, would amount to about 280 million people worldwide with at least some knowledge of German.

In Europe, German is the second most widely spoken mother tongue (after Russian) and the second biggest language in terms of overall speakers (after English). The area in central Europe where the majority of the population speaks German as a first language and has German as a (co-)official language is called the "German Sprachraum". It comprises an estimated 88 million native speakers and 10 million who speak German as a second language (e.g. immigrants). Excluding regional minority languages, German is the only official language of

- Germany (de facto, not specified in the constitution),
- Austria (de jure),
- 17 cantons of Switzerland (de jure), and
- Liechtenstein (de jure).

It is a co-official language of the

- Italian Autonomous Province of South Tyrol (also majority language),
- Belgium (as majority language only in the German-speaking Community), -
- four cantons of Switzerland (majority language in certain areas of these), and
- Luxembourg.

Outside the Sprachraum

Although expulsions and (forced) assimilation after the two World Wars greatly diminished them, minority communities of mostly bilingual German native speakers exist in areas both adjacent to and detached from the Sprachraum. Within Europe and Asia, German is a recognized minority language in the following countries:
Bosnia and Herzegovina

- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Hungary
- Italy (outside of South Tyrol; Cimbrian, Mòcheno/Fersentalerisch, Walser German)
- Kazakhstan
- Poland German minority in Poland; German is auxiliary language in 31 communes)
- Romania

- Russia
- Slovakia
- Ukraine.

In France, the High German varieties of Alsatian and Moselle Franconian are identified as "regional languages", but the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages of 1998 has not yet been ratified by the government.^[39] In the Netherlands, the Limburgish, Frisian, and Low German languages are protected regional languages according to the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages; however, they are widely considered separate languages and neither German nor Dutch dialects.

Africa. Namibia

Namibia was a colony of the German Empire from 1884 to 1919. Mostly descending from German settlers who immigrated during this time, 25–30,000 people still speak German as a native tongue today. The period of German colonialism in Namibia also led to the evolution of a Standard German-based pidgin language called "Namibian Black German", which became a second language for parts of the indigenous population. Although it is nearly extinct today, some older Namibians still have some knowledge of it.

German, along with English and Afrikaans was a co-official language of Namibia from 1984 until its independence from South Africa in 1990. At this point, the Namibian government perceived Afrikaans and German as symbols of apartheid and colonialism, and decided English would be the sole official language, stating that it was a "neutral" language as there were virtually no English native speakers in Namibia at that time. German, Afrikaans and several indigenous languages became "national languages" by law, identifying them as elements of the cultural heritage of the nation and ensuring that the state acknowledged and supported their presence in the country. Today, German is used in a wide variety of spheres, especially business and tourism, as well as the churches (most notably the German-speaking Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (GELK)), schools (e.g. the *Deutsche Höhere Privatschule Windhoek*), literature (German-Namibian authors include Giselher W. Hoffmann), radio (the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation produces radio programs in German), and music (e.g. artist EES). The *Allgemeine Zeitung* is one of the three biggest newspapers in Namibia and the only German-language daily in Africa.

South Africa

Mostly originating from different waves of immigration during the 19th and 20th centuries, an estimated 12,000 people speak German or a German variety as a first language in South Africa. One of the largest communities consists of the speakers of "Nataler Deutsch", a variety of Low German, concentrated in and around Wartburg. The small town of Kroondal in the North-West Province also has a mostly German-speaking population. The South African constitution identifies German as a

"commonly used" language and the Pan South African Language Board is obligated to promote and ensure respect for it.^[44] The community is strong enough that several German International schools are supported such as the Deutsche Schule Pretoria.

North America

In the United States, the states of North Dakota and South Dakota are the only states where German is the most common language spoken at home after English.¹ German geographical names can be found throughout the Midwest region of the country, such as New Ulm and many other towns in Minnesota; Bismarck (North Dakota's state capital), Munich, Karlsruhe, and Strasburg (named after a town near Odessa in Ukraine) in North Dakota; New Braunfels, Fredericksburg, Weimar, and Muenster in Texas; Corn (formerly Korn), Kiefer and Berlin in Oklahoma; and Kiel, Berlin, and Germantown in Wisconsin.

South America. Brazil

In Brazil, the largest concentrations of German speakers are in the states of Rio Grande do Sul (where Riograndenser Hunsrückisch developed), Santa Catarina, Paraná, São Paulo and Espírito Santo.

Co-official statuses of German in Brazil - Espírito Santo (statewide cultural language).

- Rio Grande do Sul (Riograndenser Hunsrückisch German is an integral part of the historical and cultural heritage of this state)

- Santa Catarina.

Other South American countries

There are important concentrations of German-speaking descendants in Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Venezuela, Peru and Bolivia.

The impact of nineteenth century German immigration to southern Chile was such that Valdivia was for a while a Spanish-German bilingual city with "*German signboards and placards alongside the Spanish*". The prestige the German language made it acquire qualities of a superstratum in southern Chile. The word for blackberry, an ubiquitous plant in southern Chile, is *murra* instead of the ordinary Spanish word *mora* and *zarzamora* from Valdivia to Chiloé Archipelago and some towns in Aysén Region. The use of *rr* is an adaptation of guttural sounds found in German difficult to pronounce in Spanish. Similarly the name for marbles, a traditional children's game, is different in Southern Chile compared to areas further north. From Valdivia to Aysén Region this game is called *bochas* contrary to the word *bolitas* used further north. The word *bocha* is likely derivative of the Germans *bocciaspiel*.

Oceania

In Australia, the state of South Australia experienced a pronounced wave of immigration in the 1840s from Prussia (particularly the Silesia region). With the prolonged isolation from other German speakers and contact with Australian English, a unique dialect known as Barossa German has developed and is spoken predominantly in the Barossa Valley near Adelaide. Usage of German sharply declined with the advent of World War I, due to the prevailing anti-German

sentiment in the population and related government action. It continued to be used as a first language into the twentieth century but now its use is limited to a few older speakers.

German migration to New Zealand in the 19th century was less pronounced than migration from Britain, Ireland, and perhaps even Scandinavia. Despite this there were significant pockets of German-speaking communities which lasted until the first decades of the 20th century. German-speakers settled principally in Puhoi, Nelson, and Gore. At the last census (2013), 36,642 people in New Zealand spoke German, making it the third most spoken European language after English and French and overall the ninth most spoken language. There is also an important German creole being studied and recovered, named *Unserdeutsch*, spoken in the former German colony of German New Guinea, across Micronesia and in northern Australia (i.e. coastal parts of Queensland and Western Australia), by a few elderly people. The risk of its extinction is serious and efforts to revive interest in the language are being implemented by scholars.

German as a foreign language

German has become a classic second foreign language in the western world, as English (Spanish in the US) is well established as the first foreign language. German ranks second (after English) among the best known foreign languages in the EU (on a par with French) as well as in Russia. In terms of student numbers across all levels of education, German ranks third in the EU (after English and French)¹ as well as in the United States (after Spanish and French). In 2015, approximately 15.4 million people were in the process of learning German across all levels of education worldwide.² As this number remained relatively stable since 2005 (± 1 million), roughly 75–100 million people able to communicate in German as foreign language can be inferred assuming an average course duration of three years and other estimated parameters. According to a 2012 survey, 47 million people within the EU (i.e., up to two thirds of the 75–100 million worldwide) claimed to have sufficient German skills to have a conversation. Within the EU, not counting countries where it is an official language, German as a foreign language is most popular in Eastern and Northern Europe, namely the Czech Republic, Croatia, Denmark, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Sweden and Poland. German was once, and to some extent still is, a lingua franca in those parts of Europe.

Standard German

Standard German has its base from the Luther Bible, which was translated by Martin Luther and originated from the Saxon court language as a convenient norm. However, there are places where the traditional regional dialects have been replaced by new vernaculars based on standard German; that is the case in large stretches of Northern Germany but also in major cities in other parts of the country. It is important to note, however, that the colloquial standard German differs greatly from the formal written language, especially in grammar and syntax, in which it has been influenced by dialectal speech. Standard German differs regionally among

German-speaking countries in vocabulary and some instances of pronunciation and even grammar and orthography. This variation must not be confused with the variation of local dialects. Even though the regional varieties of standard German are only somewhat influenced by the local dialects, they are very distinct. German is thus considered a pluricentric language.

In most regions, the speakers use a continuum from more dialectal varieties to more standard varieties depending on the circumstances.

Varieties of Standard German

The national and regional standard varieties of German. In German linguistics, German dialects are distinguished from varieties of standard German. The *varieties of standard German* refer to the different local varieties of the pluricentric standard German. They differ only slightly in lexicon and phonology. In certain regions, they have replaced the traditional German dialects, especially in Northern Germany.

German Standard German

Austrian Standard German

Swiss Standard German

In the German-speaking parts of Switzerland, mixtures of dialect and standard are very seldom

used, and the use of Standard German is largely restricted to the written language, though about 11% of the Swiss residents speak *High German* (aka Standard German) at home, but mainly due to German immigrants. This situation has been called a *medial diglossia*. Swiss Standard German is used in the Swiss education system, while Austrian Standard German is officially used in the Austrian education system.

A mixture of dialect and standard does not normally occur in Northern Germany either. The traditional varieties there are Low German, whereas Standard German is a High German "variety". Because their linguistic distance is greater, they do not mesh with Standard German the way that High German dialects (such as Bavarian, Swabian, and Hessian) can.

Dialects

German is a member of the West Germanic language of the Germanic family of languages, which in turn is part of the Indo-European language family. The German dialects are the traditional local varieties; many of them are hardly understandable to someone who knows only standard German, and they have great differences in lexicon, phonology and syntax. If a narrow definition of language based on mutual intelligibility is used, many German dialects are considered to be separate languages (for instance in the *Ethnologue*). However, such a point of view is unusual in German linguistics.

The German dialect continuum is traditionally divided most broadly into High German and Low German, also called Low Saxon. However, historically, High German dialects and Low Saxon/Low German dialects do not belong to the same language. Nevertheless, in today's Germany, Low Saxon/Low German is often

perceived as a dialectal variation of Standard German on a functional level even by many native speakers. The same phenomenon is found in the eastern Netherlands, as the traditional dialects are not always identified with their Low Saxon/Low German origins, but with Dutch.

The variation among the German dialects is considerable, with often only neighbouring dialects being mutually intelligible. Some dialects are not intelligible to people who know only Standard German. However, all German dialects belong to the dialect continuum of High German and Low Saxon.

Low German and Low Saxon

Middle Low German was the lingua franca of the Hanseatic League. It was the predominant language in Northern Germany until the 16th century. In 1534, the Luther Bible was published. The translation is considered to be an important step towards the evolution of the Early New High German. It aimed to be understandable to a broad audience and was based mainly on Central and Upper German varieties. The Early New High German language gained more prestige than Low German and became the language of science and literature. Around the same time, the Hanseatic League, based around northern ports, lost its importance as new trade routes to Asia and the Americas were established, and the most powerful German states of that period were located in Middle and Southern Germany.

The 18th and 19th centuries were marked by mass education in Standard German in schools. Gradually, Low German came to be politically viewed as a mere dialect spoken by the uneducated. Today, Low Saxon can be divided in two groups: Low Saxon varieties with a reasonable Standard German influx and varieties of Standard German with a Low Saxon influence known as *Missingsch*. Sometimes, Low Saxon and Low Franconian varieties are grouped together because both are unaffected by the High German consonant shift. However, the proportion of the population who can understand and speak it has decreased continuously since World War II. The largest cities in the Low German area are Hamburg and Dortmund.

Low Franconian

The Low Franconian dialects are the dialects that are more closely related to Dutch than to Low German. Most of the Low Franconian dialects are spoken in the Netherlands and in Belgium, where they are considered as dialects of Dutch, which is itself a Low Franconian language. In Germany, Low Franconian dialects are spoken in the northwest of North Rhine-Westphalia, along the Lower Rhine. The Low Franconian dialects spoken in Germany are referred to as Meuse-Rhenish or Low Rhenish. In the north of the German Low Franconian language area, North Low Franconian dialects (also referred to as Cleverlands or as dialects of South Guelderish) are spoken. These dialects are more closely related to Dutch (also North Low Franconian) than the South Low Franconian dialects (also referred to as East Limburgish and, east of the Rhine, Bergish), which are spoken in the south of the German Low Franconian language area. The South Low Franconian dialects are more closely related to Limburgish than to Dutch, and are transitional dialects between Low Franconian and Ripuarian (Central Franconian).

The East Bergish dialects are the easternmost Low Franconian dialects, and are transitional dialects between North- and South Low Franconian, and Westphalian (Low German), with most of their features being North Low Franconian. The largest cities in the German Low Franconian area are Düsseldorf and Duisburg.

High German

The High German dialects consist of the Central German, High Franconian, and Upper German dialects. The High Franconian dialects are transitional dialects between Central- and Upper German. The High German varieties spoken by the Ashkenazi Jews have several unique features, and are considered as a separate language, Yiddish, written with the Hebrew alphabet.

Central German

The Central German dialects are spoken in Central Germany, from Aachen in the west to Görlitz in the east. They consist of Franconian dialects in the west (West Central German) and non-Franconian dialects in the east (East Central German). Modern Standard German is mostly based on Central German dialects.

West Central German dialects are the Central Franconian dialects (Riparian and Moselle Franconian), and the Rhine Franconian dialects (Hessian and Palatine). These dialects are considered as

- German in Germany and Belgium
- Luxembourgish in Luxembourg
- Lorraine Franconian (spoken in Moselle) and as a Rhine Franconian variant of Alsatian (spoken in Alsace bossue only) in France
- Limburgish or Kerkrade dialect in the Netherlands.

Luxembourgish as well as the Transylvanian Saxon dialect spoken in Transylvania are based on Moselle Franconian dialects. The largest cities in the Franconian Central German area are Cologne and Frankfurt.

Further east, the non-Franconian **East Central German** dialects are spoken (Thuringian, Upper Saxon, Ore Mountainian, and Lusatian-New Markish, and earlier, in the then German-speaking parts of Silesia also Silesian, and in then German southern East Prussia also High Prussian). The largest cities in the East Central German area are Berlin and Leipzig.

High Franconian

The High Franconian dialects are transitional dialects between Central- and Upper German. They consist of the East- and South Franconian dialects.

The East Franconian dialect branch is one of the most spoken dialect branches in Germany. These dialects are spoken in the region of Franconia and in the central parts of Saxon Vogtland. Franconia consists of the Bavarian districts of Upper-Middle, and Lower Franconia, the region of South Thuringia (Thuringia), and the eastern parts of the region of Heilbronn-Franken (Tauber Franconia and Hohenlohe) in Baden-Württemberg. The largest cities in the East Franconian area are Nuremberg and Würzburg.

Conclusion

To sum up all above, South Franconian is mainly spoken in northern Baden-Württemberg in Germany, but also in the northeasternmost part of the region of Alsace in France. While these dialects are considered as dialects of German in Baden-Württemberg, they are considered as dialects of Alsatian in Alsace (most Alsatian dialects are however Low Alemannic). The largest cities in the South Franconian area are Karlsruhe and Heilbronn.

Upper German

The Upper German dialects are the Alemannic dialects in the west and the Bavarian dialects.

Alemannic.

Alemannic dialects are spoken in Switzerland (High Alemannic in the densely populated Swiss Plateau, in the south also Highest Alemannic, and Low Alemannic in Basel), Baden-Württemberg (Swabian and Low Alemannic, in the southwest also High Alemannic), Bavarian Swabia (Swabian, in the southwestern most part also Low Alemannic), Vorarlberg (Low-, High-, and Highest Alemannic), Alsace (Low Alemannic, in the southernmost part also High Alemannic), Liechtenstein (High- and Highest Alemannic), and in the Tyrole an district of Reutte (Swabian). The Alemannic dialects are considered as Alsatian in Alsace. The largest cities in the Alemannic area are Stuttgart and Zürich.

Bavarian

Bavarian dialects are spoken in Austria (Vienna, Lower- and Upper Austria, Styria, Carinthia, Salzburg, Burgenland, and in most parts of Tyrol), Bavaria (Upper- and Lower Bavaria as well as Upper Palatinate), South Tyrol, southwesternmost Saxony (Southern Vogtlandian), and in the Swiss village of Samnaun. The largest cities in the Bavarian area are Vienna and Munich.

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НЕМІС ТІЛІ ГЕОСАЯСАТТЫҚ ФАКТОР РЕТІНДЕ

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Аңдатпа. Әлемдегі негізгі тілдердің бірі неміс тілі дүние жүзінде 100 миллионға жуық адамның ана тілі және Еуропалық Одақтағы ең көп сөйлейтін ана тілі болып табылады.

Неміс тілі ЕО-да ағылшын және француз тілдерінен кейінгі ең жиі сөйлейтін үшінші шет тілі болып табылады, бұл оны ЕО-дағы жалпы сөйлеушілер саны бойынша екінші үлкен тілге айналдырады. Неміс тілі сондай-ақ ЕО-да бастауыш мектеп деңгейінде ағылшын тілінен кейін екінші ең көп оқытылатын шет тілі (бірақ төменгі орта деңгейде ағылшын және француз тілінен кейін үшінші), АҚШ-та төртінші ең көп оқытылатын ағылшын емес тіл (испан, француз және француз тілдерінен кейін) Америка тілі) және ағылшын және орыс тілінен кейінгі екінші ең жиі қолданылатын үшінші ғылыми тіл, сонымен қатар веб-сайттарда ең көп қолданылатын тіл. Неміс тілінде сөйлейтін елдер жыл сайынғы жаңа кітаптарды шығару бойынша бесінші орында тұр, әлемдегі барлық кітаптардың оннан бір бөлігі (электрондық кітаптарды қоса алғанда) неміс тілінде басылады. Біріккен Корольдікте неміс және француз тілдері бизнес үшін ең көп сұранысқа ие шет тілдері болып табылады (бизнестердің 49% және 50% сәйкесінше бұл екі тілді ең пайдалы деп санайды).

Тірек сөздер: испан, француз, америка тілі, Үнді-еуропалық тіл, отбасы, қазіргі ағылшын тілі, австриялық және швейцариялық стандарт неміс тілі.

НЕМЕЦКИЙ ЯЗЫК КАК ГЕОПОЛИТИЧЕСКИЙ ФАКТОР

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Аннотация. Один из основных языков мира, немецкий является родным языком почти 100 миллионов человек во всем мире и наиболее распространенным родным языком в Европейском Союзе. Немецкий язык является третьим по распространенности иностранным языком в ЕС после английского и французского, что делает его вторым по величине языком в ЕС по общему количеству носителей. Немецкий также является вторым наиболее широко изучаемым иностранным языком в ЕС после английского на уровне начальной школы (но третьим после английского и французского в неполной средней школе), четвертым наиболее широко изучаемым неанглийским языком в США (после испанского, французского и американский язык), а также второй наиболее часто используемый научный язык, а также третий наиболее широко используемый язык на веб-сайтах после английского и русского. Немецкоязычные страны занимают пятое место по ежегодной публикации новых книг, при этом десятая часть всех книг (включая электронные) в мире издается на немецком языке. В Соединенном Королевстве немецкий и французский языки являются наиболее востребованными иностранными языками для бизнеса (соответственно 49% и 50% предприятий считают эти два языка наиболее полезными).

Ключевые слова: испанский, французский, американский язык, Индоевропейский язык, семья, современный английский, австрийский и швейцарский стандартный немецкий.

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