

German as a pluricentric language in two coursebook series

This paper investigates the presence of linguistic elements from the Austrian and Swiss standard varieties of German in two coursebook series of German as a foreign language at levels A1-B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference. The investigations are based on the theoretical background of pluricentricity, with Austrian and Swiss German viewed as non-dominant varieties of German as a pluricentric language. The representation of the pluricentricity of German in these two coursebook series is analysed with respect to two fields: (1) the presentation of vocabulary items and (2) reading comprehension tasks. The present study is primarily concerned with general tendencies, but some concrete examples are also included. Among other things, the most important findings include the general realization that non-dominant linguistic elements occur rather rarely in these coursebook series, which is perfectly in line with earlier observations of other scholars in this topic. Another interesting finding is, however, that one of the coursebook series (namely the one that was published in Southern Germany) seems to take the pluricentricity of the German language into account more than the other one, which was published in Berlin. Even though the pluricentricity of German manifests itself on all linguistic levels, it is primarily only vocabulary items that are presented in these coursebook series, even as far as reading comprehension tasks are concerned, and the thematic distribution of these vocabulary items is also examined in this paper. It is also worthy of mentioning that pluricentricity seems to play a more important role in this new Southern German coursebook series than in an earlier series by the same publisher that has been examined before in another study, which shows that there are definitely some signs of positive improvement. Furthermore, the thematic scope of pluricentric items is also wider in the case of the Southern German coursebook series, and the distribution of the Austrian and Swiss German elements across the proficiency levels (A1-B2) also meets the requirements of pluricentric theory more than in the case of the series published in Berlin.

Keywords: German, Austrian, Swiss, coursebooks