



Julia Ruck

University of Wisconsin, Madison

AGAINST ALL STANDARDS: ON REGIONAL VARIATION IN THE GERMAN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Abstract:

Foreign-language learners often find themselves in a so-called ‘practice shock’ as they travel abroad because they have difficulties understanding native-speakers who speak differently from the language they were exposed to in their classrooms. In the case of German, this can ensue due to a strict focus on standard German and an exclusion of regional varieties that are commonly used in everyday communication. This article problematizes this issue by (a) demonstrating that the inclusion of regional varieties is necessary to reach several goals of foreign-language learning, (b) discussing relevant recent sociolinguistic research on regional variation, and (c) providing teaching activities that support learners in developing a critical awareness of the system and discursive functions of German regional variation. This last objective is contextualized through the Austrian TV series *Braunschlag* (2012).

Keywords:

German-language teaching ♦ translingual competence ♦ linguistic variation ♦ dialects ♦ Austria

The 2007 Modern Language Association (MLA) report, titled “Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World,” gained wide attention in the discussion on goals of foreign language (FL) learning in U.S. higher education. The authors of the report called for what they term “translingual and transcultural competence” (MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages 2007: 2) as the main goal of collegiate FL learning in

the United States. Translingual and transcultural competence should be developed through the use of literature, film, and other media serving not merely as linguistic models and content-related input, but also as representations of culture as social practice. Successful FL learners and users, thus, are able to read between the lines and create meaning based on sociocultural and historical contexts of discourses that are represented in authentic texts.

This article will suggest a possible expansion upon existing ways to reach this translingual and transcultural competence through texts that contain regional varieties. In the case of German, FL instruction focuses mainly on teaching the codified standard variety of Germany. This approach is rather restrictive, however, because it does not reflect the actual language use of most German speakers, who tend to use not only the standard varieties but also other social and regional varieties in informal and sometimes even in formal contexts. When speakers choose one variety over another, they add an additional indexical layer of meaning to the message, such as expressing affiliation with or otherness from a group, inclusion or exclusion of other speakers, in-/formality, power, and emotionality. Code-choices between dialect, regiolect, and standard give important information on social discursive practices, which is why it is important to raise learners' awareness of the system, as well as the social and discursive functions of regional varieties, so that they will become able to develop translingual and transcultural competence.

In the first section, I will analyze goal areas of FL-learning with a focus on regional non-standard variation. Second, I will discuss recent theoretical and empirical research on German linguistic variation, as well as its reception in the field of German as a Foreign Language (GFL). Lastly, I will propose a set of activities around the Austrian TV series *Braunschlag* that support learners in gaining structural and functional dialect awareness for Austrian regional varieties.

Goals of Foreign Language Learning

In this section, I analyze goal areas for FL-learning across three preeminent frameworks and how they incorporate the notion of language as a dynamic, complex system with different regional varieties. Presumably, the main goal of integrating regional variation into GFL-learning is to enable learners to understand authentic language that contains common non-standard features. Therefore, the focus of the analysis will be on goal areas for receptive and interpretive abilities, that is, for listening, reading, and viewing authentic texts.

The authors of the 2015 ACTFL World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages describe the purpose of FL-learning as equipping students linguistically and culturally to communicate successfully in the United States and abroad. Successful communication is defined as “knowing how, when, and why to say what to whom” (The National Standards Collaborative Board 2015: 12). In the endeavor to become familiar with cultural products, practices, and perspectives, various kinds of authentic documents serve as important sources, such as literary and information texts, film, and video. Sociocultural and contextual factors are acknowledged as important aspects of communication; however, there is no mention of regional variation in this document.

In the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines¹, achieving higher interpretive abilities is associated with understanding more abstract, complex, and unfamiliar topics. On the Novice and Intermediate levels there is no reference to authentic texts or linguistic variation. Advanced-level listeners “understand speech that is *authentic* and connected” (ACTFL 2012: 17, emphasis added), but the authors concede “this speech is lexically and structurally uncomplicated. The discourse is straightforward and is generally organized in a clear and predictable way” (ACTFL 2012: 17). Superior-level listeners “are able to understand speech in a standard dialect on a wide range of familiar and less familiar topics” (ACTFL 2012: 16). Higher yet, Distinguished-level listeners and readers “comprehend language from within the cultural framework and are able to understand a speaker’s [and writer’s] use of nuance and subtlety. However, they may still have difficulty fully understanding certain dialects and nonstandard varieties of the language” (ACTFL 2012: 16, 21). In other words, linguistic variation is touched upon in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, but understanding non-standard varieties does not seem to be a major goal. The goal of language learning found in the Proficiency Guidelines is oriented towards a rather homogenous standard, which leads to the somewhat paradoxical case that learners at the Distinguished level are supposedly able to understand highly complex topics such as philosophical discussions and art films but may not be able to understand “conventional” films or even everyday conversation, which are very commonly conducted using German non-standard varieties.

For their part, the authors of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Languages do explicitly refer to the heterogeneity of language communities and the

¹ The examples that are quoted here are taken from the English version of the ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) Proficiency Guidelines. The German version is, in large part, a direct translation of the English version and does not contain any language-specific additions concerning non-standard varieties.

importance of acquiring a sociolinguistic competence that includes (a) linguistic markers of social relations; (b) politeness conventions; (c) expressions of folk wisdom; (d) register differences; and (e) dialect and accent. That is, learners should become aware of the social connotations of regional features and colloquial language (Council of Europe 2001, Chapter 5.2.2.5). Starting with Level B2, learners should be able to understand audiovisual media in standard varieties, whereas at the C1-Level learners “can follow films employing a considerable degree of slang and idiomatic usage” (Council of Europe 2001, Chapter 4.4.2.3). Understanding non-standard varieties is also one of the Level C1 descriptors for understanding audio media and being a member of a live audience. The reference to non-standard varieties is mentioned however only for receptive abilities; hence, learners should be able to understand these features, but they do not need to be able to speak or write them.

To sum up, all of the above-cited framework documents reference the importance of the sociocultural context of language. While the ACTFL World-Readiness Standards and the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines do not explicitly mention understanding non-standard varieties as a goal of FL-learning, the CEFR does highlight regional variation and its social connotations as important goal areas for advanced language learners.

In the FL learning context in US Higher Education, the 2007 MLA report described as the goal of collegiate FL learning to help learners develop “translingual and transcultural competence” (MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages 2007: 2). The authors of the report called for integrated FL curricula that focus on the development of linguistic competence and deep cultural knowledge. Several recent approaches in FL teaching are attempting to interconnect linguistic and cultural learning throughout the curriculum. Approaches that fall under this broad endeavor include literacy (Kern 2000), multiliteracies (Paesani, Willis Allen and Dupuy 2015; Cope and Kalantzis 2009), symbolic competence (Kramsch 2011), and genre competence (Byrnes 2004). Although all of these take a somewhat divergent focus, they have one main assumption in common: seeing language as a socioculturally situated practice and a discursive expression of cultural perspectives. It is not perceived as an autonomous structural system but rather as a social phenomenon (Kern 2000). Focusing on language as discursive practice seems to be a particularly fruitful approach for the development of ‘critical language awareness,’ as doing so entails analyzing the social dimensions of function, distribution, and evaluation surrounding German non-standard varieties (Martinez 2003).

German Linguistic Variation

The German language is characterized by heterogeneity (Schmidt and Herrgen 2011: 19). A homogenous Standard German as a codified norm is a theoretical construct and, as linguistic research shows, this holds especially true for orality (Elspaß 2010; Kehrein 2009, 2015; Lameli 2004a, 2004b, 2010, 2015; Spiekermann 2007, 2010; Soukup 2015; Winkler 2015). Nevertheless, native German speakers and German language teachers often hold to a standard language ideology, believing that there is one ideal, uniform, and consistent way to express one's ideas: *the* (i.e., one) standard variety. This section will consider this tension between Standard German and regional variation with a particular focus on the situation of spoken German in Austria, as well as the concept of linguistic variation in GFL teaching.

Real-Life Language Use

German is considered to be one of the most standardized languages, with numerous references that determine what counts as “correct” or “incorrect” (Maitz and Elspaß 2013: 38). This observation can be seen as a reason, as well as a cause, why the standard language ideology and homogeneity ideology are particularly prevalent in the German-speaking world. The former—standard language ideology—refers to the belief that, first, there is such a thing as a written *and* spoken standard variety and, second, that, as an expression of indispensable education, the standard is the most important and valuable variety. The latter—homogeneity ideology—refers to the belief that linguistic variation and change constitute a negative, abnormal, even threatening phenomenon (Maitz and Elspaß 2012, 2013; Schmidlin 2011). In other words, in the case of spoken German, the dominant belief is that there is one correct, homogenous, accentless, and supraregional pronunciation of Standard German. Maiz and Elspaß (2013), however, counter this myth:

Wollte man etwa allen Ernstes behaupten, dass nur ein an den kodifizierten Aussprachenormen orientiertes Sprechen als korrektes Standarddeutsch gelten könne, würde das den absurden Schluss nahelegen, dass die weit überwiegende Mehrheit der Lehrer und anderen Normvermittler, z. B. auch Universitätsprofessoren, in den deutschsprachigen Ländern keine Standardsprecher sind. (42)

This means that most native German speakers—including norm authorities, who serve as model speakers and who evaluate in-/correct German—do not necessarily adhere to the codified pronunciation norms of German. The tension between the intolerant attachment to the idealized standard versus the political propagation of plurilingualism and the common use

of non-standard varieties has led scholars to ascribe to Germany (Maitz and Elspaß 2012: 51), Austria (Muhr 1982; Pollak 1992: 13), and Switzerland (Scharloth 2005: 262) a linguistic schizophrenia. The view that linguistic difference is a deficit is internalized through schools and the public metadiscourse, not only among many native-speakers but also in German language learners.

The situation is further complicated if one considers that German, as a pluricentric language, has not only one but three codified national standard varieties: a Federal German Standard, an Austrian Standard, and a Swiss Standard German (Ammon 2004; see also Hägi 2007, 2015; Schmidlin 2011). Glauninger (2015) and Elspaß (2007) however criticize the concept of pluricentrism, because they see more of a political agenda in the conception of codified national standard varieties than an actual depiction of the linguistic variation of the German-speaking world. Although Germany, Austria, and Switzerland officially adhere to their respective national standard varieties of German—particularly in formal situations and written language use—all three countries show considerable regional and social variation within and across their national borders—particularly in informal, oral language usage.

Contrary to the ideology of a homogenous standard language, scholars in the field of German regional variation and change see languages as dynamic systems that change in social interaction (Kehrein 2015; Lameli 2004a, 2004b, 2010, 2014; Schmidt 2011; Schmidt and Herrgen 2011; Spiekermann 2010; Wiese 2015). Several studies on spoken German have found that the use of non-standard features is very common in spoken Standard German. Lameli (2004a, 2004b; see also Herrgen, Lameli, Rabanus, and Schmidt 2001) showed that only highly trained speakers (e.g., news anchors) consistently use Standard German, and they produce deviations from the codified norm among every 35th to 40th word (Lameli 2004a: 86). For non-trained speakers, in contrast, the rate of non-standard features is considerably higher: For example, city council members in Mainz used regional and other non-standard features among every 3rd word (Lameli 2004a: 91ff.). These findings lead to the conclusion that even in highly formal, topic-oriented situations, that is, in situations that typically require the use of Standard German, German speakers consistently deviate from the codified norm. Put in other words, only professionally trained speakers actually use “correct” spoken Standard German.

Although the common use of non-standard features in spoken Standard German seems to affect the entire German-speaking world, everyday language use varies in different regions and groups. Depending on several contextual factors (e.g. place, topic, interlocutor, medium, etc.) German-speakers use different varieties of German: standard varieties, regiolects, local

dialects (Schmidt and Herrgen 2011) or other dialects such as *Kiezdeutsch*² (Wiese 2015). Standard variety is defined by an orientation towards a common supraregional norm that is free of any salient regional features. In the German language, these norms are codified on a national level in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland (Ammon 2004). On the opposite end of the spectrum, dialects are understood as the least standard and most local, regionally restricted full varieties. Regiolects are situated in the area between standard and dialect that is also known as substandard, colloquial language, regional standard, etc. They are defined as supraregional, nonstandard full varieties.

Unlike the common belief that the standard variety is replacing local forms of speaking, the contrary holds true. In German-speaking Switzerland, for example, dialects are the main variety of oral everyday communication (Scharloth 2005; Schmidlin 2011). In the High German areas of Germany and Austria, highly localized peculiarities are slowly disappearing in favor of regionally more widespread non-standard forms. In other words, the old base dialects are being converted into more regional dialects. However, in these regions, regiolects are spreading and have become the predominant varieties of everyday life (Auer 2005; Elspaß 2010; Kehrein 2015; Lameli 2004a; Schmidt 2011).³ Kehrein examined the type of regional features in individuals' regiolects in different regions of the German-speaking world. He found that regiolects contain standard features, regional dialect-based non-standard features, as well as other supraregional non-standard features that cannot be traced back to dialects. On a social level, Auer (2005) attributes to regiolects an important role in speakers' identity construction:

The intermediate forms [i.e., regiolects] often fulfill a sociolinguistic function by enabling their users to act out, in the appropriate contexts, an identity which could not be symbolised through the base dialects (which may have rural, backwardish or non-educated connotations) nor through the national standard (which may smack of formality and unnaturalness and/or be unable to express regional affiliation). (23)

² Linguistic variation in the German-speaking countries is not limited to so-called 'traditional' regional dialects but it also includes recently emerged dialects such as *Kiezdeutsch*, which is spoken by diverse groups of multilingual as well as monolingual adolescents in German urban surroundings (Wiese 2015), or other social and functional varieties (see also Spiekermann 2010).

³ Research projects that focus on linguistic variety include *Atlas zur Aussprache des deutschen Gebrauchsstandards* (AADG) <http://prowiki.ids-mannheim.de/bin/view/AADG/WebHome>, *Regionalsprache.de* (REDE) <http://www.regionalsprache.de>, and *Atlas zur deutschen Alltagssprache* (ADA) <http://www.atlas-alltagssprache.de>

In terms of the usage of certain varieties, the following can serve as a very generalized guiding principle: Formal, public contexts usually require the use of the standard variety, whereas in informal, private situations, regiolects and dialects are widespread in some parts of the German-speaking countries. In Switzerland and in the Low-German-speaking parts of Northern Germany, speakers usually switch between either dialect or standard; regiolects are not common in these regions. In Middle German regions, the use of regiolects that are very close to the standard variety is increasing while dialects are fading. In Southern Germany and Austria, speakers tend to continuously switch and shift on the dialect-standard-continuum. Here, regiolects are often closer to the local dialects and it becomes difficult to demarcate the difference between dialect and regiolects (Lameli 2004a, 2010; Spiekermann 2010; Wiesinger 2010).

National and Regional Varieties: Functions and Attitudes

As Lameli's (2004a, 2004b) study showed, only trained native speakers, such as television presenters, consistently use the standard variety in spoken discourses. This leads to the conclusion that it is typically expected to hear the standard variety in broadcast media. However, Soukup (2015) and Winkler (2015) found that in Austrian radio interviews and television discussions, presenters as well as participants strategically switched between the standard and regional varieties. The discursive functions of code-changes included negative alignments in interactions (Soukup 2015) and establishment of distance or closeness in dialogic communication (Winkler 2015). In other words, the speakers deliberately switched on the dialect-standard continuum to convey additional meanings such as distance versus closeness, and positive versus negative attitudes towards other speakers.

With regard to attitudes towards standard versus dialect speakers, Soukup found that standard-speakers were associated with being more educated, arrogant, serious, diligent, intelligent, and competent. Conversely, dialect speakers were rated as more natural, easy-going, honest, humorous, and ribald; in general, dialect was associated with emotionality. Wiggers (2012: 346) conducted studies of attitudes among residents in a Low German area in northwestern Germany towards the local dialect. He found that residents who spoke only Standard German and who did not understand or speak Low German reported initially feeling "a considerable language and culture shock," frustration, and "a sort of 'us versus them' mentality that made it difficult for them to integrate." Knowledge of the regional variety was an important factor to integrate into the local community, and despite their initial frustration with the dialect, even people who did not grow up with the regional variety developed a strong emotional

attachment to it. In sum, non-standard varieties evoke a strong emotional attachment and sometimes clichéd attitudes toward their speakers.⁴

Regional varieties, thus, contribute to individual and collective identities; this was also found in a research project on the discursive construction of national identities in Austria (De Cillia 1995; De Cillia, Reisigl, and Wodak 1999; De Cillia and Wodak 2006). Particularly in private discourse, Austrian German speakers explicitly mentioned language, and specifically regional varieties, as an important factor in the construction of Austrian identity: Regional varieties were considered an important factor in distinguishing Austria from Germany and the German varieties in Northern Germany, as well as to voice affiliation with Southern German areas. Moreover, the authors found that there was little awareness of or affiliation with an Austrian Standard German variety (De Cillia, Reisigl, and Wodak 1999). Scharloth (2005) investigated Swiss German speakers' attitudes towards Swiss Standard German and found that the majority of his participants had a feeling of deficiency in terms of their competence of the standard variety. Moreover, they did not rate their national standard variety as equal to the Federal German standard variety. Thus, regional non-standard varieties evoke a stronger sense of identification among speech communities than the standard variety in non-dominant centers of the German-speaking world.

To summarize, German regional varieties are sociolinguistically important because they are ubiquitous; they are expressions of individual as well as collective identities; code-choices add additional layers of meaning to a message. Thus, in order to gain a translingual and transcultural competence, attention to the linguistic and social dimensions of German regional varieties needs to form part of GFL instruction. The next section will address the state of affairs of regional variation in GFL instruction.

Variation in German as a Foreign Language

Germany and the Federal German Standard variety are typically the focus of GFL instruction, while Austria and Switzerland with their respective (national) linguistic varieties are often only introduced through exotic excursions from the Federal German norm (Pabisch 2012; Parkes 2012; Ransmayr 2007; Van Kerckevorde 2012). There are several reasons for this focus on Germany and its national standard variety: a) because speakers of non-dominant

⁴ Hundt (2012) points out that although there are several studies on perceptual dialectology, that is, how dialect speakers see themselves and other dialect speakers, they often lack a sound research design and therefore have to be interpreted carefully.

varieties—that is, Austrian and Swiss Standard German—typically know the dominant variety (Federal German Standard German), and therefore the Federal German Standard has the highest communicative range and is less regionally marked (Scharloth 2005; Hägi 2007); b) consequently, the Federal German Standard is regarded as the most prestigious variety; c) there is little awareness of Swiss and Austrian standard varieties, not only among native speakers (Scharloth 2005; de Cillia and Wodak 2006; Schmidlin 2011), but also among GFL teachers (Ransmayr 2007); (d) there is a lack of appropriate teaching materials that systematically promote all three national varieties (Van Kerckvoorde 2012), let alone non-standard varieties.

In order to gain insight into attitudes toward non-dominant standard varieties, Ransmayr (2007) researched the spread and acceptance of the pluricentric concept and the prestige of Austrian German among students and instructors of GFL in the UK, France, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. She found that Austrian standard variants were largely considered incorrect and dialectal. In general, her research participants demonstrated little knowledge of the existence and variants of the Austrian standard variety. They voiced a very clear preference for the Federal German Standard as the more correct variety.

To counter the imbalanced representation of German-speaking countries, increasing attention has been paid to regional, cultural, and linguistic variation in the field of GFL (e.g., the 2007 issue of *Fremdsprache Deutsch* on pluricentrism; the 2012 special issue of *Die Unterrichtspraxis* on Austria and Switzerland; various contributions in Demmig, Hägi, and Schweiger 2013). Most of the publications that intend to promote awareness of different German varieties refer to the pluricentric approach and the three national varieties of German (e.g., Clalüna, Fischer, and Hirschfeld 2007; Hägi 2007, 2015; Ransmayr 2007; Van Kerckvoorde 2012). Yet, this approach can be problematic because it emphasizes only the three national standard varieties and, by doing so, it may convey the impression that there is no further linguistic variation within these nations. Focusing solely on national variation of standard varieties and disregarding the variation within and across the national borders does not do the sociolinguistic reality of the German-speaking world justice (Elspaß 2007; Glauninger 2015). For this reason, Spiekermann (2007) emphasizes the importance of raising learners' awareness of and receptive abilities in not only national but also regional varieties and points out

Ein Unterricht, der die regionale/nationale Variation in der Standardsprache nicht berücksichtigt, muss zwangsläufig dazu führen, dass Nicht-Muttersprachler des Deutschen eine andere Standardsprache sprechen als Muttersprachler [...] und viele

Bestandteile der Sprache [...], die für Muttersprachler vollkommen alltäglich und normal sind, nicht erfassen können. (n.p.)

Learners have to be able to understand native speakers, but it has become clear that teaching a sanitized standard variety will not prepare learners to understand German in informal, everyday conversations, which are characterized by the widespread use of non-standard varieties. In order to gain insight on German learners' attitudes on this issue, Baßler and Spiekermann (2001) researched attitudes towards dialect and standard German among adult, immersed German learners in Freiburg. Although they considered the standard variety as more significant than regional varieties, they clearly expressed the desire to develop a receptive competence of the regional variety because they acknowledged its crucial role in everyday communication.

To conclude, German regional variation has found increasing acknowledgement in the teaching of GFL through the pluricentric approach. However, learners must also be able to understand actual spoken language—that is, varieties that include regional and other non-standard features.

Teaching Regional Variation in the German Classroom

This sections will discuss goals of integrating regional variation in the GFL classroom and propose a set of activities that foster a critical language awareness of regional varieties through the example of an Austrian television series.

Although there are differing suggestions on how pluricentrism and regional variation should be adopted in GFL curricula, there is consensus that particularly audio and audio-visual material should represent a broad spectrum of spoken language in different regions (Clalüna, Fischer, and Hirschfeld 2007: 39). In terms of language production, GFL classes should teach rather unmarked lexical items and have the overall goal of achieving the highest possible geographic communicative range (Schmiedlin 2011: 86). Hence, German language instruction needs to a) focus on authentic spoken language, that is, an orality that is not only based on the written standard variety (Elspaß 2010, Lightfoot 2016); b) help learners develop an ability to deal with speakers of different varieties in a tolerant and unprejudiced way (Hägi 2007: 12); c) build a perceptive tolerance with a focus on listening, or *Wahrnehmungstoleranz* (Studer 2002: 119), and (d) make students aware of the social dimensions of regional varieties and help them to critically analyze their functions, distributions, and evaluations (Martinez 2003).

In order to accomplish this last goal of creating awareness of social functions, Martinez (2003) proposes a model of classroom-based dialect awareness for Spanish heritage learners that is intended to foster an understanding of language variation at elementary levels of language instruction. He expands Wolfram's (1999) dialect awareness pedagogy, which provides students tools to analyze and describe linguistic variation as a system of human communication. Martinez adds a critical dimension to this approach that asks not only about the *what* but also the *why* of linguistic variation. In other words, Martinez calls for including a critical analysis of the social dimension of linguistic variation alongside the linguistic description. The three elements are a) the social function of dialects as systems of inclusion and exclusion; b) the distribution of dialects across social groups and the significance of this distribution; c) and finally, an evaluation of dialects that countenances the dimension of "language equals power" as a complex social construct.

The following activities are based on the goals above, with a particular focus on critical dialect awareness. Through a set of activities, learners uncover systematic differences between the standard and the regional varieties and analyze instances of code-choice in order to uncover the additional meaning these code-choices connote. Although the activities focus on a very specific linguistic region of the German language, they serve as general examples for how a structural and functional awareness of regional variation can be integrated into the FL classroom. These types of activities can—and should—be adapted for other varieties and languages.

Braunschlag

Cultural products such as fictional film and TV series are representations of cultural discourses and identities, as they reflect the cultural context of their production (Tonsern 2015). Audio-visual texts thus "offer an ideal way for raising students' awareness of discursive practices in target language societies and how these discursive practices are both historically and culturally situated" (Paesani, Willis Allen, and Dupuy 2015: 201). As mentioned above, Austrian identities are often closely connected to the German language and specifically regional varieties of German (De Cillia 1995; De Cillia, Reisigl, and Wodak 1999; De Cillia and Wodak 2006). Therefore, a large quantity of Austrian cultural products, such as literature and music but also film and TV series, reflect societal discourses and language use by employing regional varieties. However, the linguistic barrier of regional non-standard varieties often leads GFL teachers to exclude these cultural products as learning sources. Accordingly, this section provides an example of how cultural products with

regiolectal variation can be used in the GFL classroom. Specifically, I will discuss activities using three scenes of the first episode of the Austrian TV series *Braunschlag*.

Braunschlag (Schalko 2012) is set in the fictitious homonymous Lower Austrian village near the Czech border. The producers describe the TV series as follows: „BRAUNSCHLAG is a story about greed, corruption, misanthropy, Catholicism and alcohol—quintessential Austria. This black-humored TV series explores the darker corners of the Austrian heart” (Superfilm 2016). Soon after *Braunschlag* was first broadcast on TV in 2012, Austrian media praised it a cult series, TV ratings skyrocketed, and *Braunschlag* won several national and international awards. The series was first aired on German TV in 2015 and the U.S. station ABC is currently planning to adapt *Braunschlag* for the US market.

The first episode of *Braunschlag*, “A Holy Miracle,” introduces the characters and the main plot of the series: The village of Braunschlag is bankrupt, which is why both the state governor’s office and Russian loan sharks are putting pressure on the mayor, Geri Tschach. Together with his friend Richard Pfeisinger, who runs the local disco, Geri decides to fake an apparition of the Holy Virgin Mary, hoping to lure masses of pilgrims to his town as tourists. Geri and Richard stage the apparition in front of Reinhard Matussek, a Braunschlag resident who runs a landing site for UFOs and who believes in extraterrestrials. Reinhard falls for Geri and Richard’s trick and proclaims his experience before the local community at Richard’s disco. The mayor informs the priest who, in turn, skeptically forwards the news to the Vatican. The message spreads throughout the whole town, and the episode ends in the local church, where a Vatican official, Mister Banyardi, harshly interrogates Reinhard, whom Geri comes to defend.

Not only because of its popularity but also because of the producers’ aspiration to represent a certain side of Austria, this TV series is a culturally rich source for the GFL context. Furthermore, because it is set in Austria, it also reflects the linguistic reality of its regional context, that is, a broad spectrum of varieties on the dialect-standard continuum.

The objective of the following activities is to increase students’ awareness of the system, use, and social dimensions of regional varieties in the German-speaking world, with a particular focus on a Middle Bavarian regiolect in northeastern Austria. Because students will need a basic command of German, I suggest these activities for students at the levels Intermediate-High, according to the ACTFL proficiency guidelines, or B1 according to the CEFR. Students will be guided through a noticing activity that helps them uncover the linguistic system in evidence in the episode, that is, systematic sound changes as well as other morphosyntactic

and lexical differences between the standard and the regional variety. This will help develop a perceptive tolerance for Bavarian dialects. Moreover, they will analyze the social functions of meanings conveyed through code-choice and switches between the standard and the regional variety. This episode calls forth various cultural discourses that can be analyzed: politics and corruption, Catholicism, social hierarchies, life in the countryside, etc. Here, however, I will focus primarily on the analysis of the linguistic and social dimensions of regional varieties.

Activities

At home, students watch the first episode with standard German subtitles at home in order to get acquainted with the overall narrative context and the protagonists. As they are watching, students take notes on their linguistic observations. They write down their general observations concerning the language, as well as at least three words that differ from the standard German subtitles. They then fill out a matrix in which they collect information on the protagonists' character, professions, and predicaments. Particularly the respective professions, which reflect their social status, will be important factors for a later activity that focuses on the discursive function of code-switches on the dialect-standard continuum in formal contexts. In class, students compare their notes about their linguistic observations and the protagonists, and discuss the content of the episode.

After the overall context has been established, I suggest a close-reading of three scenes that represent different instances of code-choice and change: a) the Virgin Mary apparition, b) the proclamation in Richard's disco, and c) Banyardi's interrogation.

a) The Virgin Mary Apparition

In the first scene "The Virgin Mary Apparition," Reinhard is walking through the forest looking for his father's runaway dog when, suddenly, he notices an eerie light around him. Excited to finally meet aliens, he gets ready to greet them properly, but the Virgin Mary (i.e., Richard, and later Geri through a microphone) starts talking to him. This scene was chosen as a starting point for directing learners' language awareness toward regional features, because the majority of the speech is in the Austrian standard variety, with only some shifts to the regional variety. At home, learners watch the sequence of this scene without subtitles and listen closely to the language. As they watch, they read the standard German transcription, and mark differences between written standard and the spoken regional variety. The learners can watch the scene as many times as needed.

As a next step, learners sort their observations into the matrix (see Appendix). The level of guidance the matrix task requires depends on the learners' linguistic background. It would be recommendable to give one or two examples first for each category.

Features in this sequence include the following examples:

- darkening: ja > *jo*, da > *do*, gerade > *grod*, Nachricht > *Nochricht*
- monophthongs: heißt > *haßt*
- rounding: meine > *moan*
- l-vocalization: will > *wii*
- syncope or apocope: mich > *mi*, gerade > *grod*, ist > *is*, ich > *i*, schon > *scho*
- other observations: lexical changes (sind > *san*, wir > *mia*); verb conjugation (*ihr nehmt* > *ihr nehmts*), das > *des*

Directing learners' attention to systemic sound changes with this matrix will help them notice patterns in preparation for upcoming analyses of scenes with a greater amount of regional features (Schmidt 1990). Being able to notice these features will support learners in developing a perceptive tolerance and acquainting themselves with the linguistic system of the dialect.

Finally, students watch the scene again, this time paying attention to when the speakers employ standard versus regional varieties, so that they can analyze the social functions of the code-choices. Richard and Geri, speaking as the Virgin Mary, use the standard variety. Reinhard, too, uses mainly the standard variety when he talks to the Virgin Mary but he does shift to a more regional speech level several times. First, he shifts when he believes to be talking to aliens, because he is very emotional and wants to signal solidarity ("*Haßt des, ihr nehmts mi mit?*"; "*Aber ich bin heil, i wii nua fuat!*").⁵ He switches back to the standard variety as he notices that he is talking to the Virgin Mary but regresses to regiolect when he feels insecure about the question whether the Virgin Mary is the mother of God and Jesus ("*Jo, i moan scho*"). Second, Reinhard uses regional dialect when he talks to himself ("*Jetzt sans do.*") and, third, Geri and Richard speak dialect with each other ("*Der Trottl glaubt mia san Außairdische.*"). In other words, the standard variety is used in formal situations, whereas dialect is used in informal, intimate situations that are intended to create solidarity. Reinhard's code-changes between dialect, regiolect, and standard perform a discursive function of

⁵ Non-standard features in all following transcripts are in italics.

signaling either insecurity, emotionality, solidarity-versus-distance or submission to hierarchies.

b) The Proclamation

In the second scene, Reinhard, accompanied by two police officers, enters Richard's disco, where Geri is having a drink at the bar. Reinhard shares his experience in the forest. Because the scene takes place in a small village, where talking to the mayor can be a rather informal affair, the protagonists in this scene mainly use dialect.

For this scene as well, learners listen to the conversation while reading the standard German transcript. They mark differences between what they hear and what they read and sort the non-standard variants in the matrix again. Because this scene is linguistically very dense due to the high occurrence of regional features, it is recommendable to play it more than once. However, because the learners have already used the matrix in the first scene, they already are aware of some systematic sound changes, which help them notice differences between standard versus non-standard variants.

Examples of the features in this scene include the following:

- darkening: Wasser > *Wossa*, Wachstube > *Wochstubm*, was > *wos*, aber > *oba*, sagen > *sogn*, Braunschlag > *Braunschlog*, hat > *hot*, naja > *najo*, alle > *olle*
- diphthongs: Gegenlicht > *Gegnliacht*, muss > *muaß*, ruft > *ruafst*
- monophthongs: meine > *man*, weiß > *waß*, heim > *ham*, heißt > *haßt*, Stein > *Sta*, Scheiß > *Schaß*, keiner > *kana*
- rounding: billig > *büllig*, zwei > *zwoa*
- unrounding: könnt > *kennts*, hörst > *heast*
- l-vocalization: Gesellschaft > *Gsöschoft*; außerhalb > *außahoib*, haltet > *hoits*, mal > *moi*, Wald > *Woid*, halt > *hoid*, Fall > *Foi*, melden > *mödn*, selber > *söba*
- r-vocalization: waren > *woan*, wer > *wea*, verarschen > *vaoaschn*, war > *woa*
- consonant weakening: passiert > *bassiert*, Telefon > *Delefon*, probiert > *brobiert*
- assimilation: Wachstube > *Wochstubm*, Sternschnuppe > *Sternschnuppm*
- syncope or apocope: geschlossene > *gsshlossene*, Gesellschaft > *Gsöschoft*, jetzt > *jetz*, darauf > *drauf*, ausgeschaut > *ausgschaut*, zuerst > *zerst*, hingestellt > *hingsetzt*, hinten > *hint*, gleich > *glei*
- other observations: nasalization of *a* in front of *n* (ganz, anders, dann); second person plural -s (ihr haltet > *ihr hoits*, ihr kennt > *ihr kennts*, ihr ruft > *es ruafst*);

lexical changes (ihr > *es*, Weißweinschorle > *Spritzer*); contractions (schauen sie denn > *schaunsn*, tun wir > *damma*, gehen wir > *gemma*)

This list is not complete, but the mere quantity of the examples highlights the importance of raising learners' awareness of the systematicity of sound changes, which may help them understand regional varieties more easily. This list also contains numerous commonly used words that learners may be able to recognize in different contexts.

Besides the types of regional features in this scene, the protagonists also employ several code-changes with important discursive functions. For example, the police officers mainly use dialect but they switch to the standard variety to highlight the official purpose of their presence and their power as police officers: “*Da Reinhard wü wos melden.—An höchster Stelle bitte.*” Reinhard himself also starts out speaking dialect, but he keeps switching to the standard variety when he quotes the Virgin Mary, as well as to make his proclamation more dramatic and highlight important aspects:

Na es woa scho komisch. Najo, zerst hot sa si übahaupt net bewegt. Do hods ausgschaut wie so a büllige Statue aus da Kiachn in so am gschissenen Gegnliacht wie in deine Disko do. Oba daun bini no amoi zruck und do hobi mi hingsetzt auf an Sta. Es woa in deem Woid, Richard. Und daun woa auf amoi so a Wärme in meim Körpa und so a Liebe. I waß, des kennts ihr ned. Und ich habe auf einmal in jedem nur mehr das Gute gesehen. Auch ... in ... euch. Und daun is wos gaunz Unbeschreibliches bassiert. Sie hod auf amoi in mir gesprochen und hat gesagt— Verkünde! Braunschlag braucht Liebe und Freude! Und daun hod sie nu a Sternschnuppm vom Himmel zur Erde geschickt.

Also Geri, who is under the influence of too much alcohol but who needs to underline his position of power as the mayor of Braunschlag, switches from dialect to standard German: “*Na auf jedn Foi muuß sowos gemeldet werden.*” Instead of vocalizing and dropping unstressed vowels in “gemeldet” and using the dialectal form *gmöd*, he uses the standard pronunciation to highlight the significance and formality of the situation, as well as the fact that he is speaking not as a private person, but as the mayor.

c) Banyardi's interrogation

The third and last scene of the episode takes place in the church of Braunschlag, where the Vatican envoy Mister Banyardi is interrogating Reinhard about the Virgin Mary apparition. Geri suddenly enters the church. He tries to get Reinhard out of the interrogation and starts

arguing with Banyardi. Banyardi speaks exclusively Austrian Standard German, which, together with his smart and elegant appearance, implies a high social status, high formal education, and the fact that he probably does not live on the countryside. Geri, who, on the other hand, is dressed less elegantly and more informally, switches on the dialect-standard continuum in several instances:

Geri: *So! Morgn! Foigendes: Jiatz is Schluss mit diesn Vahörmethoden, das ist ein Bürger von Braunschlag und Sie san nur Gost.*

Banyardi: (speaks Italian to priest)

Geri: *I bin da Burgamasta und wauns mit wem redn woin, daun redn S' mid mia.*

Banyardi: Das ist ein Haus Gottes, also sind Sie Gast.

Geri: (zu Reinhard) *Schau, gaunz a Gscheida.* (zu Banyardi) Sie werden aber trotzdem akzeptieren müssen, dass in Braunschlag ein Wunder stattgefunden hat.

Banyardi: Was glauben Sie, wie viele Bürgermeister das behaupten?

Geri: *Woin Sie damit sogem, dass ich lüge?*

Banyardi: Nein, Sie wissen es einfach nicht besser. Für ein Wunder braucht's ein bisschen mehr als einen Wahnsinnigen, der nicht zwischen Außerirdischen und der Heiligen Maria unterscheiden kann.

Geri: *Nau, wos brauchtn so a Wunda?*

Banyardi: Na ein Wunder eben.

Geri purposefully chooses his codes and this scene can be used to analyze the function of the code-choices. Often, dialect speakers try to accommodate non-dialect speakers by choosing the standard variety, especially in formal situations. Hence, Geri would be expected to speak standard German with Banyardi. However, he deliberately breaks these rules and switches to a more dialectal speech level. Geri uses the standard variety to highlight his status and power as a mayor who is able to influence what is happening in his town. Conversely, he uses a more dialectal variety to signal, on the one hand, solidarity with Reinhard and, on the other hand, that Banyardi, as a non-dialect-speaker, is not part of the local community. The juxtaposition of dialect and standard in this sequence can be interpreted as a struggle for power. The use of the standard variety highlights high social and professional status. Banyardi only uses the standard variety, while Geri is able to switch. With the standard variety, Geri emphasizes his position of power as the mayor; with the dialectal speech level, he excludes the outsider—Banyardi—from the local community.

For this scene as well, students mark differences on the written standard transcript while listening to the dialogue and order the features into the matrix. Next, they listen to the

dialogue again and analyze the discursive function of the code-switches described above. After having completed these three activities, learners have not only become aware of linguistic differences between standard and the local non-standard variety in *Braunschlag*, but they have also analyzed the discursive functions of code-choices that signal emotionality versus distance, informality versus formality, and expressions of power and exclusion.

Conclusion

Based in examples from an Austrian TV series, this article provided suggestions on how regional varieties can be included in the FL classroom in order to increase learners' critical language awareness. Most articulations of FL learning goals highlight the importance of the sociocultural functions of language and language as social practice. An effective GFL curriculum focuses on teaching not only the standard variety, but also the non-standard varieties that are typically used in spoken discourse.

The activities suggested can support learners in building a so-called *Wahrnehmungstoleranz* of regional varieties by helping them notice systematic differences between the standard and the regional variety. Moreover, an analysis of code-choices can make learners aware of the social dimensions of different varieties. In particular, an analysis of the functions of code-choices showed that standard variety and dialects were used to signal different discursive functions. Hence, in order to become translingually and transculturally competent, learners need to be able to not only understand native speakers, but also read between the lines and interpret the social practice of code-choices of different varieties.

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Appendix: Sound Changes, Austrian Regional German

Episode 1: Who are these characters? Answer the questions: What profession / problem / character do these people have? What do you think? Collect evidence for your hypotheses.

Character	Topic	Evidence
 <p>Geri</p>	Profession	
	Problem	
	Character	
 <p>Herta</p>	Profession	
	Problem	
	Character	
 <p>Reinhard</p>	Profession	
	Problem	
	Character	
 <p>Elfi</p>	Profession	
	Problem	
	Character	
 <p>Richard</p>	Profession	
	Problem	
	Character	
 <p>Herr</p>	Profession	
	Problem	
	Charakter	

Take notes: What are your general observations on the language in *Braunschlag*? As you listen, write down at least three words that differ from the Standard German subtitles.

Scene 1—Die Marienerscheinung. As you listen to the dialogue in the scene, read the transcript. Mark all words that are pronounced differently in the scene.

Reinhard: (*zu sich*) Jetzt sind sie da.

Richard: Bist du Reinhard Matussek?

Reinhard: Entschuldigung ... Willkommen auf der Erde!

Richard: (*zu Geri*) Der Trottel glaubt, wir sind Außerirdische. (*zu Reinhard*) Knie dich hin, Reinhard. Ich komme, um dich zu erlösen.

Reinhard: Heißt das, ihr nehmt mich mit?

Richard: Ich bin gekommen, um dir eine wichtige Nachricht zu bringen.

Reinhard: (*zu sich*) Eine Nachricht. (*laut*) Aber seid ihr nicht gekommen, um die Welt zu beherrschen?

Richard: Ich bin gekommen um dich und viele andere zu heilen.

Reinhard: Aber ich bin heil. Ich will nur fort!

Geri: Lass mich das machen, gib her! (*zu Reinhard*) Glaubst du an Gott, Reinhard?

Reinhard: Ja. Er ist nur gerade wo anders.

Geri: Hab keine Angst, es wird alles gut. Ich bin ein Wunder.

Reinhard: Aha.

Geri: Ich bin die Heilige Maria. Reinhard, verstehst du? Weißt du, wer die Heilige Maria ist?

Reinhard: Ja.

Geri: Und, wer ist die Heilige Maria?

Reinhard: Das ist die Mutter Gottes und von Jesus.

Geri: Von beiden?

Reinhard: Ja! Ich meine schon!

Geri: Reinhard Matussek, du musst dir diesen Ort gut merken, denn hier werde ich wieder erscheinen und hier werden viele Wunder passieren. Hast du dir das gemerkt Reinhard?

Reinhard: Ja.

Geri: Dann laufe jetzt und verkünde das Wunder.

Reinhard: Aber wem?

Geri: Lauf Reinhard, lauf! (*zu Richard*) Glaubst du, der hat das gefressen?

Richard: Gefressen schon, aber ob er es verstanden hat?

Geri: Wird schon passen. Lass sie runter. Packen wir zusammen.

German in Austria. How does the regional dialect in *Braunschlag* differ from Standard German?

Darkening	a > o [ɑ, ɒ, ɔ]	
Diphthongs	i > ia [iə], u > ua [ʊə]	
Monophthongs	ei > aa [a:]	
Rounding	i > ü [y, ʏ], e > ö [ø, œ], ei > oa [ɔə]	
Unrounding	ü > i [i, ɪ], ö > e [e, ε], eu > ei [ai]	
L-Vocalization	al > oi [ɔɪ], el > ö [œɪ], il > üi [ʏɪ], ol > oi [ɔɪ], ul > ui [ʊɪ]	
R-Vocalization	er > a [ə, e], ar > oa [ɔə]	
Consonant weakening	t > d, p > b, k > g	
Assimilation	z.B. haben > ham	
Synkope, Apokope	Wegfall von Lauten/Silben; z.B. ich > i, ge- > g-, -	
other		

Grammatical observations:

Lexical observations:

Scene 2—Die Verkündigung. As you listen to the dialogue in the scene, read the transcript. Mark all words that are pronounced differently in the scene.

Richard: Geschlossene Gesellschaft!

Polizist: Zwei Spritzer und ein Wasser für den Reinhard.

Geri: Trinken wir jetzt schon Alkohol im Dienst, ich meine außerhalb der Wachstube?

Polizistin: Der Reinhard möchte etwas melden.

Polizist: An höchster Stelle bitte.

Geri: Na.

Reinhard: Geri, Richard. Ich weiß, ihr haltet mich für einen Trottel. Aber diesmal waren sie wirklich da.

Geri: Wer?

Reinhard: Die Außerirdischen.

Geri: Die Außerirdischen?

Richard: Wollten sie leicht heim telefonieren?

Geri: Wie schauen sie denn aus deine Außerirdischen?

Reinhard: Kommt ganz darauf an, jedes Mal anders.

Richard: Jedes Mal anders ...

Geri: Da soll nochmal einer sagen, es gibt keinen Tourismus in Braunschlag.

Reinhard: Ihr könnt mich ruhig verarschen. Aber diesmal ist es ernst.

Geri: Ja, ich merke es eh.

Reinhard: Weil diesmal war es die Jungfrau Maria.

Geri: Was?

Reinhard: Die Jungfrau Maria.

Richard: Die Jungfrau Maria, bist du dir da sicher?

Reinhard: Völlig.

Geri: Na weil da ist schon ein Unterschied.

Reinhard: Wieso?

Geri: Na hörst du, die Jungfrau Maria ...

Richard: ... die ist ...

Geri: ... die gibt es vielleicht wirklich und die Außerirdischen ...

Richard: ... sicher nicht ...

Geri: ... na sicher nicht.

Reinhard: Aber die Jungfrau Maria ist auch eine Außerirdische.

Richard: Aber das ist doch jetzt Wurst.

Polizist: Und wie hat sie ausgeschaut die Heilige Maria?

Geri: Was heißt, wie sie ausgeschaut hat, sie schaut aus wie sie ausschaut, nicht.

Polizist: Achso.

Reinhard: Na es war schon komisch. Naja zuerst hat sie sich überhaupt nicht bewegt. Da hat sie ausgeschaut wie so eine billige Statue aus der Kirche in so einem geschissenen Gegenlicht wie in deiner Disko da. Aber dann bin ich nochmal zurück und da habe ich mich hingesezt auf einen Stein. Es war in deinem Wald, Richard. Und dann, war auf einmal so eine Wärme in meinem Körper und so eine Liebe, ich weiß, das kennt ihr nicht. Und ich habe auf einmal in jedem nur mehr das Gute gesehen. Auch ... in ... euch! Und dann ist etwas ganz Unbeschreibliches passiert. Sie hat auf einmal in mir gesprochen und hat gesagt: „Verkünde! Braunschlag braucht Liebe und Freude!“ Und dann hat sie noch eine Sternschnuppe vom Himmel zur Erde geschickt.

Richard: Das ist ein unbeschreiblicher Schuß. Das glaubt dir keiner.

Polizist: Na ob man so etwas erfinden kann?

Richard: Was?

Polizist: Na das mit der Liebe und der Freude.

Geri: Na auf jeden Fall muss so etwas gemeldet werden.

Polizist: Und wem?

Geri: Na hörst du, wenn heute Nacht in Braunschlag ein Wunder stattgefunden hat, dann muss man das dem Vatikan melden und wir müssen die Presse verständigen.

Richard: Die Presse schläft dort hinten.

Geri: Na bitte, dann wecke sie auf und gehen wir, ihr ruft den Vatikan an.

Polizistin: Was? Jetzt gleich?

Geri: Na sicher, wann sonst?

Polizistin: Na hat irgendwer die Nummer?

Geri: Na da rufst du halt bei der Auskunft an, nicht?

Polizistin: Und was soll ich da sagen?

Geri: Na könnte ich bitte die Nummer vom Vatikan haben, zum Beispiel, nicht?

Polizist: Der Vatikan ist aber ein Land.

Geri: Das weiß ich selbst auch, ich bin ja kein Trottel. Aber dort haben sie Telefone und die haben eine Nummer.

Reinhard: Die sind alle geheim, das habe ich schon probiert.

Polizist: Und was tun wir jetzt?

Scene 3—*Das Ende?* As you listen to the dialogue in the scene, read the transcript. The dialectal parts are *in italics*.

Geri: *So! Morgn! Foigendes: Iatz is Schluss mit diesn Verhörmethoden,* das ist ein Bürger von Braunschlag *und Sie san nur Gost.*

Banyardi: (spricht Italienisch mit dem Pfarrer)

Geri: *I bin da Burgamasta und wauns mit wem redn woin, daun redn S' mid mia.*

Banyardi: Das ist ein Haus Gottes, also sind Sie Gast.

Geri: (zu Reinhard) *Schau, gaunz a Gscheida.* (zu Banyardi) Sie werden aber trotzdem akzeptieren müssen, dass in Braunschlag ein Wunder stattgefunden hat.

Banyardi: Was glauben Sie, wie viele Bürgermeister das behaupten?

Geri: *Woin Sie damit sogem, dass ich lüge?*

Banyardi: Nein, Sie wissen es einfach nicht besser. Für ein Wunder braucht's ein bisschen mehr als einen Wahnsinnigen, der nicht zwischen Außerirdischen und der Heiligen Maria unterscheiden kann.

Geri: *Nau, wos brauchtn so a Wunda?*

Banyardi: Na ein Wunder eben.

1. Discuss: What do the parts *in italics* mean in Standard German?
2. Read out the dialogue first, entirely in Standard German and second, changing between the standard and the regional varieties.
3. Make a list: When do people generally use the standard variety and when do they use regiolects/dialects? What happens if you break these conventions?
4. Discuss: When does Geri switch between Standard German and the regional variety? What effect does this have?