Chapter 11
Misconceptions about pluricentric languages and pluricentric theory[1]

1. Introduction

This chapter is an attempt to review common ideas - and in particular misconceptions - about pluricentric languages (PCLs) and the theory surrounding them. The reason for this is, that after more than 50 years of research in PCLs there is still substantial disagreement about how PCLs should be defined and described. It seems necessary to give an overview about the different approaches to pluricentricity in order to reflect critically on them. They will be related to the theoretical framework that has been developed since 2010 within the "Working Group on Non-dominant Varieties of Pluricentric Languages" (WGNDV)[2]. Many of the misconceptions I will address come from publications on the pluricentricity of German, as I have been working on that for more than 45 years now. Many of these misconceptions are also relevant for other PCLs.

A. Basic misconceptions (MC) about PCLs

1. Misconception 1: The general rejection of pluricentricity and its sources

The most fundamental misconception regarding PCLs is the outright rejection of pluricentricity as a valid concept for languages that are, in fact, pluricentric. The rejection of the concept of pluricentricity has largely faded among linguists working on the main PCLs over the last 20 years. However, in some linguistic communities, the pluricentric concept is still strongly rejected, despite belonging to a pluricentric language. This can be observed in two types of languages in particular:

1. "*New PCLs*" that have emerged only recently.

Examples include the new nations that emerged after the split of the former Yugoslavia and the successor states of the Soviet Union that underwent a transformation after the communist system ended.

2. *Highly centralized PCLs* that often follow the "*one language – one nation*" concept.

Such a situation can actually be observed in *Albanian*[3], *Arabic*[4], *Catalan*[5], *French, Russian*[6] and (particularly strongly in) *Romanian*[7], to name but a few[8]. The "old" linguistic and political elites of the D-nations in these languages are

often unwilling to accept the "new" linguistic norms (and the political circumstances) that develop in independent nation(s) and that they can no longer control.

3. Imagined nations through a common language

The intensity of the "battles" over pluricentricity and self-definition seems to be directly related to the force that links language, nation and identity. The more a particular language is considered to be the sole basis for defining of individual, collective and national identity, the more its pluricentricity is rejected as it is thought to sever the unity between (the imagined) nation and the language on which it is based. This causes "*passions of the tongue*" as Ramaswamy (1997) calls the devotion towards the mother tongue that exists in some language communities (*Tamil* is one of them) and even lead people to self-immolation for the preservation of their language.[9]

4. Religion and language in Arabic

The preservation of a status quo (of a seemingly unified language) is also the key word for *Arabic*, which is a striking example for the rejection of pluricentricity and at the same time, a typical PCL. The concept of pluricentricity is thought to be detrimental to the idea of *Pan-Arabism* and not compatible with the notion that Arabic is the holy language of the Quran. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is therefore considered to be the "best" variety, although its use is marked by diglossia and rarely used in daily conversation and sometimes even not even a key to getting a better job.[10] However, there are, about 30 (mainly uncodified) national varieties in the various Arabic speaking countries, yet they are – as has already been mentioned in chapter 3 - generally perceived as "*debased forms, deviations or corruptions of MSA*"[11]. Ever since Abd-el-Jawad wrote his paper in 1992[12], there has been little change in this general attitude in the Arabic speaking world – except maybe in Tunisia[13], Morocco[14] and to some extent also in Algeria.

5. The imagined loss of social status

A third major source for the rejection of pluricentricity is the fear of loss of social status when adopting the norms of the ND-variety. M. Clyne (1992: 459) stated that

> "Cultural elites in the O-nations tend to defer to norms from the D-nation(s). This is related to the fact that the more distinctive forms of national varieties are dialectally and sociolectally marked."

It is by now common knowledge that the elites of the NDVs tend to prefer the norms of the D-nation (as an act of *linguistic cringe/opportunism*). The rejection of native NDV-norms by the social elites is also supported by misconceptions about the nature of the NV, which is falsely and exclusively associated with the regional varieties of the NV and not with the standard variety of the NDV. As one participant of the internet-forum of the Austrian quality newspaper "Der Standard" put it like this:[15]

> What's that supposed to be, "Austrian German"? Vorarlbergerisch?[16] Carinthian?[17] Meidlingerisch[18]?[19]

The participant in the forum discussion associated Austrian German exclusively with a very local variety (Meidling – district of the capital city Vienna) or a self governing federal state (Bundesland) of Austria (Carinthia, Vorarlberg). Such misleading attitudes are mainly due to the lack of information about the nature of the native NDV and its linguistic characteristics, which are not made aware in schools and often not codified in dictionaries and reference works.

B. Misconceptions in the early period of pluricentricity an later on – Battling with deep-rooted monocentric views about language

The early period of pluricentricity was the decade of the late 1970s and 1980s when the concept gained ground via the discussion on the pluricentricity of *English, German, Spanish, Portuguese* (and to some extent in French). In the 1990s, it was consolidated through M. Clyne's publications about German (1984, 1995), his seminal volume of (1992) and the many publications on *World Englishes.*[20] The following section is a summary of the most important early counter-arguments for readers who are new to this field. Most of it will be known for those who are familiar with the concept and the development of the debate. Many examples come from German and English but are, in principle, representative for other PCLs too.

2. Misconception 2: The monocentric concept of languages as "mother" of all misconceptions about pluricentricity

As already discussed in chapters (2) and (3) of this book, at the forefront of political and language policy misconceptions about PCLs is the idea that non-dominant varieties (NDVs) of pluricentric languages (PCLs) are mere "*dialects*", "*substandard*", "*peripheral elements*" that can only be considered as "*regional varieties/diatopic varieties*", and in a very restricted way as standard language. This approach can be found (among others) in Hugo Moser's publica-

tions on German (e.g. 1959a and 1985) for German where he coined the terms "*Hauptvariante Bundesrepublik*" [main variety Federal Republic of Germany"], "*Binnendeutsch*" [Core German] and "*Außengebiete der deutschen Hochsprache*"[21] [external areas of the German standard ("high") language], who considered German as a monocentric language. In a way, this urge to centralise norms can be seen as an echo of the strong Pan-Germanism (ethnic conception of the nation) that set in after the founding of the German Empire in 1871 and lasted until 1945. It seems that parts of the German German linguistics community have cultivated this idea again (see chapter 15). The author of an Austrian school dictionary published in 1941 put the unity of language and nation underlying the one language-one nation concept as follows:[22]

> The German language has many and very different dialects ... Above all these dialects, however, lives the German common language, i.e. the common language of the whole nation, the so called good, pure German, also called "High German" or "Written German". ... Someone who does not want to be just a Viennese, a Carinthian, a Swabian, a Saxon, etc., but a real German, who feels at home in German lands everywhere, an educated man, he must also speak the language of the whole great people, just that "Good German", the High German.[23]

This was the language ideology since the early 19th Century and was still prevailing a long time after WWII. It is still represented by German nationalist, right-wing extremist political organizations until today. Michael Clyne's work of 1984 and 1995 successfully challenged and replaced the old monocentric view (for German) and showed that German is a PCL. However, the underlying "*core-periphery notion*" of the old monocentric model is still used to some extent in English sociolinguistics until today via Kachrus model of circles (i*nner Circle, outer Circle and expanding Circle*), which attempts to describe the pluricentricity of English, but without the same ideological implications as in German.[24] Both Moser and Kachru have been criticised for the direct or indirect monocentricity of their models that obviously are not suitable to describe PCLs.[25] The "*core-periphery notion*" is still widely used in French[26] with the concept of "*bon usage*" and "*hexagonal French*" (French French), a term that stands for the predominance of the French French variety.

However, the above quote of the author of an Austrian dictionary is a first hand exemple of central notions of monocentrism, which were first summed up in Muhr (2004: 13) under the following terms: "*centralist, elitist, monolingual, mono-normative and derogatory towards non-core-norm speakers*." As

already said before in chapter (4), it equates language and nation and regards the standard variety as the only 'pure' expression of the language and its mastery as a prerequisite for being considered educated.

It also distinguishes between *high* (standard language) and *low* (regional language), *unity* (standard) and *fragmentation/split* (regional/national variety), *belonging to and being a member of a powerful political entity* (achieved through standard language) and *outsider status, who is only part of an insignificant political unit* (adhering to a regional language/not unified national standard). The (political) objective underlying of monocentric conceptions of language is to achieve and exercise power through centralised norms and control over the social behaviour of speakers with the claim that this approach is advantageous for everyone speaking this specific language. The monocentric argument in detail is as follows:[27]

1. There is only one language with a specific name (French, German etc.) and there is only one language standard for it. If there is another norm of this language, it can't be correct because that it would diminish the status of the dominant variety.
2. A certain nation is represented by this language and the nation represents this language as its most valuable asset and symbol. This nation pretends to be in "possession" of this specific language.
3. Every person who belongs to this nation is assumed to speak only one variety of that language – the standard norm – which is the only correct one. This must be the case in all communicative situations - private or official ones. The perfect monolingual speaker is the idol that is aspired to.
4. The „good and correct usage" of the language is only achieved by a (small) minority. The correct norm is not available to all.
5. The majority of the speakers are not proficient in this type of language which makes the formal standard norm the social dialect of the elite. Those who want to be part of the social élite have to adopt this norm and adapt to its social "habitus".[28]
6. The norm of the language is decided in the centre of the nation – in and around the economic/demographic centre (capital). This denies the periphery of the language any participation in the norm-setting. And it leads to the second level of pluricentricity which is present both in dominant and non-dominant varieties.

The central objectives of monocentric language policies are to fight movements that potentially endanger the unity of the language (and the stan-

dard norm). Strategies to achieve this are: the linguistic characteristics of non-dominant varieties are denied the status of being an appropriate standard and/or they are not codified, or only selectively.[29] The elitist approach resists any attempt to narrow the gap between the official standard norm and the "actual" everyday norm.

Most misconceptions about PCLs found in academic literature and among laypeople are basically variations of the six arguments. These attitudes are by no means imposed by some kind of dictatorship. Rather, they are maintained as they serve the interests of certain social groups both in DVs and NDVs.

3. Misconception 3: Pluricentricity considered as nationalism and chauvinism[30]

The observations in this section mainly refer to Austrian German (AG). However, they are also exemplary for other PCLs and NDVs too, as they describe *defensive attitudes* against the labelling a language as a PCL and against attempts by self-definition by a NDV that seeks to achieve endonormativity.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, all kinds of (academic) battles were fought on whether certain languages should be considered as pluricentric – one of them was German. Proponents of the concept of German as a PCL were accused by both conservatives and by left-leaning people of being *outdated, isolationist, separatist, segregationist.* This happened in the context of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the dissolution of borders in Eastern Europe after 1989 and the freedom of travel rights in the European Union under the Schengen-Agreement. I think that this criticism is exemplary for similar cases of NDVs/languages that have tried to constitute themselves through the development from the disintegration of a larger statehood. Examples are the countries of Ex-Yugoslavia (*Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro*[31]) and the former Soviet-Union (*Moldavia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan* etc.)

In particular, the idea of considering Austrian German (AG) as a NV was perceived to be *dividing people, supporting the exclusion of people, stirring up emotions, leading to xenophobia* and therefore *inciting nationalism* (or even *chauvinism*)[32], and as an *attempt to declare Austrian German an independent language* by *turning dialect into standard language*.[33] The critics unequivocally argued in favour of the DV – German German – and the concept of *"one language-one nation"* by ignoring the fact that Austria has established itself as a nation of its own since WWII.[34]

Their arguments were also wrongly based on the term *national variety* and in particular on the term *national.* Critics from the political left and right spec-

trum claimed that this term had been used by the Nazis during the years 1933-1945 and was therefore associated with *chauvinism, xenophobia* etc. This was of course, a far-fetched and bogus argument as the term has long been used in English linguistics, where the concept of *state-nations* is used and no one would think of such a connection.

As recent political events in various parts of Europe have shown, the ethnically based concept of nations is not only threatening the concept of pluricentricity, but also the very existence of the European Union and of the nations that make it up. While accusations such as the above are no longer heard in serious academic discourse (in relation to German), the battles are still being fought in other PCLs. One could say that inappropriate arguments that have become obsolete in the 'older' PCLs over time may resurface in the 'new' PCLs and cause trouble there for a while as well. They must be countered with well-founded arguments.

4. Misconception 4: Pluricentricity is supposed to support purism and language policing

Another important accusation against the pluricentricity of German was that it advocated the "*purism of national varieties*" and "*language policing*" measures.

These concerns arose when an answer was sought to the question how elements of other NVs of German should be treated in Austrian dictionaries and in textbooks for schools. Should they be marked as non-Austrian?

The allegation of "*national variety purism*"[35] was raised by Ammon (1995: 181ff) against the national dictionary of AG (Österreichisches Wörterbuch). He devoted a entire chapter in his book to the fact that the AG-dictionary that marked German German (GG) vocabulary (only 147 items) with an asterisk, and by that denoting them as "foreign" to AG.

Ammon criticized this as "*purism*". This was, of course, completely unjustified as it is absolutely normal that dictionaries add information about the use of words used by their linguistic community and about those that are not common. The accusation is all the more unjustified as German dictionaries like the "Duden" have always marked linguistic items of Austrian German (AG) and Swiss German (CHG). Why the marking in the dictionary of AG was "*purism*"[36] can probably only explained if one sees this as an attempt *to force a NDV into not to become too different from the DV* – an attempt that was temporally successful as the Austrian dictionary stopped the marking of GG vocabulary and was reintroduced in a marginal way in the 42nd edition of the dictionary.

Entirely in line with this strategy were accusations of two professors of German linguistics (born in Germany) who accused me of supporting language policing measures when I suggested that Austrian expressions should have priority in textbooks for schools and GG vocabulary should be avoided in newspapers and public texts. Again, this was nothing more than an attempt to interfere in the linguistic self-definition of AG. Such accusation may seem strange for other PCLs, where the power relation between the varieties is not as one sided as in German. However, they show a consistent pattern that is always directed against the self-definition of NDVs and are therefore worth mentioning.

So, in total, *eight arguments* put forward against the existence and self-definition of AG have been put forward, which in my view represent the complete arsenal of the opponents of pluricentricity and are probably relevant for most other NVs of PCLs.[37] It must be emphasised that none of these arguments ever had or has any factual basis.

(1) *The nationalism argument* (Pluricentricsm is nationalism, as it is excluding other varieties);
(2) *The separation argument* (the self-defining activities of the NDVs will split the language into separate languages);
(3) *The argument* of *creating a separate language* (the secret goal of the proponents of the pluricentric concept is claimed to be the creation of a national language independent of the DV (German German).
(4) *The language police argument* (Language police like measures are taken to ensure the establishment of a NDV).
(5) *The argument* that *dialect is transformed into a standard language* ("Low" language is standardised, thereby lowering the level of the standard language);
(6) *The inconsistency argument* (NDVs like AG are internally so fragmented, that there is no real national norm);
(7) *The overlapping argument* (There are almost no native features of AG as they are also found in neighbouring areas of Germany and Switzerland and seen from this point of view there is no AG national variety).
(8) *The outmoded and obsolete argument* (in the context of the European unification, the small languages and the national varieties no longer serve any purpose).

C. Current misconceptions on PCLs and NDVs

5. Misconception 5: The "One language – one nation – concept"

The most powerful misconception regarding the concept of PCLs is the notion of "*One language - one nation*" (already mentioned in section 2). It equates language (mother tongue, national language etc.) and national identity. The argument essentially claims that everyone speaking the same "*mother tongue*" belongs to the same nation and is therefore to be considered an (ethnic) *Albanian, Bulgarian/Macedonian, Hungarian, Serbian, Russian* etc. despite living in different countries.

The misconception is often held by dominant nations and can currently be observed in several PCLs.[38] The results of this ideology are often border disputes, the occupation of territories and populations as well as (in extreme cases) denying the very existence of an independent statehood. A "mild version" of this is the denial that the smaller countries sharing the language do not have a variety of their own right but only a "*dialect*" as shown in the previous chapters.

This concept of *ethnic nation,* which extends across sovereign nation states, is in direct opposition to the standard theory of pluricentricity, which is based on the concept of *state-nations.* The reason for this is obvious: Looking at the many (very different) countries that share former colonial languages like English, French, Spanish, Portuguese etc., it is quite evident that these countries cannot be grouped under a common concept of (ethnic) nationhood in which every state is a separate nation of its own.[39] Otherwise, the "new" countries would be subsumed as dependent entities under the "old" countries, which of course none of the 'new' states would accept. Any attempt to apply the concept of 'one language - one nation' to describe PCLs is therefore untenable.

Given these facts, it is quite surprising that Ammon (2004: 1537) - who was an eminent scholar in German linguistics - proposed three different types of pluricentricity using the terms "*plurinational*" (for nations), "*pluristatal*" (for states) and "*pluriregional*" (for regions of a nation). This terminology is now being used throughout in research on the pluricentricity of German and therefore needs consideration. The term "*pluristatal*" is attributed by Ammon to the former two German states (and only to them) and claiming that there was one German nation encompassed the former two German states. Obviously, he uses the concept "*one language – one nation, two states*" and not the concept of *two state nations* (which they definitely were). In doing so, (for political reasons) he

inconsistently omitted Austria which is also a German speaking country. It was as recently as in the mid- 1980ies when some German historians claimed again that Austria was still part of the German nation[40]. Austrian historians vehemently rejected this, since as Austria has ever since 1945 considered itself as being a nation of its own and not a part of the German nation.

A comparable attitude exists in the case of countries such as Croatia and Bosnia that established themselves as independent nations and have insisted on their national independence after the Balkan war, including their respective decisions to have a language of its own (albeit these are is still mutually comprehensible with Serbian).

Another case is the establishment of Luxemburgish as national language in Luxemburg, which is considered as a reaction to the German occupation during WWII and was perceived by leading German linguists as a deplorable loss for the German language.

The "*one language – one nation* concept experienced a surprising rebirth after 2010 with the *pluriareal concept* of German linguists (see chapter 12 of this book). This concept claims that German is not a pluricentric language, but merely a succession of language regions and thus has no "centres" with national borders playing no role. There will be a detailed description of this concept and its fallacies are discussed in chapter 14.

This kind of struggle between "old" and "new" nations seems to be a concomitant side effect of the process of national self-definition of nations, which includes the establishment of national language norms as part of it. The significance of these conflicts lies in different approaches to national and linguistic self-definition, which also concerns the naming of national varieties.

6. Misconception 6: Misleading terminology: The naming of national varieties: English in America or American English / Österreichisches Deutsch or Deutsch in Österreich

Closely linked to this discussion is the question of the correct terms for naming the national varieties. Once an NV has been established and is gradually developing, the question arises as to what it should be called: *English in America* or *American English* (AME), *Österreichisches Deutsch* or *Deutsch in Österreich*? What might, at first glance, appear to be a petty name dispute is actually much more than that. In the case of AME it is quite clear: After more than 200 years of independence nobody speaks of "*English in America*" anymore, but uses the term "*American English*", emphasizing the fact that AME is part of

the identity of the US population, as it is a distinct variety that is accepted by the population. Kahane (1992: 213) puts this development as follows:

> The essential developments of American English, then, consist of a decline of Anglophilia, the standardization of informal speech, the levelling of social dialects, the integration of foreign elements. ... The pioneers of yesterday have turned into middle class citizens.

Following these developments, the NV naturally represents the speakers and their country, even if it is not a completely different language. The political entity gives the language and its linguistic features a certain status. Moreover, it is the country and its speakers that shape the language, and not the other way around. Therefore, the correct naming puts the name of the country as the determiner first, and the name of the language second: *Austrian German/American English* etc.

Why would something that seems quite self-explanatory be worth mentioning at all? In 2015, some professors of German linguistics (all of whom of German origin) in Austria suddenly changed the name of the Austrian NV from "*Österreichisches Deutsch*" (Austrian German) to "*Deutsch in Österreich*" (German in Austria).[41] This terminology is even used in English-language publications of the project: German in Austria.[42] It is obvious that a pan-German concept (one language - one nation) is behind this change in terminology, which subsumes Austria under the German nation. [43]

A large scale special research project, funded by the Austrian National Research fund calls itself "*Deutsch in Österreich. Variation – Kontakt – Perzeption*"[44]. This is not only a terminological revision but also of content as the focus is obviously not primarily on the characteristics of Austrian German (standard) and its contribution to Austrian identity but overwhelmingly on dialect studies:[45]

These tendencies can hardly be considered anything but revisionist. They are pursued by professors who obviously favour the views of their dominant nation of origin and therefore downgrade the Austrian variety by reducing their research mainly to so-called "*dialect use*"[46]. Proof of this is that 48% for the 194 publications found on the web site of the project deal with the so called "dialects" of Austrian German (German in Austria according to their terminology). There are no publications that provide an overview about the specific features in phonetics, phonology, lexicology, syntax of AG etc. The other half of the publications deal with specific inner-linguistic or methodological questions.

Seen in a larger context, the terminological revision is nothing less than an attempt to undo 45 years of research on the NDV of Austrian German and to reduce it to a regional, mainly dialectal (local) phenomenon that has little or no significance in respect to the Austrian identity as a whole. This is a precedent worth noting and a warning to other NDVs of PCLs whose pluricentricity might also be undone by forces that inflict a status loss to their NDV.

7. Misconception 7: The naming of linguistic varieties within pluricentric languages to describe "Second level pluricentricity"

The concept of pluricentricity is firmly rooted in variational linguistics and based on a functional approach to describing linguistic variation, as well as in sociolinguistics, having as basis one or more varieties of (a) language(s) that have official status and are present in different nations. Despite some attempts to turn back the clock, as outlined in chapter 2 and 13, it is now generally agreed that these varieties should be referred to as "*national varieties*" of a "*pluricentric language*" (and not of a *polycentric language*[47]). Apart from the difficulty to decide of what is to be considered to be part of a NV (i.e. only the standard variety or all varieties of the languages prevalent in the country in question), there is also the question of how the varieties within each NV are to be called. In traditional linguistics, there is quite a lot of terminological confusion in this regard.

As a rule, terms like *dialect, dialetto, accent, argot, patois, Regiolekt, Mundart, vernacular, Umgangssprache,*[48] *colloquial language, slang, everyday language, langage familier, lingua colloquiale, gíria, calão, spreektaal, język potoczny* etc. are used without certainty that the refer to exactly the same linguistic phenomenon or provide an exact description. A classic example is the German term "*Umgangssprache*" (colloquial language) that is thought to be situated between local "*dialects*" and "*standard language*", without being able to say where exactly the boundaries between *dialect, colloquial language and standard language* lie – where each variety exactly starts and ends.[49] In addition to its unsuitability for an exact description, terms like "*dialect*", "*sublanguage*", "*Substandard*"[50], "*Umgangssprache*", *colloquial language* (and the like) are socially discriminatory for their speakers and contradict the functional approach of variational linguistics.

I would argue that such terms should be avoided in the description of PCLs. Instead the general term "*variety*" should be used in combination with a *descriptive adjective* that is based on four functional criteria:

(1) geographical region, (2) social group, (3) situation of speech and (4) mode of utterance:

- "*regional variety*" instead of "*dialect*";
- "*local variety*" instead of "*local dialect*"/"*Ortsmundart*"etc.
- "*trans-regional variety*" or "*koine (variety)*" instead of "*Umgangssprache*" (colloquial language)
- "*standard-variety*" (codified or established by use) instead of "*Hochsprache*" [high/elevated language], "*literary language*" etc.[51]
- As there are different types of "*standards*", the term should also be specified by adjectives describing the situation of speech or geographical circumstances:
  - "*formal standard*" (the traditional standard variety),
  - "*informal standard*" (language of everyday / wider communication),
  - "*regional standard*" (a clearly discernible variety in a larger region (e.g. Bundesland / department / district etc.),
  - "*local standard*" (in a town or village).
  - "*spoken formal standard-variety*" and "*written formal standard variety*" would be specifications that differentiate the "*standard-variety*" based on the criterion "*mode of utterance*" as there are differences in the norms of spoken and written utterances.

This approach enables a much more precise description of varieties that exist within NVs. They also provide a transparent way of labelling of second level pluricentricity-occurrences, which as a rule are bound to transregional varieties or koine-varieties that cover larger regions of NV and are tied to a linguistic identity.

8. Misconception 8: Types of centres: *Full, semi, quarter centre and rudimentary* ones versus dominant and non-dominant ones

The terms "*minimal/formal, basic and full pluricentricity*" that were mentioned above must not be confounded with Ammon's (1989, 2004, 2017) concept of *"full centres", "nearly full centres", "semi-centres", "rudimentary* centres *of a language"* and recently even of "*quarter centres*" - a terminology particularly popular in German linguistics. It was originally based on a scale of *full endonormativity* to *full exonormativity*.[52] In the 2nd edition of the "Variantenwörterbuch"[53] the category "*quarter-center*" was additionally introduced and the definition for "*centres*" and "NVs" changed:[54]

> In all full centres as well as in all semi-centres German is the official state language, either for the entire state ("national official language": Germany, Austria, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg - in Switzerland with simultaneous territorial restriction) or only for a sub-region of the state ("regional official language": East Belgium, South Tyrol). In the full centres, the national varieties of German are codified in their own reference works but not in the half centres. In the quarter centres, German is only a minority language and not an official state language, and the national variants are not codified – like as in the half-centres. However, these are only real quarter centres, if there are also national varieties that are 1) specific to the country or minority concerned, 2) regularly occur in local model texts, especially in newspapers, occurrences, and 3) are recognized as correct for public use by local language standards authorities (especially teachers).[55]

This definition seems to be quite incoherent and based on contradictory criteria: (a) *status*: official recognition for full and half-centres, no official recognition for minority varieties; (b) *scope of recognition*: for the whole territory, for a region, no recognition for a defined territory (for an unofficial minority language); (c) *codification*: full codification, no codification (in half centres and quarter centres). The introduction of a concept like "*quarter centre*" is particularly confusing as it refers to a *very restricted usage in minority varieties* that have no influence on the overall language as a whole, since in oral communication they usually practice a non-standard variety and in writing they use the prevailing dominant norm. In addition, only some cases of German as a minority language are included in the description, while others are not[56]. The argument for this is:

> "There are sometimes also specific expressions of the German standard language" ... These forms may be considered standard texts because they are familiar locally (to varying degrees), especially in the types of text typical for the use of standard languages (eg. newspapers, specialist texts, school essays, public speeches), and because they are accepted as correct by "the" authorities responsible for linguistic corrections (teachers, editors).[57]

In my view, this approach blurs the whole concept of PCLs as it extends the concept of "centre" to units that have little or no endonormativity. The authors of the "Variantenwörterbuch" therefore themselves refrain from calling them "national centre" and say: "Because of the lack of reference to the respective country, we do not specify the quarter centres as "national" cen-

tres."[58] One might ask: on what grounds then are some of those "quarter centres" included at all and others are not?

And if they do not constitute any kind of a national centre, what are they? The WGNDV has always rejected the idea of including cases of minority languages into the concept of PCLs (see chapter 8 of this book).[59] It is obvious that Ammon's concept of centres is only referring to the specific situation of German, and even there its usefulness is not obvious. Considering the inconsistency of criteria, the approach is also not applicable to other PCLs. Finally, the terminology also lacks descriptive neutrality. Giving a NV (centre) a label like "*half-centre*", "*quarter centre*" etc. somehow implies that the variety is lacking something – symbolically, it is as if it is worth only half as much or even less than a "*full*" centre. This is not implied when looking at the original criteria, but can be inferred if the terms are taken at face value.

For good reasons, the WGNDV therefore uses the terms "*dominant*" and "*non-dominant*" *variety/centre*.[60] The terms are both sociolinguistic and quantitative in nature. A large number of criteria has been put forward in recent years (Clyne, 1992: 459, Muhr 2012: 36, Muhr, 2015) to describe and distinguish dominant from non-dominant varieties/centre, which are easy to apply and facilitate the recording and description of PCLs. [61] They are equivalent to "different types of PCLs" that were described in chapter 9 of this book.

9. Misconception 9: Being a speaker of a NDV does not imply any professional and personal disadvantages - The social costs of the rejection of pluricentricity – Observations since the early 1980ies

The rejection of the pluricentricity of languages is evidently accompanied by social and economic costs. In this section, I will give some examples that I have observed during the past 30-40 years. They are intended to illustrate the multiple problems that exist between the demands of DVs towards speakers of NDVs. Although I have no concrete evidence that similar incidents occur in other PCLs, it is likely that they do. Nevertheless, the phenomenon is mentioned here because it has a massive impact on people who have to endure such disregard for their respective L1 or L2 norm.

1. Professional disadvantages for teachers

Speakers of AG who have been working at universities or in schools often have to endure professional discrimination and derogatory remarks. Ransmayer (2006) provides extensive empirical data about the discrimination of speakers of AG in academic contexts at universities in Europe in the mid 2000s. Several of them reported that they have even been denied the opportunity to

teach core subjects as their pronunciation was considered to be "non-standard". Such incidents have particularly often been observed at French universities and at universities where academics from northern Germany worked, according to emails sent to me. Austrian teachers of German resident in France who were candidates for the French teacher exam (CAPES) were forced to adopt a Northern German pronunciation, since their standard Austrian pronunciation was classified as "dialect" and thus the successful completion of the (existentially enormously important) examination was denied. Martin (1995) researched the attitudes of teachers of German at British universities and the experiences of British students of German. The result: most of the English students she interviewed tried to put down the German they had learned in Austria, for fear of failing the exams.[62] Cyr/Cyr (2018) also report such experiences with regard to speakers of Quebec French, who are often discriminated by speakers of French French.

I would like to give just two more examples from a multitude of such incidents: In an e-mail, a former Swedish student (after a study visit to Austria) complained to me that German professors at the University of Stockholm did not allow her to pass an important language test because of her 'poor pronunciation'. A doctoral student of German who had studied in Salzburg (Austria) and was working at a French university was told by her French colleagues that she spoke bad 'mountain German' (Bergdeutsch), etc. Experiences like this are depressing and intolerable.

2. Professional disadvantages for translators and interpreters

Austrian translators and translations services were and are confronted with the problem that their translations were not accepted by German customers. They were returned to them with the note "*wrong translation*" or "*too Austrian*". The only way out of such a situation is probably to apply a "bilingual" approach and to follow the GG norms for German clients, in order to comply with their expectations.

3. Avoiding speakers with an Austrian accent for the dubbing of commercials and popular TV-series

This was common practice in the 1990s and 2000s. When an American children's series was to be dubbed in Vienna, children had to be flown in from Berlin.[63] The Austrian language colouring, which the originally planned Viennese children could not completely avoid, would have meant that the series could only be broadcast on Austrian television, but could not be sold to German TV-stations.

A similar situation arose with the language used in the popular series "Kommissar Rex" [Detective Rex] (a detective series with a dog as main character). It was located in Vienna and produced from 1994-2004 by the Austrian National Broadcasting Corporation together with a private German TV-station. The actor playing the chief detective, an Austrian actor, consistently speaks (as a Viennese detective) a very different North German accented standard German, while his colleagues speak unmistakably Viennese. For a British series of that kind, this would mean that a Scotland Yard detective superintendent consistently uses the English of New York or Los Angeles when working in London! The reason for this was that the German TV-station insisted on it. The message was clear: the "boss" speaks "correctly" while his subalterns speak the local variety and thus showing their lower social and professional status. This resembled and was very reminiscent of the situation in the former colonies in Africa or America. However, since the years of 2010, it has become more and more usual that regional and national accents are more and more being used in German detective series, even though Austrian accents are still thought to be "strange".

4. The purification of Austrian literature from AG linguistic features

Publishers' editors systematically remove Austrian language characteristics from Austrian literature and replace them with GG or neutral expressions. I have conducted two major studies (1996 and 2013) of Austrian authors in this regard. They showed that 33-50% of the authors had experienced the removal or replacement of genuine Austrian expressions in their literary works.[64] At the same time, there is also the anticipatory self-censorship on part of Austrian authors, which seems to be even stronger than the interventions of the editors. An author and friend of mine told me in this regard: "With the first book you fight like a lion for every word, with the second book you are only worry about important words, and by your third you already know what to leave out." The main reason for this is that the book market in Austria is rather small and numerous Austrian writers publish with German publishers, where their manuscripts are then "normalised" according to GG norms as the publishers are of the opinion that they cannot sell works to a German audience if they are distinctly Austrian. This leads to the strange situation that lexical and syntactic features of AG are hardly to be found in Austrian literature.

10. Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to discuss nine common misconceptions prevalent in research on PCLs and to focus on substantive claims that have a strong influence on the theory and description of PCLs. From the observed phenomena, it can be deducted that most misconceptions are mainly caused by the attempts of representatives of dominant varieties to downplay the linguistic differences, to pursue descriptive models that downgrade NDVs to diatopic varieties, or even to deny the existence of a NDV at all. The correct description of the NDVs based of their own standards, rather than on exogenous norms, is therefore the most important task in the research and description of PCLs and for the work of researchers.

Footnotes:

1 In: Muhr, Rudolf / Meisnitzer, Benjamin (eds.) (2018): Pluricentric Languages and non-dominant Varieties worldwide: New pluricentric languages – old problems. Wien et. al.: Peter Lang Verlag. p. 9-44.

2 See the web pages for information: http://www.pluricentriclanguages.org

3 See Jusufi (2018) and Muco (2018).

4 See Abd-el-Jawad (1992)

5 See Mas (2012)

6 See Del Gaudio (2013)

7 See Huțanu/Sorescu-Marinković (2018). The dominance of Romanian Romanian is even enforced by a specific law.

8 Since the disintegration of former Yugoslavia and the establishment of Bosnian, Croatian and Montenegrin as three new languages, there is a permanent discussion going on whether these languages are rather national varieties of „Serbo-Croatian“ (an idea that is by and large rejected in Bosnia, Croatia and Montenegro). For the discussion, see Kordić (2008a, 2008b).

9 See Ramaswamy (1997) describing the language devotion in Tamil Nadu (a federal state of India) in the period from 1930-1968 where speakers burnt themselves alive in order to protest against the attempt of the federal government of India to introduce Hindi as language of Tamil Nadu. The Tamil language is worshipped as “mother” for all Tamils. The motto of the men killing themselves for the sake of language was: Uṭal maṇṇukku, uyir tamiḻukku, “body to earth, life for Tamil”.

10 See Abd-el-Jawad (1992)

11 Ibd. (1992: 296) and confirmed by Zeinab Ibrahim (Qtar, Cairo) (personal communication).

12 Abd-el-Jawad (1992) in Clyne (1992).

13 See Masmoudi et.al. (2014)

14 See Marley (2015) and Moustaoui (2013).

15 https://derstandard.at/1288659358318/Das-ist-die-Auswirkung-linguistischer-Kriecherei (acc. 10.1.2018)

16 The most western province of Austria (a very small and Allemanic speaking language area)

17 The southernmost province of Austria, which has a rather strong accent in places.

18 A district of the Austrian capital Vienna (where a distinct local variety is practised).

19 "Was soll denn das sein, "Österreichisches Deutsch"? Vorarlbergerisch? Kärntnerisch? Meidlingerisch?"

20 See Filppula et. al. (eds.) (2024): The Oxford Handbook of World English.

21 See Polenz (1988) and Hellmann (1989) for a critique of these terms.

22 Ortmann (1941): Regeln und Wörterverzeichnis für die Aussprache und Rechtschreibung.

[23] " Die deutsche Sprache hat viele und sehr verschiedene Mundarten (Dialekte)... Über allen diesen Mundarten aber lebt die deutsche Gemeinsprache, d.h. die gemeinsame Sprache der ganzen Nation, das sogenannte gute, reine Deutsch, auch „Hochdeutsch“ oder „Schriftdeutsch“ genannt. ... Wer nicht bloß ein Wiener, ein Kärntner, ein Schwabe, ein Sachse usw. sein will, sondern ein wirklicher Deutscher, der sich überall in deutschen Landen daheim fühlt, ein Gebildeter, der muss auch die Sprache des ganzen großen Volkes beherrschen, eben das „gute Deutsch“, das Hochdeutsch."

[24] Kachru, (1992: 355-365).

[25] See Crystal (1997), Wehbe (2018) and Polenz (1988).

[26] Pöll (2001)

[27] First published in Muhr (2004: 13) and extended and updated in Muhr (2012: 28f).

[28] For the term see Bourdieu (1984): Distinction. A social Critique of the judgement of taste.

[29] See chapter 6 of this book for further details.

[30] See Muhr (1997) and an extensive overview in Muhr (2013).

[31] See Hodges (2016) for a comprehensive overview, Stojanov (2020), Karpovic (2020) and Kordič (2008a, 2008b) for a description of the matter from a different viewpoint.

[32] Opinions like this are found extensively in Putz (2002), Wiesinger (1980) and put forward by left leaning activists in 1995 on the one side and conservative Journalists and Germanists on the other. The first group imagined the abolishing of all borders and nations and the second group were afraid of loosing their symbolic capital of being able to master a variety of a powerful language that gives them an advantage towards the less educated members of their society.

[33] Put forward among others in Wiesinger (1980, 1995) and in Putz (2002).

[34] This kind of massive criticism is no longer used as the Austrian population seems to accept its national variety more and more as discussions on the large internet-forum of the newspaper "Der Standard" show.

[35] Ammon (1995: 181ff). The same accusation was levelled at me personally by a German-born professor of linguistics after I had organised a large conference on Austrian German in 1995.

[36] Due to this kind of bullying, the marking of GG vocabulary has unfortunately been stopped by the authors of the AG-dictionary and only been taken up to certain degree in the last edition.

[37] The abbreviation “AG” in this list can be substituted by the name of any other NV.

[38] Among these languages are Albanian, Hungarian, and Russian as an example. For Albanian see the Jusufi (2016) and Muco (2016) for Albanian, for Hungarian Sebök (2016) and Kozmás/ Vančo (2016) and for Bulgarian/Macedonian (Sánchez Prieto, 2013).

[39] This holds true despite the existence of the “Commonwealth of Nations” and the “Organisation internationale de la Francophonie” which are assembling nations with the same official language (and the same colonial history to some degree) but are not purporting to constitute a nation in itself.

[40] For the discussion see: http://www.bpb.de/geschichte/zeitgeschichte/deutschlandarchiv/247587/dreistaaten-zwei-nationen-ein-volk-ein-konzept-fuers-museum [acc. 10.01.2018]

[41] See: Lenz/Ahlers/Glauniger (2015): Dimensionen des Deutschen in Österreich.

[42] Stratton/Beaman (2024)

[43] Stratton/Beaman (2024)

[44] [German in Austria. Variation - Contact – Perception]. See the webpage of the project: https:// dioe.at [acc. 10.01.2018]

[45] 94 out of a total 194 publications (48%) of the project are dealing with “dialects” in Austria.

[46] See Lenz/Ahlers/Glauninger (2015) for a publication in this line.

[47] A term favoured by Kloss (1978) and recently by Blommert/Rampton (2013) exclusively.

[48] For a recent example of the use of this terminology see Soukup/Moosmüller (2011) and other papers in Kristiansen/Coupland (2011).

[49] See Bichel (1973) for an early and substantive critique of this term that however, did not help to abolish this terminology.

[50] Bellmann (1983).

[51] Many other terms have been put forward in linguistics for "standard language" Like: "*Literatursprache*", "*Gemeinsprache", "Einheitssprache", "langue litteraire", lingua litteraria", "literaturnyy yazyk", "spisovný jazyk", jezyk kulturalny*" etc.

[52] Ammon et. al. (2004, Einleitung/Introduction)

[53] Ammon et. al. (2017): Variantenwörterbuch des Deutschen. 2nd ed.

[54] Variantenwörterbuch 2017 (Einleitung/Introduction)

[55] [„Sowohl in allen Vollzentren als auch in allen Halbzentren ist Deutsch staatliche Amtssprache, entweder für den ganzen Staat („nationale Amtssprache": Deutschland, Österreich, Liechtenstein, Luxemburg - in der Schweiz mit gleichzeitiger territorialer Einschränkung) oder nur für eine Teilregion des Staates („regionale Amtssprache": Ostbelgien, Südtirol). In den Vollzentren sind die nationalen Varianten des Deutschen in eigenen Nachschlagewerken kodifiziert, in den Halbzentren dagegen nicht. In den Viertelzentren ist Deutsch nur Minderheitssprache und nicht staatliche Amtssprache, und die nationalen Varianten sind - wie in den Halbzentren - nicht kodifiziert. Jedoch handelt es sich nur dann um wirkliche Viertelzentren, wenn es dort auch nationale Varianten gibt, die 1) spezifisch sind für das betreffende Land oder die Minderheit, 2) regelmäßig in örtlichen Modelltexten, vor allem in Zeitungen, Vorkommen und 3) von dortigen Sprachnormautoritäten (vor allem Lehrerinnen) als für den öffentlichen Sprachgebrauch korrekt anerkannt werden."]

[56] German is a also minority language in Denmark, Slovakia, France, the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Russia.

[57] "Dort finden sich bisweilen ebenfalls spezifische Ausprägungen der deutschen Standardsprache … Diese Formen dürfen als standardsprachlich gelten, weil sie vor Ort (in unterschiedlichem Maße) geläufig sind, speziell in den für den Gebrauch von Standardsprachen typischen Textsorten … und weil sie von den für Sprachkorrekturen zuständigen Autoritäten als korrekt akzeptiert werden." (Variantenwörterbuch 2nd ed. 2017, Einleitung.)

[58] "Wegen des nicht immer eindeutigen Bezugs auf das jeweilige Land verzichten wir bei den Viertelzentren auf die Spezifizierung als „nationale" Zentren." (Variantenwörterbuch 2nd ed. 2017, Einleitung.)

[59] Except for cases like Hungarian (and some others) where there is an evident discrepancy between the official status and linguistic data that justify certain national varieties to be considered as regional languages.

[60] The original terms used by M. Clyne were „dominating" and „other" varieties. The WGNDV decided in its first conference in 2011 to use the pair "*dominant*" and "*non-dominant*" to show a clear opposition between the two terms.

[61] The concept of "major variety" and "minor variety" (a terminology already in use in respect to NVs of English) resembles it but lacks the socio-semiotic dimension that is essential for the description of PCLs and not synonymous. However, it can be used to denote general relations between NVs of different size.

[62] I would just like to cite two more examples from a large number of such occurrences: In an email, a former Swedish student complained to me (after studying in Austria) that German professors at Stockholm University refused to let her pass an important language proficiency exam because of her "bad pronunciation". A graduate student of German who had studied in Salzburg (Austria) and was working at a French university was told by her French colleagues that she spoke bad "Bergdeutsch" (mountain German) etc.

[63] Reported by Gauß (1994: 30).

[64] See Muhr (1996).