

REVIEWS

Variantenwörterbuch des Deutschen. Die Standardsprache in Österreich, der Schweiz, Deutschland, Liechtenstein, Luxemburg, Ostbelgien und Südtirol sowie Rumänien, Namibia und Mennonitensiedlungen. Edited by Ulrich Ammon, Hans Bickel, & Alexandra N. Lenz. Berlin: de Gruyter Mouton, 2016. Pp. lxxviii, 916. Hardcover. € 99, 95.

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This fully revised, extended and updated second edition of the *Variantenwörterbuch des Deutschen* (henceforth VWB; first edition published in 2004) covers not only the language usage in countries and regions with German as an official language, but also important, hitherto not lexicographically coded peculiarities of the German language in Romania, Namibia, and Mexico. In those countries, some distinct language forms have emerged in areas known as *Viertelzentren* ‘quarter centers’ among the scholars of language varieties (German: *Varietätenlinguistik*). The *Viertelzentren* of pluricentric German are in contrast to *Vollzentren* ‘full centers’ (that is, Germany, Austria, and Switzerland) and *Halbzentren* ‘half centers’ (that is, Liechtenstein, South Tyrol, and Eastern Belgium; pp. XI–LXXVIII; see also Ammon 1995).¹ The purpose of the VWB is twofold: First, it is to record the peculiarities of the different varieties of German spoken in the *Viertelzentren*, which have emerged under different historical conditions.² Second, it is to

¹ In the first edition of the VWB, only the lexical variants of the German standard language in the national full and half centers were coded, where German is the official and/or administrative language. The new edition is the result of a three-way research cooperation between the departments in Germany (University of Duisburg-Essen), Austria (University of Vienna), and Switzerland (University of Basel).

² The historical conditions referred to here include settlement (Romania), colonialism (Namibia), and religious persecution (for example, USA, Mexico, and Canada).

compare the Viertelzentren varieties of German with the varieties spoken in Vollzentren and Halbzentren. For each lemma, the VWB specifies its origin, dissemination, and importance, and provides its “usual German correspondences” (p. XVIII) offering at least one reference with source citation.³ The VWB not only closes a lexicographic gap through the corpus-based representation of the national and area-specific vocabulary, but it also offers new perspectives on the diversity of German varieties and on the assessment of variation.⁴ The VWB contributes to a better understanding of German as a pluriareal language.

The objective of the editorial team and its associates—to produce a comparative dictionary of the diverse German standard varieties—is presented in a comprehensive and detailed introduction (*Preface and Introduction*, pp. IX–LXXVIII), which precedes the dictionary part (*Dictionary*, pp. 3–857). The legitimacy of the Viertelzentren of the German language (pp. XII–XIII) is dealt with in a professional and motivating manner, so that the interested nonspecialist can also find it a useful source of reference. Chapter 4 is especially valuable, since it offers a brief overview of the Viertelzentren in Romania, Namibia, and the Mennonite colonies in Mexico (pp. LX–LXIII). The autonomous varieties of the German language that have developed in those regions have a normative validity for the local German minorities.

The new edition comprises a total of 162 lemmata of the expressions that are valid and typical in the respective Viertelzentren, which are coded in the VWB as RUM, NAM, and MENN. The lemmata have been taken, almost without exception, from articles in the press. The entire lemma inventory of the first edition has been theoretically and empirically verified; it has been enriched with 2,500 keywords and word variants. Throughout the revision process, the Internet was used extensively to update existing entries and to collect new evidence. On the

³ The inventory of the particular varieties of the German language and the checking of the lemmata for their usage and validity in the particular region is due to the cooperation with 18 (regional) experts where the particular varieties of the German language are spoken.

⁴ The dictionary records the variants of the German standard language, which has not yet been done for any other language—not even for the major pluriareal/pluricentric languages. The breadth of the materials cited is one of the strong points of this reference work.

inside of the front and back cover pages, the VWB outlines the microstructure of an entry (that is, what information is included for each lemma), which renders the structure of each dictionary article accessible to a nonspecialist. Examples, with their sources indicated, illustrate the usage of the lemmata, while cross-references point to the usual German correspondences. Thus, the differences from and elements in common with the standard language are presented in a comprehensive and user-friendly manner. The introduction ends with an overview of the particularities of the standard German language in the different German-speaking centers (pp. LXIV–LXXXVIII).

Since the lexicographic approach has not been changed from the first edition, it is not further discussed here. The focus of the review is on the lexicographical coverage of the varieties in the Viertelzentren, which had been unjustly neglected in the first edition. In Romania, (Standard) German is a transregional and relatively uniform common language, used in church and school; it is also the medium of writing for the German-speaking minorities living in linguistic enclaves.⁵ The term *Romanian German* refers not only to the language used by a historical German minority living in Romania, but also to the language used by the German-speaking Romanians, mainly as an educational and professional language.⁶ German is also used in the media and literature, along with other minority languages (such as Hungarian).⁷ From a synchronic perspective, Romanian German is influenced by other languages (Romanian and Hungarian) as well as by other varieties of German. It shares linguistic features with the Austrian and Swiss varieties of Standard German, with the varieties of national half centers, as well as with different regional dialects.⁸ As a variety of German, Romanian

⁵ For the origin of the German communities in Romania, see Bottesch 2008:329–392.

⁶ For the discussion of Rumäniendeutsch versus the analytical form with adjective specification “rumänisches Deutsch”, see Lăzărescu 2013:369–389.

⁷ See the German newspapers cited in the references and the German broadcasters of the national Romanian Radio and Television; the Romanian-born German-language writer Herta Müller was awarded the Nobel prize in Literature in 2009.

⁸ For the common lexical features of Austrian-Romanian German, see the dictionary published by Lăzărescu and Scheuringer in 2007. For the German

German also has its own word forms—Romanianisms—which are in use in all regions of Romania, and which are only partially due to the influence of Romanian as an official language.⁹

The German language has a strong tradition in Namibia as well.¹⁰ Namdeutsch—a Namibia-specific variety of German—has developed in a multilingual context and is used in everyday life by the German-speaking community of Namibia. This extra-European German variety is spoken by a multilingual community, most of whose members speak three languages. Loanwords originate mostly from Afrikaans and English. Namibia German, which arose due to colonization and emigration, is close to Standard German, but also has some special features (Namibianisms), which are coded as NAM in the VWB.

The ancestors of many of the Mennonites living today in North and South America were German-speaking Mennonites mostly of Eastern European origin (as well as some Russian Germans). They emigrated to the United States and Canada in the 1870s, and subsequently migrated to Mexico and other Central and South American countries.¹¹ The language situation was and remains diglossic, since Mennonite (Low) German is spoken besides the majority language of their country of residence. A

language in Romania considered from a perspective of variation linguistics, see the collective volume edited by Lăzărescu et al. (2016) and the publication series of the research center *German in Central, Eastern and South Europe* (FZ DiMOS) at the Regensburg University.

⁹ Ulrich Ammon proposed the term *Transylvanianisms*, which, however, does not cover terminologically all the historical language regions of German-speaking colonists. *Rumänismus* ‘Romanianism’ (abbreviated RUM in the VWB) stands as a term on an equal footing with *Teutonism*, *Austrianism*, and *Helvetism*.

¹⁰ During the colonial period from 1884–1915, the official language was German. In 1920, Afrikaans and English were introduced as official languages of Namibia. In 1984, German was added as the third official language. Since the independence of Namibia in 1990, English is the only official language, whereas Afrikaans is used frequently as Lingua Franca (see Böhm 2003; for an outline of the history of the Germans in Namibia, see Deumert 2009: 356–361).

¹¹ *Plautdietsch*—also known as *Mennonite Low German* in the North American language area—is the vernacular of the linguistic-religious minority of the Mennonites in different regions, far apart from each other.

variety of Standard (High) German is still the language of church and school. The VWB records the specific lexical items of Mennonite German in Mexico (abbreviated MENN), which, however, have numerous correspondences in the language used in various Mennonite settlements in the United States and Canada.

The variants of the Viertelzentren, which were recorded for the first time in the VWB (RUM, NAM, MENN), include 79 Romanianisms, 37 Namibianisms, and 46 lemmata from the Mexican colonies. They reveal particularities of the German spoken in the respective Viertelzentren and cover different domains (administration, school, economy, culinary art, social life, traditions).¹² This inventory of lemmata includes variety-specific forms built according to German word formation rules; these forms do not typically exist in other varieties, or they have a different meaning: RUM *Aufboden* ‘attic’, *Muskelfieber* ‘muscle soreness’; NAM *Küska* abbreviation for *Küstenkarneval* ‘coastal carnival’, *Veld* ‘open, wide land, Savannah’; MENN *Angedenk* ‘Memory from a trip; souvenir’, *Einheimer* ‘inhabitant of a country, in which the Mennonites have founded colonies’.

Some of the word variants are identical or close in form in all three varieties, but they have at least one additional meaning specific to a particular Viertelzentrum: RUM *Programm* ‘time table’ or ‘opening hours of a shop’, *Akademiker* ‘member of the Academy’; NAM *Klippe* ‘Stone’, *Damm* ‘kind of artificial lake’; MENN *Älteste/Vorsteher* ‘a local church leader chosen by a Mennonite community’, *Ohm* ‘Minister in a local church’. The particularities of these language varieties are also manifested in words adapted to the German language (Germanizations, or calques): RUM *Mikrobus*, rather than *Kleinbus* ‘minibus’, *Vinete*, rather than *Auberginen(salat)* ‘salad made out of grilled and minced eggplant’; NAM *Kamp*, rather than *eingezäunte Fläche* ‘fenced area’, *Rivier*, rather than *Trockenfluss(bett)* ‘dried-out river[bed]’; MENN *Grünhaus*, rather than *Gewächshaus* ‘greenhouse’, *Hochweg*, rather than *Autobahn* ‘highway’. Such calques are especially common among words that designate the realia of a particular Viertelzentrum and thus do not have corresponding terms in other centers: RUM *Märzchen* ‘lucky charm items worn by girls and women on a white-red string in March’, *Bakkalaureat* ‘the Romanian high-school diploma’; NAM *Matrikulant* ‘a

¹² More detailed definitions are sometimes abridged.

person who has matriculated’, *Depositum* ‘deposit against damage’; MENN *Komiteeschule* ‘elementary school’, *Privilegium* ‘special privileges regarding religious freedom, self-administration, exemption from military service’.

The lemma inventory also contains numerous lexical items that reflect influence of the particular official language and local (minority) languages spoken in these regions. For instance, *Mititei* ‘barbecued minced meat rolls’ has been borrowed unchanged from the Romanian; from Afrikaans—*Ram* ‘ram’ and *Braai* ‘barbecue party’; from Spanish—*Diputado* ‘elected member of Parliament’ and *Estado* ‘region with limited political autonomy’. Dialectal vocabulary lives on in *Palukes* ‘polenta’, *Hanklich* ‘a Transylvanian-Saxon kind of cake’ (RUM) or in *Vaspa* ‘snack in the early afternoon’ (MENN).

Overall, one can recognize a more careful processing of lemmata found in the German of Romania. This is shown by the consistency of the lemmatizing and by the elements included in the various dictionary entries (for example, the origin and domain of usage, or comments such as “rarely also in the written form of *Kletiten* or *Klettiten*”, p. 394). In addition, in the RUM-vocabulary section, there are several references pointing to (at least two) compounds (see, for instance, the lemma *Märzchen*, p. 464) in the closing part of the dictionary article. For many MENN- or NAM-lemmata, the etymological specifications or references to compounds are missing. The new edition of the VWB has a more solid empirical foundation, listing examples that reflect the current state of the language. Each lemma inventory refers to a specific reality, with which the speakers of the respective varieties identify.

The regional and national specific vocabulary emerges from a corpus-based empirical study and is presented in a compelling, systematic, and user-friendly manner, with each entry having a clear structure. The VWB offers an organized, easy-to-read, lexicographically sound and informative overview of the German varieties, which is also accessible to nonspecialists. The dictionary is complete with a source directory (pp. 859–895) and a comprehensive bibliography of 20 pages (pp. 897–916). Written language variants have been collected using diverse regional sources, including electronic ones. With respect to Romanian German, it is commendable that representative examples drawn from rich sources are provided. By comparison, the sources for the varieties spoken in other Viertelzentren are sparse. For the new

edition, the bibliography has been updated; it is organized thematically and comprises the most important works on the national and regional particularities of German in all the centers. The publishing house has ensured an accurate, particularly careful printing of the work, which should also be commended. A clear user-friendly text layout, five maps, as well as summaries, allow for an easy overview.

Yet occasional accidental slips and discrepancies can hardly be avoided in such a comprehensive work. Since alternative variants are cross-referenced within the VWB, occasionally there are small discrepancies in the explanations. The entry for the lemma *Oberstufe* ‘high school’ (A D; p. 508) contains a reference to *Lyzeum* and *Gymnasium* (both RUM), but not to *Sekundaria* (MENN). Under the lemmata *Aubergine* (CH D; p. 54) and *Melanzani* (A; p. 470)—both meaning ‘salad made out of grilled and minced eggplant’—the reference to *Vinete* RUM is missing.

This otherwise carefully assembled volume (with solid editorial work reflected in the impeccable printing) can also be criticized for some omissions. In the bibliography, the abbreviations of authors’ names (for example, Glauninger, Norrick), as well as information about editors, subtitles, or series titles are occasionally missing. The lowercase letters marking distinct publications within the same year (for example, Ammon 2015b, Hägi 2014a, Ebner 1998b) are in some cases erroneous or entirely missing.

An overall conclusion is that the editors and experts managed to produce a consistent and visually attractive dictionary that is worth consulting; it may stimulate further research and collection of lemmata, so that those varieties of German are recognized to an even greater degree. This significant work provides an important stimulus for studying regional languages and plurilingualism, while the rich bibliography addresses more specific information needs. This dictionary will be welcomed by many users. The VWB will become a valuable resource for professional linguistic circles and beyond, offering insight to the linguistically interested readership in and outside the German speaking area. It will serve as a source of reference not only for the professional community, but also for nonspecialists who are interested in linguistic heterogeneity and would like to know more about language variation.

On a final note, the editorial team deserves credit not only for their foundational work that is unique in German lexicography and for having properly collected empirical data that help document language variation. The dictionary records evidence of the language of the German-speaking minorities in different regions as language islands. This evidence is preserved for future generations by being embedded in professional awareness by becoming part of collective lay knowledge. The successful attempt to highlight the lesser-known aspects of this subject deserves unequivocal appreciation. Some of the entries will stir up memories for the readers with connections to these colony areas, which is another reason users will be grateful to the editorial team.

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