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Eight hundred years of modern language learning and teaching in the German-speaking countries of central Europe: a social history

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ABSTRACT

The paper gives an overview of FLT in the German-speaking regions of Europe from medieval times to the present day, within a framework of language politics, communicative needs and educational ideologies. The languages addressed are French, Italian, Spanish, English, Russian and Turkish. Basic social and professional data of the various groups of teachers are provided. Formats of teaching discussed range from private tuition to state school curricula.


KEYWORDS

Language tuition; communicative barriers and needs; language politics; educational ideologies; widely and less widely studied languages; school FL curricula

The significance of the topic and the state of research

Europe has always been a continent of many languages. The question of which languages to teach and which ones to learn, and for what reason, is crucial in European cultural history. With the impact of twentieth-century political change in Europe and the advent of European Union (EU) language politics, the gestalt, the history and the status of European languages have been researched in a number of outstanding publications (e.g. Crystal 1987; Décsy 1973; Ohnheiser, Kienpointner and Kalb 1999; Price 1998). The history of foreign language (FL) teaching and learning, however, has attracted less interest. This may have to do both with the fact that modern linguistics and didactics are synchronically oriented, and with the fact that there is a methodological gap between historiography and the more systematically oriented disciplines. Nevertheless there is a fair number of monographs either dealing with the overall development of FL teaching on a worldwide scale (e.g. Kelly 1969, Titone 1968) or dealing with individual languages (e.g. Howatt 1984), sometimes restricted to certain countries (e.g. Glück and Pörzgen 2009; Glück and Schröder 2007; Lévy 2013; Minerva and Pellandra 1997; Wilhelm 2005). In 1988 the French association, the Société Internationale pour l'Histoire du Français Langue Étrangère ou Seconde (SIHFLES) started to reappraise the history of the teaching of French worldwide as part of the *patrimoine national* (national heritage), a project that has so far produced more than 50 volumes. With the voluminous and thoroughly researched publications of Helmut Glück (2002, 2013) the historiography of the teaching and learning of German has re-emerged as an academic discipline. In this context, see also McLelland (2015).

The historiography of FLT in the German-speaking countries was already alive and well as a domain of academic research between 1880 and 1914, and although it had its slack periods between the World Wars and again in the 1970s and 80s, it never completely stopped. The reason for this may be that the study of other languages has always had a high significance in the German-speaking regions, due to the fact that German was not a national language before 1871,

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and one of only limited international scope afterwards. Moreover, the German-speaking regions, placed in the very centre of Europe, were surrounded by more than a dozen neighbouring languages, and since German, in its ‘unpolished’ regional standards, was considered of relatively low status before the early 1800s, the surrounding national languages were the media of exchange. The inhabitants of eighteenth-century Germany had a brilliant reputation for being good language learners, but for other Europeans, learning German did not seem to be much of a priority. FL methodology was a key issue in Germany even after national unity had been reached in 1871, and Wilhelm Viëtor (1850–1918) is as much a German phenomenon as are the many thousand pages of printed reactions he triggered with his pamphlet (Viëtor 1882) on using the Direct, instead of the grammar-translation, method.

Historiographic contributions on FLT in Germany, Austria and Switzerland run into the hundreds. Most of them are characterised by a high degree of specialisation (by language, region, institution, gender and thematically). There is a biographical dictionary (ca. 4000 entries) of pre-1800 FL teachers (Schröder 1987–1999). A comprehensive bibliography of the domain is in preparation. What is missing, though, is a detailed synopsis of FLT history in the German-speaking world, the existing slim volume by Hüllen (2005) being somewhat rash in its documentation and conclusions.

The following article offers a condensed overview of 800 years of FLT in the German-speaking countries, based on extensive research including evidence from a number of archives.

Medieval times

During the Middle Ages, the international language of the Catholic part of Europe was Latin. It was considered a holy language, just like the biblical languages Hebrew and Ancient Greek, since the Bible was read and studied in its Latin translation, the *Vulgate*. As the idiom of the Church of Rome and its religious orders, Latin was the language of erudition. Refined and standardised, it was spoken and written by a small international elite in a world which was extremely rich in unstandardised vernaculars, but without nation states and national languages. It even penetrated into the lower social strata, where reduced, sometimes pidginised forms were common, for example, amongst long-distance traders and in ports (Bischoff 1961; Schröder 2000a).

As an international language, however, Latin remained largely restricted to the regions controlled by the Roman Church. Outside this sphere, transnational communication became more difficult, if not impossible. Communicative experiences in the fringe zones between Roman Catholicism and other creeds generated, from the thirteenth century onward, initiatives aimed at learning the prevailing dialects of the other side. Who were the people to need such a *competence transfrontalière*? Viewed from a Central European angle, four groups can be identified:

- members of the ruling class, politicians (e.g. envoys and legations) and the higher ranks of the military,
- long-distance tradesmen and seafaring people,
- missionaries, pilgrims and other travellers,
- members of linguistic and/or cultural minorities, refugees.

The languages acquired were contact languages, chosen according to personal need. Before the fourteenth century, there were no professional FL teachers, and hardly any teaching materials. What people needed was a working knowledge (partial skills) of the target language or languages in restricted social and professional fields. Most prominent as target languages were Church Slavonic and the Russian vernacular of trading cities such as Novgorod, the most important eastern centre of the Hanseatic League (Raab 1955–1956; Stieda 1885). Other vernaculars needed were Yiddish (as a trading language and for missionary reasons), Western Slavonic dialects, contemporary Greek and Turkish. In the context of the crusades and the Oriental mission, classical and contemporary forms of Arabic also played an important role (Altaner 1933, 1936).

In 1356, the Golden Bull (Chapter 30, § 2) stated that apart from German and Latin, the Electors' sons should be taught Italian and Slavonic dialects. Hanseatic Legislation ruled in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that merchants trading at Novgorod should know some Russian, and should be young enough to learn it. The Lubeck Hanseatic Parliament of 1423 decided that any Hanseatic merchant found guilty of teaching Russian to non-Hanseatic tradesmen would have to be punished: he who had the language, had the trade. Killing an interpreter, a *Tolk* (from Russian *tolkovatel*, or somebody who explains things), led to a compensation fee twice as high as the one for killing an ordinary person (Schröder 2000a: 682). When, in 1554, new rules were issued for the London Steel Yard, the Hanseatic Counting House, it became obligatory for German merchants applying for accreditation to prove their command of English. If their proficiency was found to be insufficient, they were made to live with an English master weaver for one year in order to learn the langue of the wool trade (Schröder 2000b: 724). Twenty years after the breach with Rome, English, as a national language, had replaced Latin (and possibly Hanseatic Low German) as the medium of trade. The Renaissance had reached the Thames.

The Late Middle Ages were a period of cultural and linguistic transition. As languages of literature and courtly values, French and Provençal had been present in the German-speaking countries ever since the twelfth century, studied by the aristocracy in order to gain access to the epic songs of the *troubadours* and *trouvères*, and later to read the *fabulas romanenses*, the early novels of French origin. Italian, first and foremost as a language of the textile trade, played a role from the late fourteenth century onward. Southern German cities (Nuremberg, Augsburg) had direct trade links with Northern Italy, especially Venice (Schröder 2000a: 683). In 1424, a German language master called George of Nuremberg taught both Venetian and Southern German in the vicinity of the *Fondaco dei Tedeschi* in Venice (Glück and Morcinek 2006). He also wrote a manual of spoken Venetian focused on the textile trade, a communicative document of significant cultural and didactic interest (Schröder 2006, re-edited by Pausch 1972). The volume, first printed in 1477 by Adam von Rottweil, is the ancestor of a polyglot textbook genealogy lasting well into the eighteenth century.

The Renaissance and growing interest in learning foreign languages

Modern multilingual Europe is the result of two major developments of the sixteenth century: the Reformation and the advent of the nation state. According to medieval doctrine, the Catholic Church was the mediator between God and mankind. The Reformers, however, believed that God and man could enter into direct contact through the Bible as God's Own Word. To make this happen, two conditions had to be fulfilled. The believer had to be able to read, and the Bible had to be presented in the believer's language. This explains why Reformers were Bible translators and tried to establish elementary schooling for both genders. As a consequence, the post-medieval vernaculars became precious receptacles of God's Own Word; they were sanctified and pushed towards further standardisation. Modern High German is in many ways a direct descendant of Luther's Bible translation of 1521–1534, just as formal English is incomplete without the many direct or hidden quotations from the King James Version of the Bible, published in 1611.

The second development to foster multilingualism was the nation state, which was also an expression of a new zest for life based on a longer life-span for the upper classes as a result of improved hygiene and greater security in every-day matters: a more positive approach to life and its obvious assets and joys could now materialise. The nation states of the Renaissance were determined to promote the languages of their capitals or royal courts to the status of national languages. They were conceived as icons of sovereignty, cultivated either by newly founded academies so as to place them on a par with Latin, or by outstanding educators, poets (as in the case of the French *Pleiade*) and dramatists (as in the case of Shakespeare and his contemporaries). The existence of national languages helped to develop a new vocational field: there was now a need for translators, interpreters and FL teachers.

The nation states promoted their national languages within their borders, to the detriment of regional languages and linguistic minorities, but also outside, using them as vehicles of cultural

foreign policy. Expanding the linguistic ‘catchment area’ was achieved by implicit rather than explicit legislation. Actions were based on common consent, on a firm will to promote national interest and on popular auto- and hetero-stereotypes. Most successful in this context was France: it managed to turn French into the international language of the eighteenth century.

For political and religious reasons, the German-speaking world of the sixteenth century had no chance of developing into a nation state. The Holy Roman Empire remained a medieval structure grouping different semi-independent territories under an elected Emperor originally migrating between his various imperial castles, and depending on the resolutions of the Assemblies of the Realm (*Reichstage*). The Empire had no less than four capitals (Aix-la-Chapelle, Frankfurt, Ratisbon and Prague), but no permanent centre of power, neither institutionally, nor even locally. Since there was no nation state, there was no national language. In spite of Luther’s Bible translation, German really only existed in a number of fairly unstandardised regional varieties. It was considered by intellectuals to be crude, harsh and inefficient. The official language of the Empire until its end in 1806 was Latin. What this amounted to in political practice can be shown by looking at the 1644–1648 peace negotiations in Munster to end the Thirty Years’ War. Throughout the negotiations, the Imperial delegation refused to accept any documents drawn up in French, arguing that Latin was the language of the Empire and that consequently, the King of France should be using Latin in his official contacts. The French envoys, on the other hand, stated that for reasons of clarity, they did not want to use any language but French, and that any documents addressed to them should also be in their language. In the end, the *Mediatores* (translators) offered to add translations to the Latin and French documents, obviously not without having previously considered the political benefit that could be derived from this benevolent gesture (Moser 1750: 49–52). It goes without saying that diplomats on both sides spoke both fluent French and fluent Latin.

The lack of a national language made Germans take pride in learning surrounding languages, at least until the early 1800s. In the sixteenth century, the most prominent FL in Germany was Italian, the language of the new age and in the eyes of some scholars a modern version of Latin. French, with its long tradition of learning in Germany, came a close second. The third language in importance, though at a considerable distance behind French, was Spanish, the language of Charles V and the Imperial Court. There was little English, apart perhaps from some private tuition in the major Baltic ports (due to the timber trade), and cities like Hamburg, Bremen, Amsterdam or Antwerp. With the decline of the Hanseatic League, Russian lost its former importance. Portuguese, on the other hand, did not make itself felt before the early eighteenth century, when Portuguese language tutors and translators – typically Sephardic Jewish immigrants from Spain and Portugal – offered their services in Hamburg and the neighbouring Danish city of Altona. There was no teaching of Dutch or the major Scandinavian languages in Germany before the (late) eighteenth century, since these languages were considered close enough to (Low) German to allow for mother-tongue based communication, and also because Low German had been used in Scandinavian ports as a *lingua franca* ever since the Middle Ages.

FL tuition in the sixteenth century was offered by freelance language masters (*maitres de langue*), with different backgrounds, education and effectiveness, many of them religious refugees (Italian monks, French Protestants after 1572), former students or former members of the military. Towards the end of the century, several German Noble Academies (*Ritterakademien*) and universities started teaching Italian and French as optional subjects. The first professorships of modern languages were established after 1570. An alternative way of learning FLs was by travelling abroad, or by working in places like foreign counting houses. Most affluent sixteenth-century German tradesmen, many of them multilingual, had acquired their proficiency in affiliated foreign companies. The higher ranks of the nobility had private language teachers, educated native speakers of both genders under the pedagogical guidance of an academic tutor who would, at the end of the education process, accompany the young lords on a grand tour including FL studies at certain destinations (Schulz 2014).

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

Until the end of the eighteenth century, there was little change in the educational system. The number of institutions offering FL training gradually increased, and so did the professorships in the FL domain, thanks to the Noble Academies. However, the language masters continued to be the backbone of the profession, socially insecure and with almost no fixed income. Some had a university degree, but all too often, their native speaker proficiency was all they could offer. Poverty was their basic characteristic, and frictions between educational institutions and their (loosely attached) FL masters, or quarrels amongst the masters themselves, were commonplace. Economic and social deprivation sometimes entailed alcoholism and debauchery. The number of masters secretly escaping to avoid their debts was considerable. In the eighteenth century, language masters attached to universities and Noble Academies faced growing competition from academic teachers of other subjects who tried to improve their salaries through offering *collegia privata* (private lessons, to be paid for separately) in FLs. After 1770, with the common fashion for *belles lettres* reaching the universities, private lectures featuring Shakespeare or other popular poets plus an elementary training in the target language were a common way for professors to generate extra income.

Private education as cultivated by the nobility was copied in the eighteenth century by affluent urban families who would keep a *Hausfranzösin*, a French-speaking lady in the role both of supervisor of the household and tutor. In Protestant Germany, these Frenchwomen tended to be Swiss Calvinists or Huguenots, because of their supposedly higher moral standards. The traditional Grand Tour was gradually replaced by a course of studies at one of the Noble Academies, this alternative being less costly and in many ways safer, or it was changed into a mere *Bildungsreise*, a less extravagant bourgeois derivative (Schröder 2014: 175–179).

After 1750 a growing number of *Lateinschulen* (Latin schools) added French to their curricula, sometimes even on a compulsory basis. They were reacting to the fact that their clientele considered French socially indispensable. Italian, meanwhile, continued to be prominent as the language of the opera, but its market share was dwindling. Spanish remained the language of the Imperial Court and a major language of the Catholic world, but its importance was gradually reduced to reading comprehension in areas such as geography, history, for pastimes such as horses and riding, and for travel accounts. A new wave of interest in Spanish was triggered after 1770 by the admiration of Weimar Classic authors such as Goethe and Schiller for Spanish *belles lettres*. Portuguese, along with the Scandinavian and Slavonic languages, remained marginal. Two new languages, however, came to the attention of contemporary intellectuals: English and the more exotic Turkish.

To Early Modern Europe, Turkish was the vehicle of a strange but interesting Oriental culture. Moreover, in the time span between the Battle of Mohács (1526) and the second Siege of Vienna (1683), Turkish was the idiom of a dangerously close enemy holding vast regions of the Balkans. As Muslims, the Turks were not interested in studying the languages of the unbelievers, but diplomatic contacts were indispensable, especially with the Imperial and the Hungarian Courts, and the Turks were too mistrustful to rely on the Austrians as interpreters. They thus re-educated prisoners of war of German origin, turning them into renegades, giving them a Turkish education and making them civil servants of the Sublime Porte at Constantinople. Melchior Thierperger of Frankfurt is an example. He ended up as chief interpreter under Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, going by the name of Ali the Younger (Babinger 1927; Matuz 1975). The German word *Dolmetscher* (interpreter) is of Hungarian-Turkish origin. In 1753, Empress Maria Theresa reacted by founding a school of Oriental languages in Vienna, the *Orientalische Akademie*, where ‘language boys’ (*Sprachknaben*) were educated in order to be taken to Constantinople, to work with the Imperial Embassy, the *Internuntiaturs*. The Oriental Academy paved the way for nineteenth-century oriental studies in Central Europe, especially at the universities of Erlangen, Leipzig and Vienna (Schröder 2001).

Interest in learning English grew in the later seventeenth century. In 1665, a Strasbourg teacher of French and mathematics, S. Telles, published his *Grammatica anglica in qua methodus facilis bene et succincte anglicae linguae addiscendae continetur*. He dedicated his work to Frederic, Elector of

Saxony. Another little book on English appeared five years later, at Wittenberg, the *Clavis Linguae Anglicanae*, by Johann Podenstein. In 1689, a *Double Grammar, English and German*, was printed in London. It was a full-size grammar plus conversation book of both languages. The author was a (Low?) German language master who had come to live in the British capital, Henrik Offelen (Schröder 1987–1999, vol. 3: 263–264). The volume is a linguistic and cultural treasure chest and a prime document in Anglo-German cultural history. Two other seventeenth-century publications were John Nicolay's *Grammatica Nova Anglicana* (Jena 1689), and Johann Jacob Lungershausen's *A Nursery of Young English Trees, id est Arboretum Anglicum* (1695). Lungershausen later became Professor of Philosophy and English at Jena, and Dean in the local church hierarchy (Schröder 1987–1999, vol. 3: 139–140).

Even before 1665 there had been sporadic teaching of English in the two oldest schools of the *Congregatio Beatae Mariae Virginis*, also called *Virgines Anglicanae* (Nymphenburg, founded in 1627; Augsburg, founded in 1663). As an instrument of the Counter-Reformation, the *Virgines Anglicanae*, founded by Yorkshire-born Mary Ward, established Catholic schools on the Continent for the re-education of Protestant girls along the pedagogical lines of the Jesuits. English was the language in which the novices were trained. The school network was extended in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but with the ethnic structure of the order gradually changing, English lost its place in the curriculum (Glück, Häberlein and Schröder 2013: 229–233).

The second decade of the eighteenth century witnessed the publication of three successful English conversational grammars: Johann König's (Schröder 1987–1999, vol. 3: 32–35) *Complete English Guide for High-Germans* (Leipscic 1715, 12th edition 1802), Christian Ludwig's (Schröder 1987–1999, vol. 3: 136–157; vol. 6: 35–36) *Gründliche Anleitung zur englischen Sprache* (Leipscic 1717) and Theodor Arnold's (Schröder 1987–1999, vol. 1: 20–22; vol. 5: 25–27) *New English Grammar* (Hanover 1718, 12th edition 1809). Moreover, in 1725, Thomas Lediard (Schröder 1987–1999, vol. 3: 105–107; vol. 6: 14–15), a tutor of the English language in Hamburg, published his famous *Grammatica Anglicana Critica* (2nd edition Hamburg 1726).

In 1714, George August, Elector of Hanover and a Protestant Stuart, had ascended the English throne. He spoke German and French, but no English, thus creating the role of a First ('Prime') Minister to overcome the language barrier between himself and Parliament. His son, George II of England, born and brought up in Germany and married to a German wife, founded the University of Goettingen (Hanover). Because of the dynastic union, English became more prominent in the educational institutions of Brunswick-Lüneburg and Hanover after about 1730, for example, in the Noble Academy of Lüneburg (Schröder 2010), and in the University of Helmstedt.

The University of Goettingen, founded in 1737, right from its start had a Professor of French, and after 1747, a second official French lecturer. English was represented by John Tompson, the former lecturer of English at Helmstedt, who taught in Goettingen until his death in 1768. An outstanding cultural herald in an increasingly anglophile city, Tompson was for his contemporaries the incarnation of the true English gentleman. He was appointed as Professor of English (*Extraordinarius*) by George II in 1751, and promoted to the rank of full professor (*Ordinarius*) by George III in 1762. His personality and his teaching triggered a wave of anglophilia throughout Protestant Germany. As the example of Goettingen shows, one peaceful way of boosting the national language abroad was by enhancing its study at educational institutions in dynastically associated territories. In this context it is worth noting that for some time in the eighteenth century a Professor of Danish law and poetry taught at the University of Kiel, and that the (Swedish) University of Greifswald had a professor of Swedish language and literature.

Until about 1770, the teaching of English was largely restricted to the Protestant regions of the Holy Roman Empire. Being a 'heretical' language, English was not accepted in the Catholic world. When, in 1778, the University of Vienna applied for an academic teacher of English, Empress Maria Theresa called English 'an alien and dangerous tongue exposing the students to irreligious and immoral principles'. And she continued that no tutor of English should ever be appointed at any of her universities and academies, adding that it might be better to study the languages of her own realm (Schröder 1969: 204).

The reasons for learning English often differed considerably from those for French or Italian. In the case of these latter languages, the focus was on listening and communicative production skills, whereas English, being neither an international language, nor a language that could be used in polite contacts at any of the regional Courts outside the Hanoverian Electorate, was mostly studied for reading and translation. Moreover, since the number of travellers and residents from Britain was small, there was nobody to listen to in order to solve the mysteries of English pronunciation. As a consequence, learning to *speak* English properly was almost impossible. Nevertheless English had its distinctive assets. An adequate reading proficiency gave access to theological publications of international renown, to excellent collections of sermons to be used by the German clergy, to philosophical treatises off the beaten (Cartesian) track, and to scientific and medical literature. After about 1765, with the pre-Romantic literary turn, reading and translating *belles lettres* became an additional incentive that also attracted a female readership. The number of Protestant clergymen and other academics studying English in eighteenth-century Germany, often as autodidacts, was high. These learners would pronounce what they were able to understand as if it was German.

There are a fair number of eighteenth-century publications both in German and Latin giving reasons for studying English and other modern languages, starting with Talander (1706) and Seidelmann (1724). In the last two decades before the French Revolution of 1789, educated Germans followed the pattern of a graded individual plurilingualism based on partial skills in a range of languages. The ratio of plurilinguals in comparison to the population in general, however, was very small, probably less than 2%, and of course with a strong male dominance.

Napoleonic times and after: ca. 1800 and beyond

The 1789 Revolution made eighteenth-century French appear as the idiom of a by-gone era: the age of feudal repression, of decadence and immorality. Viewed from this angle the Revolution marked the beginning of the end of French as an international language. On the other hand, French remained the language of Enlightenment, and the vehicle of the very ideals the Revolution proclaimed: liberty, equality and fraternity. German lexicographers collected the revolutionary neologisms and incorporated them into their dictionaries; to the vast majority of Germans, however, revolutionary French was of no attraction, the more so since the post-1792 Terreur produced new warfare and refugees.

With Napoleonic aggression in the years 1802 to 1815, French became the enemy language *per se*, a long-lasting label which had serious repercussions for French teaching in the German school system. Napoleon's attempts to transform the German territories west of the Rhine, which he annexed in 1802, into bilingual *départements*, were futile, and his final fall in 1815 was followed, in 1816, by a Prussian ban on French as a school subject until the 1830s. It reappeared in a different format (grammar-translation instead of communicative training) in the 1830s. Many French nationals, including French language teachers, were told to go (Arndt 1813; Schröder 1989: 62–66). The gap caused by the loss of French in the newly created German state school system was filled, at grammar school level, by Latin and Greek, and in the *Real-* and *Bürgerschulen* (the less academically oriented schools), by the language of the emerging nation: German.

The Prussian school reform of 1809, prepared by Wilhelm von Humboldt, had its immediate and long-term effects on FL teaching all over the German-speaking world. Humboldt had turned the *Gymnasium* (equivalent to the English 'grammar school') into the flagship of the state school system, which now comprised nine years of schooling instead of the six years of the former Latin School, as it incorporated the *Artistenfakultät* (Faculty of Arts), the Lower Faculty of the post-medieval University. Within the university system, the Arts Faculty had been replaced, in 1810, by the *Philosophische Fakultät* (Faculty of Philosophy), with a full curriculum of four years, the aim being to curtail, in a recently secularised world (1803–1806), the influence of the Faculty of Theology, and to strengthen the academic role of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, the humanities. According to Humboldt, the philosophy of language was a major key to liberal education (*Allgemeinbildung*, lit. 'general education'). Consequently the traditional concept of developing action-oriented oral and written communicative

skills was replaced by the attempt to teach the ‘spirit’ of the language through teaching its grammar plus the skills of reading and translating, a pedagogical development that also mirrored the growing patriotic self-containment of nineteenth-century Germany. After 1820, there were few foreigners left in most German regions to converse with. The number of language learners, and particularly of French, however, went up enormously after the 1830s, as new social strata made their way into secondary education, where they met with FL teachers many of whom were not able to properly communicate in the target language. It is a fact that some nineteenth-century university professors of neo-philology had to ask their wives how to pronounce a passage they wished to quote in the lecture hall. The wives, coming from affluent families and having had a private and communicatively oriented, gender-specific education, would know! Women were not admitted to neo-humanistic grammar school training (in the *Gymnasien*), as they were not expected to take the *Abitur*, the end-of-school examination established in 1812, or to enter university. But since girls were trained to be dutiful housewives and good and pleasant communicators, they continued to be introduced to oral language skills and the art of conversation.

Grammar schools before 1880 automatically focused on the ancient languages, with up to 15 periods of Latin and 7 periods of Ancient Greek per week, and with very little teaching of modern languages at all. In 1812, the ‘higher level of education’ required for entering university had been defined as a proficiency in two FLs. Since Latin and Greek were counted as such, and not as a species of their own, the university entrance requirement could easily be met without any modern language at all.

Public interest in Latin and Greek slowly dwindled between the 1840s and the First World War. With its come-back in the 1830s, French, now taught with a cultural and communicative bias, had once again become the first modern FL, which it remained until 1923, when five *Länder* (states) within the Weimar Republic (including Bavaria, but not Prussia) changed over to English. Italian, an important subject before 1789, lost its share in the curriculum, and so did Spanish. The rise of English as a state school subject had first become manifest after 1830, in the *Realschule*. To the German post-Romantic mind of the day, English was the obvious alternative to the teaching of French: the idiom of a constitutional monarchy that could serve as a political example for a united Germany, the language of free trade, of international seafaring, in short, the ‘language of freedom’ (a label used for English by the revolutionaries of 1848) – and of ethnic brotherhood (Schröder 1969: 107–117). The ethnic link was brought up again in 1937 by the National-Socialist government. Another reason given was that the German national poets, Schiller and Goethe, following the English literary tradition, had been at war with French classicism.

From the 1880s onward and sparked, by Wilhelm Viëtor’s (1882) pamphlet *Der Sprachunterricht muss umkehren*, (Language teaching must revert) there was a gradual changeover to an eclectic method combining a direct approach with grammar-translation (Schröder 1984). Simultaneously, the teaching of *Landeskunde* (area studies or ‘civilisation’) was introduced, generally comprising a fairly superficial study of target country institutions. The national FL teachers’ association, the Allgemeiner Deutscher Neuphilologen-Verband (ADNV) was founded in 1886.

The First World War, the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich

Had FL teachers in Germany and Austria been asked, in 1913, to give their outlook on the future, most of them would have expressed strongly positive, pacifist views, in spite of the widespread patriotism and nationalism so typical of European societies of the day. A year later, as the first European catastrophe of the twentieth century took its course, they came to share the common longing to sign up, go to the front and to kill those whose languages and cultures they had once taught, or be killed by them: *dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*. It is difficult to understand the mentality of 1914. In 1914 and 1915, FL teaching in Germany followed a naively optimistic pattern, well documented in the contemporary periodical *Die Neueren Sprachen* (Modern Languages), which could be summarised as: ‘let’s get this short war over with and then continue with our Shakespeare’. With the interminable

industrialised battles of Northern France however, the atmosphere became increasingly gloomy: was it possible to go on teaching enemy languages? By 1917, French soldiers' songs had become a topic in the French classroom: *Et la guerre, c'est la misère. La misère est partout* (Schröder 1994: 22).

The early years of the Weimar Republic (1919–1933) saw new language subjects appear, such as Spanish as the language of neutral states, or Russian as the language of the October Revolution. Methodologically speaking, teachers continued along the beaten track. The great change, however, was in the thematic domain: *Kulturkunde* (the study of culture) replaced *Landeskunde*, which was criticised for being positivist and superficial. The new *Kulturkunde* approach followed the spirit of the new age: it was holistic, focusing on the *Gestalt* of the target cultures, the overall patterns and the underlying essence (*Wesen*) of cultural phenomena. The Prussian grammar school syllabi of 1925 (called *Richtersche Richtlinien* or Richter's Guidelines) tried to put this new approach into practice. The basic concept of *Kulturkunde*, the idea that the 'gestalt' of a phenomenon is different from the grand total of its parts, was certainly correct, but holistic notions are difficult to analyse, and they can be ideologically perverted. How could English teachers of the 1920s, who had never been to any of the anglophone target countries, and who would have met people from these countries in a First World War context only, introduce their students to the 'essence' of Britain, or the United States? Teachers reacted by selecting literary texts that addressed what they considered to be typical of the target cultures, thus transmitting their own hetero-stereotypes. After 1933 the Nazi government used *Kulturkunde* to spread their racist ideology: Oliver Cromwell became a key figure in the teaching of English as an incarnation of the principle of military leadership, and characters like Cecil Rhodes (for his colonial merits) or Sir Baden Powell (Boy Scout movement) were celebrated as cultural heroes. For the girls, Florence Nightingale, giving herself up for the sake of the community, was the great example. French culture, by contrast, was judged to be effeminate and morally dangerous, which furnished yet another reason to justify the fringe position of French in the curricula. In 1937 English became the first FL in all secondary schools in Germany, officially because of the Teutonic blood relation and the fact that the Empire-building British were seen as another *Herrenvolk* (master-race).

The picture of Britain remained positive even during the first year of the Second World War, but after the Battle of Britain (1940), a more negative image had quickly to be created, not least in the English classroom. This was achieved by stating that since the British were a trading nation, they had necessarily mingled with the Jews (Lehberger 1986: 196–222; Schröder 1994: 30–34).

1945 and after – FLT in divided Germany

In 1945, in the aftermath of the Second World War, the four Allied Powers divided Germany and Austria into four military zones: American, British, French and Russian. In each military zone, the language of the respective Allied Power was established as the first FL; a few traditional grammar schools, however, were allowed to start with Latin. Post-war didactics tried to take up the pedagogical positions of the Weimar Republic; the *Kulturkunde* approach in its original form was to a certain extent revived. The overall targets of FL education were international understanding in the West and socialist *Völkerfreundschaft* (friendship of peoples) in the East in the German Democratic Republic or GDR, with Russian as a 'brother language' to be learnt by all 'children of the people'. After 1957, intensive Russian courses from Grade 3 onward were established to meet the need for high-level speakers of Russian within the political, scientific and economic elites of the GDR. In West Germany, very little Russian was taught, and if so, only as a second or third FL. The second FL in the GDR was English, officially as a sign of solidarity with the young nations of the Third World fighting for freedom, but also because of the rising international status of the GDR (Neuner 1973: 378–385).

The overall orientation of the GDR school system was towards a socialist polytechnic education stressing vocational aspects, whereas West Germany tended to stick to the traditional idealistic idea of a general education, strictly academic at grammar school level, and with no direct links to the vocational world. The term *Allgemeinbildung* (general education) was used positively in both systems.

The present situation

In the 1970s, FL teaching in Western Germany went communicative, which implied (at least implicitly) breaking with neo-humanist ideals. At grammar school level, the transition lasted well into the first decade of the new millennium, leading to a convergence of the traditional concepts of general and polytechnic education. Finally, a focus on developing competences was brought into the system as a consequence of the unfavourable results of the PISA 2000 study of education standards internationally and in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), after 2001. The competence-oriented *Abitur* (final school-leaving examination and pre-requisite for entry into higher education) standards for English and French (at CEFR B2+/C1), agreed by the Ministers of Education of the *Länder* of Germany in October, 2012, have three overall targets:

- (1) pre-academic education,
- (2) pre-vocational training (a common core practical training of communication in vocational contexts), and
- (3) training for linguistic and cultural self-determination in a multilingual and pluricultural world.

As anywhere else in Europe, school in Germany is no longer seen as an educational repository providing the student with the knowledge needed in life, but as an institution which initiates and fosters individual learning in both the content-oriented and the strategic fields, thus corresponding to a first phase in a life-long process. The new approach has far-reaching consequences for FL teaching: school education must enable students in their later lives to broaden existing FL proficiencies, to study further languages as adults and to deal with new cultures in a spirit of critical tolerance based on human rights. Educational experts in Germany strongly advocate trilingualism (European Commission/Europäische Kommission 1995: 72) as a necessary ingredient of European citizenship. In the vocational field, the formula of success has become English plus (at least) one other FL. Today there are many new ways of learning languages, through adult courses, language travel (160,000 bookings a year from Germany), exchange programmes, internships abroad and through the new media. English as the first FL in German schools is taught as an explicit gateway to other languages (Schröder 1999), and the teaching of any further languages is expected to include the skills of ‘intercomprehension’ or intercultural competence. The teaching of German as a national language will have to change, too, and with the impact of mass migration, it is changing already. How to realise these new perspectives in detail, is an interesting question for the future.

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