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Introduction

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Standardisation and language criticism are closely intertwined. Standardisation of a language means that certain forms of language used by (influential) speakers are accepted as the standard while other forms of language use are not. These processes of legitimising or delegitimising certain forms of language may be pursued by institutions, groups or individuals – depending on their acceptance and prestige in the language community. The variety that is chosen as the standard variety and ideally codified is to be implemented as the language norm. This is where standardisation coincides with language criticism. Anyone who tries to implement a linguistic norm and attempts to influence a process of linguistic standardisation is prone to engage in language criticism because he or she subjectively reflects on what constitutes the linguistic norm. This subjective metalinguistic reflection has at times occurred explicitly by devaluating a specific form of language use, but occasionally it also occurs implicitly by contrasting one linguistic variety with another.

The first volume of the handbook analysed the influence of language criticism on language norms in diachronic and synchronic perspective. The idea is to build on this in the present volume by looking at a language community's historical and contemporary reactions to claims for standardisation, how they have been shaped through language criticism and may even have gained language-political importance, or how the way for acceptance may be paved for a specific standard variety. Examples for this, which are given here for the purpose of illustration, are for instance issues concerning spelling reforms (orthography), the propagation or rejection of certain words (lexis) or of special syntactic uses (grammar), as well as sociolinguistic and cognitive linguistic issues such as the sociopolitical appropriateness of gender-specific language use.

In our view, and in accordance with the introduction given in the first volume, there is no need to justify why such issues are especially interesting in a comparative European perspective. The consideration of individual languages of course always remains a patchwork. However, by focusing on specific phenomena such as critique of language norms, standardisation, language purism, language institutions or language ideologies

in a transverse comparative perspective, a more differentiated view of the individual languages investigated becomes possible and opens a new approach to the history of language culture. To that end, we would like to give impulses for revisiting these topics rather than providing final answers.

The "Online Handbook of Language Criticism – A European Perspective" offers a comparative perspective of language criticism in five European language cultures. Our conception of language criticism as a special form of language reflection (which we define as the "practice of subjective metalinguistic reflection" for the present purpose) is explained in the introduction to the first volume.¹

The handbook is a periodic and multilingual online publication. Encyclopedic articles are published successively on selected topics that highlight key issues in language criticism and that are of cultural relevance for the European perspective. On the one hand, the handbook gives insights into the respective language cultures. On the other hand, it aims at comparing and contrasting them. The handbook thus contains articles that focus on individual languages and articles that give a comparative overview of all five language cultures. All articles are published in German. The articles looking individually at the practice of subjective metalinguistic reflection in English, French, Italian, and Croatian may additionally be read in the respective article's object language (i.e. in German/English, German/French, German/Italian, and German/Croatian).

Whenever the handbook mentions the practice of subjective metalinguistic reflection in German, English, French, Italian or Croatian, the analysis focuses on the respective historically and geographically rooted language (for instance German spoken in Germany). However, the transnational perspective is not neglected (e.g. regarding German as spoken in Austria, Liechtenstein, Luxemburg and Switzerland). The regional scope is thus expanded depending on the type of question, approach, and relevance of cultural relations.

The title "Online Handbook of Language Criticism – A European Perspective" may be considered pretentious because only five European languages (German, English, French, Italian and Croatian) are in focus.

1 Introduction. In: HESO 1/2017, p. 13. <https://dx.doi.org/10.17885/heiup.heso.2017.0.23712>

Although we cannot represent all European language cultures due to a lack of labour resources, we would nevertheless like to emphasise our programmatic claim which results from the selected examples and give two reasons for the choice of these languages. On the one hand, we have attempted to choose language cultures that either allow for striking points of comparison or that seem to be opposite to one another upon first glance. On the other hand, we have taken care to ensure that Germanic languages (German, English), Romance languages (French, Italian) and a Slavic language (Croatian) are included. Of the Slavic languages, Croatian is the only one that has seen significant German linguistic interference (for over a millennium), Italian linguistic interference (since the late medieval period), and French linguistic interference (from the beginning of the 19th until the 20th century). This allows for an additional perspective in European comparison. The selection was further consolidated by the cooperation of scholars that promote this project in Heidelberg and Mannheim.

The handbook is published in different volumes that focus on specific topics of language criticism in selected European languages. The structure of each volume follows the same pattern: A comparative article (e.g. “Standardisation and language criticism in a European perspective”) displays the core topic of the second chapter (e.g. “Standardisation and language criticism”) in a comparative perspective and is translated into all five object languages. In the following chapter, the core topic is analysed with respect to its importance for the German language culture (e.g. “Standardisation and language criticism in German”). This article is also available in translation in all of the four other object languages. The next chapter shows the topic’s relevance for the English language culture and is presented in both German and English. Similarly, the following chapters look at the topic in relation to French, Italian, and Croatian, and are presented in German and French, German and Italian, and German and Croatian, respectively.

The handbook is a publication of the project group European Language Criticism Online (*Europäische Sprachkritik Online*, ESO). The project is based in the European Center for Linguistics (*Europäisches Zentrum für Sprachwissenschaften*, EZS), which is a cooperation between the Faculty for Modern Languages of Heidelberg University and the Institute for the German Language (*Institut für Deutsche Sprache*, IDS) in Mannheim.

Various professors, researchers, postgraduate members, national and international cooperation partners as well as scholarship holders of the PhD programme *Sprachkritik als Gesellschaftskritik im europäischen Vergleich* (Language criticism as social criticism in a European perspective), which was financed by the federal state of Baden-Württemberg from 2012 to 2017, participated in the project. The project group publishes their articles in the online handbook. A multilingual and multimodal online platform enables a reader-oriented access to the online handbook via abstracts, further information and a blog that examines the connection between language criticism and social criticism (www.europsprachkritik.com). The online handbook and the online platform provide further interlinks with many other linguistic topics. They are addressed to researchers, young academics, and students of the various philologies in Germany and abroad. They are also addressed to persons from other disciplines, especially those with a background in social and cultural studies.

We would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the nine reviewers from German, English, Romance, and Slavic linguistics for their comments and suggestions. The published second volume greatly benefitted from their expertise. We would also like to thank the translators Simon Abel, Paul Chibret, Elisa Manca, Iva Petrak, Svenja Ritter, Yohanna Mebrahtu and Sarah Weissberg for their precise and professional collaboration. A final thanks is addressed to Vanessa Münch, who has fulfilled the chief editorial responsibility for this volume with great competence.

Heidelberg and Mannheim, September 2018