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German as a foreign language

Everyday academic language in German historiography

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The present article investigates the use of everyday academic language in German history writing. The starting point is a brief discussion of the two conceptual tools used in this study: *alltägliche Wissenschaftssprache* and metadiscourse. The data for an empirical and contextual analysis of everyday academic language have been extracted from a parallel corpus of German history writing. The analysis confirms that the most frequent patterns found in historiographic metadiscourse belong to the category of everyday academic language. It is suggested that one meaningful way of categorizing this vocabulary consists of linking it to a number of acts and processes characteristic of academic writing in general and of history writing in particular, namely the organization of knowledge in textual formats, the accommodation and refutation of existing knowledge claims and the self-reflective identification of cognitive and communicative processes involved in the creation of (historical) knowledge.

1. Introduction

The present article examines the use of everyday academic language (*alltägliche Wissenschaftssprache*) in German academic history writing. While other scholars have looked at this phenomenon across academic disciplines, there has been relatively little work on the use of general academic language in specific disciplines. It is the central aim of this investigation to determine some of the uses of everyday academic language typical for the writing of history. Everyday or ordinary academic language is a semantic category which has been developed over the last two decades by German linguists to describe and analyse the use of everyday or ordinary vocabulary for the purposes of academic communication (Ehlich 1995; Steinhoff 2007). The patterns of everyday academic languages analysed in this study have been extracted from a corpus of German academic history writing and belong to the category of metadiscourse, a functional concept which is based on the distinction between language used to refer to the subject matter of a text, and language used to refer to the text itself, its producer(s), recipients and their acts as well as the ongoing act of communication between the text producer(s) and their audience (Hyland 2005). Before describing the methodology and presenting the results of the present investigation, it is necessary to outline the two conceptual tools that will be employed in the analysis in more detail.

1.1 Everyday academic language

The semantic category of *alltägliche Wissenschaftssprache* or *wissenschaftliche Alltagssprache*¹ has been developed by a number of German linguists with the aim of describing and analysing the specific use of everyday or ordinary language for the purposes of academic communication. According to a number of conceptual and empirical studies, this vocabulary is characteristic of the written (and oral) communication in most academic disciplines (cf. Ehlich 1995, 1999; Fandrych 2002; Graefen 1999; Fandrych 2001; Meißner 2009; Steinhoff 2007, 2009). In its broadest sense, everyday academic language has been described as everyday language which has undergone a functional change: “alltägliche Wissenschaftssprache als ‘umfunktionalisierte’ Alltagssprache” (Steinhoff 2007: 81). This definition reflects one aspect of the rationale for labelling this part of academic language as everyday, ordinary or mundane, and highlights the fact that some of the most frequent lexical items found in academic texts have been taken from everyday vocabulary, for example noun-verb collocations like *einer Frage nachgehen* or *ein Problem beleuchten*. This lexis can be distinguished from the technical vocabulary of specific academic disciplines which has been developed through a series of more or less explicit definition processes. In contrast, everyday academic language is characterized by its use across disciplines and – like everyday language – by a certain semantic vagueness and flexibility (Ehlich 2007: 565-6). A

¹ ‘Everyday academic language’ is the translation used by Bükler (2003). The term *alltägliche Wissenschaftssprache* poses a number of difficulties for translators and cross-linguistic researchers. The noun *Wissenschaft* refers to activities directed towards the methodological production of *Wissen* (\approx knowledge), and to a product, i.e. the body of connected knowledge(s) thus established (cf. Bungarten 1981: 26). The noun *Wissenschaft* is a superordinate and unlike the commonly used English equivalent ‘science’, it refers to the natural sciences (*Naturwissenschaften*), the social sciences (*Gesellschaftswissenschaften*) as well as the arts and the humanities (*Geisteswissenschaften*) (cf. Ehlich 1995: 341). The compound *Wissenschaftssprache* links a distinct language variety to the production of knowledge and invites epistemological considerations. These questions relate to how language is at once constitutive as well as instrumental in enabling scientists and scholars to conceptualise, express and communicate the results of their work, and, conversely, what language is suitable for the production of scientific and scholarly knowledge (cf. Bungarten 1981: 28-33; Fricke 1977: 26-43). The common English equivalents ‘academic writing’ or ‘academic prose’ lack some of the connotations of ‘scientificness’ and ‘knowledgeableness’ present in the German compound. Moreover, referring to scholarly language use as ‘academic writing’ or ‘academic prose’ does not immediately raise epistemological questions while it also stresses the institutional aspects of language use. A more cumbersome, yet more accurate rendering would be “language of science and scholarship”. Translating the second part of the compound is, however, more straightforward: Ehlich has explicitly linked his choice of the term “*alltäglich*” to the tradition of ordinary language philosophy and its concern with the meaning of words as they are used by speakers in everyday communicative situations (cf. Ehlich 2007: 565).

second reason for calling these patterns ‘everyday’ or ‘ordinary’ is based on the recognition that they perform functions in academic communication which are similar to the functions of ordinary language in everyday life.

Ähnlich wie die Alltagssprache eine Grundlage für alle Kommunikation derer ist, die sich ihrer bedienen, ähnlich unscheinbar und für den ersten Blick selbstverständlich, ähnlich allgemein verbindlich und verbindend zeigt sich das Gerüst wissenschaftlicher Kommunikation in der jeweiligen nationalen Wissenschaftssprache. [...] Sie ist jenseits der terminologischen wissenschaftssprachlichen “Gipfel” die alles verbindende wissenschaftliche Sprache des Alltags von Forschung und Lehre, die wissenschaftliche Alltagssprache (Ehlich 2000: 52).

The principle mechanism through which ordinary language has become usable in academic communication is metaphor. It has thus been pointed out that many of the lexical items which can be categorised as everyday academic language have undergone metaphorical shifts, in the course of which their concrete or literal everyday meanings — referring, for example, to visual perception (*sehen*) or to the use of one’s hands (*greifen*) — have acquired new figurative meanings to refer to abstract methodological and mental processes carried out by academic researchers, for example in phrases like *etwas als Grund für etwas sehen* or *einen Punkt herausgreifen* (cf. Fandrych 2005; Graefen 2009; Meißner 2009). Furthermore it has been well documented and established that this link between everyday and academic language has a historical dimension, since the specific, often metaphorical, transfer of ordinary everyday vocabulary into the area of academic communication was part of the development of a German academic language systematically supported and carried out by scholars like the philosopher Christian Wolff who, in the first half of the 18th century, developed a systematic terminology in German to express his philosophical thought (Meißner 2009: 95; Menzel 1996; Ricken 1995).

It has been pointed out that the use of everyday vocabulary in academic communication and in particular the underlying metaphorical transfers and shifts are of interest to sociolinguists as well as other scholars interested in the linguistic foundation of what they are doing, since the analysis of everyday academic language can reveal how certain methodologies and disciplinary practices related to the creation and dissemination of knowledge have been conceptualised and have become institutionalised. In most cases of scholarly communication everyday academic language is taken for granted and used as a matter of course, with neither writers nor readers being aware of its origins, transformations, semantic complexities and epistemological implications. A diachronic

and socio-semantic analysis of these patterns can show how their use is linked to specific ideas of how knowledge is legitimately gained and communicated. Konrad Ehlich has used the metaphor of ‘sedimentation’ to illustrate how the contemporary use of certain lexical grammatical patterns² of everyday academic language can reflect the historical establishment of particular philosophies and methodologies. The frequent noun-verb collocation *eine Erkenntnis setzt sich durch* has thus been linked to the institutionalisation in the modern era of an understanding of science and scholarship which sees research as a collective endeavour, and metaphorically as a space where different ideas are articulated, discussed and compete for dominance (Ehlich 1995: 346; cf. Steinhoff 2007: 81-82).

From a pedagogical and didactic point of view the origin of these lexical items in ordinary, everyday language is a challenge since seemingly inconspicuous everyday words and phrases have been shown to pose severe comprehension and production difficulties for learners of German as a second language (Ehlich 1999: 14 -19; Graefen 1999; Steinhoff 2009). Difficulties related to the often metaphorical nature of everyday academic language, its polysemy and fuzziness as well as the lack of explicit definition processes are often compounded by a neglect of teaching this vocabulary and its use in the foreign language classroom, although the need for teaching ordinary academic language has now been acknowledged by many teachers of German as a foreign language and has been incorporated into the curriculum of many institutions (cf. Brandl et al. 2008).

In summary, the phenomenon of ordinary or everyday academic language deserves the attention of the linguistic researcher and the language teacher for a number of related reasons. Its analysis can reveal the link between everyday language use and academic communication, it can throw light on the difficulties learners of German as a foreign language may face in comprehending and producing academic texts, and it can demonstrate how certain ways of gaining knowledge have become institutionalised and have gained epistemological credit in the production of knowledge in general and, more specifically, in individual disciplines. It is thus expected that the examination of the

² Lexical-grammatical is here used in the sense outlined by functional grammarians like Halliday & Matthiessen (2004) and other corpus linguists and lexicographers (cf. Hunston et al. 2000). In these works no strict distinction is made between the lexicon and the grammar of a language, since lexical items should be characterized in terms of their distribution in grammatical patterns.

typical vocabulary of the historian attempted in this study will be useful for gaining an insight into how historical knowledge is commonly produced and presented.

Having outlined the background of the concept of *alltägliche Wissenschaftssprache*, I will move on to describe the notion of metadiscourse and, more specifically, its use in academic history writing.

1.2 Metadiscourse

The starting point for a necessarily brief discussion of the concept of ‘metadiscourse’ is a social and contextual view of academic writing. This perspective focuses on the meaning and function of academic texts as social activities and communicative events. In this sense, the written communication between historians, fellow scholars, students and general readers can be seen as mediated by institutions and disciplinary discourse communities and their specific rules, conventions and expectations. In adopting such a social view of writing and the production of knowledge, scholars have argued that in writing, academics make statements in order to “talk about things, as well as to do things” (Bazerman 1981: 361-62, 378-79; cf. Bhatia 2001; Hyland 2000; Swales 1990). Academics try to persuade and convince their readers, they negotiate their knowledge claims and acknowledge work done by other scholars, and they thus seek acceptance of their writings as valid contributions to the knowledge(s) of their disciplines. Many academic texts will therefore contain elements through which writers signal that the knowledge they are presenting was gained by methods judged to be in accordance with the general ethical and methodological conventions of their discipline, as well as elements which reflect the communicative situation in which they and their readers are placed.

This socio-cultural contextualisation of scholarly language can be linked to the textual level of academic genres and to the level of lexical-grammatical analysis. As scholars, academic writers are under pressure from their readers and peers to adhere to and to fulfil certain conventions and expectations, and this leads to specific observable linguistic characteristics, which are largely independent of the specific topics presented. These patterns are linked to the practice of doing and communicating science and scholarship in a number of ways. Firstly they reflect the methodology by which the information presented was gained, secondly they reflect the relationship between the participants of the speech event and its social context, and thirdly they are reflective of

the medium and the genre that is used to convey the information from writer to reader. In functional linguistic analyses this level of academic writing has often been discussed under the heading of ‘metadiscourse’, a category created by a semantic and pragmatic reading of a text that distinguishes between linguistic material that encodes information about the subject matter and research object of a text, and wordings used to signal to the reader how the present writer intends to organise, interpret and evaluate this knowledge and how they wish the reader to understand, interpret and evaluate it (cf. Hyland 2000: 109-112, 2005; Hyland & Tse 2004; Vande Kopple 1985).

In his recent monograph Ken Hyland has described metadiscourse in broad terms as an “approach to conceptualising interactions between text producers and their texts and between text producers and users” (2005:1). One of the most succinct (and often-quoted) definitions was given by Vande Kopple back in 1985. In this, he postulated a basic functional difference between two levels of writing:

On one level we supply information about the subject of our text. On this level we expand propositional content. On the other level, the level of metadiscourse, we do not add propositional material, but help our readers organize, classify, interpret, evaluate, and react to such material. Metadiscourse, therefore, is discourse about discourse, communication about communication (Vande Kopple 1985: 83).

According to this definition, metadiscourse is the language employed by writers to refer to themselves and to organise their texts, to signal their attitudes, and to direct and influence their readers. Writers project themselves into their texts, they explain how they have arranged their propositional content and they inform readers about the way their propositions should be evaluated and understood.³ Through metadiscourse,

the writer steps in explicitly to make his or her presence felt in the text, to give guidance to the readers with respect to how the text is organised, to what functions different parts of it have, and to what the author’s attitudes to the propositions are (Mauranen 1993: 9).

Since the present investigation will look at the use of everyday academic language in the writing of history, it is important to note that the genre of narrative — traditionally the dominant mode of historiography — lacks the self-reflective level of language use just described under the heading of metadiscourse. In the words of Roland Barthes

³ There is now a substantial body of literature on the concept of metadiscourse, including a critical evaluation of its usefulness and limitations. It is impossible to refer to this literature in any detail in this paper. The most substantial treatment of the concept to date has been provided by Ken Hyland (2005). Important reservations have been raised by John Sinclair (2005), while the concept has also been treated with caution by some German linguists (cf. Fandrych & Graefen 2002).

“pure” historical narrative is characterized by a “systematic absence of any sign referring to the sender of the historical message” (Barthes 1986: 131). Similarly, Genette has observed that

the objectivity of narrative is defined by the absence of all reference to the narrator. “Truly there is no longer a ‘narrator.’ The events are chronologically recorded as they appear on the horizon of the story. Here no one speaks. The events seem to tell themselves” (1976: 9).

Although readers may reconstruct and speculate on the persona of the history writer as a reliable omniscient narrator, this role is not acknowledged and neither are the forces and the social formations behind the making of the text. As a response to the postmodern critique of the realist discourses of traditional narrative historiography (cf. Clark 2004),⁴ modern historiography is characterized by an increasing self-consciousness – John Toews has spoken of “an intensive self-reflective focus” (2001: 8921) – and many historians feel increasingly compelled to justify and explain their methodologies and refer to their own acts and to the historical discourses to which they contribute.

Consequently, the starting point for the functional analysis of historiographic texts employed in this study is the relatively simple distinction between linguistic material used to represent and denote objects, subjects and happenings of the past (in short material employed to create narrative), and discourse-reflective material used to refer to the present author and her/his acts and the ongoing communication between the text producer and her/his audience.

For the purposes of the present investigation it is crucial to note that the observation of explicit metadiscourse is linked to the presence of a verb denoting an act related to the agency of a present writer or other discourse participants.⁵ To realise the rhetorical

⁴ I use the term post-modern in a rather loose sense to refer to various criticisms of traditional historiography that gathered force from the 1960s onwards and were all concerned with a structuralist, linguistic or critical-rhetorical reading of history writing. The literature on the subject of writing history after the linguistic turn and about the challenges that structuralist, post-structuralist and post-modern ideas pose for traditional historiography is immense. A recent overview of debates and developments can be found in Clark 2004. For the discussion in Germany see especially Rüsen 2002. Hans Kellner has tried to describe the common ground of historians inspired by the linguistic turn as the idea “that history can be re-described as a discourse that is fundamentally rhetorical, and that representing the past takes place through the creation of powerful, persuasive images which can best be understood as created objects, models, metaphors, or proposals about reality” (1995:2).

⁵ Admittedly the boundaries between narrative and metadiscourse are not fixed. The authorial act expressed in a sentence like ‘Insgesamt fielen dem »therapeutischen Töten« *schätzungsweise* 150000 Menschen zum Opfer’ identifies the act of estimating. It seems,

functions of metadiscourse at the level of wording, writers have a variety of different lexical items and grammatical structures at their disposal. In German, writers may use the first person pronouns *ich* and *wir*, or the generic personal pronoun *man* to refer to themselves or the readers of their texts, or they may employ the passive voice (and a number of passive voice alternatives) to denote communicative and text-structuring acts and processes. In the latter cases it is possible to link these acts to the implied agency of participants in the present speech event.

Other formal distinguishing characteristics of narrative and metadiscourse are the use of different tenses and the presence or absence of deictic elements. Narrative is characterised by the establishment of an autonomous temporal space anterior to the time of the narrator's telling and this discontinuity is signalled by the use of the *Präteritum* and the *Plusquamperfekt*, while use of the *Präsens*, the *Futur*, and the *Perfekt* signals that the denoted processes have links with the present moment and directly call attention to the writer, the act of writing and the present relation between writer, reader and narrative (cf. Gossman 1978: 21, cf. Weinrich 1993: 198-207). Another characteristic of metadiscourse are spatial and temporal deictic elements pointing to the here and now of the present discourse (*hier*, *im Folgenden*, *an dieser Stelle* etc). A schematic summary of narrative and metadiscourse in academic history writing is given in table 1, outlining some of the differences in reference, function and form.

	Narrative	Historiographic metadiscourse
Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • predominant tenses: <i>Präteritum</i>, <i>Plusquamperfekt</i> • no speaker and listener deixis • no discourse deixis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • predominant tenses: <i>Präsens</i>, <i>Perfekt</i> • speaker and listener pronouns • passive voice and passive paraphrases • discourse deixis
Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to past events, situations, and actors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to the present speech act and its participants • discourse community • to other texts and speech acts

however, useful to distinguish implicit acts expressed through adverbials like *schätzungsweise* from an explicit authorial intervention realized in the form of a clause: 'Die Zahl der tatsächlich ermordeten Juden *wird* zwischen 5,29 und knapp über 6 Millionen Menschen *geschätzt*.' In the present article the boundary between narrative and metadiscourse coincides with implicit authorial interventions in the form of adverbials and explicit ones realised at the clause level.

Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to represent, reconstruct and emplot past events • to create a plausible narrative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to explain and justify knowledge claims • to explain the structure of the text • to address and involve discourse participants • signal authorial stance • to recognize, incorporate and criticise knowledge claims advanced in other texts
Role of discourse participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • writer/narrator and reader are invisible and “silent” • omniscient narrator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • writers and readers are active and visible • text producer and text interpreter • expert historian – lay person • colleagues & rivals

Table 1: Schematic outline of functional levels in history writing

I have so far outlined the two conceptual categories employed in this study independently of each other, but the decision to look for patterns of everyday academic language in metadiscourse is motivated by the consideration that in historiography everyday academic language will not occur in narrative sections, but at the level of metadiscourse. It has been argued above that pure narrative is in principle unreflective and can accommodate neither references to the here and now of the communicative act nor the explicit denotation of authorial acts, because this would destroy the “referential illusion” and the claim “to let the referent [i.e. history] speak for itself” (Barthes 1986: 132). In contrast, one of the central functions of everyday academic language is to denote authorial acts and to reflect the practice of doing research. In a recent article, Thomas Steinhoff has linked the frequent use of everyday academic language to the need for the verbal representation of frequent research acts and procedures, agreeing with an earlier assessment

daß gerade die modernen Wissenschaftssprachen zu einem großen Teil verfahrensorientiert sind, also fast mehr sprachliche Ausdrücke für das Verfahren zur Gewinnung, Überprüfung und Sicherung von Wissen schaffen als für Gegenstände, über die Wissen gewonnen werden soll. (Schlieben-Lange & Kreuzer 1983:7, quoted in Steinhoff 2009: 100)

Steinhoff also suggests categorizing the use of everyday academic language by linking it to a number of scholarly procedures or acts, namely authorial self-referencing, intertextual referencing, concessive argumentation, critical reception of other writers and definition (ibid: 102-3), and it is interesting to point out that all these acts can also be meaningfully identified under the conceptual heading of metadiscourse.

2. Corpus and data

The linguistic data for the present investigation have been drawn from a corpus of German academic history writing consisting of twelve academic monographs on German history published between 1973 and 2002, totalling c. 750.000 tokens.⁶ Data extraction was determined by the formal characteristics of metadiscourse outlined above, and for this exploratory study it was limited to occurrences of the pronouns *wir* and *man*, concordances of the auxiliary verb forms *wird/werden/worden* (used to construct the *Vorgangspassiv*), as well as linguistic items which can be used to construct the common modal passive alternatives *copula + zu + infinitive* (e.g. *x ist zu erkennen, wie zu erforschen bleibt...*) and constructions using the reflexive verb *sich lassen* (e.g. *x lässt sich analysieren*).⁷ Table 2 below gives an overview of the search patterns in terms of grammatical categories and the (possible) function these elements may realize in metadiscourse.

The table identifies different lexical items and grammatical categories which potentially have certain referential functions. Uses of the first person plural may realize direct references to the present writer or other discourse participants and the corresponding predicates may denote their actions. Sentences with the generic personal pronoun *man* may point to the writer or to other discourse participants and link them to the acts they perform as agentive subjects. Sentences with present or present perfect passive structures and passive alternatives may depict processes which are performed or controlled by discourse participants, although these agents no longer appear openly as

⁶ This corpus is the German part of GEPCAHW (German-English Parallel Corpus of Academic History Writing) which was created for an earlier research project (cf. Skrandies 2007).

⁷ The principle rationale for these restrictions is the observation that the use of the first person singular *ich* is rare in German academic writing, while the use of listener pronouns is virtually non-existent. The use of pseudo-agentive subjects (*diese Studie zeigt, dass...*), indirect authorial self references (*der Autor der vorliegenden Studie glaubt...*) or the use of certain reflexive verbs (e.g. *x erklärt sich* instead of *ich erkläre x* or *x wird erklärt...*) is relatively frequent and does realize metadiscourse in the sense outlined above. However, since the method chosen was based on the systematic and automatic extraction of concordances from an electronic corpus, it was decided to limit the analysis to patterns that can be linked to ‘closed’ sets of linguistic items. While it is possible to find all occurrences of the pronouns *wir* and *man* with the help of concordancing software, and to formulate search patterns to capture all occurrences of present tense passive structures and specific modal passive alternatives, it is impossible to find all relevant proper names or lexical paraphrases referring to discourse participants or their acts.

Search patterns	Grammatical category	(possible) Function
<i>wir</i>	1st person plural pronoun	to refer to the present writer(s) and/or discourse participants
<i>man</i>	generic personal pronoun	to refer to the writer, discourse participants or generic human agents
<i>werden, wird, worden</i>	Vorgangspassiv (dynamic passive)	} to denote processes which can be linked to the agency of the present writer, other discourse participants or generic human agents
<i>ist, sind, bleibt, bleiben, stehen, steht + zu</i>	} modal passive	
<i>lassen, läßt/lässt, sich</i>		

Table 2: Search patterns

subjects, and their agency can only be inferred contextually. The textual samples produced by the automatic extraction of concordances based on searches using the lexical items and patterns identified above were read and interpreted contextually to exclude all instances in which a pronoun was used to refer to historical actors. Similarly all concordances in which a verbal predicate denotes acts linked to the agency of historical actors were discarded. This left 1349 concordances in which writers employed the extracted words and word patterns in clauses and sentences at the level of metadiscourse. In the following analysis these concordances will be analysed in terms of the ordinary or everyday academic languages used.

3. Analysis

The starting point is a quantitative overview of the data focusing on the most frequently used verbs. Table 3 shows the 15 most common verbs found in the concordances as well as examples of some of the typical patterns in which they occur.

Frequency rank	Verb	Typical patterns ⁸
1.	VERSTEHEN	[x] muss als Reaktion auf [y] verstanden werden unter [x] wird hier [y] verstanden
2.	FESTHALTEN	es muss festgehalten werden, dass [x]; zusammenfassend ist festzuhalten, dass [x];
3.	ÜBERSEHEN	man darf nicht übersehen, dass [x]; [x] sollte nicht übersehen werden; [x] lässt sich nicht übersehen
4.	SPRECHEN	falls [y] berücksichtigt wird, kann man von [x] sprechen; man kann daher von [x] sprechen.
5.	ERKENNEN	man kann [x] in [y] erkennen; so erkennt man auch hier, wie [x];
6.	SAGEN	oder anders gesagt: ...; genauer gesagt; [x] muss gesagt werden, da es empirisch unwiderlegbar ist
7.	FRAGEN	wir fragen danach, wann ...; wenn man nach [y] fragt; man hat oft gefragt, ob ...
8.	BEZEICHNEN	man hat [x] wenig zutreffend als [y] bezeichnet; man wird angesichts von [z] [x] als [y] bezeichnen können;
9.	SEHEN	wie wir gesehen haben, deuten alle Anzeichen darauf hin, dass; wie es heute in der jüngsten Forschung vielfach gesehen wird
10.	NENNEN	man hat [x] [y] genannt; für [x] kann man vor allem drei Gründe nennen ...
11.	BEANTWORTEN	mit [y] wird die Frage nach [x] keineswegs beantwortet; diese Frage lässt sich nicht ohne Verweis auf [x] beantworten
12.	BEURTEILEN	[X] und [Y] werden in der Forschung recht unterschiedlich beurteilt; [x] lässt sich nur dann gerecht beurteilen, wenn
13.	FESTSTELLEN	[x] ist festgestellt worden; im Gegensatz zu [x] wird man feststellen müssen, dass;
14.	AUSGEHEN	wird man hier vor allem von [x] ausgehen dürfen; Geht man von [x] aus, so ...
15.	STELLEN	stellt man [x] in einen größeren historischen Zusammenhang, so

Table 3: Most common verbs used in historiographic metadiscourse

The data presented in this table confirm the prominence of many verbs which are also frequent and central in everyday language. Verbs of communication (*sprechen, sagen, fragen*), of (visual) perception (*erkennen, sehen*) and cognition (*verstehen, beurteilen*) dominate, while a number of verbs which in their concrete meanings refer to physical activities are used figuratively to denote logical-methodological acts (*ausgehen*), speech acts or cognitive acts (*festhalten, feststellen*) are equally prominent. The centrality of

⁸ X and y stand here for nouns, noun groups or complement clauses. Their analysis and categorization would of course be fruitful, but cannot be attempted within the constraints of a short article.

verbs which are used figuratively is demonstrated further when focusing on the most frequent verb bases (depicted in table 4) which have been found to occur recurrently in constructions with separable and inseparable particles.

Frequency rank in corpus	base	used with separable particles	used with inseparable particles
1	SEHEN	ab~, an~	über~
2	STELLEN	dar~, fest~; heraus~; vor~	unter~
3	HALTEN	auseinander~; entgegen~; fest~	be~
5	GEHEN	aus~, ein~, nach~	über~
8	NEHMEN	an~, auf~, vor~, heraus~, zusammen~	ent~
9	MACHEN	aus~, fest~,	
12	SCHÄTZEN	ab~, ein~	
15	WEISEN	hin~, nach~; zu~; auf~	
16	FÜHREN	zurück~; ein~; aus~, an~	
20	GREIFEN	auf~; heraus~; zurück~	be~
20	FASSEN	auf~; zusammen~	er~

Table 4: Common verb bases and particles

The metaphorical use of everyday verbs is one of the phenomena of ordinary academic language which has been identified as posing specific difficulties for learners of German as a foreign language. The help and guidance students can expect from bilingual dictionaries is limited and depends on whether the figurative uses of everyday verbs have been recorded at all and on the treatment that their frequent collocations receive. While some figurative uses of everyday verbs in academic communication are frequent enough to have been included in lexical reference works others are too rare and learners cannot expect to find them in their dictionaries. A comprehensive treatment of everyday academic language can probably not be realized within the confines of a general reference work, but only in a specialised dictionary which would have to be based on a large enough representative corpus of academic German.⁹ One way of illustrating and

⁹ A systematic, empirical investigation of the treatment of everyday academic language in monolingual or bilingual dictionaries has to my knowledge not been carried out yet and would certainly be an interesting and fruitful area of research. Such an undertaking is beyond the confines of the present study.

explaining the figurative use of everyday vocabulary in academic writing is to outline and explain the principal metaphorical processes and transfers to learners of German. The principal mechanism which allows for the use of everyday verbs in academic writing is metaphorical transfer, and — as pointed out by a number of scholars — the principle metaphor behind the use of verbs like STELLEN, HALTEN, GEHEN, NEHMEN, FÜHREN, GREIFEN and FASSEN to denote speech or research acts or the use of visual perception verbs like SEHEN or ERKENNEN to refer to cognitive processes is a spatial visualization of research (Hund 1999; Fandrych 2002, 2005; Graefen 2009; Meißner 2009). To produce knowledge, scholars embark on a journey through space and time and operate within a knowledge space (*‘Wissensraum’*) created through the joint endeavours of the academic community. One of the principal acts of the individual scholar is to orientate him/herself in that space and to arrange and rearrange what can be considered as accepted knowledge. In this space specific phenomena are “picked out” (*herausgreifen*), while other aspects should not be overlooked (*dürfen nicht übersehen werden*) or certain happenings are traced back to earlier events (*werden auf etwas zurückgeführt*). With regard to learners of German as a second language, the anticipation of possible comprehension and (re)production difficulties should be linked to assessing the degree to which the metaphorical usage of these verbs has become common in non-academic contexts. Arguably, the figurative use of verbs like AUSGEHEN or FESTHALTEN is not limited to academic texts and will pose less comprehension difficulties than the comprehension of less frequent verbs, illustrated in the following text sample [1]:

1. Ungeachtet aller statistischen Ungenauigkeiten im einzelnen *läßt sich* ein Grundzug bei der Verteilung des Volkseinkommens *herausschälen*. (Wehler 1973)

Apart from possible difficulties related to understanding the metaphorical use of *schälen*, decoding difficulties might be expected with regard to the reflexive *sich lassen* and the extended nominal phrase *ein Grundzug bei der Verteilung des Volkseinkommens*. Another crucial question is the degree to which lexical items can be considered as semantically transparent, opaque or polysemic. In the context of verbs used with separable and inseparable particles, polysemic particles like *über* will cause difficulties different from those caused by items like *heraus*.

While the frequent figurative use of everyday verbs confirms the metaphorical and historical link between academic language and ordinary language, a meaningful

functional analysis must go further and should illustrate how writers have used these verbs in specific contexts to refer to certain authorial acts. This will also facilitate the meaningful categorisation of frequent patterns of everyday academic language. The main assumption, outlined in my earlier discussion of the concept of metadiscourse, is that the characteristics of academic texts can be understood in relation to their particular contexts of production and reception. In this sense, the form and the functions of the everyday academic language patterns discussed here are reflective of the methodologies, ideals and values of the individual history writer as well as their discourse communities. The relevant functions may be subsumed broadly under three conceptual headings:

- authorial interventions designed to guide the reader through the text (intra-textual metadiscourse)
- acts which refer to other texts or authors critically or favourably (inter-textual metadiscourse)
- acts through which the writer involves the reader in the text and argues dialogically for his or her own interpretations or point of views (interpersonal metadiscourse)

Like other academic texts, historiographic texts contain explicit information about their structure and their contents and writers use textual metadiscourse to illustrate and comment on this arrangement. They outline links between different parts and illustrate how these sections are related to form a coherent whole. Thus the writer shows an appreciation of the readers' position, their expectations and understandings, and is concerned with the reader-friendliness of the text by trying to manage the flow of information. With regard to these activities of text management and commenting, two different levels can be distinguished.

The first one concerns the macro-structure of the text, the identification of main topics, their arrangement in chapters or sections and the rationale for the chosen structure. At this level the writer also refers to information in other parts of the text, and the direction of these references can be forward or backward. In the present corpus the major linguistic resources for this kind of textual signposting are the use of exclusive first person pronouns seen in sample [2], as well as perfect tense passive constructions [3]

2. Die Vorgeschichte, die Folgeverhandlungen und die analytische Betrachtung jener Kontroverse *behandeln wir* in Kapitel 6. (Küntzel 1992)
3. *Es ist bereits darauf hingewiesen worden*, wie der im Herbst 1871 bevorstehende parlamentarische Konflikt in der Militärgesetzgebung dank dem auch hierfür rechtzeitig herbeigeführten dritten Krieg verschoben werden konnte. (Wehler 1973)

Patterns like [3] are especially common in historical monographs written simultaneously in a narrative and an analytical mode. Here, the wish to organize the historical subject matter thematically and to present structurally related factors together while at the same time trying to mirror the successive unfolding of historical events in the structure of the text, may force the writer to place numerous ‘metadiscursive signposts’ in the text. Frequent expository verbs used in this function are *hinweisen*, *skizzieren*, *andeuten* and *schildern*, while temporal adverbials like *bereits* or spatial deictic elements, for example *oben*, provide further guidance.

A second level relates to the micro-structure of the text. Here the writer comments and explains what he or she is going to do next and how this act is related to the immediate context. The focus is on specific communicative acts, their sequences and stages. The modal passive paraphrase *sein + zu + infinitive* is frequently used to perform this function, as shown in sample [4].

4. Nach diesen Hinweisen [...] *ist nun ein Blick zu werfen auf* die wichtigsten Entscheidungen und Stationen des innenpolitischen Ringens während der ersten Monate nach dem Staatsumsturz. (Kolb 2002)

The use of the modal verb *sollen* in passive constructions fulfils a similar role and is used to announce authorial goals and objectives.

Intertextual references to other historiographic texts are often realized by the generic personal pronoun *man*.

5. *Man hat mit Recht betont*, daß verletzter Ehrgeiz und starke Rachegefühle wesentliche Motivationsfaktoren der [...] Aktivität Papens gewesen sind. (Kolb 2002)
6. Das ist der Kern dessen, *was man als deutschen Sonderweg bezeichnet hat* - ein problematischer Begriff, da [...] (Dülffer 1992)

In these examples the writer uses the generic personal pronoun in order to accommodate interpretations developed by other historians. The identity of the historian who is quoted may or may not be revealed in a footnote, depending on whether the reported proposition is considered to belong to the discourse community of historians at large or to individual historians. Criticizing existing interpretations as well as anticipating and pre-empting possible objections is also frequently achieved through negative modal verb phrases. By using the pattern “*man darf nicht + infinitive*” the writer asserts that a subject is not authorized to act in the way specified, and is therefore in ‘breach’ of a

rule, regulation or any other normative principle judged to be relevant. In sample [7] the writer uses the negative pattern *man darf nicht überschätzen* to convey that it is not permissible to overestimate the importance of two political fringe movements, and in [8] he employs the frequent pattern *man darf nicht übersehen* to direct the reader's attention to a historical circumstance he considers important.

7. Den linken Flügel und die schroff antisozialistischen christlichen Gewerkschaften *darf man* beileibe *nicht überschätzen*. (Wehler 1973)
8. Aus diesem Grunde ist Lloyd George mehrfach den französischen Ambitionen entgegengetreten. Man *darf* dabei *aber nicht übersehen*, daß [...]. (Kolb 2002)

A look at the type of behaviour which is characterized as not permissible (*etwas überschätzen, übersehen*) shows that writers use *dürfen* in negative constructions to criticize acts which seem to violate principles of scholarly caution and thus express the necessity to weigh up carefully the different factors which contributed to a historical development or situation, implying that past reality is complex and that its reconstruction should be guided by principles which acknowledge a multiplicity of factors and causes. They also distance themselves from earlier interpretations and thus create 'space' for their own claims and suggestions which are realized in the *dass*-clauses complementing the predicate. John Swales has described similar authorial acts he identified in research articles as the rhetorical move of "creating and occupying research space" (1990: 141, 174-175). The common pattern *man darf nicht übersehen* thus signals that the present writer has discovered a new aspect which has previously been overlooked. Through this authors can introduce new arguments, which may enhance, correct or qualify previous interpretations of the historical record. These patterns also have an interpersonal meaning, since they can be interpreted as an authorial 'warning' or 'advice' to readers to refrain from the denoted act and to join the author in the performance of the implied positive act of considering.

Authorial claims that the available evidence, the historical record, or processes of deductive reasoning allow the historian to advance a proposition reflect the methodology used and acknowledge the force of disciplinary conventions. They point to the existence of processes of authorization and validation via methodology and scholarly rigor and to controls carried out by the wider community of historians, and they aid writers to portray themselves as modest, cautious and principled scholars.

At the level of interpersonal metadiscourse, writers argue for their own interpretations in more or less openly dialogic structures. They make their own viewpoints clear and try to draw their readers into their arguments and thought processes through the inclusive use of the first person plural and the anticipation of likely reactions, especially objections. The major linguistic resources are the first person plural *wir*, the generic pronoun *man* as well as modal verbs in passive constructions and certain modal passive paraphrases.

9. Wenn *wir* Nietzsches Frage, welchen »Nutzen und Nachteil« Historie »für das Leben« habe, *ernst nehmen, läßt sich* für die Geschichte Weimars *antworten* [...] (Peukert 1987)

By employing inclusive first person pronouns, writers 'invite' readers to participate in authorial acts and demonstrate a readiness to meet the expectations of their audience. The use of modal verbs expresses the possibility, permissibility and inevitability of reaching certain conclusions and thus demonstrates the writer's willingness to test their knowledge claims against methodological and epistemological considerations.

With regard to the modality of possibility, acts and processes relating to speech, (visual) perception and cognition are dominant. Instead of asserting the existence of a historical phenomenon or making a historical proposition in a narrative sentence, historians frequently state that it is possible to perceive and understand a phenomenon, or to propose that something is the case.

10. [...] seit der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts *kann man von* einer breiteren, mit der Industrialisierung wachsenden wirtschaftsbürgerlichen Schicht *sprechen*. (Frevert 1986)

Statements in which writers propose the impossibility of saying or perceiving something are often responses to rival interpretations or attempts to anticipate and accommodate possible objections by readers. In both cases, writers usually argue for the possibility or impossibility of performing the denoted acts and give reasons for their position in the context. Samples [11] and [12] show how authors may deal with possible and actual propositions that contradict their own interpretations. In [11] the writer refutes a hypothetical objection, and in [12] an explanation put forward by rival historians is rejected.

11. [D]ie „Deutsche Kolonial-Gesellschaft“ (1887-1936) stieg zu einer der großen imperialistischen Propagandaverinigungen auf, deren bedeutendes Gewicht *nicht exakt an* den fluktuierenden Mitgliederzahlen *abgelesen werden kann*. (Wehler 1973)

12. Kein Zweifel sollte darüber bestehen, daß auch der deutsche Staat vor 1914 *nicht hinreichend als* bloßes Instrument der herrschenden Klasse, als reine Agentur der Kapitalbesitzer *verstanden werden kann*. (Kocka 1973)

The two concordances above exemplify the common rhetorical moves of anticipation and pre-emption. Anticipating and overcoming objections requires the acknowledgement, as well as the incorporation – either through accommodation or refutation – of other positions.

Writers use the modality of necessity to indicate the strength or epistemological certainty of certain propositions and arguments. Their own interpretations are thus portrayed as logical or inevitable deductions necessitated by the historical evidence that was considered. The common pattern *es muss gesagt/betont/hervorgehoben/festgehalten werden* is often used in conjunction with adverbial boosters and signals the strength and the importance of the historical arguments brought forward:

13. Das *muß* mit uneingeschränkter Entschiedenheit *gesagt werden*, da es empirisch unwiderlegbar ist. (Wehler 1973)

Necessity and obligation are also frequently invoked in relation to the performance of certain methodological acts, usually because writers think they are necessary to adhere to scholarly ethics and principles or to do justice to the available historical evidence.

14. Was die Diskussion über die Ziele der deutschen Expansion von 1914 angeht, so *muß man* zuerst einmal den Wunsch nach formellem oder informellem Einfluß säuberlich *auseinanderhalten*. (Wehler 1973)

Conditional complex sentences highlight the methodological steps and acts which have enabled the writer to assert his/her knowledge claims. Writers thus link the possibility of observing phenomena or advancing a knowledge claim to the performance of certain methodological acts or to the use of certain concepts or theories. This relation is often expressed in conditional sentences of the pattern: “if one performs x” then “it is possible to observe/understand y”, as illustrated by text sample [15].

15. *Vergleicht man* das chaotische Ende des Zweiten Weltkrieges mit der Demobilmachung nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg, *wird* erst jene große Leistung *sichtbar*, die sich den Zeitgenossen gerade deshalb in ihrer Bedeutung nicht enthüllte, weil alles so unerwartet glatt verlief. (Peukert 1987)

The examples analysed above demonstrate the usefulness of linking the use of frequent patterns of everyday academic language to authorial acts and interventions which reflect the socio-cultural situatedness of academic scholars. It is also possible to categorize these patterns by linking them to a number of specific and recurrent processes inherent

in producing and communicating scholarly knowledge, most notably the textual organization of knowledge, the intertextual accommodation or refutation of existing knowledge claims and the assertion of new knowledge through series of related logical-methodological acts.

4. Conclusion

In the present article I have conceptualised and analysed the use of everyday academic language found in the metadiscourse of German academic history writing. The data were taken from a corpus of twelve academic monographs and the analysis confirmed the centrality and importance of everyday academic language in these texts. In line with earlier studies on everyday academic language in German, I concluded that the figurative use of everyday words — mainly verbs — in academic writing poses specific difficulties for learners of German as a foreign language. This is linked to the figurative use of the items in question, their apparent simplicity and their polysemy. The help that learners can expect from lexical reference works is currently limited and depends on the frequency of the lexical item in question. Teachers of German as a foreign language could assist their students by explaining the central metaphor of text as a “disciplinary knowledge space” in which academics position themselves and to which they contribute with their writings.

The main pragmatic functions of the analysed material are text organisation, the positioning of the author vis-à-vis other texts and the engagement of readers. Text producers use everyday academic language to persuade readers to accept their claims to historical knowledge presented in the form of narrative by highlighting central cognitive, methodological and communicative processes involved in the creation of this knowledge. History writers thus acknowledge that their role is not limited to being omniscient narrators who tell true stories from the past, and they show that they are disciplined scholars who are members of a wider community of experts whose contributions and expectations they have to take into account.

The present study also confirmed that the two concepts employed – *alltägliche Wissenschaftssprache* and metadiscourse – are complementary tools of analysis which are useful for understanding, analysing and assessing central aspects of academic communication. It is suggested that the mutual critical reception of work on similar

phenomena in different languages (work written in English on metadiscourse in English academic writing and work on everyday academic language produced in German) would be worthwhile for both groups of scholars.

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