Einführung in die deutsche Linguistik / Introduction to German Linguistics

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Kapitel 1
Einführung / Introduction

Überblick / overview:
- Introduction for students
- Introduction for instructors
- Preview of chapters
- Acknowledgments

1.1   Introduction for students

This book is an introduction to the study of German linguistics, for students whose native language is not German. Linguistics is the *scientific* study of human language, so in this book you will see a different approach to the German language than you may have experienced in other texts and classes. You will be learning how linguists *formally* analyze and describe the sounds, grammar, and usage of the German language. This is not necessarily a book to teach you how to speak German, nor is there much discussion of German literature or culture. Nevertheless, I hope that by learning these analytical tools and formal descriptions, you will gain new knowledge about the language that you can put into practice in your own spoken and written German.

Each chapter is structured to help you learn the material and put that learning to use by practicing your German skills; for example, Kapitel 2 introduces the phonetics of German in the theoretical sense but also requires you to practice pronouncing particular words and hopefully refine your pronunciation. For this to be successful, it is important that you do not just read through the material—reading linguistics is not like reading a novel! You should read short passages at a time, pausing to consider the examples, reflect on how the examples illustrate the concepts in the text, and practice the material, before you move on to the next section. In the phonetics chapter, you will often see the symbol ☞; when you see this, you should say the word or sound aloud, so that you can feel and hear for yourself how that sound is produced. The chapters also contain *Mini-Übungen* at key points, and you should stop and do those so that you

can check your progress and shore up your knowledge. The text will also let you know when you have enough knowledge to try out a particular exercise or *Übung* at the end of the chapter. Only by fully engaging with all of these materials will you be able to understand and remember the new concepts in this book.

You will also notice that certain words in the text are in **bold**. These are technical, linguistic terms that you are unlikely to be familiar with. These words are both explained in the chapter itself and in the *Glossar* at the end of the book. In the *Glossar,* you will find a definition of the term in German, an English translation of the word (unless it is spelled exactly as in German), its part of speech, and (for nouns) its gender, genitive ending, and plural form.

Finally, each chapter concludes with *Weiterführende Literatur*: a list of some of the sources that I used in writing the chapter. You can consult these works if you want further details about the topics in the chapter.

1.2   Introduction for instructors

Although there are many introductions to German linguistics, this is the first one that is written with intermediate-level second-language learners in mind. The book, therefore, has two primary goals: to introduce students to formal linguistics as it applies specifically to German, and to foster second language acquisition of German by connecting linguistic analysis to practical exercises in pronunciation, grammar, sociolinguistics, etc.

To that end, the text is written in clear, simple German, and it provides an English gloss of technical linguistic terms. Besides the simplicity of the language used, I have also opted in many cases for analyses that are easiest to describe to students at this level, rather than analyses that represent the *Stand der Forschung.* As one example, while Fagan (2009) argues that both fortis and lenis stops are voiceless in German ($/p^h/$ vs. $/p/$), this book uses the traditional, and more intuitive, analysis of these stops as differing in voicing ($/p^h/$ vs $/b/$). As another example, the syntax chapter dispenses with many standard assumptions such as binary branching, X' theory, the DP, and even the TP, instead assuming a relatively flat structure for the clause. Specialists in these areas may be frustrated with these choices, but my hope is that these decisions spare students some of the frustration that more sophisticated analyses can bring.

In ten or so years of teaching this material in courses that are supposed to be taught exclusively in German, I have learned that students find it difficult to discuss this material in German during class time. To facilitate their speaking in class, for each reading I give students some discussion questions in German, which they are to answer in writing, in their own words, and in German. This way, when I call on students in class, they have a ready answer that they can read or improvise from. (Instructors who wish to assign such reading questions may request them from me by email. I also welcome my colleagues' suggestions and corrections to the text itself.)

1.3   Preview of the remaining chapters

Kapitel 2: Phonetik: Die Laute der deutschen Sprache introduces the International Phonetic Alphabet, the human speech organs, the consonants and vowels of German, and phonetic transcription.

Kapitel 3: Phonologie: *Das deutsche Lautsystem* describes syllable structure, some of the most salient phonological rules in German, and prosody.

Kapitel 4: Morphologie: *Die Formen deutscher Wörter* catalogs the parts of speech, German declension and conjugation, and word formation processes including compounding and derivation.

Kapitel 5: Syntax: *Die deutsche Satzstruktur* reviews grammatical functions and case, introduces constituents from individual words to clauses, and treats German sentence structure in both the traditional topological model and generative grammar.

Kapitel 6. Semantik: Die Bedeutung deutscher Wörter und Sätze covers the semantics of lexical categories, referential properties of noun phrases, the semantics of tense/mood/voice, and pragmatics.

Kapitel 7. Dialektologie: Regionale Variation in Mitteleuropa: after a brief history of the German language, this chapter surveys German dialects, colloquial German, and Standard German as used in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.

Kapitel 8. Soziolinguistik: Soziale Variation im Deutschen gives some examples of sociolects, examines contact between German and other languages, and discusses a few current issues in German sociolinguistics.

1.4   Acknowledgments