

Gerhard Stickel

Introduction/Einführung/Introduction

Dear guests and colleagues.

Chers invités, mesdames et messieurs!

Verehrte Gäste, liebe Kolleginnen und Kollegen,

Seit Jahren habe ich mich darum bemüht, in der Einleitung zu unseren verschiedenen Tagungen jeweils einige Sätze in der Sprache des Gastlandes zu sprechen. Dies fällt mir heute sehr leicht, auf jeden Fall erheblich leichter als etwa bei unseren Tagungen in Dublin, Budapest oder Vilnius. Nehmen Sie deshalb bitte den kurzen deutschen Teil meines Beitrags gelassen hin. Wir haben ja hilfreiche Dolmetscherinnen.

Im Namen der hier versammelten Mitglieder von EFNIL danke ich dem Direktor des gastgebenden Instituts, Herrn Kollegen Eichinger, für seine freundliche Begrüßung. Herzlich danke ich auch den offiziellen Gästen für ihre Grußadressen: Frau Vortragende Legationsrätin Bennemann vom Auswärtigen Amt, Frau Bürgermeisterin Dr. Freundlieb, der Vertreterin der Stadt Mannheim, und Herrn Hernandez-Saseta von der Europäischen Kommission. Zu Señor Hernandez-Saseta möchte ich anmerken, dass er EFNIL schon seit Jahren verbunden ist. Wir möchten seine Anwesenheit auch diesmal als Zeichen dafür werten, dass die Europäische Kommission bei all den aktuellen Problemen, mit denen sie befasst ist, das Thema Sprachenpolitik nicht ganz vergessen hat. Ihn – wie auch die anderen Gastredner – grüße ich mit Dank für ihre Bereitschaft, zu unserer Tagung beizutragen, also Herrn Professor Auer von der Universität Freiburg, der über neue sprachliche Standards in Europa sprechen wird, Herrn Willem Waslander vom niederländischen Justizministerium, der uns kurz vom eSENS-Projekt berichten wird, Frau Professor de Jong von der Universität Utrecht, die uns das wissenschaftliche Netzwerk CLARIN ERIC vorstellen wird, und Herrn Professor van den Heuvel von der Universität Nimwegen, der über die europäische Organisation ELRA sprechen wird. Wie sich sicherlich zeigen wird, haben alle Gastvorträge direkt oder mittelbar mit dem Generalthema dieser Tagung zu tun.

Die Beiträge von Sprechern unserer Mitgliedsinstitutionen will ich nun nicht aufzählen. Ein Programm ist ja verfügbar. Ich möchte aber diesen EFNIL-Kolleginnen und -kollegen schon jetzt dafür danken, dass sie sich mit ihren Vorträgen aktiv an dieser Tagung beteiligen. Nun ein paar Anmerkungen zum Tagungsthema (zur Abwechslung auf Englisch).

For the last fourteen years, EFNIL has discussed at its annual conferences topics of special relevance for national and European language planning and policies. This year, the conference is focused on ourselves, that is, the national language institutions that are united in EFNIL, and the functions they perform for the official languages of their countries. The role played by each of our member institutions in respect of its official language or languages varies from one country to the next. At least, that is what we can deduce from our contacts so far, especially from the data that was collected for the European Language Monitor (ELM).¹ At this conference, we look more closely into the tasks and functions of several of our member institutions. We would like to explore the policies, strategies, and methods for promoting national languages employed by central language institutions, and to discuss how the effects of these activities can be measured and documented – if they can.

We are glad that we can also learn from several language institutes of countries outside the European Union. Therefore, a special thanks to our colleagues from Korea, Iceland, and Norway, who are contributing to the programme and to this volume. Our colleagues from Serbia and Switzerland are also very welcome.

Some of us encountered in their studies the maxim of American structural linguistics: “Leave your language alone”.² This slogan was also quite influential for European linguistics from the middle of the last century onwards. It meant that we linguists should limit our research to the description and analysis of language phenomena, without any ambition to preserve or change the use or even the structure of the language that we are studying. Since then, however, we have also become more aware of the fact that languages have never been left alone, at least not the languages whose history has been studied more carefully. Until the late Middle Ages, the regional idioms that later developed into national languages existed only as bundles of vernacular dialects with little regional and social reach. The only language used for official purposes, that is, politics, religion, and science, was Latin; in the southeastern region of Europe it was Greek or Church-Slavonic. The process of emancipating the vernacular languages and developing the standard varieties that became national languages took centuries. In some countries, it was completed only in the 19th century. How was this accomplished? There is, as we can learn from our multilingual colleagues, a different story for each of the contemporary national languages. Let me just offer as an example some words about my own native idiom, that is, standard German.

Unlike countries such as France, Spain or Italy, Germany never had an authoritative language academy such as the Accademia della Crusca or the Académie

¹ See <http://efnil.org/projects/elm>.

² The title of an influential book by Robert A. Hall Jr. (Ithaca/NY: 1950). See for comparison Joshua Fishman: *DO NOT leave your language alone*. New Jersey/London: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2006.

Française. There were kings and emperors, but none of them took action on matters of language like the French King François I, who issued an edict in 1539 (*Ordonnance de Villers-Cotterêts*) that stipulated French as the language of the official administration and thus laid the groundwork for French as the national language of France. The chancelleries of the Hapsburg emperors used Latin beside German as the official language until the 19th century. The famous Prussian King Fredric II preferred French to German.

Since the 17th century there have been several attempts to establish a competent language institution which would be respected both by the state authorities and the general public. They all failed or had only short-term or regional importance. However, the development of a standard German was not simply an invisible-hand process, as some colleagues argue; that is, a gradual change to the speaking and writing habits of the language community or its parts. Altogether it was a complex process carried out by both prestigious individuals and institutions, especially publishing houses, universities and schools. Among others, the writings of Martin Luther had a great influence on the development of a national variety of German, and so did the language use of the imperial chancelleries in Prague and Vienna. Later on, the writings of philosophers, jurists, novelists and poets became influential. In the course of the 19th century, it was also enforced by governmental authorities. The spread of the standard language was especially enhanced by the introduction of compulsory school attendance in the various German speaking states and regions.

Although a standard written language started to be developed during the 18th century, it took until the 20th century for the standard variety (though not used in all domains) to be at least understood by most people in the German lands. National standard varieties still remain and are cultivated in the different German speaking countries.

At present, there are several institutions in Germany that care for the German language, especially its standard variety; however, none of them has the official authority to set binding language norms. The most prominent publicly funded ones are the Institute for the German Language, where we are assembled today, and the German Academy for Language and Literature. Both are members of EFNIL. There is also the Goethe Institute, which promotes German as a foreign language. The question of how the institute that is hosting this conference – the Institute for the German Language – attempts to exert a positive influence on the official language of this country, or rather on its speakers, is being answered by my colleagues Astrid Adler and Rahel Beyer in their presentation.³

Let me please use this occasion now to briefly turn your attention to an important aspect of language research and language planning in our countries, and let me try to do this in French.

³ See their paper in this volume.

J'aimerais évoquer à nouveau une conclusion à laquelle nous étions déjà arrivés au sein de l'EFNIL (ou FELIN en français). Comme cela se manifesterà encore dans les contributions des membres de L'EFNIL ce matin et encore demain, nos institutions sont en principe des égoïstes linguistiques. C'est-à-dire que leur mission principale est de s'occuper de la description, de la documentation ou encore du développement de leurs langues nationales respectives. Mais durant nos quatorze ans de collaboration, il est devenu de plus en plus clair qu'il n'est pas possible d'examiner ou de planifier chacune de nos langues isolément. Elles ne sont pas des îles linguistiques mais se trouvent dans leur développement et leur usage en relation avec les langues minoritaires dans leur propres pays et avec les langues des autres pays européens, et parmi celles-ci avec les langues plus ou moins voisines.

C'est pourquoi j'aimerais anticiper un peu le résumé de cette conférence en disant. Le travail de chacune de nos institutions est certainement important pour nos langues nationales respectives. Mais dans leurs recherches, leur documentation et leur planification linguistiques toutes les institutions devraient toujours considérer leur propre langue dans le contexte des autres langues européennes afin que nous participions à la conservation et au développement des variétés linguistiques européennes dans leur ensemble. La variété linguistique est en fait une condition fondamentale des variétés sociales et de la richesse culturelle de l'Europe. Mais il n'est pas de mon intention d'exprimer une injonction, mais seulement de renouveler et de réaffirmer un consensus que nous avons adopté il y a longtemps déjà.

Et maintenant, tournons-nous vers le véritable thème de cette conférence.

Let us go to work now.

An die Arbeit!

Merci beaucoup!

Thank you.

Vielen Dank!

Bibliographical information

This text was first published in the book:

Gerhard Stickel (ed.) (2018): National language institutions and national languages. Contributions to the EFNIL Conference 2017 in Mannheim. Budapest: Research Institute for Linguistics, Hungarian Academy of Sciences. [299 pages.]

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