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Pidgin German Spoken by Foreign Workers in West Germany.

The Definite Article.

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0. Introduction.

At present, just over 10% of the total work force in West Germany consists of foreign workers or Gastarbeiter. The Gastarbeiter (GA) come mainly from countries bordering the northern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean (see Table 1); there are relatively few from Arabic-speaking North Africa, the Middle East, France, the Netherlands, and other countries. The major ethnic (L₁) languages spoken by the GA are the 3 Romance languages -- Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese --; the closely related Slavic languages of Yugoslavia -- Croatian, Serbian, Slovenian, and Macedonian --; Modern Greek; and Turkish. The extremely deviant, non-standard German characteristic of this social group serves both as a positive identifier of the group and as an almost insurmountable barrier to any attempt to break out of the group.

Gastarbeiter German (GAG) has been termed "broken," "corrupt," or "bad" German (see Table 2 for subjective evaluations of the type of German spoken by members of 6 ethnic groups). Syntactically, it is characterized by the non-appearance of most inflectional suffixes with little or no overt marking of gender/number/case; generalization of the unmarked form of the definite article, die, where this appears in surface structure at all; non-appearance of prepositions, pronouns, the copula, even the subject NP; exclusive use of the familiar form of address, du; surface structure verb position (in the unmarked "infinitive" or -en form) after the object NP; expansion of the syntactic function of adverbs; placement of a negative particle before a V or NP (in lieu of the complicated Standard German system of negation); and many other differences from anything yet described for Standard German or for German urban, industrial dialects.

Since little is known about the linguistic nature of GAG, our study is concerned primarily with the question of whether GAG is systematically different from Standard/Urban/dialectal German. We are making the basic assumption that GAG is not a chaotic hodgepodge of "errors" or "simplifications"

due to interference from the respective L_1 's, or to lack of formal instruction in German, unfavorable conditions for language learning, etc. Although L_1 interference has obviously played an important part in the formation of GAG, the systematically deviant character of GAG among all ethnic groups seems to be due to a more or less universal process of simplification in the formation of pidgins, and/or a *petit-negre* effect -- a culturally transmitted tradition (and perhaps a part of the language competence of German speakers) of how to simplify German in situations which call for "foreigner's talk" or "baby talk" (see Ferguson ms.). If these styles are a part of competence, as Ferguson suggests, then the question arises whether such competence is a function of universal rules of simplification or whether it is language and culture specific. GAG, a pidgin arising before our eyes, can provide significant data on this question.

Nationality	June 1968	June 1969	March 1970	Sept. 1973
Italian	287,840	340,244	351,500	350,000
Jugoslav	99,860	226,290	326,200	335,000
Turkish	139,336	212,900	287,700	605,000
Greek	136,191	175,347	218,600	250,000
Spanish	111,982	195,591	154,300	190,000
Portuguese	18,743	26,379	35,600	----
others	221,422	255,269	295,300	670,000 (incl. Port.)
TOTAL	1,014,774	1,372,020	1,669,800	2,600,000

Table 1. Ethnic origin of Gastarbeiter in West Germany 1968-1973. The figures for Sept. 1973 are rounded to the nearest ten thousand; the total to the nearest hundred thousand. No separate figures were available for the Portuguese. Note that these figures include only working men and women. If dependents were included, the totals would be considerably higher, e.g., in Sept. 1968 there were 375,000 GA children in German schools. Only incomplete information is available (see Koch 1970:14). Also, the figures represent only those GA who have legally entered West Germany. Estimates of the number of immigrants who have entered the country illegally would swell these figures by 20% or more. Sources: Koch 1970; IAZ 1974; Speigel 1973.

Nationality	"Knowledge of German"			
	very good	fair	bad	none
Italian	17%	41%	30%	12%
Greek	10%	38%	38%	14%
Spanish	11%	33%	39%	17%
Portuguese	5%	28%	43%	26%
Turkish	7%	34%	43%	16%
Jugoslav	19%	44%	29%	8%
ARITHMETIC MEAN	11.5%	36.0%	37.0%	15.5%

Table 2. Bundesanstalt für Arbeit 1972 estimate of knowledge of German for 6 ethnic groups. Source: Bundesanstalt für Arbeit 1973.

1. Informants; sampling method; interviews; technical data.
 - 1.1. type of sample: ethnically stratified non-probability sample
 - 1.2. method of gathering linguistic data: tape recorded interviews; directed conversation
 - 1.3. date of interviews: January - May 1974
 - 1.4. place: Mainz, Germany -- University clinics, ethnic cultural centers
 - 1.5. language of interviews: investigator(s) spoke Standard German (our Serbo-Croatian and English accents were probably noticed by the informants; we assume that this produced no systematic bias in the responses); informants spoke GAG in formal, interview style (Labov's Style B)
 - 1.6. average length of tape recorded interviews: 20 minutes
 - 1.7. number of informants: 29
 - 1.8. ethnic groups: Greek (4), Italian (5), Portuguese (5), Spanish (4), Turkish (6), Yugoslav (5)
 - 1.9. sex: female (12), male (17)

- 1.10. educational level: L (6 yrs. of schooling or less) (22)
H (7 yrs. of schooling or more) (7)
- 1.11. residence group: 0 - 9% (3)
10 - 19% (6)
20 - 29% (12)
30 - 39% (6)
40 - 49% (1)
50% and over (1)

the percentages represent the proportion of an informant's life spent in West Germany (years spent in West Germany rounded to the nearest year, divided by chronological age at the time of interview)

- 1.12. tape recorder: Uher 4000 Report-L
- 1.13. type of recording: monophonic, dual track
- 1.14. source of electricity: line current
- 1.15. tape speed: 19 cm. (7.5 inches) per second
- 1.16. frequency range of tape recorder (claimed by manufacturer):
40 to 20,000 hz.
40 to 20,
- 1.17. tape: BASF, 1 mil, mylar
- 1.18. microphone: Uher dynamic interview, 200 ohm
- 1.19. quality of recordings: fair to excellent (room acoustics were generally poor and there was considerable external noise)

2. Working hypotheses

Since the sample is of the non-probability type, the following can only be viewed as programmatic or suggestive, i.e., we cannot project the results with confidence beyond the immediate sample. An improved design would have called for a 6 x 6 table (36 cells), ethnic group by residence group. As a compromise with the limited resources available, we focused on stratification by ethnic group, but at the same time found at least 3 informants for each of the first four residence groups. Two additional extralinguistic factors -- sex and educational level -- were also studied, although unsystematically. Doubtless, there are further factors which might correlate significantly with linguistic variation in the pidgin, i.e., form a part of the variable input, P₀, to variable rules. A number of these are discussed at length in Dittmar, Klein et al. ms.

Despite the gaps which obviously exist in this sample, previous literature and informal observations generally support our findings. There are no indications that a stratified random sample (of the type for example that Dittmar, Klein, et al. are presently carrying out among Spanish and Italian GA in Heidelberg) would yield results radically at variance with these.

To show how GAG systematically deviates from Standard/Urban-dialectal German, we have chosen to focus on the definite article. This is an important and easily analyzed indicator of pidginization because:

- 1) Aside from certain phonological assimilations to preceding prepositions, the syntactic slot for the definite article is almost always filled in the surface structure of all (non-pidginized) forms of German;
- 2) the variable or categorical deletion of the definite article is found in the German of native speakers only in the foreigner's-talk style (cf. Clyne ms.; Mühlhäusler ms.);
- 3) categorical or variable deletion of articles is (almost?) universal in Germanic and Romance "based" pidgins and creoles; in the process of decreolization the definite article may come to appear categorically in syntactic slots corresponding to usage in the standard language, but without markings for gender, number, and case (compare the indeclinable die of Afrikaans);
- 4) four of the 6 L_1 's possess definite articles in syntactic arrangements corresponding to German usage; following the principle of contrastive analysis that it is much easier to learn equivalent filler morphemes in L_2 for categories which already exist in L_1 , rather than to create wholly new categories, we would assign tendencies toward deletion of the German definite article among these speakers to pidginization rather than to simple $L_1 \rightarrow L_2$ interference.

2.1. Hypotheses 1: L_1 and deletion (non-appearance) of GAG definite article.

Based on the "equivalent category" principle of contrastive analysis, we predicted that the appearance of the GAG definite article would be positively correlated with those L_1 's which possess a similar syntactic category. We would thus expect that speakers of Greek, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese would have a high percentage of GAG definite articles, but that speakers of Serbo-Croatian and Turkish would have relatively few.¹

Figure 1 and Table 3 show that this is generally the case. The discrepancy between the Spanish and Portuguese may be due to other factors (such as the shorter residency and lower educational classification of the Portuguese). The informants labeled IFL and PML in Figure 1 are highly deviant; in general, the Italians and the Portuguese have the widest intra-group variation.

2.2. Hypothesis 2: residency and GAG definite article.

Despite the powerful social constraints favoring continued use of GAG, we predicted that longer residency would be positively correlated

with increased appearance of the GAG definite article. Table 6 provides tentative confirmation of the hypothesis (although the poor match of ethnic groups to residency may cause serious skewing, as Fig. 1 shows). It is significant that not even those GA with the highest residency percentages used the definite article categorically.

2.3. Hypothesis 3: L₁ and absence of number/case/gender inflection of GAG definite article.

We postulated that speakers of those L₁'s having inflectional categories most similar to those of German would show more non-die forms (i.e., would use more of the marked forms, whether "correctly" or not). This should place the 6 languages in the rank order: Greek; Italian-Spanish-Portuguese; Serbo-Croatian-Turkish.

Table 7 shows that the hypothesis must be tentatively rejected.

Instead it appears (aside from the Yugoslavs) that there is a negative correlation between increased use of the definite article and increased use of marked forms (der, das, dem, den).

2.4. Hypothesis 4: residency and absence of number/case/gender inflection of GAG definite article.

As with hypothesis 2, we reasoned that "depidginization" (increasing approximation to Standard/Urban-dialectal German) would result in a positive correlation between residency and marked forms of the definite article. Table 10 shows that this hypothesis, too, must be tentatively rejected. Aside from the Spanish informant who had lived 82% of her life in Germany, all residence groups show a surprisingly high percentage of unmarked (die) forms.

Nationality (arranged by rank order, lowest to highest)	% of occurrence of def. art. (no. of actual occurrences divided by no. of potential occurrences)	N
Turkish	15.91%	35/220
Jugoslav	19.75%	31/157
Portuguese	35.34%	41/116
Italian	69.02%	127/184
Greek	75.86%	242/319
Spanish	87.10%	135/155

Table 3. Frequency of occurrence of definite article by nationality.

Sex (arranged in rank order, lowest to highest)	% of occurrence of def. art. (no. of actual occurrences divided by no. of potential occurrences)	N
male	46.79%	321/686
female	62.80%	292/465

Table 4. Frequency of occurrence of definite article by sex.

Educational level (arranged in rank order, lowest to highest)	%	N
low (6 yrs. of schooling or less)	44.77%	385/860
high (7 yrs. of schooling or more)	78.35%	228/291

Table 5. Frequency of occurrence of definite article by educational level.

Residence group (arranged in rank order, lowest to highest)	%	N
10 - 19% of life spent in Germany	22.42%	37/165
0 - 9% of life spent in Germany	25.68%	19/74
20 - 29% of life spent in Germany	49.72%	269/541
30 - 39% of life spent in Germany	74.29%	208/280
40 - 49% of life spent in Germany	87.80%	72/82
50% or more of life spent in Germany	83.89%	8/9

Table 6. Frequency of occurrence of definite article by residence group.

Nationality (arranged in rank order, highest to lowest)	% die	N
Italian	100.00%	127/127
Jugoslav	96.76%	26/27
Spanish	85.19%	115/135
Greek	69.44%	163/235
Portuguese	31.43%	37/118
Portuguese	41.18%	47/114

Table 7. Absence of case/number/gender inflection of definite article by nationality.

Sex (arranged in rank order, highest to lowest)	% die	N
female	82.53%	241/292
male	73.21%	235/321

Table 8. Absence of case/number/gender inflection of definite article by sex.

Educational level (arranged in rank order, highest to lowest)	% die	N
low (6 yrs. of schooling or less)	51.82%	115/222
high (7 yrs. of schooling or more)	70.61%	164/232

Table 9. Absence of case/number/gender inflection of definite article by educational level.

Residence group (arranged in rank order, highest to lowest)	% <u>die</u>	N
20 - 29% of life spent in Germany	81.78%	220/269
30 - 39%	79.81%	166/208
0 - 9%	78.95%	15/19
10 - 19%	67.57%	5/37
40 - 49%	65.28%	47/72
50% or more	37.90%	3/8

Table 10. Absence of case/number/gender inflection of definite article by residence group

3. Sex and educational level

Our preliminary observations (see Table 1) show that females use considerably more definite articles than males, but that they also generalize the omission of die to a greater extent. Another instance of the tendency noted above is that the more often the definite article appears, the larger the proportion of die forms.

Reversing this trend, the H educational level uses far more definite articles than the L group, but at the same time shows a slightly smaller percentage of die forms (Tables 5 and 9). Although this may be attributed to the influence of education, considerable reading of German, greater participation in German society, and so forth, the fact that more than 1/5 of potential definite articles do not appear and that 7/10 of those which do occur are unmarked fits in well with the emerging pattern of "systematic deviancy" for all GA.

4. Conclusion.

No matter whether we view the GAG definite article as being variably deleted or variably added, its syntactic distribution is clearly different from Standard/Urban-dialectal German. The equivalent category principles of contrastive analysis suggests that the frequency of appearance of the definite article is linked to the presence or absence of equivalent structures in the various L₁'s. However the positive correlation between increased use of the definite article and its increasing indeclinability (i.e., generalization of unmarked die) is just as clearly an emerging, systematic trait of the "simplified language" or pidgin which characterizes the foreign workers as a class. Striking parallels to this process in the

transition of Old English to Middle English and of 17th-century Dutch to Afrikaans, as well as in various pidgins and creoles "based" on English, Dutch, Portuguese, French, and Spanish, attest to the universal character of article simplification and deletion (for those languages which possess this syntactic category).

Further investigation will undoubtedly reveal numerous syntactic and phonological parallels to the systematic, pidgin-like characteristics outlined here for the definite article. Some of the most obvious are negative placement, adverbial substitution for verbs, person/number marking on verbs, invertible *du* forms of address, coalescence of front rounded and unrounded vowels, and coalescence of [ç] and [ʃ]. The extent to which native speakers of German also simplify along these lines in baby-talk and foreigner's-talk style is a further indication of powerful psychological processes operating in a consistent way toward the same end.

FOOTNOTES -

1) Note, though, that Turkish has a definite article suffix attached to nouns when they function as direct objects. Also, both Serbo-Croat and Turkish have demonstrative adjectives.

To calculate the "% of deletion" (or "% of occurrence") of the definite article, we are assuming that the distribution of the definite article in a non-pidgin German equivalent of our corpus represents either a structure underlying GAG (which then undergoes variable deletion) or, alternatively, a prestige, de-pidginization model that causes a variable rule of definite article insertion to be added to the GAG basilect.

2) There are indications that the pidgin is becoming creolized in urban ghettos with large concentrations of GA. See Spiegel 1973; Kolloch, Magsam, and Müller ms.

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