Small languages in the digital age – a example of Low German

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Source: https://computermuseum-oldenburg.de/ueber-uns/
0. Digitalization

“technologies for communication”  (Thurlow et al. 2012)
0. Digitalization

Performance era (Kelly-Holmes 2014)

Source: https://de.freepik.com
Theses guiding the talk

1. For SL teaching and learning, the integration of digital literacy is essential to create digital vitality as a key factor of language maintenance.

2. Digitalization is changing communication practices, which poses specific competence requirements in terms of digital literacy.

3. Digitalization can open up specific learning possibilities for SL, the use of which depends on the learners or new speakers.
1. For SL teaching and learning, the integration of digital literacy is essential to create *digital vitality* as a key factor of language maintenance.
1. Digital vitality of SL

Source: https://de.statista.com
1. Digital vitality of SL

• Extend to which a language is used and usable on the internet and through digital devices (cf. Dolowy-Rybinska/Soria, 2021)

• SL: Digital Language Vitality Scale (Ceberio et al. 2018/\texttt{www.dldp.eu})

• groups of indicators
  1. Language digital capacity
  2. Language digital presence and use
  3. Language digital performance
1. Digital vitality of SL

Results

• Digital minorization of RML

• „general perception [...] moderately positive“ (Ferré-Pavia et al. 2018, 1082)

• Low German online (Reershemius 2023; Fenske 2021; Arendt i. rev.)
1. Digital vitality of SL

• Dominance of English
  • Digital linguistic imperialism (Phillipson 1992) and/or linguistic justice (Van Parijs 2011)

Cunliffe (2007, 146f.):

• „The origins of the Internet and its early adoption by majority languages and in particular English have led to a dominance that poses a threat to minority languages. These dominant languages tend to have additional advantages in terms of infrastructure, economic power, and state commitment to the creation of e-societies. The widespread use of English in the real world, as a first and second language, and its dominant position, even among majority languages on the Internet, has established it as the lingua franca of the Internet. Minority cultures and languages should not be viewed simply as victims of the Internet or as passive recipients of Internet technology, services and content. Instead it should be recognised that they have the potential to be active shapers of this technology, able to create their own tools, adapt existing tools to the local needs and to create culturally authentic, indigenous Internet media. A culture interacts with a technology and that interaction changes both the culture and the technology.“

• Cf. also Cunliffe 2019
2. Digitalization is changing communication practices, which poses specific competence requirements in terms of digital literacy.
1. Polymedia (Madianou/Miller 2021)
2. Multilingual repertoires (Pietikäinen 2010)
Beiträge

@knd_uni_greifswald

"dat Fahrrad/die Fohrae'

das Fahrrad/die Fahrer

Claas scheest mit sein Fahrrad um de Eck.
Claas rast mit seinem Fahrrad um die Ecke.

Hebben ji de Fohrae' in denn Schupper brocht?
Hebt ihr die Fahrräder in den Schuppen gebracht?

92 Aufrufe • Gefällt wortshaus
knd_uni_greifswald Heute kommt wieder ein kleiner Beitrag aus dem Wörterbuch✨
3. Juni
2. Digital literacy

• Technologies *for* communication
  • Contextual heterogeneity
  • Diversity of communicative practices (Berger/Luckmann 1969; Günther/Knoblauch 2007) and their norms

• **Sharing and networking and cooperation** = increasing interactivity

• **Digital culture**: creativity, playfulness, multimodality and multilingual practices (e.g. memes)
2. Digital literacy

“[Digital literacies are literacies,] that have emerged with the rise of social practices mediated by digital media, and that are marked by an ethos characterized by deep interactivity, openness for feedback, sharing of resources and expertise, and a will to collaborate and provide support.“ (Knobel/Lankshaer 2015, 152)

• digital literacy → digital literacies
2. Digital literacies

Cf. Jones/Hafner (2021), own figure
2. Digital literacies

Digital literacies and SL

- Digital tools
  - Multimodal Reading and writing
  - Online SL
  - Critical digital literacies
  - "Oraliteracy" in SL
  - Online SL cultures
  - CofP of new speakers
  - Games, learning and literacy
  - Gamification of learning
- Digital practices
  - Social media
  - Collaboration and peer production
  - Influencers of SL
  - Learning principles

...
2. Digital literacies
I ideologies on YouTube

Critical literacy

“In the past, ‘critical literacy’ was presented as a special category of language education; however, in the online future, virtually all literacy will necessitate critical judgment.” (Warschauer 2004, 20)

- SL as „contested languages“ (Tamburelli 2021)
2. Digital literacies 

Ideologies on YouTube

Explorative Case study

- practices of contestation in narrative interviews (cf. Arendt 2021) and on YouTube (Androutsopoulos 2013; Leung 2017)
- Topos-analysis of language ideological argumentative events (Kienpointner 1992)
2. Digital literacies

Ideologies on YouTube

Topics of comments

- Identity; 226; 21%
- Language comparison; 169; 16%
- Meta-linguistic explication; 156; 14%
- Comments on discussion; 141; 13%
- Intelligibility of video content; 118; 11%
- Reflection on status; 71; 7%
- Language loss; 65; 5%
- Video specifics; 51; 5%
- Positive evaluation; 41; 4%
- Usefulness of language; 6; 0%
- Criticism of language use in video; 33; 3%
Example: analogy- and distance-topos

MB /5 years ago
Das richtige Plattdeutsch / Niederdeutsch ist grammatikalisch und Wortschatzmäßig näher am Niederländischen als am Hochdeutschen dran. Dann ist es durchaus als eigene Sprache zu verstehen. Doch was uns die CDU hier als "Niederdeutsch" abgeliefert hat, war Hochdeutsch mit westfälischer Schnauze gesprochen, um es einmal salopp auszudrücken. (Er preist die "niederdeutsche Grammatik" an und dann folgt seine niederdeutsche Rede der hochdeutschen Grammatik. ;) )

Proper Low German is closer to Dutch than to High German in terms of grammar and vocabulary. Then it can certainly be understood as a language in its own right. But what the CDU delivered to us here as "Low German" was High German spoken with a Westphalian mouth, to put it casually. (He praises the "Low German grammar" and then his Low German speech follows the High German grammar. ;) )
2. Digital literacies

Ideologies on YouTube

Findings

- Binary structured toposinventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context-abstract topoi</th>
<th>Context-specific topoi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dialect</td>
<td>Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analogy topos</td>
<td>Dialect topos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layer topos (interlingual)</td>
<td>Pronunciation topos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediality topos</td>
<td>Speech topos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composition topos (intralingual)</td>
<td>Heterogeneity topos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance topos (interlingual)</td>
<td>Closeness topos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligibility topos</td>
<td>Intelligibility topos</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cf. Arendt (i. rev.)
2. Digital literacies

Ideologies on YouTube

Preliminary conclusion

• Purist ideology of homogeneity - offline AND online
• Normative language ideologies
• Hinder concepts of linguistic diversity
• Need for critical reflection on this
3. Digitalization can open up specific learning possibilities for SL, the use of which depends on the learners or new speakers.
3. Digital media & learning

Digital media & learning

- Tools for learning (CALL)
  Cf. Warschauer 2004; Meskill/Antony 2015 etc.

- Learning digital practices
  Cf. Waldron 2015; Iorio 2015 etc.

Cf. Warschauer 2004; Meskill/Antony 2015 etc.
3. Digital media & learning

Plattdüütsch; ISO: 639-3 nds (Low German; Low Saxon); Area: Northern Germany

- Recognised by ECRML (1998), integration in education (i.a. Tollefson 2002; Cenoz 2009; Arendt/Langhanke 2021)
- New speakers (i.a. Jaffe 2015; Hornsby/Vigers 2018; Arendt 2021)

Sociolinguistic characteristics and speaker oriented demands

1) Low contact between (potential) speakers
   - New CofP (Eckert/McConell-Ginet 1999) necessary
2) Language area is extensive, also Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania
   - Trans local interaction (Georgakopoulou/Spilioti 2015)
3) Heterogeneous knowledge among new speakers
   - Inclusive cooperative learning methods (Arendt 2021)
3. Digital media & learning

Online courses for Low German

Studies
- Teaching degrees,
- Master’s,
- Subsidiary subject Low German

Continuing Professional Development
- In-house training courses for staff members in childcare facilities

Courses
- Teachers at primary schools
- Secondary schools
- Grammar schools

Teaching Materials
Research
Library
E-learning
3. Digital media & learning

*Online courses for Low German*

**OER of CCTLG**

- Teaching Videos
- Quizlet material
- Online courses
- ALWiNE (vocabulary trainer)
- Digital dictionary
- Learning-App
3. Digital media & learning

Online courses for Low German

Teaching principle

- Cognitive-constructivistic concept of learning

Methods

- Interaction and cooperation oriented
- Digitalization (E-Learning)

Characteristics

- Inclusion of heterogeneous knowledges
  - Cf. Slavin 1994; Sato/Ballinger 2016; Arendt 2021
- Demanding acquisition contexts
  - Cf. Arendt 2018; Heller 2015; Morek 2015
- Translocal communication
  - Cf. Caruso/Hofmann 2018; Stern/Arendt 2021; Kytölä 2015
- Virtual CofP & affinity spaces
3. Digital media & learning

*Online courses for Low German*

1. **Data and methods**: participant perspectives in survey and authentic interactions of online courses
3. **Summary and discussion**: possibilities and limitations of online courses
3. Digital media & learning

Online courses for Low German

1. **Who** are learners?
2. **Why** do they want to learn regional language?
3. What **practices** are established by learners?
4. How do new speakers **evaluate** digital offers?
3. Digital media & learning

Online courses for Low German

- Participant perspective
  - Written survey of 4 courses: (n = 57 p.)
    - Beginners Aug. – Sept. 2020
    - Advanced I. Aug. – Sept. 2020
    - Beginners Feb. – April 2021
    - Advanced I. Feb. – April 2021
  - Quantitative analysis
  - Interaction observation
  - Videos of web seminars (n = 32 w.; t = 1075 min.)
  - CA oriented interaction analysis
3. Digital media & learning

Online courses for Low German

Who?
- Participants from all parts of the M-WP
- translocal communication
- Virtual CofP
3. Digital media & learning

*Online courses for Low German*

**GENDER**
- Female: 64%
- Male: 36%

**AGE**
- 30-60: 56%
- -30: 39%
- 60+: 5%

**PROFESSION**
- Teacher: 46%
- Student: 36%
- Others: 18%

**Typical participant**
- Adult female teachers with predominantly receptive competences
3. Digital media & learning

Online courses for Low German

I think that's a great pity. Low German was my family's mother tongue, but now, almost two generations later, it is almost forgotten. (JP-A)

Overcoming language obstacles, developing knowledge; improving pronunciation. (MK-F)

Try to acquire additional qualifications to make myself more attractive to schools. (CR-A)

Reasons
1. **Social aspects** of belonging (family and living area) and tradition
2. **Individual interests** (improving competencies, interest in languages)
3. **job-related reasons** (vocational school teachers; hotel keeper; school director)
3. Digital media & learning
Online courses for Low German
3. Digital media & learning

Online courses for Low German

Example 1: simulation globale: village meeting (08.07.2019; A8, t: 00:01:39)
L, W: students; US: teacher

019  L: äh:: ((räuspern)) de katten kümmn alleen runner vun de boom un (.)
    äh:: ((clearing throat)) the cats can get down from the tree by themselves and (.)
    wenn dat ierst wind gäben moet (. aber runder kam se: van (. alleen:
    if there has to be wind first (. but they get down by themselves

020  W: aber: dat duurt ok fô:=äh (. ) fünfzig
    but that also takes uh (. fifty

021  W: was heißt [fünfzig]?what does [fifty] mean?

022  L: [föftig]
    [fifty]

023  US: [föftig]
    [fifty]

024  W: ((kurzes Lachen)) föftig jahr: (. bi katten ut mackelburg (2.0)
    ((short laugh)) fifty years with cats from Mecklenburg (2.0)
Evaluation: Online courses …
1. Encouraged to speak
2. Increases declarative and procedural knowledge
3. Provides further impulses
3. Digital media & learning
Online courses for Low German

"Super, little effort, great effect, no stress on arrival" (JK-A)

"I have always dealt with it exactly when I have had enough time." (MW-A)

"This also means that the range is much wider." (CR-A)

Evaluation – Advantages of digital implementation
1. Time and travel cost savings
2. Individualisation of learning processes (through recording)
3. Variety of offers
3. Digital media & learning

Online courses for Low German

• **Who** are learners?
  - adult female teachers with predominantly receptive competences

• **Why** do they want to learn regional language?
  - Social aspects; individual interests; job-related reasons

• **What practices** are established by learners?
  - peer-oriented cooperation and demanding interaction patterns

• **How do new speakers evaluate** digital offers?
  - Encourage to speak & provide further impulses
  - Time and travel cost savings; Individualisation of learning processes
### 3. Digital media & learning

**Online courses for Low German**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possibilities</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Individualisation of learning processes</td>
<td>1. Technical limits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• selection of place and time</td>
<td>• equipment differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• possibility to repeat the lessons</td>
<td>2. Sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Translocal communication</td>
<td>• time limit</td>
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<tr>
<td>• self-chosen learning environment</td>
<td>• competences only stimulable by occasional use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Heterogeneous learning groups</td>
<td>3. Group sizes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• support cooperative learning from each other</td>
<td>• rehearsals only possible in small groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Addressing different skills</td>
<td>• in bigger groups mainly receptive competencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• learning by doing</td>
<td>4. Situation of new speakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• acquisition supportive interactive experiences (encouraging)</td>
<td>• new speakers among themselves</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• acceptance problems not yet eliminated</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
4. Summary

1. For SL teaching and learning, the integration of digital literacy is essential to create digital vitality as a key factor of language maintenance.
2. Digitalization is changing communication practices, which poses specific competence requirements in terms of digital literacy.
3. Digitalization can open up specific learning possibilities for SL, the use of which depends on the learners or new speakers.
4. Conclusion

Changing teaching principles
small languages – big ideas

Digital literacies ➔

Cooperative, connected open teaching & learning methods

Linguistic & didactic expertise by teachers

Digital expertise by students

in SL

in digital tools & practices
4. Conclusion
Changing teaching principles
small languages – big ideas

Source: https://education.minecraftr.net/de-de
Von Harten bedankt!
Literature (selection)


