

Dramatic texts as a source of stigmatization from below

Linguistic stigmatization has mostly been described as a "from above" process. However, stigmatizing grammarians must also have their structures from somewhere: either from their own observation and evaluation of language, or from stereotypes and stigmas that are already circulating within the speech community. Moreover, stigmatizations from the top must also descend to the bottom, where they must be incorporated into a broader discourse of linguistic registers and evaluative techniques.

Because fictional, literary language is typically a standard (written) variety, it frequently exploits the contrast with orality. This frequently involves orality features that are considered characteristic of certain groups of speakers, as we see in classical Greek drama, which clearly influenced modern European literatures.

In German literature we already find passages with fictionalizations of oral varieties in Middle High German texts. As a literary strategy, however, the opposition between written and oral language(s) becomes popular only from the early modern period. Especially within passages of direct speech and dramatic texts, oral varieties are adapted. Such oral variety implementations convey linguistic (and non-linguistic) stereotypes as for example the excessive use of diminution (by means of *-le*) and the apocope in the text of a Swabian peddler in the play "Der Eheteufel auf Reisen" (1822) by the Viennese author Josef Alois Gleich:

Ach du lieber Herrgott, was ist das für ein Lebe-ø , ja, es wäre schon recht, ich wollte auch gern tanze-ø und gute Bißle esse, wenn wir nur auch das Geldle dazu hätte-ø. Aber mein Mann, das ist ein Lump ohnegleiche-ø – den ganzen Tag sitzt er in Branntweinhäusle, und ich kann nicht begreife-ø, wo er auf den Abend das Geldle hernimmt. [Emphasis added]

'Oh, dear God, what kind of life is that, yes, it would be all right, I would also like to dance and eat good bits, if only we had the money for it. But my husband is an incomparable rascal - all day long he sits in a liquor house, and I can't understand where he gets the money for the evening.'

The lecture examines the extent to which such structures of intended orality serve stereotypes (in the definition according to Labov 1972 and Silverstein 2003) and can be used as a source of stigmatization from below using 200 German-language plays from the 16th to the 19th centuries. Selected phenomena (diminution, pronominal adverbs, variation within the VP, and verbal periphrasis) will be investigated and compared to previous studies on stigmatization processes in the history of German (esp. Davies & Langer 2006).

Davies, Winifred V. / Langer, Nils (2006): *The Making of Bad Language*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Labov, William (1972): *Sociolinguistic Patterns*. Conduct and Communication. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Silverstein, Michael (2003): „Indexical Order and the Dialectics of Sociolinguistic Life.“ *Language and Communication* 23 (3): 193–229.