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**An instant standard**  
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## An instant standard

Ulrich Ammon. 2015. *Die Stellung der deutschen Sprache in der Welt*. Berlin/Munich/Boston: Walter de Gruyter.

With *Die Stellung der deutschen Sprache in der Welt*, Ulrich Ammon published an entirely rewritten follow-up to his 1991 standard volume *Die internationale Stellung der deutschen Sprache*. At 1,295 pages, the fairly reasonably priced book (79,95 € / \$112.00 / £72.50) is divided into 12 chapters, about half of them being book-length themselves. This already shows a major strength of Ammon's work, namely its breadth. Where other books cut short, simplify, and merge for (understandable) reasons of sheer extent and cost, Ammon goes into detail by trying to cover virtually every aspect of the diffusion of the German language in the world. He begins with a general introduction in the first chapter, "A. Die deutsche Sprache im Spannungsfeld nationaler Interessen und globaler Kommunikation: Begriffserklärungen und Theorieansätze". The following chapter, "B. 'Deutsche Sprache', 'deutsches Sprachgebiet': Was dazu gehört und was nicht, und die Frage einer deutschen Ethnie", deals with the necessary questions of what (and who) the object of study is thought to be, before describing the number of speakers and "economic strength" of the German language in chapter C.

The study of the German language in specific contexts follows, first as a national language ("D. Deutsch als staatliche Amtssprache"), then as a minority language ("E. Deutsch als Minderheitensprache, aber nicht staatliche Amtssprache"), and finally as a means of communication in the international economic and scientific world ("F. Deutsch in der internationalen Wirtschaftskommunikation", "Deutsch in der internationalen Wissenschaftskommunikation"). The latter two are Ammon's major concerns, and it should be noted that he does not plead for quick and simple solutions. He is, on the contrary, well aware that the "measures of promotion of German as an international scientific language could have unwanted side effects, which are to be examined respectively" (my translation, p. 694). Regarding German as a language of economic communication, he states:

The – albeit marginal – fight against English in the German speaking countries is a quixotry. Instead, it is important to find and maintain an optimal balance between German and English and other foreign languages – for long-term benefit, preferably not only for the German speaking community, but also for all those communities cooperating with it. (my translation, p. 518)

In the following chapters, the examination continues, covering "H. Deutsch in der Diplomatie und in der Europäischen Union (EU)", "I. Die deutsche Sprache im internationalen Tourismus", "J. Deutsch in Medien und Sprachkunst außerhalb des deutschen Sprachgebiets", and "K.

Deutsch als Fremdsprache (DaF) außerhalb des deutschen Amtssprachgebiets". The final chapter, "L. Politik der Förderung der deutschen Sprache in der Welt", gives an overview of German language policies abroad and compares them with those of other countries.

Finally, there is a very extensive bibliography (118 pages!) and glossary, which could have been a bit more detailed, as I will explain below. But one thing the book does not offer is a definitive conclusion or résumé. This doesn't necessarily represent a flaw, since it underlines the book's encyclopedic character, but it leads to very different forms of reception, as two reviews of Ammon's book have shown. Mark L. Louden's review for the *Monatshefte* ends with the following sentence:

Just as one stumbles onto interesting topics while browsing through an encyclopedia or the shelves of a library, readers will be intrigued to discover the manifold ways in which German is truly a global linguistic player in the twenty-first century. (Louden 2017: 675)

Elke Donalies' however, whose equally favorable review is published in *Linguistische Berichte*, provides a different reading:

The euphoria of the initially cited resume is beautiful, but not true, since the standing of the German language in the world is indeed at risk. Thus, Ammon's book is a fact-based call to all of us to take more, and – most of all – the right action for the German language. (Donalies 2016: 249)

This goes to show that Ammon's book not only allows, but in fact calls for divergent readings, interpretations and further work given the huge collection of information he provides.

Other reviewers (e.g. Marc Pierce) already noted that the extension of the book is both its greatest strength and its biggest flaw, since it "covers too many topics, and as such is sometimes simultaneously too detailed and not detailed enough" (Pierce 2015: 293). This is surely a valid objection, and Pierce offers some specific examples, to which I would add the following (minor) details: On page 75, Ammon mentions 'super diversity', describing the term as "probably coined by Jan Blommaert" (my translation). Blommaert's importance for this field of study is beyond question, but the term is usually associated with Steven Vertovec (e.g. 2007), who – according to the bibliography – isn't cited at all throughout the book. Furthermore, Ammon dedicates little attention to media, and only one subchapter to "Vokalmusik" – two large subfields of language dispersion, which would surely require chapters, if not volumes of their own. As for vocal music, especially a deeper look into rap and both its culture-merging and culture-strengthening effects (cf. Androutsopoulos 2003, Pennycook 2009) would have been an interesting read. Ammon mentions rap music at least once (p. 85), but doesn't list it

in the glossary. As mentioned before, a more extensive list would have been a great help in dealing with the book. And while the entry “rap” might be a bit too specific, a complete list of all countries and states dealt with in the book would have surely been useful. It is, after all, a book about German in the world.

Needless to say, the meticulous work and great detail provided in the book outweigh the relatively insignificant flaws mentioned here. Especially the initially mentioned breadth is impressive: In trying to cover every aspect of the role German plays globally, Ammon dedicates a whole chapter to the German language in tourism – a form of language contact often neglected within linguistic studies. Similarly, his chapter about “German as a minority language, but not official language” (chapter E., my translation) includes ‘expats’ alongside what Ammon calls “pensioner-colonies” on the Spanish island of Mallorca. This goes to show that this book is not only a standard work of reference for any student and researcher interested in the German language and its global standing, but it even offers new starting points for research one might not have previously considered or deemed worthy of study. Ammon’s book is therefore both an encyclopedic work of reference and – in the best sense of the word – a practical tool for researchers. It is up to us to make the best use of it.

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