

„The representation of dialects in contemporary German and Japanese prose through the lens of language ideologies“

Summary

The processes of linguistic standardization in Germany and Japan began as early as the 19th century, yet dialects continue to play a significant role in both countries. However, their social perception has not been sufficiently studied. This dissertation aims to identify and analyze language ideologies reflected in the literary representations of four dialects—Bavarian, Upper Saxon, Kansai, and Tōhoku—in contemporary German and Japanese prose (1980–2024).

The introductory section consists of two chapters. The first discusses existing research approaches to the representation of dialects in literature, including narratological, stylistic, and sociolinguistic perspectives, while also introducing key concepts such as dialect, language ideology, and language policy. The second chapter focuses on the linguistic situation in Germany and Japan, describing the history of standardization, language policy, and the role of dialects in both countries, as well as the dialects analysed in this study.

Chapters three, four, five, and six contain an analysis of the representations of Bavarian, Upper Saxon, Kansai, and Tōhoku dialects in the examined literary texts. These chapters explore the socio-demographic profiles of dialect speakers, the contexts in which the dialects are used, their portrayal in specific literary works, and the reasons why authors choose to incorporate these dialects.

The final chapter summarise the conducted analyses and compares their findings on the social perception of these dialects, including differences between high- and low-prestige varieties, as well as similarities and contrasts in their representation in German and Japanese prose.

The study's findings confirm that in all analysed literary texts, dialects are portrayed as marked varieties contrasting with the neutral standard language. The writers often rely on familiar associations tied to specific dialects, with lower-prestige varieties being more often stigmatized or exoticized. In Japanese literature, dialects receive more attention than in German prose, which may indicate a shift in language attitudes influenced by the ideology of anti-standardization.