

Re: Plausibility Check

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2006-08/msg00611.html>

- *From:* phoglund@xxxxxx
 - *Date:* 27 Jul 2006 15:10:58 -0700
-

Peter T. Daniels wrote:

phoglund@xxxxxx wrote:

Peter T. Daniels kirjoitti:

me wrote:

Peter T. Daniels wrote:

me wrote:

Peter T.
Daniels
wrote:

Languages
just
don't
"converge,"

You
presumably
mean
merge:

No, OP proposed that the world's languages would "converge" if they were all written with a common phonetic alphabet.

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OK; I thought he meant to say that dialects of one language (eg. Serbo–Croat) would merge if they didn't have separate scripts.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Language_merger

It has been proposed by some linguists that actual merger was the source of what would ultimately become the modern German language, arising as a homogenized dachsprache of several regional German dialects. This process, which took place over a period of several centuries, was neither truly natural nor truly artificial. What began as a formal language of the clergy and aristocracy developed progressively into an everyday spoken

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language,
and has now
nearly
completely
displaced
the original
dialectal
forms of
German.

And the mountains of
evidence provided by
wikipedia for this assertion?

They haven't given any evidence that this
has been proposed by some
linguists. Has it never been proposed by any
linguist?

I'm not a Germanicist, but looking at it again, it might be a
reference
to Martin Luther's creation of a common literary language
out of a
variety of spoken languages for his Bible translation.

Well, the very concept of a language merger is somewhat unclear.

There is no such thing as "language merger." Neither I nor O.P. used
the term; it was Ranjit's, aka "me."

The discussion was of "convergence," and I speculated that what might
have been meant was the convergence of dialects into a literary
standard seen in Luther.

Well, I wouldn't call it convergence exactly. Literary standards tend
to have a life of their own, and develop quite independently of spoken
dialects. You as an Arabicist should know this better than anyone. The
genitive case of literary German is not exactly weakening, although it
has entirely disappeared from dialects, in fact it was dying out or had
died out when Luther created his written style. He kept the genitive
and the simple past of the earlier written styles, he didn't abolish
them.

So, the thing that has happened and is still happening is not the
convergence of dialects, but their disappearance. They have largely

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been ousted by what is called "regionale Umgangssprachen", i.e. regional colloquials. These colloquials are definitely not the result of dialects converging into or towards the standard, but of dialects having been ousted by a colloquial form of Hochdeutsch influenced by the regional dialect.

The regional colloquials are very different from real German dialects, which should become clear enough if you ever hear or read Luxembourgish: it has of course been influenced by standard German, but it has only two cases – nominative and dative (accusative has merged with nominative entirely, or rather the other way round) – and not every verb has a simple past form, as perfect tense is usually preferred. (Modal auxiliary verbs do have a simple past or Präteritum, though.) It uses "geben" (or the local variant of it) instead of "werden", and has not adopted "werden", and you never see genitive in Luxembourgish texts. It has a "für etwas zu tun" construction, which does not exist in literary German, and this construction shows no signs of weakening, but neither has it been adopted into any varieties of standard German, although it exists in other West Middle German dialects such as Kölsch (Cologne dialect aka Riparian or Ripuaric). When I was in my teens learning German, I used to read Heinrich Böll, that quintessentially Cologne author, but I have never found the "für etwas zu tun" construction in anything written by him, not even in the most colloquial passages.

To sum up: literary German is essentially a constructed language, there is a sharp and tangible distinction between even the most colloquial and regional forms of standard German and traditional countryside dialects, and if people in Germany now speak less dialectally than earlier, it is not the result of convergence – the dialect has simply died out and given way to a more or less imperfect, simplified or colloquial variety of the standard language.

Personally, I don't think it exactly catches the point of what Luther actually did. As I see it, he took an existing literary tradition – that of Gemeines Deutsch – and made it more accessible by widening its dialect base and by making its syntax more colloquial. But was this a merger? I don't think so. It was rather a recodification of the written standard.

And what is happening with German dialects, is definitely not a merger. Rather, the "genuine" (whatever THAT means) dialects are being ousted by the literary language in forms that vary somewhat, due to the influence of the substratum.

And before you ask: yes, I majored in German.

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Yet mostly you pontificate on Celtic.

It might have something to do with the fact that I am fluent in Irish.

And you replied to a message that is more than two weeks old.

Is it illegal?

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