

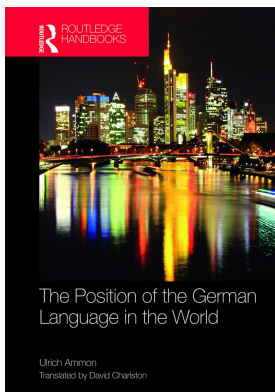
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The Position of the German Language in the World

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Speaker numbers and economic strength of German

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SPEAKER NUMBERS AND ECONOMIC STRENGTH OF GERMAN

1. Current speaker numbers (numerical strength) of German

Speaker numbers, or the “numerical strength” of languages, are generally cited as a parameter for measuring “large” or “small” languages. For many experts, e.g. Abram de Swaan (2001: 27–33), they represent a key factor and a significant indicator for the global position of languages. Opportunities for contact with a language increase in proportion with rising speaker numbers. Especially in the case of international contacts, experiencing the “communication potential” of a language (Ch. A.7), can motivate people to learn it, thereby further boosting opportunities for use.

However, as Heinz Kloss noted (1974b; also Lieberson 1982), the number of speakers, especially native speakers, is not a reliable indicator for the international or interlingual use of a language (Ch. A.3). This is evident from the relatively weak international position of many numerically strong languages, e.g. Bengali with considerably more than 200 m native speakers (211 m, including second-language speakers, according to *Ethnologue* 2005: 320). However, the existence of a positive correlation between the rank ordering of languages by speaker number and their ranking as international languages is beyond doubt, at least with numerically strong languages. The only notable exception is the constructed language Esperanto (Sakaguchi 1987, 1989). It has very few speakers, but they often communicate internationally. Estimates of the speaker number, including the very few native speakers, vary from 500,000 to 2 m (de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Esperanto).

When considering speaker numbers, it is therefore expedient to distinguish between speaker types: primarily, native speakers, second-language speakers (SL speakers) and foreign-language speakers (FL speakers). The latter have learnt the language outside its language territory and can still speak it (Ch. A.3). In the statistics, it is often unclear whether only native speakers have been included or SL speakers as well; FL speakers are generally not included.

Apart from constructed languages, native speakers represent the starting capital for the development of a language into an international language. Other factors being equal, a high native-speaker number motivates people to learn the language as a foreign language. For example, compare the larger European languages (English, French, German, etc.) with the smaller languages (e.g. Czech, Danish, Greek, etc.). With larger languages, learning is more “worthwhile” in cost-benefit terms and because of the increased communication potential. Additional SL- or FL

speakers therefore boost development into an international language. FL speakers may, in fact, be crucial for its international position. For example, English enjoys a dominant international position in the EU, although it has fewer native speakers than German, and in the world, in spite of its smaller number of native speakers than Chinese (Graddol 1999, 2006). Such examples confirm the different relevance of native speakers, SL speakers and FL speakers and the need to keep these figures separate. Mere FL learners of a language should be included, not only because it is difficult to distinguish them from real FL speakers, but because “mere” learners can motivate non-learners to learn, even if they themselves do not have and may never reach useful language competence.

However, it is easier to define speaker and learner types than it is to register them statistically. Uncertainties arise from the almost unavoidable reliance on self-assessment, or whether a subsequently learned language which is now mastered better than the native language should be counted as a native language, perhaps a second native language, or even as the only actually mastered language. Difficulties also occur with self-assessment of competence levels as a means for distinguishing genuine FL speakers from mere learners. Collections of data in different regions can also present different problems. For example, for learners of German, some reliable worldwide data is available (e.g. Netzwerk Deutsch 2010; Foreign Office, Bulletin 610, 2015); Ch. L.3.2); but, for German-speakers, similarly reliable data is only available for limited regions, such as the EU and adjoining countries (defined by self-assessment of ability to converse in German; e.g. the *Eurobarometers special*); also Ch. H.4.4). Native speakers and SL speakers can be determined with reasonable accuracy in the official-language territory of German (Ch. D), but this is not so easy for German (speaking) minorities (Ch. E), not to mention the small groups distributed worldwide, the “German diaspora” (Kloss 1935; Ammon 1991a: 91). It is therefore expedient to estimate total speaker numbers for the German language subdivided into the following three groups:

- (i) German native speakers and German SL speakers in the official-language territory of German (in central Europe) (Ch. B.4 and D);
- (ii) German native speakers and if possible German SL speakers in the German (speaking) minorities outside the official-language territory of German (Ch. E);
- (iii) German FL speakers including all German learners worldwide, former and current, with useful competence level (Ch. C.1, end) – although distinguishing “competent speakers” from mere learners is an almost impossible task.

Turning first to (i): German native speakers and SL speakers in the official-language territory of German. Even registering these figures can become flawed with errors in validity and reliability (Crystal 1985; Graddol 1999; Haarmann 2002a: 21–29; Coulmas 2005a: 151–157). Census figures with representative data provide a reference point, but it is often precisely speaker numbers which are missing, not to mention data differentiated by speaker type. In 1872, the first International Statistical Congress in St Petersburg recommended that censuses should register at least the “language spoken in normal conversation” as one of the 12 significant features of the population (no. 8 of the list; de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volksz%C3%A4hlung). However, in many censuses, language is not even mentioned or the questions are formulated vaguely and vary between time periods and countries, which hampers comparison. Limitations on validity and reliability of data because of self-assessment are an additional factor (de Vries 2005).

Censuses in the German-speaking countries and the German-language territory (Ch. B.4) also suffer from these defects. The 2011 census for Germany contains not even one explicit question about language. The evaluation of this census therefore also contained no relevant

information. Census information from other states with German as the official language differs with regard to knowledge of German. To achieve an overview, it would be advisable to divide the population comprehensively into citizens, naturalised foreigners and non-naturalised foreigners with a “permanent residence permit” – as provided in Germany under the Residence Act of 1 January 2005 for citizens from non-EU states; EU citizens have this permanent permit anyway (www.bundesauslaenderbeauftragte.de/aufenthaltsberechtigung.html). In the following, I refer more generally, not only with reference to Germany, to foreigners with a permanent residence permit. It is often only foreigners defined in this or in a similar way who are included in censuses.

For simplicity, in states or parts of states with German as the sole official language (e.g. the Sorbian area), I count all citizens as German-speakers and even as German native speakers. I also assume that in minority regions, in which German is an official language alongside the minority language, all minority-language speakers will also classify as German-speakers, – possibly with German as a second native language. By way of partial compensation, I count all foreigners as non-native speakers, with the larger fraction (according to the criteria explained below) as SL speakers of German and the smaller as non-German-speakers. The distinction between German speakers and non-speakers also remains unspecified because of lack of data. It is only relevant for SL speakers who might achieve competence level B1 of the Common European Reference Framework as a minimum level for German-speakers (“can converse simply and coherently about familiar topics and areas of personal interest” – as stated in the summary). This is often required in Germany for naturalisation (for criticism, see Li 2014).

The following considerations relate initially to Germany (Ch. D.2.1), then to the other states and parts of states with German as the national official language (Ch. D.2.2–D.3.2), and finally to the German (speaking) minorities without official status of their language (Ch. E). Before going any further, I must say that the findings on foreigners’ knowledge of German do not entirely agree with the numerous, alarmist claims; on the contrary, they are largely positive. “Second-generation immigrants almost all have a good knowledge of German” (W. Werner 2005: 11). “Competent use of their German skills in different everyday situations [. . .] is relatively unproblematic for most migrant groups” (Haug 2008: 6). According to one representative telephone survey (n = 1000) in North-Rhine Westphalia in 2011, 98.9% of third-generation Turkish (im)migrants classify their knowledge of German as very good or good; even in the second generation, the figure is 86.3%. The figures for first-generation migrants, who arrived during their lifetime, are lower (43.6%), but the high figures for those who have grown up in Germany indicate an upward trend (Sauer 2012: 5). In this context, Turkish migrants are among the most integration-resistant (Haug 2008: 6). However, most have come to realise that success at school correlates very positively with knowledge of German, especially with German as family language, and this is confirmed by the “Second Integration Report of the Federal Office for Migration, Refugees and Integration” (Engels/ Köller/ Koopmans/ Höhne 2011: 157–159).

Based on these findings, at least the majority of foreigners with a permanent residence permit can be classified as SL speakers of German. For Germany, I have estimated a somewhat optimistic proportion of 90% of foreigners (still with a permanent residence permit) as SL speakers of German. A figure of 95% for Turkish people may apply to the next generation but would be an overestimate for the present generation; however, other foreigners are often more prepared to integrate. Accordingly, if 100% of citizens are counted as German native speakers, and 90% of foreigners as SL speakers of German, the total number of people with a knowledge of German in Germany is calculated as: Σ German-speakers = 100% citizens + 90% foreigners.

I am also guided by this formula for the other states and parts of states with German as the predominant native language and sole national or regional official language – i.e. Austria,

Liechtenstein and East Belgium. In states or parts of states with German as the widespread native language and one of several official languages, I adopt the same approach, allocating the foreigners in proportion to the German native speakers (Switzerland, South Tyrol).

For Germany (Ch. D), the following figures were derived from information from the Federal Office for Statistics at the end of 2011: a total population of 81,843,743, of which 7,409,753 foreigners, i.e. 74,433,990 citizens. According to the considerations above, the latter count as German native speakers. 90% of the foreigners, i.e. 6,668,778 people count as German SL speakers (the proportion of foreigners with a permanent residence permit still unclear). Native speakers + SL speakers then amount to 81,102,768 German-speakers (www.destatis.de/DE/Publikationen/Thematisch/Bevoelkerung/Bevoelkerungstand/VorlBevoelkerungsfortschreibung5124103119004.pdf?).

For Austria (Ch. D.2.2), the available data justify the assumption that around 90% of foreigners have knowledge of German. This has been described as “certainly a very cautious estimate” (Rudolf de Cillia, email, 28 August 2012). In the 2001 census, only 2.8% of the Austrian population indicated that they speak no German in daily communication; by contrast, 88.6% speak only German, and 8.6% German together with one other language (de Cillia 2012). The proportion of foreigners in Austria in 2012 was around 11.5% of the population (Statistik Austria *inter alia* 2012: www.integrationsfonds.at/zahlen_und_fakten/statistisches_jahrbuch_2012). In fact, the 2.8% non-users of German constitute 24% of the foreigners, so that only 76% of foreigners would be German users; however, the proportion of potential German users, probably even in 2001 and certainly today, may be estimated as higher. At the end of 2011, the total population of Austria was around 8,420,900 (www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/bevoelkerung/index.html). With the percentages named for 2012, that would be 7,452,497 citizens and German native speakers, and 868,403 foreigners and 781,563 German SL speakers.

The Statistics Office in Liechtenstein (Ch. D.2.3) quoted a total population of 36,476 (2010: 36,149) with a proportion of foreigners of 33.3% (www.liv.li/pdf-llv-as-bevoelkerungsstatistik-vorlaeufige_ergebnisse_31.12.2011). For 2010, it is claimed that the “one third of the population [...] of foreign nationality” are “predominantly Swiss, Austrian and German nationals” (Regional Administration Principality of Liechtenstein: www.llv.li/llv-as-bevoelkerung). I therefore classify 90% of the total population as German native speakers (32,824 people), and of the assumed 10% of foreigners from non-German-speaking countries, 90% as German SL speakers (3,283 people).

The German-speaking community in East Belgium (Ch. D.3.1) had a total population of 73,119 people in 2006. Of these, 80.9% were Belgians and 14.9% immigrant Germans, but only 4.3% were foreigners from other countries (www.kathonrw.de/uploads/media/7._Die_Deutschsprachige_Gemeinschaft_Belgiens.pdf). Since German is the sole official language, the Belgians, like the immigrant Germans, can also be counted as German native speakers (95.8% = 70,048 people), and 90% of the other foreigners (3,144) as German SL speakers (2,830 people). This gives a total of 72,878 German-speakers.

For Switzerland (Ch. D.2.4), I am grateful to Christoph Freymond (Deputy Sectional Director in the Regional Federal Office for Statistics) for figures according to which, in the last census of 2010, 65.6% of the population declared German as the “main language”, and a further 6.9% declared German as the language which they speak “at home and at work/in education”. Clarifying terms, Freymond explained, “In normal speech, the main language [...] is what we call our native language”. Accordingly, at least 72.5% of the Swiss population speak German, of which 65.6% can be counted as native speakers and 6.9% as SL speakers (1.3% of the native speakers do not use German in the named situations). The continuous resident population of Switzerland in 2010 was 7,870,134 (Federal Office for Statistics: Leporello_Bevölkerung_2010_D_web.de).

Of these, as per the data, 5,705,847 were German-speakers with 5,162,808 native speakers and 543,039 SL speakers.

For Bolzano, South Tyrol in Italy (Ch. D.3.2), the Regional Institute for Statistics gives the total population for year-end 2011 as 51,750, with 8.7% foreigners (www.provinz.bz.it/astat/news/news_d.asp?cate_id=9737). Of these, 467,228 are citizens and 44,522 foreigners. Among the citizens, language groups are subdivided as follows: German native speakers 69.41% (324,303 people), Italian native speakers 26.06% (121,760) and Ladin native speakers 4.3% (30,091) (de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethnischer_Proporz_%28S%C3%BCdtirol%29). The Italian and Ladin native speakers learn German as a school subject. However, it is not known how many of these can subsequently speak and use German, so I have no option but to estimate 50% in each case as SL speakers. This would amount to 75,926 people. Regarding the foreigners, as for the other regions, I assume 90% knowledge of at least one of the three languages and subdivide this between the native-speaker proportions. This gives, for German: 37,812 SL speakers and, together with the SL speakers among the 75,926 Italian and Ladin native speakers, a total of 113,738 German SL speakers. Together with the 324,303 German native speakers, that makes 438,041 German-speakers.

For Luxembourg (Ch. D.2.5), the “Institut national de la statistique” gives a (rounded) total resident population for 2011 of 511,800, of which 221,300 foreigners and of these, in turn, 12,100 are Germans, that is, 290,500 citizens (www.statistiques.public.lu/catalogue-publications/luxembourg-en-chiffres/Luxemburg-zahlen.pdf). All the citizens can be considered German SL speakers. Of the foreigners (minus Germans), I again, out of necessity, count half as German SL speakers, i.e. 104,600, which gives 395,100 German SL speakers with the 12,100 Germans as German native speakers. All in all, this amounts to 407,200 German-speakers.

Table C.1–1 provides an overview of the findings so far.

By contrast with previous alarmist warnings, the outlook for the future seems more like limited growth rather than a decline. However, the proportion of German native speakers may decrease while the proportion of German SL speakers may increase, because in all the states or parts of states considered here, the birth-rate for the citizen population has been falling while immigration is increasing, so that immigration now exceeds the decline in population (caused by falling birth rates) in all states with German as the national official language.

Whether the number of German-speakers will rise in the longer term depends on the power of linguistic integration in the receiving language communities. It is possible that linguistic integration will be weakened as postnational tendencies and globalisation are intensified (compare Ch. A.8). Immigrants may increasingly retain English as a lingua franca, and

Table C.1–1 German (native and SL) speakers in the official-language territory of German

| | <i>Native speakers</i> | <i>SL speakers</i> | <i>German speakers total</i> |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|
| Germany | 74,433,990 | 6,668,778 | 81,102,768 |
| Austria | 7,452,497 | 781,563 | 8,234,060 |
| Liechtenstein | 32,824 | 3,283 | 36,107 |
| Switzerland | 5,162,808 | 543,039 | 5,705,847 |
| Italy (Bolzano, South Tyrol) | 324,303 | 113,738 | 438,041 |
| Belgium (German-speaking community) | 70,048 | 2,830 | 72,878 |
| Luxembourg | 12,100 | 395,100 | 407,200 |
| Total | 87,488,570 | 8,508,331 | 95,956,901 (≈96 m) |

this could succeed in line with the citizen population acquiring ever more comprehensive knowledge of English (Ch. A.5; Wagener 2012). 4.1% of the stable resident population of Switzerland currently speaks English at home ([Swiss] Federal Office for Statistics: media bulletin 19 June 2012).

Turning now to the next part of our inventory (ii): German native speakers and possibly SL speakers outside the official-language territory of German (compare Ch. E). SL speakers can always be incorporated within reasonably intact native-speaker networks. Gauging such networks by identifying and counting the actual German-speakers worldwide would, however, be a major research project because the methodological problems named previously even for the official-language territory of German would increase exponentially. With language minorities outside the German official-language territory, speaker numbers may be subject to interest-dependent distortions, because funding by the home government or the German-speaking countries is often dependent on size. Anyone who has ever visited “German” minorities – as I have e.g. in Pennsylvania (USA: Amish), in Rio Grande do Sul (Southern Brazil) and in the Kaliningrad region (Oblast Kaliningrad in Russia) will know how difficult it is to identify real speakers of German. However, I have at my disposal only the available numerical data, much of which is presumably inflated.

The data listed includes only nations in which German is not a national official language (Ch. D). Moreover, the following data sources were removed:

- From Born/ Dickgiesser 1989: Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, because of dissolution of these states;
- From “Deutsche Sprache” [German language] in Wikipedia: Greece, Britain, (“United Kingdom”), Ireland, Netherlands, Spain, Thailand and Turkey, and from *Ethnologue* 2009: Mozambique, Philippines, Puerto Rico and United Arab Emirates, because there were no real minorities (for this term see Ch. E.1), but rather expatriates (contract Germans) or seasonal or border dwellers.

The varieties of Hutterite, Pennsylvanian and Mennonite German, Silesian and “*Unserdeutsch*” (Rabaul Creole German), the latter, with only about 100 speakers, being named for Australia and Papua New Guinea (*Ethnologue* 2009: 581, 640), are included in the figures for German. The total in the last column (7.493 m) must not be understood as an average of the three totals before it in the same row, otherwise its value would be lower. Instead, the averages from all rows were totalled and averaged and, in fact, on the assumption that each of the three sources has overlooked one or other minority but not added any.

The uncertainty of numerical estimates of German minorities is clearly articulated in the Born/Dickgiesser text, which discusses the diversity of the sources on which it is based. This can be seen especially in the numerical ranges for many states, e.g. Brazil or Hungary. Born/Dickgiesser had no figures for German native speakers in Poland (1989: 161f.), but only for people recognised by the Polish government as “indigenous” and by the Federal Government at the time as German citizens (former Germans). Born/ Dickgiesser expressly relate the figures for Canada, Mexico (and the Soviet Union at that time) only to German native speakers (1989: 15f). The naming of their other categories varies according to source: “German speakers” (Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Chile, Denmark, Namibia, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela), “German-speaking” (Peru), “speakers of German” (Brazil), “German as home language” (Australia, USA), “German as home or conversational language” (South Africa), “passive knowledge of German” (France), “German national/naturalised of German-speaking origin”, “from Germany and Austria”, “German” and “of German nationality” (Ecuador, Israel, Colombia, Romania,

Table C.1–2 Native- and SL speakers of German outside official-language territory of German in m

| | <i>Born/Dick-giesser 1989</i> | <i>Ethnologue 2009</i> | <i>“Deutsche Sprache” in Wikipedia</i> | <i>Average</i> |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|--|----------------|
| Argentina | 0.300 | 0.400 | 0.330–0.350 | 0.347 |
| Australia | 0.109 | 0.135 | 0.200 | 0.148 |
| Belize | 0.003 | 0.069 | n.d. | 0.036 |
| Bolivia | 0.011 | 0.160 | n.d. | 0.086 |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina | - | Named, n.f. | n.d. | - |
| Brazil | 0.500–1.500 | 1.506 | 0.850–0.900 | 1.127 |
| Chile | 0.020–0.035 | 0.035 | 0.020 | 0.028 |
| Denmark | 0.020 | 0.026 | 0.020 | 0.022 |
| Dominican Republic | n.d. | n.d. | 0.030 | 0.030 |
| Ecuador | 0.002–0.003 | 0.032 | n.d. | 0.018 |
| Estonia | - | 0.001 | 0.002 | 0.002 |
| France (Alsace-Lorraine) | 1.200 | 1.500 | 1.200 | 1.300 |
| Israel | 0.096 | 0.200 | 0.200 | 0.165 |
| Canada | 0.439 | 0.641 | 0.438 | 0.506 |
| Kazakhstan | - | 0.050 | 0.358 | 0.204 |
| Kyrgyzstan | - | 0.101 | 0.020 | 0.061 |
| Croatia | - | 0.003 | 0.003 | 0.003 |
| Columbia | 0.010–0.012 | n.d. | n.d. | 0.011 |
| Latvia | - | n.d. | 0.003 | 0.003 |
| Lithuania | - | n.d. | 0.003 | 0.003 |
| Mexico | 0.050 | 0.040 | 0.080–0.090 | 0.058 |
| Moldavia | - | 0.007 | n.d. | 0.007 |
| Namibia | 0.020 | 0.023 | 0.030 | 0.024 |
| Paraguay | 0.125 | 0.038 | 0.166 | 0.110 |
| Peru | 0.005 | n.d. | n.d. | 0.005 |
| Philippines | n.d. | 0.001 | n.d. | 0.001 |
| Poland | 1.100 | 0.523 | 0.150 | 0.591 |
| Puerto Rico | n.d. | 0.001 | n.d. | 0.001 |
| Rumania | 0.200–0.220 | 0.045 | 0.045 | 0.100 |
| Russia | - | 0.647 | 0.862 | 0.756 |
| Serbia | - | n.d. | 0.005 | 0.005 |
| Slovakia | - | 0.005 | 0.006 | 0.006 |
| Slovenia | - | 0.002 | 0.002 | 0.002 |
| South Africa | 0.041 | 0.012 | 0.300–0.500 | 0.151 |
| Tajikistan | - | Named, n.f. | n.d. | - |
| Czech Republic | - | 0.039 | 0.030 | 0.035 |
| Ukraine | - | 0.038 | 0.035 | 0.037 |
| Hungary | 0.220 | 0.033–0.088 | 0.035–0.200 | 0.133 |
| Uruguay | 0.008–0.009 | 0.029 | n.d. | 0.019 |
| USA | 1.610 | 1.488 | 1.100 | 1.395 |
| Uzbekistan | - | 0.040 | n.d. | 0.040 |
| Venezuela | 0.025 | Named, n.f. | n.d. | 0.025 |
| Totals | 6.114–7.153 | 7.870–7.925 | 6.523–6.968 | 7.493 |

Note: “n.d.” = no data; “n.f.” = no figures

(Sources: Born/ Dickgiesser 1989; *Ethnologue* 2009; “Deutsche Sprache” in Wikipedia: de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deutsche_Sprache: 17f.)

Czechoslovakia, Hungary). My reinterpretation into German-speakers probably leads to an overestimate of the figures, primarily in the last-named categories. It should also be noted that there are smaller groups of native speakers of German in other countries (“*Streudeutschtum*” [scattered German (ethnicity)]; Kloss 1935), which are not included here.

The estimated total number of native speakers and SL speakers of German of 103.5 m is obtained by adding the figures from Tables C.1–1 and C.1–2 (96 m in the official-language territory of German +7.5 m outside).

In the often cited sources for corresponding figures, the data are somewhat lower, – at least for the most recent period, perhaps even too low – e.g. for the total number of German native speakers: around 92 m (*Fischer Weltalmanach* 1990: 758; Finkenstaedt/ Schröder 1990: 14); 100, 95 and 90 m (*Ethnologue* 2000, 2005 and 2009), and 101 m (Haarmann 2002a: 33). Haarmann presumably includes SL speakers, at least for Germany (ibid: 74). In *Ethnologue* (2000, 2005, 2009), figures for German SL speakers are also named expressly, and in fact in all three editions at a consistent 28 m. Accordingly, the figures for native speaker + SL speakers add up to, respectively, 128, 123 and 118 m. All in all, this results in a declining trend in view of the shrinking number of native speakers.

It is difficult enough to determine figures for native speakers and SL speakers of languages, especially large languages. However, the difficulties are considerably greater in the case of FL speakers. As suggested at the start of the chapter, this does not mean FL learners. On the contrary, it is those people who have learnt the language as a foreign language and a) still master it, but b) have not become SL speakers or native speakers. To explain b) with an example: a Turkish woman who learnt German as a foreign language (GFL) as a child in Turkey and now lives in Germany, is no longer counted in the group of German FL speakers but is a German SL speaker. She will also be registered as such through our data collection method in the separate data for the official-language territory of Germany.

It is much harder to deal with criterion a) of adequate competence in German, on the basis of which German-speakers could be distinguished from non-speakers of German. This demarcation by specifying a minimum competence, is therefore even more urgent than in the case of SL speakers, because considerably larger numbers and corresponding possibilities for distortion are involved. For the dichotomy into speakers and non-speakers, with regard to SL speakers, I have already suggested competence level B1 of the Common European Reference Framework (“can converse simply and coherently on familiar topics and areas of personal interest”). To avoid inconsistency, this same competence level should also be used to define FL speakers. I shall resist giving further details, which are not relevant for the present, practical purpose of counting speakers. Regarding the worldwide figures, which concern us here, it is not currently possible to determine representative levels of competence of German FL (GFL) learners, especially former learners.

The following overall figures are totalled from all states offering GFL tuition. Since they often originate from official school and university statistics, they can, cautiously, be evaluated as reliable (for data quality, see also Ch. K.7).

Figures for GFL learners worldwide are available for the following years:

- 1982/ 83: around 16.8 m (precisely 16,836,172 = total of the columns for the different types of learners in *Report* 1985: 46f);
- 1995: 17.5 m (precisely 17,476,665 = total of the columns for the different types of learners in the Goethe Institute 2000: last page, no page numbers);
- 2000: around 20.2 m (precisely 20,167,616; StADaF 2005: 15);
- 2005: around 16.7 m (precisely 16,718,701; StADaF 2005: 15);

- 2010: around 14.5 m (precisely 14,500,940) (Netzwerk Deutsch + supplements shown to me by the Goethe Institute);
- 2015: 15,455,452 (Foreign Office, Bulletin 6010:16).

A helpful reference point for actual GFL speakers (from competence level B1 of the Common European Reference Framework) could be provided by estimates of how many current or former GFL learners use German regularly to any extent. But, to my knowledge, the only estimate was made many years ago. It is based on annual reports from overseas branches of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1982/ 83. Its reliability is doubtful because of lack of information on the method of data collection. The figure cited is around 40 m (*Report* 1985: 47; see also Witte 8 July 1987).

The upper limit for the required overall figure of GFL speakers is derived from the global sum of current GFL learners and former GFL learners who are still alive today. On one hand, one could start with an estimated average life expectancy, say 65 years (in 2008, the average life expectancy worldwide was around 68.9 years: [de. Wikipedia.org/wiki/Lebenserwartung](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lebenserwartung)). On the other hand, the average start of learning should perhaps be set at 15 years of age, providing a period of 50 years for the totality of GFL learners to be included, extending from 1965 to 2015. From the learner figures named above, a yearly average of around 17 m learners would thus be obtained for this period (assuming learner figures similar to 1982/ 83 dating back to 1965). Now, what is still required is an average learning period, which could perhaps be set at around three years, so that the period of 50 years would accommodate around 17 generations of learners. With 17 generations, we would have a total figure of approximately 289 m former and current GFL learners still living today (with 25 generations: 425 m learners). If a certain reality value for today can still be ascribed to the earlier estimated figure for users, and therefore speakers, of German of 40 m, and if this is assumed to be a lower limit because of the subsequent, higher learner figures, the numerical ranges for worldwide GFL speakers – which are now fictional rather than speculative – would be:

- 40–145 m (taking half of the 289 m learners as speakers); or
- 40–289 m (quite unrealistically taking all learners as speakers).

If the numbers of native speakers estimated in this manner, including SL speakers (Table C.2–1), and our speculative figures for GFL speakers (40–145 m) are added, the following total figure for speakers of German (native speakers, SL speakers and FL speakers) is obtained as ranging from 143.5 to 248.5 m.

In this context, the total number of learners is not included. However, “mere” GFL learners, who are not German-speakers, because they have never reached an adequate level of competence or have lost it again, should also be considered. In fact, these are people who have become more familiar with German-speaking countries, their language and culture than people who have never learnt German. They thus represent a certain potential for international contact which could be worth investigating for German-speaking countries and their inhabitants. An order of magnitude of around 300 m still-living former + current learners is therefore not unreasonable. Thinking about these people, who have already had contact with German language and culture, and at least selectively considering them where possible, also falls within the sustainable promotion of the global position of German (Ch. K).

2. Speaker numbers of German compared with other languages

The following comparison is based on existing data. Ch. C.1 showed how difficult it is to determine speaker numbers, especially with larger languages. The total figures for German, which

Table C.2-1 Speaker numbers for German compared with other languages (in m)

| Muller 1964 | | Culbert 1977 | | Ethnologue 1984 | | Comrie 1987 | | |
|-------------|------------|--------------|------------|-----------------|------------|-------------|------------|--------|
| 1. | Chinese | 515 | Chinese | 821 | Chinese | 700 | Chinese | 11,000 |
| 2. | English | 265 | English | 369 | English | 391 | English | 300 |
| 3. | Hindi+Urdu | 185 | Hindi+Urdu | 278 | Spanish | 211 | Spanish | 280 |
| 4. | Spanish | 145 | Russian | 246 | Hindi+Urdu | 194 | Russian | 215 |
| 5. | Russian | 135 | Spanish | 225 | Russian | 154 | Hindi+Urdu | 200 |
| 6. | German | 100 | Arabic | 134 | Portuguese | 120 | Indonesian | 200 |
| 7. | Japanese | 95 | Portuguese | 133 | German | 119 | Arabic | 150 |
| 8. | Arabic | 90 | Bengali | 131 | Arabic | 117 | Portuguese | 150 |
| 9. | Bengali | 85 | German | 120 | Japanese | 117 | Bengali | 145 |
| 10. | Portuguese | 85 | Japanese | 113 | Indonesian | 110 | Japanese | 115 |
| 11. | French | 65 | Indonesian | 101 | Bengali | 102 | German | 103 |
| 12. | Italian | 55 | French | 95 | French | 63 | French | 68 |

| Dalby 1999/2000 | | Ethnologue 2005 | | | Ethnologue 2009 | | |
|-----------------|------------|-----------------|------------|-----|-----------------|------------|------------|
| 1. | Chinese | 1,000 | Chinese | 873 | 1,051 | Chinese | 845.+178 |
| 2. | English | 1,000 | Hindi+Urdu | 425 | 588 | Spanish | 329 (+60) |
| 3. | Hindi+Urdu | 900 | English | 309 | 508 | English | 328 (+?) |
| 4. | Spanish | 450 | Spanish | 322 | 382 | Hindi+Urdu | 243 (+224) |
| 5. | Russian | 320 | Russian | 145 | 255 | Arabic | 221 (+246) |
| 6. | Arabic | 250 | Arabic | 206 | 246 | Bengali | 181 (+69) |
| 7. | Bengali | 250 | Bengali | 171 | 211 | Portuguese | 178 (+15) |
| 8. | Portuguese | 200 | Portuguese | 177 | 192 | Russian | 144 (+110) |
| 9. | Japanese | 130 | Indonesian | 23 | 163 | Japanese | 122 (+1) |
| 10. | German | 125 | Japanese | 122 | 123 | German | 90 (+28) |
| 11. | French | 125 | German | 95 | 123 | French | 68 (+50) |
| 12. | Italian | 70 | French | 65 | 115 | Italian | 62 (+?) |

I collated from previous research, agree approximately with other sources. But for the other languages included in this chapter, especially for Spanish and French, the figures often diverge widely. In this context, very high figures often originate from sources with vested language-policy interests. Native countries of languages, the associated institutions and individuals tend to exaggerate because large speaker numbers motivate continued learning of the language and support claims for an advantaged position of the language, e.g. in international organisations or school curricula. To limit distortions which might privilege individual languages, I have limited myself to sources which supply figures for all languages relevant to our context not just individual languages. But even this limitation does not guarantee a neutral perspective and certainly does not guarantee uniform methods of data collection.

In many cases, the speaker number for a language refers only to the number of native speakers, without this always being derivable from the sources, but this may explain some of the low figures, especially for English, French and to some extent German. If SL speakers had been included, the figures would have to be higher. The inclusion of SL speakers in Table C.2-1 is only certain in the case of Dalby (1999/ 2000), *Ethnologue* (2005, column 2), at least in part in *Ethnologue* (1984; e.g. 315: “probably includes second-language speakers and Low German”) and in *Ethnologue* (2009). For some languages, Comrie (1987) gives figures only for individual regions which I have added to the named total speaker numbers.

Ethnologue, which is the most comprehensive inventory of languages in the world, tends towards language splitting (glottotomy). For example, German dialects are shown as independent languages. Alongside disputable cases such as “German, Swiss” or “Saxon, Low” (compare Ch. B.1), these include “Bavarian”, “Saxon, Upper”, “*Kölsch*”, “*Mainfränkisch*”, “*Pfälzisch*” and “Swabian” (*Ethnologue* 2009: 553–555). To counteract this splitting, I have taken comprehensive data for all varieties where indicated, but otherwise, figures for the standard variety. Accordingly, for Arabic, e.g. in *Ethnologue* (1984), I have added figures for “Eastern Colloquial Arabic”, “North Eastern Colloquial Arabic”, “Western Colloquial Arabic”, “Sudanese Arabic” and “Egyptian”; however, from *Ethnologue* 2005 (page 508) onwards, figures were available for “Arabic Standard”. Throughout, I have also combined figures for Hindi and Urdu (language: Hindi-Urdu). In *Ethnologue* 2009, there are no data for “L2 speakers” (SL speakers) of English and Italian. With some other languages, the figures for the standard variety differ from those for the totality of varieties. For instance, for “Chinese, Mandarin”, there are 845,456,760 “L1 speakers” (native speakers), with the addition of 178 m “L2 speakers” (ibid: 339), however, 1.213 m for all varieties of “Chinese”, which seems to refer to native speakers (ibid: 20). Presumably, the large figure includes those “varieties” which would be evaluated orally according to linguistic distance as different languages, but which are mutually intelligible in writing because of the same (ideographic) writing system (compare Ch. B.1). For “Arabic, Standard”, there are 206 m “L1 speakers” (ibid: 523); but for “Arabic” in the sense of all Arabic varieties, 221 m and 246 m L2 speakers of all Arabic varieties” (ibid: 21, 523). For Bengali, without distinguishing between standard and other varieties, there are 181,272,900 “L1 speakers” and, “including L2 speakers”, 250 m (ibid: 21, 328). Because of the incomplete data on SL speakers, *Ethnologue* does not allow a comprehensive comparison of languages. Relevant data in Table C.2–1 (last column) are shown in brackets; the unbracketed data relate only to native speakers.

According to these findings, based on the number of native speakers, German moves between positions six and 11 of all languages in the world. With the inclusion of SL speakers, French was recently neck and neck with German (*Ethnologue* 2009), and in fact in position ten, which German had previously shared with Japanese (*Ethnologue* 2005). However, there are many much higher figures for French, which evidently include FL speakers (Ch. A.3) or even FL learners. By all accounts, Chinese, English, Hindi-Urdu (also only Hindi), Spanish and Russian are ahead of German; in some cases, their speaker number is many times greater than that of German. Arabic, Portuguese, Bengali and Japanese are only ahead of German according to some of the sources, but these are the more recent ones. The long-term trend gives an impression that German is dropping back in rank position; this question will be taken up again in Ch. C.3. However, the long-term trend does not explain all fluctuations in speaker numbers; short-term fluctuations are presumably determined by differences in the inclusion of SL-speakers or the projection of older figures.

Comparing the languages named in Table C.2–1 with the very high-ranking international languages (Ch. A.7; F.1; G.1; H.1) reveals the following correlation: internationally important languages simultaneously belong to the group of the numerically strongest languages. Languages which play a leading role in international economic, academic or diplomatic communication are all among the 12 numerically strongest languages in the world. It should be borne in mind that at least 2,500 languages are currently still spoken in the world (Ch. A.7). However, there are also marked discrepancies between numerical strength (based on native speakers and SL-speakers) and international rank. On one hand, the numerically strong languages Hindi-Urdu and Bengali hardly play a role in international communication (Ch. A.3). Conversely, English and French are considerably more important than several numerically stronger languages. In this respect, English surpasses all other languages, and French possibly all apart from English.

A closer correlation between international importance and numerical strength could be secured if numerical strength including FL speakers could be determined. However, figures for different languages are not available for this comparison. I have only been able to estimate approximately the number of current FL learners, as per Table J.7–3 (Ch. J.7; also Ammon 2010c: 105). Many of these figures may have been overtaken already or will be in the near future. Caution is therefore required with regard to inflated expectations relating to vested interests. For example, it may be questioned whether the Chinese-government prognosis (2006: 63) that the learner number for Chinese as a foreign language “[will] rise to around 100 m in the next few years”, will be fulfilled. Above all, learner numbers must on no account be equated with the numbers of actual FL-speakers (Ch. A.3; C.1).

3. Long-term development of speaker numbers of large European languages

Disregarding fluctuations, Table C.2–1 shows significant changes over time. In the 45 years registered, the speaker numbers of Chinese, Arabic, Bengali, Hindi-Urdu, Portuguese and Spanish have grown more than those of German and Japanese. This corresponds to population growth in the native-speaker and official-language territories of these languages. The distance between those languages and German has thus continued to increase, e.g. for Spanish, it has more than doubled from 1:1.45 to 1:3.66; for Chinese, it increased by 40%, from 1:5.15 to 1:8.67 (in each case *Ethnologue* 2009 compared with Muller 1964). This lag in the development of German is also evident in world population and presumably began towards the end of the nineteenth century. Its course is approximately proportional to global population which grows more strongly in developing countries than industrial countries. The numerical proportion of German native speakers and SL speakers to the world population in 1925 was still around 5% (1:20; Winkler 1927: 26) and is currently just under 1.5% (Ch. C.1: 103.5 m by comparison with more than 7 bn). Analysis of longer term development requires: 1) speaker numbers of German relative to other languages; 2) speaker numbers of German relative to world population. For 1), I only have figures for six European languages, i.e. not for all the current international languages (cf. Ch. A.7). For Portuguese and all non-European languages, older figures are not available. Figure C.3–1 shows the development of six European languages since 1500.

Regrettably, Jespersen does not indicate sources – apart from Tesnière (1928) for 1926 (Jespersen 1933: 229, Note 1). It is also unclear whether he means only native speakers. In Figure C.3–1, the highest numbers named by Jespersen are given in brackets, the lowest without brackets. Similar figures occur in Burney (1966: 67).

It is faintly evident from Figure C.3–1 and Table C.3–1 that German had high speaker numbers at two periods: around 1500, level with French; and, around 1800, as the numerically strongest language. In the intervening period, it was surpassed by French and then by English (Table C.3–1). Might it be possible to show a causal connection between the larger reservoir of German native speakers and the cultural flourishing in the German-language territory? Around 1500, this would mean the humanism inspired by the Italian Renaissance and the Reformation; and around 1800, German Classicism. Moreover, Goethe, an exponent of German Classicism, emphasised the international position and cultural standing of his language which was perhaps apprehended even at the start of the nineteenth century. Around 1825, he welcomed an English “engineering officer” on a visit to Weimar saying, “you have done well [. . .] coming over to us to learn German [. . .]”. The visitor told Goethe that, in England, interest in German had become so great “that there is hardly a young English gentleman of good family who is not learning German”. Goethe replied, “If someone understands German well, he can do

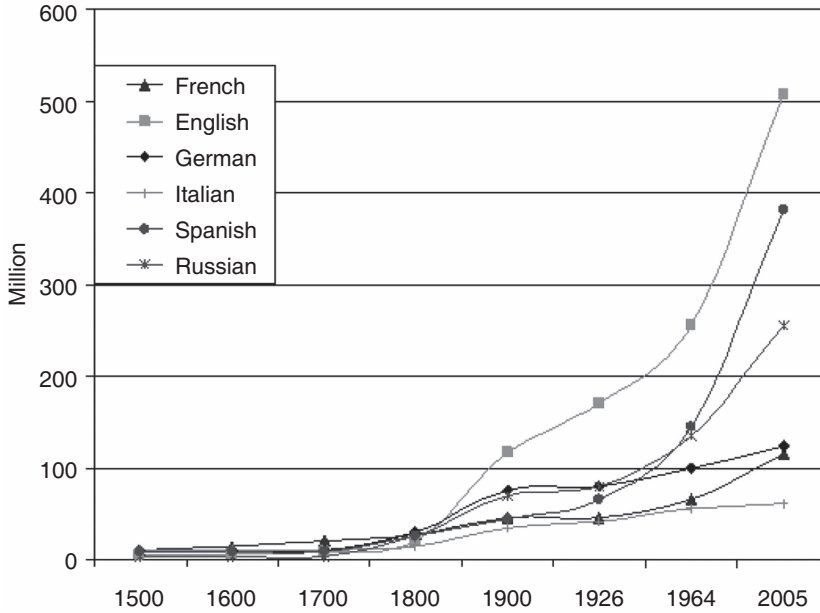


Figure C.3-1 Numbers of speakers of major European Languages over time

(Sources: Jespersen 1933; Muller 1964; *Ethnologue* 2005)

Table C.3-1 Long-term development of speaker numbers of six European languages in millions

| Language Year | English | German | Russian | French | Spanish | Italian |
|---------------|-----------|----------------|---------|---------|---------|----------|
| 1500 | 4 (5) | 10 | 3 | 10 (12) | 8.5 | 9.5 |
| 1600 | 6 | 10 | 3 | 14 | 8.5 | 9.5 |
| 1700 | 8.5 | 10 | 3 (15) | 20 | 8.5 | 9.5 (11) |
| 1800 | 20 (40) | 30 (33) | 25 (31) | 27 (31) | 26 | 14 (15) |
| 1900 | 116 (123) | 75 (80) | 70 (85) | 45 (52) | 44 (58) | 34 (54) |
| 1926 | 170 | 80 | 80 | 45 | 65 | 41 |

(Source: after Jespersen 1933: 229)

without many other languages”, because “we can now “read the most excellent works [. . .] in good German translations”. Goethe expressly stated that only French could not be replaced by German, because it “is the language of commerce and is especially indispensable on journeys” (*Eckermann’s Conversations with Goethe*, 1825, Geiger, L. (ed.) (1902) Leipzig: Hesse, 101f). Other historical contemporaries confirm this interest in German among the British. For example, reporting on an English travel company on the Lower Rhine in the 1820s, Johanna Schopenhauer (1828: 128) describes “children whose education is to be completed on tour. Because learning German is now the fashion in England; in Godesberg I saw a family with three or four boys and girls who wanted to spend the next winter in Innsbruck to have their children tutored in German”.

Table C.3–2 Long-term development of speaker numbers of German in proportion to world population

| | | | |
|------|------|------|--------|
| 1500 | 2% | 10: | 500 m |
| 1800 | 3% | 30: | 1000 m |
| 1927 | 4% | 80: | 2000 m |
| 1960 | 3.3% | 100: | 3000 m |
| 1987 | 2.7% | 133: | 5000 m |
| 1999 | 2.1% | 125: | 6000 m |
| 2011 | 1.5% | 104: | 7000 m |

Note: German native speakers as percentage of world population, speaker numbers 1500 to 1926

(Sources: after Jespersen 1933: 229; from 1964, after Muller 1964, for 1987, after *Ethnologue* 1984, for 1999, after Dalby 1999/2000, for 2011, as per Ch. C.1 end)

By contrast, the high speaker numbers for French and English (Table C.3–1) each correlate positively – at least roughly – with phases of political dominance of the native countries. Second position, behind each of the numerically strongest European languages, is typical for German. The previously low figures for Russian and English are also remarkable. For Jespersen, Portuguese was not worth mentioning because, in his day, colonial activities of native countries hardly impacted on the speaker numbers of their languages.

The speaker numbers for German during the approximately 500-year period initially rose relative to world population and then, from around the middle of the twentieth century, declined again. This relative decline is likely to continue in future decades. Around 1500, the world population was some 500 m (UN estimate); it only “surpassed 1 billion people [. . .] in 1804”. During the twentieth century, the global population almost quadrupled. 1927: 2 bn, 1960: 3 bn, 1974: 4 bn, 1987: 5 bn, 1999: 6 bn, 2011: 7 bn. “With a mean projection up to 2025, the UNO anticipates [. . .] 8.17 billion, and 10.9 billion by 2100” (de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weltv%C3%B6lkerung). The sequence of proportions shown in Table C.3–2 is derived from Tables C.2–1 and C.3–1, without the – uncertain – prognoses for future decades.

4. Comparing the economic strength of language communities

In addition to speaker numbers, the economic strength (GNP) of a language is a significant factor for global position. As with numerical strength, this refers, more precisely, to the economic strength of the speakers or language community. The term “numerical and economic strength of a language” is used for short. International contacts with a language community – commercial, academic, diplomatic and so on – tend to be more intensive if it has greater economic strength at its disposal.

Table C.4–1 gives an overview of existing data and figures collected specially for this book (Mackey 1976; Ammon 1991a: 49, also for 2005 and 2009). The figures are not comparable throughout. Mackey (1976: 199–220) is not primarily concerned with the ten economically strongest language communities in the world at his time because Japanese is missing, and several numerically strong languages (Chinese, Hindi-Urdu, Bengali and Portuguese) are not included. Moreover, Mackey’s figures relate to the purchasing power of speakers, while the subsequent figures relate to their gross national product (GNP). These were based on *Ethnologue* (1984, 2005, 2009), which gives speaker numbers for languages in every state in the world. The gross national product for the states was taken from the *Fischer Weltalmanach* 1990, 2007 and 2012; for individual, small states, the gross domestic product was used by way of assistance. Since the

Table C.4–1 Development of economic strength of economically strongest language communities in recent years

| c | 1975 | 1984 | 2005 | 2009 |
|-----|-------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|
| 1. | English 944 | English 4,271 | English 12.717 | English 14,187 |
| 2. | Russian 266 | Japanese 1,277 | Japanese 4.598 | Chinese 5,379 |
| 3. | German 204 | German 1,090 | German 3.450 | Japanese 5,029 |
| 4. | French 141 | Russian 801 | Spanish 3.204 | Spanish 5,001 |
| 5. | Spanish 88 | Spanish 738 | Chinese 2.399 | German 4,257 |
| 6. | Italian 78 | French 669 | French 2.215 | French 3,109 |
| 7. | Dutch 37 | Chinese 448 | Italian 1.207 | Portuguese 1,866 |
| 8. | Arabic 26 | Arabic 359 | Arabic 985 | Arabic 1,703 |
| 9. | | Italian 302 | Portuguese 872 | Italian 1,687 |
| 10. | | Portuguese 234 | Russian 584 | Russian 1,185 |
| 11. | | Dutch 203 | Hindi-Urdu 215 | |
| 12. | | Hindi-Urdu 102 | Bengali 113 | |

(Sources: Mackey 1976; *Ethnologue* 1984 and Fischer Weltalmanach 1990; *Ethnologue* 2005 and Fischer Weltalmanach 2007; *Ethnologue* 2009 and Fischer Weltalmanach 2012)

data in the *Fischer Weltalmanach* show a delay, they were matched as accurately as possible to the publication year of *Ethnologue*. For each state, the gross national product per head of population was calculated (total GNP: population) and then multiplied by the speaker numbers of the respective language in the relevant state (= economic strength of the language community in the relevant state). Finally, all values determined for each language across all the states in the world were added (= economic strength of the language in total). It can be assumed that Graddol (1997: 28f.) calculated the economic strength of languages in about the same manner for 1994, but without specifying sources and method.

Regarding changes over the 34-year period, which I mention here only for the higher-ranking languages, the enduring stability of German in position 3 is particularly noticeable (1984 to 2005). German has only recently been relegated from this “customary” position, very evidently by Chinese and to a lesser extent by Spanish. Relegation by Chinese is hardly surprising given China’s rise to a world economic power of currently similar rank to the USA. Its economic advantage over German (2009 approximately 21%) has become even greater since 2009. However, it may be exaggerated for 2009, because the calculation was based not only on speaker numbers for Mandarin, but also for all varieties of Chinese (1,213 m by comparison with 845 m native speakers +178 m SL-speakers; cf. Ch. C.2). The fact that German has also been economically overtaken by Spanish – although not to such a great extent – is perhaps more surprising in view of recent reports on economic weaknesses of Spain and Latin American countries. Maybe these weaknesses have been compensated by population growth in the Latin-American countries (see Ch. C.5), which could mean that the rising popularity of Spanish as a foreign language (Ch. J.7) stands on a more stable foundation than flamenco and beach holidays.

5. Comparison of economic strength with numerical strength

As suggested in Ch. C.4, the ranking of language communities according to economic strength (GNP) does not coincide with ranking by numerical strength (speaker numbers). This is shown by comparison of Table C.2–1 with Table C.4–1 (Ch. C.2; C.4). Figures C.5–1 and C.5–2

Speaker numbers/economic strength

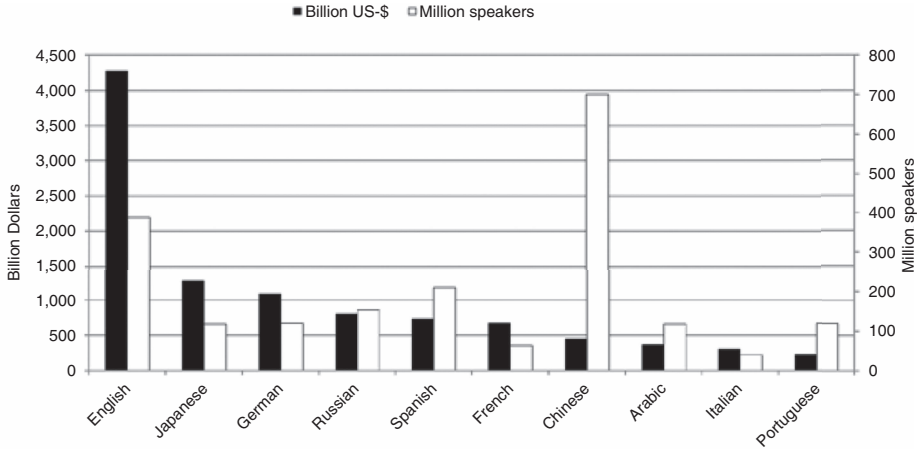


Figure C.5-1 Economic strength of German-language community compared with other language communities around 1984 in billion US \$

(Sources: Ethnologue 1984 and Fischer Weltalmanach 1990)

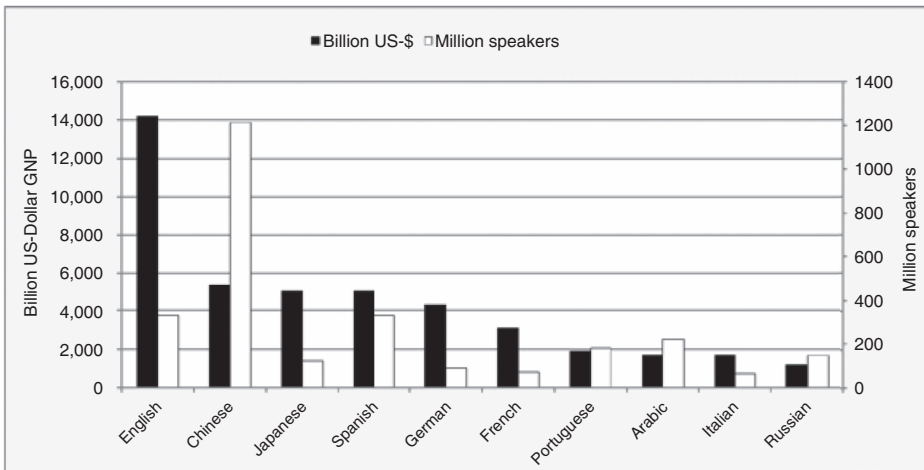


Figure C.5-2 Economic strength of German-language community compared with other language communities around 2009 in billion US \$

(Sources: Ethnologue 2009 and Fischer Weltalmanach 2012)

illustrate the comparison for the two years included, with data for economic and numerical strength.

Of particular relevance here is the decline in economic strength of the German-language community from position 3 to position 5. A simultaneous decline in speaker numbers from position 7 to 10 is relevant to this explanation. The parallelism suggests that the decline in economic ranking is determined by the decline in numerical ranking which may even be the principal

factor. In the period from 1984 to 2009, German lagged economically behind Chinese and, albeit slightly, behind Spanish, which it still outranked in 1984 – and even in 2005 (cf. Table C.4–1).

In detail, in the period 1984–2009, the proportions varied as follows (cf. C.2–1, C.4–1 – data less rounded here).

Chinese: German;

Numerical 13.5 (2009) : 6.9 (1984) (growth quota of proportions 1.9);

Economic 1.3 (2009) : 0.4 (1984) growth quota of proportions 3.3);

Spanish: German;

Numerical 3.7 (2009) : 1.8 (1984) (growth quota of proportions 2.1);

Economic 1.2 (2009) : 0.7 (1984) (growth quota of proportions 1.7).

The figures suggest that the Chinese-language community overtook German in economic terms primarily through stronger economic growth (GNP). With Spanish, however, it was primarily through stronger numerical growth (speaker numbers). In this period, the Chinese-language community grew economically stronger than the German, while Spanish grew primarily in terms of population/speaker numbers.

The difference between the Chinese- and the English-language communities is also evident. With Chinese, numerical ranking far exceeds economic; for English, this is reversed. But with the German-language community, economic position is stronger than numerical, and the same applies for Japanese, German, French and – to a lesser extent – also Spanish. This finding suggests that the Chinese-language community has greater economic growth potential than the English, Japanese, French and Spanish. But this would always occur if future population growth were subject to narrower limits than pure economic growth. This is supported by the now familiar warnings about global overpopulation, which seem better founded than the equally familiar warnings about continuing economic growth, as the associated ecological damage may ultimately be controllable with new technologies. Moreover, population growth has flattened in the more highly developed countries, so that additional economic growth is unlikely (de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bev%C3%B6lkerungsexplosion). This applies primarily for the countries under discussion here: the English-speaking, German-speaking, Japanese-speaking, French-speaking, and to a lesser extent Spanish-speaking countries.

Various indicators have even suggested that the Chinese-language community will one day overtake the entire English-language community economically. This possibility is illustrated by the two pairs of bars in Figures C.5–1 and C.5–2. The economic strength of the Chinese-language community would be far greater than that of the English – according to our data for 2009 (Table C.2–1) – around 3.7 times as great, if it developed in proportion with numerical strength. During the period between the two Figs., i.e. within 25 years, the proportions have declined from 9.6:1 to 2.6:1. Recent economic-growth data suggest that this decline will continue. However, a linear projection would be dubious. Above all, it must therefore be assumed – as has been routinely observed during the “maturing” of underdeveloped economies into developed economies – that the economic growth rate of Chinese will decline over time. One notable example is Japan, whose economic growth, as it approached the technological level of competitor states, also slowed down to their rate of growth. Instead of linear modelling, a logarithmic modelling with a flattening course would presumably be closer to reality.

An ultimately even more serious objection to the present prognosis can be constructed if our previous scale for the economic strength of a language or language community is seen as being limited to native speakers and SL speakers (Ch. C.4). If FL-speakers were included, English could not even be approached by Chinese. Learners and speakers of English as a foreign language far exceed FL speakers of Chinese, even including native and SL speakers and show a

tendency to expand further in the direction of the total world population (cf. Ch. A.7; Graddol 2000, 2006; Crystal 2003). If its economic potential is included in the measurement of economic strength, English will remain – so far as can be estimated at present – the economically strongest language with a strong lead for an undefined period. But the relationship between economic strength and language communities no longer fits so neatly, unless the concept of language community is expressly expanded to include FL speakers. Then the terms “economic strength of language X” and “economic strength of *speakers of language X*” (including FL speakers) would be synonymous and probably clearer.