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GERMAN 2

German Language and Culture

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German Language and Culture

E. J. NEATHER

EDITORIAL CONSULTANT
BETTY PARR

M
MACMILLAN

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First published 1989

Published by
MACMILLAN EDUCATION LTD
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 2XS
and London
Companies and representatives
throughout the world

Typeset by TecSet Ltd, Wallington, Surrey

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Neather, E. J.
Mastering German 2 : German language and culture —
(Macmillan masters series).

1. German language—Questions & answers

I. Title

438

ISBN 978-0-333-43571-7 ISBN 978-1-349-20133-4 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-20133-4

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SERIES EDITOR'S PREFACE

Mastering German 2 is intended for students working, with or without a teacher, to extend their command of spoken and written German and to learn more about the German-speaking countries and their people. When the first German book in the series was published in 1982, it was suggested that it could 'provide a carefully planned introduction to the language as well as a secure foundation for further study'. The present publication should offer an excellent basis for more advanced work within a stimulating and carefully planned programme.

The introductory course placed the main emphasis on understanding and using the spoken language, although due attention was paid to reading and writing. In *Mastering German 2*, the reading comprehension and effective use of written German are important objectives, though listening and responding to the contemporary spoken language are important elements in the learning process. The table of contents shows that this is an anthology with a difference. An imaginatively chosen selection of authentic passages from contemporary sources gives a glimpse of various aspects of life in present-day West and East Germany, in Austria and in Switzerland. Some of these texts form the topics of discussions by native speakers, whose recorded conversations provide a further source of information and opinion, as well as an excellent example of the language as spoken by intelligent and cultivated German-speaking people. Another series of extracts from the poetry and prose of earlier writing recaptures past traditions in a way that also illuminates the present. These excursions into the past are aptly named *Literarische Zwischenspiele*.

The author's helpful comments on each extract are followed by explanations of more unusual words and phrases, and by reference to some of the features of grammar and syntax exemplified in the chosen passages and dialogues. The contemporary extracts and associated conversations are followed by exercises devised to lead to a clearer understanding of the passage and to a more competent use of the language within that context.

A Reference Section contains a key to the exercises and a helpful guide to pronunciation. The latter should obviously be studied in conjunction with the accompanying cassette, which contains recordings by native speakers of relevant passages in the book.

PREFACE

An important item in the reference section is a comprehensive and comprehensible Grammar Summary, with its own index for ease of study. A distinctive feature of this summary is the skilful way in which the grammatical explanations have been illustrated by examples from the selected texts, so the grammar is studied in context, not in isolation.

The author's own Introduction gives a clear analysis of the aims and objectives of this publication and suggests ways of using it effectively. The student should study this section carefully before embarking on this unusual anthology which will surely chart the course for a rewarding and effective voyage of discovery of the German language and the people who speak it.

BETTY PARR
Editorial Consultant

INTRODUCTION:

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Mastering German 2 is intended for students who already have a working knowledge of German, either dating back to their school-days, or acquired more recently at evening classes, from radio or television programmes, or from studying a book such as the first volume of *Mastering German*.

GENERAL AIMS

The book has two main aims:

1. To offer students the chance to familiarise themselves with the contemporary German language as expressed in a wide range of written texts and spoken dialogues.
2. To gain some knowledge of the heritage of the German language and of German-speaking cultures by an introduction to selected reading passages from literary works.

Of course, a book of this size cannot hope to be complete in its coverage, and there have been difficult choices to make, both in selecting the topics which form the framework for the chapters, and in choosing texts to illustrate them. Without making any impossible claims, the author believes that the final choice, both of topics and texts, provides a balance of content and style which will enable students to make significant strides in their mastery of the language.

LANGUAGE TEACHING OBJECTIVES

Within the two main aims expressed above the book pursues certain specific objectives in developing students' language skills:

INTRODUCTION

1. Reading skills, by extending recognition and understanding of vocabulary and structures within a range of topics.
2. Listening skills, by the use of recordings of dialogues related to the same range of topics.
3. Speaking skills, in exercises involving the use of language heard in the dialogues.
4. Writing skills, within certain limited fields, such as letter writing.

For a course-book such as this, aimed at the individual learner, the first two objectives above are the prime concern, since the student's chances to encounter the more advanced levels of the foreign language are perhaps more frequent through the written word of books and magazines and the spoken word of the radio and, increasingly, television.

CULTURAL OBJECTIVES

It is not possible to use language, whether reading, listening, speaking or writing, unless one uses it *for* something. At an elementary level, one may be satisfied with basic communication, but beyond that, any encounter with the language is an encounter with the culture of the language and the people who speak it. German is particularly rich in this respect, in that the language is the medium for the culture of Austria and Switzerland, as well as that of the Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic. The cold war attitudes to the GDR have melted now, and although restrictions still exist on journeys by GDR citizens outside their state, visits by citizens of the Federal Republic and others have revealed the GDR as a German-speaking culture in its own right and with its own separate identity. An attempt is made in this book to represent all four of these significant German-speaking cultures. All the texts in the book are authentic, that is to say they are written or spoken by native speakers of German and not constructed only for a textbook. All the extracts convey something about the German-speaking cultures and their people, whether in the contemporary context – as when dealing with the use of computers for issuing railway tickets – or from a more historical point of view – as when presenting a text on the immediate post-war situation or on the joint anniversary of the birth of Handel and Bach. Knowledge of different cultures is not something which can be quickly acquired, by means of a single book. The author hopes only that the student will feel better

informed and more knowledgeable at the end of the book, and anxious to find out more. The study of foreign languages breeds an undying curiosity about other ways and other countries.

LEVELS OF DIFFICULTY AND THE USE OF THIS BOOK

In using authentic materials, written and spoken, such as are found in a book of this kind, it is not always possible to grade the texts according to levels of difficulty. The texts of Chapter 1, 2 and 3 are relatively straightforward in terms of vocabulary and structures, and are intended to allow the reader to make a start on developing reading skills and to revise some of the elements of basic grammar such as word order and case endings. Subsequently, students should not expect the texts to follow a clear progression of difficulty, though the texts from Chapter 11 onwards are more demanding than those earlier in the book. Depending on the students' present level of competence in the language, some of the texts may, at first, seem a little daunting and difficult. It is important, however, not to be put off by unknown vocabulary or by structures which have not previously been encountered. One of the important skills to develop is that of 'reading for gist' and realising that one does not need to understand every word. The exercises follow a pattern which is intended to assist this initial understanding. Each chapter is organised as follows, as an aid to working with the materials:

1. *Reading passage*, preceded by information about its context.
2. *Exercises – Section A* These are exercises designed to help understanding and develop methods of coping with new materials in the foreign language. The suggestion is that students should attempt these exercises *before* studying the vocabulary and grammatical explanations, so as to develop the capacity to guess at the meaning of words in context and appreciate the internal pattern of organisation of a text.
3. *Explanations* This section consists of a select vocabulary, and a list of expressions and idioms which may be new to the reader and which will help comprehension of the passage. There is inevitably a certain arbitrary element in choosing words and phrases from the text in this way and the choice will not suit every individual. With texts of this level of difficulty it is important to make use of a good dictionary, and some suggestions are given in the Bibliography at the end of the book. After the word lists

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there is a summary of the main items of grammar selected for practice in the exercises of Section B, and a reference to the section of the Grammar Summary where the explanations can be found. Finally in this section, there are, in some chapters, notes which either explain references in the text, or give brief comments on aspects of the grammar of the text not treated in detail.

4. *Exercises – Section B* These are exercises which concern themselves with practising the specific grammatical points selected from the text. They may use types of manipulation and word replacement techniques which are somewhat out of fashion in current language teaching trends which place a stress on communication rather than structure. In a highly inflected and complex language such as German, the author feels that the student needs such practice in structures to achieve also the skills of fluent and correct communication.

After the four chapters in Part I, each of which contains only one reading text, subsequent chapters have two texts related to the chosen theme, and the same sequence of exercises and explanations is followed for both texts. Some of the chapters then have a recorded dialogue and exercises in listening comprehension and suggestions for developing speaking skills and powers of expression.

Although there is a gradual progression of difficulty in the presentation of structure (e.g., the use of the Passive Voice or the Conditional of Modal Verbs coming later), the student may not wish to work methodically through the book from p. 1. One may choose a particular topic of interest, or decide to work on a particular aspect of grammar or on developing reading skills by concentrating on Section A exercises. The book offers a resource, and students will develop their own ways of drawing on the range of materials offered.

I would particularly like to thank my German language consultant Mrs Gabi Winter, for her help in the preparation of this book, and particularly for her checking of the correctness of language used in the exercises.

E. J. NEATHER

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author and publishers wish to acknowledge the following photographic sources:

The Bettmann Archive Inc./Eschen-Roy Bernard Co., Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, Sally and Richard Greenhill, Hulton Picture Co., Mansell Collection, Popperfoto.

The author and publishers wish to thank the following who have kindly given permission for the use of copyright material.

Paula Almqvist for material from *Mitgefangen, mitgehangen. Über das Leben im Zeitgeist-Takt* by Paula Almqvist, Rowohlt Verlag, 1988.

Buchverlag der Morgen for material from *Guten Morgen, du Schöne* by Maxie Wander, 1977.

Cornelsen Verlag Schwann-Girardet GmbH & Co. for material from *Kleines Wörterbuch des DDR-Wortschatzes* by Michael Kinnes and Birgit Stube-Edelmann.

Gemeinnützige Gesellschaft Gesamtschule e.V. for material from 'Gesamtschule – was ist das eigentlich?' by Ernst Röse, 1982.

Wilhelm Goldmann Verlag GmbH for material from *BP Kursbuch Deutschland, 1985/6*.

Harenberg Kommunikation for material from *Aktuell – Das Lexikon der Gegenwart*, 1984.

Hoffmann und Campe for material from *Die DDR: Politik, Gesellschaft, Wirtschaft* by Kurt Sontheimer and Wilhelm Bleek. Hoffmann und Campe Verlag, 1979.

Jugendscala for material from various issues of *Jugendscala* and *Scala*.

Gustav Lübke Verlag GmbH for material from *Die Stunde Adenauers und Ulbrichts* by Henric L. Wuermeling, 1983.

Luchterhand Literaturverlag GmbH for material from *Der Mauer-springer* by Peter Schneider, 1982.

Stern for material from various issues of *Stern* and two cartoons by Markus.

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Verkehrsverband Zentralschweiz for material from one of their publications.

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