

Language And German Disunity: A Sociolinguistic History Of East And West In Germany, 1945-2000

CHANGING GERMAN – EXPONATE, E-MAILS, EINGABEN

ON THE GERMAN LANGUAGE AND 15 YEARS OF GERMAN UNIFICATION

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ABSTRACT

This essay provides a snapshot of the change of the German language in the more than fifteen years since the Unification Treaty. It focusses mainly on lexical change and discusses different processes and trends in language change. In addition to certain East German words becoming obsolete in the united Germany, words 'travelling' from East to West and from West to East are identified. A third group is illustrated by providing examples of words which have only entered the German language in the last 15 years. Generally though, the focus is on lexical change which has some (often indirect) link with unification and post-unification. Overall, it can be shown that the German language proves remarkably robust in integrating and assimilating the words which are new for the entire speech community or at least for a large subgroup (East or West in this case) and that language change has resulted in a wider choice for speakers and thus a better basis for linguistic creativity.

It is not always the case that the German unification and German language are considered together. The *Handbuch zur deutschen Einheit* (Weidenfeld and Korte 1999), for example, does not list 'language' as one of its 71 keywords and concentrates instead on 'Staatssicherheit' and

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