

Constructing a clientele in need: the field of German as a second language

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The academic field of “German as a second language” (DaZ – *Deutsch als Zweitsprache*) in Germany gives pertinent evidence for a construction of multilinguals as Others. The field developed as an applied linguistic field in the 1970s, when German educational institutions had to develop measures for the children of the newly arrived ‘guest worker’ immigrants (Menk 2000). Following its school-oriented origin, a focal topic of DaZ is the investigation, diagnosis, and promotion of academic language (Germ. *Bildungssprache*) as the particular register of German that is presumed to open the doors for social participation (Lange 2020).

On the basis of a survey of publications from the field of DaZ we argue that the field has the tendency to develop an ‘operational blindness’ and treat bilingual young people who are born and raised in Germany as if in need of special language support. This ignores the fact that they do not, in fact, lag behind monolinguals in their competencies in the formal register of German (Goschler 2017, Haberzettl 2016). This approach, then, construes two groups, one being children and adolescents with full competences in German, the other DaZ children and adolescents. Bilingual children growing up in Germany are subsumed under the second, rather than the first group, while the first is reserved for monolinguals.

References

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