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Article · January 2011

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Kiezdeutsch as a multiethnolect

Ulrike Freywald, Katharina Mayr, Tiner Özçelik, Heike Wiese

Abstract

This paper deals with Kiezdeutsch, a way of speaking that emerged among adolescents in multiethnic urban neighbourhoods of Germany. We argue for a view of Kiezdeutsch as a multiethnolect, based on: (a) A linguistic analysis of the lexical and grammatical characteristics that have been reported for it so far, and their interaction with information structure; and (b) A perception study that tested the acceptability and evaluation of such features by adolescents from a multiethnic and a monoethnic neighbourhood of Berlin. Our results support a view of Kiezdeutsch as a linguistic system of its own, with features that establish a distinct way of speaking that is associated with multiethnic neighbourhoods, where it cuts across ethnicities, including speakers of non-migrant background.

1 Introduction

Kiezdeutsch is a way of speaking that emerged among young people in multiethnic urban areas of Germany and resembles multiethnic linguistic practices we find in other European countries, e.g. *rinkebysvenska* ‘Rinkeby-Swedish’¹ in Sweden (Kotsinas 1992, 1998; Fraurud 2003), *straattaal* ‘street language’ in the Netherlands (Appel 1999; Nortier 2000), or the *københavnsk multiethnolect* ‘Copenhagen multiethnolect’ in Denmark (cf. Quist 2000, 2008).

In the academic as well as in the public discussion, a number of alternative terms have been used in addition to ‘Kiezdeutsch’, most prominently ‘Kanak Sprak’, a term that first became popular through political novels and interview collections by Feridun Zaimoğlu (e.g. Zaimoğlu 1995) and is based on reclaiming the initially pejorative, xenophobe term ‘Kanake’ within political movements of second- and third-generation immigrants of mostly Turkish origin. While it is used in some sociolinguistic investigations as well as in popular accounts of this multiethnolect, this term still carries the pejorative connotations of ‘Kanake’ (cf. Androutsopoulos 2007 on language ideology aspects of this), and emphasises a ‘foreign’ association. In contrast to this, ‘Kiezdeutsch’ (lit. “(neighbour-)hood German”) does not carry such associations and does not imply any ethnic restrictions, unlike, for example, the term ‘Türkendeutsch’, “Turks’ German” that can also be found in the literature.

Another reason for us to use ‘Kiezdeutsch’ is that this term emphasises that this way of speaking belongs to a “Kiez”, a ‘hood, it belongs to informal, everyday communication in a (multiethnic) neighbourhood. In this multiethnic setting, it is used independently of the speaker’s ethnic background, that is, by ado-

¹ Named after Rinkeby, a Stockholm suburb with a large immigrant community.

lescents of the majority ethnicity as well as those with a migrant background. The following quote from a Berliner of Turkish background illustrates this:²

- (1) “When you look how many Germans in Kreuzberg do not speak German anymore, that is, they speak this Kiezdeutsch, so that, when you do not see them, you think there are Turks or Arabs speaking, but then you turn round, and they are totally normal German kids, then you notice, really amazing, how this has developed.”

In this article, we are investigating the status of Kiezdeutsch from the point of view of the linguistic system. While most studies on Kiezdeutsch so far have focused on sociolinguistic aspects (cf. Eksner 2006; Androutsopoulos 2007; Keim 2007), investigations coming from different perspectives have contributed converging evidence for some characteristic grammatical features in Kiezdeutsch (cf. Füglein 2000; Auer 2003; Dirim & Auer 2004; Wiese 2006). We are going to take this as our point of departure and are going to explore whether these features indicate a linguistic system of its own that supports a view of Kiezdeutsch as a multi-ethnolect.

In what follows, we first give an overview over characteristics of Kiezdeutsch on the level of the linguistic system (section 2), and then make clear what we understand by ‘multiethnolect’ (section 3), and on this basis we report findings from a study that tested the perception of Kiezdeutsch features in order to pin down its status as an identifiable, distinct variety.

2 Linguistic characteristics of Kiezdeutsch: Grammar and Information Structure

In the present section, we first summarise findings on some core linguistic characteristics of Kiezdeutsch, and then show that the grammatical features indicate not only reductions, but also reflect linguistic innovations. Based on this, we turn to an area where this is particularly pronounced, namely new developments supported by a specific interplay between grammar and information structure in Kiezdeutsch.

2.1 Grammatical and lexical characteristics

While there is certainly variability between as well as within speakers, the evidence from linguistic descriptions of Kiezdeutsch so far points to a converging set of characteristic features at both the grammatical and lexical level (cf. Auer 2003).

On the lexical level, the integration of lexical material from migrant languages is salient in Kiezdeutsch: processes of lexical integration take place particularly in the field of discourse particles, including noun-based terms of address, such as *lan* ‘man, guy’, *moruk* ‘old man’ (both of Turkish origin), introductory and closing remarks (sometimes involving ritualised insults), such as *çüş* ‘Play up! / You fool!’ (lit.: ‘Whoa!’, said to stop a donkey; Turkish origin), *hadi* ‘Come on!’ (Turkish; initially *haydi*), *yallah* ‘Go!’ (lit.: ‘oh, Allah’; Arabic origin), *fawaka* ‘How is it going?’ (lit.: ‘How are you?’; Sranan origin), and affirmative particles such as *wallah* ‘indeed’ (lit.: ‘and God’; Arabic origin).

² From an interview on Kiezdeutsch we conducted with the director of “Tiger Kreuzberg”, a video series that plays on stereotypes about youth culture in Kreuzberg and is created by two young Berliners of Turkish origin, Murat Unal (actor) and Serkan Cetinkaya (director), who grew up in Kreuzberg and Wedding, two multiethnic neighbourhoods of Berlin.

- (2)
- a. *isch will mit dir spielen lan* (Kallmeyer & Keim 2003: 33)
I want with you play man
'I want to play with you, man!'
 - b. *moruk moruk guck dir das doch mal an* (Dirim & Auer 2004: 190)
old.man old.man look you that PTCL PTCL at
'Man, have a look at that!'
 - c. *yallah vi skal købe noget* (Quist 2008: 47; københavnsk multietnolekt)
PTCL we will buy something
'Come on, we are going to buy something.'
 - d. *he fawaka* (Cornips 2005; straattaal)
hey PTCL
'Hey, how is it going?'

A second area of influences from background languages is the phonological/phonetic level. In Kiezdeutsch, this includes the coronalisation of the palatal fricative [ç] to [ʃ] as well as some phonetic reductions, e.g. use of [s] instead of [ts] in word initial position (Tertilt 1996; Androutsopoulos 2001a; Auer 2003; Dirim & Auer 2004).

Characteristic phenomena on the morphological and syntactic levels have so far mostly been approached from a perspective of grammatical reduction. As we will show further down, though, reductions are only part of the picture: they can display a systematicity from which new grammatical developments –that is, linguistic innovations– can arise.

Findings so far point in particular to changes in the area of functional categories, which are indicated; at the morphological level, by inflectional deviations affecting gender, case, and number endings; and at the syntactic level, by bare NPs lacking determiners and/or prepositions, by nominal sentences lacking a copula verb, and by verb-first declaratives as well as the preservation of SVO word order after sentence-initial adverbs in declaratives (which would require an order Adv VSO according to the verb-second rule in standard German) (cf. Füglein 2000; Keim & Androutsopoulos 2000; Androutsopoulos 2001a,b; Kallmeyer & Keim 2002, 2003; Auer 2003; Dirim & Auer 2004; Wiese 2006; Kern & Selting 2006a).

- (3) *Inflectional deviations:*
- a. *aber ich HAB verGESsen mein nAme raufzuschreiben* (Kern & Selting 2006a: 246)
but I have forgotten my name down.to.write
'But I forgot to write my name down.'
(standard German: 'meinen_{MASC,ACC} Namen_{ACC}')
 - b. *aber mein schwester hat mich von klein an schon* (Dirim & Auer 2004: 441)
but my sister has me from small on already
immer fertig gemacht.
always finished made
'But even from the time I was little, my sister has always treated me badly.'
(standard German: 'meine_{FEM} Schwester')
- (4) *Bare NPs:*
- a. *hast du problem?* (Auer 2003: 258)
have you problem
'Do you have a problem?'
 - b. *daNACH vor meinem FENster is so BRIEF* (Kern & Selting 2006a: 245)
then in.front.of my window is PTCL letter
isch GUCK so isch dachte erstmal so STRAFzettel
I look PTCL I thought at.first PTCL parking.ticket

‘Afterwards, there is a letter in front of my window; I had a look,
at first I thought, a parking ticket.’

- c. die muss **bahnhof** gehn (Kallmeyer & Keim 2003: 42)
she must train-station go
‘She must go to the train station.’

(5) *Lack of copula:*

- a. münchen weit weg, oider (Füglein 2000: 89)
Munich far away man³
‘Munich is far, man.’
b. ja, ich aus wedding
yes I from Wedding
‘Yes, I’m from Wedding [= district of Berlin].’

(6) *Adv SVO and VI:*

- a. danAch wir warn auf KLO weißt du? (Kern & Selting 2006a: 248)
afterwards we were on loo know you
‘Afterwards, we went to the loo, you know.’
b. jetzt ich bin 18 (Auer 2003: 259)
now I am 18
‘Now I am 18.’
c. wollt ich keine hektik machen (Dirim & Auer 2004: 207)
wanted I no hectic make
‘I did not want to cause any hectic.’

Similar findings have been reported from linguistic practices in multiethnic neighbourhoods of Sweden, Denmark, and the Netherlands (cf. Kotsinas 1998; Appel 1999; Nortier 2001; Braak 2002; Cornips 2002, 2004; Quist 2005, 2008), suggesting that what we are seeing here are general – rather than idiosyncratic – linguistic processes that work in similar ways in similar settings. As mentioned above, though, for an understanding of the grammatical characteristics of Kiezdeutsch, these phenomena should not be seen only under the umbrella of grammatical reduction. While *prima facie* these features might indicate a reduction similar to that found in second language acquisition, a closer look reveals they do not reflect random simplification, but display a systematicity that can lead to linguistic innovations and give rise to new grammatical forms.

As Wiese (2006, 2008) argues, one way in which these forms can arise is via an elaboration and generalisation of patterns that draw on grammatical options that the grammatical system of German in principle offers, but that are realised in a more restricted way in other German varieties. The following list summarises some examples of this:

- *Bare NPs occurring with semantically reduced verbs* (cf. the example in (4a) above), which make use of the light verb pattern that German offers, reflecting an interaction of morphosyntactic economy (lack of determiner, high-frequency verbs) and pragmatic support (the interpretation draws on linguistic and extralinguistic context instead of lexicalisation, rendering the construction synchronically productive) (Wiese 2004; 2006);
- *Bare NPs used as local expressions* (cf. the example (4c) above), which generalise a pattern that is also found in other variants of colloquial German, but is there restricted to names for public transport stops (Wiese 2008);

³ *Oider* is a South German variant of *Alter* ‘old man’.

- *Development of a new system of directive particles*, “musstu” (speaker-exclusive) and “lassma” (speaker-inclusive), which are similar to a standard particle like *bitte* ‘please’ in some respect, but occupy a fixed sentence-initial position, drawing on a generalised pattern of verb-first-declaratives that occur as directives with a soothing/placating status in colloquial spoken German (cf. Simon 1998); in Kiezdeutsch, there is no restriction to the soothing/placating subdomain anymore (Wiese 2008).

Apart from an elaboration and generalisation of patterns, there is a second, systematic way in which linguistic innovations can emerge in Kiezdeutsch: through an interaction of information-structural preferences with the grammatical reduction strategies typical for communication in multilingual settings.

2.2 Grammar and information structure – an interplay

The grammatical reductions that have been reported for Kiezdeutsch point to a relaxation of morphological and syntactic – and presumably also semantic – constraints, that is, to a more liberal grammatical system, as would be expected for a newly emerging contact variety. Such a relaxation at the grammatical level can affect the implementation of information-structural aspects such as structuring the content of an utterance and anchoring an utterance in discourse: if grammatical restrictions are weaker in impeding the realisation of communicative strategies, information-structural preferences can be reflected more freely. This provides another starting point for innovations, i.e., the development of new constructions within the linguistic system. We describe two examples of this from Kiezdeutsch: the organisation of the left periphery in declaratives, and the functional extension of the particle *so*.

As mentioned in the previous section, we find declaratives with an Adv SVO order in Kiezdeutsch, which is at variance with the verb-second-pattern of standard German, which requires exactly one constituent in front of the finite verb in declarative clauses. This is not an unsystematic phenomenon, though – say, a random syntactic simplification – but is functionally motivated and can be linked to information-structural preferences. Judging from the evidence available so far,⁴ one restriction on this construction is that not just any constituent can be placed in front of the subject in the pre-field, but this pattern seems to be restricted to the type *Adv* SVO.

As Kern & Selting (2006a) have shown in a conversation-analytic study, in some of these cases, we find temporal adverbials in the left-most position that are pre-positioned in front of V2 clauses and packaged in separate prosodic units with primary accents. They argue that these separated, prosodically exposed pre-positionings are used as focusing devices in narratives.⁵ Hence, these cases do not just reflect a simplified sentence structure without subject inversion, but rather the systematic use of a particular kind of phrase (temporal adverbials) in a position separated from the sentence proper, which serves information-structural ends.

In a similar vein, the left periphery of intonationally integrated sentences might be accounted for by information-structural preferences as well. Prima facie, this domain seems to be subject to great syntactic variation, seemingly unmotivated from the grammatical point of view: as mentioned in the previous section,

⁴ See data in Auer (2003), Kern & Selting (2006a), Wiese (2006); for comparable data from Sweden and Denmark cf. Kotsinas (1998), Quist (2000, 2005).

⁵ Cf. also Kern & Selting (2006b), who find similar focusing functions for prosodically separated post-positioned constituents.

studies so far have not only reported Adv SVO, but also verb-first declaratives⁶, and we find common verb-second declaratives, as well. (7) brings some examples together:

- (7) a. *jetz ich **bin** 18* (Auer 2003: 259); cf. (6b) above
 now I am 18
 ‘Now, I am 18.’
 b. ***wollt** ich keine hektik machen* (Dirim & Auer 2004: 207); cf. (6c) above
 wanted I no hectic make
 ‘I did not want to cause any hectic.’
 c. *vielleicht **sind** die im aufenthaltsraum* (Kallmeyer & Keim 2002: 46)
 maybe are they in.the common.room
 ‘Maybe they are in the common room.’

However, a closer look at the different realisations of the left periphery reveals another interplay of word order and information structure. Note that the domain in front of the finite verb, the “forefield” in German sentences, is the customary position for the sentence topic. If we look at the sentences in (7) from this perspective, we can account for the different word orders we find here by a unified pattern, namely as different options to allocate topics to the forefield domain: in the verb-second sentence (7c), we find one element in topic position, as is also common outside Kiezdeutsch.

Under the account that grammatical constraints are somewhat loosened here, there should then also be other options, viz. the ones illustrated in (7b) (empty topic position) and (7a) (two elements in topic position). In (7b), there is only a weak candidate for the topic position, namely a pronominal information topic, and this topic then does not occupy a sentence-initial position, but is cliticised to the final verb (the preferred realisation of pronominal subjects in spoken German), leaving the topic position empty and thus yielding verb-first.

In (7a), the fronted adverbial is best be interpreted as a frame setter. Frame setters combine some aspects of focus with those of a topic; they are often referred to as “frame-setting topics”.⁷ While this terminology might be seen as problematic due to the absence of aboutness features, frame setters usually behave like topics; they are marked by morphological topic markers in some languages, for instance (see Jacobs 2001: 655-658). On the other hand, the function of frame setters is “to limit the applicability of the main predication to a certain restricted domain” (Chafe 1976: 50). Hence these adverbials bear a contrastive meaning: they choose a certain point of time out of possible alternative time spans, that is, they choose from a set of alternatives, which implies focusing. The focus within frame setters is not the main focus of a sentence, however, cf. Krifka (2007: 45), and that is why, though prosodically marked by a rising accent, the frame setter does not carry the main accent and tends to be in topic position. What the Adv SVO order in intonationally integrated sentences achieves, then, is that a frame setter can be realised in the sentence-initial topic position, while at the same time a sentence topic can occur there as well. Again, this points to a functional exploitation of weakened syntactic restrictions, a systematic pattern that yields a broader range of possibilities to realise information-structural preferences.

⁶ Note that these are verb-first constructions other than the directives discussed for colloquial German in the previous section, that is, they occur in contexts where they would not be found in other varieties of German (Dirim & Auer 2004: 207).

⁷ Accordingly, Jacobs (2001: 658) considers topicality a “polysemous category”. Krifka (2007: 47f) subsumes contrastive topics and frame setters under one superordinate term, “delimitation”.

Another case in point is a new development in the use of the particle *so* in Kiezdeutsch. This particle is a multifunctional lexical item in German.⁸ In Kiezdeutsch, it occurs in functions that are known from German in general, but also in new contexts. In particular, *so* occurs in a usage where it is semantically reduced and does not contribute to the meaning of the sentence, and is combined with phrases from a range of different syntactic categories that carry the main sentence stress, while *so* itself remains unstressed. (8) through (11) give some examples (Paul et al., to appear; data from informal conversations with adolescents from multiethnic neighbourhoods of Berlin):

- (8) Interviewer: könnt ihr n bisschen erzählen aus eurer freizeit
 could you a little.bit tell from your leisure.time
 Speaker: wir sind imma bei haus der jugend da(.)
 we are always at house of.the youth there
 da gibts **so CLUB** imma bei [h.] wir sin imma da
 there is SO club always near [PLACE] we are always there
für Jugendliche so
 for adolescents SO
 zum beispiel da gibts **so BILLiard-raum**
 for example there is SO snooker-room
 ‘Can you tell me a little bit about your leisure time? – We are always at House of Youth, there is always SO club, at [PLACE], we are always there, for young people SO.’
 [male, 15 years old, Turkish background, interview in Berlin-Wedding, in the street, about hobbies and activities in leisure time]
- (9) dicker isch hab isch weiß nisch also
 fatty I have I know not well
 die stadt is nisch mein dings so weißt was isch meine
 the city is not my thing SO know what I mean
 ich bin mehr **so naTURtyp** für natur dorf
 I am more SO nature.type for nature village
so im GRÜnen das is mein ding
 SO in.the green that is my thing
 ‘Buddy, I have, I don’t know, well, the city is not my thing, you know what I mean? I am more SO a nature type, for nature, village, SO on the country side, that is my thing.’
 [male, 28 years old, Turkish background, conversation with a German-background friend of about the same age, in the apartment of the latter, about places where he likes to live]
- (10) ich höre alpa gun weil er **so aus SCHÖneberg** kommt
 I listen.to Alpa Gun because he SO from Schöneberg comes
 ‘I listen to Alpa Gun [rap singer], because he comes SO from Schöneberg [Berlin district].’
 [male, 19 years old, Arabic (Palestinian) background, informal interview in Berlin-Kreuzberg about his music preferences]
- (11) die HÜBschesten fraun kommn von den schweden
 the most.beautiful women come from the Swedes
 also ich mein **so BLOND so**
 that.is I mean SO blonde SO
 ‘The most beautiful women come from Sweden, I mean SO blonde SO.’
 [male, ca. 20 years old, Arabic background, informal interview in Berlin-Kreuzberg about the soccer world cup 2008 in Germany]

From a purely syntactic point of view, the behaviour of *so* seems erratic: it combines with bare nouns, where it occupies the canonical position of a determiner (*so club*, *so billiardraum*, *so naturtyp*, cf. also the examples

⁸ On the functions of *so* in German (including informal speech) see for instance Hole & Klumpp (2000), Thurmair (2001), Lenerz & Lohnstein (2005), Auer (2007a).

in (4b) above), with prepositional phrases (*so im grünen, so aus schöneberg, für jugendliche so*), and with adjective phrases (*so blond so*), and it can precede its argument (*so naturtyp*) as well as follow it (*für jugendliche so*), and it even occasionally brackets it (*so blond so*).

As the examples show, though, *so* in this usage is always combined with the focus constituent of the sentence, which is supported by main stress. If one takes information-structural aspects into account, then, this seemingly erratic behaviour can be subsumed under a unified account of *so* as a focus marker, a particle that attaches to the respective focus constituent in a sentence. Under this view, the semantic and phonological peculiarities of *so* in this usage (semantic bleaching, no stress) do not seem unrelated anymore, but fit in as typical characteristics of focus markers (cf. Paul et al., to appear). The variability in the relative position of *so* and its argument, where *so* can mark the left or the right edge of the focus domain or even both, could be a sign for a construction in development, or might point to further functional differentiations.

Under this account, linguistic innovations in the domain of particles take place not only in the field of speaker-hearer-interaction (as in the case of *musstu* and *lassma*, mentioned in the previous section), but also in the domain of information packaging. This account of Kiezdeutsch is further supported by evidence for similar developments in informal varieties of related Germanic languages. Underhill (1988) and Meehan (1991) show that in colloquial North American English the particle *like* serves as a means to focus “the most significant new information” (Underhill 1988: 238).⁹ According to Toril Opsahl (p.c.), *sånn* ‘true’ in Norwegian Youth Language can be interpreted along similar lines, and *bara/ba* ‘only/exclusively’ in Swedish Youth Language has been characterised as a conversational/discourse marker that can “highlight certain parts of the discourse” by preceding the focused element (cf. Erman & Kotsinas 1993: 83).

Taken together, our analysis indicates that what we find in Kiezdeutsch is not so much a set of unrelated phenomena of grammatical reduction, but rather supports the development of new, systematic, patterns evolving from a complex interplay of grammatical and extra-grammatical domains: an interplay of morpho-syntactic reduction and grammatical and lexical innovation, of grammar and pragmatics, and of a relaxation of grammatical constraints and the realisation of information-structural preferences.

The question that arises then is: do these interactions and the grammatical and lexical developments they support justify speaking of a linguistic system that constitutes Kiezdeutsch as a multiethnolect that stands on its own? Is Kiezdeutsch a multiethnolect, and what would that imply?

3 What does it mean to be a multiethnolect?

A discussion of this question has to distinguish two aspects: first, one has to have an understanding of what it means to identify a linguistic phenomenon as some kind of *-lect*, and second, one needs to make clear what the *multiethnic* character of this *-lect* implies.

3.1 *-lects*

The term “lect” is traditionally closely related to that of a variety (cf. Bailey 1973): by calling a linguistic phenomenon a *-lect*, one approaches it from the point of view of a variety, that is, one takes a grammatical

⁹ Beyond this usage, *like* fulfills several other functions, mainly similar to *so*, cf. Dailey-O’Cain (2000) and Fox Tree (2006).

perspective and expects it to be characterised by linguistic features that establish a system that stands on its own, with some evidence for systematic relations between its linguistic variables. While different varieties will not necessarily be fully discrete, but could rather best be seen as conventionally defined dots of compression on a continuum (Berruto 1987: 265), a variety should display linguistic features that support a characteristic way of speaking that is recognised by its speakers as well as by other members of the larger community and which marks it as distinctive (cf. Gumperz 1975). Accordingly, Androutsopoulos (2001b: 324) talks of “new, emerging sociolectal varieties” (‘neue soziolektale Varietäten in der Entstehung begriffen’), based on converging evidence from different studies for a core set of characteristic grammatical and lexical features (cf. also Deppermann 2007: 325 who speaks of „a new ethnolectal variety of German“, and the characterisation of Rinkeby-Svenska in Kotsinas 1988: 136 as variety).

Traditionally, a certain degree of homogeneity within the grammar of a -lect has been considered crucial, leading to objections against this term in approaches that emphasise the variability between speakers and even within one speaker’s speech (cf. Fraurud & Bijvoet 2004). Against this background, multiethnic ways of speaking are rather characterised as styles or stylistic practices, emphasising their use as an expressive behaviour that is connected to the social identity of groups and can be operationalised according to different social situations (Kallmeyer 1994: 30f; Irvine 2001; Kern & Selting 2006a,b). Social style as a holistic and multilevel phenomenon is considered to challenge a more traditional approach to linguistic variation that focusses on single variables, which is seen as insufficient to account for the linguistic basis of social categorisation (cf. Auer 2007b), particularly when we adopt a view that treats identity as a communicated phenomenon allowing for “the possibility of multiple and flexible, inherently contingent selves that have coherence only from specific points of view and in specific contexts” (Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz 2007: 478). If we want to describe the way of speaking that is involved in a particular style, though, we need to include linguistic variables in our investigation, and accordingly, one often find both concepts, variety as well as style, used side by side in studies on multiethnic ways of speaking.¹⁰

In a unified approach combining the concepts of “variety” and “style / stylistic practice” under the label of “multiethnolect”, Quist (2008) interprets the use of a “lect” term rather as a signal that this phenomenon is not something exotic, but shows parallels to other -lects (like sociolects, dialects etc.), and points out the strategic advantages of this terminology and its potential political impact outside academia. She argues that the view of multiethnic ways of speaking as linguistic varieties vs. stylistic practices is a question of perspective: studies that take a variety approach aim to provide a formal description of adolescents’ speech in relation to other varieties (e.g. the standard national language), while studies that take a practice approach focus on the ways in which their speech is used as a resource for self-positioning within a social space. Following this approach, we will understand “multiethnolect” as a term that regards multiethnic speech as a phenomenon that involves characteristic linguistic features, without neglecting its social relevance within a complex, heterogeneous setting where its speakers engage in a range of different communities of practice.

¹⁰ Cf. for instance Androutsopoulos (2007: 9) who characterises ethnolects as “bundles of varieties or speech styles with ‘family resemblances’.” (‘Bündel von Varietäten bzw. Sprechstilen mit ‘Familienähnlichkeiten’”).

3.2 *Multiethno-lects*

Characterising this lect as ‘multiethno-’ points to the heterogeneous ethnic backgrounds of its speakers. Clyne (2000: 86) defines ethnolects as “varieties of a language that mark speakers as members of ethnic groups who originally used another language or distinctive variety”. According to him, a ‘*multiethnolect*’ is used by “several minority groups [...] collectively to express their minority status and/or as a reaction to that status to upgrade it” (Clyne 2000: 87). While this characterisation initially restricts multiethnolects to minority speakers, he also subsumes developments under this term where members of the dominant ethnic group, especially young people, share this way of speaking in a ‘language crossing’ situation (cf. Rampton 1995, 1998) that leads to the expression of a new kind of group identity.

It is in this broader sense that we will understand “multiethno-”lects: as ways of speaking that emerge in multiethnic neighbourhoods and, rather than being linked to *one* ethnic group, include speakers of different ethnic backgrounds, including those coming from the country’s majority (non-migrant) ethnicity. Hence, as Quist (2008: 58) points out, there is no clear one-to-one correspondence between ethnic background and the use of a multiethnolect.

The “multi-” in “multiethnolect” implies different ethnic backgrounds, but does not make any assumptions about their range. At present, we prefer this weaker term over “*panethnic*”, since it is not yet clear whether these ways of speaking are emerging across ethnicities in general, or whether they might be restricted to a particular subset, e.g. comprising mainly speakers with a middle-Eastern background (apart from those of the majority ethnicity).

Another terminological distinction is that to a broader sense of “ethnolect” as it is used, e.g., in Androutsopoulos (2001b, 2007) and Auer (2003). Auer (2003: 256) speaks of a ‘new ethnolect of German’ that has emerged in ‘ghettos’ in German cities and is used primarily by male adolescents with Turkish roots, but can be acquired by non-migrant background speakers, too, when they have close social ties with the primary speakers. Such a distinction might account for the early stages of such ways of speaking, although, to our knowledge, there is no empirical evidence showing a diachronic primacy of Turkish-background speakers – as opposed to dominance in terms of quantity and visibility. However, at present, speakers of a multitude of ethnic backgrounds are involved in these linguistic practices and contribute accordingly to their development. By using the term “multiethnolect”, we therefore do not commit ourselves to a distinction of primary and secondary users, and make explicit the contribution of different ethnicities.

3.3 *Criteria for a multiethnolect*

In summary, in order to identify Kiezdeutsch as a multiethnolect, one has to show that it meets the following criteria:

1. There are linguistic features that are characteristic of this way of speaking and distinguish it from the standard and from other varieties (» *-lect*).
2. There are some systematic relations between its variables that indicate a system of its own (» *-lect*).
3. Its speakers come from different ethnic backgrounds, including the (non-migrant) majority ethnic group (» *multiethno-*).

In section 2, we have summarised central grammatical and lexical features that have been reported as characteristic for Kiezdeutsch in the studies available so far, and have shown that these characteristics do not exhaust themselves in grammatical reduction, but that patterns of reduction provide a basis for linguistic innovations and are involved in a specific interplay of grammar and information structure. These systematic relations point to an emerging system in its own right, as required by criterion 2.

In order to satisfy the other two criteria, we must now show that these features can indeed identify Kiezdeutsch and distinguish it from other varieties (in compliance with criterion 1), and that this case holds across ethnicities in multiethnic neighbourhoods (in compliance with criterion 3). For this purpose, we conducted a perception study that employed a core set of Kiezdeutsch features identified in the literature, investigating their recognition, distinction, and evaluation by speakers from within and outside the expected speech community.

4 The perception of Kiezdeutsch: Recognition, distinction, evaluation

We investigated the acceptability and evaluation of Kiezdeutsch stimuli by asking a two-fold question:

1. Is Kiezdeutsch a -lect? Are these stimuli recognised as familiar in a multiethnic neighbourhood, and do they distinguish Kiezdeutsch from standard German as well as from random grammatical errors?
2. Is Kiezdeutsch multiethno-? Is it spoken by adolescents of different ethnic backgrounds in multiethnic neighbourhoods, including the majority ethnicity (= German)?

In order to answer these questions, we tested adolescents in a study targeted at a multiethnic and a monoethnic neighbourhood of Berlin, thus allowing us to involve the relation between Kiezdeutsch and multiethnic settings. We investigated possible differences in the acceptability of sentences with typical Kiezdeutsch features in contrast to standard German sentences and random grammatical errors, and compared neighbourhoods as well as ethnic/linguistic backgrounds across neighbourhoods. Differences in responses to Kiezdeutsch compared to the two other kinds of stimuli were taken as a defining factor for its distinctiveness; a higher acceptability of Kiezdeutsch in the multiethnic neighbourhood compared to the monoethnic neighbourhood, and the absence of differences for German vs. non-German background in the multiethnic neighbourhood, were taken as a defining factor for its multiethnicity.

4.1 The study

4.1.1 *Methods*

We conducted a perception study that tested the acceptability of linguistic characteristics from Kiezdeutsch in contrast to standard German samples and to random grammatical deviations. The form of an acceptability study offered us a controlled way to elicit judgments that provides a legitimate basis for statistical analysis (Schütze 1996). Given the problem that socially superordinate norms can take precedence over dialects in direct judgments tasks, leading to mismatches between speakers' intuitions and their actual linguistic behaviour (cf. Labov 1996), we employed indirect instead of direct judgments, that is, we asked speakers to tell whether they or their friends might say a sentence like the one we presented as well, rather than asking them to judge whether it is grammatical. This was done to diminish the effect of explicit, prescriptive notions of

speakers¹¹, which is particularly important in the case of a low-status variety, where speakers tend to have a high level of “linguistic insecurity” (Labov 1966), that is, they consider the form they use themselves as the incorrect form if it deviates from the standard. Given the general low social status of multiethnic neighbourhoods in Germany (see also data in section 4.1.2 below), we expect Kiezdeutsch to have a low prestige in line with the general phenomenon that attitudes towards linguistic varieties are tied to those towards their speakers.¹²

The acceptability test was based on a non-graded, binary, task that did not elicit relative judgments¹³ or magnitude estimations (cf. Sorace & Keller 2005), in order to keep the stimuli list short and to make it possible for subjects to handle the task without elaborate instructions and training sessions, thus avoiding long testing sessions that might lead to exhaustion effects (cf. Schütze 1996 on this problem).¹⁴ Testing was done in individual, single-subject sessions, which, together with the comparably short stimuli list, allowed us to complement yes/no responses by free comments on the sentences that subjects could give after each response. This way, we combined the advantages gained from a controlled questionnaire method with those of interviews that can give an insight into subjects’ motivations for their answers and thus help spotting possible problems that arise from judgments based on e.g. content or on pragmatic considerations, rather than on grammatical intuitions (cf. Cornips & Poletto 2005). In addition, subjects’ comments revealed some of their attitudes towards the stimuli we presented to them. Unlike the common practice in linguistic attitude research,¹⁵ the focus in this setting was on the perception of linguistic samples directly, rather than the perception of their speakers (via such samples).

The stimuli were presented auditorily, rather than in writing, given that Kiezdeutsch is an informal way of speaking that is generally restricted to spoken language. This thus further helped avoid prescriptive notions about written standard German to interfere with the judgments. For the oral presentation, the sentences were recorded, which allowed us to (a) control for a uniform intonation, and (b) to choose a young speaker who would ensure plausibility for the Kiezdeutsch stimuli, given that Kiezdeutsch tends to occur as a youth language in in-group situations among adolescents.

¹¹ Cornips & Poletto (2005), Cornips (2006). Cf. also Silverstein (1998), who notes the ideological alliance of speakers to the standard register.

¹² Cf. Preston (2002). This is supported by findings as those in Preston & Niedzielski (2003), who show that African American English is judged incorrect by the speakers themselves, who relate this incorrectness to “‘laziness’, ‘low class’ or an inability (or unwillingness) to perform otherwise” (ibid.: 131). Kroskrity (2004) observes similar processes in the Puerto Rican community in New York, where the command of two languages, Spanish and English, creates a group identity among bilingual children at first. But later on, “[a]s children become more exposed to the pejorative view of their language skills that is promoted by educational and other dominant bloc institutions [...] they display the language-ideological compliance of subordinated groups by accepting, even partially, the negative images of themselves presented by the dominant society” (ibid.: 510). Cf. also Irvine (2001: 33) who notes that “linguistic differences appear to be iconic representations of the social contrasts they index – as if a linguistic feature somehow depicted or displayed a social group’s inherent nature or essence”.

¹³ That is, it did not ask e.g. which of a set of similarly constructed sentences might be most common.

¹⁴ Cf. also the findings in Weskott & Fanselow (2008) that indicate that binary categorical judgments, graded judgments (e.g. involving a 7-point scale) and judgments based on magnitude estimations provide the same amount of information on acceptability, as well as Sorace & Keller (2005: 6) who state that the data elicited using a binary or 7-point scale “correlate well with magnitude estimation data”.

¹⁵ For an overview cf. Giles & Coupland (1991).

4.1.2 Subjects

Subjects were adolescents from schools in two different kinds of neighbourhood: (1) a *multiethnic* neighbourhood where 84.4 % of the pupils had a home language other than German¹⁶ and 25.3 % of under 18 year olds living in the area do not hold a German citizenship, and (2) a *monoethnic* neighbourhood where only 4.8 % of the pupils had a non-German home language and only 1.7 % of of under 18 year olds living in the area do not hold a German citizenship.

Since one aspect we wanted to investigate were possible differences between subjects from multi- vs. monoethnic neighbourhoods, we had to make sure that there were no other, external, factors coming into play in this comparison. In the case of substandard linguistic stimuli, especially the social background of speakers might play such an additional role for the responses, and the risk that this will be a confounding factor is particularly pronounced given that in Germany, we find a strong correlation between ethnic and social factors: for inhabitants with migrant background compared to those without a background of migration, the statistics give over-all lower educational achievements, higher school drop-out rates (almost 10 % compared to 1.5 %), a nearly doubled rate of employment in low-skilled domains (48.5 % manual workers compared to 24 %), and nearly twice as high unemployment rates (13 % compared to 7.5 %).¹⁷

Accordingly, in order to make sure that the differences we might find would indeed be related to multi- vs. monoethnic neighbourhoods, rather than to aspects of social class, we recruited subjects from two state schools of the same educational status (both were “Oberschulen”, ie., general secondary schools) that were located in areas with comparable social indicators (similar unemployment rate, similar percentage of households receiving social benefits), that is, the neighbourhoods differed with respect to multi- vs. monoethnicity, but not with respect to general social factors. That we were able to identify a monoethnic neighbourhood for our study that satisfies these criteria, is due to a idiosyncrasy of Berlin. While it is generally rare in Western Europe to find predominantly monoethnic urban neighbourhoods with a social profile that is similar to that of a multiethnic inner city neighbourhood, we do find such areas in some Eastern districts of Berlin that still have a very small intake of residents with migrant background.

Table 1 provides the relevant figures for the two schools and their neighbourhoods (data from the Berlin Senate for Education, Science, and Research (= school administration), and the Berlin Senate’s Administration for City Development (= demographic monitoring)):

¹⁶ This feature (German: ‘nicht-deutscher Herkunftssprache’) is determined via questionnaires that the Berlin Senate for Education sends out to parents: children count as having a “non-German home language” if parents state that the main language spoken at home is a language other than German (in a dual choice of possible answers “German” and “other than German”).

¹⁷ Sources: German Federal Office for Statistics, Microcensus 2005 on the population with a migrant background in Germany; German Federal Ministry of Internal Affairs, Report of the Independent Committee on Immigration.

	pupils nGh	foreigners under 18	recipients of social benefits	children in house- holds receiving social benefits	unem- ployment rate	long-term unem- ployed	unem- ployed adoles- cents	developmental index
multiethnic	84.4 %	25.3 %	25.2 %	59.4 %	14.8 %	6.0 %	10.8 %	<i>middle to very low</i>
monoethnic	4.8 %	1.7 %	13.3 %	41.7 %	14.3 %	6.9 %	10.2 %	<i>middle to very low</i>

“nGh”: ‘non-German home language’ (after Berlin Senate for Education)
 “foreigners”: inhabitants who do not hold a German citizenship (after Berlin Administration for City Development)
 “children”: under 15 years old
 “adolescents”: 18-25 years old
 “long-term unemployed”: people who have been without employment for an uninterrupted period of more than 12 months (after Federal Employment Agency)

Table 1: ethnic/linguistic and social demographic data for the selected neighbourhoods

Altogether 48 adolescents, who were recruited and tested at the two schools, participated in the experiment. All participants were in the 9th grade and were 14 to 17 years old, with an average of 15.2 years for participants from the multiethnic neighbourhood and 15.3 years for those from the monoethnic neighbourhood. Participation in the study was voluntary and took place outside class. Participants represented a random sample in the sense that no conditions were placed on the ethnic background of the pupils to take part in the study. 30 participants (9 female, 21 male) were from the school in the multiethnic neighbourhood, while 18 participants (7 female, 11 male) were from the school in the monoethnic neighbourhood. These figures were chosen as a kind of compromise that would enable us to compare both responses between participants from the multi- vs. the monoethnic neighbourhood *and* responses between German-background participants from the multiethnic neighbourhood vs. those from the monoethnic neighbourhood: while all participants from the monoethnic neighbourhood were of German background, participants from the multiethnic neighbourhood were all born in Germany, but had different ethnic backgrounds and different home languages (Turkish (19), German (6), Arabic (3), Kurdish (1), Polish (1)). “Home language” was determined from a questionnaire that was presented to participants after the study and asked about the language subjects dominantly spoke at home (with parents and siblings) and with their friends (in addition to background information about age, gender etc.). In all cases, the language spoken with parents was also used with siblings and/or friends – even though it was usually not the only language used in that context.

4.1.3 Materials

Stimuli consisted of 25 short sentences, each consisting of 4 words, which would diminish parsing difficulties (which can reduce, but under some conditions even increase acceptability; cf. Fanselow & Frisch 2008), and allow us to keep testing sessions short enough for the subjects. The sentences were subsumed under three categories: ‘kiezdeutsch’, ‘standard’, and ‘false’. Our main interest was in responses to ‘kiezdeutsch’ stimuli, while ‘standard’ and ‘false’ sentences served as fillers, but also provided a basis for comparison against which to determine the distinctness of the ‘kiezdeutsch’ stimuli. In order to provide a reasonably balanced set for speakers who might perceive ‘kiezdeutsch’ stimuli as more similar to ‘false’ ones as well as

for speakers for whom they might fall in-between ‘false’ and ‘standard’ sentences, we constructed 10 ‘kiezdeutsch’ stimuli, 10 ‘standard’ stimuli, and 5 ‘false’ stimuli (for a complete list see the attachment).

(a) ‘kiezdeutsch’ stimuli. Using spontaneous speech samples from adolescents in multiethnic neighbourhoods as a model, we constructed 10 sentences with features that have consistently been reported as characteristic for Kiezdeutsch in the literature (a complete list of the stimuli is in the attachment). Several examples were chosen for each domain, with two examples for each structure:

- *syntactic level*: lack of articles (= bare objects NPs), lack of prepositions (= bare local expressions), lack of copula
- *morphological level*: inflectional deviations (gender, case in NPs)
- *lexical level*: word borrowings (from Arabic and Turkish)

(b) ‘standard’ stimuli. 10 sentences that showed no deviations from spoken standard German in informal situations.

(c) ‘false’ stimuli. 5 sentences with random deviations from standard German:

- *syntactic level*: wrong word order within the noun phrase, double allocation of the subject position, incomplete sentence
- *morphological level*: agreement violation between subject and verb (number, person)
- *lexical/morphological level*: wrong construction of complex predicate

The sentences were mixed in a semi-random order such that the appearance of ‘standard’, ‘kiezdeutsch’, and ‘false’ sentences was balanced, and ‘kiezdeutsch’ stimuli of the same subcategory – that is, reflecting the same kind of feature – were at least 6 sentences apart.

Sentences were recorded by a male adolescent (24 years old) speaker of German background who was familiar with Kiezdeutsch and was chosen because of his ability to produce a “compromise” form of a salient phonological Kiezdeutsch feature, the coronalisation of [ç]. Since we concentrated on grammatical, rather than phonetic indicators in our study and did not want to prejudice participants in a particular direction, we decided to use an intermediate pronunciation inbetween standard and Kiezdeutsch for [ç] in all stimuli.

In order to check our stimuli, we conducted a pre-test with 6 participants. Based on the results, we replaced two sentences: (1) “Nee, ich aus Spandau.”, a ‘kiezdeutsch’ sentence with a missing copula, was exchanged because Spandau, a district of Berlin, was not well known by the participants, so that they got sidetracked by the content. (2) “Er ich singt gerne.”, a ‘false’ sentence with double subject allocation, was exchanged because it got corrected in perception, such that the two adjacent subjects “Er ich” were understood as one constituent, the proper name “Erich”.

4.1.4 Procedure

The mixed set of sentences was presented auditorily to the participants via a dictaphone with an internal loudspeaker, Olympus DS 2300. Participants were tested individually in a controlled setting in a separate room at their school. Each testing session lasted about 20 minutes. Subjects were asked to listen to the sentences one by one and to give their opinion on them, according to the following instruction:

“This is not a German test, and you will remain anonymous. We would like to know how you speak in every-day life. We will play 25 sentences to you and want to know your opinion on them. When you hear a sentence that you or your friends might say so too, say ‘yes’. If you think the sentence sounds strange or wrong, say ‘no’. After each sentence, you have the opportunity to comment on it. If you want a sentence to be replayed, you can say so.”

Two experimenters conducted the experiment; one of them was the main interactor with the participants, the other one stayed in the background. Responses were coded by both experimenters: the main interactor took hand-written notes on participants’ responses (yes/no) and comments, while the experimenter in the background typed them in on a laptop. Since there were no deviations between the two protocols, all responses were included in the analysis.

4.1.5 *Analysis of potential problems*

An exploratory error analysis, based on the free comments and on clarification requests by participants during the testing sessions, revealed two potential problems:

(1) Participants did not always distinguish between acceptability/grammaticality and content. As a result, a slightly old-fashioned proper name like “Kai” in one of the ‘kiezdeutsch’ sentences was corrected by participants from the multiethnic neighbourhood, who gave comments like “Yes, but with another name. I often hear that.” or “Yes, not with “Kai”, though, but with another name.” Similarly, cycling does not seem to be a part of their every-day life, so the ‘kiezdeutsch’ sentence “Mein Fahrrad wieder da.” (‘My bike back again’, lack of copula) got corrected, e.g. in “Yes, but I would say “My father back again” (‘Mein Vater wieder da.’), not “My bike back again”.”, or commented upon as in “We actually do not speak about bikes.”

(2) There were two sentences that were initially corrected in perception by some participants: “Kauft Katja gleiche Jacke?” (‘Does Katja buy same jumper?’, ‘kiezdeutsch’ stimuli, lack of determiner) was interpreted as “Kauft Katja gleich die Jacke?” (‘Does Katja buy the jumper right away?’, would be standard German), and “Paul kauft Auto das.” (‘Paul buys car the/that.’, ‘false’ stimuli, wrong word order) was interpreted as “Paul kauft Autogas.” (‘Paul buys car gas.’, would be standard German). In both cases, subjects commented on this and asked for a replay of the sentence, leading to rejections, e.g. for the first sentence “Kauft Katja gleich die Jacke? Can I hear that again?” [sentence replayed] “No. ‘kauft gleich *die* Jacke’ would be OK.”, and for the second sentence “Autogas? Can I hear that again?” [sentence replayed] “No! Not this way!” and “Can I hear that again?” [sentence replayed] “No! Honestly, where did you get this from?”

Hence, free comments and the option of replaying sentences helped avoiding potential problems such that phonetic misunderstandings could be clarified and possible influences of pragmatic considerations or content could be spotted.

4.2 **Results and Discussion**

Results were analysed from a quantitative perspective, where we compared yes/no-responses for the different groups of participants and the different categories of stimuli (using two common non-parametrical tests suited for interval scales involving two or more than two categories, respectively: Mann-Whitney’s U and Kruskal-Wallis H-test), and additionally from a qualitative perspective, where we analysed the different

evaluations of ‘kiezdeutsch’ stimuli that became apparent from the free comments provided by participants from the multi- and the monoethnic neighbourhood.

4.2.1 Quantitative assessment

A statistical analysis of yes/no-responses in the acceptability task revealed three main patterns:

(1) Distinction of Kiezdeutsch sentences from standard and false stimuli. There were highly significant differences between responses for sentences of the three categories (‘standard’, ‘false’, ‘kiezdeutsch’) across neighbourhoods (cf. Table 2): for all subjects Kruskal Wallis $\chi^2(2) = 21.110$, $p = 0.000$; for subjects from the multiethnic neighbourhood: Kruskal Wallis $\chi^2(2) = 17.454$, $p = 0.000$; for subjects from the monoethnic neighbourhood: Kruskal Wallis $\chi^2(2) = 21.695$, $p = 0.000$.

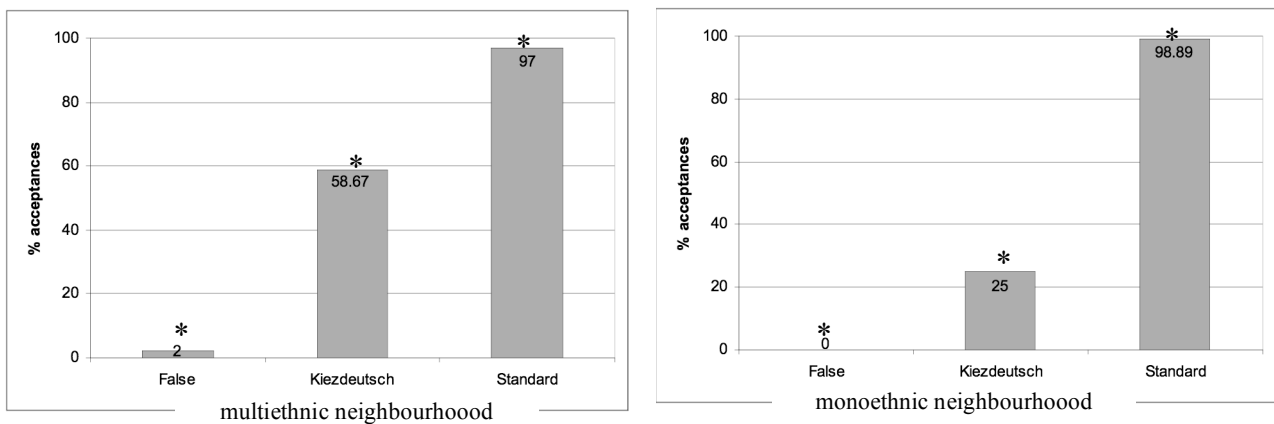


Table 2: Acceptance rates for ‘false’ vs. ‘kiezdeutsch’ vs. ‘standard’ sentences

This result supports our distinction of the three kinds of stimuli. It shows that the features we selected as Kiezdeutsch characteristics are clearly distinguished from standard German as well as from random grammatical deviations by speakers across neighbourhoods.

(2) Differences between participants from mono- and multiethnic neighbourhoods only with respect to Kiezdeutsch sentences. There were no significant differences between participants from mono- vs. multiethnic neighbourhoods with respect to ‘standard’ and ‘false’ sentences: Mann Whitney’s $U = 235$, $Z = -1.098$, $p = 0.272$ for ‘false’ sentences, $U = 243$, $Z = -1.371$, $p = 0.170$ for ‘standard’ sentences. In contrast to that, there were highly significant differences between participants from mono- vs. multiethnic neighbourhoods for responses to ‘kiezdeutsch’ sentences, which were accepted more than twice as often in the multiethnic neighbourhood (59 % vs. 25 %, see Table 2 above): Mann Whitney’s $U = 43.5$, $Z = -4.884$, $p = 0.000$ for ‘kiezdeutsch’ sentences.

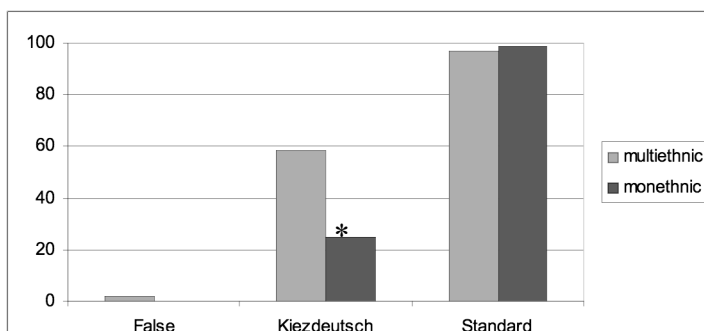


Table 3: Responses from mono- vs. multiethnic neighbourhoods for ‘kiezdeutsch’ vs. ‘false’ and ‘standard’ sentences

This sets Kiezdeutsch sentences apart from false and standard ones in the comparison of neighbourhoods; it indicates a clear distinction in the acceptability for Kiezdeutsch sentences, but not for sentences with random grammatical errors, which were overall rejected by participants from mono- and multiethnic neighbourhoods alike, and for standard German sentences, which were overall accepted by participants from mono- and multiethnic neighbourhoods alike: it is only for Kiezdeutsch sentences that we find differences, and these differences are in a direction that clearly indicates their association with the multiethnic, rather than the monoethnic neighbourhood.

(3) Differences between neighbourhoods, not between ethnicities. On the one hand, there were no significant differences in the multiethnic neighbourhood between participants with different languages of origin, and in particular not for German vs. migrant background: responses for all sentences, comparison of different languages of origin: Kruskal-Wallis $\chi^2(4) = 6.508$, $p = 0.164$; comparison of German vs. migrant background: Mann Whitney’s $U = 55$, $Z = -0.9$, $p = 0.368$ (comparison of German vs. migrant background for Kiezdeutsch stimuli: $U = 62.5$, $Z = -0.506$, $p = 0.613$). On the other hand, there were highly significant differences between participants from the monoethnic (German) neighbourhood and German-background participants from the multiethnic neighbourhood with respect to the Kiezdeutsch stimuli (though not with respect to the ‘false’ and ‘standard’ sentences, in line with the general pattern summarised in (2) above): comparison for ‘kiezdeutsch’ sentences: Mann Whitney’s $U = 6$, $Z = -3.235$, $p = 0.001$ (for ‘false’ sentences: Mann Whitney’s $U = 54$, $Z = 0.000$, $p = 1.000$; for ‘standard’ sentences: Mann Whitney’s $U = 48$, $Z = -0.835$, $p = 0.404$).

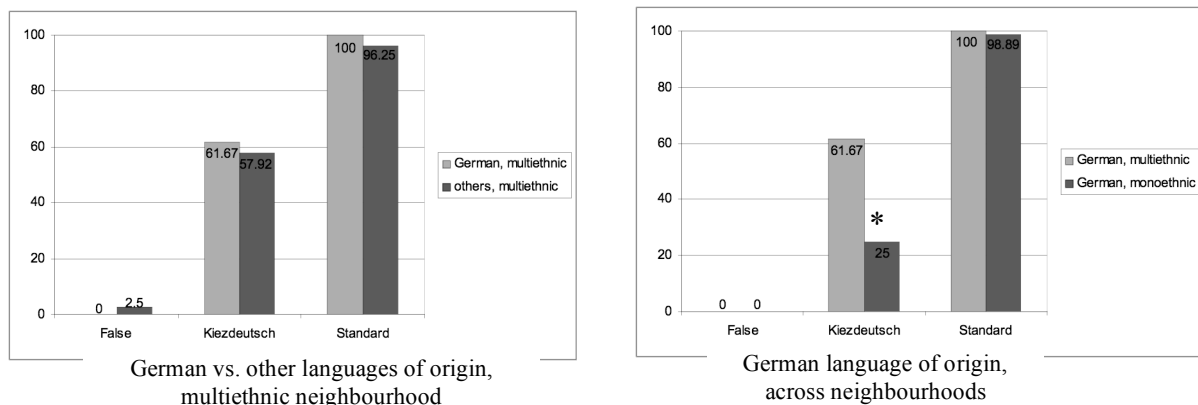


Table 4: Responses from German-background participants from multiethnic neighbourhood compared to migrant participants and to participants from monoethnic neighbourhood

These figures show that, when it comes to Kiezdeutsch stimuli, adolescents with a non-migrant, German background who live in the multiethnic neighbourhood pattern with their migrant peers, rather than with German-background adolescents from the monoethnic neighbourhood: we found a clear distinction between participants from mono- and multiethnic neighbourhoods that goes across linguistic/ethnic boundaries and

applies to linguistic samples with grammatical features found in Kiezdeutsch, but not to standard German samples or random deviations.

Taken together, these results support a view of Kiezdeutsch both as “multiethno-“ and as a “-lect”: they indicate a distinctive variety by showing that the characteristics we employed distinguish Kiezdeutsch from standard German as well as from random grammatical errors in the perception of speakers both from multi- and monoethnic neighbourhoods, and they indicate a multiethnic, rather than an ethnic variety by showing that Kiezdeutsch is accepted in multi- rather than monoethnic neighbourhoods, and that this acceptance is related to the neighbourhood rather than to a particular linguistic background or ethnicity, and specifically not to migrant vs. non-migrant background.

4.2.2 *Qualitative assessment*

When we have a look at the free comments subjects made on the ‘kiezdeutsch’ sentences and analyse the attitudes that become apparent from them, we find some interesting patterns that indicate further differences between participants from the monoethnic and the multiethnic group and support a view of Kiezdeutsch as a variety that is associated with multiethnic speech communities.¹⁸

There is a striking contrast between the monoethnic and the multiethnic group with respect to what they focus on in their perception of this association: while the monoethnic group tended to focus on ethnicity, the multiethnic group associated ‘kiezdeutsch’ stimuli with (multiethnic) neighbourhoods. In this context, participants from the monoethnic group made a ‘we’ vs. ‘they’ distinction, with comments like “We don’t use it because we are Germans.”, and tagged ‘kiezdeutsch’ sentences as “non-German” or “language of foreigners”: 50 % referred to “foreigners” at least once, four of the participants specifically mentioned “Turks”. In contrast to that, multiethnic subjects related ‘kiezdeutsch’ sentences to their own group, to their friends, school class, or neighbourhood (park, street, etc.), giving comments like “My friends speak like that.”, “We speak like that.”, or “I am not sure whether I say this, but it is frequently used in my environment.”

We interpret this as an indication for a higher degree of familiarity with Kiezdeutsch in the multiethnic group: evaluations in the multiethnic neighbourhood focus less on surface differentiations like ‘foreigners’ – ‘non-foreigners’ and more on classifying the variety and oneself within the practicing group and its repertoire, i.e., on categorising oneself as a (non-)user of this specific way of speaking.

Categorisations following the pattern ‘language of foreigners’ in the monoethnic group were formulated in a way that sometimes revealed strong negative stereotyping, with comments like “wog German”, or “These typical foreigners again.”, a formulation that indicates a language-ideological shift from first to sec-

¹⁸ Note that comments were optional, that is, not all sentences were commented upon by each subject. Altogether, subjects volunteered comments in 943 out of 1200 possible cases (25 sentences x 48 subjects), with subjects from the monoethnic neighbourhood providing comments for 82 % of the stimuli they heard, and those from the multiethnic neighbourhood in 77 % of the cases. Most comments were given for ‘kiezdeutsch’ sentences (comments on 94 %), followed by ‘false’ sentences (comments on 81 %), and ‘standard’ sentences (comments on 62 %). Most subjects (= all but three) commented on at least 60 % of the sentences, and all but four sentences were commented upon by at least 71 % of the subjects.

ond order indexicality in the sense of Silverstein (2003), where instances of speech perceived as characteristic for members of a certain group become associated with *types* of people (cf. also Woolard 1998).

Additional deprecative comments indicating strong negative attitudes towards the speakers of ‘kiezdeutsch’ samples relate to areas like education (“something for stupid people”) and social class (“prole-like”). There was also a participant from the monoethnic group, though, who connected the evaluation ‘foreigner language’ with positive aspects of speech economy: “Foreigner language. Well, I speak like that, too. It’s a shortcut. It’s better this way. The Germans adopt this from the foreigners.”

From language attitude research in general we know that there is a tendency to judge a way of speaking deprecatingly when it is associated with a group of speakers of (alleged) lower status (cf. Preston 2002), and to evaluate their speech as wrong. This holds for the monoethnic neighbourhood, where nearly 20 % of the comments on ‘kiezdeutsch’ sentences explicitly characterised them as ‘wrong’ or ‘bad German’.

To a lesser degree this also holds for participants from the multiethnic neighbourhood, where 10 % of the responses involved explicit evaluations as ‘wrong German’, with comments like “I hear this very often, that’s Kreuzberg after all, children are not well educated there with their languages, they keep bad company”. This supports findings on ‘linguistic insecurity’ as mentioned in section 4.1.1 above, i.e., the observation that lower class speakers might consider the form they use as the incorrect form if it deviates from the standard, leading to potential mismatches between speakers’ intuitions in judgment tasks and their actual linguistic behaviour (Labov 1966, 1996).

Note, though, that sentences evaluated as ‘wrong’ were nevertheless accepted as part of their own speech by 6 subjects at least once. Altogether, sentences considered incorrect were accepted in 20.7 % of the cases. Furthermore, as reported in the previous section, we found highly significant differences between the acceptability rates for sentences with random grammatical errors (‘false’ stimuli) and those with Kiezdeutsch features in both neighbourhoods. This suggests that in spite of these attitudes, subjects did make a difference between true grammatical errors and Kiezdeutsch sentences. The view that speakers in the multiethnic neighbourhood might make a difference between something like ‘wrong, but nevertheless part of our language’ and ‘just wrong’, is supported by the following comment, given by a member of the multiethnic group on a ‘kiezdeutsch’ sentence he accepted: “Yes, we say that [laughs], although it’s not formulated correctly. We say it anyway.” This account is also in accordance with findings from a study on attitudes towards Rinkebysvenska conducted by Bijvoet (2003) who reports that some of its speakers “are of the opinion that it is incorrect to speak Rinkeby Swedish, even for peer-peer interaction, but they use the variety anyway.”

This further underlines that Kiezdeutsch is not characterised by random grammatical errors, but, as a multiethnolect, forms a system that is part of a broader linguistic repertoire serving different social functions. This is in line with findings from multiethnic youth languages in other European countries. For the københavnsk multiethnolect, Quist (2008) reports “a manifest awareness among the participants of their speech style as a specific “language” (their words, *et sprog* ‘a language’). They formulated opinions and attitudes about its use – by whom and in what situations – and they talked about it as something distinct from “normal Danish” and also different from the Danish language of their first-generation immigrant parents.” (Quist 2008: 48). Similarly, Godin (2005/2006) states for multiethnic linguistic practices in Botkyrka, a suburb of

Stockholm, that this youth language serves as “a way of speaking and relaxing among friends, as something to have in common with them” (ibid.: 134), and accordingly is not used outside the peer group, where speakers switch to a more standard form of Swedish. Nevertheless, like in the case of Kiezdeutsch, speakers often regard their language as “a form of ‘bad’ or ‘improper’ language”, as “something one grows out of” (ibid.: 135).

Using Kiezdeutsch reflects a choice, a self-positioning of its speaker within a complex multiethnic urban setting. It signals that the speaker belongs to a certain group, and several of the comments show that this multiethnolect is bound to a peer-group, emphasising its status as a youth language, with participants from the multiethnic neighbourhoods volunteering comments like “Sometimes I say this, but not that often, my friends as well. Not to everyone, not to adults, but to my friends I do.” This awareness is also reflected in a comment from the monoethnic group, by a participant who commented on a ‘kiezdeutsch’ sentence: “Typical youth language at a lot of schools.”, while distancing himself from such schools, however, and rejecting the sentence.

Taken together, the free comments subjects gave on test stimuli support the findings from the acceptance figures that indicate a marked difference between the multiethnic and the monoethnic neighbourhood and characterise Kiezdeutsch as a variety that is associated with multiethnic speech communities, while they also provide further insights into the status this multiethnolect has, namely as a way of speaking that might be considered ‘wrong German’ and be subjected to negative attitudes, but has its place in a multiethnic community, where it can be used for social positioning in peer-groups. Here is a final quote, a comment from a participant from the multiethnic group, that summarises this nicely: “My friends talk like that, but consciously. We do as if we don’t know German. It is not so hip when one speaks fluent German, so we pretend this.”¹⁹

5 Conclusions

In this paper, we have investigated the status of Kiezdeutsch from the point of view of the linguistic system, and argued that its characteristics are best captured by the notion of ‘multiethnolect’. Based on a discussion of what it means to be a multiethnolect, we identified three criteria that Kiezdeutsch would have to fulfill: (1) It must involve characteristic linguistic features that distinguish this way of speaking from the standard and from other varieties (» *-lect*), (2) There must be systematic relations between its variables that indicate a system of its own (» *-lect*), and (3) Its speakers must come from different ethnic backgrounds, including the (non-migrant) majority ethnic group (» *-multiethno-*).

We showed that the second point, the systematicity on the linguistic level, is supported by a number of interrelations between grammatical phenomena found in Kiezdeutsch, by linguistic innovations they support, and the interaction between different linguistic interfaces, including a specific interplay of grammar and in-

¹⁹ Note that this shows also parallels to adolescent speakers of African-American English, who use this variety consciously among themselves and are also able to switch to some variety closer to the standard, as becomes apparent in the following quote describing a teacher’s assessment of her pupils: “They change when they speak to her [the European-American teacher], particularly, she says, ‘if they want something’” (Preston & Niedzielski 2003: 132).

formation structure. We argued that these phenomena point to patterns interrelated in a complex and systematic way, rather than random deviations or mere grammatical reductions.

Against this background, we presented evidence from a perception study conducted in a multiethnic and a monoethnic neighbourhood in Berlin that elicited acceptability judgments and free comments on three kinds of linguistic stimuli that either (i) reflected characteristic grammatical features reported for Kiezdeutsch in the literature, (ii) came from standard German, or (iii) showed random grammatical errors. We conducted a qualitative analysis of free comments and quantitative comparisons of judgments between the different kinds of stimuli and between participants from the multi- vs. monoethnic neighbourhoods.

Our results support a view of Kiezdeutsch as a distinct way of speaking, with grammatical features that distinguish it from standard German as well as from random grammatical errors, a way of speaking that is, furthermore, linked to multiethnic rather than monoethnic neighbourhoods and holds across ethnicities there, including speakers with non-migrant background (who patterned with their migrant peers, not with their ethnic peers from the monoethnic German neighbourhood). This way of speaking is subjected to negative attitudes, in particular, it is regarded as ‘bad’ or ‘wrong’ German, from without, but to some part also from within the speech community (in accordance with what we know from attitudes towards low-class dialects in general), but it is part of a larger linguistic repertoire where its choice is an integrated part of social practices that serve to position the speaker in a peer-group context in multiethnic urban settings.

Taken together, these results support a view of Kiezdeutsch as a multiethnolect that, despite its inherent variability, constitutes a linguistic system that distinguishes it from other varieties or dialects, and supports perceptions that recognise it as the speech of a multiethnic urban neighbourhood.

6 References

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Paola Lopez and Nadja Wiercholski for their help in gathering the data for our investigation. Special thanks go to the pupils and teachers of the two schools involved in the study. The study was funded by a grant from the German Research Foundation (DFG) to the Special Research Area (SFB) "Information structure" (project "Kiezdeutsch", PI: Heike Wiese). Work on this article was further supported by a grant from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) to Heike Wiese (funding of a European network on linguistic practices of young people in multiethnic urban areas).

Attachment: Stimuli used in the perception study

'kiezdeutsch' stimuli

Kauft Katja gleiche Jacke?	'Does Katja buy same coat?'	[bare object NP]
Kai hat andere Meinung.	'Kai has different opinion.'	[bare object NP]
Mein Fahrrad wieder da.	'My bike back again.'	[lack of copula]
München weit weg, Alter!	'Munich far away, man!'	[lack of copula]
Gehst du jetzt Aldi?	'Do you go Aldi now?'	[bare local expression]
Wir sind grade McDonald's.	'We are McDonald's right now.'	[bare local expression]
Ich mag andere Leuten.	'I like other people _{DAT} .'	[inflectional deviation]
Meine Vater geht spazieren.	'My _{FEM} father goes for a walk.'	[inflectional deviation]
Wallah, den kenn ich!	'Wallah, I know that guy!'	[word borrowing]
Lan, so geht's nich!	'Lan, that doesn't work!'	[word borrowing]

'standard' stimuli

Komm mal her, Alter.	'Come here, man.'
Das Eis schmeckt gut.	'The ice cream is tasty.'
Ich bin bei Katja.	'I am at Katja's.'
Im Kühlschrank ist Cola.	'There is cola in the fridge.'
Es geht jetzt los.	'It's about to start.'
Echt, der macht das!	'Honestly, he does that!'
Der Akku ist leer.	'The battery is empty.'
Siehst du den Roller?	'Do you see the scooter?'
Ich komm später vorbei.	'I'll drop by later.'
Ich fahre zum Bahnhof.	'I'm driving to the station.'

'false' stimuli

Das versucht niemand zu.	'Nobody tries that to.'	[<i>incomplete sentence</i>]
Paul kauft Auto das.	'Paul buys car the.'	[<i>wrong word order within NP</i>]
Ich trinke spazieren gewesen.	'I drink walking gone.'	[<i>wrong construction of predicate</i>]
Wir ich lachst gerne.	'We I like laughing.'	[<i>double allocation of subject position</i>]
Wir gehst ins Kino.	'We goes to the cinema.'	[<i>agreement violation</i>]