

ICH SCHREIBE DEUTSCH ICH SPRECHE DEUTSCH ICH PUBLIZIERE DEUTSCH ICH LIEBE DEUTSCH ICH RECHNE DEUTSCH ICH ERFORSCH E DEUTSCH SPRACHE VON WELT ? ICH LEHRE DEUTSCH ICH LERNE DEUTSCH ICH SINGE DEUTSCH ICH ÜBERSETZE DEUTSCH ICH ÜBERSCHÄTZE DEUTSCH ICH VERMITTLE DEUTSCH STREITEN ÜBER DEUTSCH ICH VERTRETE DEUTSCH ICH FÖRDERE DEUTSCH ICH VERMISCHE DEUTSCH ICH ERFORSCH E DEUTSCH ICH SPRECH

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Kiezdeutsch: A Multiethnolect of German

The subject of my thesis is Kiezdeutsch, a multiethnolect spoken in large urban areas across Germany-speaking countries. Kiezdeutsch is of particular interest because of its newness in form, emerging as a multiethnolect with aspects of both a contact language and a youth language. Kiezdeutsch is spoken by urban youth from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds living in multiethnic neighborhoods.

The word “Kiez” is a German word that roughly means “hood” or “neighborhood”. In Berlin, this might refer to one of the city’s many distinct regions such as Charlottenburg, Kreuzberg, or Neukölln. Unlike the so-called “KanakSprak” of 1980s Turkish youth culture or the Gastarbeiterdeutsch (guest worker German) of post WWII Germany, today speakers of Kiezdeutsch can more accurately be predicted by age than heritage. I plan to address the following specific topics: a) what is Kiezdeutsch and what are characteristics of Kiezdeutsch that make it unique? b) what types of code-switching take place between Kiezdeutsch and Turkish or Kiezdeutsch and standard spoken German and what can that tell us about youth identity formation in these large urban areas? c) what were the contact languages that preceded Kiezdeutsch; were they leading up to this youth language or were they a separate phenomena, and to what extent?

The thesis will draw heavily upon the work of Universität Potsdam professor Heike Wiese, who has done pioneering work in an effort to demonstrate that Kiezdeutsch is indeed a multiethnolect, meaning that its grammatical innovations are rule-bound rather than arbitrary. To illustrate its place as a “multi” ethnolect, Kiezdeutsch also makes use of non-Turkish and non-German words from languages such as Arabic, English, and Kurdish. A study showed that youth in Berlin were more likely to call a sentence in Kiezdeutsch acceptable (i.e., something they or their friends would say) if they came from a multiethnic neighborhood, irrespective of citizenship or ethnic background. The thesis will discuss the linguistic characteristics that make Kiezdeutsch unique, such as the innovative grammatical possibilities not available in standard spoken German. I will explore Kiezdeutsch as a modern youth language phenomenon as well as its function as an identity-forming device for youth in multiethnic neighborhoods in urban Germany. Finally, I argue that Kiezdeutsch is a rule-bound contact-induced multiethnolect with unique characteristics as a variety of spoken German.

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