

Youth Language as Driver of Linguistic Change: The influence of *Kiezdeutsch* on Standard German

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Abstract

This thesis aims at understanding if and how Kiezdeutsch has influenced Standard German. Kiezdeutsch is a youth language that arose in the 90s within multiethnic urban areas in Germany. It has since been classified as a sociolect of its own right with unique systematic grammatical innovations. As youth languages have the potential to drive linguistic change by deviating from standard grammatical norms, Kiezdeutsch too could become a catalyst for the development of the German language. To investigate this, I analyzed nine different published examples of spoken or written German of varying degrees of formality and different media formats, to determine if linguistic characteristics of Kiezdeutsch can be found in mainstream German. The main takeaway is that the interferences of Kiezdeutsch are not consistent and frequent enough to assume a considerable influence on the standard variety beyond its situationally dependent and informal use in spoken conversation. Thus, its use remains contingent upon contextual, spatial, and speaker-specific factors, indicating a lack of significant development in its status as a multiethnic youth language and integration into the mainstream.

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Introduction

Flows of migration have significantly altered national demographics and the linguistic landscape of places. Interactions between speakers from different heritage languages have led to the emergence of multiethnic language varieties (WIESE 2015;341, PAUL ET AL 2009;92). This phenomenon is particularly common among adolescents, who have been the subject of many studies regarding multiethnic youth languages, such as in Sweden (KOSTINAS 1992, FRAURUD 2003, BIJVOET 2003), Denmark (QUIST 2005) and the Netherlands (NORTIER 2001, APPEL 1999). Germany is no exception to this phenomenon (WIESE 2010;3). Despite its prevailing belief of a monolingual societal habitus (SIMSEK & WIESE 2022;1), it is characterized by a strong multilingual reality (SIMSEK & WIESE 2022;1) that is particularly evident in urban areas such as Berlin. The idea of “one” hegemonic standard language is firmly tied to the idea of a *shared* and *elevated* culture (SIMSEK & WIESE 2022;1, WIESE 2015;362). So much so, that emerging urban contact dialects have been met with great resistance (WARDOUGH & FULLER 2021;43,). This is also the case with the multiethnic youth language Kiezdeutsch, which has been accused of threatening the decay of the German language (GLÜCK 2014; KAUBE 2012; HEINE 2014; SCHRÖDER 2012, TROJANOWSKI 2008). The strong negative reactions it has evoked are complicit with standard language ideology defined by MILROY (2001;537) as the following:

The canonical form of the language is a precious inheritance that has been built up over the generations, not by the millions of native speakers, but by a select few who have lavished loving care upon it, polishing, refining, and enriching it until it has become a fine instrument of expression. (...) It is believed that if the canonical variety is not universally supported and protected, the language will inevitably decline and decay.

Here Milroy accurately describes that any variety deviating from the standard is believed to be inferior. A belief that is often also unfairly projected onto its speakers (WARDOUGH & FULLER 2021;29).

Kiezdeutsch has been a known linguistic phenomenon since it came about in the 90s (WIESE 2010;1, WIESE 2011;146). However, with Heike Wiese's publication “Ich Mach dich Messer – Grammatische produktivität in Kiezsprache” (*I make you knife – grammatical productivity in hood language*) in 2006 the variety finds recognition as more than just a “broken” German spoken by “uneducated” youth (WIESE 2010;4). Wiese claims that Kiezdeutsch is indeed a systematic dialect with its own linguistic innovations that deserve to be seen as part of the German linguistic repertoire (WIESE 2010;1).

What makes Kiezdeutsch unique is its use of reduced grammar, employing lexical items from languages such as Turkish and Arabic, altering the information structure of sentences and adopting new phonological features (POHLE & SCHUMANN 2014;4, WIESE 2010;7, FREYWALD ET AL 2011;94, SIMSEK & WEISE 2022;8, KALLMEYER & KEIM 2003;43). By breaking traditional grammatical rules or expanding on already existing ones, they could be expected to propel linguistic change of the standard variety (FREYWALD ET AL 2011;93). Uwe Hinrichs is a proponent of this view, seeing Kiezdeutsch as a catalyst for the development of the German language (TROJANOWSKI 2008). The “simplifications” that Kiezdeutsch would entail, Hinrichs sees as developments that have long since been completed in other languages such as English or French and could also present a potential trajectory for the development of the German language (TROJANOWSKI 2008).

The main objective of this thesis is to see if Kiezdeutsch has indeed proven to propel linguistic development of the standard variety, since its emergence more than two decades ago. Its status as a youth language speaks for such a possible development, whilst its low prestige may prevent the language from having a long-lasting effect on the mainstream. This leads me to my primary research question; has the multiethnic youth language Kiezdeutsch influenced standard German and if yes, which linguistic features of Kiezdeutsch have been the most salient?

I will begin by examining the socio-linguistic features of Kiezdeutsch in Chapter 1, including what characterizes it as a multiethnic youth language, controversies surrounding terminology and a discussion of its perception by the public. In Chapter 2 I will outline the linguistic features of Kiezdeutsch which lays the groundwork for my analysis in Chapter 3, in which I will explore the variety's potential as a driver for linguistic change. To determine if Kiezdeutsch has indeed influenced standard German, I will inspect nine public media sources for the presence of Kiezdeutsch interferences, followed by an analysis and discussion of the findings. It can be concluded that Kiezdeutsch has a very limited impact on the Standard Variety. Specific interferences of Kiezdeutsch are found sparsely and primarily in spoken language. Furthermore, the use of Kiezdeutsch remains highly context-dependent. All of which speaks for little development in terms of Kiezdeutsch Status and impact on standard German.

1. Kiezdeutsch: An Overview

1.1 Kiezdeutsch as a Multiethnolect

In this section, I want to give insight into how Kiezdeutsch emerged as a dialect, who its speaker base is and why this has led sociolinguists to classify it as a Multiethnolect. To begin with, however, I will briefly examine the controversies surrounding the name of the variety, as it is essential to understand the connotations and ideologies obscured behind the term.

Before the name “Kiezdeutsch” was broadly established, the sociolect was known under “Kanak Sprak” (can be roughly translated to *wogyspeak*) (FERIDUN 1995), “Türkenslang” (Turkish slang) (AUER 2003), “Türkendeutsch” (Turkish german) (KERN & SELTING 2006, ANDROUTSOPOULOS 2001), “Migrantendeutsch” (Migrants German) (HINRICHS 2013) or “Ghettodeutsch” (ghetto German) (KEIM 2004). What these terms have in common is that they identify the speakers as members of a particular ethnic group in a manner that is degrading and xenophobic (WIESE 2015;343). The term “Kanak Sprak” is particularly problematic. According to Wiese, it is othering on two levels: “Kanak” referring to the speakers as foreigners and “Sprak” marking their way of speaking as essentially different and incorrect (WIESE 2015;344). Feridun Zaimoglu (1995) attempted to reclaim the term “Kanak Sprak” in his publication of the same name, but the term did not rid itself of its negative association (WIESE 2015;343). By establishing the term Kiezdeutsch, Wiese attempts to create a value-neutral name that does not carry any negative connotations (WIESE 2015;244).

However, the act of naming always carries an element of essentialism. Wiese recognizes this (2015;344) but defends Kiezdeutsch as the most appropriate term as it alludes to the characteristics of the language itself as a) being spoken in the “Kiez-” (hood), indicating its use as an informal everyday variety (WEISE 2015;344, FREYWALD ET AL 2011;46 CONSENTINO 2023), and b) being “-deutsch” (german) thus labelling it as a part of the German language spectrum (WIESE

2015;344). This latter point is of significance because Kiezdeutsch had previously been seen as a broken and improper form of German (WIESE 2010;4). Classifying it as a dialect recognizes that this is not the case and that it is a language variety with system and intent.

Not everybody shares this view. Helmut Glück argues that Kiezdeutsch is not a dialect because a dialect implicates a way of speaking that is “characteristic of a certain region and also has historical depth.” (SCHRÖDER 2012). Two things which according to Glück, Kiezdeutsch is not.

Despite this, Kiezdeutsch has prevailed opposed to the other terms, because it does not mark its speakers as part of a certain ethnic group such as “Türkenslang” (Turkish slang) or a particular socioeconomic group such as “Gastarbeiterdeutsch” (*guest workers*). In this thesis, I will adopt the term Kiezdeutsch as it is the most widespread and value-neutral term.

The many name changes of the language variety reflect the changing status of variety from becoming something associated with foreignness, language decay and undesirability, towards associations of linguistic innovation, prestige and identity construction. This is the argument that academics such as Wiese attempt to persuade of. Understanding the nature of the language by making it the subject of study most definitely contributes to a positive shift in the variety’s perception. Nevertheless, the variety is demarked by many negative prejudices which I will examine in section 1.3.

The stereotypical Kiezdeutsch speaker is constructed as being a male adolescent from a socially marginalized immigrant (usually Turkish) background (AUER 2003;2 SIMSEK & WIESE 2022:9). This stereotype is not entirely unfounded yet disguises a much more nuanced reality. The language variety *did* emerge in areas that had a high population of Guest workers, specifically from Turkish background (PAUL ET AL 2009;93). These areas also have the lowest average household income, high unemployment rates and low educational achievement (PAUL ET AL 2009; 92). As such the

correlation between the ethnicity of speakers and social factors cannot be denied. To understand who speaks Kiezdeutsch now, it is worth examining how the variety emerged.

KALLMEYER & KEIM (2003:43) claim that Kiezdeutsch originated from a pidginized form of German that was spoken by the first generation of Turkish migrants who came to Germany. By the second and third generations the pidginized form had developed into a more systematic dialect (Kiezdeutsch) that was employed as a means of demarcation of the younger generations from their parents and to assert feelings of hybrid belonging (KALLMEYER & KEIM 2003:43).

AUER (2003;2) constructs the primary speakers as Turkish adolescents, specifically male teenagers who grew up in “urban ghettos.” He calls their way of speaking the “primary ethnolect” which then developed into the “secondary ethnolect” through its imitation in the media. This involves the appropriation of a way of speaking by people it does not technically “belong” to, and an act of *transgression* is performed (AUER 2003;3). As non-migrant German adolescents pick up this imitated form of the ethnolect, the “tertiary ethnolect” is accomplished, and the variety becomes “de-ethnicized.” Note that AUER’S (among other authors) use of “ethnic” is not a value-free term as AUER only constructs people with a history of migration as ethnic, whilst non-migrant Germans are constructed as being *outside of* or *non-ethnic*.

For adolescents of German descent, imitating the primary ethnolect has “hidden prestige” (WIESE 2012 in CONSENTINO 2023;209), which is not the case for the primary speakers. Non-migrant monolingual Germans can choose when and if they want to adopt the dialect and in which situations they can profit from its use (CHESHIRE 2015;3). At first, it was assumed this privilege is not available for primary speakers, since they do not have other available language registers (POHLE & SCHUMANN 2014;2). However, further studies have concluded that speaking Kiezdeutsch is a conscious choice, and the variety is employed when situationally relevant

(CONSENTINO 2023;2010). The majority of Kiezdeutsch speakers have access to other language registers including native competency in Standard German (CONSENTINO 2023;210).

Whilst AUER (2003) claims that Kiezdeutsch emerged as an *ethnolect* and has since developed into a “de-ethnicized” *sociolect*, WIESE argues that speakers of Kiezdeutsch, disregarding their background, are united by the fact that they were raised in Multiethnic areas such as Kreuzberg (2010). The varieties multiethnic properties are owed to interactions between people from different cultures and heritage languages (WIESE 2006;11), thus also demonstrating features of a contact language (POHLE & SCHUMANN 2014;3, CHESHIRE 2015;3). Following this sentiment, Kiezdeutsch was never the “property” of a single ethnic group and thus sociolinguists speak not of an *ethnolect* but of a *multiethnolect*. This refers on one hand to its “multiethnic-” status, as the speakers come from a diverse range of (linguistic and ethnic) backgrounds, whilst “lect” gives it the status of a linguistic system with features that are distinct and identifiable from the standard as well as unsystematic errors (FREYWALD ET AL 2011;51, CHESHIRE 2015;2).

1.2 Kiezdeutsch as a Youth Language: Identity & Change

Why Kiezdeutsch can be considered a Youth language is only partly explained by the fact that it is spoken by adolescents. Beyond that, Kiezdeutsch is used as a tool of demarcation, identity construction and marker of social belonging (ANDROUTSOPOULOS 2001;2). As in the case of Rinkeby Swedish, another multiethnic youth language, Kiezdeutsch signifies both loyalty towards the youth of the non-dominant ethnicity as well as allegiance to the dominant society (ANDROUTSOPOULOS 2001;11). It becomes a stylistic “resource” to negotiate one's allegiances between mainstream and minority cultures (CHESHIRE 2015;4). Thus it fulfills a social *function* (ANDROUTSOPOULOS 2001;22). However, only within specific social groups and situationally relevant contexts (ANDROUTSOPOULOS 2001;22). An example which illustrates this well is

given by POHLE & SCHUMANN (2014;16) where adolescents were asked to describe a car accident in different contexts, spoken or written and formal or informal. These were the results:

Conversation with friends via Telephone:	<i>Isch bin grad Hermannplatz</i>
Spoken / Informal	I'm Hermannplatz right now
Conversation with police officers:	<i>Ich stand an der Kreuzung am Hermannplatz</i>
Spoken / Formal	I was standing at the intersection at Hermannplatz
SMS to friends:	<i>Hermannplatz ist ein auto gegen eine frau gefahren</i>
Written / Informal	Hermannplatz a car drove against a woman.
Written Witness Report:	<i>Eine frau wurde am Hermannplatz angefahren</i>
Written / Formal	A woman was hit (by car) at Hermannplatz (...)

In this example, Kiezdeutsch is only employed in informal contexts, regardless of written or spoken German. Other literature supports these findings (FREYWALD ET AL 2011;46, WIESE 2015;344, WIESE 2010;6). Therefore, it can be deduced that speakers are aware of their social contexts and can choose to adopt this way of speaking in socially sanctioned situations (CONSENTINO 2023;2010). KERSWILL (1996;181) terms this the *social competence* of speakers to recognize and exploit the use of language varieties within communities in order to achieve social meaning. LE PAGE & TABOURET-KELLER (1985 in ANDROUTSOPOLOUS 2010;10) expand on this link between Identity and Language, arguing that an “act of identity” (such as every act of speaking) is performed on the individual level, yet is only meaningful in group settings, so always in relation to the identity of others. KALLMEYER & KEIM (2003;35) speak of a

“communicative social style” in which the language style constructs the identity of the speaker as either *belonging to* or *different from* their surroundings. However, KALLMEYER & KEIM (2003;44) refer here to the symbolization of a “ghetto youth.” DANIELA MAROSSEK describes in an Interview with *Berliner Morgenpost*, that the image of the “migrant ghetto youth” that is reinforced by the media, is an attractive image for adolescents in their self-discovery phase (NAUHAUS 2014). They appropriate this association to seem unapproachable and tough (NAUHAUS 2014). The more socially marginalized, the stronger the use of Kiezdeutsch is according to MAROSSEK (NAUHAUS 2014).

As adolescents have wider social networks in comparison to younger children, paired with their capability to modify their speech due to a strong desire to assert their social identity, they can act as significant bearers of language change (KERSWILL 1996;181). The importance of Youth Language as a driver of language change is best expressed in the following quote:

Adolescents are the linguistic movers and shakers, at least in western industrialized societies, and, as such, a prime source of information about linguistic change and the role of language in social practice.

Eckert (1997:52)

CHESHIRE ET AL warn that despite the creativity and innovation of urban varieties that arise from environments with a high tolerance for linguistic variation and flexible language norms, the resulting language forms are “unfocused” and “unstable” (2015;19). As multiethnolects tend to be spoken only by a small number of people, CHESHIRE ET AL see them as unlikely to survive (2015;19). Furthermore, long-lasting language change occurs when one community of speakers adopt new linguistic forms from another socially attractive group (KERSWILL 1996; 178). A Multiethnolect such as Kiezdeutsch may thus only be a transitory phenomenon, argues CHESHIRE ET AL, that adolescents lose once they grow into adulthood or only use within peer groups (2015;19). In contrast, MAROSSEK considers it quite probable that Kiezdeutsch could

seep into the standard variety, at the very least specific phrases (in NAUHAUS 2014). KERSWILL is more ambiguous about the potential of certain linguistic features to prevail:

Ultimately, why particular innovations win through, and others do not can only be answered sociolinguistically, and only then post hoc. (1996;183)

After more than two decades of Kiezdeutsch, it is worth investigating if Kiezdeutsch had an impact on the standard variety, and if so, which of its features have been the most salient in establishing themselves.

1.3 Public Consensus

In this section, I will outline the controversies and stereotypes associated with Kiezdeutsch. Since the dialect has been subject of public debate, researchers as well as the public have accused the variety of being a threat to Standard German or otherwise degraded it as a broken or improper form of German (WIESE 2011;74, POHLE & SCHUMANN 2014;9). WIESE (2015;348) argues that the reason for such strong negative reactions are conflicted beliefs about what “genuine German” is. The most common affiliation with Kiezdeutsch is that it is an indicator of the speaker's inability or unwillingness to integrate into the majority society (WIESE 2015;357). Another assumption is that it is a rejection of Standard German, thus threatening the decline of linguistic standards (WIESE 2013;357). Ultimately this violates two central ideas about Standard German; First of all, that it is a vehicle of “shared culture” that overcomes social fragmentations (WIESE 2015;356). Since Kiezdeutsch is seen as an unwillingness to integrate it threatens “social cohesions” and suggests “conflict and aggression” (WIESE 2015;357). Secondly, it goes against the notion that Standard German is a form of “cultural elevation” that requires “care and effort to uphold” (WIESE 2015;357). Thus, grouping Kiezdeutsch as part of the German linguistic repertoire challenges the superior status of Standard German. The preservation of Standard Germans'

superior status necessitates the devaluation of Kiezdeutsch as being separate from culture. (WIESE 2015;357).

This separation of standard language from other varieties is compliant with Standard Language Ideology (WARDOUGH & FULLER 2021;34). In the case of Kiezdeutsch, POHLE AND SCHUMANN (2014;13) argue that it challenges the belief of German monolingual language purity. Its status as a *multiethnic* dialect is responsible for its low prestige because it wakes association with socio-economically weaker areas, which in turn is projected onto the speakers (POHLE & SCHUMANN 2014;12). And finally, Kiezdeutsch is seen as negative due to its status as a Youth Language. Like any youth language, it aims to create a “we-code” through grammatical innovations that mark the in-groups and out-groups (POHLE & SCHUMANN 2014;3. As such it is a vital part of demarcation and identity construction but can also become exclusionary. Whilst WIESE (2010;3) argues that Kiezdeutsch is a sign of successful integration and its linguistic system shows signs of innovation, the variety earns criticism for exactly these linguistic developments which are interpreted as *negative interferences* of the Heritage language of the speakers.

Despite the tremendous progress made in terms of research in the past few decades, the dialect is still controversial and encumbered with negative affiliations. Sociolinguistics such as WIESE (2010;4) and POHLE & SCHUMANN (2014;3) have empirically proven that innovations of the dialect are not (only) due to interferences of heritage language but build and expand on grammatical rules of German and do so quite cleverly. Should linguistic features of Kiezdeutsch have successfully integrated into mainstream German, then not only its linguistic innovativeness is shown to be influential but that it also has salience as a useful social register. In the following sections, I will turn to the linguistic attributes of Kiezdeutsch and their potential to influence standard German.

2. Linguistic Features of Kiezdeutsch

In this section, I will outline the linguistic features of Kiezdeutsch. These features are proven to be employed systematically and not randomly by Kiezdeutsch speakers (FREYWALD ET AL 2011;51, WIESE 2010;43, POHLE & SCHUMANN 2014;4). Identification of these features will serve as a basis for my analysis of public media sources for Kiezdeutsch Interferences.

The most apparent marker of Kiezdeutsch is the coronalization of the “ch” sound, which is transformed into a “sch.” sound (POHLE & SCHUMANN 2014;4). So, for example, “ich” (I) becomes “isch” and “Richtig” (to be right) becomes “Rischtig” (POHLE & SCHUMANN 2014;4). This phonetic alteration allows for other grammatical innovations such as the creation of the new particle “ischwöre,” which had previously consisted of two separate words “ich” and “schwöre,” meaning “I swear” (POHLE & SCHUMANN 2014;5). The coronalisation of “ch” lets two same sounds (“sch”) follow one another, allowing for its Monomorphematisation (two morphemes merging into one). A similar process has occurred with “lass uns mal” (*let us*) which becomes “lassma” in Kiezdeutsch, “musst du” (*you have to*) which becomes “musstu” and “gibt es” (*there is*) transforming into “gibs” (SIMSEK & WIESE 2022;9). In the case of “gibs” the monomorphematisation is accompanied by a shift in its thematic role from an accusative object to a subject. Subsequently, the expletive subject “es” in the original construction “gibt es” becomes excessive and can be omitted (SIMSEK & WIESE 2022;9). The following example demonstrates this:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------|
| 1) <i>Guck mal, was es hier alles noch gibt.</i> (Standard German) | (SIMSEK & WIESE 2022;9) |
| <i>Guck ma was hier alles noch gibs.</i> (Kiezdeutsch) | (SIMSEK & WIESE 2022;9) |
| (Take a) look at all there is (available) here. | |

Another feature of Kiezdeutsch is the borrowing of lexical items from other languages such as Turkish and Arabic (POHLE & SCHUMANN 2014;4, KALLYMEYER & KEIM 2003;43,

FREYWALD ET AL 2011;46, WIESE 2010;7). Examples include “lan” (dude/mate) and “Moruk” (bro/dude) from Turkish, and “Wallah” (by god) and “Tamam” (okay) with roots in Arabic (POHLE & SCHUMANN 2014;4, WIESE 2010;7; KALLMEYER & KEIM 2003;43). Lexical borrowings are an integral part of Kiezdeutsch and are used equally by speakers with and without migration background (POHLE & SCHUMANN 2014;4, WIESE 2010;4). They are employed similarly to loan words from other languages; integrated by the rules of German grammar and pronunciation (WIESE 2010;7) and can be used as a means of assertion, emphasis, or vulgarity (POHLE & SCHUMANN 2014;4).

A word that is often brought into association with Kiezdeutsch is the youth word “Digga.” It can be found in many headlines regarding Kiezdeutsch, such as:

„**Digga**, ich schwör“ – das neue Deutsch aus dem Kiez. (edit.magazine.de 2024)

Digga, I Swear - the new German from the Hood.

„Yallah **Digga**, was geht“ – Kiezdeutsch als Forschungsprojekt. (Spiegel.de 2012)

Yallah **Digga**, what's up – Kiezdeutsch as a research project.

Ey **digga**, die party gestern war voll fett, ischwör. (wissenschaft.de 2012)

Ey Digga, the party yesterday was awesome, I swear.

However, the term did not arise from Kiezdeutsch but originated in the Hamburg Hip-Hop scene (EBERT 2022). The Rapper *Das Bo* made the term mainstream among German youth with his song “türlich, türlich” (EBERT 2022). It is related to the word “Dicker” (fat) but has undergone a semantic shift with the phonetic conversion of “ck” to “gg” which is typical for the Hamburg

regiolect (EBERT 2022). Today the word is used synonymously with the word *bro* or *dude*, but linguists in the field do not interpret it as a Kiezdeutsch feature. In the analysis which follows I will be cautious of the fact that it *can* be a marker of Kiezdeutsch but is not exclusively so and is more widely associated as a marker of youth language.

In Kiezdeutsch, the verb order is much more flexible than in standard German, allowing for higher productivity according to WIESE 2006 (in FREYWALD ET AL 2011;96). Through different verb order constructions, the relevant information gets shifted to the last position in the sentence, emphasizing it more. Additionally, the generalization of some verbs like “gehen” (walk/leave/move) “kommen” (come/arrive) or “machen” (make) contributes to a wider array of meanings that can be expressed using fewer verbs (KALLMEYER & KEIM 2003;43). In standard German, the verb is usually positioned in second place (POHLE & SCHUMANN 2014;6). In Kiezdeutsch this rule is broken and the adverbial and subject can sit before the finite verb. The adverb expresses the temporal or spatial frame of the sentence, whilst the subject forms the topic of the sentence (POHLE & SCHUMANN 2014;7). As a consequence, it is possible to express both the topic and frame of the sentence right in the beginning (POHLE & SCHUMANN 2014;7). Similar constructions have been grammatically possible in older versions of German but were lost at some point during its evolution (POHLE & SCHUMANN 2014;7).

A further such “simplification” of German standard grammar occurs by treating prepositions in noun phrases as optional (POHLE & SCHUMAN 2014;7, SIMSEK & WIESE 2022;8, AUER 2003;4, KALLMEYER & KEIM 2003;43). In standard German prepositions are only omitted when naming public transport stops (WIESE 2000 in PAUL ET AL 2009;95). For example, the sentence “Ich steige Alexanderplatz um,” (I change Alexanderplatz) does not use the preposition “am” (at) but is still correct in standard German (POHLE & SCHUMANN 2014;7). Kiezdeutsch expands on this exception by applying it to local and directional adverbials (PAUL ET AL 2009;95). So that “Ich gehe morgen *zum* Arbeitsamt” (I am going to the job centre tomorrow) becomes

“Morgen ich geh Arbeitsamt” (Tomorrow I go job centre) (PAUL ET AL 2009;95). In this latter sentence, we also see the rearranging of sentence parts so that the adverb and subject precede the verb and object. The lack of a preposition further simplifies the information structure and makes it more efficient.

Lastly, Kiezdeutsch demonstrates evidence of inflectional variations, more specifically the inflections at word endings tend to be omitted (SIMSEK & WIESE 2022;8 DIKO 2019;279). For example, “*Meine* Schule ist schon längst aus“ (My school is long over) becomes “*Mein* Schule” and “Wir *kennen* uns schon vom Fitness” (we already know each other from fitness) becomes “Wir *kenn*” (DIKO 2019;280). Inflectional variation is common in colloquial speech and regional dialects such as the Berlin dialect, yet is also heavily used in Kiezdeutsch.

The linguistic features mentioned are summarized here in Table 1. In the next section, I will look if evidence of Kiezdeutsch interference can be found in German language use today.

Category	Linguistic Characteristics
SYNTACTIC	New Verb Order Constructions
	Bare Noun Phrases
	Lack of Prepositions
	Optionality of Determiners
MORPHOLOGICAL	New Particles by Monomorphematisation (e.g. <i>ischwör</i> , <i>musstu</i> , <i>lassma</i>)
	Inflection Variation
LEXICAL	New Lexical Items (including borrowing from other languages) (e.g. <i>digga</i> , <i>lan</i> , <i>wallah</i> , <i>moruk</i> , <i>tammam</i>)
	Generalization of Verbs
PHONOLOGICAL	Coronalization of <i>ch</i> -sound

Table 1: Summary of Linguistic Characteristics of Kiezdeutsch

3. Kiezdeutsch in Standard German

There is good reason to believe that Kiezdeutsch has influenced standard German in the last two decades since its emergence. This chapter will deal with *if* and *how* Kiezdeutsch has influenced standard German.

What makes Kiezdeutsch a good candidate for catalyzing German language change, is for one, that some of its linguistic features are much more productive in communicating information, such as different verb order constructions and the lack of determiners and prepositions. Such grammatical simplifications exist in other languages already, e.g. English and French (TROJANOWSKI 2008). Additionally, many of the linguistic features of Kiezdeutsch are simply expansions of already existing rules of German (WIESE 2010;6, PAUL ET AL 2009;48). Thus, it would be quite reasonable for people to make use of these extended rules. According to KERSWILL (1996;200), lexical items are the easiest to acquire over one's lifespan, whilst phonological features tend to be acquired only early on in life. I would thus expect to find that the most common impact of Kiezdeutsch on standard German would take the shape of lexical borrowings. Harder to acquire later in life are grammatical and morphologically conditioned changes (KERSWILL 1996;200). Since these are more difficult to take up into one's language repertoire, they would show that Kiezdeutsch's influence on the standard is stronger.

3.1 Methodology

I will investigate nine published media sources that are written, spoken or audio-visual, are concerned with a variety of different topics and appeal to a range of different audiences, for the interferences of Kiezdeutsch. Through this breadth in format types, it should become apparent if Kiezdeutsch has influenced mainstream German language use. If this is the case, the nature of the

media source should not be of significance, since the standard variety is not context-dependent, and is not tied to a specific topic of conversation nor a specific milieu of speakers. Only if these factors no longer determine the use of Kiezdeutsch, one can successfully state that the variety is not constrained to its status as a multiethnic youth language. Table 2 shows a summary of the media sources that I used during my analysis.

At this point, a note on my use of “Standard Language” may be of significance. The standard form of a language is seen as absent of social, regional or idiosyncratic variation within a language (WARDOUGH & FULLER 2021;34). However, it is the case that every individual's way of speaking consciously or unconsciously carries such variation. A “neutral” or “untainted” language is merely the ideological standard (WARDOUGH & FULLER 2021;34) that however does not reflect the language used and spoken naturally. When I draw comparisons between Kiezdeutsch interferences and the “standard,” I am referring to explicitly identifiable interferences of Kiezdeutsch in comparison to common colloquial uses of German that will vary in degree of other social, regional or idiosyncratic variations.

The categorization of each source's audience is based on my evaluation of the source's content and form. I also took care to evaluate the general formality and type of audience the media outlets appeal to. The audience is important in regard to who is being spoken to, and which social group is targeted. These factors may influence the language use of the author/speaker and thus be linked to the frequency of Kiezdeutsch interferences. Based on my personal assessment the source was categorized as Informal (I), Intermediate (M) or Formal (F).

Format		Title	Author	Publisher	Audience
Audio	A	<i>Der Italien Mann Schade Detektivin Dick & Doof</i>	Laserluca & Selfiesandra	RTL+	I
	B	<i>Podcast: Welche Jobs sind in Gefahr? Arbeitsmarkt im Umbruch Lanz & Precht (Episode 139)</i>	Markus Lanz & Richard David Precht	ZDF	M
	C	<i>Gesellschaft ohne wärme: Die Renaissance der Gemeinschaftsideologie</i>	Stefan Kühn	DEUTSCHLAND FUNK	F
Audio-Visual	D	<i>FAKE FASHION Braucht man noch Originale?! mit Kolja Goldstein, Mahan, WBB, Berlins Perserin</i>	Andrej Filatow	HYPECULTURE (FUNK)	I
	E	<i>Der Taylor Swift Kult – Die Fans hinter dem Megastar</i>	Jasmin Weiner	Y-Kollektiv (ARD)	M
	F	<i>Gerhart Baum (FDP) kritisiert im Spiegel-Talk den Führungsstil von Kanzler Scholz und Warnt vor AfD</i>	Markus Feldenkirchen: & Gerhart Baum	DER SPIEGEL	F
Written	G	<i>Berlins berühmteste U-Bahnlinie: Menschen erzählen ihre wildesten U8-Storys</i>	Alexandra Theis	VICE	I
	H	<i>Einbrecher Bande muss in den knast.</i>	Birgit Begass	BILD	M
	I	<i>Mit wem will ich im Studium zusammenziehen?</i>	Ananda Klaar	DER SPIEGEL	F

Table 2: Overview of Public Media Sources

Sources for investigation were selected so that a range of audiences and media outlets were used. Written as well as spoken formats were of importance since phonological features such as the colonialization of the *ch*-sound can only be produced when spoken. Furthermore, spoken and written language tends to differ in form, so that it can be expected to find different types of

interferences. There was also care taken for a wide variety of topics to be selected, that speakers are male as well as female, and that all sources were published in the last two years so that the findings reflect the presence of Kiezdeutsch in the language use of speakers currently.

To analyze the given sources for linguistic markers of Kiezdeutsch transcripts of the audio and audio-visual sources were made manually. In the case of written sources, this step was not required. The sources were then analyzed for evidence of the linguistic markers of Kiezdeutsch that I have summarized in Chapter 2, Table 1.

In order to keep the number of words relatively equal across the sources and due to time constraints, audio and audio-visual material was limited to a maximum of twenty minutes, averaging around 3500 words once transcribed. Only the first twenty minutes were used for analysis, as this should give a broad enough sample to determine if Kiezdeutsch interferences are present in the speaker's language use. For written sources, the whole source regardless of the length was used and all of them averaged under 3500 words.

If Kiezdeutsch has significantly impacted the standard language, I would expect to find Kiezdeutsch interferences across all types of media, regardless of formality and content. This would indicate the successful integration of Kiezdeutsch features into mainstream German. However, if this process is incomplete or Kiezdeutsch has only marginally or not at all developed from its status as a youth language then it is more likely to find either no interferences at all or varying degrees of interferences, more likely in the informal spoken contexts than in the written and formal ones. In the following section, I will present the findings of my analysis.

3.2 Findings

Overall, it can be said that the interferences of Kiezdeutsch in the selected sources were limited. In total, only 47 interferences were found, all of which are concentrated in sources A and D. All interferences were found in spoken and none in written records. The presence of Kiezdeutsch interferences may coincide with the fact that both Source A and D are considered “informal”. The number of interferences reduces to 31 if we leave out the interferences of “Digga” which is not exclusively a marker of Kiezdeutsch. This leaves us with 20 interferences concentrated in Source D and only 1 in Source A. Already, these findings suggest that Kiezdeutsch’s impact on language use is very limited. To give a better explanation of how and why the interferences were found precisely in these sources and what this means about the status of Kiezdeutsch in the standard variety, I will examine all sources individually and take a closer look at which interferences were (or were not) found and why.

To begin with, I will examine the written sources, as there were no interferences found here. The reason for this may very likely be that written language is subject to much stricter norms than when used in spoken context. This aligns somewhat with my expectations since news articles in particular tend to use more formal language. This also indicates that Kiezdeutsch is not used in a formal register. Source I (DER SPIEGEL), for example, is a more sophisticated news outlet and shows no interference. Yet, even the BILD article (Source H), being a tabloid paper and thus appealing to a less “sophisticated” audience, shows no interference from Kiezdeutsch. VICE (Source G), which appeals to a younger audience and consists of inserts of Interviews with people ranging from 22 to 36, also showed full compliance with standard German. A very similar sentence that is used to demonstrate the lack of prepositions in Kiezdeutsch was used here by one of the interviewees but using the preposition according to standard German:

- 1) *Einmal bin ich am Hermannplatz eingestiegen und am Kottbusser Tor sind drei Jugendliche zugestiegen.*

Once I got on at Hermanplatz and at Kottbusser Tor three teenagers got on.

In both instances, the names of the public transport stations (*Hermannplatz* and *Kottbusser Tor*) are preceded by the appropriate preposition “am” (at). Whether this reflects the genuine tendency of the Interviewee to use prepositions or if this is a result of context-dependent use of standard language is unclear. Nevertheless, it demonstrates that Kiezdeutsch did not enforce itself in written forms of German.

In the audio-visual category only one source, Source D, shows interference of Kiezdeutsch. Source D consists of a mixture of interviews and scripted narrative. Whilst there are no interferences of Kiezdeutsch in the scripted narrative, some interviewees do use Kiezdeutsch. The types of interferences found in Source D are shown below:

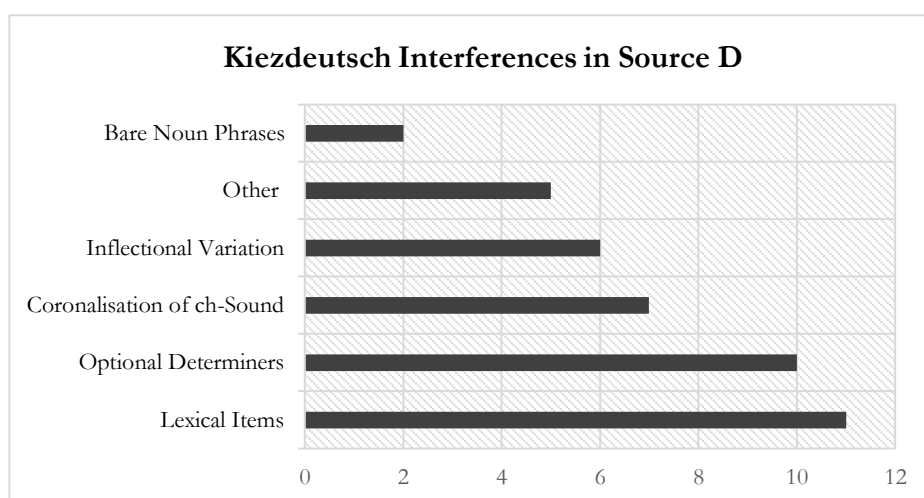


Figure 1: Kiezdeutsch Interferences in Source D

The most common category is the lexical items. However, all of these are uses of the word “digga” which is not a very strong indicator of Kiezdeutsch. Since none of the speakers were adolescents, however, the use of the word may carry some significance in terms of signalling group belonging.

The second most common interference is the lack of a determiner. This is heavily indicative of Kiezdeutsch. Below are examples from the Source. The correct determiner according to Standard German is shown in brackets.

2) *(Der) Versand hat sich wirklich verbessert.*

(The) Shipping has really improved.

3) *Ich trag Gucci aus (der) turkei und keiner merkt.*

I wear Gucci from Turkey, and nobody notices.

4) *Einfach nur (das) Logo ausgetauscht.*

Simply exchanged (the) logo.

5) *(Die/Eine) 20-Euro Hose will sie sich nich mal holen.*

She does not even want to get (the/a) 20-euro pants.

The lack of a determiner makes the sentence shorter and communicates the message more efficiently. In each example the information that is trying to be communicated is clear, so adopting the Kiezdeutsch feature is useful because it makes the information structure more productive. In example 3, other grammatical elements are lost, such as the object “es” which is required by the intransitive verb “merkt” (to notice), but which is omitted. In standard German it would say “Ich trage Gucci aus *der* Türkei und keiner merkt *es*.” Here the message of the sentence is clear despite grammatical reductions, yet in other examples, deviations from standard German come at the cost of clarity. Such as in example 6, where the use of the relative pronoun “der” is misleading because it fulfils two different roles in the same sentence.

- 6) *Und dann kauft **der** seine Rohstoffe auch da, **der** fake das produziert.*

And then he buys his raw materials also there, who fake that produces.

On one hand, it is used as the subject of the relative clause (“der fake das produziert”) and on the other hand, it becomes the subject of the main clause (“der seine Rohstoffe auch da kauft”). It becomes unclear who or what “der” is referring to. The relative clause could be rearranged to indicate this. However, the way in which it should be rearranged depends on the meaning it is trying to convey.

The third most common interference is the phonological feature, the clearly audible coronalization of the “ch” sound, as is the case in the interview with female speaker *Berlins Persian*. Examples of this are as follows:

- 7) *Du merkst wirkli**sch** keinen unterschied.*

You notice really no difference.

- 8) *Viellei**sch**t, wenn er nicht da wäre, viellei**sch**t wär die gar nicht darauf gek**om**men.*

Maybe, if he wasn't there, maybe she wouldn't even have thought of it.

- 9) ***Isch** könnte das nich. **Isch** denke an meine Mutter. 20-Euro-Hose will sie si**sch** nich mal holen.*

I couldn't do that. I am thinking of my mother. She doesn't even want to get 20-euro pants.

- 10) *Man bat halt nicht diese 100-prozentige Si**sch**erheit, ob das auch alles nachhaltig ist*

You don't have that 100 per cent security if all this is sustainable.

None of the other speakers made use of this coronalization. Furthermore, Berlins Persian did not coronalize all “ch” sounds, rather the usage of this phonetic marker seemed sporadic and inconsistent. For example, here the “ch”-sound is not coronalized:

11) *Ich hab auch Replika-Schuhe*

I also have replica shoes.

Example 11 also shows an inflection variation of the verb “habe” (to have) which becomes contracted to “hab.” Inflectional variations are common in colloquial German, but combined with the other Kiezdeutsch features as well as its consistent use indicates that this can very well be interpreted as Kiezdeutsch. In general, inflectional variation was used often, also by other speakers. The contraction “hab” is quite common but example 13 demonstrates a more specific use of inflectional variation.

12) *Aber ich **hab** par mal auch schon Glück gehabt.* (opposed to **habe**)

But sometimes I also had luck.

13) *Auf ein **krassen** level gekommen.* (opposed to **krasses**)

Got on a crazy level.

In some cases, the lack of a determiner leads to a bare noun phrase such as in example 14 where it should say “*Es ist sinnlos das Original zu kaufen*” (*It is useless to buy the original*), but instead “es ist” and “the” are omitted to transform the sentence into a bare noun phrase.

14) *Sinnlos Original zu kaufen.*

Useless to buy original.

Ultimately, the strongest indicator for the use of Kiezdeutsch in Source D are the optional determiners and bare noun Phrases. Since inflectional variation is common in colloquial German, the *ch*-sound coronalization is tied to only one speaker and inconsistently so, and the lexical borrowing is similarly indicative of colloquial German or youth language, they are weak indicators of Kiezdeutsch influence.

In the other audio-visual sources, there were no interferences found although Source E has a similar structure to Source D, consisting of interviews and intermittent narrative. Unlike my expectations, interferences were not even found in dialogue. What is evident, however, is very frequent intermissions of English words particularly by young speakers. This could mean that English presents a more salient and influential language variety than Kiezdeutsch.

In the audio category, Sources B and C again comply with standard German. The only other source that showed an interference was Source A. In this case, it was the Arabic word “Hamdullah” (*praise to god*).

15) *Wenn ihr es erfahrt, dann, digga, **Hamdullah** ich leb noch.*

When you find out, then, *Digga, **Hamdullah***, I am still alive.

The word here emphasizes the statement being made, thus it functions similarly to a focus marking particle. The way in which the word was pronounced suggests limited competency in the Arab language, yet it was still clearly distinguishable and recognizable as Arabic. I hesitate to put too much value on this interference as a sign of Kiezdeutsch since it was used only once. Despite this, it implies that exposure to Arabic words is present and is integrated into the speaker’s language use, even if sparingly.

Ultimately, the findings of Kiezdeutsch interferences were limited in all sources. Nevertheless, the few interferences that were found do carry significance. The question is; are they enough to prove that Kiezdeutsch has influenced the language use of German speakers? In the following section, I will turn to a more in-depth discussion of these findings and their significance.

3.3 Discussion

The findings revealed that very few Interferences of Kiezdeutsch are present in public media, and if so, only in audio and audio-visual material. Some interferences overlap with characteristics of other varieties, such as “Digga” as a lexical attribute of youth languages, inflectional variation as a colloquial way of speaking or coronalization of the *ch*-sound as an idiosyncratic attribute. The reasons for such limited influence can be explained by a number of factors.

Firstly, public media tend to resist deviations from standard language norms to maintain and comply with linguistic purity. This suggests that the variety has little salience for the use of formal registers. Lexical Items may be the most common interference because they can be integrated without violating the rules of standard German grammar.

Secondly, societal attitudes towards the variety may be less optimistic than academia suggests. Whilst sociolinguists attempt to discredit many of the negative stereotypes affiliated with the language, in real-world contexts the belief of an inferior or improper form of German may still prevail, demonstrating the power of standard language ideology, specifically when it comes to “ethnic-centered” varieties like Kiezdeutsch.

Thirdly, the aim of Kiezdeutsch speakers may not actually be to fully integrate into Standard German. Rather it is the speaker's intent to maintain and assert their distinctiveness. Its use is thus primarily motivated by its social function as a means of demarcation and identity construction, as opposed to its linguistic productivity. Additionally, the quickly fluctuating nature of youth languages may mean that Kiezdeutsch has not reached the stability or longevity to significantly impact standard German.

Lastly, it must also be considered that the scope of my study is very narrow. Although Wiese’s study (2006) only consisted of a small sample size as well, it is the case that my findings do not present an average use of Kiezdeutsch interferences in public media. What these findings

demonstrate is that Kiezdeutsch did not have such a significant impact on standard German as originally expected, rendering concerns about threatening the German language redundant. Other Language varieties seem to present a much more salient alternative to Kiezdeutsch, worth adopting and integrating into the German language. So, for instance, English, as an ever more globally powerful language. Nevertheless, the fact that there were interferences at all demonstrates that German speakers (or at least some) possess Kiezdeutsch in their language repertoire. In that case, it remains a useful register for some speakers, that is available in certain social contexts, but that does not replace or mix with standard German.

Conclusion

By analyzing the morphological, lexical, phonetic and syntactical features of nine different public media sources, this thesis aimed to identify the extent to which Kiezdeutsch has permeated mainstream German language and which of its features have been the most salient. The findings revealed that Kiezdeutsch is occasionally present in informal contexts, but that it generally has a limited impact on standard German. From the features that were found, the most common were new lexical items, the absence of determiners and the coronalization of the *ch*-sound. Yet again, their use remains highly context-dependent, indicating its unchanged status as an urban youth language and poor salience for mainstream use.

For future research, longitudinal studies could investigate if markers of Kiezdeutsch make it into the mainstream over a longer period of time. Furthermore, conducting broad population surveys about social attitudes towards the variety and its speakers could give more insight on the barriers towards full acceptance of the variety. Additionally, extending the scope of comparative studies with other Multiethnic youth languages could determine if the development of such varieties into mainstream use is a foreseeable and long-term possibility and which conditions would be required for the full integration of its linguistic features into the standard.

In conclusion, Kiezdeutsch remains a distinct and influential youth language which, however, has not been able to make it out of the *Kiez*. Since language is dynamic and constantly evolving, the potential for it to permeate standard German in the future remains an intriguing possibility. Further research will be required to track its ongoing development and broader implications for the Standard German Language.

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