

Phonetic features of (multi-)ethnic urban vernaculars in German-speaking Switzerland Marie-Anne Morand, Sandra Schwab, Stephan Schmid (University of Zurich)

Since the turn of the millennium, the phenomenon of so-called (multi-)ethnolects has been observed in different cities of German-speaking Switzerland (Tissot et al. 2011). This kind of speaking differs significantly from traditional Swiss German dialects. For the time being, however, a sociophonetic investigation of this phenomenon is lacking. This has already been done quite extensively in other (Western) European cities such as in the project about *Multicultural London English* (Cheshire et al. 2011).

We recorded 53 pupils in two different schools, which are either located in a very multicultural neighborhood in the city of Zurich or in a more monocultural one. To compare the varieties and speech styles of adolescents with and without migration background in the city of Zurich, various selected phonetic features are examined. We conducted individual interviews asking the subjects about their language biographies and let them describe a picture. In addition, the informants played a game of ‘spot the difference’ in pairs, we let them read out loud phonetically rich sentences and finally conducted group interviews. While the adolescents were naïve to the exact purpose of the recording during the first three speech styles (individual interview, ‘spot the difference’, read speech), they were explicitly told what the recordings are all about for the group interview because we are interested in their attitudes towards (multi-)ethnolects.

In a third school, other adolescents were asked to evaluate to what extent the recorded pupils sounded mono- or multiethnic by means of a short ‘screening’ experiment (Bodén 2010). The realizations of different phonetic features are analyzed statistically. For example, Swiss German dialects are traditionally lacking voiced obstruents and speakers make use of a fortis-lenis distinction (Fleischer & Schmid 2006); instead, ethnolectal Zurich German is assumed to use voicing to distinguish obstruent pairs (Schmid 2012). Furthermore, we hypothesize that suprasegmental features (in particular speech rhythm) differ between the two groups of adolescents.

The research gap filled with our project is not only relevant for the fields of language variation, sociolinguistics, and phonetics, but is also of great social relevance. (Multi-)ethnic urban vernaculars or rather the speakers thereof are often associated with negative stereotypes, which we will investigate by means of two perception experiments at a later stage.

References

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