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The view from within: Gendered language ideologies of multilingual speakers in contemporary Berlin

Naomi Truan  | Martina Oldani

Institut für Germanistik, Universität
Leipzig, Leipzig, Germany

Correspondence

Naomi Truan, Institut für Germanistik,
Universität Leipzig, Leipzig, Germany.
Email: naomi.truan@uni-leipzig.de

Abstract

Drawing on interview data on Kiezdeutsch, we argue that a focus on gendered language ideologies is much needed to understand the social meanings ascribed to multiethnolectal practices. By attuning carefully to the nuanced, subjective ideological stances of young multilingual women, we show that at the interactional level, Kiezdeutsch is constructed as a consequence of the interviewees' multilingual practice and thus activates a sense of belonging and entitlement. At the macro level, however, the belonging to a multilingual speech community is tied up with the representation of a racialized and ethnicized 'other' in the mainstream, dominant public discourse prevalent in Germany. As young males are the more salient figure in the construction this racialized and ethnicized 'other', Kiezdeutsch then becomes indexed with masculinity—even within the peer group. Saying that Kiezdeutsch is used among friends thus presents only a partial picture on how, for girls and young women, using Kiezdeutsch becomes socially sanctioned both in the public sphere *and* in private settings.

KEYWORDS

Berlin, gender, Kiezdeutsch, language ideologies, migration, multiethnolect, multilingualism

Zusammenfassung

Anhand von Interviewdaten zu Kiezdeutsch zeigen wir, dass ein genauerer Blick auf der Gender-Dimension von Sprachideologien dringend erforderlich ist, um die

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sozialen Bedeutungen zu verstehen, die mit multiethnolektalen Praktiken verbunden sind. Anhand der Analyse nuancierter, subjektiver Sprachideologien junger Frauen wird gezeigt, dass Kiezdeutsch auf der Interaktionsebene als Folge der mehrsprachigen Praxis der Befragten konstruiert wird und somit ein Gefühl der Zugehörigkeit und der Berechtigung entsteht. Auf der Makroebene ist die Zugehörigkeit zu einer mehrsprachigen Sprachgemeinschaft jedoch mit der Repräsentation eines rassifizierten und ethnisierten ‘Anderen’ im öffentlichen Mainstream-Diskurs verknüpft. Da junge Männer in der Konstruktion dieses rassifizierten und ethnisierten ‘Anderen’ die hervorstechendste Figur sind, wird Kiezdeutsch mit Männlichkeit indiziert—und dies auch innerhalb der Peer-Group. Die Annahme, dass Kiezdeutsch im Freundeskreis verwendet wird, gibt also nur ein unvollständiges Bild davon wieder, wie die Verwendung des Multiethnolekts für Mädchen und junge Frauen sowohl im öffentlichen als auch im privaten Bereich sozial sanktioniert wird.

SCHLÜSSELWÖRTER

Berlin, Gender, Kiezdeutsch, Mehrsprachigkeit, Migration, Multiethnolekt, Sprachideologien

1 | INTRODUCTION

The last few decades have produced a growing body of research devoted to linguistic practices in urban, multiethnic spaces. To understand how processes of identity construction are not only produced but also avoided by individuals and social groups, a shift to ‘the ideological aspects of that linguistic differentiation’ (Irvine & Gal, 2000, p. 35) has taken place in sociolinguistic research. As ideological products, styles, sometimes reduced to salient linguistic features in the public perception, tend to be associated with macro categories and ‘particular social groups via metapragmatic stereotypes’ (Bucholtz, 2009, p. 147; referring to Agha, 2007). This is why stylistic features should always be interpreted in regard with the social meanings they are being ascribed to.

Drawing on previous accounts of racialized linguistic regimentation of public space (Hill, 1998), we show how discourses on who is entitled to speak differently than the (perceived; white) norm are also gendered. In this context, we are interested in how young women ‘with migration background’¹ living in Berlin are associated with multiethnolectal practices, and, crucially, how they self-report on their use of multiethnolectal features and their sense of belonging and identity, whether they identify as speakers of this variety or not. Following Quist (2008, p. 44), we define a multiethnolect as ‘a linguistic “something,” a variety or style, which has developed in multiethnic urban communities and which is associated with speakers of mixed ethnic groups’.

At the core of this paper is the idea that while adopting some features of a given sociolinguistic style may be rewarding in some situations at the interactional level, by investigating how these stances are

permeated with and shaped by broader language ideologies, we come to understand how social actors, at the same time, distance themselves from social stereotypes at the macro level. One of the varieties relatively present in the (local) public discourse is Kiezdeutsch ('neighborhood German'). Although Kiezdeutsch is known for being spoken by all genders (Bunk & Pohle, 2019, p. 121; Wiese, 2017, p. 334), we show, on the basis of semi-structured interviews conducted at a women's centre in Berlin Kreuzberg, that a focus on gendered ideologies of style is much needed.

At the interactional level, among friends, Kiezdeutsch is constructed as a consequence of the interviewees' multilingual practice and thus activates a sense of belonging and entitlement. At the macro level, on the other hand, the belonging to a multilingual speech community is tied up with the representation of a racialized and ethnicized 'other' in the mainstream, dominant public discourse prevalent in Germany. As young males are the more salient figure in the construction of this racialized and ethnicized 'other', Kiezdeutsch then becomes indexed with masculinity—even within the peer group. As a consequence, for females, speaking Kiezdeutsch is sanctioned across contexts. In the public sphere, Kiezdeutsch is seen negatively because it is attached to an ethnicized 'other' and thus with a failed integration. In private settings as well—and this is a crucial point—even among friends, Kiezdeutsch is also disapproved of because it is deemed inappropriate for girls. While these aspects expectedly interact, a new aspect of our study is the predominant role gender plays in language ideologies revolving around Kiezdeutsch, contrary to what previous observations have shown.

The paper is divided as follows. We first briefly review previous research on multiethnolectal practices, and then on gendered performances of style. In the next section, we describe how the interviews were conducted, and how they lead to our unique viewpoint. In our discussion on language ideologies, we show how, at the level of 'direct indexicality' (Ochs, 1992), speakers connect linguistic forms with interactional stances, and how, at the level of 'indirect indexicality', the linguistic features associated with typical behaviors, situations, or individuals, 'become associated with particular social types believed to take such stances' (Bucholtz, 2009, p. 148).

On this basis, we identify three themes that spontaneously emerged from the interactions with the interviewees, with a focus on why *not* speaking Kiezdeutsch is constructed as appropriate in the vast majority of social contexts. We first show how for racialized girls and women, one common strategy to cope with the stigma attached to Kiezdeutsch is to pursue a *politics of nonvisibility* by consistently trying to avoid speaking Kiezdeutsch in the public sphere, even within the peer group where it may be tolerated. Mirroring the biased public perception, our participants construct Kiezdeutsch as a product of multilingual speakers, and per extension, index it with racialized people and low status.

We then show that gender is constructed as a central category for not using Kiezdeutsch in the discourse of the interviewees and show how internalized 'verbal hygiene' (Cameron, 1995) specifically geared towards women pervades their expectations, norms and perceptions of language use. We finally turn to the ways through which the participants resist these metalinguistic assessments. Our interviewees indeed simultaneously construct Kiezdeutsch as 'the language of the boys' and oppose the double standards they are subjected to. By 'double standards', we mean the application of different sets of principles for situations that are, in principle, the same: whereas males using Kiezdeutsch in the peer group remains unmarked, females using Kiezdeutsch may be constructed as inappropriate.

2 | MULTIETHNOLECTAL PRACTICES AND PUBLIC PERCEPTION

One of the multiethnolects our interviewees have probably been exposed to and sometimes explicitly refer to, Kiezdeutsch, literally means 'neighborhood German'. Note that the term *Kiez* is positively

connoted in Berlin (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015, p. 44) and is not used for multiethnic neighborhoods specifically. Although Kiezdeutsch is used by both monolingual speakers of German and multilingual speakers (Wiese, 2017, p. 335), it remains, however, ‘associated with speakers of mixed ethnic groups’ (Quist, 2008, p. 44). Per extension, Kiezdeutsch becomes tied with people perceived as having a migration trajectory, even if the people who, from an outside perspective, fall into this category, may not identify with the variety or even use it.

Because they are associated with young, multilingual speakers, multiethnolects remain held in low esteem and are seen as ‘products of decay’ not amounting to a ‘real’ language (Krämer, 2017, p. 115). Heated and condemnatory public debates combined with more general discourses on language preservation are pervasive across many countries (see *Straattaal* in the Netherlands [Nortier, 2017], *London Multicultural English* in the United Kingdom [Kircher & Fox, 2019], *rinkebysvenska* in Sweden [Milani, 2010], and *multicultural Paris French* in France [Secova et al., 2018]).

In Germany, our field of investigation, public discourses tend to construct multiethnolect users—or people who are perceived as such, although they may not identify with this way of speaking—as ‘outsiders’ foreign to German nonstandard practices (Wiese, 2015, 2017). The notion of ‘impoverished’ language of people ‘with migration background’ indeed goes far beyond the low prestige attached to regional dialectal forms (Wiese, 2015, 2017). Although standard languages ideologies are pervasive in various contexts, a German specificity revolves around the idea that Kiezdeutsch, contrary to other varieties, would not deserve the status of a dialect, which is attached to regional varieties (Wiese, 2015, 2017).

For this reason, multiethnolectal practices, which incorporate elements of other languages, are seen in contrast, if not in opposition with the dominant language, German. As our study will show, the use of multiethnolectal elements, in turn, is indexed with ‘non-Germanness’. Gendered performances of linguistic styles complexify this picture even more, as metapragmatic assessments on who uses or should use a given multiethnolect are often tied up with gendered identities (Keim, 2007; Spreckels, 2006).

Importantly, we are not interested in whether the girls and women actually use Kiezdeutsch or not. Thus, this paper is not an ethnographic study on (gendered) styles in a high school context (Eckert, 1989; Mendoza-Denton, 1996). Rather, as multiethnolects in Germany have already been widely studied, yet primarily for their phonological, morphosyntactic and lexical features (Auer, 2003; Kern & Selting, 2006; Wiese, 2009), we propose to move the focus from language use to ideologies. Although the stigmatization in public discourse has already been portrayed (Canoğlu, 2012; Dirim & Auer, 2004; Wiese, 2015, 2017, 340ff.), the effects of these ideologies remain largely unexplored, and the role of gender even more so. Although they recognize salient features of Kiezdeutsch when asked and say using some of them, the women we talked to prefer not to be associated with the community Kiezdeutsch represents. Both within their mixed peer groups and outside of them, girls and women are expected *not* to speak Kiezdeutsch.

3 | YOUTH, LANGUAGE AND GENDER

Within language and gender research, the role played by girls and women in using and spreading prestige forms has been explored quantitatively. On the one hand, women are believed to adopt prestige forms more than men, and to avoid stigmatized variants more than men (Labov, 2006). Especially for youth languages, the ‘general pattern [is] that at least where clear nonstandardisms (particularly grammatical) are concerned, from early adolescence on, males in general use more of them than females’ (Eckert, 2014, p. 533). On the other hand, in his review on youth languages, Androutsopoulos (2005, p. 1500) presents a more contrasting picture and shows that girls have also been found to lead in the use of vernacular variants (Eckert, 1989).

Another way to approach the intersection between language, age, and gender is to focus on interaction (Keim, 2007; Spreckels, 2006; Stenström, 2003) and the role played by ideologies (Mendoza-Denton, 1996; Miller, 2004) in gendered performances of style. As early as in the 1990s, Ochs had underlined how important it is not to investigate the relation between language use and gender as a set of linguistic features that could be correlated with individuals or social groups, but to look into the role metalinguistic assessment plays in constructing gendered language ideologies:

Knowledge of how language relates to gender is not a catalogue of correlations between particular linguistic forms and sex of speakers, referents, addressees, and the like. Rather, such knowledge entails tacit understanding of (1) how particular linguistic forms can be used to perform particular pragmatic work (such as conveying stance and social action) and (2) norms, preferences, and expectations regarding the distribution of this work vis-à-vis particular social identities of speakers, referents, and addressees. To discuss the relation of language to gender in these terms is far more revealing than simply identifying features as directly marking men's or women's speech. (Ochs, 1992, p. 342)

Ochs suggests that the indexical relationship between language and social meaning takes place at two levels. Direct indexicality refers to how linguistic forms are imbued with social meaning at the interactional level. These same linguistic forms then become associated, at the level of indirect indexicality, with broader social groups—and this when ideologies come into play. Over time, the relationship between linguistic forms and social meaning is not perceived as indirect anymore, and the individuals performing certain stances in interaction become directly associated with larger groups.

Importantly, in connecting the 'macro' and 'micro' levels, we do not mean that they exist 'as ready-made platforms for social practice, as if social life simply unfolded in more or less intimate, proximate, local, grounded or contained situations' (Carr & Lempert, 2016, p. 8). Rather, we suggest that, as ideological constructs, the micro and macro levels give us insights into how the participants make sense of their social worlds and allow us to see language ideologies and their 'explanatory power to understand beliefs as part of how systems of power are organized' (Cavanaugh, 2020, p. 55).

The processes we are interested in, then, are the ones through which linguistic forms become ideologically linked with one gender, or, more specifically, with certain types of imagined personae. Although a single linguistic feature does not, in itself, build a style, as styles are clusters of linguistic and semiotic signs, certain linguistic expressions may become particularly salient in public discourse and stand as a symbol for a certain type of persona.

As we will show, our interviewees typically recognize and sometimes say that they are using some of the linguistic forms typical for Kiezdeutsch such as lexical borrowings. They say that they do not use the full range of linguistic and semiotic forms associated with Kiezdeutsch, however, and disaffiliate from the community of speakers it represents on two main grounds. First, the interviewees want to avoid being framed as a racialized 'other' in public spaces. Second, while exposing the intern contradictions inherent to these judgements, they partly fulfill gendered expectations by constructing themselves as *not* speaking Kiezdeutsch.

4 | LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES IN INTERACTION

In part of her training and professional engagement, since 2018, Martina has been working in a women's centre aimed at empowering young women exposed to racism by facilitating their school career

and supporting their educational path. Martina is a white woman in her early thirties. She grew up in a European country and speaks German fluently but identifies as a nonnative speaker, although she spoke both German and Italian at school. The interviewees are mostly students of Martina who voluntarily participate in a program offered to young women. They can use the association premises to study, get advice or simply hang out. Teachers, teacher trainees, and social workers offer individual consultations for students who register at the beginning of the school year. The interviewees meet Martina once a week for a few hours.

The eight interviews² at the core of the analysis involve young women (between 16 and 23 years old) born in Berlin from parents with another nationality and who identify as multilinguals. The only combination of languages spoken on a daily basis was Turkish and German. The specific combination of languages was not a criterion when selecting the girls for the interviews, while their educational career in the Berlin school system was. Indeed, the specific position of young females born and raised in Berlin and often described as ‘with migration’ background’ has inspired this research (on the negative connotations of the term *Migrationshintergrund*, see Scarvaglieri & Zech, 2013). Prior to the interviews, we did not assume that these women spoke Kiezdeutsch or not, although it could be expected, given their age, the school they went or go to, and one of the neighborhoods in which they spend some time (Kreuzberg), that they had already been often exposed to it.

Martina played the role of a mentor and coach for Aylin, Fiona, Edna and Kevser³ whereas they prepared for their Abitur (the German A level) or during their apprenticeship. They have been seeing each other once a week for a year and developed a close familiarity. Most interviews reflect this both in the willingness and enthusiasm in participating in the interviews and the eagerness to share personal (including negative) experiences. Ruja has been a student and took part in the program some years ago, whereas today she is herself a teacher trainee and a younger colleague of Martina. The other interviews were conducted with young women (Esra, Selma and Cynthia) Martina did not know so closely before, as they frequent the space but had not been her students prior to the interviews.

The interviews took place at the women's centre in a familiar place, where the young women say they feel confident and comfortable. This represents a major difference compared to previous studies, where the discussions with the students often take place at school, although usually not in the classroom, but in an extra room reserved for extracurricular activities (Bunk & Pohle, 2019, p. 102).

We conceived the interviews in the broadest way possible, and with no prior assumption on what we expected to hear. In order to let room for unelicited accounts, the interviews were 1-hr long semi-structured interviews structured around a loose set of topics ‘which are allowed to develop freely in order to gain insight into how people give meaning to, categorize and account for their worlds in interaction’ (Laihonen, 2008, p. 674). The topics included (a) biographical information; (b) style, codes and linguistic repertoire; (c) outside perception; (d) own positioning. In comparison, previous research on the internal perception of Kiezdeutsch relied on an open guise study and much shorter semi-structured group interviews with 16 students who lived in Kreuzberg (Bunk & Pohle, 2019).

Bearing in mind that interviews are communicative events that should not be seen as a mere reproduction of what the interviewees think (Briggs, 1986), semi-structured interviews provide valuable insights into how participants discursively (re)construct language ideologies (see Gal, 1993; Laihonen, 2008; Liebscher & Dailey-O'Cain, 2009). As the order and the phrasing of the questions influences the ways the interaction unfolds, we make clear for each example whether the turns are an answer to a question from the interviewer, or if they proceed to unelicited narratives. In sum, on the basis of an interactional approach, we investigate ‘the more widely circulating models or ideologies that provide a starting point for local interactional work’ (Wortham, 2008, p. 91).

5 | LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES: THE VIEW FROM WITHIN

In what follows, we show that young women dissociate from the category of ‘Kiezdeutsch speakers’ on the basis of two interrelated aspects of their identities. The motif of a *politics of nonvisibility* is salient in all the interviews. It can be explained by the common association, both in public discourse and for the interviewees, between Kiezdeutsch as a variety with no overt prestige spoken by multilingual speakers, and, per extension with ‘foreigners’ or people ‘with migration background’ with a low socioeconomic status. A specificity of our gender perspective, however, is that girls and women not only avoid to use Kiezdeutsch outside of their peer group, but also *within* it, because they are, as women, sanctioned for using it.

5.1 | The politics of nonvisibility

In this section, we show that speaking Kiezdeutsch in the public sphere, even among friends, is viewed as potentially harmful. The disaffiliation from the community of Kiezdeutsch speakers may seem paradoxical at first: Kiezdeutsch is constructed as belonging to multilingual speakers, and the interviewees precisely are multilingual speakers. Because Kiezdeutsch is seen as a consequence of their multilingual practices, the interviewees feel authorized in discussing who is supposed to speak Kiezdeutsch. As pointed out by Hill for the US context, however, in the ‘white public space’ linguistic heterogeneity and multilingualism can be a desirable asset for speakers perceived as the white majority, whereas the same practices, when used by racialized populations, are subject to devaluation and hypervisibility (Hill, 1998, p. 684).

At the same time, because the interviewees believe that speaking Kiezdeutsch indexes multilingualism, and, by extension, ‘non-Germanness’, the processes of othering they are consistently exposed to drive them to adopt a *politics of nonvisibility*, and to relegate Kiezdeutsch to a variety they are not supposed to use. While for male speakers, Kiezdeutsch may be associated with covert prestige in both private and public settings, female speakers are not offered the same possibilities to find their way through practices of ‘linguistic disorder’ (Hill, 1998, p. 684). The only way for females to be unmarked, no matter where, is to construct themselves as *not* speaking Kiezdeutsch.

When presented with patterns typical for Kiezdeutsch,⁴ the interviewees reject speaking like this, still mention a few salient features, thus leading the informants to be (partly involuntarily) ‘re-labelled’ as Kiezdeutsch speakers, yet again even though they openly state that they do not identify as such:

Example 1 ‘I definitely don’t speak like that’ (Selma_2020.01.29_31:58-32:29).

- | | | |
|---|-------|---|
| 1 | SELMA | <i>also ich kann mich GAR nicht mit dieser sprache identifizieren [...]</i> |
| 2 | | <i>weil ehm (1.0) also KEIne ahnung ich find ehm</i> |
| 3 | | <i>die sprache ist einfach</i> |
| 4 | | <i>so spreche ich DEfinitiv nicht [...]</i> ((lacht)) |
| 5 | | <i>aber ich und mein umfeld sprechen nicht so finde ich</i> |
| 1 | SELMA | well I cannot identify AT ALL with this language [...] |
| 2 | | well ehm (1.0) well I've no idea I think ehm |
| 3 | | the language is simply |
| 4 | | I DEfinitely don't speak like that [...] ((laughs)) |
| 5 | | but me and environment don't speak like that I think |

In example (1), Selma, an 18-year-old who lives and goes to school in Kreuzberg, clearly disaffiliates from Kiezdeutsch. Although they do not identify as Kiezdeutsch speakers, all the interviewees recognize Kiezdeutsch when they are shown typical features. On a formal descriptive level, two main aspects are typical for Kiezdeutsch (Wiese, 2009): (1) loaned features from migrant heritage languages, including, at the lexical level, discourse particles such as *yalla* (from Arabic, meaning ‘let’s go’) and *lan* (from Turkish, a vocative particle of address, roughly equivalent to ‘dude’), and, at the phonological level, the coronalization of /ç/, which yields pronunciations such as ‘isch’ for ‘ich’ (but is not exclusive of Kiezdeutsch, as it is found in many other German dialects, see Dirim & Auer, 2004, p. 207); (2) grammatical ‘reduction’, including zero copula (omission of expected linking verbs between the subject and predicate), reduced or absent morphological inflection of nouns and verbs, and a tendency towards V3 (verb-third) word order. Interestingly, the interviewees have usually no difficulty saying that they are using lexical items typical for Kiezdeutsch, while also distancing themselves from morphological reductions, thus suggesting that lexical innovations are more salient and more accepted than grammatical ones.

Lexical borrowings are indeed regarded as a consequence of the interviewee’s multilingualism and belonging to the Turkish-speaking community. In (2), we see how Selma, who we already quoted in (1), divides her social world between ‘pure Germans’ and ‘people with migration background’:

Example 2 ‘it’s not German like the Germans speak’ (Selma_2020.01.30_15:00-16:43).

- 1 SELMA *zum beispiel ist es auch dieses straßendeutsch so*
 2 *ich sag also ich hab mich jetzt ja auch dazugezählt bisschen*
 3 *aber dieses eh diese heutzutage sieht man kinder so die (2.0)*
 4 *die so bisschen ausgefallen deutsch reden [...]*
 5 ***das ist halt nicht so deutsch dass halt das:: die DEutschen sprechen***
 6 *ich sag mal so die DEutschen ((macht Anführungszeichen in der Luft)) so genau [...]*
 7 *also eher weniger*
 8 *ich hab mal so auf der straße so jugendliche gesehn die*
 9 ***also ich denk ma also das soll jetzt nicht ein vorurteil sein***
 10 ***REin deutsch sind***
 11 *aber halt so wo ich mir d:: so die haben so gesprochen und auch voll laut*
 12 *da hab ich mir gedacht warum sprichst du kein deutsch?*
 13 *das war voll schlecht so das kenn ich auch gar nicht von den DEutschen ((lacht))*
 14 *weil sie auch zuhause so sprechen so*
 15 *uns würd ich ja noch verstehen obwohl okay meine eltern können*
 16 *jetzt nicht NUR deutsch aber ich sprech ja auch noch zuhause türkisch so*
 17 *es kann ja sein dass man sagt ok vielleicht kommt es davon*
 18 *dass die halt nur TÜ:: also dass die halt nicht nur deutsch zuhause reden*
 19 *dass man halt sagen kann okay das is:: da ist was schief gelaufen*
 20 *sie kann nicht so gut deutsch reden*
 21 ***aber bei familien die halt NUR deutsch reden***
 22 ***kann ich das leider nicht verstehen wieso sie dann***
 23 *immer noch so in dieser kultur leben wo man halt*
 24 *ehm:: sie halt nicht 100% wirklich gut reden können*

- 1 SELMA for example there is also **this street german**
 2 I put it like **I also counted me as part of it** a bit
 3 but this ehm nowadays one sees children who like (2.0)
 4 they speak unusual german [...]
 5 **that's not german tha::t GERmans speak**
 6 I put it like the GERmans ((makes quotation marks in the air)) like that [...] well less
 7 I've once seen teenagers on the street who
 8 well I think well **it shouldn't sound like prejudice**
 9 **who were PUre germans**
 10 but well were I thought th::ey also spoke like that and were loud
 11 there I thought why don't you speak german?
 12 it was so bad well **I've usually not heard that from GERmans** ((laughs))
 13 cause they also speak like that at home
 14 I would understand us although my parents also can't
 15 only speak german but **I speak also turkish at home**
 16 well it could be that one says ok maybe it is because
 17 she only speaks TU:: well that she doesn't speak only german at home
 18 well that one says okay something went wrong there
 19 she can't speak german well
 20 **but in families who ONLY speak german**
 21 **unfortunately I cannot understand** why they would
 22 still live in that culture
 23 where one ehm:: well they don't speak 100% well

Although Kiezdeutsch is by no means only spoken by multilingual speakers (Wiese, 2017, p. 335), which in turn explains why the term of *multiethnolect* captures the fact that 'the variety is not linked to just one ethnic group' (Quist, 2008, pp. 48–49), the public discourse remains shaped by the idea that Kiezdeutsch is attached to multiethnic groups only with a focus on populations of Turkish descent, and exclusive of 'families who ONLY speak German' (l. 20). Six of our interviewees directly confirm this view, as they argue that depending on the school and in general the living environment, German monolingual speakers also use Kiezdeutsch. In this example, however, we see how Kiezdeutsch remains constructed as indexing 'non-Germanness', and how the ethnic essentialism of German public discourse (the dichotomy German versus non-German) is reproduced. Regarded as potentially problematic ('street German', l. 1), Kiezdeutsch still functions as a marker of belonging ('I also counted me as part of it', l. 2), and more precisely, as unfolded in the rest of the extract, as a marker of ethnicity.

Kiezdeutsch is indeed framed as a variety which is 'not German that Germans speak' (l. 5). Interestingly, Selma's perception is not directly attached to whether 'Germans' speak Kiezdeutsch or not, as she reports having heard 'teenagers who I think [...] are pure Germans' (l. 8), even if the air quotes (l. 6) suggest that she metapragmatically disaligns with the label 'Germans', if not with the category altogether: all interviewees are Germans as well. Rather, she is looking for explanations as to why 'Germans', who do not experience multilingualism the same way she does, speak 'unusual German' (l. 4). Although Selma shows understanding towards speakers navigating between several languages, she judges negatively those 'families who only speak German' (l. 20). For teenagers and young adults born in Germany with a Turkish background, Kiezdeutsch is imbued with covert

prestige, partly because it reflects their multilingual everyday practices and becomes the locus where their multiple linguistic identities become not only acknowledged, but also valued.

At the same time, they are aware of the negative public perception and know that Kiezdeutsch has no overt prestige, and thus do not understand why peers who are not multilingual would speak Kiezdeutsch: ‘there I thought why don't you speak German?’ (l. 11). Kiezdeutsch thus does not work as a youth language in the broadest sense, but, crucially, as a ‘multiethnolect’ (Bunk & Pohle, 2019; Nortier & Dorleijn, 2013; Wiese, 2009). To sum up, young adults exposed to Kiezdeutsch are aware that it is not only spoken by multilingual speakers. Still, they reconstruct Kiezdeutsch as deficient, and say that navigating between several languages may account for their use of Kiezdeutsch. This is why Kiezdeutsch is constructed as more legitimate if spoken by multilingual speakers.

The understanding of Kiezdeutsch as a marker of ethnicity is reflected in several interviews (see Kevser, Selma, Edna, Esra), but it is particularly salient in the following extract of Aylin, an 18-year-old woman living in Kreuzberg who had already successfully passed her *Abitur*, the qualification granted at the end of secondary education, at the time of the interview:

Example 3 ‘Germans who pretend to be foreigner’ (Aylin_2019.08.22_21:00-22:23).

- 1 AYLIN *dass DEutsche ehm sich (2.0) mit (2.0) dass sie so einen auf ausländer tun [...]*
 2 *dann ist das doch ok wenn sie sonst ein GUTes deutsch sprechen*
- 1 AYLIN that GERmans ehm they (2.0) they (2.0) pretend to be foreigner [...]
 2 then it's ok if they otherwise speak GOod german

The practice of language crossing described as ‘Germans who pretend to be foreigner’ (l. 1) refers to instances where speakers (momentarily) switch into a style of language that ‘is not generally thought to “belong” to them’ (Auer, 2006, p. 490; Rampton, 1995). By assuming that German students who speak Kiezdeutsch pretend to be ‘foreigners’ possibly to be cool, speaking this variety of German indexes being ‘foreign’ to the interviewees, thus mirroring the (biased) public perception.

The term ‘foreigner’ (*Ausländer*) has derogatory connotations and may be seen in relation to the German history of exclusion of people of non-German descent. The term was indeed first (in the 80s) used as part of a process of othering where one could not really say what exactly being German could (and could not) mean, but at least one was clearly distinguished from the ‘foreigners’ or ‘the Turkish culture’ (Mannitz & Schneider, 2014, p. 81). Here again, we see how the discursive ‘conceptualisation of Kiezdeutsch speakers as non-German’ reflects the ‘alloethnic construction of Kiezdeutsch speakers as “foreigners” or “migrants”’ (Wiese, 2015, p. 354)—that is, how the interviewees have internalized the public discourse on Kiezdeutsch being primarily used by multilingual speakers. Because they are otherwise able to speak ‘good German’ (l. 2), peers who speak German at home are constructed as *choosing* to speak Kiezdeutsch, whereas the participants describe their use of Kiezdeutsch as a consequence of their multilingual practices.

The discursive construction of Kiezdeutsch as a marker of ethnicity is correlated with strategies to minimize their visibility in public spaces. In (4), Aylin clearly connects speaking Kiezdeutsch with facing racism in public transport:

Example 4 ‘typical for foreign people’ (Aylin_2019.08.22_18:32-19:27).

- 1 AYLIN *ich war mit meiner freundin unterwegs und sie trägt selbst kopftuch*
 2 *wir haben so kommuniziert nicht richtig deutsch*

3 *also so ja was machst du? hä:::? ni::emals und so*
 4 *dann wurde uns so komisch angeguckt so einen auf hä::?*
 5 *so typisch ausländer! in der u-bahn war das*
 6 *oder (1.0) wir wurden auch einmal Richtig fertig gemacht*
 7 *aber da haben wir auch nicht hingehört so*
 8 *wir haben da auch so diese wörter wie wallah⁵ nein und so*
 9 *und da haben wir gelacht und so*
 10 *und da war ne frau neben uns und hat telefoniert*
 11 *und hat gesagt hier bellen einige hunde*

1 AYLIN I was outside with my friend and she wears a headscarf herself
 2 we were communicating **not really german**
 3 well like what's up? hä:::? ne:::ver and things like that
 4 and then we were looked at in a weird way like hä::?
 5 **typical foreigner!** that was in the underground
 6 or (1.0) once we've REally been worn out
 7 but we didn't listen like
 8 there we were also using these words like wallah no and things like that
 9 and we were laughing and so on
 10 and there was a woman sitting next to us who was talking on the phone
 11 and said **there are some dogs barking here**

In this extract, Aylin explains that while talking to a friend in a language which is 'not really German' (l. 2), she experienced racism on several occasions, being accused of talking like 'typical foreigners' (l. 5) or even being compared to dogs (l. 11). Such narratives come up frequently in the interviews, and always without being triggered by any direct or indirect question concerning experiences with racism. Esra (17 years old, preparing for her *Abitur*, the qualification granted at the end of secondary education, in a school in Wedding at the time of the interview) for instance refers to a job interview during which the other candidates commented on her German sounding different, 'with migration background'. Similarly, Fiona (16 years old, going to a school providing advanced secondary education [*Gymnasium*] in Friedrichshain) reports the positive judgments from her teachers on her German 'compared to the others' (understand: the other students 'with migration background') but also highlights the double standards she is exposed to, wondering whether she can take this as a compliment and wondering why she sticks out (thus implying that speaking 'good' German is normal because she was born in Germany).

Importantly, such narratives are not only linked with the girls' and women's experiences as racialized 'others', but crucially intersect with their gender identity. Although it has been shown in other contexts that multilingual practices, especially of racialized speakers, are made 'highly visible' in white public spaces and 'the object of constant monitoring' (Hill, 1998, p. 684), we show that our interviewees are subjected to these racist discourses both as people 'with migration background' and as women.

An important thread underlying the women's' discourse is visibility, or, rather the politics of non-visibility consistently pursued by our interviewees. Kiezdeutsch is described as something that should be avoided in public spaces, even when talking to friends. Ruja, Esra's sister who is 23 years old and studying to become a teacher, describes it as follows:

Example 5 'I don't speak like that in public' (Ruja_2020.01.08_18:00-19:44).

- 1 RUJA *aber also ich versuch dann SCHON drauf zu achten*
 2 *dass ich nicht in der öffentlichkeit SO mit meinen freunden rede*
 3 *wie Die jetzt ich mein' wie die jetzt so öffentlich reden*
 4 *so würd ich jetzt nicht reden [...] ja weil es klingt SCHON asozial [...]*
 5 *ist mir einfach PEInlich weil (2.0) ich denke mal die leute denken dann so*
 6 *ja die kann kein richtiges deutsch oder so (.)*
 7 *weil sie ja ständig ((unverständlich)) ist mir einfach peinlich*
 8 *ich will nicht dass andere menschen mitbekommen*
 9 *dass ich ehm so mit meinen freunden oder so so rede*
 10 *dass die öffentlichkeit das mitbekommt*
- 1 RUJA but well I DO try to pay attention
 2 **that I don't speak like that in public like THAT with my friends**
 3 **I mean like THEY you know speak in public**
 4 I wouldn't speak like that [...] yes because it DOES sound asocial [...]
 5 it's just EMBarrassing to me cause (2.0) I suppose **people think** like
 6 **well well she cannot speak proper german** or something like that (.)
 7 cause she keeps ((unintelligible)) it's just embarrassing for me
 8 **I don't want other people to get**
 9 that I ehm speak like that with friends
 10 **that the public notices that**

Using Kiezdeutsch is repeatedly constructed as something that exposes you in the public sphere and in particular in the subway: using Kiezdeutsch means standing out. The discomfort of attracting attention may be explained by several factors, but one of them frequently reappears in several interviews: the feeling of being in-between and thus used to 'get funny looks'. Fiona for instance explains that this happens both in Berlin when she speaks Turkish with her family at the supermarket, but also in Turkey during the summer holidays when she speaks German with her siblings.

We suggest that because they are used to be noticed and constructed as 'the other', women perceived as having 'migration background' choose not to stand out and actively pursue a politics of nonvisibility by saying that they avoid using Kiezdeutsch in the public sphere. The line of demarcation is thus not only between addressees with whom Kiezdeutsch is appropriate (Bunk & Pohle, 2019), but, crucially, between private and public spaces, thus underlining the perverse effects of appropriateness based additive approaches that tend to relegate other repertoires than standard language to private spaces, hence delegitimizing their use in highly valued public spaces (Flores & Rosa, 2015, p. 159). Making a clear distinction between their role in the public sphere, where they are often construed as representatives of 'foreigners' and hence become easy targets for racist comments, and their role in private spaces, where they use Kiezdeutsch as an in-group marker with their friends, indeed appears unfair for many interviewees. Reducing the question to register awareness or audience design, that is, to the ability or willingness of the participants to adjust their ways of speaking to the situation, obscures the erasure they subject themselves to, even in contexts where Kiezdeutsch would be appropriate (for instance with friends).

In sum, because they are multilingual speakers, often confounded as people 'with migration background', and, per extension, as 'foreigners' in the (racist) public perception, the interviewees are

expected to use Kiezdeutsch. This leads to two interrelated positions: on the one hand, they see themselves at the core of the speech community, and as legitimate users when it comes to assessing who is entitled to speak it. This suggests that for multilingual speakers, Kiezdeutsch functions as a marker of ethnicity with covert prestige. Importantly, the use of Kiezdeutsch is not imbued with covert prestige within the community of Kiezdeutsch speakers all together, as the interviewees consider that some Kiezdeutsch speakers should *not* speak it, since they are monolinguals.

On the other hand, because Kiezdeutsch becomes tied up with multilingual speakers, it is also viewed as the consequence of a faulty or insufficient German (because Turkish is spoken at home), which is why the interviewees pursue a politics of nonvisibility in public spaces. This suggests that reducing the question of who uses Kiezdeutsch and when to whether they are within the peer group fails to grasp how Kiezdeutsch users are stigmatized. When being heard speaking Kiezdeutsch, the interviewees fear judgments on their (standard) German being not good enough, whereas their peers labelled as ‘pure Germans’ are not, in the same situation, accused of not being able to speak ‘good German’. Given that all interviewees are born and raised in Berlin and have successfully navigated the German educational system leading to their attainment of the qualification granted at the end of secondary education, the *Abitur*, or are even studying at the university (in the case of Ruja and Esra), it becomes increasingly clear that such accusations/prejudices arise irrespectively of their actual language use. Their linguistic insecurity is, in turn, triggered by the repeated assignments as people ‘with migration background’: even using standard German, the participants report being noticeable (because they speak better than expected given their assigned ‘migration background’).

5.2 | Internalized ‘verbal hygiene’

Talking is an inherently social, political, and public act, and the ways we metadiscursively engage with how we talk crucially impacts how we continue talking and how it is received. One of the groups particularly exposed to metalinguistic judgments on how they should speak, also labeled ‘verbal hygiene’, is women (Cameron, 1995, chap. 5). We now turn to the recurring role of older women as guardians of a ‘correct language’ and show how the interviewees position themselves when subjected to normative judgments about language use outside the school context.

In the following extract, Edna answers Martina's question on whether she thinks that social media are responsible for a certain form of language decay. Although the arguments presented are typical, thus showing how speakers internalize elements of language ideology brought onto them by the dominant majority of the society, we find non incidental that Edna specifically mentions her female cousin policing her language use:

Example 6 ‘I want to hear a real sentence from you’ (Edna_2019.10.20_16:29-17:14).

- | | | |
|---|------|--|
| 1 | EDNA | <i>oder wenn ich halt einfach einen satz ohne artikel verwendet habe</i> |
| 2 | | <i>dann hat sie gesagt nein ich möchte jetzt Bitte einen richtigen satz von dir hören</i> |
| 3 | | <i>nicht ehm (1.0) ich bin kurz klo</i> |
| 4 | | <i>so (.) sondern ICH bin jetzt kurz auf dem klo ((leichtes Lachen))</i> |
| 5 | | <i>das hat sie mir immer so gesagt und ich meinte ja okay</i> |
| 6 | | <i>ich kann's auch so sagen aber wozu jetzt</i> |
| 7 | | <i>du weißt doch dass ich's eh kann aber es geht doch so viel schneller</i> |

- 1 EDNA or if I just used **a sentence with no article**
 2 then she said no I want to hear **a real sentence** from you
 3 not ehm (1.0) I'm quick bathroom
 4 so (.) but I am in the bathroom right now ((light laughter))
 5 that's what she always said to me and I said okay
 6 **I can say it that way but why now**
 7 you know I can do it as well but it's so much faster

The 21-year-old Edna, doing an apprenticeship (*Ausbildung*) at the time of the interview, explains that her cousin is tutoring her and presents her as the person who would get angry at her for switching from German to Turkish in the same sentence or leaving out articles while speaking German. Two competing language ideologies on the functions of language are salient in this extract: on the one hand, an older female family member, who is educated and described as a potential role model, transmits prescriptive norms. The request, based on the unarticulated idea of a 'real sentence' (l. 2), reflects not only the pervasive dichotomy between written and spoken language use, where utterances are condemned to remain 'unreal sentences' from a syntactic perspective oriented towards written standards on texts as products, but also reminds us of the prototypical judgments from teachers around 'the fetish of prescriptive grammar' (Cameron, 1995). Edna opposes a functional approach based on register awareness and the idea that both communication partners know that she knows how to talk in a different way (l. 6), yet that she decides not to. In doing so, she shows her acute understanding on how language use changes according to the contexts, but also reaffirms herself as a competent speaker in the view of standard language ideologies that unfold as inadequate or unimportant.

Throughout the interview Edna does not mention any other person in her family or in the educational realm with such a role. When asked whether there are people that she only speaks standard German (*Hochdeutsch*) with, Cynthia similarly spontaneously mentions her aunt, who arguably speaks this way because, according to Cynthia, she went to university and is used to it. The aunt can count as a sort of role model or a trigger for a more monitored way of speaking, but she does not sanction the informant's language use. This seems to be a different role than someone who actively engages with the informant's practices, as (young) males do (see next section), although Ruja also reports correcting her own friends (she is, however, the only one). Interestingly, only older women are cited as guardians of a 'correct language' for educational purposes. As more women are usually involved in educational matters (for instance, the high school teachers mentioned by the interviewees are all women), these narratives may reflect a more general pattern regarding the females' presence and involvement in teaching and language policing, especially as the interviews took place at a women's centre.

On the basis of this representative example, we may make broader claims on the continuum between *collusion* and *contestation* (Martin-Jones & Heller, 1996, p. 4). The distinction between the two serves as an analytical tool. The first term, *collusion*, captures instances where speakers reaffirm, legitimize and thereby contribute (possibly unconsciously) to prescriptive, standard language ideologies, while the second, *contestation*, emphasizes those instances where speakers discursively challenge the legitimacy of such hegemonic views and/or describe practices of resistance. Expectedly given the sensitive nature of metalinguistic judgements on language, their hybrid identities, and the contradictory norms they evolve in, the participants alternately adopt different and contrasting perspectives.

Importantly, despite strong feeling of linguistic insecurity none of the young women accepts judgements on their language use without questioning them, no matter where they come from. The difference between older women and males from their peer group is rather to be found in the possible explanations they account for others policing their language use. When a female authority figure other than a teacher intervenes, the interviewees usually challenge it, for instance by emphasizing their register awareness.

Still, the participants acknowledge the rationale behind the critique, and where their interlocutors are coming from, usually providing explanations in terms of education. When boys do so, however, the girls cannot connect the boys' stances with any valid reason for policing their language use. This aspect, which, as far as we know, has not been explored until now, is the focus of the last section.

5.3 | The language of the boys? Exposing double standards

Kiezdeutsch is said to be spoken as much by male as by female speakers (Bunk & Pohle, 2019, p. 121; Wiese, 2017, p. 334). Although in the public perception, Kiezdeutsch is usually associated with young male speakers, Wiese (2017, p. 334) suggests that it may be explained by an increased and more visible presence in the public sphere (on the streets, in youth facilities), which is consistent with the politics of nonvisibility presented earlier. Referring to the studies from Kern and Selting (2006) and Selting (2011), in which a large proportion of female speakers were involved, and to Dirim and Auer (2004, p. 215), who note that Kiezdeutsch is also used by girls and women, Wiese (2017, p. 334) observes that gender does not prove to be a central category for Kiezdeutsch. However, Bunk & Pohle, who conducted one of the first studies on the internal perception of Kiezdeutsch, mention the gender variable as 'one of the aspects that we leave for future research' (2019, p. 121). Similarly, Preseau (2020, p. 132) states that 'the role of gender in these communities, specifically the presence of women, has been underexplored' and that a 'gender-balanced study will thus necessitate future work conducted in female-only programs' (Preseau, 2020, p. 75).

Indeed, five interviewees spontaneously—that is, without us asking any question pertaining to gender—refer to Kiezdeutsch as the 'language of boys' (*Sprache von Jungs*), which suggests that young women both ascribe this variety of German to male speakers, and are expected, especially by male peers (brothers, boyfriends, friends), not to use it. By *expected*, we do not only mean that women sometimes do not use Kiezdeutsch among friends and that not using it would be considered unmarked behavior, but also that they are explicitly told not to use Kiezdeutsch, even within their peer group:

Example 7 'what those guys talk' (Edna_2019.10.20_11:12-11:37).

- | | | |
|---|------|--|
| 1 | EDNA | <i>also schlechtes deutsch fange ich mal GLEICH an</i> |
| 2 | | <i>huh mmh (2.0) das klingt jetzt ein bisschen witzig aber ((lächelt))</i> |
| 3 | | <i>man merkt ja türkische jungs in einer gruppe [...]</i> |
| 4 | | <i>oder halt allgemein ich weiß nicht wie der kanake so::</i> |
| 5 | | <i>sagt man so und es gibt auch so ne sprache halt so</i> |
| 6 | | <i>was halt so solche TYPen so sprechen</i> |
| 7 | | <i>DAS ist zum beispiel schlecht schlechtes deutsch</i> |
| 1 | EDNA | so bad german I can start IMMEDIATELY |
| 2 | | huh mmh (2.0) it sounds funny but ((smiles)) |
| 3 | | you notice turkish guys in a group [...] |
| 4 | | or generally I don't know like the kanake |
| 5 | | that's how people say and well there is also a language |
| 6 | | what those guys talk |
| 7 | | THIS is bad bad german for instance |

When asked whether she identifies ‘good’ and ‘bad’ (varieties of) German, ‘bad German’ is most salient, which in turns suggests that ‘good German’ is unmarked. Edna, who we cited in (6), is 21 and doing an apprenticeship at the time of the interview. Similar to four other interviewees, Edna spontaneously associates ‘bad German’ with male speakers (and with Turkish male speakers more specifically, as we have already highlighted). The interviewee uses terms which in mainstream are used with mainly derogatory connotations (*Ausländer, mit Migrationshintergrund*), although they have sometimes been reappropriated, such as *Kanake*, which has been taken upon by migrant movements positively reclaiming the term (Zaimoglu, 2013).

Edna keeps characterizing (lexical) features of Kiezdeutsch as typical for male speakers, although she also says that she speaks like this, too. Kiezdeutsch is thus presented as a variety of German females may use, but are not supposed to:

Example 8 ‘They (the boys) say it’s a turn off’ (Ruja_2020.01.08_21:56-23:01).

- 1 RUJA *ja also ich denk da gibt's SCHON einen unterschied zum beispiel **finden JUngs***
 2 ***die mädchen die SO reden voll ehm ASOzial (2.0)***
 3 ***obwohl die selber so reden [...]***
 4 ***die sagen ist voll abturnend oder so (3.0)***
 5 *ja also ich denk schon dass da einen unterschied gibt*
 6 *und ich find ich find beide sind mittlerweile gleich*
 7 *also da gibt's keinen unterschied beide reden ziemlich auf kiez [...]*
 8 *sonst ham dann denken die auch guck mal was für mädchen das sind (2.0)*
 9 *und ja das versuchen wir dann zu vermeiden*
- 1 RUJA *yes well I DO think that there is a difference for example **BOys think***
 2 ***that girls who talk like THAT are ASOcial (2.0)***
 3 ***even if they speak like that themselves [...]***
 4 ***they say it's a turn off** or something like that (3.0)*
 5 *yes I do think there is a difference*
 6 *and I think I think by now both are the same*
 7 *there is no difference both speak quite kiez [...]*
 8 *otherwise they've then they think look what kind of girls they are (2.0)*
 9 *and yes we try to avoid that*

These examples present very clear instances of language policing, where young males within the peer group are constructed as corrective authorities sanctioning the female speakers' linguistic behavior. In contrast with the older women, boys do not comment on or correct features, but their fierce negative reactions are a reason to comply with gendered expectations. We suggest linking the boys' negative judgements on girls speaking Kiezdeutsch with Eckert's observation according to which ‘Girls control the heterosexual market—they decide who will go with whom, they arrange meetings and alliances, and they negotiate desirability’ (2014, p. 531). In (8), Ruja explains that in her opinion, both boys and girls speak Kiezdeutsch, but that female speakers are negatively judged by male speakers if they do so, which may indirectly have an impact on the possibility to form heterosexual relationships: ‘it’s a turn off’ (l. 4), indicating that a woman using this kind of speech is not a prototypical object of male physical desire.

The word 'asocial' (l. 2), which also comes up in example 5 (line 4), is noteworthy, as it implies that female Kiezdeutsch users 'are not social' (see Nortier, 2017, p. 21 for similar comments on Straattaal). A study on the semantics of the word *asozial* in a female peer group has shown, however, that the adjective gets a more specific meaning in female adolescent interactions, as it is notably used to refer to the socially sanctioned behavior of boys hanging out in bars (Spreckels, 2006, pp. 133–134).⁶

From this point of view, the fact that 'boys think that girls who talk like that are asocial' (l. 2) underlines even more how, according to our interviewees, boys construct themselves as authorized speakers of Kiezdeutsch *because* they are males. On this basis, we hypothesize that the use of Kiezdeutsch in public spaces may not only be seen as contestation or covert prestige, but as a symbol of the males' (perceived) power on social order. According to our interviewees, boys describe themselves as the only ones entitled to speak Kiezdeutsch, and thus the only ones allowed to be visible, and possibly the only ones who can afford to stand out. Kiezdeutsch is thus implicitly constructed as a point of contention in power dynamics in male-female relationships. Yet the girls we spoke to actually challenge these males' perceived intrusions into the linguistic market.

In an attempt to control the males' judgements on their ways of speaking, Ruja explicitly engages in a form of censorship: 'and yes we try to avoid that' (l. 9), although she also highlights the double standards girls and women are exposed to: 'even if they [males] speak like that themselves' (l. 3). This type of metalinguistic assessment is very frequent in our interviews (five interviewees discuss this point extensively). Another example is how the 16-year-old Fiona tells a story about how she unintentionally used some features of Kiezdeutsch while talking with a (female) friend on the street in front of her friend's father, and how it made her feel very uncomfortable. It is only later in the interview that some more elements of explanation on why Fiona was ashamed of speaking Kiezdeutsch come up:

Example 9 'He HAtes it when a girl talks like that' (Fiona_2019.11.15_29:00-34:37).

- | | | |
|----|---------|--|
| 1 | FIONA | <i>JA ich mag diese sprache nicht [...]</i> |
| 2 | | <i>zum beispiel wenn ich zuhause mit meinem bruder oder mit meiner schwester</i> |
| 3 | | <i>so reden würde würden sie mich ((wird leiser)) schlagen ((lacht))</i> |
| 4 | | <i>also die hassen sowas vor allem mein bruder</i> |
| 5 | | <i>also er findet (2.0) er HASsst es wenn ein mädchen so redet</i> |
| 6 | | <i>so diese aznacksprache ich selber mag das selber nicht [...]</i> |
| 7 | | <i>oder das mädchen einfach das das passt denen irgendwo nicht so zu reden [...]</i> |
| 8 | MARTINA | <i>und das würde dich bei einem jungen nicht stören? das fändest du dann</i> |
| 9 | FIONA | <i>doch das hass ich selber also ich mag es nicht</i> |
| 10 | MARTINA | <i>also dein bruder würde da einen unterschied machen aber du nicht? verstehe ich das richtig?</i> |
| 11 | FIONA | <i>also ja also ich persönlich mag es an mir überhaupt nicht</i> |
| 12 | | <i>aber wenn zum beispiel mein freund oder irgendjemand anderes so reden würde</i> |
| 13 | | <i>würde ich sagen mach richtig so vor allem wenn man in der öffentlichkeit ist</i> |
| 14 | | <i>oder in der bahn oder so find ich sowas PEInlich weil</i> |
| 15 | | <i>ich ma.:g das irgendwie überHAUpt nicht ich weiß nicht ob es nur mir so geht</i> |
| 16 | | <i>aber ehm wir reden auch im freundeskreis über sowas wenn wir zum beispiel</i> |
| 17 | | <i>auf der straße die mädchen hören die so reden (.) oder die jungs [...]</i> |

- 18 *das ist einfach nicht passend diese sprache [...]*
- 19 *aber was mir komisch vorkommt ist*
- 20 *dass JUngs das gar nicht mögen an mädchen*
- 21 *obwohl die selber so reden (2.0) weil jungs die mögen das überhaupt nicht*
- 22 *wenn mädchen so mit dicker oder lak gib ma her oder so [...]*
- 23 *weil die finden das gar nicht passend die finden das sogar ehm (2.0) männlich*
- 24 *[...] obwohl sie das selber machen finden sie das nicht gut an mädchen (6.0)*
- 25 MARTINA *was denkst du dazu?*
- 26 FIONA *ja ich find's unfair ((lacht)) ich find's unfair ehrlich gesagt weil ehm*
- 27 *ihr habt das recht so zu reden aber wenn wir mädchen zum beispiel so reden*
- 28 *dann seid ihr direkt gegen uns so (2.0) ey rede ma richtig*
- 1 FIONA **YEAH I don't like this language [...]**
- 2 *for example if I'd speak like that at home to my brother or my sister*
- 3 **if I'd speak like that they'd** ((lowers her voice)) **slap me** ((laughs))
- 4 **well they hate things like that mostly my brother**
- 5 **well he thinks (2.0) he HAtes it when a girl talks like that**
- 6 *this azzlak language I don't like it myself [...]*
- 7 **or that girls it simply it it doesn't fit them to speak like that [...]**
- 8 MARTINA *and that wouldn't bother you if it were a boy? you'd think*
- 9 FIONA *yes it would I hate I myself don't like it*
- 10 MARTINA *well your brother would make a difference there but you wouldn't? did I get you right?*
- 11 FIONA *well yes I personally don't like it about myself at all*
- 12 *but if for example my friend or someone else would speak like that*
- 13 *I'd say do it proper **even more so if you are in public***
- 14 *or in the subway or something I think it's EMbarrassing cause*
- 15 *I somehow don't li::ke it at ALL I don't know if it's only me*
- 16 *but ehm we also talk about among friends and if for example*
- 17 **we hear girls in the street talking like that (.) or boys [...]**
- 18 *this is just not appropriate this language [...]*
- 19 **but what I find weird**
- 20 **is that BOys don't like it at all about girls**
- 21 **even if they speak themselves like that (2.0) boys don't like it at all**
- 22 *if girls say bro or lak gimme that or things like that [...]*
- 23 *cause they think it's not fitting **they even think it's ehm (2.0) manly***
- 24 *[...] even if they do it themselves they don't like it about girls (6.0)*
- 25 MARTINA *what do you think about it?*
- 26 **yes I think it's unfair ((laughs))** *I think it's unfair to be honest cause ehm*
- 27 *you have the right to speak like that but if we girls for example talk like that*
- 28 *you're immediately against us and like (2.0) ey speak proper*

In this extract, Fiona shows that the negative connotations attached to Kiezdeutsch are even stronger for girls, and that the negative judgements on Kiezdeutsch users can arise within the in-group, from

her brother (l. 4), even though she aligns with the fact that this variety does not fit her well (l. 9–11). The use of *azzlacksprache* (l. 6), which we translated as ‘azzlak language’, is particularly interesting. Although we hear ‘asnak’ in the audio file, we hypothesize that Fiona cross-references the common abbreviation *azzlack* for *asoziale Kanaken* which has become popular as a self-chosen label for a group of German rap artists, among which *Haftbefehl* is the most prominent figure (Herdam, 2016). While the term was initially used derogatorily, it now appears to be used as a term of self-empowerment as well (Loh & Güngör, 2002, p. 40, cited by Herdam, 2016, p. 95). Similar to the uses of *asozial* in examples 5 and 8, we see that the positive connotations attached to the term as a marker of identity for young people is not necessarily taken upon by girls, who are subjected to different rules than their male counterparts.

Fiona's brother is not the only male policing females' language as inappropriate for women, as it is described as a more general pattern (l. 20–21). The inconsistency of the boys policing their language use while being Kiezdeutsch speakers themselves is presented by the interviewees as ‘unfair’ (l. 26), which invites us to question how the participants conceptualize the connection between using Kiezdeutsch and being male.

Importantly, it is not only said that Kiezdeutsch is or should be used by males, but that it is ‘manly’ (l. 23), which means that not only may Kiezdeutsch speakers use it because they are males, but also in order to (directly) construct a masculine identity (Cynthia and Ruja also emphasize this aspect). We would like, however, to suggest that this interpretation pertains to the first level, direct indexicality, and does not fully capture what is at stake here. Indeed, it could be argued that it is not only masculinity that the young women resist, but being noticeable, and thus exposed, in the public sphere—as we saw earlier, but also as is repeated in this extract (l. 13, l. 17).

The fact that negative judgments on Kiezdeutsch get intertwined, once again, with the politics of nonvisibility, suggests that Kiezdeutsch is, for girls and women, a marked behaviour—a stylistic choice that they may construct as initiated or reinforced by peer pressure (‘everyone talks like that’), but that they always frame as conscious and deliberate. The problem, then, is not only that Kiezdeutsch makes them sound ‘foreign’ or ‘male’, but noticeable and ‘relaxed’. Not using Kiezdeutsch may thus read as an avoidance strategy in fulfilling ‘the linguistic norms saying women should “mind their language”’, which continue to ‘apply to some degree across the social spectrum—“correctness” is associated with femininity as well as with high social status’ (Cameron, 1995, p. 171).

In other words, Kiezdeutsch does not correlate, per se, with any gender. It still, however, activates a typical persona, that of a young male of Turkish descent who does not pay attention to his language use or does not care of what others think of it. These characteristics may be linked with coolness at the interactional level, thus explaining why males with no ‘migration background’ may use Kiezdeutsch as a marker of belonging as well (see example (3)).

6 | CONCLUSION

This paper invites us to pay more attention to competing linguistic ideologies in relation with language use. The fact that people use a language variety or, as is often the case, some salient features attached with a style (but not constitutive, per se, of this style), does not mean that they are expected to do so, nor that they are positively engaging with this aspect of their identity. As Ochs (1992) has suggested, the indexicality of gender must be considered at two levels. At the level of direct indexicality, linguistic forms are seen in relation with interactional stances. These aspects usually correlate with levels of formality, as Kiezdeutsch is considered more informal and, depending on the addressees and the situation, potentially impolite. At the level of indirect indexicality, which constitutes the

core of our analysis, metalinguistic judgements on ways of speaking become ideologically loaded as representative of particular social groups. An indexical perspective on Kiezdeutsch shows, first, that lexical and grammatical elements are not ascribed the same communicative functions and thus are not imbued with the same social meaning. Lexical features, which are seen as the consequence of multilingual practices, are positively valued and constructed as the negotiation of a linguistic repertoire moving back and forth German and Turkish at the interactional level. When described in such terms, Kiezdeutsch is constructed not only as belonging to the linguistic reality of the interviewees but also as a variety inherently belonging to them as multilingual speakers, in contrast to other members of the in-group who are monolinguals.

Because they become indexed with male multilingual speakers, these features, by processes of iconization, fractal recursivity, and erasure (Irvine & Gal, 2000), also become prototypical for 'foreigners' and thus for a non-German ethnicized 'other'. By *iconization*, Irvine and Gal (2000) refer to the shift from some (salient) linguistic features to the social group they become a representation of. When multilingual speakers may use (elements of) Kiezdeutsch (not more or less than monolinguals, just the fact that they use it as well), it is as if these features 'depicted or displayed a social group's inherent nature or essence' (Irvine & Gal, 2000, p. 37). This may explain why, as multilingual speakers, the participants see themselves as more legitimate to decide who is entitled to speak Kiezdeutsch or not—a process which may pertain to the reappropriation of this identity forced upon them by claiming their expertise in multilingual matters and, by extension, in using Kiezdeutsch.

'*Fractal recursivity* involves the projection of an opposition', especially 'between *activities* or *roles* associated with prototypical social persons' rather than identities (Irvine & Gal, 2000, p. 38). A series of oppositions pervade the use of Kiezdeutsch, the most prevalent one being multilingualism, and, by proxy, 'non-Germanness'. Finally, through a process of *erasure*, which 'renders some persons or activities (or sociolinguistic phenomena) invisible' (Irvine & Gal, 2000, p. 38), the fact that monolingual speakers use Kiezdeutsch, too, goes unnoticed. Parallel to this, as male speakers are more salient in the public sphere—because they do not engage in the politics of nonvisibility actively pursued by young women—this creates an indirect indexical link to masculinity, and gives the impression, even to speakers of the variety, that Kiezdeutsch is inherently attached to males.

These findings suggest on the one hand that the study of youth languages and specifically multiethnolects from an interactional perspective benefits from semi-structured interviews in order to move the focus from linguistic practices to metalinguistic assessments, and in a second step, to wider ideological formations. The double perspective on the micro and macro levels enables us to link interactional stances to 'larger metapragmatic stereotypes' (Bucholtz, 2009, p. 165), and then, in a continuous movement, to understand how speakers judge their stylistic choices in interaction.

The interplay between the perceived necessity, at the interactional level, to position themselves as full members of the community of multilingual people, and the process of othering as people 'with migration background' explains for instance why the participants describe themselves as familiar with Kiezdeutsch (in particular regarding lexical innovations), yet they do not identify as Kiezdeutsch speakers. Similarly, the fact that using Kiezdeutsch is avoided in the public sphere, even with(in) the peer group, cannot be grasped if considering situational factors such as contextual relevance or audience design only. Rather, it needs to be connected with the full persona of a young male speaker 'with migration background' that speaking Kiezdeutsch activates. Saying that Kiezdeutsch is used among friends thus presents only a partial picture on how, for girls and young women, using Kiezdeutsch becomes socially sanctioned both by members of the in-group and of the out-group.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

ORCID

Naomi Truan  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1023-4663>

ENDNOTES

- ¹ The concept of ‘migration background’ is very controversial in Germany (see Scarvaglieri & Zech, 2013). We decided nonetheless to use this term because this how the interviewees refer to themselves. We are aware of the risk to reproduce negative connotations while explicitly not endorsing them, and intend to distance ourselves with the use of scare quotes.
- ² The interviews that make up the empirical basis of the study contain highly sensitive data as described by Steinhardt et al. (2020, p. 11): the interviewees are members of vulnerable populations (young women, some of them still minors, all of them describe experiencing racism) who would be easily recognizable (school and/or university they attended, neighborhoods they live in, family relationships, jobs they applied for, etc.). Removing the sensitive data would leave us with partly incomprehensible transcripts and/or audio files, as the narratives are very often imbricated in some personal details. The interviews could take place only in Martina's presence, and as creating and fostering a safe space was essential to us in this context, we did not ask the interviewees for the permission to publish the data in open access. We believe, however, that the debate on sharing qualitative data with the scientific community is of crucial importance, and refer to the useful guidelines by Steinhardt et al. (2020) in this regard.
- ³ All interviewees have been assigned pseudonyms.
- ⁴ The interviewees were presented a transcript from the KiezDeutsch-Korpus (KiDKo) (Wiese et al., 2010). While this was deemed a viable alternative to recordings at first, the visual representation of Kiezdeutsch (instead of an acoustic one through a recording) has methodological implications for the participants' perception, who may tend to dissociate from Kiezdeutsch because the orthographical and grammatical rendering of it makes it appear even further away from the norm (Jaffe & Walton, 2000). The negative perception of (written) Kiezdeutsch persisted even when discussed prior to the reading. The transcript was nonetheless used with all participants in order to ensure comparability between the interviews. It would however be recommendable to use recordings instead in future research as to avoid confusion and dissociation with otherwise familiar formulations.
- ⁵ The word *wallah* is an emphasizing particle from Arabic *wallah billa* ‘I swear/in God's name’ (Wiese, 2009, p. 786).
- ⁶ It should be noted, however, that the German-Turkish ‘power girls’ described in Keim (2007, p. 399) also use the term as a way of other-referencing ‘traditional Turkish girls’ who are not rebellious and independent the way they are. In both cases, the adjective *asozial* entails the idea that the individual is not behaving according to the norms of the peer group.

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