

# German(ic) in language contact

Grammatical and sociolinguistic  
dynamics

Edited by

Christian Zimmer

Language Variation



## Language Variation

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Christian Zimmer (ed.). 2021. *German(ic) in language contact: Grammatical and sociolinguistic dynamics* (Language Variation). Berlin: Language Science Press.

This title can be downloaded at:

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Assistant editor: Horst J. Simon

ISBN: no digital ISBN

no print ISBNs!

ISSN: 2366-7818

no DOI

Source code available from [www.github.com/langsci/305](http://www.github.com/langsci/305)

Collaborative reading: [paperhive.org/documents/remote?type=langsci&id=305](http://paperhive.org/documents/remote?type=langsci&id=305)

Cover and concept of design: Ulrike Harbort

Fonts: Libertinus, Arimo, DejaVu Sans Mono

Typesetting software: X<sub>E</sub>L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X

Language Science Press

xHain

Grünberger Str. 16

10243 Berlin, Germany

[langsci-press.org](http://langsci-press.org)

Storage and cataloguing done by FU Berlin



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# Chapter 1

## Contact settings involving Germanic languages

Christian Zimmer & Horst J. Simon

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In this chapter, we outline the scope and the main aims of this volume. First, we briefly sketch the diversity of contact settings involving German(ic) varieties and the according research history. This sets the scene for a brief overview of the contributions included.

### 1 Germanic varieties in language contact: Scenarios and research traditions

It is well-known that contact between speakers of different languages or varieties leads to dynamics in many respects. From a grammatical perspective, especially contact between closely related languages/varieties fosters contact-induced innovations (as put forward by, e.g., Thomason 2014). The evaluation of such innovations reveals speakers' attitudes and is in turn an important aspect of the sociolinguistic dynamics linked to language contact.

In this volume, we assemble studies on such settings where typologically congruent languages are in contact, i.e. language contact within the Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family. Languages involved include Afrikaans, Danish, English, Frisian, (Low and High) German, and Yiddish. The main focus is on constellations where a variety of German is involved.<sup>1</sup> These scenarios are

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<sup>1</sup>This is why we use the term ‘German(ic)’ in this book: We do not want to constrain ourselves to scenarios involving a German variety, but at the same time we do not want to pretend that we assemble studies on Germanic contact varieties in a balanced way. There are no further implications of this term.



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multifaceted. Apart from some basic commonalities (such as the language(s) involved) these constellations differ in many respects. For example, there are settings where language contact results from emigration from Europe, e.g. to Africa (see, e.g., Wiese et al. 2017), to the Americas (see, e.g., Johannessen & Salmons 2015), to Australia (see, e.g., Riehl 2015), or to Melanesia (see., e.g., Maitz et al. forthcoming). These settings can again be differentiated with regard to the extent and the role that colonialism played in the migration process. For example, the German-speaking minority in Namibia has its roots in the purposeful colonisation of South-Western Africa by the German government, resulting in the colony *Deutsch-Südwestafrika*. In contrast, other migration movements (such as the ones to North America) cannot be described as the result of concrete colonialist efforts (in the narrow sense), but are part of the more general colonial expansion of Europeans. Apart from that, language contact, of course, also results from immigration to Europe (cf., e.g., Wiese 2013). In addition, in many cases no (recent) migration is involved; here two or more varieties are often in long-term contact (cf., e.g., Höder 2021 [this volume]).

So far, studies on language contact with German have often been separated according to the different migration scenarios at hand, which resulted in somewhat different research traditions. For example, the so-called *Sprachinsel*-forschung (research on ‘language islands’) has mainly been concerned with settings caused by emigration from the continuous German-speaking area in Central Europe to locations in Central and Eastern Europe and overseas, thus resulting in some variety of German abroad. However, from a linguistic point of view it does not seem to be necessary to distinguish categorically between contact scenarios within and outside of Central Europe if one thoroughly considers the impact of sociolinguistic circumstances, including the ecology of the languages involved (such as, for instance, German being the majority language and the monolingual habitus in Germany, but completely different constellations elsewhere; see Haugen 1972 for the concept of language ecology).

In this volume we focus on language contact as such, not on specific migration scenarios. Hence, we assemble studies on language contact within and outside of Germany. For instance, Rocker (2021 [this volume]), studies heritage language use in the United States, whilst Höder (2021 [this volume]) and Gregersen & Langer (2021 [this volume]) focus on language contact in Northern Germany (and Denmark). Recent studies have revealed striking similarities between different varieties of German irrespective of their differing socio-historic backgrounds (and the respective contact languages), see, e.g., Wiese et al. (2014).<sup>2</sup> This sup-

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<sup>2</sup>See also Rosenberg (2003) for some revealing insights from “comparative speech island research”.

## 1 Contact settings involving Germanic languages

ports the idea that the crucial aspect is language contact as such and that grammatical and sociolinguistic dynamics are comparable across contact scenarios in different parts of the world.

German(ic) contact varieties do not only differ in their geographical location and their socio-historical background but also with regard to their vitality. On the one hand, there are instances of a completed language shift. For example, Low German in Iowa is not transferred as a heritage language anymore (see, e.g., Rocker 2021 [[this volume](#)]) and there are many other communities in that part of the world, where a language shift from different Germanic languages to English is imminent (cf., e.g., Page & Putnam 2015). On the other hand, there are also examples for persistent language maintenance in North America (cf., e.g., Louden 2016 on Pennsylvania Dutch) and elsewhere (cf., e.g., Shah & Zappen-Thomson 2018 and Rosenberg 2018 on German in Namibia and in Latin America, respectively). This is often (but not always) linked to religious affiliations, which support separation from other surrounding groups. And finally, there are of course many intermediate cases (cf., e.g., Gregersen & Langer 2021 [[this volume](#)] on efforts in Frisia to prevent language shift). The vitality of German(ic) varieties as spoken by minorities is closely linked to the institutional support from which these varieties benefit. This has a strong impact on where and when a language is used. Questions – which are highly relevant with regard to language maintenance and shift – include: Is the minority language used in private homes only? Is there a written form of the language in use? Are there (still) newspapers, radio and TV programmes, religious services, schools, and/or social media users who make use of the minority language? A reduction of domains can precede language shift, but this does not necessarily have to be the case. Also in this respect, the varieties at hand differ significantly. For example, German-language newspapers in North America were typically discontinued, or they switched to English during the 20<sup>th</sup> century (cf. Rocker 2021 [[this volume](#)]), whilst the Namibian German-language newspaper *Allgemeine Zeitung* is still in daily print (cf., e.g., Shah & Zappen-Thomson 2018).

Another important aspect is of course the composition of the languages and varieties interacting with each other. Germanic languages are in contact with closely related languages (i.e. other Germanic varieties, e.g., Yiddish in contact with American English in the United States; see, e.g., Nove 2021 [[this volume](#)]), related languages (i.e. other Indo-European languages, such as German in contact with Brazilian Portuguese in Brazil, see, e.g., Rosenberg 2003) and unrelated languages (e.g. German in contact with Hungarian in Hungary, cf. Knipf-Komlósi 2008). Although we focus on the first type of setting in this volume, there is still

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a great variety of constellations to be examined. For example, these constellations differ in the number of languages involved. Many scenarios involve more than two major contact languages/varieties. This holds true especially (but not only) if we also consider non-standard varieties.<sup>3</sup> In the Danish-German contact zone, for example, Standard Danish, Jutlandic Standard Danish, South Jutlandic, Standard German, North High German, and Low German interact (among other varieties, cf. Höder 2021 [this volume]).<sup>4</sup> See also the settings in Namibia and South Africa where (among others) German, Afrikaans, and English (including several non-standard varieties) are in close contact. In such cases we are dealing with contact of several closely related varieties (see, e.g., Zimmer 2019).

The diversity of the different scenarios outlined above allows us to study many different aspects of the dynamics induced by language contact. With this volume, we hope to exploit this potential in order to shed some new light on the interplay of language contact, variation, change, and the concomitant sociolinguistic dynamics. Particularly, we hope to contribute to a better understanding of closely related varieties in contact.

By doing so, we also aim to deepen research on German(ic) in language contact from a decidedly contact linguistic perspective. – There is a long-standing tradition of research on Germanic in different contact settings. As mentioned above, the German *Sprachinseln* ('language islands') in particular have been the focus of attention for a long time, beginning already in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (see Rosenberg 2005 for an overview). However, research on these varieties has mostly been carried out in the context of descriptive dialectology, more specifically as *Sprachinselforschung*, with a goal to investigate the preservation of inherited features. There was no genuine interest in language contact:

In German dialectology, language islands were predominantly investigated as relics of the past for the purpose of studies in language change. Most of the linguistic communities examined were rather small with restricted external communication. Since these conservative communities frequently preserved archaic features of German, they were seen as offering access to linguistic elements which had died out in the main German language area. [...] The interest in language islands was built on a myth of purity and homogeneity. Language variation and language contact were considered more a source of data corruption than as a subject of research. (Rosenberg 2005: 222–223)

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<sup>3</sup>See, e.g., Schirmunski (1930), Trudgill (1986), and Rosenberg (2005) for studies on the dynamics induced by dialect contact.

<sup>4</sup>Assuming that such varieties can be neatly distinguished.

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Subsequently, the interest in language contact phenomena increased in the field. However, the original *Sprachinsel* approach continued to have an effect. It is only recently that a re-orientation of the field can be observed, which was (at least partly) initiated through the programmatic article by Mattheier (1994). By now, discussions have broadened in scope by taking into account the concepts and methods that have been developed in the international literature on language contact and language variation (see, for example, Putnam 2011, Page & Putnam 2015 and Boas & Höder 2018). It is our aim to further exactly this line of research. In this volume, we assemble studies that...

- view language contact from a grammar-theoretical perspective (see the contribution by Steffen Höder),
- focus on lesser studied contact settings (e.g. German in Namibia; see the contributions by Yannic Bracke, Henning Radke, and Britta Stuhl & Christian Zimmer)
- make use of new corpus linguistic resources (see the contributions by Yannic Bracke and Britta Stuhl & Christian Zimmer) or newly acquired data (see the contribution by Maike H. Rocker)
- analyse data quantitatively (see, e.g., the contribution by Chaya R. Nove)
- study language contact phenomena in computer-mediated communication (see the contributions by Johanna Gregersen & Nils Langer and Henning Radke)
- focus on the interplay of language use and language attitudes or ideologies (see, e.g., the contributions by Yannic Bracke, and Johanna Gregersen & Nils Langer)

In the following section, we briefly outline the structure and the contributions of this volume.

## 2 The papers in this volume

The volume at hand is mainly based on a selection of papers that were originally presented at the workshop *German(ic) in language contact: Grammatical and sociolinguistic dynamics*, which was held at Freie Universität Berlin (3–5 July

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2019).<sup>5</sup> The topics covered range from phonetics, morphology, and syntax to the use and perception of transferred lexical and grammatical material and issues related to language shift and maintenance. The volume brings together authors who share a general interest in language contact phenomena but work in different frameworks, such as scholars who are concerned with corpus linguistics, sociolinguistics, theoretical approaches to multilingualism etc.

The book consists of two major sections. The first section focuses on grammatical aspects of language contact (including phonetics), whilst the contributions in the second section are mainly concerned with sociolinguistic dynamics. The first section starts with a contribution by Steffen Höder, who examines morphosyntactic arealisms in the Danish-German contact zone, i.e. features shared by a number of German and Danish varieties which have been shaped by consistent language contact. These features are addressed within the framework of Diasystematic Construction Grammar (DCxG). A core assumption of this approach is the idea that language-specificity is part of a construction's pragmatic meaning and that constructicons comprise both language-specific and language-unspecific constructions (i.e. *idioconstructions* and *diaconstructions*). Höder claims that the proportion of diaconstructions in a multilingual constructicon increases constantly. The pertinent mechanisms are demonstrated with the help of selected arealisms, such as the SHALL future.

The following two contributions are both concerned with phonetic phenomena in contact settings. The paper by Chaya R. Nove focuses on phonetic change within the community of Hasidic Yiddish speakers in New York City using the apparent time approach. To this extent, the phonetic systems of three different generations of Hasidic Yiddish-English bilinguals are compared (more specifically, the vowels /i, ɪ, u, ʊ, a/). It is shown that convergence can be observed in the younger generations to a greater extent. This main result is interpreted with reference to models of second language acquisition, with a special focus on the impact of the linguistic input.

The contribution by Britta Stuhl & Christian Zimmer is the first of three papers in this volume studying the contact setting of German in Namibia. This setting does not only involve contact of closely related and (to a much lesser extent) unrelated languages (such as Afrikaans, English, German, Khoekhoeogowab, and Oshiwambo), but also of dialects of German. Britta Stuhl & Christian Zimmer focus on the latter aspect. Their contribution centres around the question as to

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<sup>5</sup>This workshop was organised by the members of the DFG-funded research project *Namdeutsch: The dynamics of German in the multilingual context of Namibia* (PIs: Horst Simon, Freie Universität Berlin, and Heike Wiese, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin).

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what extent features of Northern German varieties (which were used by a significant proportion of the German-speaking immigrants) have survived dialect levelling. The corpus study reveals that Namibian German does indeed contain specifically Northern German phonetic features; the fact that one of these features is more frequently used by older speakers hints at an ongoing change.

Yannic Bracke also examines language use within the Namibian German community, but he focuses on sociolinguistic aspects. He is concerned with the question of how the gender of speakers correlates with the use of transferred lexical items. The underlying assumption is that the use of loan words and the like (which are usually considered to be characteristic of non-standard language use) could be connected to a male stereotype. This idea is based on statements by community members. However, his corpus study (which comprises the elaboration of a sophisticated annotation system for transferred lexical items) shows that there is no consistent correlation of gender and language use in this respect.

Henning Radke studies the use of informal Namibian German (i.e. *Namdeutsch*) in computer-mediated communication. Most of the speakers he studies were born and raised in Namibia but live in Germany now. Within this diasporic group, *Namdeutsch* serves as an in-group marker. Transferred lexical material (from Afrikaans and English) plays a crucial role here. Radke compares the language use in two types of online communities quantitatively and qualitatively: single mode groups, which communicate only online, and mixed mode groups, which additionally meet face-to-face. Based on this comparison, he examines the interplay of communication mode, (multilingual) language use, and group cohesion.

While transferred lexical material has generally positive connotations within the Namibian German diaspora, the group examined by Johanna Gregersen & Nils Langer partially rejects such outcomes of language contact. In their study, Gregersen & Langer focus on the assessment of borrowings by academic linguists working on North Frisian. Using examples from different types of scholarly and public discourse, they show that some of these scholars do not only describe but also evaluate language use. These evaluations can be seen in the context of linguistic purism: external influences on North Frisian are evaluated as a threat to the language. Such assessments are rather unusual in the context of academic linguistics. Gregersen & Langer consider this to be specific to discourses on smaller languages.

The paper by Maike H. Rocker is the last contribution in this volume. It deals with heritage language use in print media, more specifically with Low German and High German correspondence letters to the *Ostfriesen-Zeitung*, an East Frisian-American newspaper, which was published in the United States until 1971. She

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answers the following classic question: *Who writes what to whom in which language?* The results provide insights into a number of sociolinguistic aspects, such as the regional distribution of East Frisian communities in the United States, domains of Low German and High German language use, and the interrelation of pragmatic purpose and language choice. Finally, Rocker shows how the newspaper fostered a sense of East Frisian-American identity, which in turn facilitated language maintenance of both Low German and High German well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In sum, the papers collected in this volume reflect a wide array of current work in the thriving and fast-developing field of language contact studies with regard to German(ic). It is to be hoped that they give an idea of the range of insights that can be gained by applying methods and theories of contemporary language contact studies to a traditional sub-field of German(ic) linguistics.

## Acknowledgements

This work was funded by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (DFG, German Research Foundation) – WI 2155/9-1; SI 750/4-1/2; ZI 1793/1-2. Furthermore, we thank about two dozens of colleagues, who were generous with their time when they peer-reviewed papers for the present volume.

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## Chapter 2

# Grammatical arealisms across the Danish-German border from a constructional perspective

Steffen Höder

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German and Danish share a long, complex, and multifaceted history of language contact. Besides other contact scenarios, societal as well as widespread individual multilingualism has characterized the linguistic situation in the territory of the former Duchy of Schleswig (i.e. the northern part of the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein in Germany as well as the southernmost part of Jutland in Denmark) from the Early Middle Ages until the present day. In structural terms, this contact scenario has resulted in a range of areal features that are shared by a number of Danish and German varieties spoken in the border region, while diverging markedly from other varieties of at least one of the languages. The aim of the present article is twofold: Firstly, it discusses selected grammatical arealisms found in dialectal and regiolectal varieties within the Danish-German contact zone (e.g. a SHALL future, the use of AND words as infinitive markers in German varieties, and possessive linking pronouns in Danish dialects). Secondly, it attempts to demonstrate that such arealisms can be interpreted and, to some extent, explained within the framework of Diasystematic Construction Grammar (DCxG), a usage-based constructionist approach to language contact situations that is centred around the idea of language-unspecific constructions used in multilingual communities. Even though present-day speaker communities in the contact zone might not be equally bilingual as, say, their predecessors in the early 19th century, it is argued that the reconstruction of common constructions can help to better understand contact-related developments that led to the emergence of linguistic areality in the past.



Steffen Höder

## 1 Introduction

German varieties have been in contact with Nordic languages throughout their history, involving a range of multifaceted contact scenarios. The majority of these scenarios fall into one of two (partially overlapping) categories:

1. Northern German varieties (including both Low and High German) and Continental Scandinavian languages have been in long-term, intense contact from the Late Middle Ages onwards until (at least) the 19th century. Merchants from Northern Germany established trading routes to Scandinavia during the Hanseatic era, which not only resulted in a permanent presence of German-speaking people in Northern Europe (including large-scale migration by Germans into Scandinavian towns), but also marked the beginning of a centuries-long period that saw German as a culturally and economically prestigious, if not dominant language in Scandinavia. German has, as a consequence, influenced the Continental Scandinavian languages structurally in many ways, ranging from uncountable lexical and grammatical borrowings to the adoption of textual and stylistic norms (cf. [Braunmüller 2005](#)).
2. In addition, German and Danish varieties have been in continuous contact since protohistoric times (which, for this area, means the Early Middle Ages) in what is now the Danish-German border region. Unlike other language contact areas, where rather clear-cut boundaries between different neighbouring languages have emerged over the centuries, there has usually been an areal overlap between Danish and German varieties within what is frequently called the Danish-German contact zone. This has led to different sociolinguistic scenarios for different historical periods, regions, and social groups, ranging from various types of diglossia (or, rather, polyglossia) and complex language shift scenarios to diverse settings of widespread individual and collective bi- or multilingualism (cf. [Fredsted 2009](#); [Höder 2019a](#)).

On the whole, both scenarios have led to the emergence of areal features that are shared by both German and Nordic varieties, including lexical and phonological as well as grammatical *arealisms*. While many of these arealisms are reflected in well-established and well-studied Germanisms in the Nordic standard varieties, others tend to remain underinvestigated, in particular those that only occur in non-standard varieties of either German or the Nordic languages. Such

## 2 Grammatical arealisms across the Danish-German border

arealisms are the focus of the ongoing project *Grammatical Areality in the Nordic Countries and Northern Germany (GrammArNord)* at Kiel University (cf. Höder 2016a).

The aim of the present article is twofold: Firstly, it discusses selected grammatical arealisms found in dialectal and regiolectal varieties within the Danish-German contact zone. Secondly, it attempts to demonstrate that such arealisms can be interpreted and, to some extent, explained within the framework of *Diasystematic Construction Grammar* (Höder 2012; 2014; 2018), a usage-based constructionist approach to language contact situations that is centred around the idea of language-unspecific constructions used in multilingual communities. Even though present-day speaker communities in the contact zone might not be equally bilingual as, say, their predecessors in the early 19th century, it is argued that the *reconstruction of common constructions* can help to better understand contact-related developments that led to the *emergence of linguistic areality* in the past.

The article is structured as follows: §2 gives a brief outline of the history (linguistic and otherwise) of the Danish-German contact zone, followed by a sketch of Diasystematic Construction Grammar (§3), which also includes a discussion of major types of contact-related change from a diasystematic point of view. Against this background, five selected areal features are then discussed in detail in the following section (§4). The final section provides concluding remarks (§5).

## 2 The Danish-German contact zone

Nordic and West Germanic varieties have been in continuous contact on the Cimbrian Peninsula (comprising the mainland of today's Kingdom of Denmark and the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein within today's Federal Republic of Germany) for more than a thousand years. By the end of the first millennium CE, the southern part of the peninsula was inhabited by speakers of four recognisably different language groups:

1. Saxons, settling in the south of the area, speaking Old Saxon, a West Germanic variety and the predecessor of Modern Low German;
2. Jutes in the northern part of the region, speaking Old East Nordic varieties that later evolved into the (South) Jutlandic branch of Danish dialects;
3. Frisians on the North Sea islands and along the coast of today's North Frisia, whose language developed into distinct North Frisian dialects;

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4. Obotrites in the easternmost parts of Holstein, speaking varieties of Pobalian belonging to the Lechitic branch of West Slavic.

Subsequent Germanisation of the Slavic-speaking population from the 12th century onwards resulted in a tripartite distribution of the regional languages that, in a way, still holds today, with Danish in the north, German in the south, and Frisian in the west.

While the contact linguistic macro-scenario has thus remained stable for more than a millennium, the actual *ecologies*, to use Haugen's (1971) concept (cf. Eliassson 2013) – i.e. the social settings in which the languages have actually been used by their speaker communities – have changed frequently, often rather dramatically, and in quite complex ways over the centuries. The region's linguistic history is inextricably intertwined with its sociocultural and (at times rather labyrinthian) political development.

For most of its history, the peninsula was mainly divided politically into three territories (cf. Figure 2.1):

1. Northern Jutland (an integral part of the Danish realm), roughly north of the river Kongeå, flowing into the North Sea near Ribe;
2. the Duchy of Schleswig (a Danish fief) between the rivers Kongeå and Eider, flowing into the North Sea south of Tönning in North Frisia;
3. the Duchy of Holstein (a state within the Holy Roman Empire until 1806, later within the German Confederation) between the rivers Eider and Elbe.<sup>1</sup>

From the 15th until the 19th century, the duchies constituted semi-autonomous polities under Danish suzerainty, whose degree of political autonomy varied across historical periods; the Danish monarchs usually ruled both duchies either personally (by means of a personal union between the duchies and the kingdom) or indirectly (through dependent dukes).

During the heyday of nationalism in the 19th century, tensions arose between Denmark and the German Confederation over the territorial affiliation of the

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<sup>1</sup>This is a much simplified representation – in reality, the division was not always that neat. For one thing, numerous smaller polities existed in different parts of the southern region as well, all parts of the Holy Roman Empire and its successors, including the Duchy of Saxe-Lauenburg, the Republic of Dithmarschen, the Prince-Bishopric of Lübeck, and the Free and Hanseatic Cities of Lübeck and Hamburg. Also, the Duchy of Holstein was subdivided into different (but partly jointly ruled) sub-duchies during the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Times. Finally, parts of the territory between the rivers Kongeå and Eider were ruled as enclaves of Denmark proper rather than as parts of the Duchy of Schleswig.

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Figure 2.1: The Duchy of Schleswig (modified work, CC-BY-SA-3.0. Original source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Karte\\_Deutsch-D%C3%A4nischer\\_Krieg.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Karte_Deutsch-Dänischer_Krieg.svg) by NordNordWest/Wikipedia)

duchies. Denmark eventually lost their territory as a result of the Second Schleswig War in 1864, and Schleswig and Holstein were annexed by Prussia in 1866 and subsequently incorporated into the German Empire in 1871. After the First World War, two internationally monitored plebiscites in 1920 resulted in a partition of the former Duchy of Schleswig into a Danish and a German part, separated by a new border that has remained in place ever since. This partition, in turn, has resulted in the emergence of *national minorities* on both sides of the border, consisting of people that, for some reason, identify as German or Danish, respectively, while being citizens and inhabitants of the other country.<sup>2</sup> Both minorities are protected by an extensive framework of diplomatic, legal, and political measures at different levels (regional, national, supra-, and international), one of the earliest and most important steps being the 1955 Bonn-Copenhagen Declarations

<sup>2</sup>In everyday parlance, the northern part of the former Duchy is usually referred to as Southern Jutland (Danish *Sønderjylland*, German *Südjütland*), and the southern part is normally called Schleswig (Danish *Slesvig*, German [*Landesteil*] *Schleswig*). In specific contexts – in particular when the national minorities are concerned – the northern and southern parts are referred to as North Schleswig (Danish *Nordslesvig*, German *Nordschleswig*) and South Schleswig (Danish *Sydslesvig*, German *Südschleswig*), respectively.

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in which the governments of Denmark and West Germany granted concurrent rights to both minorities. Moreover, the minorities maintain their own institutions (e.g. pre-schools, schools, churches, and cultural as well as political organisations). There are no official criteria for minority membership (in fact, applying such criteria would be illegal in both countries), but there is a range of de facto criteria such as, most prominently, enrolment in minority schools.

Danish and German varieties have always coexisted territorially in the Duchy of Schleswig, with shifting types of polyglossic distributions in some parts of the region (Winge 2004). This is why the area is frequently described as a *contact zone* (as opposed to a language boundary, which would imply a possibility to draw a clear-cut line between a Danish-speaking and a German-speaking area). In addition, North Frisian dialects have been in continuous (but declining) use in North Frisia up to the present day, including the North Frisian Islands and a coastal strip on the mainland. (Frisian will, however, be largely excluded from the following discussion that instead focuses on Danish and German.) Until about 1800, Danish was used in everyday communication in rural areas north of a line between the towns of Friedrichstadt in North Frisia and Eckernförde on the east coast, whereas German was used south of that line. In the towns and among nobility and merchants, however, as well as in the domains of law and administration, German varieties – including Low and High German – were used predominantly by about 1500. The languages used in church and in school differed between ecclesiastical subdivisions such as dioceses, with Danish dominating north of Flensburg and German in the south (Fredsted 2009: 2–7). Functional and regional differentiation between languages and varieties notwithstanding, the major part of the Duchy of Schleswig can be appropriately described as a *transnational multilingual communicative space* until, say, 1800. Language choice was largely determined by pragmatic factors rather than national or ethnic affiliation, and multilingualism was, in some form and to some extent at least, the rule rather than the exception both at the collective and at the individual level (Höder 2019a: 56–58).<sup>3</sup>

The 19th century, however, saw an accelerating language shift from Danish dialects to German varieties in everyday domains in rural areas in the south (Höder 2019a: 59). Although there were concerted political efforts from both

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<sup>3</sup>There is also ample metalinguistic evidence for the ubiquity of multilingual practices from early on; for example, the Danish scholar Christiern Pedersen (1531, *Dauidz psaltere*, fol. Twijr, as quoted by Skautrup 1947: 162), characterises the Danish variety spoken in Flensburg as incomprehensible to speakers from Denmark proper because of the amount of German transferences.

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the Danish side and, after 1864, the Prussian side as well to strengthen the respective national languages and suppress the use of the minority languages, the shift towards German is rather due to the higher societal prestige of German (as, among other things, the language of the social, economic, and cultural elites) and its wider functional and geographic range. The shift began in the eastern regions and proceeded westward. While the Danish-speaking area in 1600 had included the Schwansen peninsula (between the Schlei, a firth east of Schleswig, and Eckernförde Bay), this region had shifted to German by about 1780. By 1850, the shift was completed in Anglia (between the Schlei and the Flensburg Firth). (Wenker 2013[1889]: 3–6), in his map and commentary, reported the ongoing shift and noted that young people no longer used Danish in north-western Central Schleswig around 1880. One consequence of this successive shift to German varieties is the emergence of Low German dialects (Schleswig Low German) used in previously Danish-dominant communities.

In the 20th century, in turn, many speakers *shifted from dialectal to more standard-like regional varieties* of German and Danish, respectively, in domains of everyday communication, resulting in declining dialect use and often even dialect loss (Höder 2019a: 62). In the latter case, the process also entailed the replacement of a diglossic distribution of the dialects and the respective standard varieties with *diaglossic repertoires* (Auer 2011) that comprise near-standard varieties as well as more standard-divergent regiolectal varieties, in particular in South Schleswig (Höder 2011; 2019a: 65–71), whereas speakers in North Schleswig maintain diglossia to a higher extent.

The resulting situation is further complexified by the emergence of *minority varieties* used by the national minorities on both sides of the border (North Schleswig German, Danish *nordslesvigtsk*, German *Nordschleswigdeutsch*, and South Schleswig Danish, Danish *sydslesvigdansk*, German *Südschleswigdänisch*). These varieties show virtually no traces of the traditional dialects of the minority languages, but are instead heavily influenced by contact with the standard varieties of the national languages in the respective countries. The main reason for this is institutional: While speaking the minority language – let alone being an L1 speaker – is not necessary for minority membership, the institutions conduct their official business in the minority languages; in particular, they are the primary languages of instruction in minority schools. As a consequence, active participation in minority institutions requires some form of linguistic competence, and the institutions are the most important locus of minority language acquisition. Virtually all minority language speakers are bilingual, and most are L1 speakers of the respective majority language, whereas the minority language

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is acquired as a second L1 or as an early L2, during pre-school and school education (Kühl 2015: 246–247).

Table 2.1 summarises the varieties of Danish and German that are used in the former Duchy of Schleswig today (in addition to North Frisian dialects, Romani, Danish Sign Language, German Sign Language, and post-1950 migrant languages).

Table 2.1: Danish and German in North and South Schleswig.

| Variety     | Danish                                 | German                                  |
|-------------|--|---|
| standard    | Standard Danish                        | Standard (High) German                  |
| regiolectal | Jutlandic Danish                       | North High German <sup>a</sup>          |
| local       | local varieties of Jutlandic<br>Danish | local varieties of North High<br>German |
| dialectal   | (local) South Jutlandic                | (local) Schleswig Low German            |
| minority    | South Schleswig Danish                 | North Schleswig German                  |

<sup>a</sup>The term *North High German* is preferred over alternative terms such as *Northern Standard German* or simply *Northern German* because it emphasises the dialectologically relevant difference between High German varieties and Low German varieties. Socio-politically speaking, Low German and High German are usually considered to be different languages, with Low German lacking a standard variety of its own.

It is no surprise that, after almost a millennium of rather intense language contact, the languages spoken in the area have become increasingly similar in structural terms. This development has not escaped the attention of linguists either. Among the contact-induced innovations that have been described in the dialectological and contact linguistic literature are both lexical items (e.g. South Jutlandic and local Jutlandic Danish *mojn* ‘hello; bye’ < Low German, North High German *moin* ‘hello’; the original etymology is unclear; Pedersen 1995) and structural patterns (such as the de-additive infinitive, see §4.3). However, they are usually analysed in *linguocentric terms*, i.e. as borrowings from one language into another, and only rarely viewed from an *areal perspective*, i.e. with a focus on structures that are shared across languages within a specific area in communicative space, in particular when this area extends beyond the border region in a narrow sense (such as with de-demonstrative phoric pronouns, an areal feature that is found in all of the Scandinavian languages as well as in German varieties north of the Elbe; Höder 2016a: 121–124).

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### 3 Grammatical arealisms from a constructional perspective

There is a cognitive dimension to the increasing similarity of neighbouring languages that underlies the emergence of grammatical arealisms: In the contact zone, *individual bi- or multilingualism* has, at least, been widespread at some point in history. In usage-based or cognitive terms, the fact that stable, intense, long-term contact typically increases (or inhibits a decrease in) structural similarity between the varieties involved (cf. Matras 2010) reflects the more general pattern that multilingual speakers prefer, evolve, and retain structures that are applicable in more than one of their languages, i.e. structures that are shared by several varieties. This is in line with the view held by modern contact linguistics (e.g. Matras 2020: 336) that multilinguals do not store or process linguistic elements separately for each of their languages, but rather organise their linguistic knowledge in its entirety into a common repertoire from which they choose the appropriate structures in a given communicative situation.

Diasystematic Construction Grammar (DCxG; Höder 2012; 2014; 2018; 2019b; for an extensive survey, see Höder 2018) is, basically, a somewhat formalised model of this view in terms of a usage-based Construction Grammar approach to language contact situations.<sup>4</sup> DCxG embraces the view put forward by, among others, Goldberg (2006: 18) that speakers' linguistic knowledge in its entirety can be captured by a *constructicon*, i.e. a set of constructions connected by interconstructional links – which implies that the language-specificity of linguistic elements must be represented constructionally as well. In DCxG, language-specificity is conceptualised as a property of individual constructions, i.e. as part of a construction's pragmatic meaning, within an inherently *multilingual constructicon*. The rationale behind this conceptualisation is that multilingual speakers use different languages for different purposes (Grosjean's 2008: 22–31 'Complementarity Principle'), i.e. language choice is functional in that it conventionally marks the current context as belonging to a specific set of communicative settings.

For example, a bilingual member of the Danish minority in Germany will typically use Danish words such as *by* 'town' in institutional minority contexts, but

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<sup>4</sup>Construction Grammar can be understood as a family of grammatical theories that share the idea of the construction as the central unit of language structure, defined as form-meaning pairs (for an overview, cf. Hoffmann & Trousdale 2013; Hilpert 2019). Proponents of usage-based Construction Grammar (for an overview, cf. Diessel 2019) emphasise the cognitive side of language and thus consider constructions as (cognitively realistic) representations of speakers' linguistic knowledge.

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German words such as *Stadt* ‘town’ when talking to colleagues and neighbours that do not belong to the minority; this is not merely an individual habit, but a communicative convention shared by the whole bilingual community. These are examples of language-specific constructions, or, in DCxG terminology, *idioconstructions*; they can be formalised as, say, [*by ‘town’* ⟨C<sub>minority institutions</sub>⟩] and [*Stadt ‘town’* ⟨CC<sub>everyday life</sub>⟩]. The label C<sub>x</sub> specifies the set of communicative settings that the construction marks; a common shorthand notation is the use of C<sub>glottonym</sub> (e.g. ⟨CC<sub>Danish</sub>⟩), which suggests that the construction is used in a set of contexts (whatever they are) that are conventionally associated with language X in a given community.

However, DCxG emphasises that, since ‘language’ is a sociolinguistic (or, if not even that, a metalinguistic) label rather than an a priori cognitive category, there is no need for *all* constructions to be language-specific. For example, a member of the German minority in Denmark cannot use *mojn/moin* ‘hello’ to mark the current context as belonging to some specific set of communicative settings, since this lexical element is shared by all of the dialectal and regional varieties in her repertoire (e.g. local Jutlandic Danish, South Jutlandic, North High German). This is an example of a language-unspecific *diaconstruction*, i.e. a construction that does not carry pragmatic meaning of the ⟨C<sub>x</sub>⟩ type.

As constructions in general, diaconstructions come in different degrees of schematicity, ranging from fully filled constructions (without any open slots) such as free lexemes (e.g. *mojn/moin*) via partially filled constructions to fully schematic ones. Standard Danish, for example, has a fully schematic clausal construction [V<sub>fin</sub><sup>1</sup> SUBJ ... ⟨polar question⟩], i.e. a syntactic pattern that consists of a clause-initial finite verb followed by a subject and, optionally, other elements, and functions as a polar question marker.<sup>5</sup> However, the same construction – originally a common Germanic feature – is also used in non-standard Danish and even in German varieties spoken in Schleswig, such as Jutlandic Danish, South Jutlandic dialect, Schleswig Low German, North High German, and Standard German, as illustrated in (1):

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<sup>5</sup>The following notational conventions apply throughout this contribution: *italics* = lexical form; **SMALL CAPITALS** = schematic form; *ITALIC SMALL CAPITALS* = paradigmatic form; ‘ ’ = lexical meaning (indicated by approximate translation); ⟨ ⟩ grammatical/pragmatic meaning (indicated by approximate description); ... (ellipsis) = other (compulsory or optional) components of a construction (left out in the description); X<sub>property:value</sub> = an element X with a specific property with a specific value; X<sub>property:α</sub> = a variable value of a property; X<sup>number</sup> = relative position of an element X within a construction; X Y = elements X and Y are adjacent to each other; X, Y = elements X and Y are components of the construction (but do not necessarily occur in that order or adjacent to each other).

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- (1) a. Standard Danish, Jutlandic Danish  
**Kunne I**      hør-e      mig?  
can.PRT 2PL.NOM hear-INF 1SG.OBL
- b. South Jutlandic dialect  
**Ku**      I      hye      mæ?  
can.PRT 2PL.NOM hear.INF 1SG.OBL
- c. Schleswig Low German  
**Kunn-en**      ji      mi      hör-en?  
can.PRT-PL 2PL.NOM 1SG.OBL hear-INF
- d. Standard German, North High German  
**Konn-te-t**      ihr      mich      hör-en?  
can\PRT-PRT-2PL 2PL.NOM 1SG.ACC hear-INF  
‘could you hear me?’

While there are numerous grammatical differences between the utterances in the different languages and varieties (as indicated by the glossing) and the lexical filling, of course, is language-specific, a speaker that has these varieties in her repertoire can use the same Verb-Initial Polar Question Construction in any communicative context. For multilingual speakers, then, this construction qualifies as a schematic diaconstruction, a syntactic pattern that can be used across languages.

Whether there is a diaconstruction that is shared, as it were, by different languages used by the same speaker community, or whether there are different (but parallel) constructions in each variety is not only a matter of descriptive preference or elegance. Diaconstructions are cognitively more economic, since using the same construction across languages simplifies the overall organisation of multilingual speakers’ linguistic knowledge. DCxG predicts, among other things, that multilinguals have a preference for diaconstructions over idioconstructions (as compared to, for instance, monolingual speakers of the languages involved). They will also use diaconstructions productively, resulting in diasystematically anchored innovations, i.e. forms that are non-canonical, but perfectly acceptable for members of the multilingual community (while they may be incomprehensible to monolingual outsiders; Höder 2018: 59; 2019b: 347–348). In the long run, such innovations may be entrenched and conventionalised, which then results in language change.

Arealisms typically come into being through common inheritance in neighbouring languages (as with verb-initial polar questions) or through contact-induced convergence. From a DCxG perspective, a high amount of arealisms in a given

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region corresponds to a high *degree of diasystematicity*, defined as *the proportion of diaconstructions in the multilingual constructicon* that encompasses the respective languages. The degree of diasystematicity is influenced by various factors:

1. First of all, it is obvious that the languages and varieties in many contact areas, such as the Danish-German contact zone, are genetically closely related and, unsurprisingly, structurally rather similar; their overall degree of diasystematicity is high from the outset, i.e. many of their structures can be stored and processed as diaconstructions, in particular schematic ones such as the Verb-Initial Polar Question Construction.
2. Irrespectively of such pre-existing similarities, intense language contact will result in an increase in diasystematicity. It has often been observed that, given enough time, languages in contact will approximate (and potentially reach) a form of structural isomorphism between larger portions of the language systems, variously described in the literature as, for example, “exact structural equivalence” (Heine & Kuteva 2005: 179–180), “word-for-word and morpheme-per-morpheme intertranslatability” (Aikhenvald 2007: 28), or “construction-per-construction intertranslatability” (Höder 2014: 149). The key mechanism behind such convergence processes, constructionally speaking, is what has been called *pro-diasystematic change* (Höder 2018: 59–62), basically a type of pragmatic bleaching in which an idioconstruction gradually loses its pragmatic restriction to a (language-)specific set of communicative settings until it is considered acceptable in a wider range of contexts, i.e. as a diaconstruction. Pro-diasystematic change, then, is essentially an economic process, a simplification of the multilingual constructicon (for examples, see §4.4–§4.6).
3. Pro-diasystematic change may also entail mechanisms of constructional re-organisation that facilitate diaconstrunctional processing in more sophisticated ways. For example, existing idioconstructions or interconstructional links can be modified so as to increase the degree of diasystematicity in a specific part of the constructicon (*diaconstrunctionalisation*; see §4.3 for an example).
4. Finally, arealisms may reflect *diasystematic stability*: existing diaconstructions in regional varieties fail to undergo language-specific changes that are going on in other regions where one of the contact languages is spoken (cf. Kühl & Braunmüller 2014; see §4.2 for a potential instance).

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From a cognitive view, the locus of language contact is “the language processing apparatus of the individual multilingual speaker and the employment of this apparatus in communicative interaction” (Matras 2020: 3). Once established, however, contact-induced arealisms continue to exist even when speakers no longer are multilingual, and areal patterns often reflect historical contact situations rather than present-day multilingualism. Yet, a usage-based framework such as DCxG can still be employed as a descriptive tool for the analysis of grammatical arealisms that also has explanatory power, since areal features can be described in terms of *reconstructed diaconstructions* for the multilingual communities in which they supposedly originated (cf. Hölzl’s 2018 notion of *construction-alisation areas*). As with all types of linguistic reconstruction, however, caution is advised, since a fuller analysis (e.g. using a historical sociolinguistic approach) would require detailed information on the respective ecologies of these communities, including information on chronology and sociolinguistic settings – which, unfortunately, are usually not known in detail.

## 4 Analysis of selected areal features

### 4.1 Feature catalogue

The following sections contain brief analyses of five grammatical arealisms (see Table 2.2) from the Danish-German contact zone, illustrating different types of diasystematic innovations. None of these features are totally innovative in the sense that they do not occur anywhere outside the contact zone. Rather, they reflect bilingual innovations that facilitate an areal spread of originally Danish (or, more generally, Nordic) features into German varieties (features 1–3) or vice versa (features 4–5). Also, almost all of the features have been described in earlier research (features 1–4), but usually without much focus on cognitive aspects or even an areal perspective. Among those, some of the features (1–2) are fairly well-known as regional markers among the population, whereas others are primarily known from the dialectological literature (features 3–4). Finally, one feature (5) has not been dealt with extensively in prior research.

### 4.2 De-obligative future construction

German varieties in the contact zone have a standard-divergent construction that consists of a finite form of an obligative modal (i.e. a SHALL verb) and an infinitive. This construction indicates future time reference from a given vantage point in

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Table 2.2: Grammatical arealisms in the Danish-German contact zone (selection).

- 
- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| [1] | De-obligative future construction                  |
| [2] | De-additive infinitive construction                |
| [3] | Animacy-gender-sex pronominalisation constructions |
| [4] | Possessive linking pronoun construction            |
| [5] | Dative external possessor constructions            |
- 

time, marked as past or non-past by the morphological tense of the obligative (cf. Höder 2016b: 300–303). This can be formalised as in (2):

- (2) De-obligative future construction  
[OBLIG.MODAL<sub>fin</sub>, v<sub>inf</sub>]

This construction, a rather well-known regional shibboleth, is illustrated by the examples in (3):

- (3) a. Schleswig Low German  
Ik        schall        Maandag noch arbeid-en.  
1SG.NOM shall.PRS.1SG Monday still work-INF  
b. local North High German  
Ich        soll           Montag noch arbeit-en.  
1SG.NOM shall.IND.PRS.1SG Monday still work-INF  
'I'll be working on Monday.'

De-obligative future constructions of this type are not at all unusual globally (cf. Kuteva et al. 2019: 288 for the grammaticalisation path OBLIGATION > FUTURE) or within Germanic (Dahl 2000: 319–320), where they occur in, for example, English, Dutch, and indeed Danish, as shown in (4):

- (4) a. Standard Danish, Jutlandic Danish  
Jeg        skal        køre        hjem nu.  
1SG.NOM shall.PRS drive.INF home now  
'I'm going to drive home now.'  
b. South Jutlandic dialect  
Æ        ska        køe        jæm no.  
1SG.NOM shall.PRS drive.INF home now  
'I'm going to drive home now.'

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Such constructions are even attested for Low German varieties, not least Middle Low German (cf. Schiller & Lübben 1875–1881, s.v. <sup>2</sup>*scholen*). They are, however, absent from most varieties of present-day German, including North Low German and North High German as spoken south of the contact zone; these varieties are ‘futureless’ in the sense that present (non-past) forms are used to refer to future events (as in 5a) or that futurity is expressed as part of the modal semantics of specific verbs (as in 5b), whereas the use of a SHALL verb in these varieties implies some sense of obligation (as in 5c). Standard German uses either present (non-past) forms or a specifically future-marking construction [WERDEN<sub>fin</sub>, V<sub>inf</sub>] (the ‘BECOME future’) as in (5d):

- (5) a. North High German  
 Ich        **arbeite**              Montag noch.  
 1SG.NOM work.IND.PRS.1SG Monday still  
 ‘I’m working on Monday.’
- b. North High German  
 Ich        **muss**              Montag noch **arbeit-en**.  
 1SG.NOM must.IND.PRS.1SG Monday still work-INF  
 ‘I’ll have to work on Monday.’
- c. North High German  
 Ich        **soll**              Montag noch **arbeit-en**.  
 1SG.NOM shall.IND.PRS.1SG Monday still work-INF  
 ‘I’m supposed to work on Monday.’
- d. Standard German  
 Ich        **werd-e**              am Montag noch **arbeit-en**.  
 1SG.NOM become.IND.PRS-1SG on Monday still work-INF  
 ‘I’ll be working on Monday.’

The de-obligative future construction as an areal feature, shared by Danish and German varieties used in the contact zone, may trace back to one of two origins. The first possibility is *pro-diasystematic change* (with an originally Danish idioconstruction losing its pragmatic restriction to conventionally Danish settings and thus turning into a diaconstruction). The second possibility involves *diasystematic stability*: a genuinely Low German construction (as attested for Middle Low German) is retained because of its diasystematicity in the contact zone, while disappearing from neighbouring Low German varieties. From a cognitive point of view, the result is equally advantageous in either scenario: a unified (and potentially simplified) constructional representation for varieties of both

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languages that can be assumed to be cognitively more economic for multilingual speakers, provided that speakers identify obligative constructions in Danish and German varieties as interlingual equivalents, i.e. as instances of the diaconstruction in (2).

### 4.3 De-additive infinitive construction

Another arealism that is restricted to Danish and the northernmost German varieties is an infinitival construction (sometimes described as the ‘AND infinitive’) that consists of a phrase-initial infinitive combined with a preposed clitic that is homophonous with an additive conjunction (i.e. an AND element), followed by verbal arguments (excluding subjects) and adverbials. It can be formalised as in (6):

- (6) De-additive infinitive construction  
 [ADD.CONJ v<sub>inf</sub><sup>1</sup> ...]

The emergence of this construction has often been attributed to Danish influence in earlier research (cf. Laur 1975; Hoekstra 2009; Höder 2016b: 303–305). Its use in German varieties is illustrated in (7):

- (7) a. Schleswig Low German  
 Dat is nich klook un lehn-en em Geld.  
 3SG.N be.PRS.3SG not wise and lend-INF 3SG.M.OBL money  
 ‘It’s unwise to lend him money.’
- b. local North High German  
 Ich hab kein-e Lust und les-en das.  
 1SG.NOM have.IND.PRS.1SG no-F.SG.ACC wish and read-INF 3SG.N.ACC  
 ‘I don’t feel like reading it.’

From a monolingual German perspective, this construction appears odd in several respects. Firstly, one would have to assume a grammaticalisation of an additive conjunction into an infinitive marker (functionally corresponding to the German infinitive marker *zu*) along a grammaticalisation path that is hardly attested (? ADDITIVE > INFINITIVE MARKER). Secondly, German infinitive phrases are normally verb-final, as illustrated in (8):

- (8) Standard High German

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|                                 |                  |             |                |            |
|---------------------------------|------------------|-------------|----------------|------------|
| Ich                             | hab-e            | kein-e      | Lust, es       | zu         |
| 1SG.NOM                         | have.IND.PRS-1SG | no-F.SG.ACC | wish 3SG.N.ACC | INF.MARKER |
| les-en.                         |                  |             |                |            |
| read-INF                        |                  |             |                |            |
| 'I don't feel like reading it.' |                  |             |                |            |

The emergence of the de-additive infinitive construction is a more complex case that cannot be explained simply as an instance of pro-diasystematic change. Firstly, the divergent word-order pattern found in the Schleswig varieties is easily identifiable as a likely candidate for contact influence, since it follows the Nordic type, with infinitives (and infinitive markers) at or near the beginning of the phrase, as in (9):

- (9) Standard Danish
- |                           |        |             |            |         |       |
|---------------------------|--------|-------------|------------|---------|-------|
| Det                       | er     | dum-t       | at         | sig-e   | det.  |
| 3SG.N                     | be.PRS | stupid-N.SG | INF.MARKER | say-INF | 3SG.N |
| 'It is stupid to say it.' |        |             |            |         |       |

Secondly, as for the form of the infinitive marker, the phonetic realisation of Danish *at* has to be taken into account. This element has both a strong form, pronounced [æd], and a much more frequent weak form [ᵰ]. The same holds for the additive conjunction *og*, which has a strong form [øŋ] and a more frequent weak form [ᵰ]. While in Standard Danish only the weak forms of the infinitive marker and the additive conjunction are homophonous, the elements are formally completely identical in many Danish dialects, including the traditional South Jutlandic dialects found in the contact zone, which have an open (or half-open) back monophthong, often transcribed as *a* (cf. *Jysk Ordbog* s.v. <sup>2</sup>*at*, **Bjerrum & Bjerrum 1974**, s.v. *a konj.* §1, 2.)

From a more traditional perspective, this would be analysed (and then disregarded) as a coincidental homophony between two categorially distinct structural elements. From a usage-based constructionist perspective, however, a priori categories are not necessarily relevant in speakers' organisation of linguistic knowledge. As a consequence, since there is only one additive conjunction and only one infinitive marker in South Jutlandic dialects, they are best represented in terms of two separate constructions – i.e. a partially schematic conjoining construction [*CONJUNCT<sub>1</sub> a CONJUNCT<sub>2</sub>*] and a partially schematic Infinitive Phrase Construction [*a v<sub>inf</sub> ...*] – without any need to identify the form *a* with a particular word class or category in either case.

Within a multilingual constructicon, however, the classification of both *a*'s as instances of a single more schematic element makes cognitive sense: The

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South Jutlandic conjoining construction is functionally equivalent and formally similar to, say, the Low German conjoining construction [CONJUNCT<sub>1</sub> *un* CONJUNCT<sub>2</sub>] and the North High German conjoining construction [CONJUNCT<sub>1</sub> *und* CONJUNCT<sub>2</sub>]. Cross-linguistic generalisation results in a schematic diaconstruction [CONJUNCT<sub>1</sub> ADD.CONJ CONJUNCT<sub>2</sub>] that contains an ADD.CONJ slot, which has to be filled with language-specific lexical material. In this context, the classification of the South Jutlandic form *a* as ADD.CONJ implies a simplification of the multilingual constructicon and thus increases overall diasystematicity – hence, it is an instance of *diaconstructionalisation*. Once this is established, other instances of South Jutlandic *a* can also be identified as instances of ADD.CONJ, resulting in a modified South Jutlandic infinitive phrase construction [ADD.CONJ V<sub>inf</sub> ...] (another case of diaconstructionalisation).<sup>6</sup> Finally, this construction loses its restriction to Danish settings and is used in German varieties as well (*pro-diasystematic change*), resulting in infinitive phrases beginning with *un(d)*.

In short, the emergence of the De-Additive Infinitive in German varieties can be explained by the identification of the dialectal Danish additive conjunction *a* with the homophonous infinitive marker and the functionally equivalent German conjunction *un(d)* as a result of simplifying changes within the multilingual constructicon – thus, it is the result of a combination of diaconstructionalisation and pro-diasystematic change.

#### 4.4 Animacy-gender-sex pronominalisation constructions

Pronominalisation of nominal referents relies on patterns of agreement between inherent or variable grammatical features of noun phrases on the one hand and phoric pronouns on the other hand. German pronominalisation patterns are typically based on nominal gender (an inherent category) and number (usually variable). Accordingly, most German varieties have a set of gender-marked singular phoric pronouns, such as Standard German *er* (M), *sie* (F), and *es* (N) or North Low German *he* (M), *se* (F), and *dat* (N), corresponding to the inherited Germanic ternary gender system (masculine, feminine, neuter). In constructionist terms, this can be captured by the pronominalisation construction described in (10) and illustrated in (11):

- (10) German Gender Pronominalisation Construction  
 [NP<sub>number:sg, gender:α</sub>, PRON<sub>number:sg, gender:α</sub>]

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<sup>6</sup>The *intralingual* identification of pre-infinitival *a* with conjunctional *a* is further enhanced by ambiguous contexts where both infinitive and conjoining constructions can be used in Jutlandic dialects (*Jysk Ordbog* s.v. <sup>2</sup>*at*, §2.1).

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### (11) North Low German

- a. de              Jung – he  
DEF.SG.M.NOM boy(M) – 3SG.M.NOM
- b. de              Foot – he  
DEF.SG.M.NOM foot(M) – 3SG.M.NOM
- c. de              Fru – se  
DEF.SG.F woman(F) – 3SG.F.NOM
- d. de              Döör – se  
DEF.SG.F door(F) – 3SG.F.NOM
- e. dat              Huus – dat  
DEF.SG.N house(N) – 3SG.N

In local Low German dialects in the region of Anglia, however, we find a different pattern (as reported by [Bock 1933](#): 76, 87–88; cf. [Höder 2016a](#): 123–124å). These varieties exhibit an *animacy-based pronominalisation split* in the singular, with different sets of phoric pronouns for animate and inanimate referents: while nouns denoting animate referents are pronominalised by the genuine Low German phoric forms *he* (M) and *se* (F), inanimate nouns are usually pronominalised by clitic forms, namely *en* (M/F) and *et* (N), derived from and sometimes alternating with de-demonstrative strong forms (*de*, *dat*).

This pattern is strikingly similar to the system found in many Danish varieties, where animate nouns are pronominalised on the basis of sex rather than gender (e.g. Standard Danish *han* (MALE) and *hun* (FEMALE)) as opposed to the gender-based pronominalisation of inanimate nouns, with two pronouns (such as *den* (U [uter, common gender]) and *det* (N)) corresponding to the binary gender system found in South Jutlandic as well as Standard Danish (but by no means all Danish varieties). Clitic variants are absent from Standard Danish, but found in extinct as well as extant South Jutlandic dialects, e.g. in Anglia ([Jul Nielsen & Nyberg 1995](#): s.v. *de*, *den*) and on the island of Als ([Jørgensen 1950](#): 24).

Given that (a) for animates, there is an almost one-to-one relation between gender and sex in German varieties (including Low German) and that (b) there are only two pronouns for inanimates in the local dialect of Low German (M/F and N, each with a clitic form and a full variant), the South Jutlandic and Local Low German systems are practically isomorphous, with sex-based pronominalisation (male vs. female forms) for animate referents and a binary gender distinction (uter vs. neuter) for inanimates. This pronominalisation split can be captured by

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<sup>7</sup>the diaconstructions in (12) and illustrated in (13) and (14).<sup>7</sup>

- (12) Animacy-gender-sex pronominalisation constructions

  - a. animate referents  
[NP+animate, number:sg, sex: $\alpha$ , PRON<sub>number:sg, sex: $\alpha$</sub> ]
  - b. inanimate referents  
[NP-inanimate, number:sg, gender: $\alpha$ , PRON<sub>number:sg, gender: $\alpha$</sub> ]

(13) local Low German (Anglia)

  - a. de            Jung                                    - he  
DEF.SG.M boy(M.ANIMATE.MALE) – 3SG.MALE.NOM
  - b. de            Foot                                    - en        (de)  
DEF.SG.M foot(M.INANIMATE) – 3SG.U
  - c. de            Fru                                    - se  
DEF.SG.F woman(F.ANIMATE.FEMALE) – 3SG.FEMALE.N
  - d. de            Döör                                    - en        (de)  
DEF.SG.F door(F.INANIMATE) – 3SG.U
  - e. dat            Huus                                    - et        (dat)  
DEF.SG.N house(N.INANIMATE) – 3SG.N

(14) South Jutlandic (Anglia)<sup>8</sup>

- (14) South Jutlandic (Anglia)<sup>8</sup>

  - a. æ man – hanj  
DEF man(M.ANIMATE.MALE) – 3SG.MALE.NOM
  - b. æ fu·əi – n (dæn)  
DEF foot(M.INANIMATE) – 3SG.U
  - c. æ ku·n – hsn  
DEF woman(F.ANIMATE.FEMALE) – 3SG.F.NOM
  - d. æ döi – n (dæn)  
DEF door(F.INANIMATE) – 3SG.U
  - e. æ hu.s – i (de.i)  
DEF.SG.N.NOM house(N.INANIMATE) – 3SG.N

<sup>7</sup>Animate neuters are rare in German and Danish, including nonstandard varieties, and insofar as they exist, both gender-based and sex-based pronominalisation can be found (e.g. Low German *dat Wief* 'DEF.SG.N woman(N) [derogatory]' – *dat* '3SG.N/'se '3SG.F', Standard Danish *barnet* 'child(N)-DEF.N.SG' – *det* '3SG.N/'han '3SG.MALE.NOM'/*hun* '3SG.FEMALE.NOM'; cf. *Jysk Ordbog* s.v. <sup>1</sup>*den* §2.3).

<sup>8</sup>The transcription follows Jul Nielsen & Nyberg (1995).

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As an areal feature, the animacy-based pronominalisation split traces back to the emergence of new local varieties of Low German as a result of the language shift in Anglia completed in the 19th century, preceded by a period of intensified productive bilingualism. The emergence of the pronominalisation split in Low German varieties can thus be explained as *pro-diasystematic change*, with – if we consider ‘imperfect learning’ (to use Thomason & Kaufman’s 1988 term) part of the language shift process – speakers failing to acquire the ‘proper’ Low German system and instead turning an originally Danish construction into a diaconstruction that could also be used in Low German.

### 4.5 Possessive linking pronoun construction

A different areal picture emerges for the possessive linking pronoun construction, as illustrated in (15):

- (15) a. Low German

|                               |              |      |                              |
|-------------------------------|--------------|------|------------------------------|
| Ik                            | will         | mit  | <b>Mudder ehr-en Wagen</b>   |
| 1SG.NOM                       | want.PRS.1SG | with | Mummy(F) POSS.3SG.F-SG.M.OBL |
| fohr-en.                      |              |      |                              |
| car(M)                        | drive-INF    |      |                              |
| 'I want to take Mummy's car.' |              |      |                              |

- b. North High German

|   |                  |         |                   |                   |              |
|---|------------------|---------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Das   | hab              | ich     | von               | <b>mein-em</b>    | <b>Onkel</b> |
| that.N                                      | have.IND.PRS.1SG | 1SG.NOM | from              | POSS.1SG-SG.M.DAT | uncle(M)     |
| sein-er                                     |                  | Frau    | ge-erb-t.         |                   |              |
| POSS3SGM-SG.F.DAT                           |                  | wife(F) | PTCP-inherit-PTCP |                   |              |
| 'I've inherited that from my uncle's wife.' |                  |         |                   |                   |              |

Similar [POSSESSOR POSS.PRON POSSESSUM] constructions ('linking possessive pronouns') are widespread in spoken German varieties, where they are usually considered a stereotypically non-standard feature, as well as in other Continental West Germanic languages and Norwegian varieties, including the younger of its two standard varieties, Nynorsk (Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2001: 963; Harbert 2007: 158–161; Höder 2016a: 107–121; Gunleifsen 2011: 229–230). In a historical perspective, they can be seen as analytical constructions that have taken over during the loss of the inflectional genitive in many languages ('genitive periphrasis'), such as Low German, where linking pronouns are now the default strategy of marking possessive relations with animate possessors. Morphosyntactically, however, constructions of this type are rather complex in that they involve three inflected

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elements: not only a (possibly case-marked, as with the North High German dative *meinem Onkel* in (15b)) possessor and a possessum, but on top of that also a possessive pronoun that agrees morphologically with both the possessor and the possessum. In (15a), for example, the Low German pronominal form *ehren* combines a morphological stem (*ehr-*) that indicates a 3rd person singular feminine possessor (*Mudder* ‘Mummy’) with an inflectional suffix (*-en*) that marks the possessum as singular masculine in the oblique case. In constructional terms, this agreement pattern can be formalised as in (16):

- (16) Low German possessive linking pronoun construction  
 [POSSESSOR.NP gender: $\alpha$ , number: $\beta$ , case:obl  
 POSS.PRON<sub>gender-possessor: $\alpha$ , number-possessor: $\beta$ , gender-possessum: $\gamma$ ,  
 number-possessum: $\delta$ , case-possessum: $\varepsilon$</sub>  POSSESSUM.NP<sub>gender: $\gamma$ , number: $\delta$ , case: $\varepsilon$</sub> ]

Strikingly, very similar constructions – otherwise absent from Nordic languages except Norwegian – are also found in non-standard Danish varieties within or near the contact zone, in particular in South as well as in West Jutlandic dialects, an observation that suggests a contact explanation. In addition, there is also anecdotal evidence for such constructions in South Schleswig Danish (Christophersen 1985). Jutlandic examples are given in (17).

- (17) a. South Jutlandic (Hürup, Anglia, Jul Jul Nielsen & Nyberg 1995: s.v. *sin* §1.2  
 dæn      'gamæl 'maj               si-d                          'hu.s  
 DEF.SG.U old      man(U.MALE) POSS.3SG.MALE-SG.N house(N)  
 ‘the old man’s house’
- b. West Jutlandic (Aal Sogn, Jysk Ordbog s.v. <sup>2</sup>*han* §4.1)  
 a      'sme                hans                        'næw-ə  
 DEF smith(U.MALE) POSS.3SG.MALE fist-PL  
 ‘the smith’s fists’

These constructions differ from each other and from the German construction insofar as nouns and pronouns have different inflectional categories. For instance, 3rd person singular possessive pronouns such as *hans* in (17b) are uninflexed in West Jutlandic and hence cannot agree with the possessum, as opposed to the inflectional patterns in South Jutlandic as in (17a), where the suffix *-d* in *sid* (corresponding to orthographic *-t* in Standard Danish) marks a neutral possessum.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, as case inflection is only found in pronouns in the Danish

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<sup>9</sup>Unlike Standard Danish, the Jutlandic dialects discussed here do not distinguish reflexive and

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dialects, possessor noun phrases are not case-marked in the Jutlandic varieties, unlike in German. Finally, Danish possessive pronouns agree with possessor *sex* rather than with possessor *gender* (hence the choice of the male forms in (17b); see also §4.4 for the pronominalisation system in general). A somewhat simplified formalisation as in (18a) is thus sufficient for the South Jutlandic variant of the possessive linking pronoun construction, while the West Jutlandic variant has an even simpler structure as shown in (18b).

- (18) a. South Jutlandic (Hürup) possessive linking pronoun construction  

$$[\text{POSSESSOR.NP}_{\text{sex}:\alpha, \text{number}:\beta} \text{ POSS.PRON}_{\text{sex-possessor}:\alpha, \text{number-possessor}:\beta, \text{gender-possessum}:\gamma, \text{number-possessum}:\delta} \text{ POSSESSUM.NP}_{\text{gender}:\gamma, \text{number}:\delta}]$$
- b. West Jutlandic (Aal Sogn) possessive linking pronoun construction  

$$([\text{POSSESSOR.NP}_{\text{sex}:\alpha, \text{number}:\beta} \text{ POSS.PRON}_{\text{sex-possessor}:\alpha, \text{number-possessor}:\beta} \text{ POSSESSUM.NP}])$$

Despite those structural differences, it is possible to reconstruct a diaconstruction that captures the overall similarities between the Jutlandic and Low German constructions without abstracting away too much from the variants actually used. The tentative formalisation in (19), for example, points to agreement between the possessor and the possessive pronoun in the relevant pronominalisation category (either gender or sex) and makes case-marking optional (indicated by asterisks).

- (19) Possessive Linking Pronoun Diaconstruction  

$$[\text{POSSESSOR.NP}_{\text{gender-sex}:\alpha, \text{number}:\beta, \text{case}^*:\text{obl}} \text{ POSS.PRON}_{\text{gender-sex-possessor}:\alpha, \text{number-possessor}:\beta, \text{gender-possessum}:\gamma, \text{number-possessum}:\delta, \text{case-possessum}^*:\varepsilon} \text{ POSSESSUM.NP}_{\text{gender}:\gamma, \text{number}:\delta, \text{case}^*:\varepsilon}]$$

In combination with language-specific (or variety-specific) lexical and grammatical constructions, this diaconstruction accounts for the use of possessive linking pronouns in all of the varieties discussed here. The most likely mechanism for its emergence as an arealism is, again, pro-diasystematic change: an originally German construction underwent pragmatic bleaching and became applicable in Danish settings as well.<sup>10</sup>

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non-reflexive forms of the possessive pronoun, and usually only one of the two inherited sets of pronominal forms is used (Jul Nielsen 1986). Hence, West Jutlandic *hans* and South Jutlandic *sid* are functionally identical 3rd person singular male possessives, whereas, in Standard Danish, *hans* would be non-reflexive as opposed to reflexive *sit*.

<sup>10</sup>An almost (but due to structural differences not totally) parallel development can be assumed for the spread of the possessive linking pronoun construction into Norwegian via Low German-Norwegian contact (Höder 2016a: 119; Nesse 1998).

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#### 4.6 Dative external possessor construction

Dative external possessors are defined as oblique (often ‘dative’) noun phrases that encode possessors, but occur independently within a clause, i.e. outside the noun phrase that contains the possesum (Haspelmath 1999; 2001; König 2001). Semantically, dative external possessors typically express that the possessor is somehow affected by an action or a situation that involves the possesum; moreover, the possessor is prototypically animate (Haspelmath 1999: 112–114). Dative external possessors are illustrated in (20):

- (20) a. Standard German

|  |                  |                     |           |
|--|------------------|---------------------|-----------|
| Sie                                    | hat              | ihr-em              | Chef mal  |
| 3SG.F.NOM                              | have.IND.PRS.3SG | POSS.3SG.F-SG.M.DAT | boss once |
| die                                    | Nase             | ge-broch-en.        |           |
| DEF.SG.F.ACC nose PTCP-BREAK\PTCP-PTCP |                  |                     |           |

‘She broke her boss’s nose once.’

- b. Low German

|                            |            |       |                       |                     |
|----------------------------|------------|-------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Mi                         | is         | 'n    | Steen op-'n           | Kopp full-en.       |
| 1SG.OBL                    | be.PRS.3SG | INDEF | stone on-DEF.SG.M.OBL | head fall\PTCP-PTCP |
| ‘A stone fell on my head.’ |            |       |                       |                     |

Constructionally, dative external possessors are a component of a dative external possessor construction that could be formalised as in (21):

- (21) Dative external possessor construction

[POSSESSOR.NP<sub>case:obl</sub>, POSSESSUM.NP]

As an areal feature, dative external possessors are typically said to occur in the core area of ‘Standard Average European’ (cf. Haspelmath 2001: 1498, map 107.7), including Continental West Germanic, but excluding the north-western, northern, and eastern peripheries of Europe, with Insular West Germanic as well as the Nordic languages lacking similar constructions.

While information about non-standard syntactic features in specific areas is often hard to come by, the South Jutlandic data collected for Wenker’s dialect survey (*Linguistic Atlas of the German Empire*, collected 1876 and 1887, original questionnaires accessible via ; cf. Fleischer 2017) is a valuable source, particularly for the now extinct and under-documented dialects from the southernmost part of the then Danish-speaking area in present-day South Schleswig.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>The data consists of 287 questionnaires with handwritten translations of forty Standard Ger-

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One of Wenker's sentences (Sentence 8 in the questionnaire used in Northern Germany) contains a dative external possessor in Standard German, shown in (22):

(22) Standard German

Die Füß-e thu-n mir sehr weh, ich  
 DEF.PL.NOM foot\PL-PL do-IND.PRS.3PL 1SG.DAT very painful 1SG.NOM  
 glaube, ich habe sie durchgelaufen.  
 believe-IND.PRS.1SG 1SG.NOM have-IND.PRS.1SG 3PL.ACC word out  
 'My feet hurt very much, I think I've worn them out.'

Since Danish varieties normally do not have a similar construction, the first clause translates into Standard Danish into something similar to (23), i.e. a clause that contains a straightforward possessive construction with a possessive pronoun:

(23) Standard Danish

Min-e fodd-er gör meget ond-t.  
 POSS.1SG-PL foot\PL-PL DO.PRS much evil-N.SG  
 'My feet hurt very much.'

Indeed, we do find this type of construction in the South Jutlandic questionnaires, as exemplified in the translation from Asserballeskov (German *Atzerballigholz*; Questionnaire 46882) in (24a), but we also find German-type dative external possessor constructions in the South Jutlandic data, as in the translation from List (on the northernmost tip of the North Sea island of Sylt; Questionnaire 47006) in (24b).

(24) South Jutlandic

a. Asserballeskov

Min' För-e gø usfel-t vi=e  
 POSS.1SG.PL foot\PL-PL do.PRS miserable-ADV pain  
 'My feet hurt miserably.'

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man sentences into local dialects, transcribed in a non-standardised quasi-orthographic way by unsupervised laypeople. As should be expected with data gathered in this way, Wenker's data is not altogether unproblematic (with priming effects, possible interferences caused by some transcribers' unfamiliarity with the local dialects, and so forth). However, it is possible and often useful to exploit the data in search of insights into contact-related morphosyntactic phenomena. As shown in Höder & Winter's (2020) discussion on the general validity of Wenker's material, the data has to be considered as, by and large at least, representing authentic dialect features. Also, it cannot be rejected out of hand as being contaminated by methodological artefacts due to Wenker's admittedly error-prone use of data collection by proxy.

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b. List

E Född-er gör me wee  
 DEF foot\PL-PL do.PRS 1SG.OBL pain  
 'My feet hurt.'

Such findings suggest *prima facie* that the dative external possessor construction as given above was used as a diaconstruction in historically bilingual communities, presumably as a result of *pro-diasystematicchange* which turned an originally German construction into a language-unspecific one.

However, Wenker's data also allows for more fine-grained analyses. In an ongoing study, (Höder n.d.) finds that, in a subset comprising the southern half of the area included in Wenker's survey ( $n = 179$ ), both constructions are about equally frequent in the data, with 53.1% of the informants choosing a prototypical Danish possessive construction in their translation and 45.3% using a German-type dative external possessor (1.7 % chose a structurally different translation).<sup>12</sup> In principle, of course, the German-type translations could be due to priming effects, but in that case one would expect there to be no areal differentiation: priming effects should be approximately equal across the whole area. On the other hand, if dative external possessors are a contact-related, but genuine feature of dialect grammar, then one would expect a higher number of German-type translations in regions where contact with German is (and traditionally has been) more intense, i.e. in regions closer to the German-dominant area. This suggests the hypothesis, firstly, that dative external possessors are more frequent in the south than in the north and, secondly, that they are less frequent on the island of Als, which is separated from the German-speaking area by the Flensburg Firth. Indeed, statistical analyses confirm both predictions. As 'distance from the German-dominant area' can be conveniently operationalised in terms of geographic latitude, the negative correlation of latitude with the use of dative external possessors (point-biserial correlation coefficient:  $r = -0.258, p < 0.001$ )<sup>13</sup> reveals an areal pattern with a tendency to use dative external possessors more in the south than in the north. Similarly, dative external possessors are significantly less frequent in the district of Sonderburg, where the island of Als is located, than

<sup>12</sup>Up to now, data from the districts (*Kreise* as defined by the Prussian administration in the 1880s) of Tondern, Apenrade, Sonderburg, Flensburg, and Husum have been transliterated manually and included in the analysis (Danish *Tønder, Aabenraa, Sønderborg, Flensborg, Husum*). The data from the district of Hadersleben (*Haderslev*) further to the north still awaits transliteration.

<sup>13</sup>Point-biserial correlation coefficients are used to measure correlations between two variables if one of them is dichotomous. The coefficient  $r$  is mathematically equivalent to Pearson's  $r$  (Kornbrot 2014).

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in the other districts (chi-squared test:  $\chi^2 = 5.7$ , df = 1,  $p = 0.017$ ,  $r = 0.18$ ).<sup>14</sup>

In cases where such quantitative analyses are possible, they support the idea that the cognitive advantage of diaconstructions is higher the more a speaker community actually uses different languages or is, at least, exposed to bilingual input.

## 5 Conclusion

German and Danish have been in close contact in the former Duchy of Schleswig for more than one thousand years. However, while the contact situation has remained more or less stable from a macro-perspective, an inextricable multitude of micro-settings with different contact varieties has been shaped by different language ecologies, including various scenarios of language change, language shift, and the emergence of new varieties. The overall outcome is the formation of varying patterns of grammatical areality, with some areal features originating in the Nordic languages and spreading into regional varieties of German and vice versa. While some of these arealisms are long-established, others can be observed, as it were, *in statu nascendi* at different points in time.

While describing and mapping arealisms is a challenging (but also gratifying) task in itself, a constructionist approach is useful not only as a descriptive tool, but also for explanation. Diasystematic Construction Grammar, developed as a framework for analysing multilingual practices and subsequent contact-induced language change in contact situations, proves to be applicable in this context as well: Reconstructing areal features in the Danish-German contact zone in terms of (emerging) diaconstructions bridges the gap between an areal linguistic view, which is mainly based on contrastive analyses of relevant structures in the contact languages and varieties, and a usage-based perspective on the socio-cognitive reality of multilingualism.

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<sup>14</sup>In total, dative external possessors were used in 13 questionnaires from the district of Sonderburg as opposed to 30 translations using prototypical Danish possessive constructions. In the other districts, the ratio was 68:65.

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## Chapter 3

# Outcomes of language contact in New York Hasidic Yiddish

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Hasidic Yiddish (HY), brought to the U.S. by post-Holocaust immigrants, is currently the native language of five generations of bilingual speakers in New York. In this new contact setting, a unified variety is emerging, which has diverged from its Eastern European Yiddish parent dialect(s). The present study is a bilingual comparison whose aim is to examine, for a subset of HY and English vowels, how early HY-English bilinguals organize their phonetic system(s), and to explore the degree and direction of cross-linguistic influence. To that end, twenty-four early HY-English bilinguals, eight per generation (starting with Gen2, the children of immigrants), were recorded reading monosyllabic HY and English CVC words containing the vowels /i, ɪ, u, ʊ, a/ (approximately 100 tokens per speaker, 10 of each vowel). Pillai scores were calculated for each vowel category by generational group to measure the extent of overlap in the category by language. For /u/, Pillai scores were calculated separately for the lexical sets TOO and HOOP, reflecting the implicational hierarchy attested in North American English in these contexts (Fridland 2008; Hall-Lew 2009; Labov et al. 2005; Wong 2014). The findings suggest apparent time change between Gen2 and Gen3/Gen4 in two areas: 1) spectral overlap of /ɪ/ and /ʊ/ in the two languages; and 2) relative advancement of English vs. HY /u/. Specifically, HY and English high lax vowels are qualitatively distinct for the oldest generation but show greater convergence in the younger generations. Additionally, while Gen2 HOOP and TOO both overlap cross-linguistically, English /u/-sets of Gen3 and Gen4 show more fronting. The results are interpreted with reference to models of second language acquisition, emphasizing how differences in language input might result in the acquisition of different systems. This study illustrates how an understanding of the dynamic nature of the language systems of individual learners can help explain structural change observed in the language of a speech community.



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## 1 Introduction

A frequent finding in research on migrant linguistic minority communities, is that shift to the dominant language is typically complete within three generations of arrival (see e.g., Alba 2004; Alba et al. 2002; Rumbaut et al. 2006). This trend has been observed following both past and recent waves of immigration and was formalized as the THREE-GENERATION RULE (Fishman 1972; Haugen 1953). Diaspora immigrant groups that have defied these odds and retained their native vernacular beyond three generations are valuable testing sites for theories of language variation and change.

The present research focuses on one such language. Hasidic Yiddish (HY)<sup>1</sup> has been transmitted by post-Holocaust refugees from Eastern Europe and is currently the native language of five generations of Hasidic [ultra-Orthodox] Jews in New York State.<sup>2</sup> This study examines the degree and direction of crosslinguistic influence resulting from stable bilingualism by comparing the phonetic similarity of vowels in speakers' first and second languages (HY and American English, respectively). The analysis is based on tokens of HY and English /i, ɪ, u, ʊ, a/, produced by twenty-four speakers representing three generational groups. Vowel formant frequencies are compared across language and generation to identify change over time. The results show crosslinguistic differences in the acoustic correlates of /ɪ/, /ʊ/, and /u/ for second and third generation speakers. The findings are interpreted with reference to theories developed in the field of second language acquisition studies (henceforth, SLA), highlighting the sociohistorical circumstances that resulted in dissimilar language input across these groups.

As a quantitative sociolinguistic analysis of a minority language community, this study hews closely to the research goals that shaped the field of modern sociolinguistics.<sup>3</sup> The application of SLA models situates this paper within a comparatively more recent tradition in the field that promotes an inter-disciplinary

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<sup>1</sup>The term Hasidic Yiddish as used here excludes the Yiddish spoken in Lubavitch (Chabad) communities, which derives from Northeastern Yiddish varieties and differs significantly from the Hasidic Yiddish originating from the Central Yiddish dialects. While I resort to this term for the sake of simplicity, I acknowledge that excluding Lubavitch Yiddish renders it somewhat problematic.

<sup>2</sup>While New York has the highest concentration of HY speakers in North America, there are also HY-speaking communities in New Jersey, California, Montreal and Toronto. Across the world, sizable HY-speaking groups can be found in Israel, England (London) and Belgium (Antwerp) (Assouline 2018).

<sup>3</sup>Modern sociolinguistics is rooted in issues related to language contact (see Weinreich 1970), however, the research paradigm in the field shifted to monolingual communities early on (e.g., Labov 2006), in large part due to the challenges inherent in studying multilingual communities (see Sankoff 2002). More recently there has been a call by sociolinguists for more quantitative

### 3 Language contact in Hasidic Yiddish

approach between variationist sociolinguistics and SLA (see e.g., Adamson & Regan 1991; Bayley 2000; Fasold & Preston 2007; Preston & Bayley 1996; Regan 2004; Tarone 2007; Yao & Chang 2016).

The remainder of this chapter is organized as follows: In §2, relevant sociohistorical and sociocultural details will be provided to acquaint the reader with the circumstances of New York HY. §3 introduces the speech learning model (SLM) of second language acquisition developed by Flege (1995; 1996). The data, methods and results of the study are described in §4. §5 discusses the findings in the context of SLA and offers some concluding remarks.

## 2 Background

### 2.1 Hasidic Yiddish in New York

HY is exceptional both as a U.S. minority language that has resisted the trend towards language shift,<sup>4</sup> and as a Yiddish variety that has thrived while its sister dialects globally declined to the point of virtual obsolescence in the decades following WWII. It is currently the native language of 135,000–273,000 Hasidic Jews<sup>5</sup> in New York State and its environs, where the speaker population has been increasing steadily due to a unique combination of demographics and ideology: A high birth rate within the Hasidic community leads to natural population growth, while HY use is promoted as a means of ensuring cultural separatism and religious continuity (Fishman 1965; Shandler 2006; Fader 2009; Glinert 1999). Figure 3.1 shows the locations of the largest Hasidic communities in New York.

HY derives from the dialects spoken in the pre-war Eastern European region referred to by Yiddish-speaking residents as the Unterland,<sup>6</sup> which roughly corresponds to the border area of modern-day Slovakia, Hungary, Ukraine, and north-western Romania and central Romania, as illustrated by the area highlighted in

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research of minority languages and multilingual contexts (see Guy & Adli 2019; Nagy & Meyrhoff 2008; Stanford 2016).

<sup>4</sup>Languages spoken by auto-segregated religious groups often withstand the three-generation rule. Pennsylvania German (also known as Pennsylvania Dutch) is another example of a Germanic minority language in the United States whose retention has been attributed to socio-religious factors, and which has been explicitly compared to Hasidic Yiddish (Louden 2016).

<sup>5</sup>This range is based on the 2011–2015 American Community Survey of the U.S. Census Bureau (Manson et al. 2017) and approximations offered by Biale et al. (2018) of the number of Hasidim in Greater New York, who are presumed to be Yiddish speakers.

<sup>6</sup>The terms *Oyberland* and *Unterland* overlap semantically with Hungarian *Felföld* (Highland) and *Alföld* (Lowland). However, while the latter refer to a north/south territorial division, the former designate a west/east division that was culturally relevant to Yiddish-speaking residents of formerly Hungarian territories (Weinreich 1964).

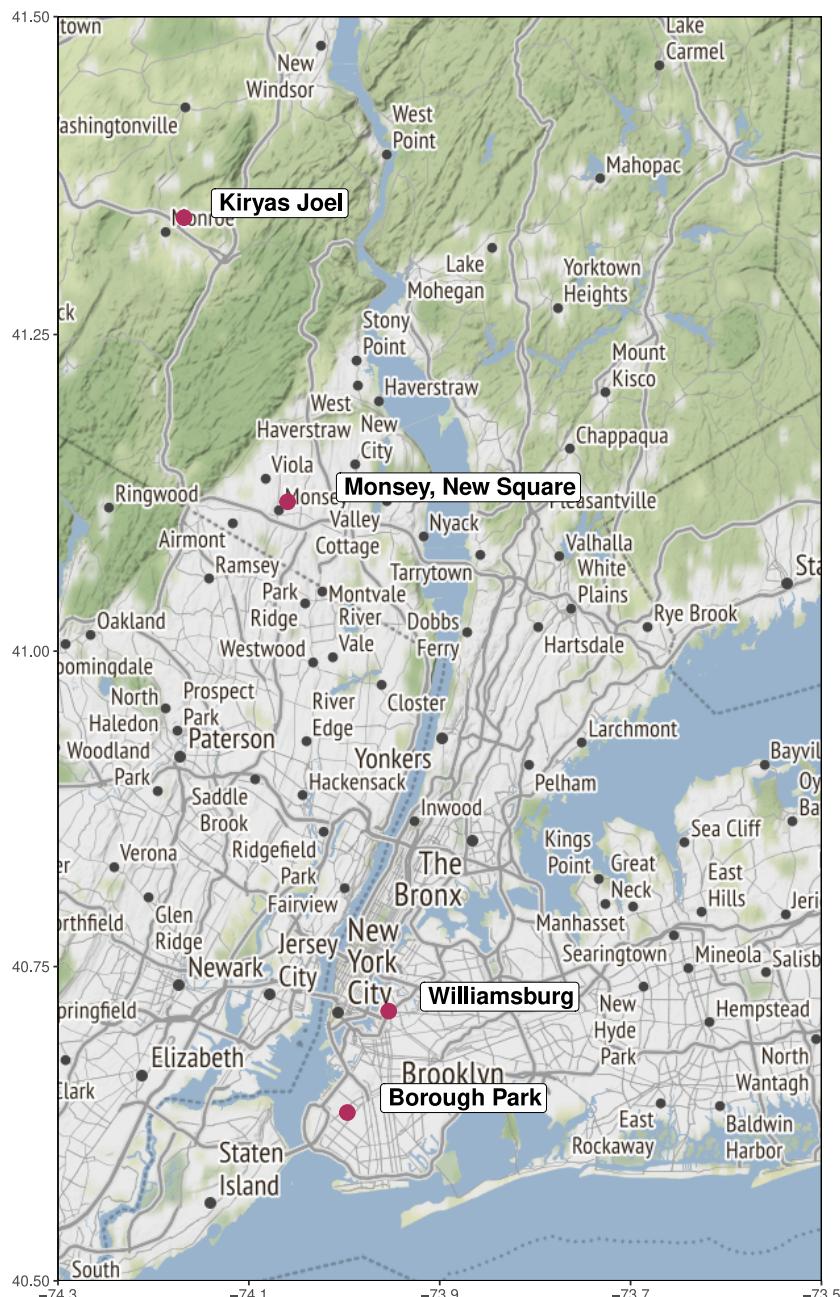
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Figure 3.1: New York Hasidic Communities: Map showing locations of the four largest Hasidic communities in New York State (map created using the *ggmap* package, Kahle & Wickham 2013, in R software, R Core Team 2016)

### 3 Language contact in Hasidic Yiddish

Figure 3.2 (Weinreich 1964; Krogh 2012). Yiddish dialectologists include the historical Unterland in the Central Yiddish (CY) dialect region.<sup>7</sup> However, plurilingualism and dialect mixing was endemic to this particular geographical region, whose political borders shifted frequently. Moreover, some of the HY-speaking groups in New York trace their ancestry to locations beyond the Unterland (e.g., the Bobov Hasidic group, from Bobowa, Poland). Despite these somewhat eclectic dialectal origins, a unified variety of HY has emerged, which has only recently gained the attention of linguistic scholars (Nove 2018b; Sadock & Masor 2018).



Figure 3.2: Historical Unterland region: Map showing the approximate pre-WWII Unterland region in Eastern Europe (map created using the `ggmap` package (Kahle & Wickham 2013) in R (R Core Team 2016))

<sup>7</sup>Eastern Yiddish is discussed in terms of three main dialect groups: Northeastern Yiddish originated in what is currently Lithuania, Belarus, Latvia, areas of northeastern Poland, northern and eastern Ukraine, and western Russia; Southeastern Yiddish was spoken in Moldova and parts of Ukraine; and Central Yiddish was found in modern-day Poland, eastern Slovakia, eastern Hungary and Romania, including the historical Unterland region.

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## 2.2 Sociocultural context

The greater Hasidic community in the New York area is comprised of more than a dozen groups of various sizes, each united around a spiritual leader (*rebbe*) and named after the pre-war Eastern European town or village from which the group originated.<sup>8</sup> The most prominent of these is Satmar, whose name derives from present-day Satu Mare, Romania.<sup>9</sup>

HY speakers are typically bilingual (with English),<sup>10</sup> but HY is acquired first and remains the dominant in-group language in many domains, including the home, the school and frequently also the workplace. Maintenance of the ancestral language is but one feature of the modern-day Hasidic ethos, which emphasizes traditionalism and cultural separatism. The Hasidic ideology is also manifested, *inter alia*, in gender segregation policies that govern virtually all aspects of social life and a distinctive dress code for men approximating that of 18<sup>th</sup> century Jewish men in Eastern Europe.

Hasidic children are educated in private (gender-segregated) institutions overseen by the respective leaders of each Hasidic group. In the boys' schools, the curriculum centers around religious studies with HY as the language of instruction, however, boys are rarely required to write in HY and prescriptive grammar is not taught (Bleaman 2018). Approximately 60–90 minutes is devoted to secular subjects daily. In the girls' schools, half of the (7-hour) school day is allocated to religious studies, taught in HY, and the other half to secular studies, with English as the instructional medium. HY literacy is taught, but minimal emphasis is placed on prescriptive norms. English grammar, on the other hand, is taught extensively from first grade through high school. Consequently, Hasidic males and females exhibit different patterns of HY-English bilingualism.

## 2.3 Length contrast in Yiddish vowels

To date, very few acoustic analyses of HY have been reported. The following description is based on impressionistic and acoustic analyses of the data I have collected thus far. HY has twelve vowels in stressed syllables—eight monophthongs /a, a:, ε, i, ɪ, u, ʊ, ʌ/ and four diphthongs /aɪ, eɪ, ɔɪ, oʊ/. In unstressed position, these vowels neutralize to schwa. The inventory of HY monophthongs is

<sup>8</sup>Unless otherwise cited, sociocultural information is based on my fieldwork.

<sup>9</sup>Detailed sociological studies of New York Hasidim are offered in Heilman (1992; 2017), Kranzler (1995), Poll (1962), and Rubin (1972; 1997). Fader (2009) provides an in-depth ethnography of one New York Hasidic group. Wodziński (2018) compares the population sizes of contemporary Hasidic groups.

<sup>10</sup>Some liturgical Hebrew and Aramaic is also typically acquired via the oral translation of Hebrew and Aramaic texts to Yiddish.

### 3 Language contact in Hasidic Yiddish

shown alongside American English ones in Figure 3.3. Note that HY high vowel pairs represented by the symbols /i, ɪ/ and /u, ʊ/ were likely /i:, i/ and /u:, u/ for Gen1/Unterland Yiddish speakers (see Nove 2020; Weinreich 1964); and that /ʌ/ corresponds to /ɔ/ in other Yiddish dialects.<sup>11</sup>

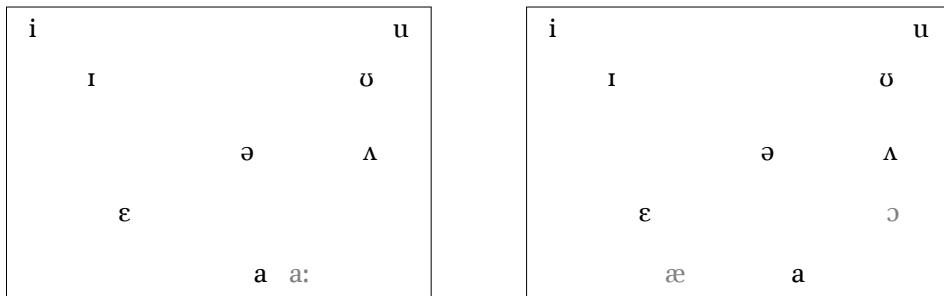


Figure 3.3: The inventory of HY (left) and American English (right) monophthong vowels. Vowels not common to both languages are shown in gray.

A notable feature in HY, inherited from CY, is the contrast between long and short peripheral vowels /i/, e.g., [zin] ‘sons’ and [zm] ‘sun’; /u/, e.g., [ʃtruf] ‘punish’ and [ʃlɔf] ‘sleep’; and /a/, e.g., [ha:nt] ‘today’ and [hant] ‘hand’.<sup>12</sup> In the literature on CY, this contrast is described in terms of length.<sup>13</sup> However, phonetic research has revealed a fair amount of complexity in the physical manifestation of vocalic length distinctions among the world’s languages,<sup>14</sup> and the phonetics of CY vowels, absent acoustic analyses, is not known. A pilot study analyzing the vowels of three Unterland Yiddish speakers points to duration as the primary distinguishing feature between long-short peripheral vowels (Nove 2020). Relatedly, in a study focusing on contemporary HY speakers, Nove (2018a) describes the emergence of a tense-lax contrast for the high vowel pairs /i, ɪ/ and

<sup>11</sup>An acoustic analysis of apparent time change from /ɔ/ to /ʌ/ is in progress.

<sup>12</sup>In Standard Yiddish, the orthographic representations of these sample words are *zin*, *zun*, *shtrof*, *shlof*, *haynt* and *hant*, respectively.

<sup>13</sup>Central Yiddish is unique among Yiddish dialects in having maintained the Indo-European length feature in its vowel system. For in-depth analyses of the historical development of these vowels, I recommend (Jacobs 1990; Herzog 1964); and (Beider 2015).

<sup>14</sup>For example, the spectral patterns of the long-short correlates of particular vowels in some languages show that longer sounds are produced with more muscular tension than shorter sounds (see e.g., Abramson & Ren 1990). Furthermore, perception experiments reveal that listeners may be more attuned to these qualitative differences than they are to differences in duration in some languages, for at least some vowels (see e.g., Abramson & Ren 1990; Lehiste 1970; Peterson & Lehiste 1960).

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/u, ʊ/, but not in the long-short /a:/, /a/, which appear to differ primarily by relative duration. That is, while long and short /a/ exist in the same phonetic space, the short correlates of the high vowels are lower and more centralized than their long counterparts. Moreover, there is evidence of change over time, specifically a gradual lowering and centering of HY /ɪ/ and /ʊ/ between second and third generation speakers. The different trajectories of change in HY high vs. low vowels, with patterns of contrast in the high vowels becoming more similar to their English counterparts, while the /a/ pair, which lacks an equivalent in Northeastern American English, behaves differently, invites a contact-induced account of sound change.

### 3 Modeling bilingualism

#### 3.1 Language contact in sociolinguistic and SLA studies

Language contact phenomena, while notoriously difficult to isolate, are a potentially significant factor underlying language variation and change and are thus of great interest to sociolinguists conducting research in multilingual communities. It is also a point at which sociolinguistics interfaces with SLA studies; however, the approaches differ significantly between these two fields. While the bilingual individual has remained the central focus in SLA studies, research in the field of sociolinguistics focuses on patterns of language use in the speech community as a whole (Yao & Chang 2016; Sankoff 2002). The latter approach has facilitated a growing understanding of the linguistic and social factors that underlie language variability and change; however, it has provided less insight into cognitive factors that give rise to it. Scholars in both fields will undoubtedly agree that “[FEFF?]macro change (in the language of a speech community) starts with micro change (in the idiolect of a member of that community)” (Yao & Chang 2016: 433). Using this unifying statement as a guiding principle, Yao and Chang demonstrate how an integrated approach combining SLA models of the speaker’s internal state with aggregated data obtained from a language community leads to a more detailed account of the status of a vowel merger in Shanghainese. The authors suggest that sociolinguistics can function as a testing site for models of SLA, for the mutual benefit of both fields.

Informed by the study cited above, the analysis provided in this paper layers an SLA approach onto data obtained via sociolinguistic methods for the purpose of identifying which of the observed patterns are attributable to language contact. Specifically, predictions about L1–L2 sound interaction in a bilingual speaker’s

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mind are used to interpret group data comparing the phonetic properties of HY and English vowels, for an account of contact-induced change in apparent time.<sup>15</sup>

#### 3.2 The speech learning model

The speech learning model (SLM), developed by Flege (1995; 1996), is based on the premise that mechanisms of language learning remain operative across the lifespan. Indeed, Flege (2007) argues that the differential degrees of L2 acquisition long observed among second language learners are not attributable solely to maturational constraints (i.e., to a critical period), as many scholars have posited. Flege explains how age of L2 acquisition in studies of bilingualism are likely to be confounded by a number of other variables, chief among them the amount and quality of language input.

While the phenomenon known as INTERFERENCE (the impact of L1 on the acquisition of L2 sounds) is well-known, the SLM is distinctive among other SLA models in explaining influence in the opposite direction. Flege (1995; 1996) proposes that L1-L2 sound systems coexist in a shared phonological space in the bilingual mind and exert an ongoing bidirectional influence on each other. The interaction is based on a system of EQUIVALENCE CLASSIFICATION: L2 sounds that are perceived by learners as ‘new,’ i.e., acoustically distinct from sounds in the L1 inventory, will form new categories; while sounds that are perceived as ‘similar’ will be mapped onto acoustically similar L1 sounds, resulting in non-native production of those segments. (‘Identical’ sounds will similarly map onto L1 categories but will not result in any discernible production differences due to their inherent acoustic similarity.) He further explains that both language systems remain malleable throughout the lifespan. As the L1 system develops, it has an increasing (obstructive) influence on L2 learning, leading to outcomes often attributed to maturational constraints. Similarly, greater familiarity with, and use of, the L2, can lead to slight alterations in the phonetic quality of overlapping (similar) sounds, sometimes shifting them in the directions of the L2. Indeed, such change in the L1 as a consequence of experience with an L2, referred to as PHONETIC DRIFT, is well attested in L2 dominant environments (see e.g., Flege 1987 on English learners of French in Paris and French learners of English in Chicago; and Sancier & Fowler 1997 on Portuguese learners of English both in Brazil and in the U.S.) as well as in environments where the L1 is predominantly spoken (see e.g., Herd et al. 2015 on English learners of Spanish in the U.S.). Moreover, in a

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<sup>15</sup>Based on an assumption that childhood speech patterns remain relatively stable across the lifespan, apparent time studies attempt to capture language change by examining an age-stratified cross section of a population at a particular point in time rather than longitudinally.

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study of English speakers learning Korean in South Korea, Chang (2012; 2013) discovered that phonetic drift (at the subsegmental, segmental and global levels) was evident within the first two weeks of language learning, and indeed, that its effect was even more pronounced during early exposure. The author suggests drift is actually reduced as the learner's familiarity with the L2 increases and points out that these results support a view of the L1–L2 systems as constantly evolving.

## 4 Data, methods and results

### 4.1 Data

Data for this study were collected between June 2017 and February 2018. The sample consists of twenty-four native HY speakers, eight per generation (2, 3 and 4), where 2<sup>nd</sup> generation (Gen2, etc., henceforth) refers to the children of post-Holocaust immigrants to the U.S. The age range for Gen2 is 60 – 70 ( $M = 66.73$ , median = 68.5,  $SD = 3.27$ ) and five of them are female. Gen3 speakers range in age from 33 to 48 ( $M = 38.88$ , median = 37.5,  $SD = 5.39$ ) and are balanced for sex. The Gen4 group is balanced for sex with an age range of 13 – 24 ( $M = 17.51$ , median = 17,  $SD = 4.17$ ). Table 3.1, arranged by generation, lists the speakers' ages and sex.

Table 3.1: List of speakers (with assigned codes) by generation, age and sex

| Gen2    |     |     | Gen3    |     |     | Gen4    |     |     |
|---------|-----|-----|---------|-----|-----|---------|-----|-----|
| Speaker | Age | Sex | Speaker | Age | Sex | Speaker | Age | Sex |
| 2A      | 70  | F   | 3A      | 48  | F   | 4A      | 24  | F   |
| 2B      | 69  | F   | 3B      | 39  | F   | 4B      | 20  | F   |
| 2C      | 69  | F   | 3C      | 35  | F   | 4C      | 14  | F   |
| 2D      | 68  | F   | 3D      | 33  | F   | 4D      | 13  | F   |
| 2E      | 65  | F   | 3E      | 47  | M   | 4E      | 21  | M   |
| 2F      | 69  | M   | 3F      | 38  | M   | 4F      | 21  | M   |
| 2G      | 64  | M   | 3G      | 37  | M   | 4G      | 14  | M   |
| 2H      | 60  | M   | 3H      | 34  | M   | 4H      | 13  | M   |

Speakers were interviewed in a quiet room at a venue of their choice. The interview commenced with 30–40 minutes of open-ended conversation (not analyzed

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here). Next, participants were asked to repeat an HY carrier sentence, inserting a different Yiddish word with each repetition.<sup>16</sup> The stimuli (target words) were presented orthographically via digital flash cards (on a tablet), in a pseudo-randomized order. A cue card with the carrier sentence was visible to the speaker as the stimuli were presented. Finally, the above procedure was repeated for a list of English words.

Yiddish and English stimuli included 8–10 monosyllabic content words for each of the five vowels relevant to this study (/i, ɪ, u, ʊ, a/).<sup>17</sup>

Data were recorded using a Zoom H4N digital audio recording device, with either a flat response, omnidirectional condenser lavalier microphone from Audio-Technica (AT899); or using the recorder's built-in microphone.<sup>18</sup> The recordings were made in WAV format, with a sample frequency 44.1/kHz and a bit rate of 16.

## 4.2 Methods

Audio files were imported to *Praat* (Boersma & Weenink 2018), where Textgrids containing transcriptions were generated. The sound segments in Yiddish words were aligned manually, while the English word files were aligned using Montreal Forced Aligner (McAuliffe et al. 2017). Sample segmented Yiddish and English word files (*brev* ‘letter’ and *beef*) are shown in Figure 3.4 and figreffig:nove:5. Misread words, words read in isolation (not in a carrier sentence) and words containing disfluencies were excluded from the analyses.

Vowel tokens were extracted from the audio files and divided into three increments. The mean first and second formant (F1 and F2) frequencies of the second increment were measured from an LPC analysis over a 25-millisecond window with a 10-millisecond frame interval, using a script by Kang (2016). Formant measures were checked, and outlying values were manually corrected by visual inspection of a wideband spectrogram or discarded if formants could not be measured with certainty. Plots were created using the *ggplot2* package (Wickham

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<sup>16</sup>The carrier sentence was *yetst zog X shoyn* ‘now say X already’.

<sup>17</sup>Ten words for each vowel were initially included but some were not successfully elicited due to their unfamiliarity to speakers. A complete list of stimuli, along with a brief description of selection considerations, is included in §5.

<sup>18</sup>The intention was to use the external microphone for all the interviews, but a flaw in the recorder's software caused the device to occasionally switch to the built-in microphone mode. This problem went unnoticed for a while. The problem was eventually resolved by upgrading the software. A total of 9 out of 24 interviews analyzed here were recorded with the built-in microphone.

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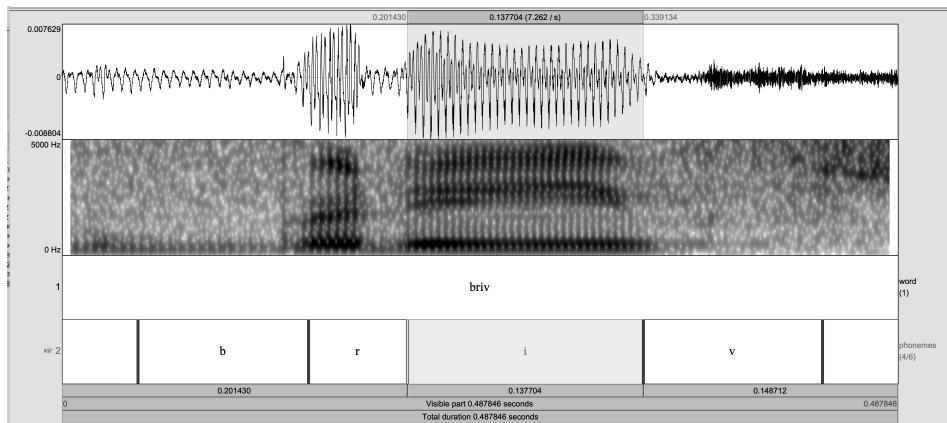


Figure 3.4: Waveform and spectrogram for the word <briv> 'letter,' by time (on the horizontal axis) and frequency (in Hz, on the vertical axis), with annotation showing the start and end points of individual segments. The speaker is 3B (39 years old, Gen3)

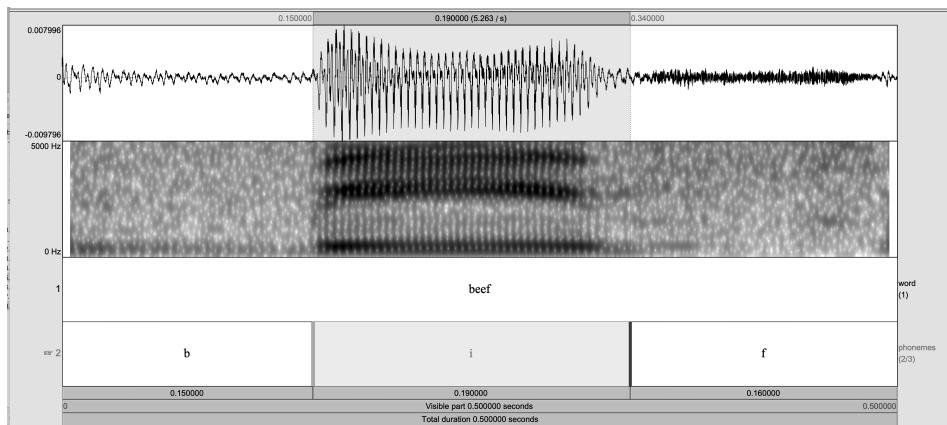


Figure 3.5: Waveform and spectrogram for the word <beef> by time (on the horizontal axis) and frequency (in Hz, on the vertical axis), with annotation showing the start and end points of individual segments. The speaker is 3B (39 years old, Gen3)

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2009) in R (R Core Team 2016). The number of tokens extracted for each generational group are shown in Table 3.2 alongside mean F1 and F2 values of each word class by language.

Table 3.2: Mean formant frequencies of all vowel tokens by word class, generation, and language

| Vowel | Gen | ENG |        |         | HY  |        |         |
|-------|-----|-----|--------|---------|-----|--------|---------|
|       |     | n   | F1     | F2      | n   | F1     | F2      |
| i     | 2   | 78  | 334.48 | 2735.07 | 94  | 361.34 | 2649.76 |
| i     | 3   | 77  | 331.83 | 2492.11 | 91  | 340.26 | 2498.13 |
| i     | 4   | 88  | 393.16 | 2683.09 | 131 | 390.82 | 2654.51 |
| ɪ     | 2   | 87  | 473.61 | 2176.46 | 107 | 450.14 | 2289.92 |
| ɪ     | 3   | 87  | 471.10 | 2043.82 | 104 | 448.85 | 2082.91 |
| ɪ     | 4   | 109 | 491.60 | 2268.14 | 122 | 477.70 | 2171.98 |
| u     | 2   | 78  | 370.58 | 871.70  | 82  | 410.02 | 917.31  |
| u     | 3   | 77  | 370.40 | 1032.85 | 90  | 377.30 | 976.46  |
| u     | 4   | 96  | 406.60 | 1171.06 | 100 | 409.20 | 1054.01 |
| ʊ     | 2   | 79  | 501.26 | 1232.95 | 71  | 461.57 | 1108.55 |
| ʊ     | 3   | 80  | 493.54 | 1208.19 | 74  | 460.55 | 1147.63 |
| ʊ     | 4   | 94  | 538.32 | 1349.03 | 79  | 514.33 | 1333.98 |
| a     | 2   | 81  | 783.05 | 1408.58 | 87  | 822.50 | 1377.38 |
| a     | 3   | 87  | 762.31 | 1312.04 | 87  | 759.24 | 1319.03 |
| a     | 4   | 111 | 759.33 | 1506.28 | 103 | 778.33 | 1480.10 |

Formant values (Hz) were normalized using the modified Watt & Fabricius method as implemented in the *phonR* package (McClory 2016) in R. This normalization method has been shown to reduce disparities caused by physiological factors and improve vowel space overlap for multiple speakers, while preserving socially and dialectally-induced differences in vowel quality (Watt & Fabricius 2002; Fabricius et al. 2009). Raw formant values and normalized values were then plotted and compared to check for distortion or artifacts introduced by normalization.

Next, conventional vowel plots (F2 on the x-axis and F1 on the y-axis) were created to enable visualization of the data by language, separately for each generation. These are presented in Figure 3.6. Figure 3.7 displays similar vowel plots created for each generational group by gender. The tokens were then plotted by

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vowel for each generation using two-dimensional contour maps, as shown in Figure 3.8, in which density, represented by lines, is given as an additional dimension of the distribution of the vowel tokens.<sup>19</sup> Finally, Pillai scores were calculated by generation for each vowel category, and by gender within each generational cohort, to measure the extent of overlap across and within languages. The Pillai score (or the Pillai-Bartlett trace), first applied to vowel overlap by Hay et al. (2006) and elaborated on by Nycz & Hall-Lew (2013), is the output of a MANOVA model/test,<sup>20</sup> with F1 and F2 values entered as dependent variables. Pillai scores measure overlap by comparing the size and shape of word class clusters. The value of the scores ranges from 0 to 1, with 0 indicating total overlap between two clusters and 1 indicating no overlap. Manner and place of articulation of the preceding and following segments, as well as the duration of the vowel token, were included in the models as independent variables.

Sociolinguists studying the phonetic quality of North American English vowels have identified an implicational hierarchy in the vowel /u/ by context, which has led to a partition into three main lexical sets: 1) TOO: /u/ following coronal consonants tend to be the most advanced (fronted); 2) COOL: /u/ preceding laterals are the least advanced (backed); and 3) HOOP: /u/ elsewhere (Hall-Lew 2009; Labov et al. 2005; Baranowski 2008). To account for these systematic contextual differences, crosslinguistic Pillai scores for /u/ were calculated separately by lexical set. These are shown in Table 3.3 and Table 3.4. As the Yiddish wordlist did not include tokens of COOL, only TOO and HOOP are compared. Additionally, within-language Pillai scores were obtained to compare TOO vs. HOOP in each generational group, as shown in Table 3.5.

### 4.3 Results

In examining Figure 3.6, below, we observe that the vowel plots of Gen2 appear to represent two distinct systems. In the HY system, the long-short versions of the high vowels ellipses overlap considerably, and the formant means are closer together, while the same vowels in the English system show minimal elliptical overlap and more distance between the formant means. The plot of Gen3

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<sup>19</sup>Density maps rely on kernel density estimation (KDE), a non-parametric method of estimating the probability density function of a random variable. Given that a prior distribution is not assumed, they have the advantage of non-symmetry (see Nycz & Hall-Lew 2013)

<sup>20</sup>A MANOVA is a type of analysis of variance that models two or more continuous dependent variables simultaneously to test whether they come from the same distribution in that multivariate space.

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and Gen4 vowels illustrate a higher degree of similarity between the two languages, although the vowels of Gen4 show greater variability overall. The cross-generational difference in overlap of the high vowel pairs appear to be caused primarily by dissimilarities in the quality of the HY short/lax vowel in each pair. That is, Gen2 HY /i/ and /ʊ/ are higher (larger F1 values) and more peripheral (F2 values are lower for /i/ and higher /ʊ/) than Gen2 and Gen3, but the corresponding English vowels occupy similar positions for all generations. There are no discernible differences in the phonetic positions of /i/ and /a/ across languages or generations.

When the data of each generational cohort are plotted separately by gender (Figure 3.7), a slight discrepancy is visible between female and male speakers of the Gen2, with female speakers showing more variability and greater cross-linguistic overlap in the short high vowels. This gender difference shows up in the Pillai scores calculated by gender (see Table 3.3, below): For both short high vowels (i and ʊ), male speakers have higher values than female speakers, indicating more separation between the HY and English clusters. In the younger generational groups, there is a small difference in the scores of /ʊ/ in Gen4 females and males in the opposite direction, suggesting greater cross-linguistic overlap among male speakers.

Table 3.3: Crosslinguistic Pillai scores by vowel/set, grouped by generation (Gen) and sex. Significance codes: \*\*\* = < 0.001, \*\* = < 0.01, \* = < 0.05, . = < 0.1

| Gen | Sex | /i/  | /ɪ/      | HOOP    | TOO      | /ʊ/      | /a/     |
|-----|-----|------|----------|---------|----------|----------|---------|
| 2   | F   | 0.05 | 0.24 *** | 0.28 ** | 0.04     | 0.38 *** | 0.02    |
| 2   | M   | 0.03 | 0.60 *** | 0.06    | 0.06     | 0.66 *** | 0.01    |
| 3   | F   | 0.02 | 0.16 *** | 0.31 ** | 0.34 *** | 0.29 *** | 0.03    |
| 3   | M   | 0.09 | 0.12 **  | 0.15    | 0.41 *** | 0.24 **  | 0.09    |
| 4   | F   | 0.03 | 0.18 *** | 0.02 *  | 0.05     | 0.23 **  | 0.09 *  |
| 4   | M   | 0.17 | 0.10 *   | 0.38 ** | 0.28 **  | 0.06     | 0.17 ** |

Next, we consider the extent of crosslinguistic overlap as represented by the contour maps for each vowel (Figure 3.8). The plots representing tokens of /i/ and /a/ show the distribution of the HY and English vowels essentially overlapping for all generations, that is, there is minimal phonetic difference between them. This observation is confirmed by the Pillai scores for these vowels (shown in Table 3.4), which are smaller than 0.1, for all generations, with differences of

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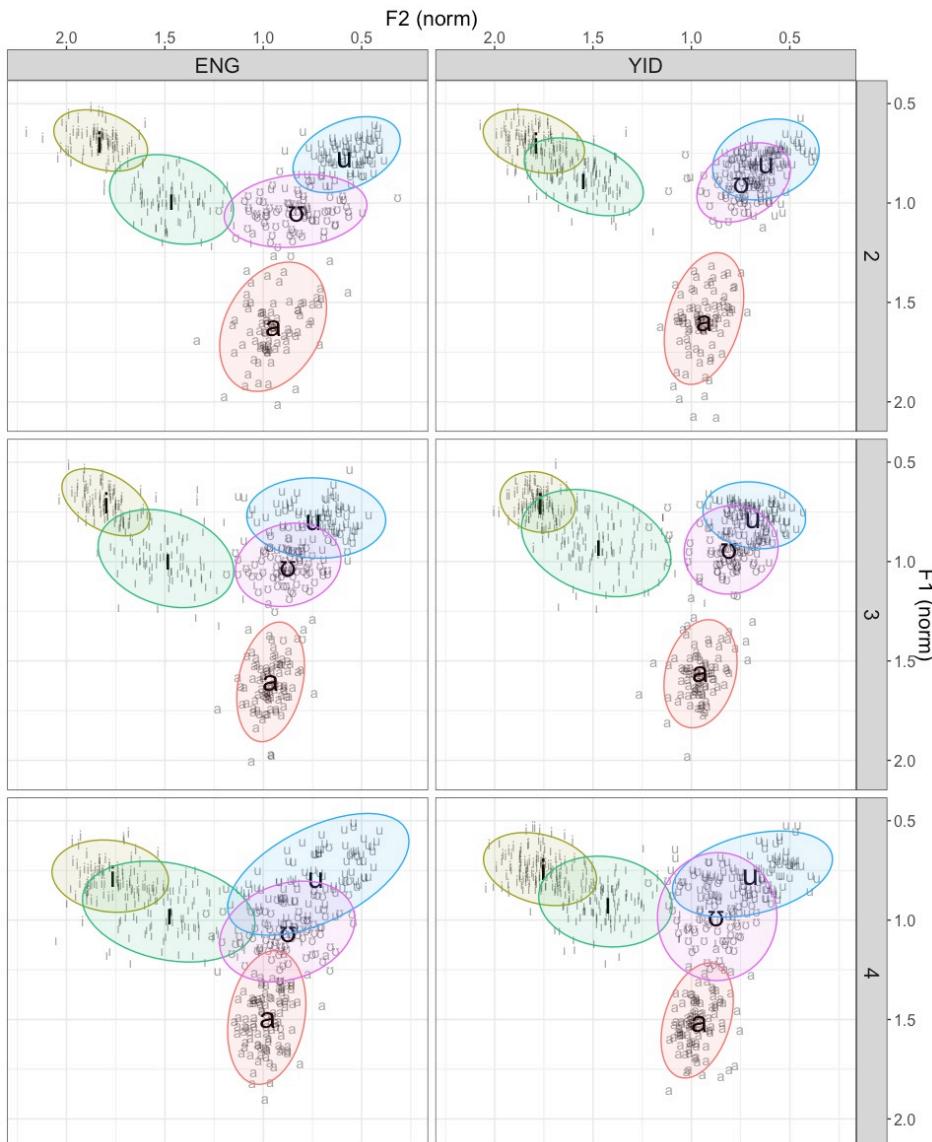


Figure 3.6: Plots of normalized F1 and F2 values of all vowel tokens, faceted by generation (rows) and language (columns), with HY labeled “YID.” Formant means are represented by symbols in large font. Ellipses represent 95% confidence intervals. N = 2577 (HY = 1367; ENG = 1210)

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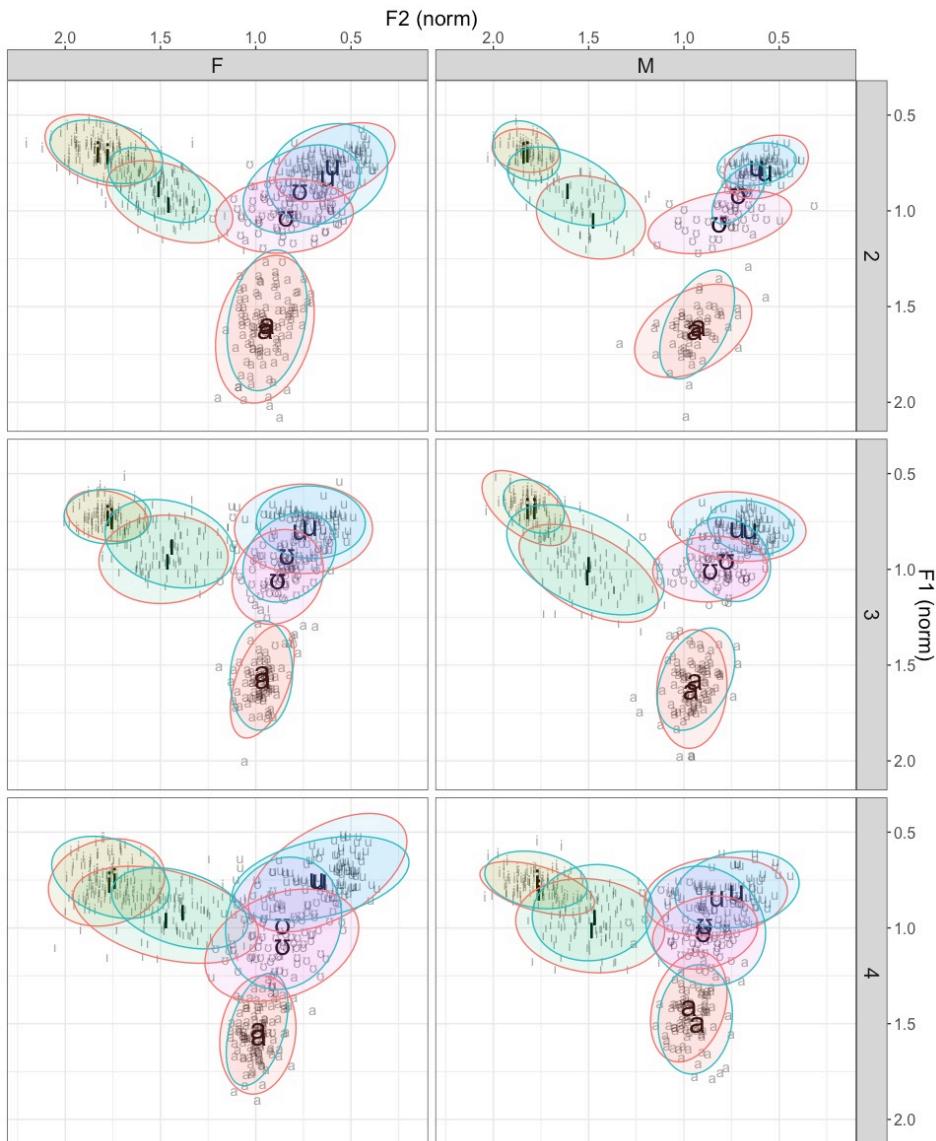


Figure 3.7: Plots of normalized F1 and F2 values of all vowel tokens, grouped by language and faceted by generation (rows) and gender (columns). Dashed outlines indicate HY vowels and smooth outlines English vowels.

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only 0.02–0.04 points between groups. With the exception of Gen4 /a/, these differences are also not statistically significant. The representation is different for the short-lax vowels /ɪ/ and /ʊ/. Here we see quite a bit of separation in the HY vs. English vowels of Gen2 on both axes (F1 and F2). Spectrally, they are more distinct in the oldest generation, with the HY cluster situated closer to the periphery. The following generations show increasing overlap in these vowels, especially /ɪ/. We see a reflection of this in the Pillai scores, with the Gen2 exhibiting scores for /ɪ/ and /ʊ/ that are significantly higher (0.33 and 0.45, respectively) than for the other two groups.

Table 3.4: Crosslinguistic Pillai scores by vowel/set for each generational. Significance codes: \*\*\* = < 0.001, \*\* = < 0.01, \* = < 0.05, . = < 0.1

|      | /i/    | /ɪ/      | HOOP    | TOO      | /ʊ/      | /a/    |
|------|--------|----------|---------|----------|----------|--------|
| Gen2 | 0.04 . | 0.33 *** | 0.09 .  | 0.00     | 0.45 *** | 0.01 . |
| Gen3 | 0.02   | 0.07 **  | 0.16 ** | 0.39 *** | 0.23 *** | 0.03   |
| Gen4 | 0.06   | 0.11 *** | 0.12 *  | 0.08 *   | 0.12 *** | 0.03   |

Finally, we turn to the long high back vowels, which were calculated separately for the lexical sets TOO and HOOP. Here, the first finding is that Gen2 exhibits more F2 overlap than the younger generations, whose HY-English vowel tokens are slightly separated along the F2 (Figure 3.8). That is, English TOO and HOOP of Gen3 and Gen4 are a bit more advanced than the HY counterparts. Pillai scores once again reflect this distribution, although the differences are small. Within-language statistical comparisons of these vowels by set (Table 3.5) shows that TOO is slightly more advanced than HOOP in both languages for all speaker groups.

Table 3.5: Within language Pillai scores by lexical set (HOOP vs. TOO) for each generational group. Significance codes: \*\*\* = < 0.001, \*\* = < 0.01, \* = < 0.05, . = < 0.1

|      | HY       | ENG       |
|------|----------|-----------|
| Gen2 | 0.27 *** | 0.336 *** |
| Gen3 | 0.39 *** | 0.536 *** |
| Gen4 | 0.23 *** | 0.338 *** |

The differences in advancement of TOO vs. HOOP in HY are in line with the patterns found between these lexical sets in North American English (i.e., TOO

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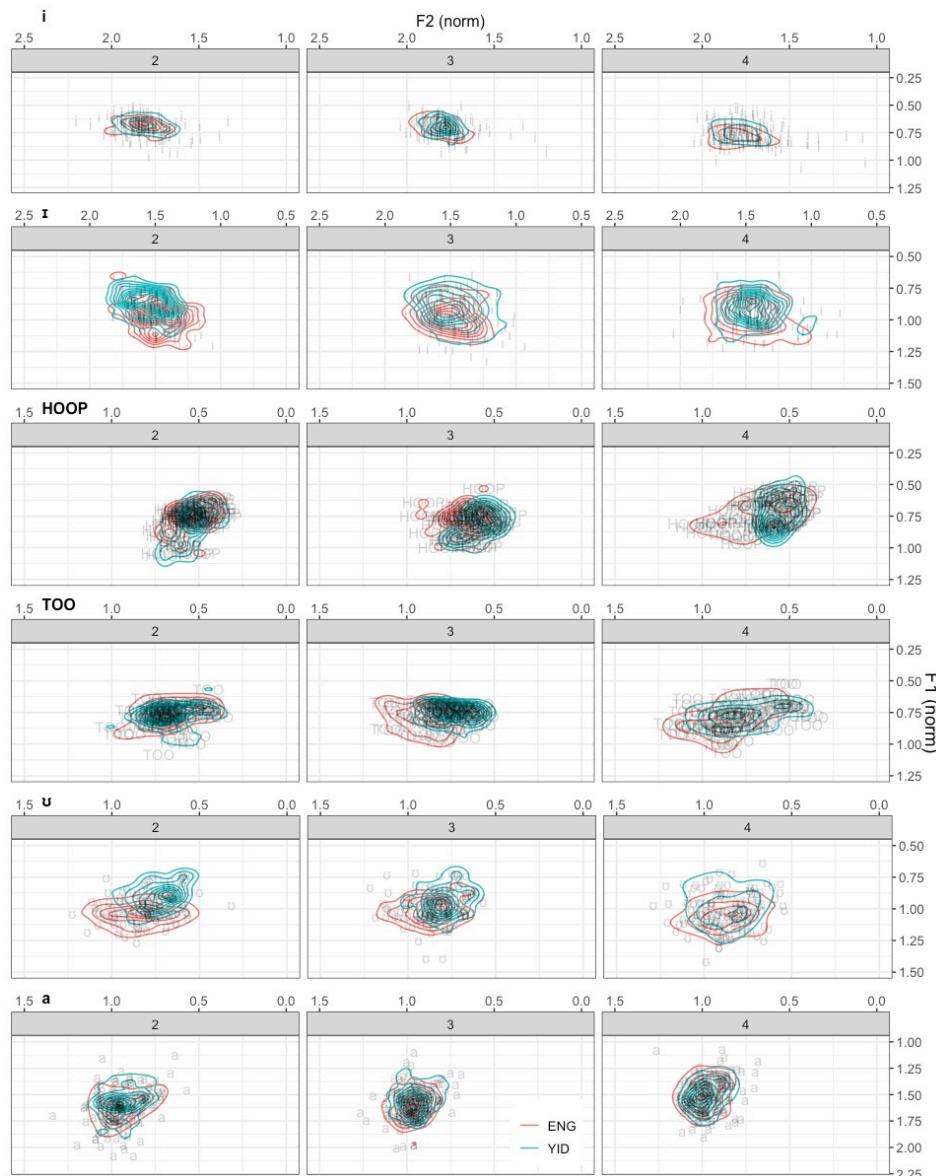


Figure 3.8: Contour plots of all vowels showing location (by normalized F1 and F2) and density, faceted by generational group

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is more advanced than HOOP), however, it is notable that the mean F2 values of both HY and English TOO are considerably lower (less than 1200 Hz) in this speaker group than the values typically found among mainstream New York English speakers (around 1800 Hz for New York City, see [Newman 2014; Wong 2014](#); [Haddican et al. 2019](#)). Moreover, more fronting is visible in the HY TOO of Gen4 than of the older generations.

Finally, while the Pillai scores calculated by gender also suggest greater separation of HY vs. English HOOP for male speakers of Gen2 and Gen3, and the reverse for Gen4, no clear patterns emerged when these data were visualized via a variety of plots and graphs, most likely due to the relatively small sample size (female vs. male speakers by group) and limited number of tokens in each category. Further research, which includes a larger sample size and both conversational and wordlist data, is in progress.

## 5 Discussion

The results obtained in this comparative study provide evidence of apparent time change between Gen2 and Gen3/Gen4 in the spectral overlap of HY-English /ɪ/ and /ʊ/ and the relative advancement of English vs. HY /u/. As described in §[4.3](#), Gen2 speakers exhibit different organizations of their HY and English high vowels: While the HY short high vowels /ɪ/ and /ʊ/ are qualitatively more similar to their tense counterparts /i/ and /u/ (i.e., the vowels in each pair are closer in phonetic space), the equivalent English vowel pairs are more distinct. Moreover, the separation is more pronounced among Gen2 male than female speakers. These cross-linguistic differences in the vowel system of Gen2 gradually diminish in the younger generational cohorts. The reverse pattern holds for the qualitative similarity of /u/ (TOO and HOOP) across languages. Here, the younger generations exhibit less overlap than Gen2, with more fronted English /u/ tokens.

In hypothesizing about the source of these cross-generational differences, we consider [Flege's \(2007\)](#) contention about the significance of input in L2 learning outcomes. Recall that Gen2 speakers are children of post-Holocaust immigrants to the U.S. All those interviewed for this study were, in fact, born within five years of their parents' arrival, a period during which these immigrant parents would probably not yet have acquired English. Thus, the Yiddish input for Gen2 was Unterland Yiddish, in which the contrast in the peripheral vowels is primarily duration, rather than quality (see [Nove 2020](#)). Their English input, however, came largely from non-Yiddish speakers.<sup>21</sup> Given the differences in the phonetic

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<sup>21</sup>Field notes and sociolinguistic interviews, 2017–2019.

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contrast of the vowel pairs {/i/, /ɪ/} and {/u/, /ʊ/} in Unterland Yiddish vs. mainstream American English, namely, a length contrast in the former and a qualitative (tense-lax) distinction in the latter, Gen2 speakers likely perceived and classified them as different vowels, thus leading to the different systems observed in Figure 3.6. However, keeping in mind that these speakers were in their 60s and 70s when they were recorded for this study, change across the lifespan should not be ruled out. That is, it is reasonable to hypothesize that the short vowels of Gen2 may have resembled those of their parents more closely at a younger age, and that phonetic drift (a shift in the phonetic quality of a sound segment, influenced by speakers' experience with English) resulted in a slight lowering and centralizing of HY /i/ and /ʊ/ at the individual level over time. Such an outcome is predicted by the SLM and is well documented in the literature (see review by Chang 2019). Moreover, male Gen2 speakers, who acquired English later and used it less frequently than their female contemporaries, likely started out with more conservative HY vowels (i.e., tenser high short vowels) and maintained the cross-linguistic separation of the vowel systems more fully.<sup>22</sup> The comparatively laxer (more centralized) HY vowels of Gen2, in turn, served as the HY input for Gen3 and Gen4, who acquired their English from other HY-English bilinguals in their community. In accordance with the SLM, the 'similar' HY and English /i/ and /ʊ/ sound segments were likely perceived as equivalent by speakers of the younger generations, and thus acquired with the same phonetic values, leading to the crosslinguistic phonological convergence that we observe in the data. The potential influence of language input is also highlighted by Stuhl & Zimmer (2021 [this volume]) for Namdeutsch, who cites the growing presence of Standard German, via media, education, and travel, as a reason why the phonology may be shifting towards the standard.

Factor The comparatively low F2 values of both HY and English /u/ in this community, on average lower than 1200 Hz, indicates either a lack of participation, or a significant lag, in the u-fronting trend that has been observed in the majority population. This can be interpreted as an L1 influence, i.e., the relative backness of HY vowels exerting a retractive influence on the English vowels

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<sup>22</sup>Although gender differences are not immediately apparent for Gen3 and Gen4 speakers in the analyses provided here, their existence should not be ruled out. While Pillai scores measure overlap, they do not show directionality of vowel movement. Thus, this analysis may not reveal effects such as differential L1 – L2 influence. That is, it may turn out that while the amount of cross-linguistic overlap in the male vs. female speakers is relatively consistent, in one group (or in some individuals) this overlap is due to HY vowel lowering and in the other to ENG vowel raising. Future analyses that include a larger sample size and additional statistical models are in progress to investigate these in greater detail.

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of these bilingual speakers. Alternatively, speakers in this community might be somewhat insulated from the sound changes occurring among mainstream English speakers by virtue of their sociocultural separateness (Fader 2009). A similar phenomenon, described by (Benor 2009; 2012), is the comparatively lower/laxer quality of prenasal /æ/ among Orthodox Jews, indicating a lack of participation in prenasal /æ/-tensing, a prevalent sound change among mainstream American English speakers. The relative advancement of Gen3 and Gen4 English /u/ suggests that u-fronting may indeed be permeating this speech community but is still at an early stage. Moreover, the finding that Gen4 HY TOO is slightly more fronted than the older generations, possibly signifies another instance of phonetic drift, i.e., HY u-fronting under the influence of English.

As described in §1, New York HY severed all ties with its homeland dialect more than seven decades ago, when it was transplanted to the U.S. along with its refugee speakers. Sustained by an ideology that supports language maintenance, it is still far from immune to the cognitive, linguistic and social influences of the majority language. But how does such vulnerability translate into language change? The analysis and interpretation provided here illustrate how an understanding of the dynamic nature of the language systems of individual learners can help explain structural change observed in the language of a speech community.

## Appendix

As the wordlist task was initially designed to investigate the contrast in HY vowel pairs, the first consideration was to include as many minimal pairs within the HY (and later English) vowel sets (e.g., [zin], [zm] for /i/, /ɪ/). Secondly, there was an attempt to match the contexts (especially the following consonant) of the English words with the Yiddish ones (e.g., the lexical item [hit], which exists in both languages). Finally, attention was paid to include as many consonant classes as possible following the vowel, i.e., voicing (+/-), manner (voiceless obstruents, voiced obstruents, nasals, laterals and rhotics) and place (non-lingual, coronal and dorsal). Note that the split between long-short /u/ in Yiddish was historically conditioned by following segment: /u/ followed by velar or labial consonants became shortened. Thus, [u] is found before coronals and [ʊ] before dorsal and non-lingual segments. Some redundancy was built into the list and several adjustments were made after the study commenced, with some words removed and others added based on issues encountered, including word recognition difficulties and variable pronunciation.

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Table 3.6: Word lists for each vowel category by language, arranged by place of articulation of the consonant following the vowel. HY words are transliterated phonetically, with /u/ represented as ⟨uu⟩ and /i/ as ⟨ii⟩

| POA  | ENG    | HY    | ENG   | HY   | ENG   | HY      | ENG    | HY     | ENG  | HY    |
|--|--------|-------|-------|------|-------|---------|--------|--------|------|-------|
|  | /i/    |       | /ɪ/   |      | /u/   |         | /ʊ/    |        | /a/  |       |
| Non-lingual<br>(bilabial,<br>labio-dental) | beef   | tiif  | shift | shif | snoop | shtruuf | grub   | mop    | khap |       |
|  | seep   | shiif | gift  | lip  |       |         | tuf    | top    |      |       |
|  | sleeve | liib  | tip   |      |       |         | shluf  | mob    |      |       |
|  |        | briiv |       |      |       |         |        |        |      |       |
| Coronal                                    | meet   | hiit  | hit   | hit  | hoot  | bruut   | foot   | vus    | pot  | zat   |
|  | sheet  | giis  | miss  | git  | suit  | ruut    | put    |        | lot  | bas   |
|  | geese  | miis  | hid   | miz  | food  | shtuut  | hood   |        | hot  | dan   |
|  | weed   | miid  | sing  | tish | rude  | muus    | should |        | dots | hant  |
|  | feel   | ziin  | dim   | zin  | mood  | gruud   | good   |        | rod  | man   |
|  | teal   | tiir  | fill  | din  | noose | gruuuz  | would  |        | nod  | vant  |
|  |        | fil   |       | zing | moose | fuun    | pull   |        |      | fal   |
|  |        |       |       | fil  | boon  | nu-     |        |        |      | kalt  |
|  |        |       |       |      | pool  | unt     |        |        |      | sharp |
|  |        |       |       |      |       | kluur   |        |        |      |       |
|  |        |       |       |      |       | tsuul   |        |        |      |       |
| Dorsal                                     | geek   | ziikh | pick  | dik  |       |         | took   | tsuk   | lock | pak   |
|  | kriig  |       | big   | kik  |       |         | brook  | frukht |      | lakht |
|  |        |       |       | lig  |       |         | nook   | nukh   |      |       |
|  |        |       |       |      |       |         |        | yug    |      |       |
|  |        |       |       |      |       |         |        | nug    |      |       |
|  |        |       |       |      |       |         |        | zug    |      |       |

## Acknowledgments

I wish to thank Bill Haddican (Queens College) and Juliette Blevins (CUNY Graduate Center) for advisement; Arianna Chinchilla, April Polubieci, and Nutti Gross for assistance with data processing; Danielle Ronkos for feedback on an early version of this chapter; and the editors of this volume and two anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments and suggestions. I am grateful to the following organizations for research funds: Endangered Language Initiative (ELI GC CUNY); Doctoral Studies Research Grant (GC CUNY); and Center for Jewish Studies (GC CUNY).

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## Chapter 4

# Northern German in Southern Africa? On the phonology of Namdeutsch

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This chapter presents a study on the phonology of Namdeutsch, a variety of German spoken in Namibia. Previous literature has called its pronunciation either Standard German or Northern German, and the aim of this paper is to determine whether Namdeutsch does sound Northern German, based on the analysis of two vowel variables and four consonant variables that occur in Northern German. The data for this study stems from the *Deutsch in Namibia* corpus. The analysis reveals that, while not all Northern German variants are common in Namdeutsch, both vowel features and a consonant feature are frequent or very frequent in the data.

## 1 Introduction

One of the generally lesser-studied varieties of German is spoken in Namibia, in the south-west of Africa. As the result of Namibia being a former German settler colony, there is still a vital German-speaking community of roughly 20,000 people living in Namibia today. While most other German varieties outside of Europe have declining speaker numbers, the German-speaking community in Namibia maintains its language through education, media and social activities. Its existence as a vital, non-European German language island is what makes this variety so remarkable, particularly considering the current interest in comparative language island studies (cf. Boas 2016 for the discussion of a future comparative language island database).

While there have been some analyses of this variety in the last few decades, there has never been a large database with transcribed speech of Namibian German until now. The creation of the corpus *Deutsch in Namibia* (*DNam*) aimed to



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change that, and provide data for a thorough analysis of Namibian German (cf. [Zimmer et al. 2020](#)).

In the previously published research on Namibian German, phonology has typically been dismissed as simply being Standard German, and therefore not as interesting as lexical and grammatical features (see below). If anything, it has been said to sound somewhat “Northern German”, which has largely been attributed to the fact that many of the settlers came to Namibia from Northern Germany ([Böhm 2003: 564](#)).

The area known as Namibia today was claimed as a German colony from 1884 until 1915, a time in which many German settlers migrated to the colony known as *German South West Africa*.<sup>1</sup> As [Zimmer \(in press\)](#) shows, the settlers came from all German-speaking areas of Europe, resulting in dialect mixing. A questionnaire study with 157 Namibian German participants shows that, while settlers came from all different language regions, 50% of participants report their family as coming from a Low German area ([Zimmer in press](#); see also [Zimmer forthcoming](#)). However, this does not mean that the settlers from those areas spoke Low German – in fact, it is very likely that all settlers spoke not only their regional dialect, but also what has been called *landschaftliches Hochdeutsch* (cf. [Schmidt & Herrgen 2011](#)). This term, roughly translated to *regional High German*, describes prestige varieties in which speakers directly oralised standardised written German. [Ganswindt \(2017: 25\)](#) states that around the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, i.e. the time of the settlement colony *German South West Africa*, almost every German-speaking person would have been able to speak some version of *regional High German*. These versions of *regional High German* differed from the base dialects, but still varied greatly from region to region.

Now that a corpus of data on Namibian German is available, research on the phonology of Namdeutsch is more accessible than before, and we have decided to re-evaluate the claims in the previous literature. Does Namibian German sound Northern German?

## 2 Namdeutsch and its phonology

Today, the German speaking community in Namibia consists of approximately 20,000 speakers and is remarkably vital. The community uses different terms

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<sup>1</sup>It is important to note that the colony is not the only source of settlement from German-speaking Europe to Namibia, albeit the largest and earliest one. Settlement into Namibia has continued and is continuing since then.

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for its language, including *Südwestdeutsch*<sup>2</sup>, *Namlish* and *Namsläng*; We have decided to use the more neutral term *Namdeutsch*. This refers to the language generally spoken in everyday life by Namibian Germans. This study focuses on the phonology of Namdeutsch; for descriptions of the history and structure of German in Namibia see, e.g., Nöckler (1963); Pütz (1991; 1995); Gretschel (1995); Schmidt-Lauber (1998); Böhm (2003); Shah (2007); Deumert (2009; 2018); Ammon (2014); Riehl (2014); Kellermeier-Rehbein (2015), Wiese et al. (2017); Dück (2018); Kroll-Tjingaete (2018); Shah & Zappen-Thomson (2018); Stoltz & Warnke (2018); Zappen-Thomson (2018); Zimmer (2019; 2020; in press; forthcoming; submitted); Wiese & Bracke (2019); Bracke (2021 [this volume]) and Radke (2021 [this volume]).

So far, no thorough analysis of Namdeutsch phonology has been conducted. Where pronunciation is mentioned at all, authors typically suggest that no difference exists between Namdeutsch and Standard German (Nöckler 1963: 128, Pütz 1991: 464). Shah excludes phonological features from her description of Namdeutsch, both because of a lack of previous research and due to her “own observation that they are not nearly as striking as morphological, syntactic and lexical” differences (Shah 2007: 23). Böhm (2003: 564) states that a large amount of German settlers in Namibia came from Northern Germany, and therefore Namdeutsch pronunciation is similar to Standard German – this claim stems from the assumption that Standard German is the typical variety spoken in Northern Germany (cf. Clyne 1995: 29). While this appears true especially in comparison to other areas of Germany with regiolects that differ more strongly from Standard German, Northern German does have unique phonological properties (cf. Elmentaler & Rosenberg 2015).

Riehl (2014: 114) mentions an overall Northern German pronunciation for Namdeutsch. In the same paragraph, she makes the point that the alveolar trill [r] appears in Namdeutsch, which is unusual due its general similarity to Northern German – Elmentaler & Rosenberg (2015: 301), however, find that while the alveolar trill [r] is not very common in Northern German anymore, its use was more widely spread in the area around the turn of the century. Therefore, the existence of [r] does not dispute the idea that Namdeutsch could sound Northern German – if anything, it might confirm it, considering that [r] appears to have been more common around the time the settlers moved to Namibia.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>This term is derived from *Deutsch-Südwestafrika* (‘German South West Africa’, the name given to the former German colony).

<sup>3</sup>Note, however, that [r] is extremely rare in the *DNam* corpus (apart from code-switches to Afrikaans; Zimmer submitted).

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Kellermeier-Rehbein states that, outside of the pronunciation of non-German words, Namdeutsch has what she metaphorically calls a Northern German tinge, a “norddeutsche Färbung” (Kellermeier-Rehbein 2015: 49). She mentions two features as examples: the spirantisation of word-final -g, such as [kʁiçt] for *kriegt* ('gets'), and unvoiced plosives that did not change in the High German consonant shift, such as [kɔp] for *Kopf* ('head'). Her examples were taken from material (e.g. video clips) produced by the Namibian German musician EES (Kellermeier-Rehbein 2015: 48).

### 3 Data and Methodology

For this study, we used the corpus *Deutsch in Namibia* (*DNam*, Zimmer et al. 2020), which consists of roughly 225,000 tokens of spoken data. It features three types of recording settings (the recounting of a story in both a formal and an informal setting, free speech and sociolinguistic interviews). The data was collected in Namibia in 2017 and 2018 and subsequently transcribed, tagged and compiled in the corpus. Detailed metadata is also available for the speakers. The entire corpus was used for this study.

The basis for our comparison to Northern German is the *Norddeutscher Sprachatlas* ('Northern German Language Atlas', Elmentaler & Rosenberg 2015), and the variables included in this study have been selected from the Northern German variables listed in this publication. Not all variables could be included in this study due to the nature of the data in the *DNam* corpus: the recordings, while of good quality and transcribed well, were not made with the intention of phonetic analysis.<sup>4</sup> This limits the amount of features that occur in the data, and only variables that naturally occur in the data frequently enough to allow for statistical analyses could be included. Another important aspect that limits our choice of variables, besides availability in the corpus, is how distinctive that feature is in fast, fluent speech. Some features which may be identifiable easily with recordings of word lists are more difficult to correctly identify in fast speech. It was necessary, therefore, to choose only features that can be clearly identified without a phonetic analysis using software.

The methodology of this paper typically follows that of the *Norddeutscher Sprachatlas* (Elmentaler & Rosenberg 2015). One significant difference is that non-standard pronunciations limited to single words were excluded from the data, as

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<sup>4</sup>Detailed analyses with Praat were impossible due to the nature of the recordings, as there is background noise of varying volume in most recordings and the group recordings are often too busy to single out specific utterances for a software-based phonetic analysis.

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the focus lies only on variables that occur systematically. Furthermore, all lexical borrowings from the contact languages in Namibia were excluded from the data.

This article frequently uses the term “Northern German variant”, which is a very broad term. This is intentional. Language use is too varied to easily be able to condense the varieties in all of Northern Germany into one easily described “Northern German”. Therefore, for the purpose of this analysis, we define “Northern German variant” as follows: a variable that occurs at least somewhat frequently in large areas of “Northern Germany”, i.e. areas in which Low German was/is spoken. While the variable can also occur outside of Northern Germany, it is nonetheless recognised – both by linguists and by speakers themselves – as being a characteristic feature of spoken Northern German, even if not exclusively.

The following section discusses the variables we have chosen for this study: vowel length, raising of long ä, plosive in word-final -ng, spirantisation of word-final -g, lenition of intervocalic *p*, *t*, *k* and assimilation of intervocalic *nd* and *ld*. Each subsection first describes the variable, followed by its distribution in Northern Germany. Next, we analyse the variable in Namdeutsch using the *DNam* corpus and discuss the influence of sociolinguistic factors.

## 4 Analysis

### 4.1 Vowel length

The shortening of typically long vowels (see 1-2), particularly [a:], [o:], [u:] and [i:], is especially prevalent in Northern Germany, and has been attributed to Low German (cf. Martens & Martens 1988: 135), as Low German has retained short vowels where High German has not (Elmentaler & Rosenberg 2015: 141). Elmentaler & Rosenberg (2015: 141), however, note that a shortening of vowels cannot be traced back only to Low German, as this feature also occurs in other regiolects.

- (1) *Rad* (‘wheel’): [ɹat] vs. [ɹa:t]
- (2) *Zug* (‘train’): [tsʊx] vs. [tsu:k]

While the feature occurs freely in certain phonetic environments, it is nonetheless connected to specific lexemes quite often with different lexemes being produced with different vowel lengths in different areas of Northern Germany (cf. Kleiner 2011ff.<sup>f;</sup><sup>5</sup> Elmentaler & Rosenberg 2015: 144; Kleiner et al. 2015: 65). For

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<sup>5</sup>See <http://prowiki.ids-mannheim.de/bin/view/AADG/RadQuant> (28<sup>th</sup> July 2020).

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these lexemes, large regional differences exist within Northern Germany and their realisation with a long vowel can in fact be the “Northern German variant”, meaning that the absence of a short vowel does not always equal “not Northern German”. In order to quantify it as broadly as possible within the scope of this study, however, a line had to be drawn. Therefore, only short vowels have been included, with no lexeme-specific analyses.

Despite the existence of this feature in other varieties of German as well, it is nonetheless a defining vocalic feature of the Northern German regiolect. It occurs in the entirety of Northern Germany, and is overall fairly common with varying frequencies of at least 20% and up to 60%, depending on region (Elmentaler & Rosenberg 2015: 144). Elmentaler & Rosenberg (2015: 142) state that, while short vowels in place of long ones do exist in other varieties of German as well, they tend to exist primarily in specific lexemes (e.g. *Obst* ‘fruit’ in Southern Germany).

We systematically analysed vowel length in monosyllabic lexemes in the *DNam* corpus, following the methodology used by Elmentaler & Rosenberg (2015: 144).<sup>6</sup> Overall, these vowels were shortened 40.4% of the time in a total of 535 utterances.

Phonological context plays a role in the occurrence of variables, and two variables in particular co-exist frequently. Elmentaler (2008: 77) finds that generally, vowel length seems not to be connected to the quality of the following consonant, except in one case: the relation of vowel length to the spirantisation of the following, word-final -g (see 2). He finds that if the vowel before a -g is shortened, the -g is frequently realised as a fricative – either [x] or [ç] depending on the phonetic environment. However, this does not mean that each spirantisation of -g is preceded by a short vowel (Elmentaler 2008: 77). The shortening of vowels before [x] and [ç] mirrors the historical development of German to some degree, as long vowels shortened over time in positions before consonant clusters, especially before [xt] (Szulc 1987: 152).

In order to test whether the phonetic context and/or sociolinguistic variables (i.e. GENDER and AGE) have an impact on the realisation of word-final -g in Namdeutsch a *binomial generalised linear mixed model (GLMM)* was fitted (see, e.g., Baayen 2008: 278–284).<sup>7</sup> SPEAKER was integrated as a random effect, which ensures that any idiosyncratic behaviour of individual speakers does not skew the

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<sup>6</sup>All lexemes ending in -it and -ik were excluded from the data, as the regional distribution of long and short vowels is different here than for all other phonetic contexts (see, e.g. Elmentaler & Rosenberg 2015: 151–152; Elspaß & Möller 2003ff, <https://www.atlas-alltagssprache.de/politik/>, 11<sup>th</sup> February 2020).

<sup>7</sup>The software *R* (R Core Team 2019) and *RStudio* (RStudio Team 2020) were used for this and all subsequent analyses in this paper. For GLMMs, the package *lme4* was used (Bates et al. 2015).

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results. The first version of the model also contained an interaction term for the two sociolinguistic variables.<sup>8</sup> Subsequently, all variables that do not significantly improve the quality of the model were identified and removed. Whilst the phonological context proved to be relevant, the sociolinguistic variables (including the interaction term) did not. Hence, the final version of the model only contains PHONOLOGICAL\_CONTEXT as independent variable and SPEAKER as a random effect (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Results of a GLMM (vowel length)

|  | Estimate | SE     | <i>z</i> | Pr(>   <i>z</i>  ) |
|--|----------|--------|----------|--------------------|
| (Intercept)  | 0.9764   | 0.2191 | 4.457    | < 0.001 ***        |
| PHONOLOGICAL CONTEXT (reference level: other_contexts) |          |        |          |                    |
| word_final_-g.plosive                                  | 1.4752   | 0.3245 | 4.546    | < 0.001 ***        |
| word_final_-g.fricative                                | -3.9236  | 0.4313 | -9.097   | < 0.001 ***        |

Although the model only contains one independent variable, it explains a substantial proportion of variance (marginal  $r^2 = 0.538$ ; conditional  $r^2 = 0.566$ ) and discriminates well ( $C = 0.938$ ). 87.4% of all observations are correctly predicted by the model (this rate is significantly higher than the *no information rate*;  $p > 0.001***$ ). Multicollinearity is no problem as all *variation inflation factors* (VIFs) are below 2.

These values as well as Table 4.1 show that the realisation of the vowel is highly dependent on the phonological context: a final -g (realised as a fricative) usually co-occurs with a short vowel, a final -g (realised as a plosive) with a long vowel. This mirrors Northern German (Elmentaler 2008: 77).

Parallels can also be found as regards the overall frequency: Short vowels appear in place of long vowels fairly frequently in Namdeutsch, as they do in Northern German. With a frequency of 40.4%, they are about as common in Namdeutsch as they are in Northern German (Elmentaler & Rosenberg 2015: 144). Hence, it can be said that this Northern German feature exists in Namdeutsch.

## 4.2 Raising of long ä

Possibly the most common vocalic feature of Northern German is the raising of the long ä from the Standard German [ɛ:] to [e:] (see 3–4). The *Duden Aussprachewörterbuch* states that a pronunciation of ä as [e:] is usual in Northern and

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<sup>8</sup>Model specification: vowel\_length ~ gender\*age + phonological context + (1|speaker).

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Eastern Germany as well as in Eastern Austria (Kleiner et al. 2015: 64: 64). Moreover, the *Duden* also finds that the use of [e:] instead of [ɛ:] is common in media as well, excluding traditional news broadcasts (Kleiner et al. 2015: 65). Data by the *Atlas zur Aussprache des deutschen Gebrauchsstandard* (AADG, ‘Atlas for the pronunciation of the used German standard’) shows that the raised variant is common not only in Northern Germany but also in all of Austria and parts of Bavaria (Kleiner 2011ff.).<sup>9</sup> Elmentaler & Rosenberg (2015: 104) find the feature to be particularly common with a usage of 70–100% in most of Northern Germany.

- (3) *Käse* (‘cheese’): [ke:zə] vs. [ke:zə]
- (4) *Mädchen* (‘girl’): [me:tçən] vs. [mɛ:tçən]

As the raised pronunciation of long ä as [e:] rather than [ɛ:] is a very common feature of Northern German, we decided to investigate whether the pronunciation of long ä is also raised in Namdeutsch. The analysis revealed that the long ä is overwhelmingly pronounced as the Northern German variant [e:], with an overall frequency of 97.2% in a total of 575 occurrences.

This feature, more than any other, is almost exclusively produced with the Northern German variant – independent of sociolinguistic variables: in a *GLMM* with AGE and GENDER and the according interaction term as independent variables and SPEAKER as random effect, no variable turned out to have a significant impact on the vowel realisation.<sup>10</sup>

The data shows that the realisation of long ä as [e:] is clearly the typical pronunciation in Namdeutsch, with barely any realisations of [ɛ:]. In Northern Germany, the raised variant [e:] is similarly common in most areas, with a typical frequency of over 90% (Elmentaler & Rosenberg 2015: 103).

Some of the literature on this feature suggests that long ä is more frequently realised as [ɛ:] in more formal contexts (cf. Stearns & Voge 1979: 151, König 2019a: 45), while other researchers find register not to be an important factor in the realisation (cf. Herrmann-Winter 1979: 141; Elmentaler & Rosenberg 2015: 104). Elmentaler & Rosenberg (2015: 106) find that formality plays no role, and this feature does not appear to be very salient for Northern German. Our data for Namdeutsch is in line with this, as none of the realisations of [ɛ:] were produced in a formal context. In sum, the pronunciation of long ä behaves in Namdeutsch just as it does in Northern German, and social factors do not make a difference in the distribution of the variants.

<sup>9</sup>See <http://prowiki.ids-mannheim.de/bin/view/AADG/LangAE> (28<sup>th</sup> July 2020).

<sup>10</sup>The *GLMM* was calculated according to the procedure described above. To avoid redundancy, the procedure will not be explained in detail again. This is also how we will proceed with the following analyses.

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### 4.3 Plosive in word-final -ng

Typically, ⟨ng⟩ is pronounced as [ŋ] in Standard German (Elmentaler & Rosenberg 2015: 357; Kleiner et al. 2015: 68). König (2019b: 233) finds regional realisations of ⟨ng⟩ as [ŋk] in Northern Germany, particularly for lexemes ending in -ung (see 5). The *Duden Aussprachewörterbuch* mentions the variant [ŋk] as a possible feature of Northern German, and more rarely of Eastern Austrian regiolects (Kleiner et al. 2015: 68); this is supported by data from the AADG, which shows a higher concentration of the realisation of ⟨ng⟩ with a plosive in Northern Germany, the Rhine-Main region and Eastern Austria (Kleiner 2011ff).<sup>11</sup>

- (5) *Erfahrung* ('experience'): [ɛɐ̯'fa:χʊŋk] vs. [ɛɐ̯'fa:χʊŋ]
- (6) *Ding* ('thing'): [dɪŋ] vs. [dɪŋ]

The pronunciation of ⟨ng⟩ as [ŋk] (or, in some cases, [ŋg] – see 6) is a variant of most base dialects in Northern Germany, and as such is common in most areas (Elmentaler & Rosenberg 2015: 361). Elmentaler & Rosenberg (2015: 359) find that the plosive is realised in all of Northern Germany, except a small area in the very south-west. Furthermore, the plosive is realised more frequently in the southern area of Northern Germany.

Becker (2003: 83) hypothesises that the realisation of word-final -ng might be part of an ongoing change in Northern German. She found that, while overall older speakers have a higher plosive frequency, younger speakers produced a plosive more frequently in formal situations. This suggests that for younger speakers, the realisation of a plosive for -ng might be perceived as the standard (Becker 2003: 83). Other authors have also found an increase in the realisation of the plosive through diachronic comparisons and apparent-time studies (cf. Stellmacher 1977; Lameli 2004). Elmentaler & Rosenberg (2015: 362), on the other hand, have found that in a comparison of their data with that of Pfeffer (1975), the use of the plosive appears to have decreased

In the *DNam* corpus, ⟨ng⟩ is realised with a plosive in 8.7% of all cases, or 44 out of 507 utterances. Thus, while the plosive variant exists in Namdeutsch, its frequency is quite low. The distribution of this variant is not dependent on gender or age, as a GLMM with these variables (and the according interaction term) shows.

The rough distinction into Northern German variant and Standard German variant leaves the question of the nature of the plosive open, therefore we decided

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<sup>11</sup>See <http://prowiki.ids-mannheim.de/bin/view/AADG/LangAE?topic=NgAuslautundvorl> (28<sup>th</sup> July 2020).

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to analyse the distribution of [ŋk] and [ŋg] within the corpus. As the total number of plosives within the data is fairly small, the sample is not very large, but the result is interesting nonetheless: The variant that would be expected less due to the influence of final obstruent devoicing, [ŋg], is used more frequently in Namdeutsch – it occurs in 72.7% of all realisations of a plosive in word-final -ng with none of the sociolinguistic variables having a significant impact.

The *Norddeutscher Sprachatlas*, as well as other literature, mentions only [ŋk] as plosive realisation of -ng. The fact that [ŋg] is more common in our data than the devoiced [ŋk] is a particularly interesting find, as it leads to questions concerning final obstruent devoicing in Namdeutsch in general. It would be interesting to determine through a systematic analysis whether final obstruent devoicing is also absent in other phonetic contexts, and to analyse whether this might be a result of language contact, particularly with English.

#### 4.4 Spirantisation of word-final -g

The spirantisation of word-final -g is a prevalent consonant feature of Northern German. It is a process in which the word final -g, as well as the g in word-final -gt, is realised as a fricative instead of the plosive [k], which would be expected due to final obstruent devoicing (see 7–8). The fricative is typically [x] or [ç], however, going south towards Middle German regions, it is increasingly [ʃ] and [ç] (Elmentaler & Rosenberg 2015: 252). For lexemes ending in unstressed -ig or -igt, the expected Standard German pronunciation is always [ç] (Kleiner et al. 2015: 68).

- (7) *lag* ('lay'): [la:x] vs. [la:k]
- (8) *aufgeregt* ('excited'): [aʊ̯fgəʁɛ:çt] vs. [aʊ̯fgəʁɛ:kt]

This feature is well-documented (see Elmentaler & Rosenberg 2015: 251 for a thorough literature review) and has been attested in the entirety of Northern Germany to varying degrees (cf. König 2019b: 305; Elspaß & Möller 2003ff.<sup>12</sup>). According to the *Duden Aussprachewörterbuch*, the spirantisation of word-final -g is common in Northern and Middle Germany as well as the northernmost areas of South Germany (Kleiner et al. 2015: 68). Data from the *Atlas der deutschen Alltagssprache* backs this statement: the fricative is used not only in Northern Germany, but also throughout Middle Germany. What is missing from both the Duden and the *Atlas der deutschen Alltagssprache*, however, is the frequency in

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<sup>12</sup>See <http://www.atlas-alltagssprache.de/runde-1/f15a-b/> (28<sup>th</sup> July 2020).

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usage. König (2019b: 303ff) finds the fricative almost exclusively in northern areas. While his data includes the frequency, it is not a large-scale study and as such not very representative.

Despite the feature not being exclusively Northern German, it is still an interesting and important part of Northern German speech. For one, it is a frequent feature that occurs in all varieties of Northern German (cf. Lauf 1996: 197; Mihm 2000: 2113). Additionally, the spirantisation of word-final -g is a rather salient feature of Northern German: according to Berend (2008: 159) it is a regional marker for Northern German. This awareness of the spirantisation of word-final -g being a non-standard variant, whether regional or not, also makes it interesting in another regard. As a variable frequently associated with non-standard and colloquial speech, there is a tendency to hypercorrect it, both in speech and in writing (cf. Rosenberg 1986; Martens & Martens 1988; Eichinger 2007). The hypercorrection generally occurs in the phonetic context of unstressed -ig and -igt, as those are realised with a fricative in Standard German. While the variant with a realisation of [k] is the regiolectal standard in most Southern Germany as well as Austria and Switzerland (Elspaß & Möller 2003ff; Kleiner 2011ff.)<sup>13</sup>, it is a hypercorrected form in Northern Germany.

In the *DNam* corpus, words ending in -g or -gt, are more often realised with a fricative than with the Standard German plosive (164 vs. 122 tokens).<sup>14</sup> A GLMM shows that the probability of the fricative increases with the age of the speaker. Additionally, this variant is used more often with words ending in -gt (compared to words ending in -g). GENDER and the interaction term (AGE\*GENDER) do not significantly improve the model quality and were excluded (see Table 4.2).<sup>15</sup>

During the auditory analysis, it quickly became clear that [k] and [χ] or [ç], plosive and fricative, were not the only two options for the realisation of word-final -g, as we had initially assumed. Instead, another variant appeared in the data: the deletion of the final plosive. Deletion refers to the complete absence of a realisation of -g; there is no glottalisation (see 9).

- (9) *gesagt* ('said'): [gəza:t] vs. [gəza:kt]

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<sup>13</sup>See <http://www.atlas-alltagssprache.de/runde-1/f14a-c/>, <http://prowiki.ids-mannheim.de/bin/view/AADG/IgT?topic=IgAuslaut>, and <http://prowiki.ids-mannheim.de/bin/view/AADG/IgT> (28<sup>th</sup> July 2020).

<sup>14</sup>Note that all lexemes ending in -ig and -igt were excluded from the analysis, because their Standard German pronunciation is realised with a fricative.

<sup>15</sup>Marginal  $r^2 = 0.192$ ; conditional  $r^2 = 0.409$ ; C = 0.887; 82.4% of all observations are correctly predicted by the model (this rate is significantly higher than the *no information rate*;  $p > 0.001^{***}$ ). All VIFs are below 2.

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Table 4.2: Results of a GLMM (spirantisation of word-final -g)

|                                   | Estimate | SE      | z      | Pr(>  z )   |
|-----------------------------------|----------|---------|--------|-------------|
| (Intercept)                       | 1.75574  | 0.49009 | 3.582  | < 0.001 *** |
| AGE (numeric variable)            |          |         |        |             |
|                                   | -0.05880 | 0.01546 | -3.804 | < 0.001 *** |
| FINAL_SOUND (reference level: -g) |          |         |        |             |
| -t                                | -1.11129 | 0.33810 | -3.287 | < 0.01**    |

This variant is realised less often than the other two, but its frequency is nonetheless noteworthy (see Table 4.3).<sup>16</sup>

Table 4.3: Spirantisation of word-final -g – overview

| Plosive |       | Fricative |       | Deletion |      |
|---------|-------|-----------|-------|----------|------|
| n       | %     | n         | %     | n        | %    |
| 122     | 39.1% | 164       | 52.6% | 26       | 8.3% |

In a *GLMM* with realisation (either as plosive or as fricative) vs. deletion as levels of the dependent variable, only the phonological context turned out to be relevant, whilst the sociolinguistic variables did not (see Table 4.4). Deletion occurs more often if a word ends in -t (as in *gesagt* ‘said’).<sup>17</sup>

Overall, the Northern German fricative variant is the most common option in Namdeutsch. As such, this matches Northern Germany – while not all areas of Northern Germany use the fricative as commonly as the far North and the West, it is nonetheless the most common realisation in many areas (Elmentaler & Rosenberg 2015: 261). Surely, this feature plays a large role in the idea that Namdeutsch “sounds Northern”, as noted by Kellermeier-Rehbein (2015: 49), especially given that this feature is rather salient, at least in Germany (Elmentaler & Rosenberg 2015: 269). Where Namdeutsch seems to differ from other varieties

<sup>16</sup>Deletion also occurs, albeit only with a frequency of 4.3%, in lexemes ending in -ig and -igt, which were excluded from this analysis as they are realised with a fricative in Standard German.

<sup>17</sup>Note, however, that the overall quality of the model is poor. Marginal  $r^2 = 0.075$ ; conditional  $r^2 = 0.186$ ; C = 0.922; The accuracy of the model is not higher than the *no information rate*.

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Table 4.4: Results of a GLMM (realisation vs. deletion of g)

|                                    | Estimate | SE     | <i>z</i> | Pr(>   <i>z</i>  ) |
|------------------------------------|----------|--------|----------|--------------------|
| (Intercept)                        | -4.7064  | 0.8152 | -5.773   | < 0.001 ***        |
| WORD_FINAL_T (reference level: no) |          |        |          |                    |
| yes                                | 2.2538   | 0.6693 | 3.368    | < 0.001 ***        |

is the possibility of deleting the *g*, particularly when it is followed by a *-t*. This variant is clearly the least common one, yet it still occurs 8.3% of the time. Possibly, this is a unique feature of Namdeutsch.

Furthermore, it is interesting to see that age has a significant impact on the use of the standard-divergent fricative: older speakers use this variant more frequently. These differences could be interpreted as an apparent time phenomenon, with the standard-divergent variant decreasing in frequency over time as a result of dialect levelling (for dialect levelling in Namdeutsch, see [Zimmer \(in press\)](#)). It would be interesting to see how this develops, and whether a trend from the Northern German variant towards the Standard German plosive might establish itself in the future.

#### 4.5 Lenition of intervocalic *p*, *t*, *k*

In German, obstruents typically exist in pairs of voiceless and voiced: [p]–[b], [t]–[d], [k]–[g], [f]–[v], [s]–[z], [ʃ]–[ʒ] ([Kleiner et al. 2015](#): 53). However, voicedness is not the only difference between these sounds with similar manner and place of articulation, but the consonants in each pair also differ in duration, intensity and tenseness ([Kleiner et al. 2015](#): 53). These differences create the fortis-lenis contrast, and obstruents are typically sorted into two categories: the fortis consonants [p], [t], [k], [f], [s], [ʃ] and the lenis consonants [b], [d], [g], [v], [z], [ʒ] ([Kleiner et al. 2015](#): 53).

The realisation of plosives with regards to the fortis-lenis distinction differs strongly across Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Fortition and lenition occur with different plosives in different positions within syllables and lexemes all across European German speech. One such feature concerns the lenition of *p*, *t*, *k* in intervocalic positions (see 10–12). This feature differs slightly from the others we have chosen for this study, as it occurs not only or not primarily in Northern Germany, but is also frequent in the south of Western Germany and parts of Austria ([Kleiner et al. 2015](#): 69). The *Duden Aussprachewörterbuch* states that

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within Northern Germany, this feature is limited to the coastal areas. Martens & Martens (1988: 129) and Auer (1998), however, find lenition to be a common feature in Hamburg. Auer (1998: 194–195) finds that sociolinguistic factors play an important role in the distribution of this feature, particularly gender and socioeconomic background: male speakers and speakers of a lower socioeconomic class are more likely to use lenition than anyone else is. Scheel (1963: 384) states that lenition is not very salient and speakers tend to produce a lenis form without being aware of it. Elmentaler & Rosenberg (2015: 219) find that lenition is indeed more common in the far north, especially on the border to Denmark, and quite rare in the southern half of Northern Germany.

- (10) *Papa* ('dad'): [paba] vs. [papa]
- (11) *bitte* ('please'): [bɪdə] vs. [bitə]
- (12) *Brücke* ('bridge'): [bʁygə] vs. [bʁykə]

While this feature is not exclusive to Northern German, but also exists in other German regiolects, it is nonetheless a feature that is very common in the far north of Northern Germany. Therefore, we decided to include this feature in our analysis, particularly because it would be interesting to see if a feature that is so limited geographically within Northern German occurs in Namdeutsch. The risk, of course, is that even if this feature exists in Namdeutsch, it might not originate from Northern German settlers, but could potentially stem from people from another area, and with a different regiolectal background. For that reason, we will limit ourselves to describing the findings.

In order to determine whether the lenition of intervocalic *p*, *t*, *k* is frequent in Namdeutsch, we analysed a randomly selected 500 hits from the *DNam* corpus. Overall, lenition of intervocalic *p*, *t*, *k* is not very common, with only 4.6% of 483 hits realised as a lenis.<sup>18</sup> Neither of the sociolinguistic variables has a significant influence, nor does the difference between the consonants, i.e. bilabial (*p* and *b*) vs. alveolar (*t* and *d*) vs. velar consonants (*k* vs. *g*), which again was revealed by a GLMM.

Overall, lenition of intervocalic *p*, *t*, *k* is not a very common feature in Namdeutsch, but it does occur.

#### 4.6 Assimilation of intervocalic *nd* and *ld*

One of the features with the least amount of previous research available to be included in this analysis is the assimilation of *nd* and *ld* in intervocalic positions.

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<sup>18</sup>Of the 500 hits, 17 were phonetically unclear and subsequently excluded from the analysis.

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In this process, the *d* following an *n* or *l* is assimilated; there are different forms of partial assimilation ranging from a slight assimilation to a deletion (i.e. a complete lack of plosive, see 13–14).

- (13) *Kinder* ('children') [kɪnə] vs. [kɪndə]
- (14) *Bilder* ('pictures') [bile] vs. [bilde]

This feature is attested in Northern Germany, particularly in the very north and in the east (Elmentaler & Rosenberg 2015: 349). It mirrors a similar process in Low German, which explains its spread throughout Northern Germany and the lack of available research on it for the south of Germany, where it can be assumed not to occur (Elmentaler & Rosenberg 2015: 349). There is no mention of the feature in either König's (2019a) data, the *Atlas der deutschen Alltagssprache* or the *Atlas zur Aussprache des Deutschen Gebrauchsstandards*. Due to a lack of occurrences, Elmentaler & Rosenberg (2015: 349) did not include *ld* in their analysis. Other studies assume *ld* and *nd* to behave similarly (cf. Scheel 1963; Schönfeld 1989; Mihm 2000). Elmentaler & Rosenberg (2015: 349–350) found assimilated forms of *nd* in the entirety of Northern Germany, with higher frequencies of occurrences in the north and east. This shows that, while the variant is often associated with fast speech, that alone is not the only factor influencing its use, but geography seems to also play a role in the frequency. Furthermore, while the assimilation occurs most frequently in free speech, it does also exist in more careful, formal speech (Elmentaler & Rosenberg 2015: 350).

While different degrees of assimilation exist, the deciding factor for this analysis was whether a plosive was clearly audible. Overall, assimilation occurred in 21.9% of all cases, which accounts for 108 out of 494 hits.

In a GLMM only the phonological context turned out to be relevant, whilst the sociolinguistic variables did not (see Table 4.5). Assimilation is more likely if an *l* precedes the *d*.<sup>19</sup>

Overall, the data reveals that assimilation, while not the typical pronunciation, is common nonetheless in Namdeutsch.

As the literature on the assimilation of intervocalic *nd* assumes intervocalic *ld* to behave similarly (cf. Scheel 1963; Martens & Martens 1988), we will generally include both in our discussion, despite *ld* not being a part of the *Norddeutscher Sprachatlas*. In the *Norddeutscher Sprachatlas*, the frequency for this feature ranges between 5% to 60% depending on the area; however, many of these

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<sup>19</sup> Again, the model quality is poor: Marginal  $r^2 = 0.025$ ; conditional  $r^2 = 0.027$ ; C = 0.634; The accuracy of the model is not better than the *no information rate*. All VIFs are below 6. The maximum model was kept in order to avoid (near) singularity.

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Table 4.5: Results of a GLMM (assimilation of intervocalic *nd* and *ld*)

|  | Estimate  | SE       | <i>z</i> | Pr(>   <i>z</i>  ) |
|--|-----------|----------|----------|--------------------|
| (Intercept)                                  | -0.165671 | 0.449125 | -0.369   | > 0.05             |
| GENDER (reference level: male)               |           |          |          |                    |
| female                                       | 0.297108  | 0.471733 | 0.630    | > 0.05             |
| AGE (numeric variable)                       |           |          |          |                    |
|  | 0.009140  | 0.009272 | 0.986    | > 0.05             |
| PRECEDING_SOUND (reference level: <i>l</i> ) |           |          |          |                    |
| <i>n</i>                                     | 1.350504  | 0.362398 | 3.727    | < 0.001***         |
| interaction term: GENDER*AGE                 |           |          |          |                    |
| GENDER(female):AGE                           | -0.012735 | 0.012756 | -0.998   | > 0.05             |

occurrences can probably be traced back to assimilation being a feature of fast speech, particularly in the areas with a lower frequency (Elmentaler & Rosenberg 2015: 349). Nonetheless, a higher frequency in the north and the east of Germany suggests the existence of assimilation as a feature apart from fast speech. For our data, quantifying the speed of speech for each produced instance of *nd* and *ld* was beyond the scope of this study, but from our familiarity with the data we believe that not all instances of assimilation can be traced back to the speed of speech.

#### 4.7 Co-occurrence of features

Due to the regional distribution of some of the features we have chosen, namely the fact that there is regional variation within Northern Germany (e.g. for the lenition of intervocalic *p*, *t*, *k*), we decided to analyse whether some features co-occur more frequently with others. For this analysis we chose the speakers who realise intervocalic *p*, *t*, *k* as a lenis, as the lenition is tied to a specific region of Northern Germany (mainly the far north coastal areas of Schleswig-Holstein, see Elmentaler & Rosenberg 2015: 219) and it occurs rarely enough in our data to allow for a close analysis of all speakers who produced this variant. Of the 16 speakers who produced a lenition, ten are also present in the data for all other features and thus allowed for a comparison.

Of the ten speakers, all produced a raised long *ä*, eight realised short vowels in place of long vowels and seven produced spirantisations of word-final -g. As-

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similation of *nd* and *ld* occurred in the speech of six speakers and five of ten realised word-final *-ng* with a plosive. As this is such a small sample of speakers, it is surely not representative, but it does show something interesting: of the five speakers who realised both a lenition of intervocalic *p*, *t*, *k* and a plosive in word-final *-ng*, three are adolescents who go to the same school. In fact, of the six people from that school, five produced lenitions of intervocalic *p*, *t*, *k* in the data.

This group is very interesting, as they are all students of a German-speaking background who go to the same private school with an instructional language other than German (i.e. English or Afrikaans) and meet regularly with a teacher for private lessons in German, which is the setting they were recorded in. They all produced Northern German variants, some frequently, with most of them realising even the Northern German variants that occur rarely in the data. The most likely explanation in our opinion is the lack of formal German instruction in school: this group consists of the only adolescents in the corpus who do not take the subject *Deutsch als Muttersprache* ('German as a first language') at school. It would be interesting to see whether other adolescents without formal instruction in German as a first language might produce similar phonetic features.

Overall, the data from the analysis of co-occurrences is not particularly representative; nonetheless it shows that speakers who produced intervocalic *p*, *t*, *k* as a lenis are likely to realise all other Northern German variants. It also opens the question as to how adolescents without formal instruction in German speak Namdeutsch.

## 5 Discussion

Does Namdeutsch sound Northern German? While this study only singles out separate areas of Namdeutsch phonology, and is by no means a detailed analysis of all phonetic features that define Northern German, we believe that Namdeutsch does "sound Northern". Not all features we analysed were common; in fact, some barely occurred at all. However, we believe that the Northern German variants that do exist in Namdeutsch are quite common, and are often very distinctive features of Northern German. The spirantisation of word-final *-g*, for example, is a defining feature of Northern German that is quite salient (Elmentaler & Rosenberg 2015: 269), and is also common in Namdeutsch. The raising of the long *ä*, one of the most common phonetic features of Northern German, is just as common in Namdeutsch as well, with barely any Standard German variants occurring in the data. Northern German variants in vowel length are also

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quite frequent in Namdeutsch. These three features as a whole do not represent Northern German, but they are quite common and overall salient; they are defining phonetic features that set Northern German apart from Standard German, and set Namdeutsch apart from Standard German, as well.

In saying this, we challenge the common idea that people from Northern Germany speak only Standard German, and therefore phonetic variation is irrelevant (cf. Nöckler 1963: 128, Pütz 1991: 464). As the *Norddeutscher Sprachatlas* shows, and as many other studies have shown, Northern German does have phonetic variants that differentiate it from Standard German pronunciation, even if they might not be as obvious and as salient as features from other German varieties.

However, in agreeing that Namdeutsch does, to some degree, sound Northern German, we are not saying that it sounds only Northern German. Beyond the actual scope of our study we were able to discover some variants that cannot be traced back to Northern German (or, as far as we can currently tell, German in Germany in general), and as such set it apart. Most obviously, this concerns the deletion of word-final -g, particularly when followed by t, i.e. the deletion of a consonant at the beginning of a consonant cluster. The apocope of t – the elision of t at the end of a word – is a feature of Northern German that is also discussed in the *Norddeutscher Sprachatlas* (cf. Elmentaler & Rosenberg 2015: 275), and a common example for deletion, but deletion of g is not attested in this context. Interestingly, we also found plosive deletion in a feature involving the consonant cluster -b(s)t that we had analysed but ultimately excluded from this study (see 15).

- (15) *bleibt* ('stays'): [blaɪ̯t] vs. [blaɪ̯bt]

With 14 occurrences out of 446 overall hits it is not very common, but does nonetheless exist. This leads us to question whether perhaps there is a tendency in Namdeutsch to delete plosives in consonant clusters. This question will be explored in further research.

The analysis also revealed the importance of the speakers's age as a factor regarding the realisation of word-final -g. This could potentially be a sign of a language change away from a more Northern sound and towards Standard German – younger speakers are more likely to realise Standard German variant. A move towards Standard German would not be implausible, given historical and social context. When the speakers who are now adults acquired their language, they did so in large from other speakers of Namdeutsch. Most German language media, like content on the radio stations, was produced by speakers of Namdeutsch, and until 1996, there was no satellite TV from Germany available in Namibia (Kroll-Tjingaete 2018: 25). Now, however, Namibian Germans

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growing up in Namibia have much more contact with Standard German. This is partially due to the available media from Germany, partially due to the fact that travelling to Germany is easier and cheaper now than it was – and many Namibian Germans frequently travel to Germany for the holidays – and surely also in large part due to the education system. Most of the adolescents in the *DNam* corpus go to German schools, some of which are private and have teachers from Germany. As the data of students going to German schools outweighs the data of those who go to other schools, the influence of Standard German, partially through being taught by teachers from Germany, should not be underestimated. Preliminary studies suggest an increase in the usage of non-standard features in non-German schools, but no quantitative study was possible due to the scarcity of data from these schools.

It remains to be seen whether the tendency of younger speakers to produce more standard-like forms establishes itself in Namdeutsch or not, and whether Namdeutsch might in the future sound less Northern than it does now.

## 6 Acknowledgements

This work was funded by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (DFG, German Research Foundation) – SI 750/4-1/2; ZI 1793/1-2.

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# Chapter 5

## Namibian German and gender: A corpus study on the use of transferred lexical items

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This paper presents a quantitative corpus study of informal speech from male and female adolescent and adult Namibians with the L1 German. A key feature of Namibian German are various forms of language mixing, mostly with material from English and Afrikaans. Previous sociolinguistic research as well as statements by community members suggest that male speakers might use more other-language material in their speech. I identified other-language material in a corpus of peer group conversations by Namibian German adolescents and adults and investigated the amount of transferred lexical items (other-language material excluding multi-word code-switches) that speakers of different age and gender used. Further, I analyzed the proportion of the donor languages English and Afrikaans. Concerning the frequency of transferred lexical items the results show an age difference between younger and older speakers, but less clear differences between speakers of different gender. English is the prime donor language in all groups, but subtle differences in the proportion of Afrikaans may point to interesting sociolinguistic dynamics.

### 1 Introduction

Namibian German (NG), or Namdeutsch, is gaining interest as a linguistic research topic in recent years.<sup>1</sup> The fact that German is spoken in Namibia mainly

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<sup>1</sup>This paper is based on my master thesis which I wrote within the project “Namdeutsch: Die Dynamik des Deutschen im mehrsprachigen Kontext Namibias”. I have been a part of this project



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goes back to the immigration of German-speaking people to the area of present-day Namibia during and after it was a colony of the German Reich between 1884 and 1915. Today the descendants of these immigrants form a minority of approximately 20,000 L1 speakers of German. They use the language in a variety of contexts, private and official, for example in schools, clubs and churches. Yet, they live in a highly multilingual country and typically also speak English and Afrikaans. Today, the former is the country's sole official language while the latter was an official language before Namibia's independence from the South African apartheid regime in 1990 and continues to be used as a lingua franca. Some members of the NG community also speak Bantu and Khoisan languages, such as Oshiwambo, Herero, or Nama/Damara, but this is markedly less common (see [Shah & Zappen-Thomson 2018](#) and [Zimmer 2019](#) for more detailed descriptions of the general situation of German in Namibia). One effect of this multilingual situation is the occurrence of various forms of language mixing in Namibian German. In particular, English and Afrikaans influence NG language use (see, e.g., [Shah 2007](#): 22; [Wiese et al. 2014](#); [Wiese et al. 2017](#); [Zimmer 2019](#): 1185–1187). Three examples are provided below.<sup>2</sup>

- (1) es hilft nich nur mein self esteem i love doing it  
it.NOM help.3SG.PRS not only my self esteem I love doing it  
'Not only does it help my self esteem, I love doing it.' [NAM119W1]
- (2) ach dis is n gesükkel  
EXCLAM this be.3SG.COP INDEF.SG.NEUT struggle  
'Oh, this is exhausting.' [NAM155M2]
- (3) couscous is mooi  
couscous be.3SG.PRES.COP good  
'Couscous is tasty.' [NAM006M1]

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as a student assistant and research assistant, contributing to the creation of the corpus *Deutsch in Namibia* (*DNam*). The project was funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) – WI 2155/9-1; SI 750/4-1. I thank the editors of this volume, Heike Wiese, Pia Schlickeiser, and the anonymous reviewers for helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper.

<sup>2</sup>All examples in this paper are taken from the corpus *Deutsch in Namibia* (see below). The German original is provided in cGAT transcription ([Schmidt et al. 2015](#)), followed by an interlinear gloss and an English translation in natural language. For the sake of anonymity speaker names have been replaced by an alias (above the quote) that provides some information. Aliases are prefixed with *NAM*, followed by three digits for identification. The following letter denotes the speaker gender (*M* for male, *W* for female) and the final digit denotes one of four age groups (1: 20 years or younger; 2: 21–40 years; 3: 41–60 years, 4: 61 years or older).

## 5 Namibian German and gender

As a key feature of NG, language mixing phenomena have already received a substantial amount of scholarly attention. It has been argued that individual words from English or Afrikaans have gained the status of accepted loanwords and are also used in formal registers (Kellermeier-Rehbein 2016: 225–226). In general, however, the use of other-language material appears to be mostly reserved for informal settings (Wiese & Bracke 2019). This is connected to community attitudes towards mixing and linguistic purism: Standard German as it is (imagined to be) spoken in Germany is regarded as the prestige variety by German-speaking Namibians (Zimmer 2019: 1185). Other-language influences are often stigmatized as markers of substandard and ‘bad German’ (see Gregersen & Langer 2021 [this volume] for a more detailed account of linguistic purism in language contact situations). At the same time, these influences also bear some positive connotations for many speakers who associate them with a specific Namibian German identity, setting Namibian Germans apart from Germans in Germany (Schmidt-Lauber 1998: 308–309; Wiese & Bracke (2019); Radke 2021 [this volume]).

Various recent studies have investigated language mixing phenomena in NG with some pragmatic or sociolinguistic focus, analyzing them in the context of register variation (Wiese & Bracke 2019), in online media and communication (Radke 2017, Radke 2021 [this volume]), in youth language (Kellermeier-Rehbein 2015; 2016), and with regards to speaker age (Zimmer forthcoming). This line of work is extended in this paper by focusing on speaker gender, an aspect that has so far been largely neglected for NG. Specifically, I present a quantitative corpus study on the use of transferred lexical items by male and female speakers in informal peer group conversations.

What do I mean by *transferred lexical items* in this paper? The research on language contact phenomena provides a variety of terms and concepts but it does not agree on their exact definition in all cases. There is no controversy about the concept of established loanwords. These are words originating from a different donor language, which have become part of a recipient language’s lexicon, which are integrated into its grammatical system, and which are also used by monolingual speakers in the community.<sup>3</sup> It is equally agreed that the use of established loanwords differs from code-switching (CS), which is often defined as the “juxtaposition” of two or more languages (Poplack 2004: 589; Auer 2011: 460). Example (1) marks an unequivocal case of CS as it contains a stretch of English words showing no integration and retaining English grammar. By contrast, the concept of

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<sup>3</sup> As examples of established loanwords in NG, Zimmer (2019: 1185) lists *Rivier* (‘dry river’) and *braaien* (‘to barbecue’), both from Afrikaans. Note, however, that in the case of NG the loanword criterion referring to monolingual community members can be largely disregarded because almost all community members are multilingual (see above).

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borrowing and its demarcation from CS causes some controversy. Poplack and colleagues have argued that, aside from the borrowing of established loanwords, words can also be borrowed for the nonce (Poplack et al. 1988; Poplack 2004; 2018). These “nonce borrowings” are similar to established loans in some ways and similar to CS in other ways:

Like its established counterpart, the nonce borrowing tends to involve lone lexical items, generally major-class content words, and to assume the morphological, syntactic, and optionally, phonological identity of the recipient language. Like CS, on the other hand, particular nonce borrowings are neither recurrent nor widespread, and nonce borrowing necessarily requires a certain level of bilingual competence. (Poplack 2004: 590)

In this view, would it be “neither recurrent nor widespread”, *Gesükkel* in example (2) constitutes a nonce borrowing, since it is a derivation of the Afrikaans verb *sukkel* (‘to struggle’) to a noun via a German prefix. However, even a word that is not overtly integrated, like the Afrikaans *mooi* (‘good’) in example (3), could be a nonce borrowing because a native German adjective would not bear overt morphological inflection in the same slot either. It would be a nonce borrowing *candidate* because the possibility of single-word CS is not excluded a priori for words that are not overtly integrated in this view (Poplack et al. 1988: 7). However, other researchers reject the concept of nonce borrowings, contending that every use of lexical material from another language that is not an established loanword can be subsumed under the concept CS. Specifically, they see single-word or even single-morpheme other-language material simply as a very short form of CS (Haspelmath 2009: 41; Myers-Scotton 2002: 154–7). I follow the intuition of Poplack and others that nonce borrowings should be distinguished from CS.<sup>4</sup> Yet, even if all single unintegrated other-language items were referred to as CS, they are arguably different from multi-word CS in some ways. In terms of psycholinguistic activation, a longer sequence likely leads to a stronger activation of the other language, while German would stay most activated during short sequences (Muysken 2000: 8, 34). From a sociolinguistic perspective, the longer the other-language stretch lasts, the more the multilingualism is foregrounded in the conversation. Thus, in order to narrow down the range of phenomena that are analyzed in the study, I decided to exclude multi-word CS from the analysis. Consequently, the data that is analyzed includes established loanwords as well as (candidates for) nonce borrowing and/or single word CS, depending on the

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<sup>4</sup>A related distinction is the one between *insertion* and *alternation* made by Muysken (2000).

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point of view.<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of this paper, I subsume this material under the term *transferred lexical items*. The material was identified with the help of an annotation system (see §4.2), which facilitated the operationalization of transferred lexical items (see §4.3).

The study is based on analyses of some 100,000 tokens from the corpus *Deutsch in Namibia* (*DNam*), a recent collection of spoken data by German-speaking Namibians (Zimmer et al. 2020). Since some parts of this corpus only contain data by adolescent speakers (aged 14 to 18) and others only contain data by adult speakers (aged 26 to 65) it was possible to examine the role of gender in both of these (broad) age groups separately and compare the results.

The study's main focus is on the frequency of transferred tokens in speech. Due to previous work and my own observations concerning the community, which are laid out in the next section, my goal was to examine whether male speakers use more transferred lexical items than female speakers. Concerning the aspect of age, I expected that adolescents used more transferred lexical items than adults, because younger speakers are often linguistically more creative (Wiese et al. 2014: 277) and because it has been suggested by researchers and community members that Namibian German youth language is particularly rich with influences from other languages (Kellermeier-Rehbein 2016: 228). Despite this, a previous study on loanwords in NG translations of “Wenker sentences” does not report younger speakers to use more loanwords than older speakers (Zimmer forthcoming).<sup>6</sup> An additional sociolinguistic variable taken into account in the present study is the type of school that adolescent speakers attended. The role of German and the amount of German language instruction varies substantially between different schools in Namibia which might be reflected in the use of transferred material.

The analysis of the frequency of transferred lexical items in general is complemented by an additional investigation of the proportion of transferred lexical items from different donor languages. Previously, it has been reported that Afrikaans is NG's most important donor language ranking above English and that both, Afrikaans and English, rank above Bantu and Khoisan languages (Nöckler 1963: 47; Böhm 2003: 568; Kellermeier-Rehbein 2016: 229–230). However, it has been assumed that English may be in the process of overtaking Afrikaans be-

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<sup>5</sup>Note that in this paper I do not determine to which of the categories each token belongs. This would be the task of a separate article. The purpose of the study presented here was to focus on the sociolinguistic variation concerning the use of the analyzed material.

<sup>6</sup>Instead, (Zimmer forthcoming) reports a U-shaped pattern of age differentiation with middle-aged speakers (40–49 years) using markedly less loanwords than younger and older informants.

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cause, unlike Afrikaans, it is not associated with apartheid and receives more institutional support in post-independence Namibia (cf. [Shah 2007](#): 43; [Kellermeier-Rehbein 2016](#): 230; [Zimmer forthcoming](#)). This corresponds to reports by community members claiming that younger speakers are more influenced by English than older speakers (cf. [Zimmer forthcoming](#)). Yet in the quantitative “Wenker sentences” study no such tendency is observed and Afrikaans seems far ahead of English. The proportion of Afrikaans vs. English tokens is approximately 80 to 20 percent in all age groups (*ibid.*). To my knowledge, there were no previous indications of any gender specific differences with respect to the proportion of donor languages.

The paper is structured as follows. In the following section I address why I think it is worth analyzing the use of transferred lexical items in NG with respect to speaker gender. Then, a general description of the data is given (§3) and the methodology is presented (§4). In the main section the results of the corpus study are presented (§5). I conclude the paper with a summary and discussion of the results and some perspectives for future research.

## 2 Why gender?

The relationship between gender and language use has been a subject of sociolinguistic research for several decades (cf. [Coates & Pichler 2011](#)). Today, it is widely accepted that gender is a socially constructed category, but one that plays a powerful role in people’s lives nonetheless. As such, it is also meaningful for how people speak and why they speak the way they speak. It is clear, however, that gender is not a category that exists independent of other social categories or circumstances ([Eckert 2011](#): 65) and I did not assume that gender is the sole or primary variable influencing the use of transferred material in NG. This is why I looked at gender in conjunction with age and point to other sociolinguistic circumstances in the analysis. Nonetheless, there are certain aspects that indicate a possible existence of gender differences when it comes to the use of transferred lexical items in NG.

I have said above that language mixing phenomena are viewed as markers of nonstandard speech in the NG community. Early quantitative sociolinguistic studies from Britain and the US related nonstandard speech to gender by reporting almost unanimously that low prestige, nonstandard variants are favored by male rather than by female speakers ([Labov 2006](#); [Wolfram 1969](#); [Trudgill 1972](#); [Macaulay 1977](#)). Hence, analyzing the use of transferred lexical items in the speech of male and female speakers presents an opportunity to investigate whether or not this commonly observed pattern is also found in the NG

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speech community. A first quantitative piece of evidence comes from Zimmer's (forthcoming) "Wenker sentences" study where he reports that 20-29- and 30-39-year-old women used markedly less loanwords in their translations than men of the same age.<sup>7</sup> Some studies conducted in other communities have found that male speakers already tend towards more nonstandard speech in adolescence (Eisikovitz 2011; Eckert 2003: 387) underlining the importance and value of differentiated analyses. For NG there is no primary evidence of this except for a few statements in interviews with NG adolescents which Heike Wiese conducted in 2013.<sup>8</sup> Some interviewees reported that boys used more "slang", others denied that linguistic differences between boys and girls existed.<sup>9</sup>

Support for the assumption that male NG speakers might use more transferred lexical items than female speakers comes from narratives by community members. In an extensive ethnography on the Namibian German community Schmidt-Lauber (1998) addresses the role of gender and gender(ed) stereotypes. She reports that, in her interviews with community members, it became apparent that 'the Farmer' serves as an ideal and a figure of identification for many members of the group. This stereotypical figure is characterized by its toughness and masculinity (Schmidt-Lauber 1998: 236-240). Similar sentiments can be found in an excerpt from an interview in the *DNam* corpus where the interviewee, a 31-year-old man, talks about the terms *braaien* (from Afrikaans *braai*, 'barbecue') and the Standard German translation *grillen* (cf. also Zimmer forthcoming). Community members widely regard *braaien* as an important practice that seems to establish a sense of community and identity (cf. statements in the *DNam* interview corpus).<sup>10</sup>

Also, wenn [...] ein Freund von mir jetzt da mit 'grillen' anfängt so, da würde ich sagen: 'Was ist mit dir los?' [...] Weil 'braaien' ist einfach [...] so Tradition hier [...]. Wir machen das [...] auch nicht mit Kohle sondern mit Holz und richtig schön Fleisch. Und nicht so nach [...] deutschem Gesetz, sag ich mal, jetzt bloß kein Rauch und bloß nicht dies und das und jenes. Bei uns muss das richtig son *Männerding* sein. Und wenn jetzt einer kommt

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<sup>7</sup>The author reasons that these differences emerge from a conservative distribution of roles in childcare and that women in these age groups use less nonstandard words because of their role as mothers (Zimmer forthcoming).

<sup>8</sup>Other aspects of these interviews are mentioned in Wiese et al. 2017.

<sup>9</sup>Also, Deumert (2009: 359) reports in passing that male students make stronger use of Namibian German variants, but she does not provide quantitative evidence for this claim.

<sup>10</sup>Since the content of this quote is more important than its form, I provide a reader-friendly normalized transcription where hesitations, etc. are left out (marked by [...] in the German original) and punctuation and emphasis is added.

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mit ‘grillen’, dann hört sich das wieder so [...] *verweiblicht* an, sag ich jetzt mal.

Well, if a friend of mine would say ‘grillen’, I would say ‘What’s the matter with you?’ Because ‘braaien’ is just a tradition here. We don’t use charcoal but wood and we use proper meat. We don’t stick to ‘German Law’, so to speak, making sure there is no smoke and no this and no that. Here it has to be a real *guy thing*. And if somebody comes along and calls it ‘grillen’ then this sounds somehow *effeminate*, so to speak.

In his statement the interviewee links Namibian German identity, masculinity and language. Firstly, he marks *braaien* as a distinctly Namibian German practice by setting Namibian Germans apart from Germans from Germany, characterizing the former as tough – by virtue of using wood, fire and “proper meat” – and the latter as law-abiding. Secondly, the loan *braaien* is presented as the only proper way to refer to this practice. Thirdly, the standard German term *grillen* is disdained as “effeminate” and *braaien* is called a “guy thing” thereby linking practice and terminology to masculinity. Here, the apparent ideological connection between a traditional Namibian German identity and traditional ideas of masculinity includes the use of NG-specific lexis. As in the case of *braaien*, NG-specific lexis is typically transferred lexis.<sup>11</sup> This raises the question whether such a connection of masculinity and transferred lexis is more widespread and if it is reflected in everyday language use. Do male speakers use more transferred lexical items in their speech?<sup>12</sup>

It is important to note that more recent approaches to language and gender regard linguistic variation not as a mere reflection of social variables but as one of the resources that people use to construct their identity (cf. contributions in Coates & Pichler 2011; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1999; Eckert 2012). This assumption is particularly plausible in the context of language mixing phenomena

<sup>11</sup> A related observation concerns the term *oukie*. The common meaning of the word is ‘guy’ (from Afrikaans *ou*) referring to men only. Yet, *oukies* may also be used as a seemingly generic term for members of the NG community regardless of gender (Pütz 1982; see Radke 2021 [this volume] for a detailed discussion of the terms usage), suggesting that the prototypical Namibian German is male. This is underlined by attestations like “oukies and ladies” to refer to Namibian Germans of either gender Radke 2021 [this volume], since this suggests that there is a need to use an additional term (*ladies*) in order to explicitly refer to female Namibian Germans as well.

<sup>12</sup> Similarly, the so called *covert prestige hypothesis*, which Trudgill (1972) developed as a possible explanation for the gender differences observed in the Anglo-American studies cited above, assumes that gender-specific associations of nonstandard speech might have contributed to the observed tendencies (Trudgill 1972: 183).

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of which speakers are largely conscious. That is, potential linguistic differences between male and female speakers could be interpreted to be part of the practice of *doing gender*.

The *DNam* corpus allows to investigate whether differences exist and, if so, where. Analyzing language and gender in the Namibian German context should not stop with this corpus linguistic investigation. For a thorough understanding of different behavior it is necessary to engage in detailed qualitative analyses (cf. Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1999; Eckert 2012). However, the quantitative approach I take here is a first step towards an understanding of the role of gender in Namibian German. In the following the study is presented in detail, starting with a description of the data that was used.

### 3 Data

The data for this study came from a pre-release version of the corpus *Deutsch in Namibia* (*DNam*, ‘German in Namibia’). The released corpus is accessible online via the *Datenbank für Gesprochenes Deutsch* (Zimmer et al. 2020).<sup>13</sup> *DNam* is a systematic collection of the language use of the German-speaking minority in Namibia. The corpus is complemented by a collection of sociolinguistic metadata about the speakers, which is crucial for investigations like the one presented in this paper. *DNam* contains audios and transcriptions of three kinds: sociolinguistic interviews, an experimental set-up (“language situations”, cf. Wiese 2020; Wiese & Bracke 2019), and free peer group conversations that were recorded in the absence of researchers. The latter were chosen as a corpus for this study because this part of the *DNam* corpus is arguably the closest approximation to everyday linguistic interactions of Namibian Germans available for research. A minor drawback of the free conversations in the context of this study is that the content of the conversation can influence the likelihood of (specific) transferred content words. For example, in German conversations about technical equipment the usage of English terms is more likely than in other contexts. The possibility of this effect has to be kept in mind, however, I regarded the use of authentic language as a priority. Further, the fact that topics usually changed during conversations and that the corpus consists of multiple conversations has presumably mitigated this effect.

The free conversations consist of two subcorpora, one that contains only conversations of adolescents and one that contains only conversations of adults. This

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<sup>13</sup><https://dgd.ids-mannheim.de>

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allowed for a separate investigation of gender differences in peer group conversations of both groups. The adolescent subcorpus consists of 13 conversations by groups of three to five people, the adult subcorpus consists of six conversations by groups of two or three people. Consequently, the number of contributing speakers is substantially larger in the adolescent subcorpus. This is displayed in Table 5.1 together with information about the gender and age of speakers in both subcorpora. It should be noted that the number of male and female speakers are not perfectly balanced in either subcorpus. The conversations of adults were recorded on farms and in the cities of Windhoek, Otjiwarongo and Omaruru. The adolescents were recorded in schools in Windhoek, Otjiwarongo and Swakopmund with the exception of six speakers, which were recorded during private German lessons in Windhoek (see §5.1).

Table 5.1: Speaker gender and age in the subcorpora. \* = For two adolescents the exact age is not documented.

|             | Total | Female | Male | Age span | Mean age (std) |
|-------------|-------|--------|------|----------|----------------|
| Adolescents | 51    | 32     | 19   | 14–18*   | 16.1* (1.2)    |
| Adults      | 14    | 8      | 6    | 26–65    | 42.2 (13.7)    |

The conversations of adolescents have a mean length of approximately 36 minutes and a total length of approximately seven hours and 43 minutes. The conversations of adults are shorter with a mean length of approximately 13 minutes, resulting in a total length of one hour and 20 minutes. The audio data has been transcribed according to the cGAT transcription system (Schmidt et al. 2015). The token and type counts in both subcorpora are displayed in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Token and type count of the two corpora

|             | Tokens | Types |
|-------------|--------|-------|
| Adolescents | 90998  | 7350  |
| Adults      | 14672  | 2074  |
| Total       | 105670 | 8189  |

## 4 Methodology

### 4.1 Approach

The general approach of this study is that of a quantitative corpus analysis. Specifically, I calculated token frequencies for transferred lexical items and other tokens and used statistical methods to explore the assumptions concerning age and gender discussed above. I deal with details of the identification of other-language material in the corpus and of the operationalization of transferred lexical items in the two sections following this one.

Note that the study presented in the following is not variationist in the sense of the studies by Labov and others, mentioned above, because I did not look at a single variable with a few variants, like the realizations of a phoneme. Rather, I investigated how common the use of transferred lexical items in general is in the speech of NG speakers.<sup>14</sup>

I took two different statistical approaches to the corpus data. In a classical corpus linguistic approach every token (or type) in the corpus is treated as an observation having a binary property – being a transferred lexical item (as operationalized below) or not – and having been uttered by a member of some group (females, adolescents, etc.) with the group being treated as a subcorpus. The result is a neat two-by-two frequency table and a relative frequency of transferred tokens (per 1000 tokens) in the entire group subcorpus. Differences between groups can be tested for significance with the  $\chi^2$  test and effect sizes can be evaluated with the correlation coefficient Cramer's  $\varphi$ .

The pitfall of the corpus linguistic approach is that group internal differences cannot be evaluated since the behavior of individual speakers is not taken into account. However, the individuals in each group may have contributed to the total values in very different ways. In the most extreme case all transferred tokens could have been uttered by a single individual while all others used none – a fact that would go unnoticed if only this approach was used. Quantitative studies on language and gender have been criticized for not analyzing intra-group differences and foregrounding inter-group differences (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet

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<sup>14</sup>Technically, it would be possible to apply the variationist *principle of accountability* (e.g. Tagliamonte 2012: 9) to such an analysis. This would mean that every occurrence of every other-language type in the corpus would have to be measured together with all potential Standard German alternatives. In some cases, such as the discourse marker *like* (Tagliamonte 2012: 270) that appears in NG as well (Wiese et al. 2014: 299–300), an item can also be substituted by a null-variant, meaning that in these cases, every single possible place of occurrence would have to be identified. Needless to say, such an approach would have exceeded the capacities available for this study by far.

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1999: 193; cf. also Baker 2014 for a critique that specifically targets corpus linguistic approaches). For this reason I employed an additional approach. Here, the relative amount of transferred tokens (per 1000 tokens) for each individual speaker was calculated. The resulting values for each person can be compared to members of their own group (gender, age, school) as well as to members of the other group. The non-parametric Wilcoxon rank-sum test was used for testing if significant differences exist between sets of individual values. In the results section, I show how this approach constituted a valuable complement to the first one.

A final point to notice concerning the statistical analysis, is that the group of speakers in the corpus is neither homogeneous nor balanced with respect to their sociolinguistic background. For example, the adults have different occupations and the students go to different types of schools. Moreover, the number of male and female participants for each occupation/school type varies. In the analysis, I show that this imbalance must be taken into account before drawing premature conclusions from the data.

## 4.2 Annotation

A nontrivial prerequisite for conducting a corpus study on the use of transferred lexical items is the identification of tokens of interest. For this purpose, I made use of an annotation system, which I present in this section. Due to the terminological and conceptual controversies on the categorization of other-language material mentioned in the introduction, the annotation system was deliberately designed as theory-neutral, refraining from the use of the terms *code-switching* and *borrowing*. It is based on directly observable criteria as much as possible. Still the annotations can be used to approximate these concepts to some extent as I explain in the next section. The annotations were eventually added to all parts of the *DNam* corpus and will be made available to the public in a future version of the corpus. This will allow researchers to perform studies similar to this one, potentially choosing their own selection of other-language tokens.

The most fundamental feature of the annotation is the identification of other-language tokens and a secondary feature is assigning different properties to them. An other-language token was defined in the broadest possible sense as any token that can be identified as originating from a Namibian language other than German, such as English, Afrikaans, Oshiwambo, and so on.<sup>15</sup> For the purpose

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<sup>15</sup>This criterion and some other aspects of the annotation system were inspired by a workflow described in Poplack (2018: 42).

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of distinguishing different kinds of other-language tokens the annotation-tag for each token encoded the following four properties:

1. DONOR LANGUAGE: From which language does the token originate?
2. SEQUENCE ( $\pm$ ): Is the token part of a sequence of more than one other-language token (from the same donor language)?
3. INTEGRATION ( $\pm$ ): Is the token overtly integrated into German on a morphological level or not?
4. DICTIONARY ENTRY ( $\pm$ ): Does an entry for the token's lemma exist in a monolingual dictionary for Standard German (*Duden*) or not?

In order to be assigned the property +SEQUENCE, a token needed to have at least one direct neighbor token from the same donor language. Between direct neighbors there are no speaker transitions, no distinguishable (i.e. transcribed) pauses and no tokens from any other language. Importantly, a compound lexeme consisting of two separate graphemic words (e.g. *phone cover*) was treated as a single token and was annotated as -SEQUENCE unless the above characteristics applied also to the compound. The property +INTEGRATION was assigned either if a token showed overt German inflection that would not occur in the donor language (e.g. *mooi-esstück*, 'good piece') or German derivation (e.g. *Gesükkel*), or if it was a compound of a native German and an other-language lexeme (e.g. *Babystimme*, 'baby voice'). Tokens from non-inflectible word classes have the property -INTEGRATION (not integrated) by definition, as they can never be overtly integrated. For the property DICTIONARY ENTRY I employed the online version of the *Duden*.<sup>16</sup> A Namibian German codex does not exist and, as stated above, standard language in Germany (which the *Duden* aims to document) serves as a linguistic point of reference in the NG community.<sup>17</sup> In case an other-language token was used as part of a constructed dialogue (i.e., a report of real or fictional speech) or in a meta-linguistic way, this was encoded in the annotation-tag as well so that these cases could be excluded as they diverge from 'normal' language use.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>The annotation process took place between January–April 2019. That is, a word had to have an entry in the online *Duden* (<https://www.duden.de>) during that time in order to be annotated as +DICTIONARY ENTRY.

<sup>17</sup>The status of the *Duden* in the Namibian German community is exemplified by the fact that it is featured in the school logo of the German private school in Omaruru (cf. <http://www.dpsoiway.na/index.html>, last accessed Nov 14, 2019).

<sup>18</sup>650 tokens were excluded from the analysis because of this. They are already excluded from the counts presented in Table 5.2.

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For reasons of space, I leave it at this brief description of the annotation system without going into more detail about specific aspects. In the next section it is explained how the annotation system was used to select the relevant data for the analysis.

### 4.3 Operationalizing transferred lexical items

The annotations described in the preceding section identified every token in the free conversations corpus originating from a local language other than German. The total number of such other-language tokens in the corpus is 6906. I have said in the introduction that these tokens constitute several different language mixing phenomena and have motivated my decision to exclude instances of multi-word CS from the data I analyzed. The annotations allowed me to define multi-word CS for the purposes of this paper as follows: Any sequence of two or more words from one donor language (+SEQUENCE) in which all tokens have the property –INTEGRATION and at least one token does not have a dictionary entry (–DICTIONARY ENTRY). This definition was adopted here because I regard integration as indicative of (nonce) borrowing and a dictionary entry as indicative of an established loanword.<sup>19</sup>

The remaining other-language tokens that are not understood as instances of multi-word CS are referred to as *transferred lexical items* (or simply *transferred tokens/words*) and constitute the data that is analyzed in the following sections (5036 tokens). Specifically, as I have indicated in the introduction, this means that any single lexical item (–SEQUENCE) is included. Single other-language words can be morphologically integrated, as in (2), or dictionary-attested, as in (6), or both, as in (7), or neither, as in (3). Note that all dictionary-attested words were included, without discriminating between long established loanwords (like *okay*) and recently established ones (like *chillen*). Despite their attestation, these words are ultimately of non-German origin and speakers are often aware of this.<sup>20</sup> Note further that while dictionary attestation is interpreted as a sign of an established loanword here, it is not a necessary condition. In particular, Afrikaans-origin words can have the status of established loanwords (as has been noted in the literature, see §1), but there are virtually no dictionary-entries for Afrikaans-origin

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<sup>19</sup>Other definitions of (MW)CS are conceivable, borderline cases may be excluded by this definition. However, its advantage lies in its simplicity and transparency.

<sup>20</sup>Since all speakers are fluent in English, it can only remain speculative whether the English or the German lexicon was accessed for the use of such a word in a particular instance (cf. Haspelmath 2009: 40). Moreover, the decision not to exclude specific words, however common (e.g. *okay*), from the data selection ensured maximal transparency, as there was no need to establish a (necessarily subjective) definition of commonness.

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words in the *Duden* so that the method adopted here has no way of identifying established loans from Afrikaans *a priori*.

The single other-language items constitute the vast majority (96.8%) of the transferred lexical items in the corpus. The rest are tokens from sequences of two or more words for which the two other criteria for multi-word CS do not hold. Thus, these are tokens from sequences that consist of one or more integrated items, as in (4), or that are made-up entirely of dictionary-attested words, as in (5).<sup>21</sup>

- (4) weil      wir sonst      **absent ge-marked**      werdn  
because we otherwise **absent PTCP-marked** be.3PL.PRES.AUX  
'Because otherwise we will be marked as absent.' [NAM118W1]
- (5) achso    so da/ **okay okay cool**  
EXCLAM so (?) **okay okay cool**  
'Oh okay okay cool.' [NAM171W2]
- (6) ich      war                der                        **boss**  
I.NOM be.1SG.PRET.COP DEF.SG.MASC.NOM **boss**  
'I was the boss.' [NAM016W1]
- (7) ich      hab                viel    zu    wenig mit dem  
I.NOM have.1SG.PRES.AUX much too little with PRON.DEM.SG.MASC  
**ge-chill-t**  
**PTCP-chill-PTCP**  
'I have chilled with him far too rarely.' [NAM173M2]

Some similar studies have excluded other-language tokens from their data set for which no proper native alternative existed (cf. *Zenner et al. 2015*: 336; *Calude et al. 2017*). However, this must inevitably lead to problems when trying to define this criterion: What should count as a proper equivalent of a German word and what not?<sup>22</sup> The problem is that, presumably, there are almost no cases where an other-language word does not have at least a slightly different meaning, be it denotative or connotative, than its German 'counterpart' (cf. *Zimmer 2019*: 1185). Accordingly, I refrained from this practice, keeping the definition of the analyzed material simple and transparent. In the following section I present the results of the analyses conducted on this material.

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<sup>21</sup>Because of these features these sequences could be regarded as a series of borrowings.

<sup>22</sup>Cf. considerations in (the second part of) Fn. 20.

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## 5 Results

### 5.1 Frequency of transferred lexical items

The first part of this section is concerned with the frequency of transferred tokens in the speech of Namibian Germans in the *DNam* corpus. As assumed, the results show that adolescent speakers used more transferred lexical items than adult speakers. This is illustrated in Table 5.3. The relative frequency of transferred tokens (recall that instances of multi-word CS are excluded from this category) per 1000 tokens, displayed in square brackets, is higher by almost 20 tokens in the adolescents subcorpus. The absolute frequencies show the distribution of all tokens over the categories *transferred* and *other*. The difference in this distribution is statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 104.874$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ).<sup>23</sup> The effect size  $\varphi$  of 0.032 seems to indicate an extremely marginal effect since its potential values range between 0 and 1. Yet, it should be noted that in a corpus of conversations that are (predominantly) in German, the number of native German tokens is of course much higher than the number of transferred tokens. In this respect both samples would always resemble each other to a high degree. To illustrate this, consider the following hypothetical constellation. If the adults had used no transferred tokens at all and the adolescents had used the same amount as they actually did, the test statistics would be extremely high ( $\chi^2 > 772$ ) while the effect size would remain below 0.1 ( $\varphi = 0.085$ ). This has to be kept in mind for other effect sizes that I report in this section as well.

Table 5.3: Distribution of transferred and other tokens over adolescents and adults. [rel.] = relative freq. per 1000 tokens

|             | Tokens             |       |
|-------------|--------------------|-------|
|             | Transferred [rel.] | Other |
| Adolescents | 4582 [50.4]        | 86416 |
| Adults      | 454 [30.9]         | 14218 |

A look at the frequencies of the individual persons in each age group generally confirms the results presented above but adds further insight. It shows, for example, that all individuals used some amount of transferred tokens, although for a few individuals in both age groups this amount is very small (less than seven transferred tokens per 1000 tokens). Generally most adolescents used

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<sup>23</sup>For all  $\chi^2$  test results reported in this paper the degrees of freedom (df) equal 1.

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more transferred lexical items than the adults in the sample (see Figure 5.1). According to a one-tailed Wilcoxon rank-sum test, this is a significant difference ( $W = 466; p = 0.041$ ).<sup>24</sup> The individual frequencies also reveal that the three youngest adults have the highest relative frequency of transferred words. These are two 26-year-old men and a 31-year-old woman from Windhoek who took part in the same conversation together. Their use of transferred words is similar to, or even higher than, that of many adolescents and together they account for more than 45 percent of all transferred tokens uttered by adults. Without them, the adults corpus only contains a relative amount of 20.8 transferred tokens per 1000 tokens which increases the gap between adults and adolescents. This is further support for the assumption that age plays an important role when it comes to the frequency of transferred lexical items in NG speech. A more fine-grained analysis of age differences among adults would be desirable for spoken NG. Unfortunately, the limited number of adult speakers in this part of the *DNam* corpus renders such an investigation problematic at the moment.

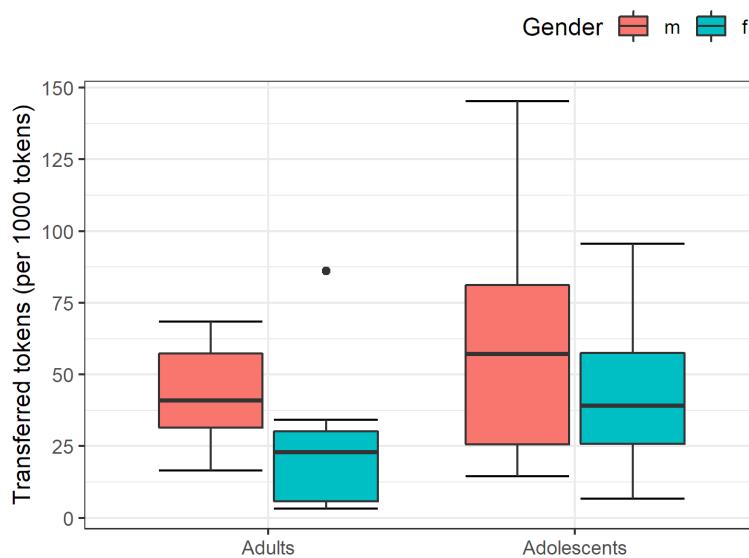


Figure 5.1: Individual relative frequencies of transferred tokens of male and female adults and adolescents.

<sup>24</sup>A one-tailed test was performed because the alternative hypothesis was directed ('Adolescent speakers use more transferred tokens than adult speakers'). This is also why the tests for gender differences reported below are one-tailed as well (Alternative hypothesis: 'Male speakers use more transferred tokens than female speakers').

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Now I turn to the frequency of use of transferred lexical items with respect to speaker gender. The corpus linguistic approach to the data shows that the male subcorpora contain relatively more transferred tokens than the female subcorpora in either age group. The difference is 17 tokens per 1000 tokens in the case of the adolescents and 22 tokens per 1000 tokens in the case of the adults (see the values in square brackets in Table 5.4 and Table 5.5, respectively). Since the adult subcorpus contains less transferred tokens overall, this means that the men's corpus contains almost twice as many transferred tokens as the women's corpus.<sup>25</sup> In both age groups the difference between the male and the female subcorpus is statistically significant according to the  $\chi^2$  test (adolescents:  $\chi^2 = 131.587$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ;  $\varphi = 0.038$ ; adults:  $\chi^2 = 53.961$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ;  $\varphi = 0.061$ ). The effect size is higher in the case of the adults.

Table 5.4: Distribution of tokens over boys and girls

| Tokens |                    |       |
|--------|--------------------|-------|
|        | Transferred [rel.] | Other |
| Boys   | 2190 [60.6]        | 33950 |
| Girls  | 2392 [43.6]        | 52466 |

Table 5.5: Distribution of tokens over men and women

| Tokens |                    |       |
|--------|--------------------|-------|
|        | Transferred [rel.] | Other |
| Men    | 233 [45.2]         | 4920  |
| Women  | 221 [23.2]         | 9298  |

So far the data seems to corroborate the assumption that male speakers use more transferred lexical items than female speakers. However, more than in the case of the age groups, the results of the analysis of individual frequencies for the gender groups deviate from the result of the corpus linguistic approach. Figure 5.1 displays the individual frequencies of transferred tokens among male and female adults (boxplots on the left) and adolescents (boxplots on the right). It visualizes the dispersion of values between individuals within and among groups. Among the women dispersion is larger than among the men. On the one hand, three women used less than seven transferred lexical items per 1000 tokens, on the other hand the adult speaker who used the most (86.0) is also a woman, namely the young women from Windhoek mentioned above. Dispersion is even higher among adolescents. In this age group, the frequencies of female speakers are

<sup>25</sup>Importantly, excluding the three young speakers from Windhoek (two male, one female) from the sample of adults does not change the relative 2:1-ratio of other-language items between men and women. The remaining men use 110 transferred and 3169 other tokens, the remaining women use 136 transferred and 8395 other tokens ( $\chi^2 = 35.993$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ;  $\varphi = 0.055$ ).

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slightly more uniform than those of males. The first quartile (the lower border of the boxes in Figure 5.1) lies at just below 26 transferred tokens per 1000 tokens for both boys and girls but the third quartile of the boys lies at 81.1, exceeding the girls' third quartile by a margin of more than 23. Importantly, these individual results show that substantial differences exist also within the gender groups of each age group. Not all male and not all female speakers behave similar to one another. Further, even though the median is higher by approximately 18 for male speakers in either age group, applying a one-tailed Wilcoxon rank-sum test renders results that are slightly above the significance level of 5 percent (adolescents:  $W = 377; p = 0.079$ ; adults:  $W = 37; p = 0.054$ ). That means, on an individual level, one cannot speak of a significant difference between male and female speakers in the same age group.

Concerning the relationship between speakers of the same gender in different age groups, it can be said that girls and women in the corpus behave less similar to each other than men and boys. In Figure 5.1, this is illustrated by the very small overlap between the boxes for the interquartile range of girls and women and it is reflected in a significant result of a one-tailed rank-sum test ( $W = 186; p = 0.025$ ). The two groups behaving most similar are teenage girls and adult men who have almost identical medians (~40) and a similar interquartile range.

The analysis has already demonstrated that the quantity of transferred tokens is not a simple function of a single sociolinguistic variable. For the adolescents, I explored this further by considering an additional factor, namely the type of school attended by the speakers. I chose this variable (a) because school is the everyday social environment for students and this environment may influence their language use, and (b) because the schools attended by the speakers differ with respect to the role of German in the institution. That is, speakers are subject to different amounts of instruction in German and in other languages. The schools that speakers attended fall into three categories:<sup>26</sup>

1. The school receives funding from the Federal Republic of Germany, several subjects are taught in German: German Foreign School (*Deutsche Auslandsschule*, GFS).
2. The school offers the subject *Deutsch als Muttersprache* ('German as a mother language', DaM), no other subjects are taught in German: DaM-school

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<sup>26</sup>Previous tests for each individual school suggested that students of schools falling into one of these three categories behave more similarly to each other than to students from another group.

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3. The school does not offer any instruction in German: no-German-school.  
(Note, all students in the sample who attended this kind of school did, however, take private German lessons.)

The *Deutsche Höhere Privatschule* in Windhoek is the only school in Namibia belonging to the first category. Community members widely consider it an important institution for ('good') German in Namibia. Most students in the sample went to a school in the second category with some instruction in German, while a few students only took private German lessons (see Table 5.6). As mentioned earlier, the distribution of participants over gender and school type is not equal.

Table 5.6: Adolescent speakers per category of school

|           | Female | Male | Total |
|-----------|--------|------|-------|
| GFS       | 11     | 6    | 17    |
| DaM       | 19     | 9    | 28    |
| No German | 2      | 4    | 6     |

The results of analyzing the individual frequencies show an interesting pattern (Figure 5.2). There are significant differences between the three groups corresponding quite obviously to the status of German in the school.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, gender differences within groups are not significant. The median differs by less than three tokens per 1000 tokens (girls > boys) for the GFS and by less than ten tokens (boys > girls) for the DaM-schools. For students attending schools without German instruction the gender differences are larger with the boys' median being higher by a margin of 24. However, it has to be noted that this sample only contains four boys and two girls which is also why the Wilcoxon rank-sum test could not provide a significant result. By contrast, the corpus linguistic approach does provide a significant difference for this sample ( $\chi^2 = 25.054$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ;  $\varphi = 0.042$ ). For the other two school categories the corpus linguistic approaches results are as follows: There is no significant difference between boys and girls from the largest group, the DaM-schools ( $p = 0.997$ ). For the GFS-school this approach indicates a significant difference ( $\chi^2 = 25.431$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ;  $\varphi = 0.028$ ), but as Figure 5.1 shows this is due to a single male student who exceeds all of his fellow male students (and most of his fellow female students) by

<sup>27</sup> A one-tailed Wilcoxon rank-sum test gives the following results. GFS vs. DaM:  $W = 428$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; DaM vs. No German:  $W = 141$ ,  $p = 0.004$ .

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at least 50 transferred tokens per 1000. That is, the data really only suggests a difference between boys and girls in the smallest category, the no-German schools. Note that this school category is also the only one in which there is an overproportional amount of male speakers. That is, the results for all boys and all girls presented above seem to be somewhat skewed by the fact that more than one in five boys in the sample goes to a no-German-school but only one in 16 girls. Therefore, exploring the additional sociolinguistic variable school type revealed that the findings concerning gender differences for adolescents should be treated with caution.

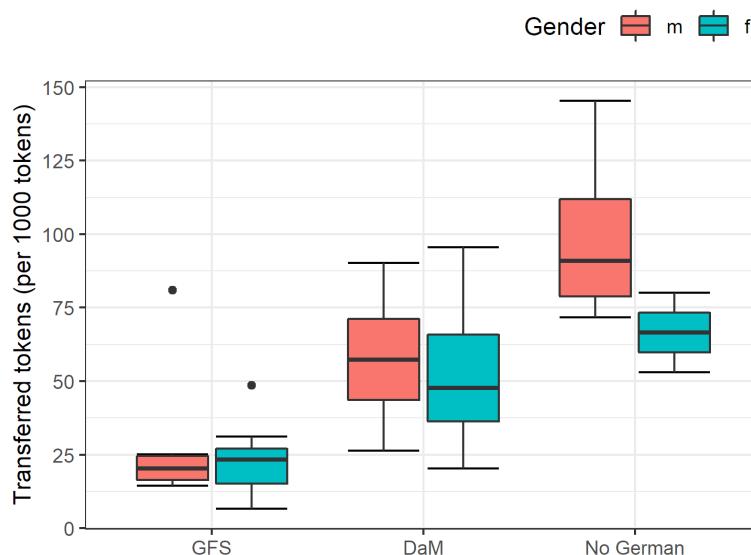


Figure 5.2: Individual relative frequencies of transferred tokens of male and female adolescents by school category.

Unfortunately, a similar analysis for the adult speakers, which would focus on occupation and workplace, was not possible due to the small sample size of only 14 speakers. An observation suggesting that these aspects might well be relevant is that three women in the sample are school or pre-school teachers and two of them are among the women mentioned above who used very few transferred lexical items.

### 5.2 Proportion of donor languages

As an addition to the frequency analysis of transferred tokens, I investigated how many of the transferred types and tokens are taken from English, Afrikaans and

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other Namibian languages. The results show that English and Afrikaans are by far the two most important donor languages in the data. 98.6 percent of the 1147 transferred types used by adolescents originate from one of the two languages. In the adult corpus, this applies to all except one of the 210 types. Thus, Bantu and Khoisan languages only play a minor role in the data as compared to the two Germanic languages which is why I concentrate on the latter in the following. The columns *E* and *A* in Table 5.7 display the absolute frequencies of English and Afrikaans types and tokens in each of the four speaker groups, the percentages represent the proportion of English vs. Afrikaans types/tokens. These results show that, consistently, English is the dominant donor language in the data. In the corpora of all four speaker groups, the proportion of English types and tokens is higher than that of Afrikaans types and tokens. However, the ratios of English and Afrikaans differ somewhat between groups. English is most dominant in the girls subcorpus, followed by boys, then women and finally men. That is, with respect to all transferred types/tokens, adults used more material of Afrikaans origin than adolescents, and in either age group male speakers used more material of Afrikaans origin than female speakers with a larger difference between men and women.<sup>28</sup> For tokens (but not for types), all of these differences are significant.

Table 5.7: Absolute frequency and proportion of English and Afrikaans types and tokens

|       | Types |    |      |      | Tokens |     |      |      |
|-------|-------|----|------|------|--------|-----|------|------|
|       | E     | A  | % E  | % A  | E      | A   | % E  | % A  |
| Boys  | 531   | 87 | 85.9 | 14.1 | 1782   | 363 | 83.1 | 16.9 |
| Girls | 614   | 81 | 88.4 | 11.7 | 2097   | 278 | 88.3 | 11.7 |
| Men   | 98    | 37 | 72.6 | 27.4 | 156    | 76  | 67.2 | 32.8 |
| Women | 85    | 19 | 81.7 | 18.3 | 178    | 39  | 82.0 | 18.0 |

The dominance of English partly goes back to the use of dictionary-attested forms. For example, the 452 occurrences of the type *okay* account for almost 9

<sup>28</sup>It is a different question how much Afrikaans-origin transferred tokens are used with respect to all tokens (not only with respect to all transferred tokens as above). This has to do with the fact that adults use less transferred tokens overall. That is why women have a lower relative frequency (4.1) of Afrikaans tokens (per 1000 tokens) than girls (5.1) and boys (10.0). Despite the fact that men also use less transferred tokens than adolescents, they still have the highest proportion of Afrikaans-origin transferred tokens per 1000 tokens (14.7).

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percent of all transferred tokens. However, as Table 5.8 displays, non-attested forms make up the majority of English-origin material in all groups. Even if only non-attested English-origin tokens/types are regarded, these are still more frequent than Afrikaans-origin types and tokens. Table 5.8 also shows that, while the ratio of attested to non-attested English-origin types is rather similar across groups, the ratio of attested to non-attested *tokens* differs significantly in both age groups. Girls use about ten percent more attested tokens than boys ( $\chi^2 = 47.496; p < 0.001; \varphi = 0.111$ ) and women about 14 percent more than men ( $\chi^2 = 7.317; p = 0.007; \varphi = 0.148$ ).

Table 5.8: Distribution and proportion of English types and tokens in terms of dictionary attestation (att) or non-attestation (n-att)

|       | Types |       |       |         | Tokens |       |       |         |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------|--------|-------|-------|---------|
|       | att   | n-att | % att | % n-att | att    | n-att | % att | % n-att |
| Boys  | 139   | 392   | 26.2  | 73.8    | 402    | 1380  | 22.6  | 77.4    |
| Girls | 153   | 461   | 24.9  | 75.1    | 682    | 1415  | 32.5  | 67.5    |
| Men   | 22    | 76    | 22.5  | 77.6    | 46     | 110   | 29.5  | 70.5    |
| Women | 24    | 61    | 28.2  | 71.8    | 78     | 100   | 43.8  | 56.2    |

The overall tendency concerning the differences between male and female speakers with respect to the proportion of English and Afrikaans words is somehow reflected in the use of the most frequent Afrikaans-origin type, *net*. The word meaning ‘just’ or ‘only’, as in (8), occurs 199 times as a transferred token in the entire corpus.

- (8) wir wolltn            **net** essn    gehn normal un das  
 we-NOM want-3PL.PRET just eat-INF go-INF normally and that  
 war                    so fancy  
 be-3SG.PRET.COP so fancy  
 ‘We just wanted to go out for an ordinary dinner and that was so fancy.’  
 [NAM092W1]

The relative frequency of *net* among male speakers is about twice as high as among female speakers in either age group. Importantly, *net* is also more frequent among male speakers relative to the Standard German alternatives *nur* and *bloß*. This can be shown by dividing the token counts for *net* by the sum of the token counts of all three words with similar meaning. The resulting proportion of *net* is 45.3 percent for boys and 30.4 percent for girls, 33.3 percent for

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men and 16.4 percent for women. The type is also more widespread among male speakers: Four out of six men and 17 out of 19 boys used it (89.5%), while only half of the eight women and 19 out of 32 girls (59.4%) used *net* at least once.

Much more could be said about the use of individual lexical items by different speakers. However, since this paper has limited space, I now come to its final section for a summary and discussion.

## 6 Summary and discussion

Concerning the key aspect of the study, the quantity of transferred lexical items (other-language tokens, excluding instances of multi-word CS) in free conversations, the most obvious finding is that the phenomenon is ubiquitous in informal Namibian German. To some extent all speakers used transferred words although the quantity varied substantially between individuals. Due to the perception of mixed and unmixed language in the NG community, a high frequency of transferred lexical items can be interpreted as a stronger deviation from the standard than a low frequency. The assumption that young speakers use more transferred lexical items than older speakers was generally supported by the data analysis. The results for the adults indicated that a more fine-grained analysis of language use by age would be desirable if the size of the data set allowed it. The results concerning the assumption that male speakers used more transferred words than female speakers were less clear. The analysis suggests that the assumption is not true independent of other sociolinguistic variables. This became apparent by looking at gender and age as well as at gender and school. For gender and age it was observed that, overall, teenage girls behaved rather similar to the group of adult men, while boys used the most and women the least relative amount of transferred tokens. Thus, within both age groups, male speakers used more transferred lexical items. However, whether this constitutes a significant difference depends on the statistical approach to the data. Namely, as opposed to age differences, gender differences were only significant with the broader ‘corpus linguistic’ approach. The reason for this were substantial intra-group differences. Further, the analysis for gender and school indicated that gender differences in the group of adolescents may be an artifact of the sample composition. I observed that there are no significant gender difference for speakers of the DaM-schools and that differences at the GFS go back to a single student. The differences are larger for speakers attending a school without instruction in German, with boys using more transferred lexical items than girls, but this subsample is also the smallest. Importantly, it was observed that, independent of gender, students who

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go to different types of schools (concerning the role of German) behave quite differently from one another. Students from the prestigious GFS, who receive the highest amount of German-language instruction, stood out as generally using very little transferred lexical items, while students with no subjects in German used the most. As the latter is the only group with more boys than girls the overall results for boys and girls are somewhat skewed in the direction that boys use more transferred tokens. Generally, this underlines the importance of a sophisticated quantitative analysis that takes into account different metadata and individual speaker behavior. The findings for the schools are also important in and of themselves. They strongly suggest that the frequency with which a speaker uses other languages than German in their everyday life influences their use of transferred lexical items. Further, since the schools have different reputations and orientations, the school a student attends likely says something about how important (Standard) German is for their parents. That is, these students are presumably confronted with different language ideologies in their home too, which they might have adopted.

In addition to the general frequency of transferred tokens, the role of donor languages was investigated. In the corpus data, English turned out to dominate quantitatively as a donor language, followed by Afrikaans, while other Namibian languages played only a minor role. The finding that English is more influential than Afrikaans is particularly noteworthy since it is at variance with previous accounts of the role of donor languages in Namibian German, including the recent quantitative analysis by *Zimmer forthcoming*). A reason for this may lie in the different data Zimmer and I used. Zimmer's study is based on Namibian German translations of "Wenker sentences", that is, on productions that are less spontaneous than informal conversations and might be subject to stylization.<sup>29</sup> Concerning the dominance of Afrikaans loanwords across all age groups in his data, *Zimmer (forthcoming)* himself suggests that this could be "an artefact of the design: maybe Afrikaans words are considered particularly salient and are used in the translations to emphasise the deviance of Namdeutsch from European German". This assumption is corroborated by several interview statements from community members in the *DNam* corpus. When asked about vocabulary they perceive as typical for NG, speakers predominantly mentioned terms originating from Afrikaans, such as *braaien* (see §2), *net* (see §5.2), *mooi* (see example 3), *pad* ('road'), *lekker* (in the sense of 'good'/'pleasant'). Yet, spontaneous language in

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<sup>29</sup>Cf. also Radke's (2017: 116) finding that the most frequent transferred items in highly stylized newspaper commentaries in the German-language Namibian newspaper *Allgemeine Zeitung* are predominantly of Afrikaans origin.

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the *DNam* corpus turned out to be influenced by English to a much larger extent than by Afrikaans. An explanation for this apparent mismatch might be that words from Afrikaans are more salient because they are older since Afrikaans was more important than English until Namibian independence in 1990. Speakers may still have a knowledge of many Afrikaans words because these used to be more common in the past, therefore perceive them as salient, and accordingly put them to use in translations of "Wenker sentences". At the same time, Afrikaans words might be declining in actual NG language use which would explain the results of this study. This might also explain the fact that younger speakers used even less transferred words from Afrikaans than older speakers in their informal conversations. It would, however, not account for the differences between male and female speakers in both age groups. Still, the salience of Afrikaans might play a role here as well. Afrikaans words are perceived as indexical of a traditional Namibian German identity, which, as I have argued above, seems to have connotations of stereotypical masculinity. Therefore, sounding 'typically Namibian' might overlap with sounding 'typically male' and speakers who seek to construct a traditional male identity might do so by using features also indexical of a traditional Namibian German identity. By contrast, English is presumably rather associated with modern Namibia and a globalized, English-speaking world. Thus, for speakers orienting themselves away from traditional views and structures in the community, English might be more attractive. This could be a reason why young female community members are particularly inclined towards English-origin lexical material.<sup>30</sup> It would be necessary to further investigate these hypotheses and the assumptions I made. One could, for example, study the community attitudes towards English and Afrikaans on the one hand and towards (traditional) gender roles on the other and explore whether these attitudes are reflected in speakers' language use. This study has indicated that there might be an interesting sociolinguistic dynamic at work.

Although I have focused on the aspects of gender and age, this study has also indicated that these are not the only aspects that play a role for the use of transferred lexical items in NG. The findings concerning schools suggest that everyday language use is of importance. This also raises the question of differences between urban and rural dwellers because Namibian German farmers often speak Afrikaans with black farm laborers and with farmers belonging to the Afrikaans-speaking community, whereas in cities English prevails as the language of business. Aside from the place of work and living, language use with family and

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<sup>30</sup>It was also observed that female speakers use significantly more dictionary-attested English-origin tokens than male speakers in the same age group. That is, in this respect the speech of female speakers appears to be closer to the prestige variety Standard German.

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friends is certainly another aspect to focus on in future investigations. The role and interaction of various sociolinguistic variables like the ones discussed here in the use of transferred lexical items could further be investigated using a multifactorial statistical model.

This paper is concluded with some remarks concerning its methodological aspects. I think, with this study, I have made a case for a careful approach to corpus data. When studying some phenomenon in a corpus that contains productions by a number of speakers, researchers should not only look at aggregated totals but also at the individual behavior of all speakers. Only then it is possible to assess how widespread the phenomenon in question is and how strongly its occurrence varies within the corpus (cf. Gries 2010: 274). Lastly, as a prerequisite for the analysis, I have presented my approach to categorizing other-language material in the corpus with the help of a simple annotation system. Note again that the results presented in this paper concern a subset of the other-language material in the corpus selected on the basis of that annotation, excluding all tokens treated as multi-word code-switches. Certainly, studies based on different selections of other-language data are conceivable. As the annotations will be available for users of the *DNam* corpus in the future, it will be possible for researchers interested in language mixing phenomena in NG to choose their own set of other-language data. I hope that this paper has helped to stimulate interest in such further research and look forward to its results.

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## Chapter 6

# The role of language contact in mixed-mode group communication: On ingroup construction through multilingualism among the German-Namibian diaspora

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This paper analyzes the role of multilingual slang within mixed-mode groups through the example of the German Namibian diaspora. While digital single-mode groups only exist in computer-mediated communication (CMC), mixed-mode groups are involved in both CMC and face-to-face communication (FtF). This article focusses on the latter type of groups and addresses the question as to how contact-induced vernacular items are resemiotized from FtF to public and from spoken to written mode within these groups. It is hypothesized that the usage of multilingual slang in FtF mode and its corresponding group cohesion contribute to the frequency of slang within CMC. Furthermore, this study compares a mixed-mode group with a digital single-mode group to investigate the effects that the missing social contact within the latter group has on the tendency of its members to use multilingual slang in CMC. The German Namibian diaspora and their language practices are particularly suited to address this topic as they draw on multiple linguistic resources in their FtF and CMC networks with Afrikaans, German, and English being the main sources. In addition, Namibia's multilingual setting has led to the emergence of a German-based variety, commonly referred to as Namdeutsch. The resulting, multilingual practices are highly in-group specific. The study includes a mixed-method approach combining traditional FtF participant observation and modern correlation analysis of CMC data. The aim of this study is not only to shed light on the role of multilingual speech within mixed-mode groups. It also strives to contribute to the understanding of the complex dynamics that occur within diasporic settings. While recognizing the need for multiparadigmaticity in sociological

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and linguistic theory, this study stresses the importance of holistic approaches to analyze and understand language in social contexts because complex systems like diasporic groups are always more than just the sum of their component parts. In that sense, multilingual language practices are considered the result of diachronic and synchronic social interaction.

## 1 Introduction

“In a 1973 lecture Dr. Paul Brandes of the University of North Carolina speculated that a link might exist between the internal cohesion of a group and the slang, or “in-group speech”, that the group evolves” (Weinberg 1979: 55). Subsequently, Brandes and his colleagues set up a research project which eventually proved that this assumption was true. As a result, they developed the Group Cohesion Checklist (GROCC), a “tool for the measurement of cohesion and its slang through the investigation of group slang” (Weinberg 1979: 55). Ever since, the idea that slang provides a means for groups to function in unity has constantly reappeared, especially in the field of sociology. “Eble (1996) stresses [...] its function ‘to establish and reinforce social identity or cohesiveness within a group’” (Fasola 2011: 4; cf. Eble 1996: 11). And Mattiello (2008: 32) notes that “slang is ascribed the two opposite purposes of keeping insiders together and outsiders out” (cf. Fasola 2011: 4). In short, slang serves to express, strengthen and maintain group cohesion, a phenomenon that Weinberg (1979: 55) defines as “the unifying force of group syntality”.

However, since the GROCC was established in the 1970s, society has significantly changed, and new types of social groups have emerged. Due to the evolution of new media, many social groups of today choose to communicate within two different sorts of modes: the traditional *face-to-face* mode (FtF) is one of them; computer-mediated communication (CMC) being the other, alternative mode with a profound influence on society. Groups of today can therefore be classified according to the mode(s) they use: while mixed-mode groups use both FtF communication and CMC, digital single-mode groups exclusively communicate in CMC and do not meet FtF.<sup>1</sup> This development leads to the following question: to what extent do linguistic habits in FtF affect CMC-based speech within mixed-mode groups? This article addresses this question through the example of

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<sup>1</sup>Groups that exclusively communicate in FtF mode can also be referred to as single-mode groups. However, since the digitalization is constantly increasing on a global scale this type of single-mode group is becoming rare.

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the German-Namibian diaspora, e.g. German-speaking Namibians who migrated to Germany for study or work (cf. Radke *in press*). It is hypothesized that contact-induced vernacular items are resemiotized from FtF to public and from spoken to written mode when the mixed-mode group communicates in CMC. Thereby, these items are highlighted as ingroup identity markers, as illustrated in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: The hypothesized dynamics between different modes in mixed-mode groups.

| mixed-mode groups (in language-contact settings) |                 |   |
|--|-----------------|---|
| ↓  | ↔               | ↓   |
| face-to-face mode                                | resemiotization | CMC mode                                  |
| ↓  |                 | ↓   |
| high slang frequency<br>(identity marker)        |                 | high slang frequency<br>(identity marker) |

The German-Namibian diaspora and their linguistic output in computer-mediated communication are particularly suited to empirically apply the given model, as they meet all necessary requirements: they have established a mixed-mode group named *NAMSA*<sup>2</sup>, as well as a single-mode group by the name of *Namibianer in Deutschland (NiD)* to maintain their Networks of Exchange (NoE).<sup>3</sup> Although, this article focuses on mixed-mode communication, §4 draws a comparison between both types of groups. It is expected that NiD deploys a less frequent degree of multilingual slang due to the lack social contact within FtF settings and a potentially lower degree of social group cohesion. Therefore, the language use in NiD is expected to be more standard-oriented and to lack slang items and traces of language contact.

The German-Namibian diaspora draws their slang from multilingual settings, with Afrikaans, German and English as the main source languages. As a result, German Namibians have developed a wide range of Namibia-specific language practices ranging from ad-hoc borrowings and code-switching/mixing to Namdeutsch (Böhm 2003; Dück 2018; Gretschel 1995; Kellermeier-Rehbein 2015, 2016; Nöckler 1963; Pütz 1991; Wiese et al. 2014, 2017; Wiese & Bracke 2019; Zimmer

<sup>2</sup>NAMSA is an acronym for *Namibia* and *Südafrika*. Up until Namibian independence in 1990, the event was known as SWASA, an acronym for *Südwest-Afrika* and *Südafrika*.

<sup>3</sup>See Rocker (2021 [this volume]) on East Frisians in Pennsylvania and their correspondences in a German newspaper for a historic example of a German-speaking minority using written media and communication to maintain a sense of belonging and identity.

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2019). Bracke (2021 [this volume]) shows that younger speaker tend to use *Namdeutsch* more frequently than older speakers while gender has not a clear effect on the speaker's tendency to use Namibia-specific characteristics in their speech. Kellermeier-Rehbein uses the term *Namslang* to denote Namdeutsch and defines it as „eine durch Sprachkontakt entstandene Nonstandardvarietät der deutschen Sprache in Namibia, die durch zahlreiche Entlehnungen von sprachlichen Einheiten und Strukturen aus dem Englischen und Afrikaans gekennzeichnet ist“ („A non-standard variety of the German language in Namibia created through language contact, which is characterized by numerous borrowing of language units and structures from English and Afrikaans“) (Kellermeier-Rehbein 2016: 228; cf. Radke in press). Stuhl & Zimmer (2021 [this volume]) argues that *Namdeutsch* is phonetically similar to Northern German and bases her findings on the analysis of two characteristic vowels and four consonants.

In the given diasporic setting, Namibia-specific language practices are considered a form of slang. Lantto (2014: 634) cites “Andersson and Trudgill (1990:82–84) [who] suggest that slang can be created by inventing new expressions, by changing the old ones and by borrowing.” Then Lantto continues: “I would add code-switching to this list” 2014: 634. The current article draws on the broad definition proposed by Lantto and thus considers the full range of Namibia-specific language practices.

Hence, the German-Namibian diaspora is seen as a multilingual speech community that uses community-specific language practices rather than separate language systems. To give three examples: first, metrolingualism, which stresses linguistic fluidity in urban settings (Otsuji & Pennycook 2010). Second, the notion of networked multilingualism, which “encompasses everything language users do with the entire range of linguistic resources within three sets of constraints: mediation of written language by digital technologies, access to network resources, and orientation to networked audiences” (Androuloupoulos 2015: 185; Radke in press).

The third example refers to the diasystematic construction grammar or DCxG. It “assumes that multilingual speakers and communities organise their grammatical knowledge on the basis of the available input [...] regardless of language boundaries” (Höder 2018a: 2). Therefore, DCxG provides a means to analyze linguistically hybrid forms, amongst others (cf. Höder 2018b: 23). (1) shows an example of such a form taken from German Namibian CMC.

- (1)    a. Original: ag nee
- b. German: ach nee
- c. Afrikaans: ag

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- d. English: I see

From a DCxG perspective, the frame of the chunk is a language-unspecific diaconstruction, including a language-specific idioconstruction, that is  $\langle ch \rangle$  for German and  $\langle g \rangle$  for Afrikaans. Both variants exist in German Namibian CMC. They clearly indicate the language of origin, as they are subject to language-specific spelling conventions. For this reason, DCxG refers to them as language markers (Höder 2018b: 23). More specifically, (1) contains a graphemic language marker since it does not imply phonetic but rather graphemic variation. An DCxG analysis of these hybrid forms is provided in (2).

- (2) a. Partially schematic diaconstruction: [a\_\_c<sub>ch</sub>, g nee ,I see']
- b. Graphemic language marker: [C(<sub>ch</sub>, g:g) ⟨C<sub>Afrikaans</sub>⟩]
- c. Graphemic language marker:[C(<sub>ch</sub>, g: ch) ⟨C<sub>german</sub>⟩]

(2) shows how the multilingual setting of Namibia is reflected in hybrid forms on a graphemic level. The component \_\_c<sub>ch, g</sub> indicates a consonant space which can orthographically either be filled with  $\langle ch \rangle$  or  $\langle g \rangle$  (see Höder 2018b: 16). It shows that both variants ach nee and ag nee coexist in German Namibian CMC.<sup>4</sup> The variation between them can, therefore, be considered a community-specific practice within the German-Namibian diaspora and is part of what Höder describes as a cross-language constructional network (“[...] des sprachübergreifenden konstruktionellen Netzwerks”) of a multilingual community (see Höder 2018b: 15).<sup>5</sup>

The German-Namibian diaspora thus combines all necessary preconditions to test the given model outlined in Table 6.1. In doing so, I have conducted research at the interface of sociology, social psychology and sociolinguistics. The common epistemological interest of these disciplines focuses on the relationships between individuals and groups in social interaction. Sociology aims to explain human behavior through structural variables such as social norms and roles, whereas social psychology rather focuses on inner processes of the human mind, e.g. goals and attitudes (cf. Jonas & Stroebe 2014: 11). This paper combines both perspectives to shed more light on the role and function of language in society through the example of the German-Namibian community. In doing so, it builds a bridge to the field of sociolinguistics.

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<sup>4</sup>There are several other hybrid pairs used in German Namibian CMC that can be analyzed in the same way, e.g. *achso/agso*, *Juni/Junie*, *Musik/musiek*, *bis dann/bis dan*, *na klar/na klaar*.

<sup>5</sup>For an in-depth analysis on the constructional perspective and its role in analyzing grammatical arealisms in Danish and German, see Höder (2021 [this volume]).

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## 2 Methodology

Not surprisingly, a study of mixed-mode groups requires a mixed-method approach, considering both FtF and CMC data. I therefore chose to combine FtF-based participant observation with correlation analysis of CMC data originating from the same group. Participant observation was conducted during the annual three-day NAMSA event in June 2019. It included direct observation, collective discussions, and participation in the activities of the group. These methods are part of the *participant as observer* role, which is one of the four major roles identified by Raymond Gold (1958) and Buford Junker (1960).<sup>6</sup> It also includes that respondents are aware of the research being conducted. This approach “may be considered moderate participation by Spradley” (Howell et al. 2018:211; cf. Spradley 1980: 58), with its main objective to maintain “a balance between ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ roles that allows a good combination of involvement and necessary detachment to remain objective” (Howell et al. 2018: 211; cf. Spradley 1980: 58). Since NAMSA is an ingroup event par excellence, it was possible to obtain a genuine impression of ingroup speech practices, e.g. the usage of diasporic Namdeutsch.

However, participant observation bears the risk of collecting data with a subjective bias. For this reason, the applicability of my analysis was evaluated based on a three-fold process: by member-checking, by participatory peer-reviewing and by non-participatory peer-reviewing. Member-checking included the feedback of German-Namibians on the descriptive validity of §3. Participatory peer-reviewing included the feedback of a fellow outgroup member with profound knowledge of Namibian cultures and who was present during participant observation.<sup>7</sup> Non-participatory peer-reviewing included the feedback of fellow (socio-)linguists during three conferences in Berlin, Hanover and Göttingen.<sup>8</sup> These member checks aim to enhance the internal validity of the collected data and the analysis presented in this paper.

Not surprisingly, FtF-based participant observation could only be conducted for NAMSA, as NiD is a CMC-only group with no FtF-platform. However, the application of correlation analysis to CMC data covered both groups, pointing out

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<sup>6</sup>See also <https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences-and-law/sociology-and-social-reform/sociology-general-terms-and-concepts-87> [8 November 2019].

<sup>7</sup>Many thanks to Merrick Nock for his feedback.

<sup>8</sup>Many thanks to Prof. Horst Simon and Dr. Christian Zimmer for inviting me to deliver a talk during the conference *German(ic) in language contact: Grammatical and sociolinguistic dynamics* (Berlin, 3–5 July 2019) and the *Sommerkolloquium* (Hanover, 12–14 July 2019). Furthermore, I owe many thanks to Klaus A. Hess and the *Deutsch-Namibische Gesellschaft e.V.* for inviting me to speak at their *Wochenendseminar* (Göttingen, Germany, 27 October 2019).

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the importance of a mixed-method approach for this study (see §4.2). The CMC data originate from social media and cover the linguistic output within NAMSA and NiD, as well as the sociodemographic metadata of their users, such as place of origin, place of residence and gender. The data were automatically exported to a spreadsheet using the add-on programme *Web Scraper*. Subsequently, the linguistic output could be annotated and correlated to the corresponding sociodemographic metadata. The resulting corpus consists of 2,178 comments: 67% or 1,451 comments were exclusively published in Standard German whereas 33% or 727 comments include Namibia-specific language practices on the orthographic, lexical or morphosyntactic level (see Radke *in press*).

This study thus combines traditional methods with new approaches to collect and analyze data. Participant observation was formalized in the 1950s, whereas CMC-based correlation analysis has gained significant importance in recent years. The mixed-method approach not only allows for a description of trans-national networks within the German-Namibian community, it also sheds more light on the dynamics within mixed-mode groups and on the role of slang for the formation of ingroups and outgroups (§3.2). First, I will turn to the findings made during participant observation (§3.1 and §3.2).

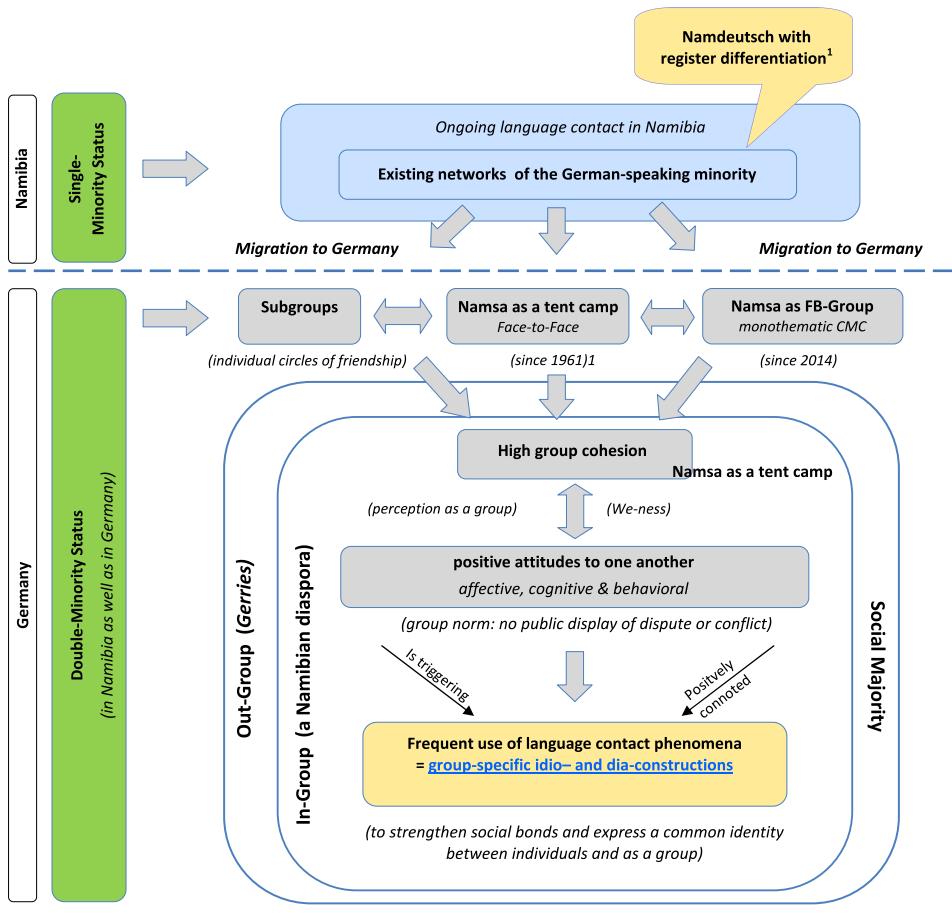
## 3 The dynamics of a mixed-mode group

### 3.1 FtF communication within NAMSA

In this section, I will address the model outlined in Figure 6.1 to lay bare the multilingual dynamics within the mixed-mode group of NAMSA. It is hypothesized that contact-induced vernacular items are resemiotized from FtF to public and from spoken to written mode when the group communicates in CMC. Thereby, these items are highlighted as ingroup identity markers and frequently reoccur in CMC. The following figure shows the interplay between FfF and CMC. It also addresses the linguistic behavior of ingroup members and its social psychological and sociological parameters.

Figure 6.1 shows that the transnational networks of German Namibians are based in an ongoing language contact situation in Sub-Saharan Africa. Besides Namibia, they extend across several other countries with Germany and South Africa being the main destinations for the German Namibian diaspora. The most influential contact languages are Afrikaans and English; indigenous languages of Namibia have had limited influence on their ingroup speech (Böhm 2003; Dück 2018; Kellermeier-Rehbein 2015; 2016; Nöckler 1963; Pütz 1991; Wiese et al. 2014;

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<sup>1</sup>(see Wiese & Bracke 2019)

Figure 6.1: The social context of Namdeutsch

## 6 *The role of language contact in mixed-mode group communication*

2017; Wiese & Bracke 2019; Zimmer forthcoming; Zimmer et al. 2020). The sustainable language contact has led to the evolution of the vernacular *Namdeutsch*. Trans-national networks between Germany and Namibia were formalized in the early 1960s by an initiative of Rosemarie Bernhardt, a young German Namibian who established the annual SWASA event (since 1990: NAMSA) during Pentecost (cf. Radke 2019a). In the first decade of its existence, the network was maintained by letter mail. With the rise of CMC, the communication and the organization of NAMSA became digitized, first through its own forum and later on social media. In 2014, a digital NAMSA group was established on Facebook, reaching the landmark of 1,300 members five years later. Thus, NAMSA started as a single-mode group in the 1960s for mostly young Namibians, supported by postcard communication, and transformed into a mixed-mode group some 40 years later.

Due to technological progress, the CMC-mode has gradually gained importance for the NAMSA group (Radke in press). Both FtF communication and CMC contribute to the development of social group cohesion, especially during the annual NAMSA event. There, members develop, maintain and deepen their sense of ‘we-ness’ and belonging to the group as a whole. They deploy a positive attitude towards one another, which is expressed in their affective, behavioral, and cognitive manners: they expect to meet old friends, make new ones, have a good time and exchange thoughts about Namibia-related topics in the middle of Germany. These expectations are central to their cognition. They are either based on prior experiences at NAMSA or created through story-telling of friends and acquaintances and mediated through social media. Cognition and affection interact with each other and so most participants expressed feelings of pleasant anticipation and joy when talking about (the upcoming edition of) NAMSA. Whoever they meet during the event will most likely be an ingroup member and will be treated as such. A positive attitude is shared by the overwhelming majority of the group members and leads to a central group norm, implying that public display of dispute or conflict is not welcomed. At least some of the group members explicitly referred to this norm, which they greet with approval. Consequently, behavior violating the norm meets disapproval by other members, in FtF communication as well as in CMC. Although the multilingual inventory for polemic language use is at their disposal (especially in Afrikaans with its descriptive compounds and phrasemes), ingroup members hardly ever use it in public FtF settings and CMC.<sup>9</sup>

The aforementioned environment provides an ideal setting to trigger the use of language contact phenomena or Namibia-specific language practices, such as

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<sup>9</sup>This observation does not necessarily mean that the *no-conflict* norm also privately applies to all individual circles of friendships linked to the group at any given time.

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code-switching, ad-hoc borrowing and the use of Namdeutsch to strengthen social bonds and express a common identity between group members and the group as a whole. Key slang words reflect the construction of an ingroup and outgroup on a linguistic level: the social majority in Germany is referred to as *Gerries*, whereas ingroup members are often addressed as *Oukies*. Both terms are a result of language contact in Namibia: *Oukie* is an Afrikaans borrowing (see §3.4), whereas *Gerrie* has evolved from the English word *German* during World War One.<sup>10</sup>

The dynamics of ingroup construction are further supported by the fact that the German-Namibian diaspora represents what I call a double minority: they amount to 1% of the population in their home country and thus draw on existing networks that are relatively easy to survey. Upon arrival in Germany, many of them indeed speak the language of the social majority (at least in its standard form) and have a sense of *German-ness*. However, they grew up in Sub-Saharan Africa, in a country with different societal, economic and environmental conditions. Hence, they are German-Namibians,<sup>11</sup> but not German-Germans, which makes many of them feel different (to a greater or lesser degree) from the (perceived) social majority in Germany.<sup>12</sup> During collective discussions, respondents confirmed that they had felt foreign in the initial stages of their stay in Germany. Therefore, the double minority status promotes ingroup construction and, in fact, triggers the use of language contact phenomena.

### 3.2 Ingroup and outgroup communication

The following figure shows the typical characteristics of ingroup and outgroup communication that are maintained by the transnational networks of the German Namibians in both CMC and FtF settings.

The construction of an ingroup and an outgroup prompts two different linguistic styles among the community: ingroup communication features the frequent use of Namibia-specific language practices, whereas outgroup communication is predominantly characterized by Standard German and a (conscious) striving to avoid Namibia-specific language practices, e.g. slang. This observation applies to

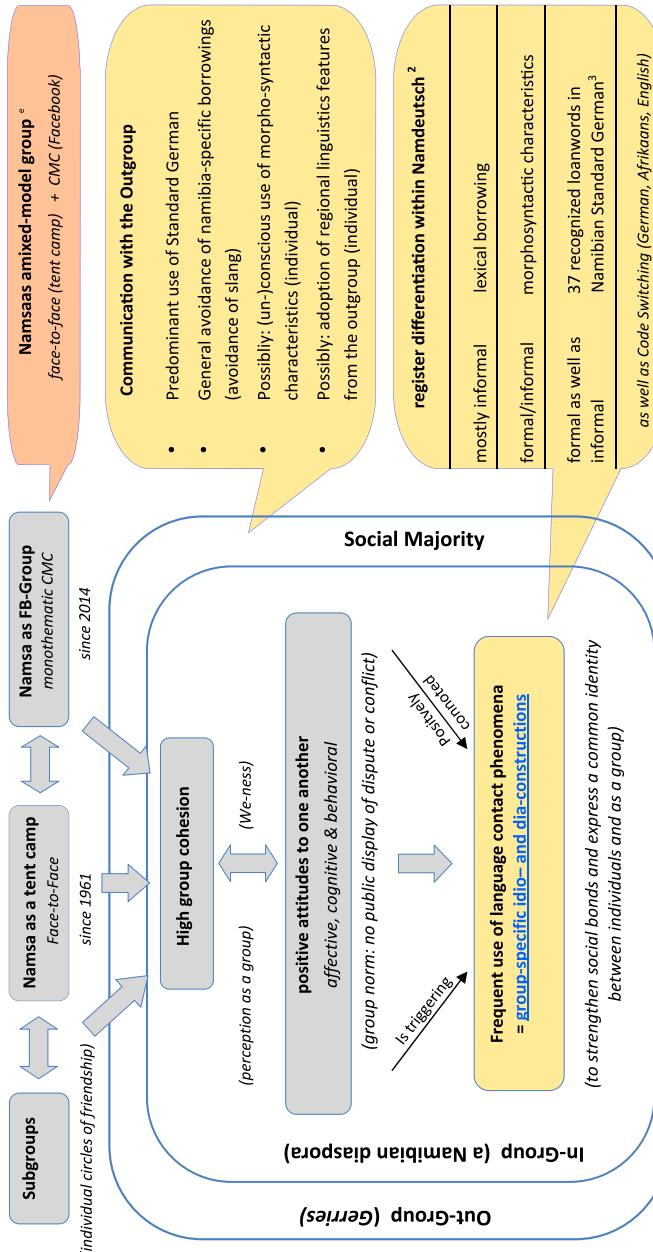
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<sup>10</sup><https://www.etymonline.com/word/Jerry> [29-06-2020].

<sup>11</sup>Or Namibian-Germans or German-speaking Namibians, depending on the individual perception of each ingroup member.

<sup>12</sup>See the article ‘Integration mit besten Voraussetzungen’ written by Katharina Herrle in which she describes her feeling of being an *Ausländer ohne Ausländerbonus* (a foreigner without the benefits of being one) when she first came to Germany (Informationsausschuss der Deutschen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche in Namibia DELK 2016:66).

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<sup>e</sup>see Ocker (2002); <sup>2</sup>see Wiese & Bracke (2019) <sup>3</sup>Häusler (2017: 205)

Figure 6.2: Ingroup and outgroup communication

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both lexical and morphosyntactic language choices. However, the latter is less accessible to human consciousness. Hence, during outgroup communication, the ingroup members are more likely to unconsciously use linguistic structures of Namibian origin other than lexical borrowings. However, awareness and use of such structures highly differ from individual to individual.

To give an example: during the annual NAMSA event, an ingroup member talked to a local taxi driver on the telephone. Clearly, the driver was an outgroup member. So, the telephone call started off in Standard German until the moment when they both discussed the taxi prices. The ingroup member posed the following question:

- (3) Wieviel geht das kosten?  
 how much go:3SG;PRS that cost:INF;PRS  
 ‘How much will it cost?’

(3) shows the Namibia-typical use of the verb *gehen* as a future marker.<sup>13</sup> In European German, a form of *werden* (English: will) is the only auxiliary to mark the future tense.<sup>14</sup> However, at the time of the telephone call, the ingroup member was not aware of the markedness that a *gehen*-construction would have for his interlocutor. The use of this construction may have further been prompted by the Namibian character of the environment: the telephone call took place towards the end of NAMSA, making it likely that the ingroup member had been using Namibia-specific language practices for almost three days in a row. In other words, he was in a multilingual mode (cf. Höder 2018b: 7), as everyone around him shared the same languages and he felt comfortable enough to join in (cf. Grosjean 2012: 2). The telephone call required a switch into the monolingual mode, which the ingroup member maintained on the lexical level. However, Namibia-specific language practices with a lesser degree of consciousness, such as tense marking, became reactivated due to the linguistic setting.

Unlike outgroup communication, ingroup discourses are characterized by the frequent use of Namdeutsch and Namibia-specific language practices, such as code-switching between German, Afrikaans, and English. Wiese and Bracke (in press) show that German-Namibians deploy different registers in Namdeutsch according to the level of formality of the communicative setting. Lexical borrowings are “stärker mit informellen Gesprächen assoziiert [...], während das

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<sup>13</sup>This is probably due to language contact with Afrikaans and/or English (cf. Shah 2007: 33; Radke 2019b: 234–235)

<sup>14</sup>*werden*-future is the marked choice to indicate the future tense and includes an epistemic notion. The present tense is the unmarked choice and is often used when a temporal adverb or the context indicate future meaning instead. This applies to European and Namibian German.

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formelle Register nah am Standarddeutschen in Deutschland ist“ (Lexical borrowing is more associated with informal conversations, while the formal register is close to Standard German in Germany (Wiese & Bracke 2019: 14). However, even formal registers include Namibia-typical borrowings and grammatical patterns and indicate the existence of Namibian Standard German (Wiese & Bracke 2019). Ammon et al. (2016) recognized 37 loanwords as being part of Namibian Standard German such as the onomasiological variants *Bakkie* (for *Laster* = ‘pick-up truck’), *Pad* (for *Weg*, *Straße* = ‘path’, ‘street’, ‘road’) and *Permit* (for *Genehmigung*, *Erlaubnis* = ‘permit’) or culture-specific terms such as *Biltong* (dried meat), *Braai* (‘BBQ’) and *Veld* (a type of open and rural landscape in Southern Africa) (Häusler 2017: 206–207). One of the criteria for the terms to be recognized as Namibian Standard German was the frequent use in official language domains such as newspapers (2016). Figure 6.2 shows the dichotomy between ingroup and outgroup communication in relation to the sociological and social psychological dynamics of group formation for NAMSA. Therefore, it stresses the importance of a holistic perspective on ingroups to understand the dynamics that evolve through social interaction.

### 3.3 Mixed-modes and group cohesion

Since NAMSA provides a reoccurring platform for FtF communication, it is likely to positively affect the group cohesion among its members. The correlation between cohesion and FtF communication has been subject to only a few studies. Ocker (2002) investigated the interplay between workgroup cohesion, conflict management, and satisfaction. These aspects can be considered key forces “causing members to remain in their group” (Carron et al. 1985: 246; Brawley et al. 1987: 276; cf. Festinger et al. 1950). According to Ocker, mixed-mode groups are more cohesive than single-mode groups.

Members of mixed-mode groups rated their groups higher in terms of cohesiveness, the ability to manage conflict, and all aspects of satisfaction. (Ocker 2002: 1)

These findings provide a first hint that mixed-mode groups, in general, develop a higher degree of cohesion. However, it is important to carefully define this term. According to Shin & Song (2011: 127), “cohesion is a multidimensional construct that encompasses both social and task aspects of the group process (cf. also Brawley et al. 1987: 276; Carron et al. 1985).

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[...] social cohesion is defined as the degree to which an individual is attracted to the group because of his or her positive relationships with other group members. However, task cohesion refers to the degree to which an individual is attracted to the group because of his or her shared commitment to group tasks (Shin & Song 2011: 127; cf. Brawley et al. 1987: 276)

In this regard, too, mixed-mode groups have a higher potential to develop and maintain a coherent group feeling, as the two “different types of cohesion can be developed through different modes of communication or interaction” (Shin & Song 2011: 136).

The findings suggest that time spent in FTF communication significantly predicted group social cohesion, but time spent in CMC did not. [...] These results suggest that FTF communication contributes to the social aspect of mixed-mode groups and that CMC is beneficial to their task-related aspect. (Shin & Song 2011: 126)

What Shin and Song describe in their research, does also apply to NAMSA: here, CMC is predominantly used to organize an annual FtF meeting during Pentecost. Therefore, it serves to distribute information on location, time and other practical matters, and to welcome new members. Hence, NAMSA functions as a predominantly task-related CMC group with the main purpose of organizing an FtF event in which the social aspect of group cohesion is central.<sup>15</sup> In this respect, the German Namibian diaspora combines both task- and social-related modes. However, in the (immediate) period after each NAMSA event, the CMC group also serves as a virtual platform for continuing experiences of the FtF setting: many members post photos taken during the event and subsequently comment on them. This way, members relate to the social aspect of the group process by bringing it up in CMC, as can be seen in (4). Namibia-specific language practices are highlighted in bold.

- (4) a. Julia: *Vielen Dank an alle für dieses herrliche Wochenende und das Stück Heimat-Feeling*  
Thanks a lot to everyone for the wonderful weekend. It gave me a feeling of home
- b. Britta: *Das war moois*  
It was nice

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<sup>15</sup>Information on other practical matters, such as housing in Germany, is common as well. However, the main focus remains on the NAMSA event.

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### 3.4 NAMSA: Slang and identity in CMC

#### 3.4.1 Afrikaans-based keywords

Since the multilingual dynamics in FtF communication have been analyzed in §3.1, I will now turn the focus on CMC-based language practices. The following question takes center stage: does multilingual slang serve as a marker for ingroup identity in CMC among the German Namibian diaspora? I will, therefore, draw on a corpus-based analysis of the 10 most frequently used keywords, all of which are borrowings from Afrikaans. To identify these keywords, I used an automated word frequency counter by Gillmeister Software.<sup>16</sup> The resulting list indicates all words (or word combinations) that exist in a given text corpus. Furthermore, it provides the absolute number of their occurrences. Subsequently, the list can be exported to a spreadsheet. The Afrikaans-based borrowings were manually lemmatized and orthographically harmonized. In doing so, all inflected forms and orthographic variants of a given word could be analyzed as a single item (e.g.: *mooi*, *moi*, *mooie*, *mooier*, *mooies*, *mooije*, *mooin* were counted as *mooi* = ‘beautiful’, ‘nice’). The resulting frequency list of Afrikaans-based keywords can be seen in Figure 6.3.

The list of keywords contains four categories of borrowings: first, the interjection *jirre/jerre* and the modal particle *mos*. Both are typical signs of orality which is in line with CMC seen as a written form close to spoken language. Furthermore, they can be used for appellative and expressive purposes, such as in (5) and (6)

- (5) *Jerre oukie hast du dich erst jetzt von Namsa erholt?*  
 Wow oukie have you yourself only now of NAMSA recovered?  
 ‘Wow oukie, have you only just recovered from NAMSA?’
- (6) *aber hey wir liken das Leben mos bunt!*  
 But hey, we like the life PART colorful  
 ‘But hey, after all we like it when life is colorful.’

The second category includes the adjectives *mooi* (‘beautiful’, ‘nice’) and *lekker* (‘delicious’, ‘pleasant’, ‘nice’), which are used to express politeness, reassurance and a positive attitude towards one another. Third, the downtoners *bikkie* (‘a bit’) and *net* (‘just’, ‘only’) serve to reduce the force of another word or phrase. Therefore, they too are often part of politeness strategies. And fourth, the three most

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<sup>16</sup><https://www.gillmeister-software.de/online-tools/text/keyworddichte-berechnen-fuer-seo.aspx> [23-06-2020]

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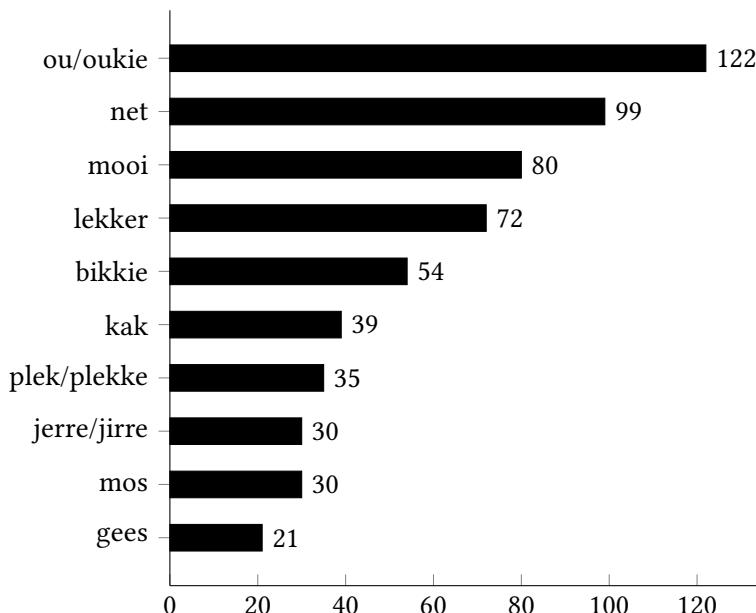


Figure 6.3: Afrikaans-based keywords in German-Namibian CMC.  
*ou/oukie(s)* = ‘dude(s)’, ‘mate(s)’, ‘guy(s)’; *net* = ‘only’; *mooi* = ‘beautiful’, ‘nice’; *lekker* = ‘delicious’, ‘pleasant’, ‘nice’; *bikkie* = ‘a bit’; *kak* = ‘shit’; *plek/plekke* = ‘place(s)’, ‘venue(s)’; *jerre/jirre* = ‘interjection’; *mos* = modal particle; *gees* = ‘mood’

frequently used nouns of Afrikaans origin are *ou/oukie* (‘dude’), *gees* (‘mood’) and *plek/plekke* (‘venue’/‘venues’). *Ou/oukie* and *gees* often serve to address other users and to prompt positive reactions, as can be seen in (7) and (8):

- (7) Lecker man. Bringt alle **stief** **gees** mit!  
 Delicious man bring all much mood with  
 ‘Great, man. Bring good vibes with you!’
- (8) Mark hat **gees** heute  
 Mark has mood today  
 ‘Mark is keen today.’

*Plek/plekke* is an exceptional case among the most frequent keywords, as it does not bear any expressive or appellative meaning in itself. Its frequency is rather caused by the monothematic setup of NAMSA, in which members often discuss suitable venues to hold the FtF event. To indicate the concept of “venue”, users often use the Afrikaans word *plek/plekke*. Another exceptional keyword is

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the pejorative *kak* ('shit'), since it bears a derogatory meaning that potentially violates the norms of individuals and groups. However, *kak* is not used in an offensive way towards other members in the first place, but rather serves as a descriptive or expressive intensifier. In that respect, it does not seem to violate any norm within German-Namibian CMC, as can be seen in (9) and (10):

- (9) Mal abwarten [...] weil die Verbindung ist **Kak**  
Once wait [...] because the connection is shit.  
'Let's wait because the connection is bad.'
- (10) Ohne **Kak?** Jerre nice welche Daten?  
Without shit wow nice which dates  
'Seriously? Wow, nice. Which dates?'

Although *kak* is a term of disparagement, it is predominantly used in a neutral way. Therefore, it does not counteract the functions of the aforementioned keywords, all of which are mostly used for appellative and expressive purposes to show a positive attitude towards the group. However, do these multilingual keywords also serve to construct ingroups and outgroups? To answer this question, I will turn to the most frequently used keyword in German-Namibian CMC: the term *ou/oukie*. As a singular noun it refers to a male person ('dude', 'mate', 'guy') whereas the plural form *oukies* can be used as a gender-neutral term in the sense of '(you) guys'. In 3.4.2., I will examine whether it is used to create linguistic identities and, hence, a notion of inclusiveness versus exclusiveness in German-Namibian CMC.

### 3.4.2 Inclusiveness versus exclusiveness

"Linguistic identities are double-edged swords because, while functioning in a positive and productive way to give people a sense of belonging, they do so by defining an 'us' in opposition to a 'them'" (Joseph 2006: 261). The construction of such an 'us' versus a 'them' through Namibia-specific language practices is shown in (11–13).

- (11) Dennoch hier noch mal an die Frage erinnert, ob wir hier auch **oukies und ladies** in Berlin haben :-) Vielleicht sucht ja auch jemand ein Zimmer in Berlin, während der Zeit, in der ich unten bin [in Namibia].  
*Still, coming back to the question of whether there are also oukies and ladies in Berlin :-)* Maybe someone is looking for a room in Berlin when I'm down there [in Namibia].

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- (12) ein paar **Oukies** aus München haben die Gees und organizen es dieses Jahr ... Für Euch nicht **Gerries**  
*A few **oukies** from Munich are keen and will organize it this year... Not for you, **Gerries**.*
- (13) **Definitely!!!** Oukies kriegen nie genug...  
*Definitely!!! **Oukies** can never get enough...*

(11–13) imply different levels of ingroup and outgroup construction through the use of Namibia-typical borrowings. In (12), a German Namibian user offers to sublet his room in Berlin, as he is planning an extended stay in Namibia. He wonders whether there are any *oukies und ladies* who may be interested in his offer. In doing so, he indicates his preference to rent out his room to an ingroup member, that is to say a German Namibian. This practice bears a mutual advantage: ingroup members in search of accommodation will find it easier to get a room. In addition, the advertiser may perceive it as safer to rent out his personal space to a person of the same network. Hence, the term *oukies und ladies* addresses German Namibians in Berlin, as opposed to any other individual who is looking for accommodation in the German capital.

In contrast to (11), the ingroup and outgroup distinction in (12) is rather sharp: here, the user labels an event as Namibian-only by noting that it is not meant for *Gerries*, or Germans from Germany. However, such a sharp distinction between the ingroup and outgroup is rather seldom and is often not meant seriously. (12) provides proof that Namibia-specific borrowings can be used to create a clear dichotomy between two linguistic identities. This dichotomy is less present in (13), as there is no outgroup mentioned. Nonetheless, the use of *oukies* addresses the German Namibian diaspora, again. Therefore, it accounts for another example of ingroup creation through Namibia-specific language practices. However, *oukie* can be used for inclusive purposes too, as illustrated in (14):

- (14) Ich habe morgen nochmal meeting da mit **den oukie** den der plek gehört  
*I have a meeting tomorrow again with the **oukie** who owns the venue*

In (14), the term *oukie* denotes the owner of a property that can possibly be used as a venue for NAMSA. In this particular case, *oukie* refers to an outgroup member. This is because he is well-disposed to the group and may be of crucial help to organize their annual FtF meeting. In such a case, *oukie* can include an outgroup member. This example shows that German-Namibians construct ingroups and outgroups through multilingualism language practices depending on the speaker, topic, intention and the context of a given discourse.

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However, there is another reason why *oukie* became such a success in German-Namibian CMC, as it often indicates a form of address and can, therefore, be used both as a vocative and a reference. In §3.4.3, I will turn to the different forms of address before analyzing the grammatical and semantic characteristics of *oukie* in comparison to its counterparts in Standard German.

### 3.4.3 Vocative and referential use

Daniel & Spencer (2008: 626) define the vocative as “a form used for calling out and attracting or maintaining the addressee’s attention [...] by using a term referring to [them]” (cf. Sonnenhauser & Hanna 2013: 2). Hence, vocative *oukie* directly addresses the recipient, whereas referential *oukie* refers to a 3<sup>rd</sup> person, who is not necessarily present. While referential *oukie* can be used for both in-group and outgroup members, vocative *oukie* is only used to address ingroup members in German-Namibian CMC, as illustrated in (15–17). This is interesting since about 20% of the active users are of non-Namibian decent and were born and raised in Germany, Austria or South Africa (see Radke *in press*).

- (15) Yes oukies! Kennt maybe einer der nach Nam fliegt und könnte ein kleines pakkie (...) mit nehmen?  
*Yes oukies!* Does anyone maybe know someone who’s flying to Namibia and who could take a small parcel with them?
- (16) Yes oukies... Jägermeister ist auch dieses Jahr am Start  
*Yes, oukies...* Jägermeister will also be joining us this year
- (17) oukies sagt doch was  
*oukies please say something*

(15–17) show that vocative *oukie* takes the initial position and is often used in a two-word phrase (*yes oukies*) for appellative purposes to summon attention or create a common identification with the addressee. Furthermore, it conveys a variety of notions such as friendship, informality, and closeness but can also express disagreement and warning.

Why has *oukie* become so successful in German-Namibian CMC? First, it denotes an informal register associated with orality (Wiese & Bracke 2019: 3). It thus matches the communicative needs in CMC as a genre of informal, written speech. Second, CMC groups run the risk of becoming increasingly anonymous when they reach a certain number of members. In such circumstances, colloquial vocatives are likely to occur to structure discourse and establish a connection with the addressee(s). And third, *oukie* is borrowed from Afrikaans, a language

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that is regionally limited to Namibia and South Africa. Hence, using Afrikaans in a German-speaking environment can easily create a sense of Namibian identity as the language itself conveys a ‘local flavor’.

These three aspects contribute to the high-frequency rate of the term *oukie* in German-Namibian CMC. However, there is also a grammatical side: *oukie* unites a broad range of morphological and semantic features for which there is no 1-to-1 translation in Standard German. Hence, it occupies a morphosemantic niche. Morphological features include the use as a non-diminutive as well as a diminutive in both singular (*ou/oukie*) and plural (*ouens/oukies*). All four forms can serve as a vocative (2<sup>nd</sup> person) or as a reference (3<sup>rd</sup> person), providing the term with a high degree of grammatical flexibility, as can be seen in Table 6.3. Neither of the corresponding form in Standard German covers the same range of grammatical flexibility as *oukie* does.<sup>17</sup>

In Standard German, several translations of the term *oukie* are possible: *Leute* (‘people’), *Typ* (‘dude’, ‘mate’), *Alter* (‘dude’), *Junge/Jungs* (‘guy/s’, ‘boy/s’) and *Kumpel* (‘buddy’, ‘mate’, ‘dude’). However, neither of these terms shows the degree of grammatical flexibility that is covered by *oukie*. *Leute* is a plurale tantum, or plural-only noun, and cannot be used to address somebody in the singular form. Furthermore, its diminutive *Leutchen* is rare and would only exist as a highly marked noun. Hence, the term *Leute* shows less than 50% of the grammatical flexibility that is covered by *oukie*.

The second translation of *oukie* is *Typ*. Unlike *Leute*, the term *Typ* comes with a plural form (*Typen*). Although the diminutive *Typchen* is morphologically possible, it is hardly ever used and would be considered extremely marked. Therefore, *Typ* only accounts for about 50% of the grammatical flexibility that is covered by *oukie*. The same pattern applies to *Junge/Jungs* and *Kumpel*. The diminutive of *Kumpel* (*Kumpelchen*), while morphologically possible, would be considered highly marked whereas the diminutive of *Junge* (*Jungchen*, *Jünglein*) actually refers to a young boy and, therefore, does not cover the idea of *Oukie*. Furthermore, *Kumpel* only covers this idea when used as a vocative. Referential *Kumpel* cannot be translated with *oukie* as illustrated in the following example:

- (18) ne freundin von mir fliegt [...] ein tag später und n **kumpel** fliegt am 28. Dez  
A (female) friend will fly one day later and one of my buddies will fly on 28 December.

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<sup>17</sup>Many thanks to Prof. Marianne Zappen-Thomson for her comments on possible and impossible translations for *Oukie*.

6 *The role of language contact in mixed-mode group communication*Table 6.2: Grammatical functions of *Oukie/Ou* and their translations in Standard German (✓ = "marked", - = "highly marked")

|                    | Diminutive                  |                          | Non-diminutive              |                          |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
|                    | Referential<br>(3rd person) | Vocative<br>(2nd person) | Referential<br>(3rd person) | Vocative<br>(2nd person) |
| <i>Oukie</i>       |                             |                          |                             |                          |
| Singular           | ✓                           | ✓                        | ✓                           | ✓                        |
| Plural             | ✓                           | ✓                        | ✓                           | ✓                        |
| <i>Leute</i>       |                             |                          |                             |                          |
| Singular           | -                           | -                        | -                           | -                        |
| Plural             | (?)                         | (?)                      | ✓                           | ✓                        |
| <i>Typ/en</i>      |                             |                          |                             |                          |
| Singular           | -                           | -                        | ✓                           | ✓                        |
| Plural             | -                           | -                        | ✓                           | ✓                        |
| <i>Alter</i>       |                             |                          |                             |                          |
| Singular           | -                           | -                        | ✓                           | ✓                        |
| Plural             |                             |                          | ✓                           | -                        |
| <i>Junge/Jungs</i> |                             |                          |                             |                          |
| Singular           | -                           | -                        | ✓                           | ✓                        |
| Plural             | -                           | -                        | ✓                           | ✓                        |
| <i>Kumpel</i>      |                             |                          |                             |                          |
| Singular           | -                           | -                        | ✓*                          | ✓                        |
| Plural             | -                           | -                        | ✓*                          | ✓                        |

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- (19) ne freundin von mir fliegt [...] ein tag später und n **oukie** fliegt am 28. Dez  
A (female) friend will fly one day later and a guy will fly on 28 December.

(19) clearly indexes camaraderie between the author of the comment and the person he is referring to whereas (18) does not bear any such indexicality. Here, *oukie* refers to just ‘some guy’ who apparently does not have special bonds with the author. Vocative *Kumpel*, however, is interchangeable with *oukie*, as illustrated in the following example:

- (20) Hey *Kumpel/Oukie*, pass auf!  
Hey dude, watch it!

(20) serves as a general example and is not part of the corpus. The corpus itself contains 4 occurrences of *Kumpel*, all of which are referential and cannot be substituted by *oukie*. The term will, therefore, not be considered for the following analysis. A last translation for *Oukie* is *Alter*. It, too, has an highly marked diminutive form (*Alterchen*) and can only be used as a vocative in its singular form. A corresponding vocative plural to *Hi Oukies!* does not exist (*Hi ihr Alten!\**).

Table 6.3 shows that there is no 1-to-1 translation in Standard German that would fully equate to the grammatical flexibility of the term *oukie*. Not surprisingly, it outnumbers the frequency of its SG counterparts, as can be seen in Figure 6.4.

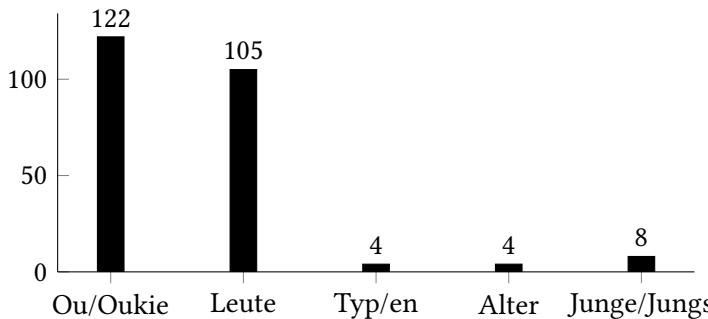


Figure 6.4: Frequency of Ou/Oukie and its SG counterparts in CMC

With 122 occurrences, *ou/oukie* (and their plural forms) deploy the highest frequency rate in the corpus, as they account for more than 50%. *Leute* comes second and still enjoys a high token frequency with 105 occurrences. Unlike *ou/oukie*, it does not particularly refer to ingroup(-related) members, but rather to various societal groups and to *people* in general. It thus subsumes many notions

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under one umbrella for which an ingroup-specific term such as *ou/oukie* is less suitable. This observation explains the relatively high frequency of *Leute* in the corpus. Some examples are: *fremde Leute* (in general: ‘foreign people’), *andere Leute* (‘other people’), *Landsleute* (‘fellow countrymen’) or *die Leute werden immer blöder* (‘people are becoming increasingly stupid’). *Ou/oukie* would not be an obvious choice in these contexts. Furthermore, *Leute* is also used as a collective vocative to address the other members in the group. In that sense, it mirrors the use of *ou/oukie*, but lacks its local flavor. The absolute frequency with which alternative SD-translations of *oukie* occur in the corpus is low and ranges from 4 (*Alter*) to 8 (*Junge/Jungs*). These findings show that ingroup members in German-Namibian CMC prefer *Leute* as a neutral form of address (e.g. *Hi Leute!*) alongside ingroup-specific terms such as *ou/oukie* (e.g. *Hi Oukies!*).

## 4 Mixed-mode and single-mode groups

### 4.1 NAMSA versus NiD

§3 outlined the dynamics of language contact within NAMSA as a mixed-mode group. It showed how language-contact items are resemiotized from FtF to public and from spoken to written mode. In this section, a comparative view takes center stage: what happens to a group that lacks the social contact in FtF mode and only exists in CMC? To answer this question, I will compare NAMSA to a single-mode group called *Namibianer in Deutschland* (NiD). NiD was established in 2011 and serves as a multi-thematic CMC group for Namibia-related topics, such as relocation and travel or sports and music. These topics occasionally occur in NAMSA as well. However, since the group is centered around the set-up of NAMSA as a FtF event, it can rather be considered a monothematic CMC group.

Until 2014, NiD served as the main platform for NAMSA-related topics. Members who regularly attended the NAMSA event increasingly felt the need to create their own CMC group and to label it as such. After all, a separate group bears the advantage of being able to streamline all communication about logistics and coordination. It can also serve as a platform to share memories and ideas. For these reasons, NAMSA was created as a separate CMC group in 2014. Prior to that, NiD can be described as a hybrid group consisting of the mixed-mode NAMSA community and the single-mode NiD community. From 2014 onwards, NiD mainly became a single-mode group with only a few references to NAMSA a year.

Contrary to mixed-mode groups, digital single-mode groups lack the social contact in FtF settings. Therefore, the language use is rather standard-oriented

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and lacks slang items and traces of language contact. This hypothesis can be broken down as follows.

Table 6.3: The hypothesized dynamics in digital single-mode groups.

| digital single-mode groups                     |                    |          |
|--|--------------------|----------|
| ↓  |                    | ↓        |
| lack of social contact<br>in face-to-face mode | no resemiotization | CMC mode |
| ↓  |                    |          |
| low slang frequency                            |                    |          |

The dynamics in Table 6.3 are in contrast to the processes in mixed-mode groups which allow for resemiotization from FtF to public and from spoken to written mode. This is illustrated again in Table 6.4 (see also Table 6.1 above).

Table 6.4: The hypothesized dynamics between different modes in mixed-mode groups.

| mixed-mode groups (in language-contact settings) |                 |   |
|--|-----------------|---|
| ↓  |                 | ↓   |
| face-to-face mode                                | ↔               | CMC mode                                  |
| ↓  | resemiotization | ↓   |
| high slang frequency<br>(identity marker)        |                 | high slang frequency<br>(identity marker) |

Since NiD members lack social contact in FtF mode, it is expected that NAMSA should be subject to a higher use of multilingual slang. If the central model applies, users who are active in both groups should deploy a higher amount of German-only comments in NiD and a lower amount of such comments in NAMSA. This is indeed the case: the users in question tend to use more German-only comments in NiD (69.1 %) than in NAMSA (58.4 %).<sup>18</sup> Figure 6.5 illustrates that this holds true irrespective of the user's gender or place of origin.

These findings suggest that users are more likely to use multilingual slang in a mixed-mode platform like NAMSA than they are in a single-mode platform like NiD. They provide a first hint that the central hypothesis can be considered valid.

<sup>18</sup>This difference is statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 16.366$ ,  $p < 0.001^{***}$ ,  $\phi = 0.11$ ). The software *R* was used for this analysis (R Core Team 2019)

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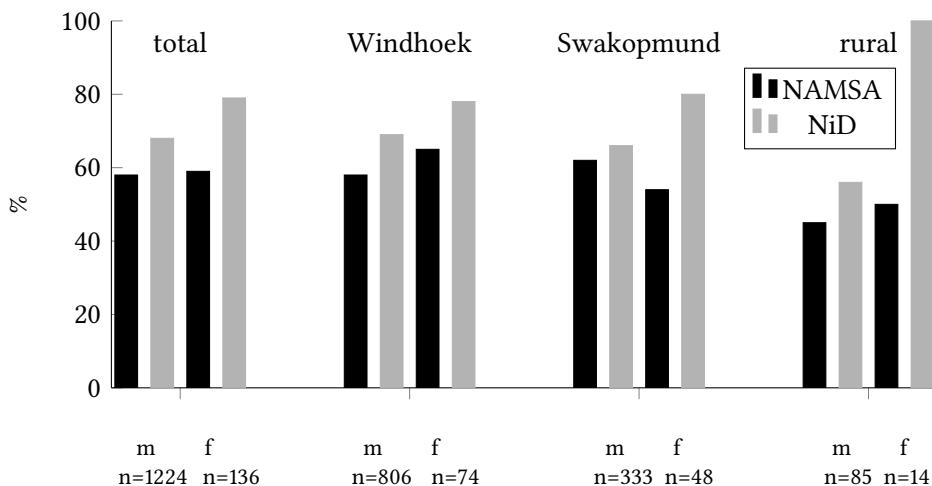


Figure 6.5: Comments in Standard German among identical users in NAMSA and NiD

However, the findings only apply to users who are active in both CMC groups and do not provide a picture of the internal group dynamics as a whole. Therefore, §4.2 will analyze the chronological frequency development of multilingual comments in both CMC groups. Based on these findings, I will draw an overall conclusion on the validity of the central model in §5.

### 4.2 Chronological frequencies

The linguistic output of both CMC groups was split into subcorpora to measure the chronological frequency development of multilingual comments. A comment was treated as multilingual if it contained at least one Namibia-specific language practice on the lexical, morphosyntactic or orthographic level. Well-established loan words like *Pad* (for *Weg*, *Straße* = ‘path’, ‘street’, ‘road’) or *Braai* (‘BBQ’) also counted as Namibia-specific. Since they are part of Namibian Standard German (see §3.2), one could argue that comments consisting of only one such word do not classify as multilingual. However, such cases were rare as well-established loan words generally co-occurred with other Namibia-specific language practices which marked the comment as multilingual. The broad categorization of Namibia-specific comments provides a macro-perspective on this topic. It subsumes a wide range of phenomena such as borrowing, loan translations and code-switching. It, therefore, serves as the base for follow-up research taking

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on a micro-perspective to focus on individual phenomena within *Namdeutsch*-related practices in CMC.

Each subcorpus covers a period of six months starting from the moment the group was initiated. Since NiD came into existence in early August 2011, one type of subcorpora ranges from the beginning of August to the beginning of February of the following year and is labeled with the roman numeral II (e.g. 2011-II).<sup>19</sup> The other type of subcorpora ranges from the beginning of February to the beginning of August of the same year and is labeled with the roman numeral I (e.g. 2012-I). The following figure illustrates the chronological frequency development between SG-only comments and multilingual comments in NiD.

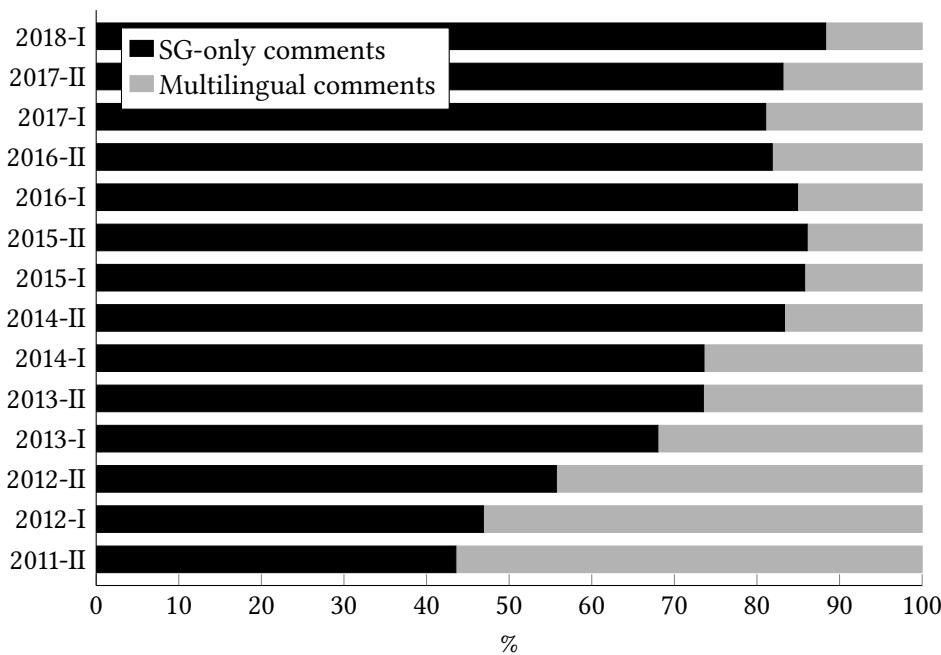


Figure 6.6: Comments within single-mode group NiD.

In the first seven subcorpora, the proportion of German-only comments has grown constantly from less than 50% in late 2011 and early 2012 to over 80% in late 2014. Ever since, they have remained on a high level with more than 80% in each subsequent corpus. This finding suggest that there has been a clear process

<sup>19</sup>To give an example: 2011-II ranges from the beginning of August 2011 to the beginning of February 2012.

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of standardization in NiD which is in line with the central hypothesis. Figure 6.7 shows the results for each subcorpus in NAMSA.<sup>20</sup>

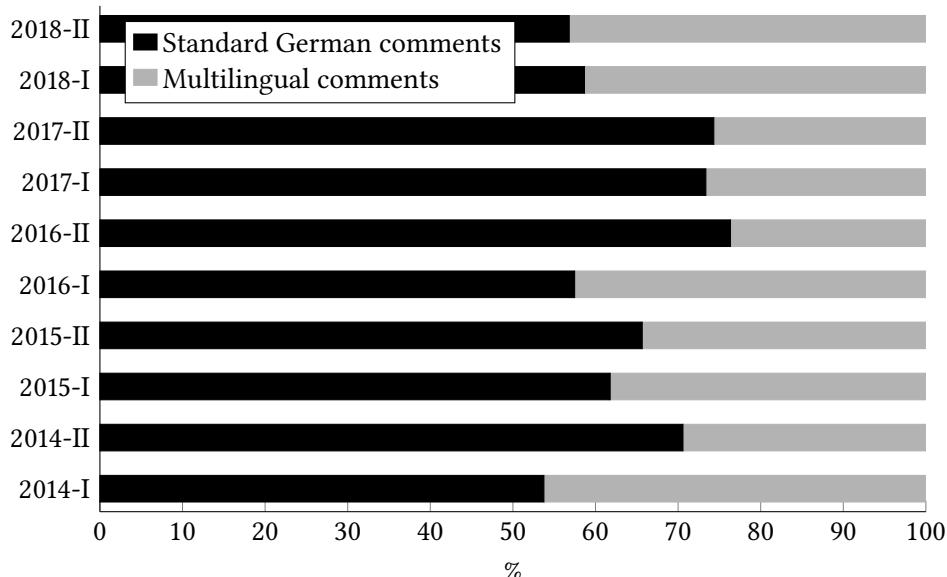


Figure 6.7: Comments within mixed-mode group NAMSA.

Contrary to the prediction, the proportion of SG-only comments has increased during the first four years of the existence of NAMSA and only dropped in the last year. Viewed proportionally across all cases, the most frequent multilingual comments occurred in 2014-I with a nearly 50-50% division. The highest proportion of SG-only comments occurred in 2016-II, 2017-I and 2017-II with proportions ranging from 74% to 77%. In 2018-I and 2018-II, the proportion of SG-only comments dropped again and stood at 59% and 57%. Does this observation indicate that the amount of SG-only comments in the NAMSA corpus remained equal or rather grew over time? The figure indicates that there is no clear tendency.

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<sup>20</sup>Since NAMSA was created in late February 2014, the first cluster of subcorpora ranges from the end of February to the end of August of each year and is labeled with the roman numeral I. The second cluster of subcorpora ranges from the end of August to the end February of the following year and is labeled with the roman numeral II, e.g. 2014-II ranges from the end of August 2014 to the end of February 2015.

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## 5 Conclusion and discussion

In this article, I discussed the role of multilingual slang within mixed-mode communication and its role for the creation as identity marker. Research on this topic dates back well into the second and even first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This article has shown how to perpetuate such research traditions by adopting mixed-method approaches: combining traditional and new methods, both quantitative and qualitative in nature, will lead to a better understanding of the society of today and the linguistic practices we encounter therein. In the 1970s, when Paul Brandes et al. developed the GROCC, no one ever thought of the internet as a mass medium. Today, it plays a crucial role in many countries, not only for the social majority, but also especially for minority groups. The diaspora of German-speaking Namibians is an example par excellence for understanding the dynamics of mode, cohesion, and multilingualism.

In this article, I showed how contact-induced vernacular items are resemiotized from FtF to public and from spoken to written mode. They can be used as identity markers in both modes and can therefore contribute to the group's cohesion. The term *oukie* is just one example that indicates how ingroups and outgroups are created through the use of borrowings. In the contrary to mixed-mode groups, single-mode groups lack the social contact in FtF setting. A resemiotization of language-contact vernacular items does not apply in these cases. Therefore, it was hypothesized that mixed-mode group NAMSA should deploy a higher and degree of multilingual slang than single-mode NiD does. The analysis in §4.1 revealed that identical users who are active in both groups, indeed, use a higher amount of SG-only comments in single-mode group NiD than they do in mixed-mode group NAMSA.

A second analysis revealed the frequency with which multilingual slang appeared in both CMC groups as a whole. Contrary to the prediction, NAMSA also deployed a process of standardization during the first four years of its existence. This trend only came to an halt during the last year. Hence, there is no clear tendency and the given question of whether a mixed-mode status supports the use of slang items over an extended period of time remains to be answered by future research.

Another starting point for future research is to shift the scope different variants of in-groups. Therefore, it would be valuable to compare slang use among diasporic and domestic groups within the same speech community or look at different diasporic destinations. The German Namibian community in South Africa would serve as a good example. Furthermore, the role of additional variables

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such as topic or length of a given comment could be investigated. A third perspective could include oral language practices and compare them to written CMC. The corpus *Deutsch in Namibia* (*DNam*, ‘German in Namibia’) makes such comparative studies possible. It is accessible via the *Datenbank für Gesprochenes Deutsch* (*DGD*, ‘Database for Spoken German’). *DNam* “comprehensively and systematically documents the language usage of the German-speaking minority in Namibia as well as the corresponding language attitudes” (Zimmer et al. 2020). Future research addressing both written and oral data of Namibian-typical language practices can thus rely on an already existing database.

On a final note, ingroups create spaces for individuals in which they feel safe and find orientation. Our minds need to categorize the chaotic world around them to be able to function. Therefore, ingroup construction will always be a part of human nature and the field of humanities and social sciences. While the categorizing function of ingroup creation does not only include individuals, but also excludes others, it is important that we are aware of such mechanisms and deal with them in a conscious and moderate manner to reconcile and align interests on the societal level.

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## Chapter 7

# Assessing language contact: Linguistic purism and North Frisian

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A common distinction between academic linguistics and lay linguistics as regards the perception of languages is that the former remains descriptive and unevaluative with regards to studying linguistic differences and language change. The latter, however, can be found to view systemic differences between languages as differences of quality: some languages are seen to be more logical or effective at expressing complex thought; similarly language change is frequently viewed as language decay, with the older stages of a language seen as being superior. The clear separation between academic linguistics as descriptions of language change and lay linguistics as evaluations of language change does not hold in such a clear-cut way when it comes to changes in smaller languages. In this chapter, we present evidence from metalinguistic comments on North Frisian to discuss to what extent such a clear separation between description and evaluation is indeed maintained by academic linguists studying this language. We aim to show that this chapter highlights a remarkable continuity in the evaluation of language contact across different types of scholarly and public discourse.

### 1 Language contact and folk linguistics

There is a common set of core assumptions on the nature of language that the vast majority of academic linguists share. Such assumptions include “doctrines” taught to first-semester students such as “all languages, big or small, have grammar”, “all phonological systems of individual languages are ‘complete’, despite striking differences across languages”, or “all languages are *equally* capable of expressing the thoughts of their native speakers”. In same spirit, academic linguists – here quietly understood to be those who have a university degree in



Johanna Gregersen & Nils Langer. 2021. Assessing language contact: Linguistic purism and North Frisian. In Christian Zimmer (ed.), *German(ic) in language contact: Grammatical and sociolinguistic dynamics*, 163–191. Berlin: Language Science Press. DOI: ??

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linguistics – are very interested when languages change, either diachronically or across a linguistic community within a narrow timespan. Studying change is seen as an opportunity to look “inside” the workings of a language as it allows us to view and describe not only what changes but also what does not change. Crucially, the fact that languages change<sup>1</sup> is seen as an important and interesting observation when studying linguistics: however, in academic linguistics language change is never *evaluated* as being beneficial or harmful to the ability of a language to express the thoughts of its speakers, just as much as a language with more consonants than vowels is neither more able or less able, more elegant or less elegant, functionally superior or inferior to a language with more vowels than consonants. There is no serious proposition that fricatives are better than plosives or that synthetic morphology is less useful or efficient than analytic morphology. Similarly, nobody would suggest that Early Modern English is better or more efficient than Middle English or that Bavarian is linguistically more complete or richer than Alemannic. Languages change, but they do not become better or worse. And yet in regard to one particular topic, namely the nature and result of language contact, such an evaluation can be found as expressed by academic linguists, too. However, such evaluations are virtually exclusively restricted to scholars working on smaller languages, i.e. languages that are (perceived to be) unilaterally receiving influence from bigger languages.<sup>2</sup> Such influence due to language contact is felt to be damaging to the linguistic system of the receiving language, to the extent that it might damage the integrity of the language. This view is illustrated by the following quotation:

Sprachkontakt bedeutet für viele Minderheitensprachen oft Verdrängung von Seiten der Hochsprache und daraus resultierende Versuche, die eigene Sprache zu retten und zu erhalten. (**Laabs 2009: 35**)

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<sup>1</sup>Languages do not, of course, change in any active or agentive manner. What we witness when we observe linguistic change is that speakers use a particular language in a different way either than speakers before them or than other users of the language. The language itself does not do anything differently. This clarification may seem petty but it is important since “languages change” is a claim often taken for granted amongst many academic linguists when discussing this issue.

<sup>2</sup>The term *smaller language* thus has nothing to do with the geographical range of the number of speakers but with power or the perception of power. Just as much as the German of Germany is a ‘smaller’ language with regard to English (since there is clear discourse of the threat of Anglicisms), it is not a ‘smaller’ language with regard to Italian (since knowing how to order a pizza funghi prosciutto in a pizzeria in Germany will be a sign of middle-class education, not an act of treason to the German language). Similarly, Austrian German is seen to be a bigger language in the context of borrowing into the Austrian dialect Karinthian but a smaller language in relation to the ‘damaging’ influence of the German of Germany.

## 7 Assessing language contact

For many minority languages, language contact results in their displacement through the influence of the high [i.e. prestige] language; as a consequence there are attempts to save and preserve one's own language.

[Laabs \(2009\)](#) states that for minority languages, language contact often means displacement by the prestige language of the majority, and that as a consequence attempts are made to preserve or save the language. Language contact is thus not seen as an interesting phenomenon worthy of description but instead as a worrying development, threatening the existence of the smaller language. The important role of evaluation in language change was already articulated in the seminal study by [Weinreich et al. \(1968: 165\)](#) who stated that the 'study of the *evaluation* problem [...] is an essential aspect [...] to an explanation of change.' They focus on the effects of social values on the internal development of language. By extension this chapter will focus on the evaluation of the internal development due to external language contact, rather than social values, though of course there also is a social-value perspective as regards the existence and acceptance of language-contact phenomena. This relates in particular to the various language-policy activities that can be found for many minority and minoritized languages, e.g. as regards the codification of language norms in dictionaries and grammars and their dissemination in language learning environments and schooling. In this way the evaluation of language contact between minority and majority language plays an important part in the standardization of smaller languages, a sociolinguistic process which not only results in limiting linguistic diversity ([Milroy & Milroy 1999](#)) but is also 'a potent way of doing or inventing language, of producing languages as bounded, discrete entities and as social institutions and subsequently increasing the social status of those who use them' ([Costa et al. 2018: 1](#)). Through the negative evaluation of linguistic features and patterns, speakers may alter their linguistic behaviour and, as a consequence, their language (cf. [Davies & Langer 2006](#)). Such opposition to change can be broadly viewed in the context of linguistic purism.

## 2 Linguistic purism

Linguistic purism is a collective term describing activities aimed at removing undesirable linguistic features from a particular language or preventing their integration into a particular language. It is typically found in metalinguistic discussions on standardized languages and languages in the process of standardization (cf. [Evers & Schramm 2002](#) on West Frisian) but it is not restricted to

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such languages. Some scholars define linguistic purism as a belief aimed only at a protection from *foreign* language materials (e.g. Trask 1999: 254). Others such as Thomas (1991; but cf. also Langer & Davies 2005 and Langer & Nesse 2012) employ a much wider definition where activities aimed to remove *any* linguistic material ought to be considered purist. By virtue of the term *linguistic purism*, one would expect that the aim of purists is to restore a “pure” state of a language, presumably the original state of a language when it came into being. This includes the replacement of foreign borrowings with neologisms created with “native” morphology.<sup>3</sup> As the principal readership of this chapter will be scholars of academic linguistics, we need not discuss the futility of such endeavours, given the false premises<sup>4</sup> on the purported purity of languages when they are first attested or named. While linguistic purism is therefore an enterprise which can never actually succeed since *pure* languages never existed or exist, the topic of purism is nonetheless an important area of sociolinguistics. It tells us plenty about the value of Language in a given society and about the perception of real or imagined linguistic changes.

As has been studied for different languages in the field of historical sociolinguistics, the emergence of purism is often linked to extra-linguistic events such as the creation, re-affirmation or distinction of a particular nation-state or distinctive nation within a state.<sup>5</sup> The concept of nation has been tightly linked to the view that a distinct nation has a distinct language ever since the late eighteenth century – even though by no means all or the majority of the members of a nation actually speak the same language (cf. Weber 1977 on the issue of suppressing

<sup>3</sup>There are plenty of famous examples of linguistic purism, both top-down from official authorities and bottom-up by informally organized individuals. Purism does not just aim to restore the *original* state of a language but many engage in the removal of foreign borrowings to produce a language equipped for modern purposes – this may include the creation of *new* words and morphs based on indigenous lexical material (= lexical *ausbau*). We are grateful to Jarich Hoekstra (Kiel) for pointing out the importance of including this type of purism in our considerations.

<sup>4</sup>Languages are not born or come into being. Instead, a language comes into existence when humans give a linguistic variety considered to be sufficiently distinct from its surrounding varieties a name. When this happens, the new “language” will, of course, consist of elements of other languages. There is, therefore, never a pure state. Note, in this context, the somewhat “confusing” use of the term *Erbwortschatz* (‘inherited lexicon’) in the tradition of German philology as a description of the earliest German lexis – with those words removed that are identifiable as borrowings from Latin.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. the studies of Flemish in nineteenth-century Flanders (Vandenbussche et al. 2005), the case of the two Norwegian standards shortly after the emancipation of Norway (Jahr 2005), or the case of the anti-German cleansing of Luxembourgish after WWII (Horner 2005); Del Valle (2016) offers comparable insights from the case of Galician in north-western Spain.

## 7 Assessing language contact

dialect diversity in post-revolutionary France). As a defining part of a particular nation, national languages typically receive particular attention. In nation-states this usually means that they become the language of administration, media and education. The form of the language is often codified in normative grammars and dictionaries, frequently also pronunciation guides. Rarely, by the way, do such codices command *official* status, i.e. some decree or authority issued by the state. The transmission of the linguistic norms of such codified varieties typically occurs two-fold: On the one hand, people acquire (at least passive) knowledge by way of reading or hearing formal language use in the form of newspapers, literary works but also TV and radio shows or language use of high-status persons in particular environments (pulpit at church; civil servant in the town hall); on the other hand, people acquire knowledge of the prestige variety through formal instruction in schools. The intended consequence is that pupils become competent in the sociolinguistic ordering of linguistic varieties of the country they live in. By virtue of the fact that only one variety or register is used in (formal<sup>6</sup>) writing, this form has prestige in and of itself. As regards our topic of linguistic purism, this typically means that it is this variety which is usually equated with correct, good, desirable or, indeed, pure language in the perception of most speakers. Correspondingly, any variety that deviates from this prestigious variety is considered incorrect, bad, undesirable or, indeed, corrupted. We deliberately simplify our assessment of the situation to focus on the *principal* divisions in the speakers' perception of the linguistic diversity that surrounds them.

### 3 Linguistic purism and smaller languages

It is unsurprising that linguistic purism and the associated complaint tradition about the (perceived) decay of linguistic, educational or moral standards can be attested for many languages, given the social functions of Language generally with regard to the identity of speakers. There is much less scholarly consensus on the question whether different types of languages trigger or facilitate particular degrees or shape of linguistic purism. It is the objective of this chapter to investigate whether there are any differences in multilingual contexts in this regard. In particular the question is whether the lines of argumentation found with majority or big languages can also be seen in concern about minority, minoritized

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<sup>6</sup>Note that since the arrival of the internet, “informal” writing is no longer incompatible with “public” writing. This was certainly not the case during the formative years of the older of the two authors of this chapter. Writing, even private letters, almost always had an air of formality attached to it.

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or small languages.<sup>7</sup> A key difference between such types of languages concerns the scholarly community of linguists: Researchers working on bigger languages generally agree that their study of language is aimed at *describing* linguistic properties as they are used, and not to advance codificatory processes or offer value judgements on what particular feature is ‘better’ than another – even though the publication of a *descriptive* grammar or dictionary may result in their use as a *prescriptive* reference point. Scholars working on smaller languages, however, often witness a decline in the number of speakers, a loss of domains where such languages are used or deemed acceptable and a general loss of prestige of the language. They also witness that these speakers, readers and writers do not, of course, become speechless, but rather that they shift to another, normally the bigger, language in these environments. The bigger language is seen to be “displacing” the smaller language (cf. the quotation by Laabs 2009 at the beginning of this chapter). Such changes in speaker behaviour are usually not observed with objective or cold distance by minority language scholars but rather are seen as a reason for concern, with the linguists feeling compelled to slow down or reverse the process. Such concerns are illustrated by the choice of technical terms which recur to biological metaphors, e.g. the notion of language *death*, the need to *revitalize* language or conceptualization of language *ecologies*, and the creation of the term *linguicide* in analogy to homicide and genocide, even though romantic perceptions of birth, growth, blossoming and death of languages are traditionally placed to the period before 1900. Not so in minority language linguistics, where the fine line between supporting people’s linguistic human rights to use their mother tongue and protecting smaller languages for their own sake is often unwittingly crossed. Saving a minority language is considered a worthy endeavour as minority languages form a valuable part of the ethnic diversity of humankind. The topic of linguistic purism comes into play when it is to be determined what precisely the language to be protected should look like, as we will discuss below.

In this context, it is an important point that most minority languages are in close contact with other, often dominant languages. Whilst this contact takes place in the form of domain-specific separated diglossia, more often than not language contact takes the form of code-switching, language mixing and translanguaging (cf. Garcia & Wei 2014). The result of such contact is often seen to be damaging to the minority language, and where borrowing of lexemes or grammatical features has happened, the result is often felt to be a lesser version of

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<sup>7</sup>The terms *bigger* and *smaller* languages are, of course, to be taken with a pinch of salt. We are aware of the impossibility to find a term that will be satisfactory to all situations and scholars, which is why we opted for the perhaps more flippant but equally comprehensible *bigger* and *smaller*.

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the minority language, as illustrated by the following account of the situation for Sater-Frisian:

Der innere Zerfall unserer kleinen Sprache ist schon jetzt gravierend. Da die Sprecher ihrer Sprache nur noch zu Hause oder gelegentlich in der Öffentlichkeit benutzen können, geraten viele seltener Begriffe in Vergessenheit. Die Zeitformen der Verben werden von den jüngeren Sprechern kaum noch beherrscht. [...] Reines, grammatisch richtiges Saterfriesisch sprechen zumeist nur noch die älteren Saterfriesen. (Evers & Schramm 2009: 56)

[The inner decay of our small language is already significantly advanced. Because the speakers can use their language only at home or occasionally in public, many of the rarer words become forgotten. Younger speakers rarely still know the tense forms of verbs. [...] Pure and grammatically correct Sater-Frisian is spoken mostly only by older Sater-Frisians.]

The reader will immediately note the use of the phrasing ‘pure and grammatically correct Sater-Frisian’ and wonder how this is defined. In this quotation there is a clear suggestion of a correlation between the age of the speaker and the degree of correctness of the language used. By implication, the Frisian of younger speaker is less correct than that of older speakers. There is indeed a scholarly discussion as to whether linguistic purism can only apply to languages which have a prestige or standard variety.<sup>8</sup> It is argued that without a codified variety, efforts to cleanse a language from damaging features would not have a point of reference as to what a clean variety of the language would look like. However, just as with the case of North Frisian discussed in detail below, those worried about the state of their language usually don’t refer to an identifiable or codified norm but rather – either explicitly or implicitly – to some generally agreed norm: the “good” language use that they themselves consider good and appropriate. This somewhat shaky method to establish what is part of the language and what is not, is rarely challenged since those who engage in these discussions generally agree on these properties and thus need not find justification. Even without the existence of a codified standard variety, there often appears to be sufficient or, indeed, universal agreement on what is an indigenous part of the language and what is not. Just as with big languages, the dangerous threats are seen to be both external influences through language contact and sloppy handling of the language by particular social groups (youths, lesser-educated speakers, etc.).

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<sup>8</sup>Cf. the discussions offered in Van der Sijs (1999) suggesting that there is an interdependence of the rise of puristic tendencies and the creation of a standardized language norm, whilst Brincat et al. (2003: viii) argue that ‘purism is an issue that can come up in societies where literacy is heavily restricted and institutions which could organise purist movements are largely missing.’

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## 4 North Frisian

North Frisian is a West Germanic language traditionally divided into 10 dialects, which has been spoken for some 1200 years along the North Sea coastline of what is now Germany. While it is fairly safe to suggest that up until the late nineteenth century most of the 30,000 people on the northern islands and the coastline were speakers of North Frisian, realistic estimates for today speak of 5,000 speakers in North Frisia and perhaps another 2,000 in the diaspora in Germany and the USA (cf. Århammar 2008). North Frisian has always been an invisible language (cf. Havinga & Langer 2016), i.e. it was never used in any significant ways in official written domains such as legal texts or public media. While there is an early witness of the language in the form of a Lutheran catechism from 1600 which survives in two dialects (though the originals have been lost since 1945) and there are a number of smaller texts from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, using North Frisian in writing never gained momentum. Private texts, including letters, were written in the language of schooling, i.e. High German, though there is evidence of Frisian interference, e.g. in the nineteenth-century private letter corpus from Amrum, studied by Jacobs-Owen (2017):

- (1) Morphological syncretism in analogy to universal plural in Amrum Frisian  
 hoffe daß ihr alle gesund und wohl sind.  
 hope.1SG that you.2PL all healthy and well are.3PL  
 ‘I hope that you are all healthy and well’ (Jacobs-Owen 2017: 54)
- (2) Directional adverbs copied into High German  
 Wir waren daselbst ungefähr 130 Meilen hinauf auf dem Reviere  
 we were there roughly 130 miles up-on up the river  
 ‘at that stage we were roughly 130 miles upstream’ (Jacobs-Owen 2017: 71)
- (3) Code-switching to Frisian  
 NB. Schreibe auch einen Brief an Mutter und laß ihr von uns wissen  
 Write.IMP also a letter to mother and let her from us know.  
 Ik mad di hal see an me di snake.  
 I may you.2SG PRT see and with you talk  
 ‘Also write a letter to mum and tell her about us. [in Frisian:] I would love to see you again and talk to you’ (Jacobs-Owen 2017: 91)

With the emergence of nationalism in the nineteenth century, first serious efforts began to use North Frisian in literary texts and to create dictionaries of the

language. It was first introduced as a school subject in 1909 and has been used in schools to varying degrees ever since, albeit with wavering success and virtually never as a language of instruction. In 2019, the language was taught in 16 (almost exclusively primary) schools to some 850 students. Except for one, very small, trilingual school (Danish, Frisian, High German),<sup>9</sup> it is not used in classes dedicated to other subjects.<sup>10</sup> The language has been protected by the European Charter for Minority or Regional Languages since 1999, though efforts to support it in Germany have existed for longer. There is some limited public use of the language, most notably on bilingual road signs. Since 2004, the language may be used in correspondence with state authorities in the district of North Frisia. The language may be studied at two universities (in Flensburg and Kiel) and there are a number of publicly supported cultural associations that promote North Frisian language and culture. One such institution, the *Nordfriisk Instituut*, has been very successful in publishing teaching materials for adult language learning; the University of Kiel has published a number of reference dictionaries, as well as teaching aids. Importantly, such publications always refer to one particular dialect, not a “common” North Frisian. By virtue of producing teaching materials, an implicit codification cannot be avoided, unless one were to offer a whole range of variants to the student learner. As a consequence, those learning Frisian (or any other language) as an L2 learn a variationally restricted variety, only those features that are considered to be correct by those engaged with teaching the language. This is normally not a problem for any L1 community: e.g. just because advanced learners of German will learn to use the subjunctive in reported speech will not affect the (much more common) use of the indicative in reported speech by L1-speakers of German. However, with minority languages, the judgement of L2 speakers may be more powerful in sanctioning particular language usages by L1 speakers which are not to be found in teaching materials or codified texts.<sup>11</sup>

## 5 Linguistic purism and North Frisian

In what follows we present examples of language evaluation for North Frisian. Following Gregersen (2019) we identify three different discourses:

1. the academic discourse, i.e. formal scholarly contributions,

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<sup>9</sup>This school, the *Risem schölj* or *Risum danske skole* is part of the Danish minority school system.

<sup>10</sup>In recent years, science lessons in Frisian have been offered as immersion classes in primary schools on the island of Sylt, but this is very much an exception.

<sup>11</sup>Admiraal et al. (2019) has examples of L1 speakers complaining about being corrected by L2 speakers on their use of Frisian.

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2. the public discourse, i.e. scholarly contributions aimed at a wider public,
3. the lay-linguistic discourse, i.e. non-scholarly contributions in open and informal sources.

We present a selection of quotations which we consider to be representative as regards the nature and motivations of their lines of argument. We do not offer statistical analyses as these would not be a suitable method of investigation in this area.

The distinction between these three discourses is not always clear-cut and there is significant overlap between participants at times. For this reason, we are guided in our classification by the intended readership of each contribution: articles published in the annual *Nordfriesisches Jahrbuch* tend to be aimed at a more scholarly audience whereas those published in the quarterly *Nordfriesland* are much more journalistic and accessible to a wider readership. And in turn, postings on public Facebook pages are likely to be intended to be yet more conversational and approachable. We argue that the difficulty to separate radically between the three discourses does not take away from the overarching insight of our analyses, namely that there is broad agreement of views across academic and non-academic linguists on the subject of language contact and language change.

## 5.1 The academic discourse

The sources mined for establishing the views of academic linguists on evaluating language change and language contact comprise academic articles and books which are aimed at an expert readership, i.e. fellow academic linguists. Such texts can be found both in publications aimed quite generally at Frisianists, e.g. the *Nordfriesisches Jahrbuch* (*Nfr. Jb.*) but also in books and journals aimed more broadly at linguists from other sub-disciplines or language specialisms. This does not mean that we would necessarily classify *all* publications in the *Nfr. Jb.* discussing language matters as being part of this discourse: the contribution by Ingwersen (1966), a school teacher and grande dame of language activism, would more readily be categorized as part of the public discourse (§5.2). In classifying these texts, we are conscious that there will always be an element of arbitrariness or controversy. We do, however, claim that the views we present here are sufficiently frequent to show the views of a broad range of scholars and are not merely “exotic” views of particular individuals. In this regard it is worth pointing out that quotations are presented in a strictly chronological manner since there is no tangible “development” of views and perceptions on the state of the language.

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A recurring topos in the area of minority-language sociolinguistics is the view that language and culture are interconnected. Sjölin (1997: 473) speaks of the acquisition of particular behaviour patterns (*Verhaltensweisen*) of the members of the cultural community (*Kulturgemeinschaft*) in line with the acquisition of linguistic competency in Frisian. He suggests that macro-sociological changes, including the loss of a distinct ethnic-cultural identity, have resulted in changes in the language, in particular the disappearance of a distinctive or independent semantics and syntax:

Die Verdrängung des Nordfriesischen stellt somit das letzte Glied einer Kausalkette dar, die über sozio-ökonomische Umwälzungen auf der Makro-Ebene, Veränderungen gesellschaftlicher Wertesysteme, Verlust der ethnisch-kulturellen Identität sowie der typischen (sprachlichen und nicht-sprachlichen) Verhaltensweisen bis zum Schwund der eigenständigen Semantik und Syntax verläuft (Sjölin 1997: 473).

[The displacement of North Frisian thus constitutes the last link in a causal chain, which runs via socio-economic revolutions on a macro-level, changes in society's value systems, the loss of an ethnic-cultural identity as well as the distinctive (linguistic and non-linguistic) behaviour patterns, culminating in the loss of an independent semantics and syntax.]

Traditional domains where Frisian was used exclusively disappeared more and more, and Frisian, he argues, was used to speak about topics of the non-Frisian world ('aus der nicht-friesischen Außenwelt', Sjölin 1997: 471). This, he says, led to the speakers' realization that their linguistic resources are insufficient in Frisian and that consequently, they will have to resort to German words and phrases. The result is a pseudo-Frisian where the formally distinctive Frisian syntax and semantics have been replaced by the corresponding German parts (*ibid.*).<sup>12</sup> In this way, Frisian transforms from being an independent language to being merely a word-by-word translation of German (Ebert 1994).

This impact of long-term language contact on the linguistic properties of Frisian is also noted by a number of other academic linguists. It is telling that such accounts often begin by stating that language change is a natural phenomenon (e.g. Walker 1979; Ebert 1994) and that any language changes. However, it is the degree of change that is said to be cause for concern. Walker (1979: 53) warns that

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<sup>12</sup>Schmidt-Petersen & Craigie (1928: 33) simply state that the sentence structure of (Fering) Frisian is the same as in German. They offer no explanation nor do they hint at a suggestion that this may be due to language contact.

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one needs to be alert when a language changes to such a degree as to damage or irrevocably change the language's idio-distinctiveness (*Eigenart*) since otherwise the language may simply end up as little more than a translated version of the standard. This view that languages have core components that must not be changed can also be found in Ebert's article on Fering Frisian (Ebert 1994). Here she argues that the Fering spoken by both young native speakers and those learners who speak *neo-Frisian* has largely lost its inner form (*innere Form*) and simply consists of a contact language (by which she presumably means German) with a different name on its label (Ebert 1994: 25). The emphasis on the difference in the language between generations can be found in other commentators, too. Walker, writing in the 1980s, argues that the Frisian of the older generation (presumably those born at around 1890–1910) shows very little interference from German since those speakers had grown up almost monolingually.<sup>13</sup> This does not mean that their Frisian had not undergone changes: Walker (1978: 113) argues that the reduction of vowel quality distinctions in Sölring (Sylt Frisian) was due to 'natural' language change since it was already completed in the older parents' generation which had not had much exposure to High German. In contrast the changes in the vowel systems of Mooring (Risum-Lindholm Frisian) took place due to a insufficient linguistic awareness ('*mangelndes Sprachbewusstsein*', Walker 1978: 133), since it first occurred amongst children at nursery age.

It was due to contact with German that the younger generations *lost* some of the distinctive features of Frisian and that their Frisian showed some *symptoms* of a dying language (Walker 1986: 210). Walker then suggests that a golden solution in this regard would consist of some sort of compromise by which some changes, e.g. the re-assignment of grammatical gender to match the German one, would continue to be challenged, whilst other developments, e.g. the loss of a particular set of dental consonants, would simply be accepted (Walker 1986: 211). Ebert (1994), in whose view her native language Fering was doomed to extinction (*todkrank*), is less conciliatory: Postulating a division into Traditional Fering and Young Fering, she maintains a view by which the archaic or traditional forms of the language are the purer ones. Acknowledging that Fering has lost its function as a village and home language,<sup>14</sup> Ebert is concerned about the speed and degree of change, which exceed patterns of normal language change and threaten the

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<sup>13</sup>There is no reason to cast doubt on this statement despite the fact that by then High German as the language of all public domains including schooling and church had been firmly established for several decades.

<sup>14</sup>This appears to be an overstatement. Writing in 2019, some 25 years later, we see no reason to suggest that Fering is likely to abandon its status as a family and village language on the western half of the island of Föhr.

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language; indeed, for her, any features of Fering distinguishing it from German have largely disappeared in the language of the younger generation:

Diese Veränderungen sind jedoch relativ unbedeutend im Vergleich zu der verheerenden strukturellen Erosion der Sprache der jungen Generation. Alle Bereiche der Grammatik und Lexik sind betroffen, und die wenigen strukturellen Züge, die das Fering vom Deutschen unterscheiden, sind weitgehend verschwunden. (Ebert 1994: 11)

[These [aforementioned] changes are relatively unimportant, though, in comparison to the devastating structural erosion of the language of the young generation. All areas of grammar and lexis have been affected, and the few structural features which distinguish Fering from German have all but disappeared.]

Sjölin (1997, also 1976) sees the reason for this in a certain lack of shared communicative spaces between generations, who no longer converse with each other in Frisian to a sufficient degree:

die Jüngeren hören [...] nur noch selten die Sprache derer, die fest im System stehen, und die sprachlichen Fehler der Jüngeren werden von den Älteren nicht mehr korrigiert. (Sjölin 1997: 470)

[The younger ones only rarely hear the language of those who are firm in the [linguistic] system and the linguistic mistakes of the younger ones are no longer corrected by the older ones.]

It is a little unclear what such a lack of communication would have actually looked like. A key aspect may have been the interruption in the parent-child transmission of smaller language as attested in many parts of Europe, and affecting equally the autochthonous languages of South Jutish, Frisian and Low German in our region, in the 1950s-1970s. This had a significant impact on the raising of a young generation of native speakers. On the other hand, Sjölin and other academics readily acknowledge that the younger generations are *fluent* speakers of the languages when they comment that the younger speakers (in particular) appear to be oblivious to the fact of how Germanised or Dutchified their Frisian is (Sjölin 1997: 471).

This also pertains to lexical change, both with regard to borrowing, morphological innovation and adaptation, as well as semantic extension. The use of such

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mechanisms in normal speech is well-known from any bi- or multilingual community (cf. the general discussion of *translanguaging* by Garcia & Wei 2014 as a method to depart from the notion of conscious switching between languages amongst multilinguals). In minority language linguistics such practices are often commented on, with the clear position that language mixing is damaging to the linguistic “health” or integrity of the participating languages. Laabs (2009: 38) reports that the high number of L2 speakers of Frisian accelerates the process of introducing and assimilating German morphemes into the language – a somewhat surprising claim that can only be convincing if such learners have particularly high social prestige or are influential in the production of formal texts.<sup>15</sup> To counteract the “damaging” influence of borrowing from German, solutions consist of artificial interference through different ways of expanding the lexicon. Such interference commonly takes the form of re-instating archaic words, perhaps adding a more modern meaning, or using existing morphological means to create new words.<sup>16</sup> Laabs (2009: 37f) reports that this includes calques derived from High German morphology – which may be perceived as incorrect Frisian (cf. also Ebert 1994: 11). Laabs offers an example which he himself considers to be ill-formed: watching TV should be *firsijinj*, not *firnsiinj*, since the latter, with the linking-*n* between *fir* (‘far’) and *siinj* (‘see’) is formed by analogy to the High German *fernsehen* (= *fern* ‘far’ + *sehen* ‘see’). There is a contradiction here, in our view, in that we fail to understand how a word can be incorrect if native speakers use it in their native speech. Laabs does not specify which section of the Frisian-speaking community rejects this example and which approves of it. The use of Frisian lexical material in the creation of new words is witnessed in the example of *eefterdiilj* vs. *noodiilj* (‘disadvantage’; see Table 7.1):

Table 7.1: *Eefterdiilj* vs. *noodiilj*.

|                   |                    |                              |   |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|---|
| “correct” Frisian | <i>eefterdiilj</i> | <i>eefter</i> + <i>diilj</i> | ‘after + part’                                  |
| High German       | <i>Nachteil</i>    | <i>nach</i> + <i>Teil</i>    | ‘after + part’                                  |
| “new” Frisian     | <i>noodiilj</i>    | <i>noo</i> + <i>diilj</i>    | <i>noo</i> as borrowing from German <i>nach</i> |

According to Laabs (2009: 38), examples such as *noodiilj* are used both by younger speakers and L2 learners. However, other examples formed on the same

<sup>15</sup>It may certainly be a meritable enterprise to follow up this hypothesis in a separate study.

<sup>16</sup>Such methods are also known for bigger languages, e.g. the successful puristic efforts in the history of German in the seventeenth and nineteenth century and the much less successful activities in the twenty-first century.

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principle of morpheme-by-morpheme translation are “often rejected” as too artificial, e.g. *müslik* instead of *mündlik* (‘oral’; cf. Fr. *mûs* vs. G. *Mund* for ‘mouth’) or *iiljwääär* for *füürwääär* (‘fire brigade’; see Table 7.2):

Table 7.2: *Iiljwääär* vs. *füürwääär*.

|                   |                  |                            |   |
|-------------------|------------------|----------------------------|---|
| “correct” Frisian | <i>iiljwääär</i> | <i>iilj</i> + <i>wääär</i> | ‘fire + defence’                                  |
| High German       | <i>Feuerwehr</i> | <i>Feuer</i> + <i>Wehr</i> | ‘fire + defence’                                  |
| “new” Frisian     | <i>füürwääär</i> | <i>füür</i> + <i>wääär</i> | <i>füür</i> as borrowing from German <i>Feuer</i> |

It does not become sufficiently clear whether there is a principled reason for the approval of the former and the rejection of the latter examples, nor any clarity as to precisely who the relevant norm authorities are that Laabs had in mind.

A much more positive view of the lexical changes in Frisian is presented in Århammar (2011). He, too, sees such developments in the context of language planning activities. In particular he identifies a *need* for lexical expansion so as to allow the language to keep pace with changes in economy and society. He employs biological metaphors, e.g. when he refers to changes in the language as part of a natural healing or adaptation process (‘natürlicher Sanierungsprozess’, Århammar 2011: 13), and he welcomes the *ausbau* of the lexicon because it enables the development of a standard language to be used in all registers and domains. In contrast to other scholars, he clearly distances himself from suggestions for lexical expansion that are top-down and that do not sufficiently make allowances for how the language is actually used: The authority to decide on the merits of a particular language lies solely with the speakers’ community (‘Sprachgemeinschaft und ihre Angehörigen’; Århammar 2011: 14).

This stands in contrast to the perception of language contact as a threat to the language. This often goes hand in hand with the formulation of particular needs to support or save the language, often with an emphasis on the urgency of the required action.

daß die dem Friesischen eigenen grammatischen Strukturen, die unter dem Konkurrenzdruck der deutschen Hochsprache in Wanken geraten sind, dringend einer Stützung bedürfen. (Wilts et al. 1977: x)

[that those grammatical structures that are inherent to Frisian but which have become unstable under the pressure of competition from the German standard language, urgently require support.]

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Thus the community of academic linguists working on North Frisian has traditionally agreed that a key threat to the language are changes brought about by language contact with the dominant language, German. Whilst they acknowledge that language change is natural in principle, they argue that where the degree of change is too high, it may result in the destruction of the language. Interestingly, they note that the speakers themselves may not feel in the same way in this regard. There is a clear perception that the academic community has a role to play to ward off such damaging developments, in ways that are typically not known for bigger languages.

## 5.2 The public discourse

In this section we provide examples of what we call the *public discourse*, publications in sources aimed at a wider, non-academic readership. The contributions of this discourse are by writers with an open interest in protecting the use or the form of the language, and who may be trained in linguistics but who may also simply have a “lay” interest in the matter.<sup>17</sup> A number of contributors are public figures such as teachers, journalists, or dictionary compilers. The contributions are printed in publications aimed at a general public, in particular those with an interest in Frisian matters, such as *Zwischen Eider und Wiedau* or *Nordfriesland*. The style of writing frequently uses an *I-* or *we*-perspective to emphasize that the author is very much involved in the general enterprise of protecting the language. The basic assumption of the previous section (§5.1), namely that there is a close link between language and culture, can also be found in this discourse. Holander (1969) puts it succinctly in that language is communication for the individual but a cultural treasure for society, worthy of protection (‘erhaltenswertes Kulturgut für die Gesellschaft’). At times it is simply stated that the actual usage is incorrect, e.g. in the following quotation from the preface of a dictionary of Sölring, the dialect of the island of Sylt:

Das beim Verb stehende reflexive ‘sich’ heißt im Sylterfriesischen nicht, wie man es heute meist hört, ‘sik’, sondern wird durch ein Personalpronomen ausgedrückt. (Schmidt 1972; cf. also more generally Bosse & Langer 2021)

[The reflexive pronoun ‘sich’ is in Sylt Frisian not ‘sik’, as is mostly used today, but is expressed by means of a personal pronoun.]

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<sup>17</sup>We use the term *lay* for want of a better term. We don’t mean to suggest that these contributions are in any way less valuable or worthy but simply that their authors have a different type of formal training in linguistic issues.

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This quotation is remarkable, though not exceptional in its clear message: even though the speakers of Sörling mostly use the word *sik* as the reflexive pronoun (cf. Low German *sick* and High German *sich*), as acknowledged in the quotation, this is simply labelled as incorrect, without any explanation. The example of *sik* is often found in metalinguistic commentary on several dialects and considered a prime example for the damage caused by external language influence on Frisian. Influences on the lexicon are frequently referred to and the stated reason for this is the low prestige enjoyed by Frisian in the community in the 1960s and 1970s. The West Frisian scholar and journalist Jan Tjittes Piebenga raises the fight against “the belittling and bastardisation of the Frisian language”, which he sees to be the most important question of the times (Piebenga 1966: 11).

Just as with purist actions for bigger languages, borrowing is not perceived as damaging when it comes from non-threatening languages. For North Frisian, this means that borrowing from High German is considered a serious problem whereas the much older and more established borrowings from Danish generally remain unacknowledged or are seen as an asset which allows Frisian to be sufficiently distinctive. Again, similar to the examples given in 5.1, the public discourse recurs to two basic principles in order to overcome any perceived lexical gaps: on the one hand to resurrect old words and on the other hand to recognize the need to strike a balance between archaisms, which may get ridiculed, and lexical innovations, which may not get accepted. Quedens (1967) calls for the establishment of a commission to monitor the language, in particular to prevent or restrict the influence of German on Frisian. He argues that the replacement of Frisian words by German (G.) ones is the biggest danger for the language and he suggests that by creating neologisms such as *biilbleed* (= picture + newspaper) for G. *Illustrierte* ('magazine') or *struumonk* (= electricity + oven) for G. *Elektroherd* ('electric hob'), such dangers can be overcome especially since the new words made up from Frisian lexemes and morphology are easier to pronounce (Quedens 1967: 95). Quedens received some immediate pushback by Preisler (1968), who stated that a language is not made, it grows, using a common biological metaphor, and hence any artificial interference would not be welcome.

Katharina Ingwersen, a school teacher and a respected figure in the textual culture of Mooring Frisian, emphasizes that old words should be restored but that they should be used correctly (*rucht snåâke*, Ingwersen 1966: 264). Jakob Tholund, a teacher of Frisian, and later president of the all-Frisian council, warned as early as 1966 that to be too puristic and to introduce too many archaic forms bears the danger of creating an unsurmountable distance between the language and future speaker generations (Tholund 1966: 31). However, just like Ingwersen

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(1966), Tholund wrote some 30 years later, in 1993, that it is not sufficient to speak the language: it is just as important to speak it correctly:

En spriik ferkomt, wan't ei pleeget wurt. Üüb a düür skul wi ei tufrees di-armä wees, dat fresk snaaket wurt: wi skul uk diarüüb aachte, dat rocht an gud fresk snaaket wurt! (Tholund 1993: 17)

[A language decays when it isn't cared for. Over time we should not be satisfied with the fact that Frisian continues to be spoken: We must also ensure that correct and good Frisian is spoken.]

To summarize this section, the key topic as regards the state of the Frisian language is a depiction of worrying language decay. Just as in the previous section, the concern is not so much a general decline of speaker numbers as such but the threat to the integrity of the language itself, as exerted by the dominant language, German. The main focus belongs to lexical changes, with the enemy clearly identified as High German (cf. Århammar 1973:202 who speaks of the peaceful co-existence of the two L-languages Frisian and Low German, both of which are in an existential battle against High German). The solutions provided range from invoking the importance of speaking “correctly” to practical advice on how to resurrect archaic words or coin neologisms from Frisian morphology and lexis in order to render any borrowing from High German unnecessary.

### 5.3 The lay-linguistic discourse

The third discourse we identify consists of contributions which are public and ephemeral, without undergoing any formal publication processes. For reasons of space, we restrict our discussion to examples from Facebook postings on private pages and on the page of a Frisian cultural association.

#### 5.3.1 Linguistic Landscaping

The first example is from a Facebook posting, discussing a car park sign at a local supermarket in Niebüll. This sign gives notice in both German and Frisian that illegally parked cars will be towed away (see Figure 7.1):

This picture of the sign was posted on a private Facebook wall with the question in Frisian: ‘Who translated this? Shouldn’t it be *stönje* and not *stünje*?’ This triggered a short trail of responses from the poster’s Facebook friends (see Figure 7.2), mostly in Frisian, who, incidentally, are all well-known as active members of the Frisian-speaking community. The trigger for their comments relates



Figure 7.1: Sign at the car park of a supermarket in Niebüll (post on a private Facebook wall)

to the use of *stünje* instead of *stönje* in the translation of *stehen* ('to stand', here: 'to be parked').<sup>18</sup> We present the beginning of the exchange in translation:

A: Who translated this? Shouldn't it be *stönje* instead of *stünje*? When you use Frisian, it should be correct Frisian [F04A?]

B: A, is this really important? I don't think so. What is correct Frisian meant to be? It would certainly not be good if our school teachers prescribe, what they, from their vantage point of the pulpit, believe to be "correct" Frisian.

C: Yes, B; but A isn't just a school teacher but also a native speaker. But I believe that we should be happy [satisfied] when people speak or write something in Frisian of their accord. One wouldn't ever learn correct Danish or English. And wouldn't have the ambition to do so, either. You couldn't force people to do anything anyway. "Bad Frisian or no Frisian."

<sup>18</sup>It was impossible to find out who provided the translation for the car park sign, despite several attempts to contact the manager of the supermarket. *Stönje* is the form listed in the most commonly used dictionary but both forms, *stünje* und *stönje*, are attested in Bökingharde Frisian, with the "incorrect" *stünje* attested for Niebüll, the location of the supermarket, in Walker (1980: 247; with thanks to Temmo Bosse (Flensburg) for helping us find this reference).

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**(A) Speaker A** Huum heet dât ouerseet? Håt et ai "stönje" etstää for stünje? Wan frasch, dan duch uk rucht frasch 😊  
Like · Reply · 1d

**(B) Speaker B** **Speaker A**, as dât wörklik wichtii? Ik liiw ai. Wat schölj rucht frasch weese? Et wus was ai gödj, wan üs da schöljmaistre forschiwe, wat eefter jare kateederwaasen, „rucht“ frasch weese schölj. 😊  
Like · Reply · 1d

**(C) Speaker C** Jaa, **B**; nü as **A** je ai. bloot liirerin sundern uk mamenspräklerin. Ååber ik miin, dât we tufreese weese schan, wan manschne üt äine draaw wat aw Frasch seede or schriwe. Ja wårde uk niij korrekt Dånsch, Ängelsch ect. liire; hääwe såcht uk di iirgiits ai. Ertwângq leet ham likes määst ninte. " Min Frysk of gjin Frysk".  
Like · Reply · 21h · Edited

**(C) Speaker C** PS: "Fleeted" as je uk ai "rucht". Ban seelew ma "fleete, fleet,fleet,fleet" apwöksen.  
Like · Reply · 21h · Edited

Figure 7.2: Caption of and responses to the picture in Figure 7.1 (post on a private Facebook wall).

C: P.S. “Fleeted” also isn’t “correct”. I myself grew up with ‘fleete, fleet, fleet, fleet’ [= ablaut forms].

The three commentators are all native speakers of Mainland North Frisian, with speaker A a school teacher of Frisian, speaker B a leading participant in the ethnic and political discourse on the Frisian minority and speaker C a well-known literary scholar and poet of Frisian, who as a student produced an influential dictionary of Mainland North Frisian in the early 1970s. They are all university-educated and take part in writing competitions and/or publish their own short stories and poetry in Frisian but none of them are academic linguists. In this Facebook exchange they argue about the need for using Frasch, their dialect of Frisian, “correctly” especially when it is used in public signage as shown above. A point of controversy in this conversation is the impact of correcting people’s Frisian. It is argued by speakers B and C that not only is it unclear who would have the authority to adjudicate on what is correct but also that being corrected might have the effect that one ceases to speak the language. Speaker C summarizes this succinctly as: better ‘Bad Frisian than no Frisian’, referring

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implicitly to the book title by (Sjölin 1976), who investigated language mixing in West Frisian.<sup>19</sup> In subsequent lines of this exchange, not quoted here for the sake of brevity, speaker B re-emphasizes that being a native speaker of Frisian should not be seen as empowerment to correct other people's Frisian. In response, Speaker A claims to be misunderstood – since they simply had wished to point out that it should have been expected that whoever produced the car park sign would have consulted a native speaker or a dictionary. Speaker B then points out that there is no institution or dictionary for Frisian that provides binding (*ferbindlik*) guidance in such language matters. Speaker B reiterates that it is preferable for people to feel encouraged to write rather than not write at all for fear of making a mistake.

This exchange summarizes some of the key issues in the lay-linguistic discourse on minority languages: in acknowledgement that smaller languages typically do not feature in the public written domain, it is generally applauded when the language is used in linguistic landscapes. However, as soon as there is visible display of the language, issue of language norms and correctness appear: writing has often been reserved only for the most formal, correct or prestigious variety of a language.<sup>20</sup> In consequence, the expectation of the reader is such that writing in smaller languages will comply with this pattern, given that s/he, like the three speakers in the exchange above, will have obtained their literacy through the medium of a highly codified language, in this case High German. There is the additional tension about who has the authority to say what is correct and what is not. In the exchange, all three refer to two types of norm authorities: on the one hand the judgement of native speakers, and on the other hand the prescriptions provided in reference works. In the case of Mooring, the dialect discussed here, there is a widely-used, explicitly *descriptive* dictionary,<sup>21</sup> that is, however, often perceived to be authoritative and sometimes referred to as the *Frisian Duden* (cf. 5.3.2 below), named after the dictionary of German which is commonly perceived to be providing clear judgement on what is German and what is not.

### 5.3.2 The word of the week

The second example is also taken from Facebook but a more public posting, hosted at the facebook page of the *Friisk Foriining*, one of the most active and

<sup>19</sup> *Min fryske* = everyday, spoken language, considered to be a variety of lesser quality; in opposition to the 'echte Fries', the real Frisian, used in formal writing (Sjölin 1976: 13).

<sup>20</sup> The advent of web 2.0 (the interactive version of the internet) and social media has offered a much-discussed challenge to this doctrine.

<sup>21</sup> „By intent and design, the dictionary is descriptive, not normative.’ (Sjölin et al. 1988: v; our translation, JG/NL)

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prominent Frisian cultural associations. For some time, the *Friisk Foriining* has been posting the ‘word of the week’ in order to highlight forgotten words or disappearing words that are of general interest. In early November 2017, the chosen word was *eewensch*, with the following explanation (see Figure 7.3):

Frisian Association

The word of the week.

*Eewensch*

*Eewensch* is a different word for ‘timely, at the same time’. The frequently used word ‘liktidi’ does not really exist in Frisian and has simply been taken from German. [...]

Friisk Foriining  
9 November 2017

Et uurd foon e waag:  
Eewensch  
Eewensch as en ouder uurd for tidlik, tu e seelew tid. Dåt hål brüked uurd „liktidi“ jeeft et eentlik goorai aw frasch as bloot foon tjüscher ouernümen. „Ja kömen biise eewensch önj e dörnsch“ - eewensch.

See translation

Figure 7.3: Word of the week: *Eewensch* (post on Friisk Foriining’s Face-book wall).

This simple statement started a lively exchange of some 31 comments between the author of the post and a number of commentators, all well-known in the Frisian community, including a university researcher, activists (speaker B and C from the exchange above), and a lecturer from West Frisia in the Netherlands. The key controversy was about the question as to what counts as Frisian. Whilst the initial post condemned *liktidi* to not being Frisian but merely being a German word in Frisian disguise,<sup>22</sup> the first respondent queried this, arguing that since *liktidi* is used by speakers when they speak Frisian, surely it must be a word of Frisian. S/he acknowledges that one may have personal preferences for the use of one word over another but that this does not mean that the dispreferred word is not part of the language:

<sup>22</sup> *Liktidi* is plausibly argued to be a morpheme-by-morpheme translation of German *gleichzeitig* (= equal+timely ‘at the same time’).

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D: Deer fäist tu schüns, dät än hü ham spräke feranert. Wat ‘hiinj’ än wat ‘gödj’ as, deer koon än schal huum ai am urdiile. Bai ‘eewensch’/‘liktidi’ määst dü et üülj uurd liiwer lise, bai ‘brükd’/‘brüked’ määst dü e nai form liiwer lise.

There you see that language changes. What is “wrong” and what “good” can and should not be judged. With the example of *eewensch* / *liktidi*, you may well prefer an older word, with *brükd* / *brüked* [past participle of *brük* ‘to use’<sup>23</sup>], you may prefer the younger one.

The original author does not accept this. S/he argues that *liktidi* is not a new word of Frisian, it is simply not a word of Frisian, partly because the suffix *-tidi* (‘-timely’) does not exist in Frisian but must have been borrowed from German *-zeitig*.<sup>24</sup> The author then proceeds by suggesting that if the view of the university people (speaker D works on Frisian linguistics at a university) was that there is no such thing as incorrect (*ferkiird*) or wrong (*hiinj*) Frisian, then there would be quite a gulf between them and us.<sup>25</sup>

FF Liktidi as ai nai, et as iinfäch niinj frasch. Et jeeft uk niinj uurd ‘tidi’ (aw tjüsч nooch...zeitig). Et as tjüsч, gåns iinfäch tjüsч. Pjåt wårt duch ai frasch, bloot ouerdåt di spreeger uk wat frasch snåâke koon. Wan jam bai e uni önj FL miinje, dät et niinj ferkiird frasch än uk niinj hiinj frasch jeeft, dan san jam bili wid wach foon üs.

[*Liktidi* is not new, it simply isn’t Frisian. There also isn’t a word *tidi* (though in German there is the equivalent *-zeitig*). It is German, plain and simply German. Casual conversation also doesn’t become Frisian just because the speaker knows a little Frisian. If you at the university in FL [i.e. Flensburg] think that there is no such thing as incorrect or ugly Frisian, you are pretty far away from us.]

The discussion continues in the direction of determining the norm authority for good Frisian. In particular, the role of descriptive dictionaries produced at

<sup>23</sup>As part of the exchange, the question of whether *brükd* or *brüked* is the correct participle of *brük* was discussed with similar passion. Here the initial objection to the (more irregular) *brükd* was dropped when a screenshot of the dictionary entry for *brük* was posted.

<sup>24</sup>There is no dispute that *liktidi* is a loan translation from German, so the rebuke here addresses something that hadn’t been suggested.

<sup>25</sup>It is not clear what is meant by ‘us’ here, i.e. whether this refers to people speaking Frisian, people working at the Friisk Foriining, or something else.

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universities is examined. While some commentators (Speaker B) emphasize that these dictionaries are academic dictionaries and have very little relevance for the speaker community, the author of the weekly column disagrees and states that there is, indeed, a normative reference work – a Frisian *Duden* –, namely the red dictionary by Sjölin et al. (1988): words included in the dictionary are good Frisian, words that are not included are not good Frisian. The post is closed by the somewhat extraordinary remark that Frisian is a standardized language, not a dialect – straying significantly from the general perception that while Frisian is a language, not a dialect, it is not formally standardized.<sup>26</sup>

FF Et jeeft en fraschen ‘Duden’ – dât as et rüüdj uurdebök foon Sjölin, Walker än Wilts. Wat deerbane stoont as gou frasch, wat ai, dât ai – sü iinjfâch määge we üs dât. Deerfor jeeft et suk referänse. Wan huum miijnt, dât huum sü schriwe än snåâke koon as huum wal, dan schal huum dât. Hiinj frasch blaft et likes! We as Foriining behoonle frasch as en standardisiirden spräke än ai as en dialekt. Huum miijnt, fölk brüket bai frasch nân standard, schååset üüsens spräke!

[There is a Frisian ‘Duden’ – namely the red dictionary by Sjölin, Walker and Wilts [1988]. What is in there, is good Frisian. What is not in there, is not good Frisian. This is how easily we deal with the problem. This is why such reference works exist. If anyone thinks they can write or speak as they wish, they should do so. This does not alter the fact that it is ugly Frisian. We at the Friisk Foriining consider Frisian a standardized language and not a dialect. If anyone thinks that the people don’t need a standard for Frisian, damages our language.]

This exchange continues back and forth a little longer. The principal discord relates to the importance of maintaining a standard so as to protect the language from disintegration and to the potentially damaging effect of policing or correcting people when they speak Frisian, especially those who are native speakers. It demonstrates the level of conviction that most contributors have when it comes to postulating or confirming that there is a correct way of speaking Frisian, that it is crucial for the existence of Frisian to have such a standard, and that the language requires active support to maintain its distinctiveness. Incidentally, what

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<sup>26</sup>We acknowledge that whilst there is no formal standardization of North Frisian, there is a level of agreement amongst language activists as to what constitutes good grammar, orthography and lexis. Such subsistent norms (cf. Gloy 1975) play an important role in the editing of texts in publications, e.g. by the *Nordfriisk Instituut* or the *Ferring Stiftung*.

is missing in these discussions are the voices of those native speakers who are not active in any metalinguistic debates (cf. [Admiraal et al. 2019](#) for ways of redressing this imbalance).

## 6 Conclusion

This book discusses the issue of language contact from a number of perspectives. This chapter focuses on the *perception* of language contact, in particular the evaluation of language contact in the context of threatening or damaging the linguistic integrity of the receiving language. It is well-known that discourses of language decay can be found for many languages and that such decay is often seen to be caused by two factors: careless use of the language (not pronouncing endings, not using synthetic case markings, etc.) and use of foreign borrowings instead of indigenous lexis and morphology. However, in academic circles amongst linguists of bigger languages, such concerns are not part of a scholarly engagement with language change: change is considered to be cost-neutral, i.e. whilst the language looks different after a particular change has happened, it is not *qualitatively worse* in its ability to serve as a communicative tool to express the thoughts of its speakers. Discourse on language decay in bigger languages is driven by the concerns of those without a formal training in linguistics or by those who openly embrace a standard-language ideology.<sup>27</sup> Such a division is less clear for minority-language linguistics. This chapter provided evidence from three types of discourse to show that when it comes to smaller languages, i.e. those that are in long-lasting contact with a majority language, the discourse of language decay through neglect and external influence is not restricted to non-academic linguists. Instead it is acceptable in the field not only to engage in codificatory processes (production of dictionaries and grammars; teaching material) but also to voice concerns about changes in the languages: such changes are almost exclusively attributed to external influences and are rarely viewed neutrally. Language change, in particular change through language contact, is considered to be damaging to the linguistic system and lexis of the smaller language. This is all the more striking as particular doctrines such as “all languages have always changed and will always change” are still upheld, despite the tension they invoke

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<sup>27</sup>Cf. the current debate amongst scholars of German on pluriareal vs. pluricentric languages, a debate which is also fought in the perception of some that a national variety such as Austrian German would suffer in prestige if it were not afforded the status of a national standard language (cf. [Dollinger 2019](#) for one controversial side of the argument).

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in connection with views of language change as decay and language contact as a threat.<sup>28</sup>

## Acknowledgements

We are grateful to Nils Århammar (Bräist), Temmo Bosse (Flensburg), Jarich Hoekstra (Kiel), Samantha Litty (Flensburg), Lena Terhart (Flensburg), the editors of this volume and the anonymous reviewers for their critical comments and helpful corrections. All remaining errors are, of course, solely the responsibility of the authors.

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<sup>28</sup>As Admiraal et al. (2019) have shown, such views, i.e. that language contact is a problem or a threat, are not universally shared amongst *native speakers* of smaller languages; they also show that there are individuals and groups who simply note results of contact such as borrowing or syncretism as part of their language(s). However, such views are never heard in the public discourse on the state of Frisian but remain restricted to those who are not part of the scholarly discourse.

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## Chapter 8

# East Frisians “achter de Penn”: Language and identity in correspondences to a German newspaper in America

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This study examines 369 correspondence letters written between 1944 and 1971 to the *Ostfriesen-Zeitung* (OZ), a newspaper published in Iowa for a group of Low German-speaking East Frisian immigrants to the USA. Although readers typically lived in small, rural Midwestern towns which were geographically dispersed, they were highly interconnected and honored their shared roots. While the correspondence letters are predominantly written in High German (HG) and typically report news of more serious events (e.g., anniversaries, visits, or obituaries), Low German (LG), which is usually a spoken language, was extended into the written domain by some authors. Although the amount of LG-usage is limited, its pragmatic purposes are highly predictable. LG is used to refer to cultural concepts, in reported speech, personal opinions and anecdotes, as well as in humoristic reference to other people. Through the OZ and the correspondence letters published in it, an East Frisian-American identity and a sense of community and belonging was promoted, which helped to maintain both HG and LG well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### 1 Introduction

When East Frisians settled in the US in the 1850s, they brought two languages with them: High German (HG), used in writing and education, and Low German (LG) spoken with family and in the community (Schnucker 1917; Frizzel 1965). This study documents the use and functions of these two languages in a corpus of correspondence letters written between 1944 and 1971 to the *Ostfriesen-Zeitung*



Maike H. Rocker. 2021. East Frisians “achter de Penn”: Language and identity in correspondences to a German newspaper in America. In Christian Zimmer (ed.), *German(ic) in language contact: Grammatical and sociolinguistic dynamics*, 193–219. Berlin: Language Science Press. DOI: ??

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(OZ), an East Frisian-American newspaper that seems to not have received any attention from the socio-linguistic point of view. Although these letters were probably corrected for orthography and grammar by the editors, we can still assume that they are “as close to speech as non-fictional historical texts can possibly be” (Elspaß 2019: 156), thus giving insight into processes of language loss and maintenance, and of linguistic and discursive dynamics in the East Frisian-American community.

The *Ostfriesische Nachrichten* (‘East Frisian news’) was first published in 1882. The newspaper was explicitly non-denominational but targeted a very particular audience: East Frisians in America, who maintained their traditional diglossia, using HG in church and writing, and LG in the spoken domain. The newspaper included short stories, poems and articles praising the old country, while simultaneously expressing gratitude for the opportunities in the US thus creating a sense of East Frisian-American identity. After Hündling’s death, the second editor, Dirk Aden, changed the name from *Ostfriesische Nachrichten* to *Ostfriesen-Zeitung* (OZ) in 1944, to cater to a more English-dominant audience. Although the readership continued to decline (Monahan 1971; Lindaman 2004: 79) due to communal language shifts to English, Aden continued to publish the newspaper in HG and LG until he passed away in 1972. The fact that the *Ostfriesen-Zeitung* never switched to English may be surprising, but since it was consecutively run by two editors, who were both members of the community, it appears that they did not have to budge to outside pressure to maintain a certain number of subscriptions. As editorial control over the paper stayed within the community, the newspaper avoided a ‘verticalization process’ (Salmons 1983), in which control over local institutions is transferred to larger organizations, which in turn promote a shift to the majority language.

This study analyzes the proportional use and functions of LG, a language that is typically used in the spoken domain, in 369 correspondence letters from a sample of twenty-eight selected issues published between September 1944 and December 1971. The results show the vast majority of these letters originated in five Midwestern states (Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, Nebraska and South Dakota), and that the communities tended to be small, rural towns rather than metropolis areas, which may have fostered language maintenance within the communities (see Louden 2006). At the same time, the communities can be characterized in terms of Reschly’s (2000) ‘strawberry system’: although dispersed throughout the USA, they originated from two larger mother settlements in German Valley, Illinois, and Grundy County, Iowa. Community members were highly interconnected, including both personal relationships as well as correspondences upheld

through the letters published in the OZ. In that sense, the OZ created a feeling of community despite the geographically dispersed home towns of its readers.

While some contributors may have been American-born, most authors were first-generation immigrants from Germany, who generally used HG in writing and LG in the spoken domain. Most of the letters in this corpus are predominantly written in HG, supporting Fishman’s (1965: 78) observation that the first language of literacy (here HG) is usually maintained as the main language of reading and writing. In these letters, however, an extension of LG to the written domain with highly predictable pragmatic purposes was found. It is used for cultural concepts, in reported speech, personal opinions and anecdotes, as well as in joking references to other people. These humoristic incorporations of LG mark it as the language of familiarity and closeness, which increases a feeling of identity, community and belonging (Pavlenko 2002), while HG continues to be used for more formal content (e.g., anniversaries, visits, or obituaries). This indicates that multilingual communal speech patterns may be reflected both in the spoken as well as the written domain, a finding that is also supported by Radke (2021 [this volume]).

This article proceeds as follows: §2 introduces the theoretical framework of interactions of community and language through newspapers, while §3 gives an overview of the methodology applied in this study, provides information on the socio-linguistic history of the East Frisian colonies in the USA and the *Ostfriesen-Zeitung*. §4 comprises the main body, presenting and analyzing data from the correspondence letters. §5 discusses the results in light of the theoretical framework and concludes the article.

## 2 Theoretical framework: Language maintenance through newspapers

From the early 19<sup>th</sup> century onward, mass immigration from German-speaking countries<sup>1</sup> shaped the socio-linguistic landscape of the United States (Putnam &

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<sup>1</sup>As Putnam & Salmons (2015: 29) point out, German-speaking immigrants were not a homogeneous group, neither in terms of geographical origin, nor in terms of their “German” dialect. However, despite the differences in group origin, dialect and identity, most academic articles use the term *Germany/ German* to refer to groups originating from geographical areas that are now part of the Federal Republic of Germany or groups that do not explicitly claim Austrian or Swiss heritage (see Schwartzkopff 1987; Boas 2002; Putnam & Salmons 2015; inter alia). Therefore, I will use the terms *German/Germany* as an umbrella term to refer to German-speaking Europeans who immigrated from modern-day Germany’s historical predecessors, such as *Hanover, the German Empire, Prussia*, etc.

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Salmons 2015). Between 1820 and 1930, approximately 5,8 million Germans<sup>2</sup> came to the US, with peak immigration between 1852–1854 and 1881–1885 (Luebke 1990: 95). Main factors for immigration lay in the search for religious freedom, avoiding harsher military duties and political unrest, as well as escaping economic hardship and famines caused by a general recession (Jacob 2002: 37). Despite the (perceived) advantages of coming to the ‘new world’, for many of these immigrants, going to the US meant leaving family members and personal belongings behind. However, they all brought their beliefs and ideologies, as well as their traditions and languages. In short, their cultures also accompanied them to the new world. Contrary to the popular claim that German immigrants learned English and adapted to the American culture quickly, they promoted cultural and linguistic maintenance while slowly adapting into American culture (Wilkerson & Salmons 2008). German language maintenance throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century was facilitated by a number of different factors, such as the remoteness of settlements, intragroup-marriages, and intergroup-connections, to which the German-language press may have contributed. This section introduces potential language maintenance factors such as their remoteness, sense of identity, foundation of locally organized institutions, and maintenance of community ties through correspondence with a particular focus on the German-language press.

## 2.1 Factors promoting language maintenance

The large number of German-speaking immigrants to the US during the mid-to-late 19<sup>th</sup> century gave rise to a significant amount of German publications in the USA. Unlike other immigrant groups, who predominately stayed within larger metropolis areas, many Germans moved to the open prairies, acquired land and founded farming communities.<sup>3</sup> They often formed *Sprachinseln* (‘language islands’) of their dialects and referred to themselves for example as “*Hessen, Schwaben or Plattdeutsche*” (Langer 2008: 501),<sup>4</sup> indicating that they did not necessarily identify as *German* but had a strong sense of regional identity. These dispersed smaller colonies seem to be the perfect ground for language maintenance, because of their “ruralness, endogamy and limited social and geographic

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<sup>2</sup>Luebke makes reference to US Census data, which historically differentiated between *Austria, Switzerland, Prussia, Hannover*, etc. However, in later Census data, the differentiation was typically *Austria, Switzerland*, and *Germany*, where the latter comprised all German-speaking groups that did not explicitly identify as Austrian, Swiss or some other country (e.g. Russia).

<sup>3</sup>Of course, there was a large presence of Germans in bigger metropolis areas such as e.g. New York, Chicago, Cincinnati, Milwaukee as well.

<sup>4</sup>Italics added by the author for better readability.

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mobility” (Louden 2006: 133). Because they were established in more remote areas, and transportation before the arrival of the train tracks was only possible by foot, horse, or boat, these towns were relatively removed from outside influences. Therefore, the communities were very close-knit and marriages within the group were common (see Kehlenbeck 1948), which are relevant factors that typically promote language maintenance.

The fact that these immigrants soon “*became aware of their ‘groupness’*” (Fishman 2019: 27),<sup>5</sup> including their shared origin, history and problems, facilitated the establishment of communal organizations and institutions. As Fishman (2019: 27) points out:

Voluntary organizations and schools and newspapers and other consciously directed media of segmented urban-industrial existence were formed by and for populations that had little or no prior experience with them.

Importantly, the founding of churches, parochial schools or newspapers by members of the community meant local control over these institutions since state or government systems were not as far-reaching at the time. According to Salmons (1983) ‘verticalization process’ approach, language maintenance is more likely when communal institutions are under local control, and language shift is more likely when said institutions are regulated by larger organizations, or state and government legislations. I will propose that newspaper publications also fall within this spectrum: as long as the main editor is a member of the community, and the target audience does not demand a language shift, the newspaper can foster a sense of group identity and communal belonging, which may turn out to be an active component of language maintenance efforts.

Although immigrant communities in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century may have been geographically remote and scattered, they were usually well-connected. The way that immigrant groups expanded into other states and founded new settlements, while still being interconnected with their home communities, was pointedly described for the Amish network by Reschly (2000: 183):

[...] the Amish system of migration seems best described as *strawberries*, which create new plants with runners, spreading while retaining connections with other plants. To be sure, all Amish plantations are not genetically identical, but there is a freedom of movement among all the locations that would tend to modify the localism of reconstructed ethnicities based on immigrant networks in one location. (emphasis added)

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<sup>5</sup>Italics in the original.

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Such ‘strawberry systems’, meaning the concept of founding new colonies with continued and established ties to older settlements and active connections between the individual groups, are not only true for Amish groups, but for a variety of other immigrant groups as well (see Johnson 2018, for a Finnish community in Wisconsin). In the EF community, inter-group connections were established and strengthened through the newspaper under study. More specifically, I argue that the geographical remoteness of the EF colonies as well as their interconnectedness through the *OZ* fostered not only a sense of identity and community, but may have also contributed to language maintenance.

## 2.2 The German-language press in the USA

Given the immigration patterns described above, it is unsurprising to find that German newspaper publications were most numerous in the so-called “German belt”<sup>6</sup> (Schwartzkopff 1987: 17; Dolmetsch 1976: 190-191).<sup>7</sup> Although the German-language press finds its origin in Pennsylvania, (Dolmetsch 1976: 192), newspapers were founded wherever German communities were established (e.g., Arkansas, Condray 2015; Nebraska Schach 1984; Texas Etzler 1954). At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, 80% of all non-English newspapers in the USA were published in German (Dolmetsch 1976: 187). In some states, single German newspapers even had higher numbers of subscribers than any English newspaper, as the *Dakota Freie Presse* ('Dakota Free Press') exemplifies (Schach 1984: 84). In 1893–1894, the number of German publications reached its peak with almost 800 daily, weekly and monthly newspapers across the US (Wittke 1973: 208).

Generally speaking, German newspapers provided “local, state, national and international news, especially from the German-speaking areas of Europe” (Schach 1984: 91), often combining political articles, reports from the *Heimat* ('homeland'), targeted advertising, and entertaining fictional texts such as short stories or poems. Additionally, since the German population in certain states was so numerous, some newspapers were used to promote political ideologies (Dolmetsch 1976: 188).

These newspapers mostly targeted German immigrants or their American-born German-speaking children (i.e., 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation immigrants), and

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<sup>6</sup>In 1900, Germans were more numerous in these states than other national stocks. The “German belt” includes from East to West: Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa, Missouri. Note that other states such as Arkansas, Kansas, Kentucky, Minnesota, Nebraska, and New York among others are also marked as having a population where Germans are the most numerous but were not included in the “German belt”.

<sup>7</sup>See Dolmetsch 1976: 190-191 for a map of the US visualizing the number of German language newspapers published between 1732-1976 based on the place of the publishing house.

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operated on a relatively local level, as subscriptions usually came from the same city, region or state. Some publications, however, focused on a more specific audience, such as particular religious, political or ethnic groups, and tried to attract a geographically diverse readership. Even though the German-speaking population reached its peak in 1910 with approximately 2.8 million foreign-born German-speakers, and almost 6.1 million American-born persons with foreign-born German-speaking parents (Kloss 1966: 213), the number of German newspapers dropped to 554 (combined daily, weekly and monthly) across the US (Haller 1988: 191). While the first generation of immigrants welcomed the German-language press, the second generation increasingly turned to English-language publications, possibly because of a lack of German literacy or an active attempt to adapt to the majority (i.e., Anglophone) culture.

World War I affected the German-language newspaper industry in the US in a number of ways, which have been described as a “climax and anti-climax” (Kloss 1966: 237). First, a renewed interest in news from Germany during WWI led to a peak in German-language newspaper subscriptions in 1917 (Wittke 1973: 244), followed by a steep decline upon America’s entry into the war, when anti-German sentiments became more prominent, including laws that banned German usage in the public sphere (e.g., Iowa’s “Babel proclamation”, see State Historical Society of Iowa, 2019). Because of the generational language shift that was underway even before WWI and potentially enhanced by anti-German motions, the numbers of daily, weekly and monthly German-language papers decreased from 234 in 1920, to a mere 41 in 1960 (Haller 1988: 190). For the most part, newspapers either switched to English, or were discontinued because the number of subscriptions was no longer profitable.

In a way, the *OZ* is somewhat of an exception to this general trend. It was published by only two editors, who were both members of the community, for ninety years with a very targeted audience and never switched to English, although subscriptions also saw a sharp decline. In order to explore whether local control over the editorial board, interconnectedness between the EF colonies, and creative use of LG in the written domain for specific pragmatic purposes created a sense of communal belonging, which in turn fostered language maintenance, four research questions are addressed. Since EF immigrants used both HG and LG, Fishman’s (1965) language domain approach is adapted to written data in order to explore the overarching question ‘*Who writes what to whom in which language?*’. The remainder of the article answers the following research questions:

1. Who wrote correspondence letters to the *OZ* and who was the intended

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audience?

2. What topics were typically covered?
3. What is the pragmatic distinction between the usage of HG and LG?
4. How did the *OZ* contribute to the maintenance of HG and LG in the East Frisian communities?

The following section provides more details about EF immigration to and settlement in the US, and background information about the *OZ*, before turning to the results generated from a close analysis of a corpus of 369 correspondence letters published in the *OZ* between 1944 and 1971 in §4.

### 3 Language and community in the *Ostfriesen-Zeitung*

As was shown in the previous section, German newspapers were more likely to survive if they could attract a broad readership. The general trend in language shift to English continued throughout the early 20<sup>th</sup> century so that many German newspapers had to be discontinued or switched to English in the 1930s or 40s because of sharply decreasing numbers of subscriptions. The fact that the *OZ* was published for ninety years with a very target audience, without ever switching to English, therefore is remarkable. The following section will provide more details about EF immigration and settlement to the US, provide background information about the *OZ* and answer the research questions outlined in §2 by analyzing a corpus of correspondence letters published in the *OZ*.

#### 3.1 Speaker community: East Frisians in the US

*Ostfriesland* ('East Frisia') is situated in the North-Western corner of modern-day Germany, bordering the North Sea and the Netherlands in the West. While diachronically speaking, East Frisian Low German is based on a Frisian substratum, today, this influence is visible merely in some lexical items (van Bree 2017: 66). Since the area was in political flux until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Southwestern part of the region was in close contact with Dutch as the language of church and writing, while the Northeastern part of the region used HG for the same purposes (Reershemius 2004: 27). Beginning in the 1860s, HG replaced Dutch for the most part, and became the language of the higher classes and the formal domain. LG remained the dominant spoken language, which was used in the private domain. Many East Frisians at the time grew up with LG as their first language and

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learned HG as a second language upon entering school. Individual proficiency levels probably varied greatly based on class, education and usage, but overall, the community can be characterized as diglossic. HG served as the written variety, while LG was used as the spoken variety (Reershemius 2004).

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, East Frisians suffered from political changes, quasi-feudal laws and famines. Because the situation was dire for people who did not own land, many workers migrated to the US to pursue better living conditions. Since they had been “craftsmen, marginal farmers and craft-agricultural laborers” (Frizzel 1965: 163), they were attracted to the cheap, fertile land in the newly founded states of the Midwest. In the 1840s, a growing number of East Frisians migrated to the US and started settling in Illinois, where the first East Frisian settlement, German Valley in Stephenson County, was founded in 1848 (Schnucker 1917). More East Frisians followed the invitations of their relatives living in America, so that the Illinois colonies in Stephenson County, Golden and Pekin quickly grew and new “daughter settlements were scattered over much of central and northern Iowa, several South Dakota counties, and Chippewa County, Minnesota” (Frizzel 1965: 163). By the 1880s, further East Frisian settlements could be found in North Dakota, Nebraska and Kansas (Lindaman 2004: 79).

What Frizzel terms *daughter settlements*, indicates that the new settlements were often based out of the older Illinois colonies. In fact, many families intermittently lived in Illinois before moving to other states, where they often settled in close proximity to fellow East Frisians (Schnucker 1917). Importantly, while English was used with outsiders of the community, the larger EF colonies maintained their traditional diglossia, using HG in church and writing, and LG in the spoken domain. Institutions such as parochial schools and churches were founded and catered to the communities’ needs and beliefs (Wirrer 1995). Therefore, despite their scattered colonies, the East Frisian community can be considered a highly interconnected group. Therefore, while Frizzel’s *daughter settlements* merely describe the *establishment* of new colonies, Reschly’s ‘strawberry’ model focuses on the continuing communication between the individual settlements. It will be shown that a sense of identity and belonging was created by personal connections expressed through letters, occasional visits, and through correspondences in the OZ.

### 3.2 Die Ostfriesen-Zeitung

The *Ostfriesische Nachrichten* (‘East Frisian news’) was first published by Luepke Hündling in 1882. Born in 1853, Hündling had immigrated from East Frisia with

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his family in 1869 and grew up in Dubuque. He worked for a German newspaper in Freeport, became a Presbyterian pastor and followed a call to Breda, Iowa, where he preached for an East Frisian congregation from 1879-1880 (Lindaman 2004). Here, his idea for a newspaper, which would cater to the many East Frisians in the area, was born. When returning to Dubuque, Hündling began to build a network of appointed correspondence letter contributors, who would report current events from the East Frisian communities (Lindaman 2004: 81). The newspaper was explicitly non-denominational, focusing instead on building a “mythical status” (Lindaman 2004: 82) of East Frisia by including short stories, poems and articles praising the old country, while simultaneously expressing gratitude for the opportunities in the US, thus creating a sense of East Frisian-American identity.

The newspaper was well-received, and quickly increased in both range and subscriptions. After having published the newspaper for 25 years, Hündling convinced Dirk Aden to immigrate from East Frisia to Iowa, and to eventually become his editorial successor (OZ, January 1, 1957). Aden accepted the suggestion and slowly took over the publication in the late 1920s. The newspaper reached a peak of 7,100 subscriptions in 1910, after which the number slowly declined. In 1930, the subscriptions had decreased to 6,600, and by 1940 circulation sank to 3,630 subscriptions (Lindaman 2004: 79). In September 1944, Aden changed the name from *Ostfriesische Nachrichten* to *Ostfriesen-Zeitung* (OZ), stating that a name change had been the previous owners’ condition to allow continuation of the business (OZ, September 15, 1944). At the same time, he admitted that the new name may come easier to American-born readers, who did not have full command of HG and often struggled to spell the old name correctly on money orders. Although the readership dropped to 2,750 in 1950 (Lindaman 2004: 79) and a mere 1,400 in 1971 (Monahan 1971), Aden continued to publish the newspaper until he passed away in March 1972 at the age of 91.

In the subsequent analysis, I will focus on the years after the renaming (1944-1971). Since these years have generally been described as the time of declining language maintenance across German language islands in the US, they are especially interesting from a linguistic standpoint. While previous studies have pointed out that the newspaper was a central part of community building for American East Frisians (Lindaman 2002; 2004), my analysis assumes a bottom-up viewpoint, through a focus on correspondence letters written by members of the community. In addition to investigating the community building aspect of correspondence letters, this study considers the sociolinguistic characteristics of authors and readership, as well as pragmatic differences of HG and LG usage, showing the interconnectedness of the EF community.

### 3.3 Methodology

For the current analysis, a time frame of twenty-eight years including all issues published after the name change to *Ostfriesen-Zeitung* (i.e. between September 15, 1944 and the newspaper's final edition in 1971) were considered. The sample under investigation was chosen from those issues that are completely preserved (without missing pages or cut-out articles), which unfortunately means that the pool was limited to two or three issues for some of the earlier years (e.g., 1945). One newspaper per year was randomly selected out of the pool of acceptable issues by a person unrelated to this research. The issues included for analysis are shown in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1: *Ostfriesen-Zeitung* issues included in the analysis

| Volume by date |            |            |            |
|----------------|------------|------------|------------|
| 1944-09-15     | 1950-11-01 | 1960-09-01 | 1970-01-01 |
| 1945-09-01     | 1951-12-15 | 1961-03-01 | 1971-09-01 |
| 1946-08-01     | 1952-07-01 | 1962-06-01 |            |
| 1947-09-15     | 1953-04-01 | 1963-05-01 |            |
| 1948-02-01     | 1954-06-01 | 1964-08-01 |            |
| 1949-12-01     | 1955-04-01 | 1965-08-01 |            |
|                | 1956-09-01 | 1966-12-01 |            |
|                | 1957-01-01 | 1967-09-01 |            |
|                | 1958-03-01 | 1968-12-01 |            |
|                | 1959-08-01 | 1969-03-01 |            |

## 4 Results

The number of correspondence letters per issue varies between 7 (1970) and 23 (1947), with an average of 13 letters per issue, adding up to a total of 369 letters in the sample of twenty-eight selected volumes. This corpus of correspondence letters was closely examined for information on the origin of the letters, language use, content, and mentions of inter-communal connections. First, an account of the geographical range of the newspaper is provided in the §4.1.

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#### 4.1 Results: *Who writes what to whom in which language?*

In order to answer the first research question *Who wrote correspondence letters and who was the intended audience?*, the correspondence letters' geographical origin and information reported by the authors is examined, in order to establish authors' and readers' prototypical socio-linguistic profile.

The corpus of 369 texts yields letters from 120 different towns or townships across 16 different states (see Table 8.2, and §5 for specific locations). Correspondence letters from some states, such as Arizona, Colorado or North Dakota (among others) were found only once in the sample. Less than 10 letters were found for other states, such as California, Indiana or Kansas, but Nebraska, Minnesota, Illinois and Iowa have a large number of authors from more than 10 different locations. Generally speaking, the more different locations letters were sent from, the higher the overall number of letters, indicating a larger East Frisian community in the area. South Dakota, however, is an interesting exception: while only three locations were identified, the sample includes 30 letters from SD, with 28 letters from Lennox, SD. This may imply a small, but very dedicated community or individual author (see Table 8.2).

While some correspondence letters originate in highly-dispersed locations such as New York, Washington, California, Arizona and Northern Minnesota, a large amount of contributions comes from a cluster of locations in the Midwest. In fact, 91% of the correspondence letters originate in five Midwestern states, namely Iowa (38%), Illinois (18%), Nebraska (14%), Minnesota (12%) and South Dakota (8%). These data indicate two things: first, (based on the places of origin) the EF population was more numerous across the Midwest than elsewhere in the US. Second, based on the number of contributions from different locations across the US, it appears that the OZ was used as a means to stay in touch with acquaintances in other places. Although not all of these locations are *colonies* per se, the locations with EF populations were interconnected through the OZ.

The geographical distribution and the size of correspondence locations point to the ruralness of many EF communities. Except for ten letters from big metropolis areas (Anaheim, CA; Chicago, IL; Detroit, MI; Denver, CO; Long Beach, CA; New York, NY), all letters stem from very small and rural communities (for a list of all locations, see Appendix 1). EF communities hence show two characteristics that are known to contribute to language maintenance, namely remoteness of location (Louden 2006), and inter-connectedness despite their scattered geographical distribution (Reschly 2000). To briefly summarize, the prototypical correspondent lived in a rural community in the Midwest, most likely in Iowa or Illinois, and was affiliated with members of other EF communities.

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Table 8.2: Correspondence letters by state, location and number

| State        | Locations | Letters (total) |
|--------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Arizona      | 1         | 1               |
| California   | 3         | 4               |
| Colorado     | 1         | 1               |
| Iowa         | 35        | 142             |
| Illinois     | 26        | 66              |
| Indiana      | 2         | 6               |
| Kansas       | 3         | 8               |
| Missouri     | 2         | 2               |
| Minnesota    | 16        | 46              |
| Montana      | 1         | 1               |
| North Dakota | 1         | 1               |
| Nebraska     | 16        | 51              |
| New York     | 3         | 4               |
| Ohio         | 1         | 1               |
| South Dakota | 3         | 30              |
| Washington   | 6         | 7               |
| Total        | 120       | 369             |

In a next step, biographic information reported by the correspondents in their letters was analyzed in order to get a better understanding of their prototypical socio-linguistic background. While many correspondences are anonymous, others are signed with initials (e.g., *K.K.*), first names (e.g., *Willm.*), first name and place (e.g., *Harm aus Indiana*), or first and last name (e.g., *M. Rademaker; Jacob Lüken*). Many correspondents write about their personal lives and their immigration history, occasionally in connection with language usage and acquisition. It seems that the majority of readers and contributors were actually first-generation immigrants, but some American-born EFs also subscribed to the paper. In example (1), we find evidence for that:<sup>8</sup>

- (1) March 1, 1969; Covington, Indiana (Harm von Indiana)

*Wenn Eibe Hinrichs und Frau Fenna geb. Koopmann auch schon zur dritten Generation gehören, die in diesem Lande geboren sein, so halten sie treu zu*

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<sup>8</sup>Orthography and punctuation as in the original correspondence letter. HG in regular font, LG in italics. All translations made by the author.

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*der ostfriesischen Sprache und lesen im Heimatblatt das Plattdeutsche mit Vergnügen. Man kann wohl annehmen, dass die Mehrzahl der hier geborenen Ostfriesen die in den 50er Jahren stehen, das Blatt noch lesen und auch verstehen [...]*

‘Although Eibe Hinrichs and wife Fenna neé Koopman belong to the third generation born in this country, they still loyally stick to the East Frisian language and are happy to read Low German in the newspaper. One can assume that the majority of American-born East Frisians in their 50s still read and understand the paper.’

While this excerpt states that American-born members of the community maintain LG, it does not explicitly refer to their HG-proficiency. The hedged claim that ‘one can *assume* that [they] *read and understand*’<sup>9</sup> the OZ, however, implies that their proficiency in productively speaking and writing HG was probably limited. It is therefore unsurprising that most contributors are actually German-born, as the author in example (2):

- (2) March 1, 1958; Rock Falls, Illinois (Fred J. Böseneilers)
- Plattdütsch hebbt wie immer west. As ick seß Jahr olt was un na de School hen muß, do kunn ick gien een Wort Hochdütsch. [...] Un as wi hier weeren, do kunnen wi gien Wort Engelsk seggen, man wi hebbt dat ok lehrt.*
- ‘We have always been Low German. When I was six years old and had to go to school, I did not know a single word of High German. And when we came here, we did not know a word of English, but we learned that as well.’

In example (2), the author points out that he grew up speaking LG (*Plattdütsch*), and only learned HG when entering elementary school at the age of six. He can therefore be classified as an early bilingual with a clear diglossia: LG as the main spoken language and HG as the language of formal education. Interestingly, the author chooses to write in LG, which may indicate that he perceives the correspondence letter as an informal venue where personal content can be shared in LG. Additionally, he mentions the challenges of immigrating to the US, where he had to learn a third language. Therefore, this person can be characterized as a late trilingual, likely with clear distinctions for the language domains: LG at home and in the community, HG as the formal educational language, and English with outsiders of the community.

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<sup>9</sup>Italics added by the author for emphasis.

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Apart from information by the contributors themselves, we can infer much about the intended audience based on the correspondences. The fact that correspondents often mention other community members by name (see 1) and usually provide additional information on the person’s biography, indicates that they assume familiarity between the person they are writing about, and their audience. Occasionally, correspondents also refer to an earlier letter and address its author directly, as in example (3):

- (3) July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1952; Titonka, Iowa (K.K.)

*Int letzte Blatt hebbt wi ja lesen, dat Lizzie dar in Danforth gör Habbo  
good in Tohm hollt [...] Grötnis an gör!*

‘In the last paper, we read that Lizzie in Danforth keeps her Habbo well in check [...] Greetings to her!’

The authors switches to LG for this part, after having reported other events in HG. Since Lizzie’s letters are always completely in LG, and she humorously rants about her husband and men in general on a regular basis, it may be the case that K.K. wants to adapt to her habits to create a humorous and personal atmosphere. The usage of LG in the correspondence letters occurs for very specific pragmatic reasons, as will be explored in §4.2.

Overall, the contributors can be divided into two groups: (1) Since the American-born EFs mostly acquired only receptive HG-proficiency (if any), they contribute less to the paper, whereas (2) the German-born EFs seem to be confident to write in HG (and occasionally in LG), and hence contribute most of the correspondence letters. Although not stated explicitly, the paper and correspondence letters targeted those EFs, who were able to read and understand HG (and LG). This may explain why the number of correspondence letter contributions, while admittedly fluctuating throughout the years, stayed relatively stable in spite of a strong decline in subscriptions in later years. It appears that American-born EFs turned away from the newspaper because they may have struggled to read it, whereas German-born EFs were seemingly more devoted to the OZ.

After the socio-linguistic profile of typical correspondence contributors and their intended audience have been described in this section, the analysis will now examine how these characteristics may have affected the correspondents’ discourse pragmatic and linguistic choices. §4.2 will therefore focus on the typical content of the correspondence letters.

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## 4.2 Results: Who writes *what* to whom in which language?

In this section, the second research question *What topics were typically covered in the correspondence letters?* will be addressed. An in-depths examination of the correspondence letters' content will give both insight into the pragmatic discourse of this community and provide information on the underlying sense of communal belonging and identity, which may influence language maintenance.

Although the editor of the OZ, Dirk Aden, probably corrected orthography and punctuation, correspondence letters seem to be relatively untouched in terms of structure and style, and therefore differ in their delivery of news. Recurring topics include obituaries, anniversaries and birthdays, visits by or to fellow EFs, as well as daily life in the community, including weather and farming. Correspondence letters often begin with brief obituaries such as the excerpt in example (4):

- (4) September 15, 1944; Grundy County, Iowa (anonymous)
- In Rochester, Minn. starb nach nur kurzer Krankheit Dirk Diekhoff im Alter von fast 76 Jahren. Er war 1866 geboren zu Westrhauderfehn in Ostfriesland. Schon in jungen Jahren kam er mit seiner Mutter, einer Schwester und einem Bruder nach Amerika [...]*
- 'In Rochester, Minn[esota], Dirk Diekhoff died after short illness at the age of almost 76 years. He was born in 1866 in Westrhauderfehn, Ostfriesland. At a young age, he came to America with his Mother, one sister and one brother [...]'

Obituaries in the correspondence letters often give a short summary of the deceased person's life, cause of death and information on the relatives surviving them. The letters normally include events from the surrounding area, but sometimes correspondents also report about friends or family members in other locations, as example (5) illustrates:

- (5) April 1, 1953; Lennox, South Dakota (anonymous)
- Von Canada kam die Nachricht, daß Eilert H. Jacobs dort gestorben sei im Alter von fast 71 Jahren.*
- 'From Canada came the news that Eilert H. Jacobs has passed away at the age of almost 71 years.'

Even though correspondence letters usually entail obituaries (and sometimes even more than one), they also report other news, such as birthdays, large family gatherings or anniversaries, as exemplified in (6):

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- (6) December 15, 1951; Lennox, South Dakota (anonymous)

*John. P. Plücker und seine Frau feierten ihren 58. Hochzeitstag. Der Jubilar ist ein Sohn von Menno Plücker, dessen Familie schon 1860 von Ostfriesland nach Illinois einwanderte.*

‘John. P. Plücker and his wife celebrated their 58<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The jubilarian is the son of Menno Plücker, whose family already migrated from East Frisia to Illinois in 1860.’

Likewise, visits to or from other EFs are usually reported and commented on, as can be seen in example (7):

- (7) November 1, 1950; Anaheim, California (Hinrich Post)

*Wir selbst werden Ende Oktober nach Illinois fahren, um unsere Kinder und Freunde dort zu besuchen. Wir müssen doch sehen, wie Dirk Johnson und Seede Schuster und Gerd Rosenbohm und John Sterrenberg sich schlagen, und auch, ob Lizzie ihren Habbo in alter bewährter Art unter Kontrolle hält.*

‘We will go to Illinois at the end of October ourselves, to visit our children and friends there. We have to see how Dirk Johnson and Seede Schuster and Gerd Rosenbohm and John Sterrenberg are doing and also whether Lizzie is keeping her Habbo under control in tried and tested manner.’

In addition to grave news such as deaths or illnesses, or special occasions such as anniversaries and visits, the OZ also provided a platform for every-day life. Correspondents often make observations relevant to their immediate community such as the one in example (8), which reports on farm auctions:

- (8) March 1, 1958; Titonka, Iowa (Harm)

*In der weiteren Umgebung finden ungewöhnlich viele Farmauktionen statt, die einen wollen die Farmerei aufgeben und in die Stadt ziehen, die anderen wenden sich anderen Berufen zu [...]*

‘There is an unusual number of farm auctions in the area, some want to quit farming and move to the city, others turn to new jobs [...]’

Since many readers were likely farmers or worked in farming-related businesses, agriculture and the weather are important aspects of daily life and therefore recurrent themes in correspondence letters, as shown in example (9):

- (9) January 1, 1957; Raymond, Minnesota (anonymous)

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*Wir haben hier in Minnesota einen so schönen Herbst gehabt, wie wir es nur wünschen konnten. Auch der Ernteertrag war in dieser Gegend sehr gut [...]*

‘Here in Minnesota, we have had such a beautiful fall as anyone could wish for. Likewise, harvest was very good in this region.’

Clearly, the correspondence letters served an important purpose in the OZ, not only because they reported personal news from the different colonies, but more importantly, they helped foster a sense of community, as confirmed in example (10):

- (10) March 1, 1958; Hildreth, Nebraska (Hilke Fuerst)  
*Frau Anna Schürmann besuchte mich, wollte für das Blatt bezahlen, das uns doch alle verbindet in Tagen von Freude und von Leid.*  
‘Mrs. Anna Schürmann visited me, [and] wanted to pay for the paper which connects us in days of happiness and sadness.’

To sum up, it seems that the correspondents expect their readers to take an interest in personalized news. As evidenced in examples (3)–(6), authors usually provide names and background information of the person(s) mentioned in the letter. This indicates that they assumed some level of familiarity on the readers’ end. The OZ and the correspondence letters created a feeling of belonging and shows how close-knit the EF communities were despite their dispersed geographical locations. This provides evidence for an adapted version of Reschly’s strawberry model: although the locations were not necessarily EF colonies, individuals, families and larger communities maintained personal relationships and continuing communications through this newspaper. Additionally, the OZ promoted an East Frisian-American identity, which may have encouraged loyal contributors and readers to maintain their LG and HG language skills.

#### 4.3 Results: Who writes what to whom *in which language?*

In this last results section, the third research question *What is the pragmatic distinction between the usage of HG and LG?* will be answered. Figure 8.1 shows the number of correspondence letters per year, including information of language usage for each of the twenty-eight years (HG-only vs. LG included). The definition for “containing LG” was kept deliberately broad and ranges from single words or sentences to full paragraphs or entire letters in LG. Although some fluctuation is evident throughout the years, it seems that volumes published between 1944–1958 contained more letters containing LG (range 0–6, average of 3), whereas

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the volumes published between 1959-1971 comprise fewer letters containing LG (range 0-2, average of 0.85). This decline may be attributed to two factors, namely authorship and topic. In this corpus, 27 different correspondents use LG in 56 out of 369 letters (15%). Only two contributors write all of their letters entirely in LG, while the other 25 appear to select HG or LG based on content. It may be the case that LG-writing authors had passed away in the later years, or no longer contributed to the newspaper.

Within the sample of correspondences that contain some LG, there is considerable variation as to how much LG is used. Some letters entail only a few words of LG, but refer to very specific cultural concepts, for example *to Hus* ('at home', meaning East Frisia),<sup>10</sup> *Olljohrsabend* ('new year's eve'),<sup>11</sup> or *drock* ('to have it busy'),<sup>12</sup> as well as popular foods such as *Tuffel* ('potatoes'),<sup>13</sup> or *Speckendicken* (pancakes made with bacon).<sup>14</sup> Such insertions suggest correspondents' familiarity with the culture and underline their importance for the community.

As became apparent in the previous section, typical correspondences include obituaries, anniversaries, visits and agriculture. More serious content is always reported in HG, often in rather formulaic wording. Whenever LG is used, it serves a specific discourse-pragmatic purpose. Those letters that are entirely in LG, for example, never report any serious content but rather provide personal opinions or humorous anecdotes. Such LG-only letters, however, are the exception rather than the norm. In some cases, LG is used in reported speech during longer HG-narratives as for example in (11):

- (11) December 1, 1968; Memories from a visit in East Frisia  
 Ein Mann kam an die Tür: „Well is dar?“ Ich sagte: „Ick wull blot fragen, of ick hier woll övernacht blieben kunn, ick hebb all so wiet schluart mit mien Kuffer un kann nich wieder.“  
 ‘A man came to the door: “Who is it?” I said: “I just wanted to ask if I could stay here overnight, I already dragged my suitcase so far and I can’t go any further.”’

Here, the author recounts his unannounced travel to East Frisia, and how he knocked on his sister’s door without having informed her of his intention to visit. The dialogue in (11) is probably a free renarration of the encounter between

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<sup>10</sup> August 1, 1959 (Crescent City, IL)

<sup>11</sup> April 1, 1953 (Diller, Nebraska)

<sup>12</sup> January 1, 1957 (Crescent City, IL)

<sup>13</sup> August 1, 1959 (Crescent City, IL)

<sup>14</sup> December 1, 1951 (New York, NY) and January 1, 1957 (Raymond, Minnesota)

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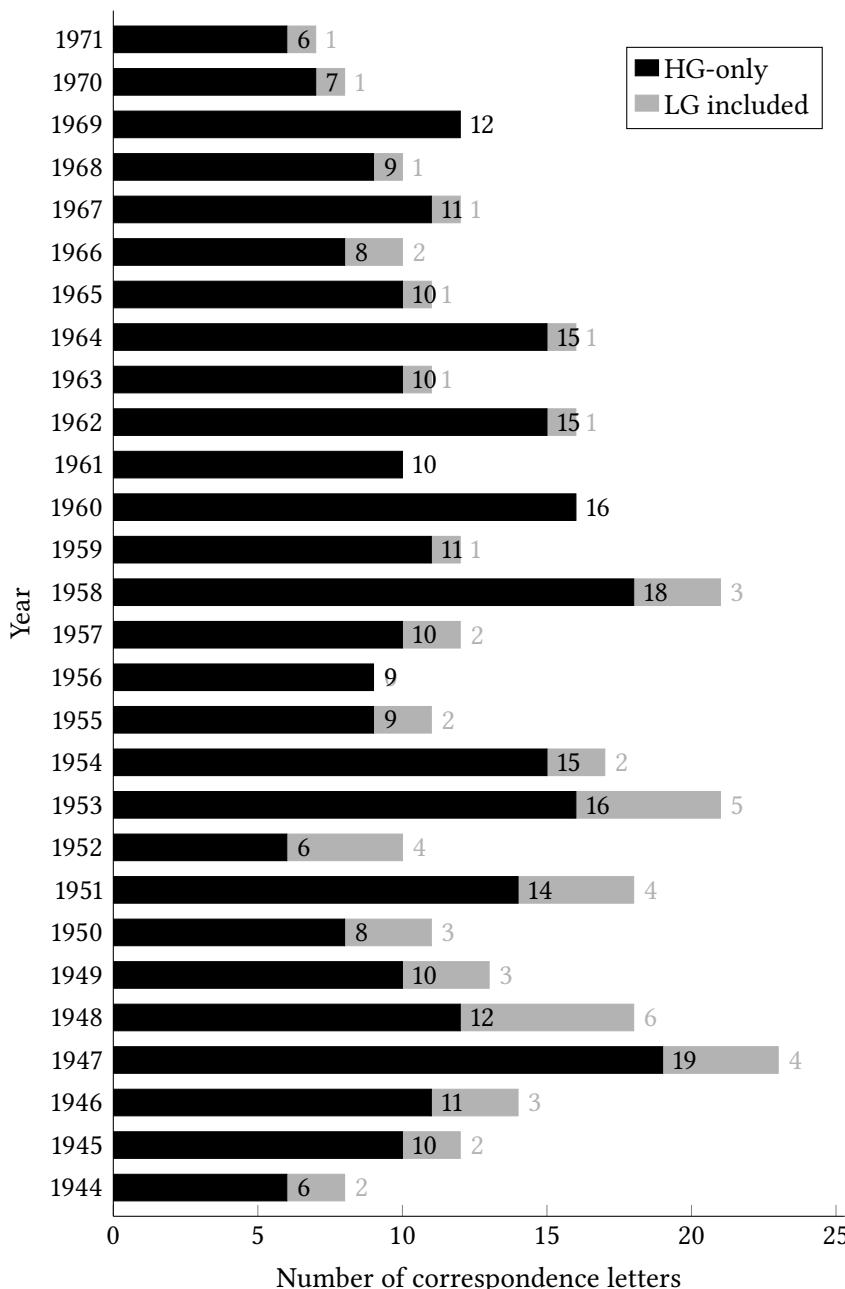


Figure 8.1: Number of correspondence letters per year (1944–1971)

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the author and his sister’s husband, whom he had never met before. While the dialogue likely occurred in LG, this particular switch from a HG narrative frame to a reported speech event in LG has a humoristic effect in the overall story line. This pattern can be evidenced in the other bilingual correspondence letters as well as correspondents use mostly HG but switch to LG for humorous remarks or personal opinions, as example (12) shows:

- (12) March 1, 1969; „*Swienslachten*“ (anonymous)

*Nettgleik, wat Mesters un Pastoren di vertellen, wat se in de Bibel lesen  
hebbt van dat Paradies ick segg un bliev darbi: Dat Paradies weer hier in  
Amerika in de Jahren, as wi in dit Land kwammen.*

‘Whatever teachers and priests try to tell you about what they have read about paradise in the bible; I will stand with this: Paradise was here in America in those years when we arrived in this country.’

These humorous instances are also extended to other people, who may be playfully mocked, as illustrated in example (13):

- (13) September 15, 1947; Flanagan, Illinois (Willm)

*Heinrich Antons is all’n paar Weeken up Urlaub na Californien, um dar de Beach- Beauties geruhig to betrachten, man dat bruk ja gien een sien Ollske vertellen.*

‘Heinrich Antons has already spent some weeks of vacation in California to see the beach-beauties, but nobody needs to tell his wife about that.’

As a result of the humorous and playful nature of the LG-passages, they often provide some comic relief after the initial serious content, and especially after obituaries. Correspondents were probably aware that their readers may be upset by the news of friends’ and acquaintances’ passing and may have tried to include some positive news in their reports.

Interestingly, the usage of English apart from a limited number of loanwords is minimal, but some items for modern concepts, such as that of *beach-beauties* in (12) or new technologies are used in a number of correspondence letters, evidenced in example (14):<sup>15</sup>

- (14) *Zu diesem [Ostfriesenfest] hin möchten wohl alle, aber der eine hat seine  
neue Car noch nicht und der andere besieht seine Tires, ob [...] noch so viel  
Vertrauen verdienen; eine andere ist Großmutter geworden und sinnt nun  
darüber nach, ob diese neue Würde nicht Priority habe.*

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<sup>15</sup>English loanwords are underlined.

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'They all want to go to the fest but one doesn't have his new car yet, the other looks at his tires unsure if they still deserve that much trust; one other has become a grandmother and wonders whether this new honor shouldn't deserve priority.'

In some cases, it seems that these loanwords may have been phonologically or morphologically integrated, which transferred into orthographic integration, as for example in the underlined words in (15) and (16):

- (15) September 15, 1944; Danforth, Illinois (Habbo)
  - Wi Landslü worden all wat oller un springen nich mehr över Fenzen [...]*  
'We countrymen are getting somewhat older and don't jump over the fences anymore'
  
- (16) March 1, 1969; „*Swienslachten*“ (anonymous)
  - a. *Bit hen to twalv Jahr was ick in de oll Kuntrie na de School gahn [...]*  
'Until I was twelve, I went to school in the old country'
  - b. *Vader muss na de Taun un Mezien halen.*  
'Father had to go to town to get medicine.'

In this section patterns of language usage in the correspondence letters were scrutinized. It was found that the vast majority of letters (85%) are HG-only, but that LG is used by 27 different authors in 56 correspondence letters to various degrees. The amount ranges from single word items and sentences, to longer paragraphs and entire letters in LG. Moreover, LG-usage serves particular pragmatic purposes. Single word or phrase insertions tend to refer to cultural concepts and themes, which point out the community's traditions and common background. Longer paragraphs in LG often serve discourse-pragmatic purposes, such as marking reported speech, stating personal opinions, or mockingly referring to another person. In all instances, LG is used with a humorous tone, suggesting the correspondents' intention to create some comic relief after the more serious content delivered in HG. Usage of individual English loanwords points towards an intended American-East Frisian audience. Overall, the variation in linguistic choices underpins the authors' intention of creating a platform especially for members of the EF community in the US.

## 5 Discussion and conclusion

In this final section I discuss the results presented in §4 with reference to the theoretical framework outlined in §2. The goal is thus to answer the fourth and last

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research question *How did the Ostfriesische Nachrichten contribute to the maintenance of HG and LG in the East Frisian communities?*

The results in §4.3 provided evidence for the claim that EF communities tended to be rural and remote: out of 120 locations from which correspondences in this corpus originated, only 10 can be characterized as metropolis areas, while all other locations are small, rural towns. Moreover, 91% of these letters originated in five Midwestern states, which implies their remoteness. According to Louden (2006), rural communities are more likely to show language maintenance, which can be supported with the data in this study. At the same time, it seems that the communities were far from isolated. In fact, they can be characterized in terms of Reschly's (2000) 'strawberry system': although highly dispersed, they usually originated from a larger mother settlement, and were highly interconnected. These connections include not only personal relationships between members of the different communities (evidenced in visits or the popular *Ostfriesenfest*), but also through the correspondence letters published in the OZ.

In addition to the geographical information, it was found that while some contributors may have been American-born, most authors were first-generation immigrants from Germany. Although the newspaper officially targeted all EFs irrespective of their place of birth, the large number of HG-only letters may have caused some difficulty for American-born EFs, who likely did not acquire productive HG-skills and may have struggled to read HG as well. This may have been a factor in the declining number of subscriptions in the years to come, as American-born EFs probably turned to English newspapers because they could not read the OZ or were no longer interested in news from other EF communities.

Interestingly, it was found that LG, which usually functions as a spoken language in the private domain, was extended into the written domain by some authors. Although the proportion of letters containing LG is admittedly rather small (15%), the pragmatic purposes of LG-usage are highly predictable. LG is usually used for cultural concepts, in reported speech, personal opinions and anecdotes, as well as in joking references to other people. These humorous incorporations of LG appear to serve some kind of comic relief, as the typical news reported in HG are often more serious (e.g., anniversaries, visits, or obituaries). Therefore, the pragmatic differences in LG and HG usage transfer even into the written domain in that HG continued to be used for formal content, while LG can be characterized as the language of familiarity and closeness. It can thus be interpreted as a language of emotion in the face of communal shift in language dominance which increases a feeling of identity, community and belonging (Pavlenko 2002). It can be inferred that multilingual communal speech patterns and codeswitching behavior is reflected both in the spoken as well as the written domain and

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contributes to a development of group identity (Radke 2021 [this volume])

Although single lexical items in English can be found, their incorporation is very limited, and there is no letter that entails a complete English sentence. This may be surprising given that many other German newspapers eventually switched to English (see §3), but in light of Salmons's (1983) "verticalization process" approach it can easily be explained in terms of editorial control. While other newspapers likely had shifting editorial boards, which were subject to outside pressure to maintain a certain number of subscriptions, the OZ was consecutively run by two editors, who were both members of the community they catered to. Therefore, control over the newspaper remained in local hands, with individuals who were willing to continue the publication even with declining readership.

In summary, that the OZ and the accompanying correspondence letters published therein targeted a very specific ethnic and linguistic community, namely LG-speaking East Frisians. Although typically residing in small, remote towns, the communities were highly interconnected and honored their shared roots. Based on these factors and with the help of the OZ, the group was able to promote an East Frisian-American identity, and a sense of community and belonging, which helped to maintain both HG and LG well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Appendix: List of all locations of correspondence letters by state in alphabetical order**

*Arizona:* Casa Grande

*California:* Anaheim, Long Beach, Orange

*Colorado:* Denver

*Iowa:* Ackley, Allison, Aplington, Belmond, Buffalo Center, Butler County, Carnarvon, Chapin, Clarksville, Denver, Dike, Dumont, George, Gilmore City, Glidden, Grundy County, Kamrar, Knierim, Lake View, Lakota, Le Mars, Lidderdale, Little Rock, Lyon County, Lytton, Manson, Mason City, Monticello, Palmer, Parkersburg, Rock Rapids, Sabula, Titonka, Waverly, Westside

*Illinois:* Ashkum, Barna, Chatsworth, Chenoa, Chicago, Crescent City, Danforth, Edwardsville, Elgin, Flanagan, Forreston, Freeport, German Valley, Gifford, Gillespie, Golden, Greenview, Kings, Metropolis, Oregon, Roberts, Rock Falls, Royal, Shannon, Sterling, Streator

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*Indiana:* Covington, North Manchester

*Kansas:* Marysville, Ellinwood, Kansas (unspecified)

*Michigan:* Detroit

*Minnesota:* Raymond, Ruthmore, Sacred Heart, St. James, Starbuck, Walnut Grove, Windom, Worthington

*Missouri:* Wright

*Montana:* Sidney

*Nebraska:* Beatrice, Diller, Filley, Glenvil, Goethenburg, Hastings, Hickman, Hildreth, Lanham, Macon, Madison, Rosemont, Sterling, Talmage, Tilden, Wymore

*New York:* New Hyde Park, New Paltz, New York

*North Dakota:* Adrian

*Ohio:* Napoleon

*South Dakota:* Lennox, Sioux Fall, Wilmot

*Washington:* Bellingham, Lynden, Montesano, Parkland, Vancouver

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# German(ic) in language contact

It is well-known that contact between speakers of different languages or varieties leads to dynamics in many respects. From a grammatical perspective, especially contact between closely related languages/varieties fosters contact-induced innovations. The evaluation of such innovations reveals speakers' attitudes and is in turn an important aspect of the sociolinguistic dynamics linked to language contact. In this volume, we assemble studies on such settings where typologically congruent languages are in contact, i.e. language contact within the Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family. Languages involved include Afrikaans, Danish, English, Frisian, (Low and High) German, and Yiddish. The main focus is on constellations where a variety of German is involved (which is why we use the term *German(ic)* in this book).

So far, studies on language contact with Germanic varieties have often been separated according to the different migration scenarios at hand, which resulted in somewhat different research traditions. For example, the so-called *Sprachinsel*-forschung (research on 'language islands') has mainly been concerned with settings caused by emigration from the continuous German-speaking area in Central Europe to locations in Central and Eastern Europe and overseas, thus resulting in some variety of German abroad. However, from a linguistic point of view it does not seem to be necessary to distinguish categorically between contact scenarios within and outside of Central Europe if one thoroughly considers the impact of sociolinguistic circumstances, including the ecology of the languages involved (such as, for instance, German being the majority language and the monolingual habitus prevailing in Germany, but completely different constellations elsewhere). Therefore, we focus on language contact as such in this book, not on specific migration scenarios. Accordingly, this volume includes chapters on language contact within and outside of (Central) Europe. In addition, the settings studied differ as regards the composition and the vitality of the languages involved. The individual chapters view language contact from a grammar-theoretical perspective, focus on lesser studied contact settings (e.g. German in Namibia), make use of new corpus linguistic resources, analyse data quantitatively, study language contact phenomena in computer-mediated communication, and/or focus on the interplay of language use and language attitudes or ideologies. These different approaches and the diversity of the scenarios allow us to study many different aspects of the dynamics induced by language contact. With this volume, we hope to exploit this potential in order to shed some new light on the interplay of language contact, variation and change, and the consequences for linguistic dynamics. Particularly, we hope to contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics of German-related varieties in contact.