Linguistic discrimination across neighbourhoods: Turkish, US-American and German names and accents in urban apartment search

Inke Du Bois

Abstract

This paper reports on the effects of foreign accents and names on the chance of receiving an apartment viewing in the city of Bremen in Germany. Almost 300 phone calls were placed in four different city districts with a Turkish, US-American and German name and accent and a Turkish name and Standard German. The analysis shows intra-urban differences: in the more prestigious neighbourhood, Turkish-accented callers had significantly lower chances of getting a viewing. In all but one city district, the Standard German callers received the most viewing appointments, and the American English-accented callers had more chances than the Turkish callers speaking Standard German. A discourse analysis of an excerpt from an apartment application conversation shows how power relations are reproduced at a discourse level. Overall, this study confirms that gatekeeping selection processes via linguistic profiling can lead to the maintenance of ethnolinguistic boundaries and segregation within the city.

KEYWORDS: LINGUISTIC PROFILING; HIGH AND LOW PRESTIGE ACCENTS; SOCIAL STRATIFICATION; MIXED METHODS; DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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Introduction

The present study investigates the treatment of speakers with Turkish, American and German accents and names in urban apartment searches. It looks at ethnic separation in a German city and the maintenance of social stratification of ethnic dialects and different neighbourhoods. Since accents are often connected with the social representation and categorisation of their speakers, accents are often attributed to particular ethnic groups and their social status (Mey 1996; Purnell, Idsardi and Baugh 1999; Sapir 1923). The perception and production of the phonological characteristics of different accents and varieties thus have social meaning and constitute different social realities (Eckert and Labov 2017; Labov 1963; Lambert, Gardner and Fillenbaum 1960).

Foreign accents and ethnic dialects are salient features of group identity (Sachdev and Bourhis 1990), and they are perceived by standard language speakers within a minimal amount of time (Flege 1984; Purnell, Idsardi and Baugh 1999; Squires and Chadwick 2006). The realisation of just one phoneme can correctly be identified as non-standard by the majority of standard speakers (Flege 1984). In a study on accent perception, the participants identified callers as Black, White and Hispanic by their saying ‘Hello’ on the phone in less than a second (Purnell, Idsardi and Baugh 1999). Such accent or dialect divergence suffices to categorise the callers into different ethnic groups and can potentially influence the course of social interactions (Raymond 2018).

Even though standard languages, foreign accents and ethnic dialects follow their own grammatical systems (Labov 1970; Purnell, Idsardi and Baugh 1999; Wiese 2015), their linguistic market values differ (Du Bois 2011; Gal 1978; Günthner 2013; Lippi-Green 2012). Ethnic dialect speakers and speakers with foreign accents often face being categorised within the social prestige hierarchy against the dominant standard language (Androutsopoulous et al. 2013; Carranza and Ryan 1975; Du Bois and Baumgarten 2013; Preston 2002; Wiese 2015). While sound characteristics and social status are related for monolingual speakers (Carmichael 2017; Eckert and Labov 2017; Labov 2001), in multi-ethnic contexts and immigration situations, the economic and political power of a nation can correspond to the linguistic prestige or status of that language (Blommaert 2009; Heller 2010); more specifically, the standard language of a nation carries the highest prestige (Gal and Irvine 1995; Trudgill 1986). Or, in some international contexts, English has been categorised as an ‘Anglo Saxon high prestige variety and a desirable accent of trust’ (Yagman and Keswell 2015). Standard American English has been described as a commodified...
language which stands for upward social movement and higher status (Blommaert 2009; Yagman and Keswell 2015). In Germany, people with a Turkish migration background represent the largest migrant population and they are a vital and integral part of German society. However, studies on language attitudes have shown that Turkish or a Turkish accent did not have high prestige for Germans (Rothe and Wagner 2015), and even more significantly, sociological and psychological studies showed that Standard German speakers discriminated against speakers with Turkish names and accents (Hinz and Auspurz 2017; Horr, Hunkler and Kroneberg 2018; Schmid 2015; Zschirnt and Ruedin 2016).

Over and above this, further sociolinguistic research has also shown that in urban contexts, neighbourhoods within one city may vary in that one ethnic dialect might be preferred over another or is even discriminated against (Baugh and Graen 1997; Breckner, Bührig and Moghaddam 2013; Warnke and Busse 2014). There can be preferred and dispreferred phonological features within urban neighbourhoods (Carmichael 2017; Cheshire et al. 2011; Hall-Lew 2010; Labov 2001) and in some neighbourhoods new multi-ethnolects emerge (Wiese 2009, 2015).

This study investigates how different accents and names were perceived and reacted to in different neighbourhoods in Bremen, Germany. Standard American English-accented German speakers were compared with Turkish-accented speakers and Standard German speakers. Further, the structural procedures of the telephone conversations were kept in research diaries. In a third step, a micro-analysis of one such telephone conversation with a Turkish-accented caller and a monolingual German real estate agent sheds light on the possible blind spots such as micro-level discourse-based discrimination in gathering statistical data on language-based discrimination.

This study inquires as to whether the decisions of the German real estate agents to grant apartment viewings were dependent on the neighbourhood the apartments were in. Further, I was interested to find out whether high prestige Standard American English-accented callers received similar viewing offers to Standard German callers. Further, I examined whether the decisions of landlords in all the neighbourhoods differed when called by applicants with a Turkish name speaking Standard German and applicants with a Turkish name speaking with a Turkish accent. This differential treatment based on names and accent would then reinforce intra-urban social and ethnic separation in cities and the maintenance of social stratification of ethnic dialects, and it would also consolidate the social stratification of ethnic speakers across neighbourhoods.
Linguistic discrimination in social life and housing

Discrimination against others based on their linguistic or ethnic background is prohibited in the anti-discrimination act (Allgemeine Gleichbehandlungsgesetz, AGG 2013) in Germany and other nations. Nevertheless, numerous studies in experimental (Bilaniuk 2003; Hansen, Rakić and Steffens 2014; Settinieri 2011) and semi-experimental settings (Baugh 2007; Bavan 2007; MacDonald et al. 2016) have shown that linguistic discrimination frequently occurs in gatekeeping situations. Gatekeepers are persons who can decide which commodities or persons may enter a societal system (Lewin 1947). Gatekeeping ‘is prototypically manifested as an interrogative encounter between someone who has the right or privilege to know and another in a less powerful position’ (Akinnaso and Ajirotutu 1982:119–20). Gatekeeping encounters which have been investigated with a focus on linguistic discrimination include housing applications (Baugh 2007; Baugh and Graen 1997; Purnell, Idsardi and Baugh 1999), employability (Lippi-Green 1994; Munro 2003, Purkiss et al. 2006; Tan, Taib and Lin 2017), school grading (Bonefeld and Dickhäuser 2018) and eyewitness testimony (Frumkin 2007).

Linguistic profiling in the context of housing applications was discovered in a study in the San Francisco Bay Area (Baugh 2007). Baugh placed phone calls with African-American dialects, Mexican American dialects and Standard American English with landlords in different cities. Baugh found that discrimination against African-American and Chicano dialects was prevalent in the more prestigious and affluent areas in the Bay area, where callers speaking the dialect had lower chances of getting a confirmed viewing. Anglo-American callers had better chances overall, except in Oakland and East Palo Alto, which are cities with a high population of African-American and Chicanos, respectively (Baugh 2007:337). In a related study in twenty Metropolitan areas, Bavan’s (2007) results confirmed Baugh’s (2007) findings: the Chicano callers achieved 941 apartment viewings, African Americans had 1271 confirmed apartment viewings and thus had a little over half the chances of Standard American (‘white’) callers, who received 2213 appointments over the phone. Massey and Lundy (2001) measured the effects of race, class and gender signalled through Black-accented English (African-American middle class), Standard American English (white middle class) and Black English Vernacular (African-American working class) on receiving an apartment viewing. They found that white middle-class men had the best chances of getting an apartment viewing and access to the apartment, followed by black middle-class men, white middle-class women, etc. The African-American
working-class women had by far the lowest chances and worst conditions (higher security deposits, rigid credit checks) for getting access to an apartment. The present study represents a replication of Baugh’s study in the German context, in that the largest migrant group and their presumed accent was tested against a high prestige American accent and a native Standard German accent.

Comparing the treatment of minority speakers in the housing market in Germany, the United States and Australia, more striking cases of discrimination could be observed. Hispanic names and accents were treated less favourably in the post-Katrina hurricane housing market (Haubert Weil 2009). The Hispanic callers had not been significantly discriminated against in comparison with white callers with regard to obtaining viewing appointments; however, they were required to provide more background checks, especially credit checks. Applicants from minority neighbourhoods were more likely to be denied a policy, charged higher prices, or offered less favourable terms and conditions for the policies that were offered. They were required to meet more stringent requirements (e.g. to have the home inspected when ‘majority’ applicants were not) and treated in other less favourable ways (Smith and Cloud 1997). They also found that the neighbourhood question ‘Which neighbourhood do you live in now?’ was the third out of four questions for Standard English callers and the second question for African-American speakers. Cases could also be confirmed of Mexicans and African Americans in the United States (Baugh 2007:338) paying higher interest rates for mortgages and Turkish Germans paying higher rents than ethnic Germans (Winke 2016). Systematic linguistic and ethnic discrimination in the rental housing market occurred towards Indians and Muslims as compared to Caucasians in Sydney, Australia (MacDonald et al. 2016) as well. Anglos were consistently offered more additional information about the rental spaces, more flexible appointment times, etc., putting the minority applicant accented speakers at a disadvantage (MacDonald et al. 2016). These subtler differences in the treatment of accented and non-accented speakers were also observed in the present study in Bremen.

In the case of urban neighbourhoods, sound recognition and group attribution of minority dialects can be advantageous. Supposedly lower social class accents and dialects acquire a new covert prestige, for example working-class English (Trudgill 1986), African-American English (Baugh 2007; Lippi-Green 2012) and the multi-ethnolect German Kiez Deutsch (Du Bois 2013; Wiese 2006, 2015). Kiez Deutsch, for example, is a variety of German which is spoken in urban areas with a dense population of young Turkish and Arabic inhabitants. The covert prestige of this multi-ethnolect
provides insider access to the infrastructure of the co-cultural group and serves as identity reaffirmation among group members (Androutsopoulous et al. 2013; Günthner 2013; Igoudin 2013). While it is disadvantageous within the majority group context of the wider society (Sebba and Wootton 1998), speaking the ethnolect or dialect reaffirms membership in one’s own group and might be advantageous in getting access to commodities in these neighbourhoods (Du Bois 2011; Keim 2007).

Social context of Bremen and Germany

Germany is a country in central Europe with about 81 million inhabitants, of whom 19.1 million have a migration background (Statistisches Bundesamt 2018). People with a migration background have immigrated themselves, or have at least one parent who immigrated to Germany after 1949, or whose grandparents immigrated and retained a foreign citizenship.

Bremen is the eleventh largest city in Germany with around 550,000 inhabitants (Statistisches Bundesamt 2018). At 29%, the number of people with a migration background is more than half as much again as the national average. Figure 1 shows Bremen’s population according to migration background within the different neighbourhoods. Notably, there are

Figure 1: Percentage of population with a migration background in Bremen’s four selected neighbourhoods (Statistisches Landesamt Bremen 2015).
no census data on the actual corresponding languages, ethnic dialects or accents spoken (cf. Adler, this issue). However, some of the speakers with a migration background might speak Standard German; others might additionally speak an ethnic dialect which could be confused with a foreign accent by the ethnic German population.

The four Bremen neighbourhoods (Schwachhausen, Walle, Gröpelingen, Tenever) and their populations selected for investigation in this study differ in average income level, education level and stratification of population with a migration background. Schwachhausen is the wealthiest of the four neighbourhoods; it is located close to the city centre and its architecture includes expensive houses which were built around the year 1900. Walle and Gröpelingen are also located quite close to the city centre and the harbour, and they host a working-class population. Tenever is located on the outskirts of the city and is a rather unpopular neighbourhood, as about 10,000 apartments were built in high-rise buildings in the 1970s (Statistisches Landesamt Bremen 2015). Gröpelingen (44.2%), Tenever (64.5%) and Walle (30.1%) have large migrant populations in contrast to Schwachhausen (14.8%). The unemployment rates are rather low in Schwachhausen (4.6%) and highest in Gröpelingen (30.5%), but they are also quite high in Tenever (23.4%) and Walle (18.4%). Prices for renting per square metre in 2018 were as follows: Gröpelingen 8.81 euros, Schwachhausen 10.21 euros, Walle 9.07 euros, Tenever 7.13 euros, compared with the Bremen average of 9.01 euros and the German average including rural areas of 8.20 euros (Wohnungsboerse.net 2018).

**Methodological background**

**The study design**

This study consisted of two steps. In a first step, quantitative results were obtained to test the success rates of speakers with different accents and names in achieving apartment viewings in the four neighbourhoods in the city of Bremen described above. The study represents a matched-guise experiment, in which 289 phone calls were made (Lambert, Gardner and Fillenbaum 1960): a caller with a Turkish name and accent, a Standard American name and accent and a Standard German caller with corresponding common names enquired about the possibility of viewing the same apartment on the same day in this order within a time period of three months. In order to minimise other possible correlates such as gender, educational or professional status, we created a basic profile: the callers were all female, single and with a similar income, working as a nurse or kindergarten teacher. The callers all had young, mid-twenties mid-
high-pitched voices. Overall, seventy-two apartments were found through newspaper ads and online portals over the time period of one university semester. Field notes and research diaries were kept, and parts of the conversations – especially the pragmatic phrases for the rejections – were noted. It was systematically noted whether or not an apartment viewing was offered, also the duration of the call, and the perceived level of friendliness was rated.

Statistical procedures
In order to analyse the statistical effects of names and accents on getting appointments or no appointments in the four neighbourhoods and in the city of Bremen overall, several statistical tests including Chi-squared, linear regression and Cramér’s $V$ were carried out with $R$. First, the results for names and accents were subsumed under the national background as one independent variable and were correlated with the number of appointments in the city overall (independent of the neighbourhoods) and across the neighbourhoods. In a second step, we tested whether the Turkish-named callers speaking Standard German and the Turkish-named callers with a Turkish accent achieved more appointments in the city and across the neighbourhoods.

Requests for an apartment viewing and accent
The callers were bilingual speakers of German and Turkish or US-American English and all of them were trained in producing sentences with the corresponding accents throughout one semester. The structure of the call roughly followed the German telephone conventions of such a request for an apartment viewing and was adopted from Baugh and Graen (1997).

Hello, my name is (first name, last name) and I am interested in the apartment on X street that you posted/announced on/in Internet platform/newspaper Y. Is it still available? Could I have an appointment for a viewing?

A combination of discourse analytic and statistical analysis can draw a broader picture of the micro-structure of talk within a social setting. While the statistical findings reveal the success rate, subtler ways of how such conversations are structured can be identified through discourse analysis within a mixed method approach. For this purpose, permissions for recordings were obtained at the beginning of the call from the real estate agents and then transcribed. The first part of the study examined the effect of the US-American and the Turkish accent and names on the chance of receiving an appointment to view an apartment for rent in four different parts of town in Bremen, Germany. In consecutive phone calls,
non-Standard-accented German and Standard German were used to test linguistic bias. The three selected names were Aysun Gülbeяз (Turkish), Lena Meyer (German) and Alice McGraw (US). All the names were considered to be closely associated with the assumed national background their accents were supposed to represent. We obtained permission to record a few of these conversations with the intention of analysing their structures. The caller asked for permission to audio record the conversation. The conversation was transcribed and submitted to the real estate agent via email and approved.

Features of Turkish-accented German

The Turkish accent in German was produced with its typical phonological features including the optional tensening of the vowel /i/ to /i/ as in ‘iisch’ for ‘ich’ and the coronisation of ‘ich’ [ɪç] to ‘isch’ [iʃ], which is notably also found in some German dialects, such as the Cologne or Swabian dialect (Bohnacker 2013; Smith 2007). In certain consonant clusters, the stops [t] and [d] are dropped and contractions occur.

Two salient syntactic features of the Turkish accent which are similar to the ethnolect Kiez Deutsch are the optional use of bare noun phrases (NPs) in some areas where Standard German would use full prepositional phrases (PPs) or determiner phrases (DPs) (Wiese 2006, 2015); these were also adopted by the applicants.

Features of Standard American-accented German

The callers produced the US-American accent by implementing a US-American postvocalic [r] instead of the German [R]. The vowels were elongated. Also, the sound of the German ‘ich’ [ɪç] was realised as [ɪk]. While the latter single feature can also be found in the informal Berlin dialect (Smith 2007), in this context it was clear that the realisation of this phoneme resembled an American dialect. The morphosyntactic features employed were the simplification of the inflected articles in the nominative case.

Results

Turkish, American and German accents and names

The representation of the success rates of speakers with the three different accents and names in the four different neighbourhoods are shown in Table 1. Not only did the neighbourhoods show different results, but also
Linguistic discrimination across neighbourhoods

the different accents were treated differently overall. There were minimal deviations in the number of calls in two cases as the same landlord could not be reached by phone.

On evaluation of the data, there is a significant correlation between the different accents and names of the prospective tenant callers and the number of appointments received. A Chi-squared test was conducted to compare the effect of name and accent on receiving an appointment for a viewing. There was a significant effect at the $p \leq 0.5$ level of the names and accents on the dependent variable for receiving an appointment for the three conditions ($\chi^2 (2) = 22.09$, $p < 0.001$, Cramér's $V = 0.32$). If we consider all four neighbourhoods, callers with a US-American accent received an appointment in 76.1% of cases, callers with a Turkish accent in 52.1% of cases, and the callers speaking Standard German received 86.5% of the appointments, as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2 also shows that Standard German and American-accented callers were invited for a viewing after this had been denied to Turkish callers, even though the Turkish callers phoned first, Americans second and Germans were the third callers on the same day, and it had previously been stated that the apartment was unavailable or already rented (see the section 'Discourse analysis of an audit call’ below for a detailed analysis). The 'prestige’ US-American accent had a lower rejection rate. The effect of the neighbourhood on receiving an appointment for a viewing was also significant.

The chance of getting an appointment was highest in Walle (83.6%) for all callers, smaller in Tenever (78.7%) and lowest in Gröpelingen (64.8%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accent/name</th>
<th>Neighbourhood</th>
<th>Appointment</th>
<th>No appointment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>Walle</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>Walle</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>Walle</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>Schwachhausen</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>Schwachhausen</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>Schwachhausen</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Tenever</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>Turkish</td>
<td>Tenever</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>Tenever</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>Gröpelingen</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>Gröpelingen</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>Gröpelingen</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2: Percentage of appointments for apartment viewings by caller group in all four surveyed Bremen neighbourhoods.

Figure 3: Percentage of appointments for apartment viewings in the four selected Bremen neighbourhoods.
and Schwachhausen (59.3%). To explore the possible relations and interactions between neighbourhood, accent and receiving an appointment, a generalised linear model was constructed for the data. The resulting model showed a highly significant interaction between not getting an appointment and a Turkish accent ($Z = 2.929, p = 0.0034$). Figure 4 indicates that callers with a Turkish accent had the highest chances of receiving an appointment in the Tenever district (72%); their chance was as high as that of callers with an US-American accent (72%), and that of German-accented callers was only 11% higher (83%). In contrast, German or Turkish names and accent played a strong role in decision-making among landlords in Schwachhausen. Fisher’s exact test was conducted on the chances of getting an appointment in the different neighbourhoods and showed a highly significant effect of names and accents ($p < 0.0001$).

Only 23.5% of the callers with a Turkish accent received an appointment, whereas 94.7% of the callers with a German accent obtained an appointment. In Gröpelingen, 77.7% of the callers with a Standard German name and accent received an appointment, 64.7% of the US-American callers and 44.4% of the callers with a Turkish name and accent. Interestingly, callers with a US-American accent had a slightly higher chance in Walle (94%) than German-accented persons (89.4%), while Turkish callers had a 66.6% chance. Depending on the part of town, the prospective tenants were differently discriminated against on the basis of their ethnically associated

**Figure 4:** Means of appointments by neighbourhood and accent.
names and accents. The results represent statistically relevant differences among different accent groups, especially in the more prestigious and expensive part of town. There are also advantages for the Standard German callers in the other three city districts, even if the gaps are not as significant. In the city district Walle, the US-American-accented speakers had the best opportunities of getting an appointment to view an apartment. However, as Figure 4 illustrates, different treatment based on foreign accent was most significant in Schwachhausen. It is of note that there was no significant accent discrimination in Tenever. Also, not all German landlords discriminated against the Turkish-accented callers. Yet the data show that discrimination by German landlords does take place, especially in the more prestigious area Schwachhausen.

**Turkish accent and name versus Turkish name**

In a second step, the effects of a Turkish name with no accent speaking German and a Turkish name with an accent were evaluated. The same number of phone calls were conducted in the same areas, and the Turkish callers identified with a Turkish name and used Standard German. Figure 5 shows that callers with a Turkish name speaking without a Turkish accent received more appointments in all four neighbourhoods. Table 2 shows the results for both groups with Turkish names in the four neighbourhoods. Across all neighbourhoods, the callers speaking Standard German received more appointments.

There was a significant effect at the $p \leq 0.5$ level of the Turkish accent on receiving an appointment ($F(1, 3) = 4.64, p = 0.032$). The neighbourhood also had a significant effect on all Turkish-named callers with or without an accent ($F(3, 1) = 8, 18, p = 0.000047$). Post hoc comparisons indicated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accent</th>
<th>Neighbourhood</th>
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<th>No appointment</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turkish name and accent</td>
<td>Walle</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish name, no accent</td>
<td>Walle</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish name and accent</td>
<td>Schwachhausen</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish name, no accent</td>
<td>Schwachhausen</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish name and accent</td>
<td>Tenever</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish name, no accent</td>
<td>Tenever</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish name and accent</td>
<td>Gröpelingen</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish name, no accent</td>
<td>Gröpelingen</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
that the mean score for the Turkish accent within the city \((M = 0.97, SD = 0.96)\) was significantly different compared with the results from across the neighbourhoods \((M = 0.02, SD = 0.05)\). In the neighbourhoods Walle and Tenever, all Turkish-named applicants were most successful in receiving appointments, third in Gröpelingen and fourth in Schwachhausen.

Comparing the data sets within this study, Americans speaking with an American accent had overall better chances of receiving an appointment than Turkish speakers speaking Standard German, and it was only in the Tenever neighbourhood that they did not (see Figure 6). However, it also shows that solely speaking Standard German did not suffice in getting the same amount of appointments as Germans or US Americans speaking with an accent if the caller has a Turkish name. In the neighbourhoods Schwachhausen, Walle and Gröpelingen, Turkish callers who spoke Standard German had fewer chances of getting an appointment than US Americans or Germans.

\[\textbf{Figure 5:} \text{Means of Turkish names and Turkish accent versus Turkish names with Standard German by neighbourhood.}\]
Discussion

Overall, it can be concluded that the prospective tenants were discriminated against based on their foreign names and accents, but not by all German landlords and real estate agents, and not in all four city districts of Bremen. The analysis shows differences among different accent groups in Schwachhausen, the more prestigious and expensive part of town with a smaller migration background population. Here, only about 20% were offered viewings of apartments, whereas 89% of the Standard German-speaking callers with German names received an appointment for an apartment viewing. These findings disconfirm those of Auspurg, Hinz and Schmidt (2017), where Turkish names were discriminated against more in those neighbourhoods with a high proportion of Turkish immigrants. It suggests social boundaries are set by the host society specifically for certain urban areas, but not so much for others. In the city districts of Gröpelingen, Tenever, Walle and Schwachhausen, advantages for Standard German callers exist. These findings are consistent with Baugh’s (2007)

Figure 6: Means of appointments by neighbourhood and accent.
study, where in the predominantly Anglo white area Palo Alto, African Americans and Chicanos had significantly lower chances of receiving an appointment, whereas in mixed ethnicity areas such as Oakland and East Palo Alto, the advantage for white people was not as apparent. Hence, in neighbourhoods which are already more mixed, Caucasian Americans and in this study ethnic Germans still have advantages, but discrimination does not occur as often as in the more exclusive parts of town.

As stated above, people recognise native and foreign accents within milliseconds and may react towards them consciously or unconsciously. These reactions might depend at least partly on the ‘attractiveness’ and/or ‘prestige’ of that accent and the corresponding national/ethnic population. Thus, US American-accented speakers appear to be better perceived and better treated in the German housing market than Turkish-accented speakers.

**Discourse analysis of an audit call**

While the previous sections have revealed general results for the success rates for apartment viewings, this section aims to reveal the structures in conversations where an applicant is refused a viewing appointment. This fine-grained analysis can shed light on unconscious mechanisms of subtle discriminatory linguistic practices in discourse. It illustrates how the inclusion of discourse analytic methods provides another fruitful dimension for linguistic profiling (cf. Baumgarten, Du Bois and Gill, this issue). The conversation below represents an example of the phone calls in which the applicant speaking with a Turkish accent asks a German real estate agent for an apartment viewing. The apartment was advertised in the local newspaper in the Walle neighbourhood. The transcription is based on GAT 2 (Couper-Kuhlen and Barth Weingarten 2011).

**Transcription conventions**

- Overlaps: [....]
- Hesitation markers: ehm, uh, uhm, etc.
- Pausing: estimated (−) or measured (0.3)
- In-/outbreaths: °h/h°
- Laughter: ((laughs)), hehehehehe, hahaha
- Non-linguistic actions: ((coughs))
- Unintelligible stretches of speech: (do i), (xxx xxx), ( )
- Stress: GÜLbeyaz
Example 1: Turkish-accented caller (AG) and German real estate agent (RA)

1 ((crackling)) (3.2) ((beep))
2 RA: (xxx xxx) Name Agency (xxx xxx xxx) GEE;=
3 =mein name ist xxx xxx ?
   my-NOM name be-3.SG name
   my name is xxx xxx
4 AG: °hh hallo;=isch bin: aysun GÜlbeyaz;=
   hello I be-1.SG Aysun Gülbe yaz
   hi I'm Aysun Gülbe yaz
5 =isch öh ruf an we[gen ]
   I call-SG because of
   I'm calling because of
6 RA: [guten T]AG;
   Good–ACC day
   good day

This telephone conversation has a beginning with a greeting and a self-identification on the part of the receiver of the phone call in line 2. The real estate agent RA, who speaks Standard German, states the name of the real estate company and subsequently identifies herself with a German last name. The caller greets and identifies herself with her name Aysun Gülbe yaz, speaking with a Turkish accent. In line 5, she intends to state the purpose of the call. However, the agent RA interrupts the applicant in line 6 and not at the possible turn transition relevance place in line 4. The agent uses the more formal ‘guten Tag’ (good day) and does not employ the more informal ‘hello’ of the applicant caller, which would reduce social distance. The applicant’s name and Turkish accent function as a membership category device, which identifies the speaker as a member of a different national ethnic background group from the German agent RA. Thus, the dialect divergence (Willemyns et al. 1997), which is immediately recognisable, possibly influences the course and the procedure of the call (Raymond 2018). A bit later, in line 26, the Turkish-accented applicant makes a request and asks if she can have an apartment viewing.

Example 2

26 AG: ja;=isch w:ollte fragen ob isch: äh
   yes I want-1.SG.PST ask-INF if I
   beSICHTigungstermin haben kann?
   appointment.viewing-M.ACC.SG have-INF can-1.SG
   I wanted to ask if I could have an appointment for a viewing
In lines 26–28, the applicant AG asks for an appointment for an apartment viewing. The request needs further specification as the agent first signals the reception of the request line 32 using ‘okay’ with a falling intonation, which is potentially a response prefacing a repair initiation (Drew 1997). A repair initiation follows in lines 33 and 34. The agent RA requires further specification for the apartment the applicant wants to see and syntactically completes the request (line 35) of the applicant AG. The agent formulates an other-initiated repair in the form of a turn continuation: she leaves the syntactic unit missing for the applicant to fill in. This type of other-initiated repair reconstitutes the power asymmetry in this
conversational dyad (Couper-Kuhlen 2012). The applicant specifies the street name and therefore implicitly acknowledges her prior contribution as a repairable in lines 35–37.

<table>
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<th>Example 3</th>
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| 40 RA: o(kay);=isch KUCK ma grade,  
  *okay I look-1.SG PTCL now*
  I’ll have a look at that now |
| 41 (0.5) |
| 42 AG: DANkeschön,  
  *thank you*
  thank you very much |
| 43 (0.8) |
| 44 AG: ((laughs)) |
| 45 (–) |
| 46 RA: äh: W:Elche denn,  
  *which-FEM.SG then*
  which one then |
| 47 ZWEI oder VIER zimmer;  
  *two or four room-PL*
  two or four rooms flat |
| 48 AG: (–) äh SWEI simmer;=  
  *two room-PL*
  two room-PL |
| 49 =isch bin alLEIne. hh°  
  *I be-1.SG alone*
  I’m alone |
| 50 (0.5) |
| 51 RA: (gut) oKEE;;  
  *good okay*
  good okay |
| 52 kucken wa ma grade hier REIN;=  
  *see–1–PL we PTCL now here inside*
  let’s see what we have here |
| 53 =was da STEHT, h°  
  *what–NOM here be-3.SG*
  let’s see what we have here |
| 54 °h (1.1) |
| 55 hh° (0.8) |
| 56 °hh (0.9) |
| 57 m::h- (2.6) |
The agent RA states that she is looking at the status of the apartment while the applicant thanks her in line 42 (example 3). Again, the agent initiates a further repair and asks for a specification of the type of apartment in lines 46–47. RA then refuses the request for an apartment viewing in line 58. A long pause of 5.4 seconds in lines 54–57 precedes the refusal which is a quickly uttered negation and apology ‘Ne tut mir leid, da sind schon zu viele Angebote’ (Nope am sorry, there are too many offers already). Pauses and delays typically precede dispreferred responses (Pomerantz 1984). Even though interaction with the computer is stated, the pause still precedes the refusal for a viewing. The applicant employs a post-refusal strategy by asking the agent if she has any alternative apartments available. This results in a rather positive conversation in lines 63–71 below. The agent offers to register the caller as an applicant for future apartment searches. Further, the agent employs the first person plural pronoun in line 66 and line 70. This indexes an inclusion in one unit (Du Bois 2010) and minimises the social distance after refusing a viewing for the applicant.
even though the test caller Aysun Gülbeяз did not receive a viewing, after a short token of disappointment in line 62 which acknowledges the rejection for a viewing, she moves on with a troubles resistance strategy (Jefferson 1988) by asking if the German agent might have another apartment available for her (line 63). This request is now granted in that the agent suggests registering Aysun on her agency’s index of applicants (lines 67–69). Even though Aysun’s non-native accent and name could possibly have influenced the course of the conversation (Raymond 2018) and Aysun’s turns have been treated as repairables, these are not overtly lexical items or non-native speaker membership issues (Egbert 2004), but rather institutional talk procedures (Heritage 2012) with distributed institutional roles and power relations, which the German real estate agent openly treats as an other-initiated repair.

**Conclusion**

The analysis of this example made clear how the statistical evaluation of such studies can be fruitfully advanced by qualitative analyses, as discourse and conversation analyses can shed light on the dynamics and micro-maintenance of power relationships in gatekeeping situations. This preliminary analysis shows the structures of many conversations with Turkish-accented callers and sheds light on the subtle discrimination
towards accented speakers as noted in the research diaries. Interruptions and other repair initiations performed by the Standard German-speaking gatekeeper towards the non-native Turkish German are symbolic and an ongoing practice of doing and accepting asymmetrical power relationships (Couper-Kuhlen 2012; Jefferson 1988; Zimmerman and West 1975).

The real estate agent refused to offer a viewing, but she did give the caller the opportunity of registering for further offers. Her knowledge that she was being recorded might have had an effect on the conversation. At a micro-level, the discourse analysis showed that the power difference between the gatekeeper agent and the Turkish-accented applicant caller was symbolically reproduced through interruptions and repair initiations. However, refusals of requests for apartment viewings do not have to be a means of discrimination. Also, in this case the real estate agent offers to include the applicant on the agency’s index of applicants, and for future studies this should be included as an additional variable for statistical analysis.

This study on language-based discrimination showed that the concrete sounds of American or Turkish accents and their corresponding names carried significant meaning in apartment searches in different neighbourhoods in a German city. Landlords and real estate agents treated the callers differently based on the way they spoke. In all but one neighbourhood, the Standard German-speaking callers had better chances than callers speaking with an American English accent. Speaking Standard German with a Turkish name had the effect that the landlords and real estate agents in all neighbourhoods granted these callers significantly more viewings than to Turkish-named callers speaking with a Turkish accent. Comparing the results from test callers with an American English accent and name and Standard German-speaking Turkish-named callers, the Americans had significantly higher chances of receiving an apartment viewing in all neighbourhoods. This suggests that in this study, American English accent features in German produce more trust in Standard German-speaking real estate agents, landlords and landladies than a Standard German speaker with a Turkish name. In other words, the Turkish name of a caller weighs more than the perfect German he or she speaks in the decision to grant an apartment viewing. This study based in Germany complements the findings of Baugh (1999) and Massey and Lundy (2001) from the United States, where accents and names corresponding to ethnicity and associated social classes are granted different opportunities for apartment viewings in different areas. Discrimination does not occur in all neighbourhoods of the city, but the findings suggest a correlation between class and linguistic discrimination. That is, it is more acceptable for a speaker with a Turkish
accent to obtain an apartment viewing in a ‘bad’ neighbourhood than in a ‘good’ neighbourhood. It can be assumed that discrimination based on the linguistic features of a foreign name and high and low prestige accent constitute one cause for ethnic segregation. The statistical analyses of the treatment of different names and accents show how separation of ethnic groups is not necessarily caused only by higher city authorities, but by the house owners and rental agencies at a lower level. If migrant populations such as people with a Turkish named and accented background and others are more likely to be accepted in disadvantaged parts of town, in which people often also have the lowest average income, the highest unemployment rates and lower educational achievement, there may in fact be linguistic bias in all sectors of society (not only among landlords and real estate agents, but also among teachers and employers), which in turn hinders actual integration of all immigrants. However, this linguistic discrimination also reinforces ethnolinguistic vitality and (multi-)ethnic dialects (Labov 1970) such as Kiez Deutsch (Wiese 2013), which in turn gain an insider prestige subcultural capital. These observations are consistent with findings from the United States and Australia, which suggest that more studies need to be conducted in order to uncover ethnic segregation, which may lead to differences in speech associated with different ethnic groups.

About the author

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