

## How pre-adolescents use ethnolectal features in urban areas: A case study of German-speaking Switzerland

Features of ethnolectal Swiss-German have often been associated and discussed in connection with adolescents with a migrant background (see e.g. Tissot et al. 2011). While these features have also been used by non-migrant adolescents for stylistic and indexical purposes (Auer 2002, Schmid 2017), little is known about their usage and the social meaning attached to them within the youngest speech group, i.e. pre-adolescent children. In this study, we investigate the extent to which such ethnolectal features (see, for instance, 1-2) have spread to the spoken vernacular of pre-adolescent Swiss-German children below the age of 12.

- (1) Pragmatic expressions, e.g. *Altä?* (as a pragmatic marker)
- (2) Syntactic expressions, e.g. omission of prepositions, articles, pronouns or auxiliaries, as in *Chani bleistift?* <Can I pen?> for *Chani en bleistift ha?* <Can I have a pen?>

The present study seeks to empirically investigate earlier anecdotal claims about the usage of these features by tapping into spoken data collected through the diapix task (Baker & Hazan 2011). Ethnolectal and other youth linguistic features are defined and extracted from the data on the basis of Auer's (2002) list of seven ethnolectal features (see also Tissot et al. 2011) and on the basis of perceptual data provided by the caregivers, peers and the children themselves. The participants are all primary school children aged between 7 and 10 who live in the city of Winterthur, an urban area in Switzerland with roughly 100,000 inhabitants.

Preliminary analysis of the data indicates that use of ethnolectal features is indeed not restricted to adolescents but is already common among children younger than 12. The most frequently attested ethnolectal features are change of genus of nouns and omission of definite articles. The paper will discuss these findings against the backdrop of language external factors, such as mobility of the speaker, number of and contact with speakers of migrant backgrounds, age and gender of speaker, and will explore the influence of these factors on inter-speaker differences. In doing so, our paper contributes to a growing body of work charting children's acquisition of language variation (De Vogelaer & Katerbow 2017).

### References

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