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The rise and fall of a wall and a dialect: Observations of shifting linguistic behavior among former East Berliners

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THE RISE AND FALL OF A WALL AND A DIALECT:
OBSERVATIONS OF SHIFTING LINGUISTIC
BEHAVIOR AMONG FORMER
EAST BERLINERS

by

Anja Vogel

Bachelor of Arts
Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany
1997

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Master of Arts Degree
Department of Anthropology
College of Liberal Arts

Graduate College
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ABSTRACT

The Rise and Fall of a Wall and a Dialect: Observations of Shifting Linguistic Behavior among Former East Berliners

by

Anja Vogel

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University of Nevada, Las Vegas

After the dividing wall between East and West Berlin fell in 1989 many changes occurred on what was formerly the eastern side of the city. Polls taken soon after found out that the East Berliners' excitement about the reunification vanished quickly. One of the more prominent – but largely ignored – new problems was the linguistic barrier that had developed between East and West during the forty years of separation.

The people in and around Berlin speak a regional dialect, Berlinish. Unbeknownst to most Berliners, the dialect took on a vastly different symbolic meaning for the people in the West than it did for the people in the East. It became associated with lower educational and class levels, and was perceived to reflect ignorance on the speaker's part in the West. In the eastern part of Berlin, however, the dialect developed a positive symbolic value. Because East Berlin (due to its proximity to the West) became a "showcase" city, the dialect became a sign of affluence and cultural superiority. This paper will analyze these trends by evaluating research findings (based on interviews, participant observation, recordings of reading lists, matched guise tests, and surveys) and discussing potential implications for gender and network relationships.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND LITERARY REVIEW ON LANGUAGE CHANGE

After the wall between East and West Berlin (and East and West Germany) came tumbling down on November 9th 1989, euphoria reigned for residents on both sides of the city. Nearly ten years later, the most memorable images remain those of East and West Berliners chiseling away on the concrete wall, celebrating in the streets, and welcoming each other warmly. These were the pictures that went around the world, inviting everybody to celebrate the “peaceful revolution” with the people of Germany.

Unfortunately, though, the honeymoon did not last. Soon problems arose on both sides, and complaints surfaced as Easterners and Westerners attempted to forge a new and symbiotic relationship. Hence, out of revolutionary change, an increasingly aggravated relationship developed between the two sides.

Polls taken in the early 1990s found that East Berliners’ excitement about the reunification vanished quickly. One of the more prominent – but largely ignored – new problems was that a linguistic barrier had developed between Eastern and Western peoples during the forty years of separation. People in and around current-day Berlin speak a regional dialect, *Berlinish* which is also called the Berlin Urban Vernacular¹ (Dittmar 1986:118). What most Berliners failed to realize was that their regional dialect took on different symbolic meanings in East Berlin (which served as the capitol of East Germany) and West Berlin (which was situated as an “island city” within the boundaries of East Berlin).

¹ From here on also referred to as BUW or Berlin dialect.

For several reasons – including an increasing focus in West Berlin on standard German – the use of the dialect developed an increasingly negative connotation in the West. It became associated with lower educational and class levels, and was perceived to reflect ignorance on the speaker's part. This image was promoted primarily through schools and public media stations in West Berlin, where the use of the dialect was highly stigmatized (Dittmar and Bredel 1999:49). It went so far that West Berliners, when asked, described their own dialect as “vulgar” and “brash” (Barbour and Stevenson 1990:123). In the eastern part of Berlin, however, the dialect developed a more positive symbolic value. Because East Berlin (due to its proximity to the West) became a “showcase” city for East Germany and the entire Eastern bloc, the dialect became a sign of affluence and cultural superiority. It was used in private situations as well as in public ones. Language was not used as an element of social or professional determination (Dittmar and Bredel 1999:50).

... Berlinish was seen as positive in East Berlin. It was to be heard on East German radio, and even teachers and politicians *berlinerten*. For many East Berliners, Berlinish developed a double function: as a familiar language it gave them a sense of identity, and it also distinguished them from the Saxons, whose language was identified with functionaries and political parties (Schönfeld and Schlobinski 1995:118).

After the wall came down in 1989, long-separated people from both sides of the city began to interact with each other again. However, once the initial euphoria wore off, relations became strained. In this research work I will argue that for the participants in this study, one major reason for this discomfort was the new “linguistic barrier.” As one West Berliner put it during an interview on national television, “the East Berliners wanted unity, so now they must learn to speak like us”² (Schönfeld 1993:187).

What, exactly, does the West Berliner mean? Many of these sentiments, in my view, stem from the differences in usage of the regional dialect. In the West, the dialect was used to a much lesser extent, and speakers would code-switch between the standard and

² “...die ha'm die Einheit jewollt und muessen sich nun unsern Jargon aneignen.”

dialect depending upon the situation: "... when they (West Berliners) did use Berlinish, then it was almost only in private situations, where a form of the vernacular very close to the standard was used" (Schönfeld and Schlobinski 1995:130).

For a better understanding of the dialectal use, I will now explain some Berlin dialect variables or markers. The variable that is the most distinct marker of the Berlin dialect is found in the [ç] of the word *ich* 'I'. People who use the pronunciation variable *ick* instead of *ich* are immediately recognized as Berliners. This particular change does not occur in other words with the phoneme [ç] such as *Milch* 'milk', *Licht* 'light' and *nicht* 'not'. Other phonological markers of the Berlin dialect are the change from [g] to [j] in words such as *ganz* 'whole', *gegangen* 'went', *Gold* 'gold', and *gut* 'good.' When [g] proceeds [r] or [l] the change from [g] to [j] occurs rarely or not at all. Other phonological dialectal markers are found when [ai] is turned into [e:], as in the words *mein* 'mine' and *keiner* 'nobody', or when [au] is replaced with [o:] as in *Baum* 'tree' and *auch* 'also'.

Because the speaker Berlin dialect may choose when he or she uses these markers, the dialect can be spoken to varying degrees. For example, a speaker can say *Ick habe eine Katze und auch einen Vogel auf einem Baum jesehen*. "I have seen a cat and a bird on top of a tree." In this instance, the speaker chose to change only the [ç] in *ich* to a [k] and the [g] in the word *gesehen* into a [j]. The speaker could have used the dialect in a stronger fashion by realizing all of the potential phonemes in the dialectal form. The phonemes that could have additionally been changed are underlined above. Note that there are six more phonemes that could have been realized as Berlin dialect markers. If that had been the case, the speaker would have used the dialect to a very strong extent, whereas in my example the speaker uses the dialect to a weak degree. In this thesis, I have developed a framework with four "degrees" relative to the realization of the Berlin dialect. Throughout this work, I will refer to these four categories as follows: 1) weak use of the dialect, 2) medium use, 3) strong use, and 4) very strong use. I discuss this categorization scheme in greater detail in the chapter on data analysis.

Further research conducted by Norbert Dittmar (1999, 1988), Helmut Schönfeld (1986, 1996), and others during the initial reunification years identified these dialectal differences as well as the pressures East Berliners had to deal with in trying to adapt to the new “class system.” The pressure on the East Berliner to adapt to the new linguistic market is not to be underestimated. However, as Schlobinski and Schönfeld (1995) point out, “(t)hey may try to adapt to the perceived demands of the new situation, but speech habits cannot be changed as easily as clothes.” Furthermore, not only were East Berliners faced with social stigmatization, but also new and harsher economic selection processes. Advertisements in newspapers around 1989 begin to look explicitly for people with “... good knowledge of German, [people who can] be persuasive, and have good verbal skills” (Schlobinski and Schönfeld 1995:130).

As Schönfeld and Schlobinski (1995:132) put it, “a deep loss of purpose and security, inferiority complexes, and identity crises were the result” of the *Wende*, or turn. Hence, my major focuses while conducting field research in Berlin were to determine if the new social situation led former East Berliners to make linguistic adjustments (to better “fit” in the new Germany) and begin to create a new sense of identity. Hence, in a sense, language patterns acted first as a cause (of an emerging social stratification) and then as an effect (as East Berliners reacted to these new stratification systems).

People in East Germany have frequently expressed their discomfort with how they were “re-unified.” They often point out that contrary to the popular imagery, for them it represented an assimilation into a new and foreign culture, leaving no room for past traditions, ideals or habits (Schönfeld and Schlobinski 1995, Schönfeld 1993:208). Ten years after the fall of the wall, I have set out to conduct empirical research on how Berliners have adjusted linguistically to the inevitable post-Wall changes in their lives. In this research, I have focused on the people of East Berlin, because they were the people who were faced with the most radical changes.

In this work, I want to use small-scale investigations of language use to see if the participants' assimilation extends to their linguistic patterns and habits as well. In particular, I want to see if these East Berliners begin to use the standard variety of German to a greater extent or even to the point where the survival of the Berlin dialect itself is threatened. I also want to find out if these East Berliners will code-switch in response to formal or informal social situations, and if so, if this process is similar to that of their Western counterparts.

Hence, the goals of this project are somewhat modest, and should be considered a springboard for more in-depth future research projects examining a broader range of individuals and variables. It is my hope that these objective and subjective investigations can contribute to an enhanced understanding of the meanings of this dialect among East Berliners. At this stage, however, the conclusions discussed here should be viewed as primarily ethnographic and subject to interpretation, rather than scientifically objective and definitive.

Language and identity are strongly linked in virtually all societies. Many even go so far as to say that we perceive our mental and physical environment through our language and that therefore it is impossible or at least difficult to translate adequately from one language into another (Sapir 1929b and Whorf 1956). It follows that language profoundly influences the way we perceive ourselves and permeates our everyday way of life and way of thinking. Language is a strong source of personal identity, and I believe it to be an especially significant development if a person chooses to give up his or her linguistic habits.³

Linguists have long been concerned with the study of endangered languages (Mertz 1989). These are mainly indigenous languages that are on the verge of extinction because they are being replaced by newer and more prominent languages. Gaelic is an example of

³ Schönfeld (in Reiher 1993) also discusses the emotional attachments to language.

an indigenous and endangered language. Once used by the entire populations of Ireland and Scotland, its survival is uncertain now because it is actively used only in isolated areas. The decline of Gaelic began a long time ago with the invasion of the English, who – as per the customs of the day – replaced it with their own language. Gaelic lost its popularity and is now spoken only in rural areas. Even at home, parents rarely speak the language with their children (Watson 1989:42). Even though Gaelic is Ireland's first official language and is promoted in the media, the influence of the more popular English is too strong. Young people leave rural areas to find jobs elsewhere, thus necessitating a proficiency in English. In a scenario familiar to East Berliners, economic pressures promote a very specific linguistic usage. The situation of Gaelic in Scotland is even worse, where the language does not even get the support of the government. There, Gaelic is associated with a backward, rural, traditional past.

A similar situation exists in Oberwart, Austria (Gal 1978, 1979). Here, the community consists of people who are either bilingual (in German and Hungarian) or monolingual (in either of the two languages). Once again, economic shifts have affected the prestige of one language for the worse: Hungarian has become associated with a peasant life, a life that is perceived as old-fashioned and backward. Gal found (1978:6-7) that only the older population spoke Hungarian. German was spoken in formal situations and by the younger generation. In Oberwart, however, young men still valued the peasant life as it gave them independence and economic stability. However, for the woman who married these men this resulted in a life of oppression. As a result, women were not attracted to men who spoke Hungarian. This language was perceived to be the exclusive language of farmers (Gal 1978:10). Women opted for the German-speaking men, who were associated with industrial work. In this case, women used the German language as a symbol of their social values. Gal concluded that the shift toward monolingual German will become even stronger in the future because in households in which only one parent spoke German, this was the language passed on to the child.

These examples reveal that economic and social pressures can strongly favor the use of one language over another, especially when the indigenous language becomes associated with backwardness and old values and hence loses its importance. Of course, a similar concern could be extended to dialects. Does the Berlin dialect, which was used extensively in the East, now face extinction due to the rapid social changes?

Other scholars point out that this does not necessarily have to be the case. In fact, lengthy studies have been undertaken on the topic of *persistence* of dialects despite their social stigmatization and negative public image. One of the reasons why dialects persist and even flourish lies in their ability to signify solidarity, community and belonging on the part of the speaker. J. Milroy and L. Milroy (1978) and later L. Milroy (1980) explicitly looked at social networks during their linguistic research in Belfast, Northern Ireland. The couple was able to show how a stable set of linguistic norms can emerge and maintain itself in a community. L. Milroy detected that there existed “vernacular norms” which were “perceived as symbolizing values of solidarity and reciprocity rather than status, and were not publicly codified or recognized (Milroy 1980:35-36).” The Milroys looked at three working class communities with differently strong networks, Ballymacarrett, the Hammer, and the Clonard. Ballymacarrett, a community with a low unemployment rate, displayed close relationships between the males who all worked at a nearby shipyard. In the other two communities the social ties between the men were less strong because they had a high unemployment rate effectively prohibiting the men from congregating at work.

The Milroys examined eight linguistic variables during the process of their participant observation in Belfast. After a close inspection, they found that there was a significant correlation between the use of certain variables and the strength of the network. The denser (i.e., many people sharing the same social contacts) the networks the higher was the usage of Belfast vernacular markers. This was the case in Ballymacarrett. Milroy concluded that “a close-knit network may be seen as an important social mechanism of vernacular maintenance, capable of operating effectively in opposition to a public endorsed and status ori-

ented set of legitimized linguistic norms” (Milroy 1980:43). Further studies on social networks and their relation to language use are discussed in Gal (1979:140-151), Barden and Grosskopf (1998), and Gumperz (1971).

In my own research I also chose to examine different social networks. After considering the Milroys’ findings in Belfast, I believe it is particularly important to examine the contacts that East Berliners have with West Berliners. After all, the *Wessis*⁴ are the ones who impose the new social and linguistic pressures onto the Easterners. However, I will also be looking at the internal structure of the participants’ social networks. For example, if the participant is a member of a very close group of friends it is very likely that they share and use a certain language as a group marker. Here the language variations shared by the group can be very influential on the speaker because it is used as a marker of group identity. In contrast, language as a group marker is not present when a person only has a very loose circle of East Berlin friends (The terms “lose” and “close” will be operationally defined in a later section.). Therefore, other linguistic influences can be more dominant in forming this person’s speech behavior.

William Labov also looked at the importance of dialects as a sign of group identity and solidarity. In 1963, he conducted a study of sound changes in progress on an island off the coast of Massachusetts, Martha’s Vineyard. He concentrated on the way the population pronounced certain vowels finding that the Up-islanders tended to centralize vowels in such words as *out*, *house* and *while*. The Up-islanders were permanent fishing residents with a rural lifestyle. In contrast, the Down-islanders lived in the “posh” part of the island that was frequently visited by summer tourists from the mainland. Because Labov wanted to inspect language changes in progress, he consulted the *Linguistic Atlas of New England* to determine the way people spoke in the past. He found that at the time the *Atlas* was written, the centralizing tendency was in the process of being eliminated. Labov offered the following

⁴ *Wessi* is a colloquial term for a West Berliner or West German.

explanation: centralization is simply an exaggeration of an existing tendency. However, its appearance in Up-island suggests that the people who identify strongly with the island chose this linguistic variable to show their solidarity towards it. “When a man [uses these variables] he is unconsciously establishing the fact that he belongs to the island: that he is one of the natives to whom the island really belongs (Labov 1972b:36).” The change is motivated by the desire to show loyalty to a particular place and solidarity with the people who live there. The loyalty and solidarity towards the people of East Berlin could also motivate its people to keep speaking the dialect the way they used to. In this project, I attempt to gain a subjective and objective understanding of these East Berliners’ attachment to the dialect. I hope to examine in these interviews whether the participants are willing to give up any sense of solidarity and belonging in exchange for the more prestigious variety of their language.

My research questions can now be rephrased in more specific terms: at this time, do these small-scale investigations suggest any tendencies toward the extinction of the dialect, and if so, will speakers risk losing part of their *berlinerish*⁵ identity? Or will the dialect persist as so many other dialects have? If it does persist, which classes will be speaking it and in what situations will they be speaking it? And finally, will people feel coerced to speak in certain ways because of the new social values brought over from the West? These are all questions previously asked by other researchers. However, none have been able to adequately address them through empirical research.

Dittmar and Bredel (1999:53) speculated about several different potential outcomes for the united speaking community of Berlin. One such development, they suggested, could be *diglossia*, in which two varieties (such as the standard and regional forms) of the same language coexist in one community. In Berlin, this could mean that the lower classes lean toward Berlinish while the upper classes maintain the standard version. Another possible

⁵ German term for being from Berlin.

development Dittmar and Bredel (1999:53) envision is that the standard will grow increasingly popular, resulting in a loss of typical dialectal characteristics because of social pressures.

Until now, however, these have only been speculations. Schönfeld and Schlobinski conclude their essay with an open ending:

Many East Berliners want to become like their neighbours in the West, but others use the standard variety only in very few and quite specific situations. Some even deliberately speak Berlinish when talking to West Berliners. Living together continues to bring more changes and new problems, and the painful process of improving communication between East and West is far from over. It will be interesting to see how the linguistic systems converge at the level of individual forms and how the outcome of this process is evaluated (1995:132).

I have now presented the core questions that I will try to answer during the course of this paper. I hope that this field study will help achieve an understanding of shifting linguistic patterns, public ideologies, and private identities in relation to the development of a new national identity in a united Germany in the heart of the newly united Europe. I believe these issues will be of increasing concern in a world that is in so many senses “globalizing” at a rapid pace. Enhanced understandings of how we are to communicate in the new global economy are essential as new identities are developed and old ones are cast aside.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE BERLIN DIALECT: HISTORY, DEVELOPMENT, AND CHARACTERISTICS

In this chapter I will give a brief description of the historical development and genesis of the Berlin dialect. The dialect's origin will be traced from the 13th century through the early 19th century in order to determine how it came to be adopted by the people of Berlin. I will pay special attention to the interconnection between social and economic changes of the city of Berlin and the people's shifting usage of the Berlin dialect.

Development of the Dialect from the 13th Century to the 19th Century

In the 13th century Berlin belonged to the middle-low-German language area (Schmidt 1986:101). The change from Low to High German as the language of the municipality took place between the later half of the 14th century and the beginning of the 16th century. Today's Berlin dialect was formed out of a mixture of the Low and East Middle German commonly spoken in the middle of the 16th century. During the 16th and 17th centuries, Low German became the language of the lower social classes. In Berlin, language use was always closely linked to status, especially after the change to High German as the official standard written language in the 16th century. The Berliners had to deal with High German speaking nobility as early as the 14th century. To be adequately understood, Berliners had to use the High German variant. This situation forced the Berliner to be linguistically flexible or even to become bilingual (Schmidt 1986:101).¹ *Berlinish*

¹ For further information see, Barbour and Stevenson, 1990.

matured into the language of the bourgeoisie for a brief period of time in the beginning 18th century. Agathe Lasch (an early scholar of the Berlinish) argues that Friedrich Wilhelm I and Friedrich II early in the 18th century were using the Berlin vernacular form because they were using hypercorrect forms in their letters to each other (in Butz 1987:24-25). This arrangement was short-lived.

Meanwhile, the Huguenots – who had settled as religious refugees in Berlin – began to spread their native language of French. This was facilitated by the Huguenots' strong commercial influence as well as their privileged political role. French was the official and religious language for most of the 18th century. However, by the end of the century its prestige declined and its privileged position was challenged. Berlinish was unable to compete because of the increasing pressures from scholars to orientate their speech towards the evolving written German standard (Butz 1987:20-22). Moritz, a linguistic scholar at that time, said around 1781 that Berlinish is “a mixture of High German and Low German, pervaded with linguistic mistakes (Butz 1987:25)” which the upper classes were supposed to rid themselves of. This shows that as early as the late 18th century the dialect began to be associated with lower social class levels. By the 19th century, the Berlin dialect was adapted and used by the working class people. Meanwhile, the bourgeoisie and aristocracy, who spoke either French or the German written standard, frowned upon the dialect.

What is *Berlinish*? Markers and Lexicology

Throughout history, use of the dialect has been associated with dramatic transformations dependent upon a number of diverse influences. I will now describe some of the dialect's lexical and phonetic characteristics that have recently been identified as the most distinctive markers (Schönfeld and Schlobinski 1995:120-121, Dittmar and Bredel 1999:50-53). The Berlin dialect is a regional variant of High German, which also serves as the written standard. Over centuries, peoples who brought their own distinct linguistic features into the city contributed to its development. A city vernacular – using the written standard as a foundation with many differing local markers – began to develop (Schönfeld 1986:218). These local nuances are unfamiliar to most speakers today, but they can still be found and observed on rare occasions.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the Berliner used only the Berlin vernacular or the standard variety (written language) as his or her everyday language. No other regional dialect spoken in surrounding areas was able to penetrate this region (Schönfeld 1986:218). Instead, neighboring people generally adopted the Berlin dialect as their own. The people that have grown up and live in the greater Berlin area today use the Berlin dialect in different social settings. Berliners of various social groups, professions, education, and age groups use and understand it. At the same time, usage varies within these groups as well. Some of the most frequent phonological markers of the Berlin dialect that have been identified by scholars (Pszolla 1999:50) in this area are listed in Table 1 displayed below.²

Table 1. Phonological Variables of the Berlin dialect

Standard German			Berlin dialect			English
written	phonology	examples	written	phonology	examples	translation
ei	[ai]	<i>keiner</i> <i>Bein</i>	ee	[e:]	<i>keener</i> <i>Been</i>	'nobody' 'leg'
au	[au]	<i>Baum</i> <i>laufen</i> <i>auch</i>	oo	[o:]	<i>Boom</i> <i>loofen</i> <i>ooch</i>	'tree' 'walk' 'also'
au	[au]	<i>darauf</i> <i>auf</i>	u	[u]	<i>druff</i> <i>uff</i>	'on top' 'on'
s	[s]	<i>das</i> <i>was</i>	t	[t]	<i>dit</i> <i>wat</i>	'this' 'what'
ch	[ç]	<i>ich</i>	ck	[k]	<i>ick</i>	'I'
g	[g]	<i>ganz</i> <i>sagen</i> <i>gehen</i>	j	[j]	<i>janz</i> <i>sajen</i> <i>jehen</i>	'whole' 'say' 'walk'

² For further references see: Schlobinski. 1988. *Codeswitching im Berlinischen*. and Schönfeld *Die Berlinische Umgangssprache im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*. pp.224 – 242.

Today, there are several distinct words and phrases in the Berlin dialect that are not often recognized as markers because they do not include the typical Berlin phonological variables. For example, words such as *Müllschippe* ‘shovel’ or names for breads and other typical Berlin groceries (such as *Schrippe*, *Stulle*, *Schusterjunge*) fall into this category (Schönfeld 1986:243). Dittmar and Bredel (1999:52) found that dialectal use is stronger among East Berliners and that they still use many of the more traditional words and phrases. They believe this happened because of the practical linguistic isolation of East Berliners during the cold war period (Dittmar and Bredel 1999:52). Contrary to the situation in the West, Standard German influences in the eastern city were weak.

At this juncture, it is interesting to examine a few historical developments. In the early 19th century, Berlin developed into a major city. In 1871, Berlin became the capital city of Germany and achieved increasing influence in cultural, economic, and political realms. Berlin’s population also began to increase rapidly as people came from all over Europe looking for work. This influx of new immigrants tended to adapt to the new lifestyle by embracing the Berlin dialect.

Berlin’s new image (crafted to a significant degree by the new immigrants) also changed both the *Zeitgeist* of the time and the people’s way of life. The Berlin citizens became more confident, seeing themselves as representatives of a capital city. As a result, Berliners began to confidently speak their own dialect. These developments were reflected in popular media outlets as well: between 1830 and 1930, elements of the local Berlin vernacular were used in theaters, newspapers, magazines, and other literary outlets (Schönfeld 1986:244).

As became the case in virtually every major industrial city, there were many who came to Berlin in search of better paying jobs, but who instead discovered a brutal environment of strong labor competition. Many workers had to live in run-down apartment buildings with as many as ten people to a room. There were many who made their living by stealing and burglarizing. These people formed a major social group in the Berlin of the late 19th and early century. They developed a unique jargon to describe the difficult aspects of city life. Slowly, these words became lexical variables of the Berlin vernacular. Most of these terms describe the everyday city life with

coarse language. This became known as “crook language” or *Rotwelsch* (Schönfeld 1986:247). Examples of Rotwelsch are *verrecken*, and *krepieren* for *sterben* ‘die’, *futtern*, *spachteln* and *fressen* for *essen* ‘to eat’ (Schönfeld 1986:250). These words had strong negative connotations for individuals in higher social classes and hence were not used in those circles.

Historical Development in the 20th Century

I will now give a more in-depth description of the Berlin dialect in the 19th and 20th century. In particular, these discussions revolve around the origin and use of typical Berlin vocabulary, the geographical and social distribution of the dialect throughout the city, and the various social connotations of the dialect. I will then move on to the current connection between the Berlin dialect and the Berliner. This is an important relationship, and one that will help to explain the images associated with 20th century speakers of the dialect. Finally, I will analyze some of the differences in the uses and attitudes of the dialect in the “Two Berlins” (East and West) of the 1970s and 1980s.

In the 19th century teachers and grammatical experts began to promote a common written standard more forcefully than ever, a process that continued until the 20th century. Naturally, this meant that most elements of the Berlin dialect were excluded from the standard. In addition, the increasingly improving and expanding school system reinforced these developments. As mentioned previously, the rapidly growing industrial sectors led Berlin to a new status as a major (and later capital) city within Germany. Because of these developments, there existed a gradually increasing awareness of the Berlin language as an independent and unique way of speaking.

The industrial revolution greatly influenced the development of the language in Berlin. In the 1830s two new social classes began to develop: the *Bourgeoisie* and the modern industrial *Proletariat* (Schönfeld 1986:214). These classes experienced immense social differences and changes in their daily way of life. The types of people one interacted with and talked to depended largely upon the social group to which one belonged.

Berlin also experienced another strong flow of immigrants, who came to the industrial city to look for work. This immigrant influx came mainly from the surrounding area of Mark Brandenburg. This group consisted of single young men working as *Hilfsarbeiter* and women who were looking to work as maids in the bourgeoisie households. These young men and women arrived only with their knowledge of their own country or village dialect and quickly adapted to the Berlin vernacular of their colleagues. Typically, the young women tried to imitate the language of their bourgeoisie employers.

As Berlin increasingly became a center for commerce and administration, the social strata of the city became visible in its infrastructure. The city was divided into “workers quarters” (with tattered old apartment complexes) and areas where the rich built their villas (to escape the stress of city life). Pronounced social differences among the people – stratified according to one’s education, profession, ownership and living standards – led to vastly different usages and understandings of the cities dialect and written language. Depending on one’s profession, the use of the written standard in conversations was often expected. However, many lacked the opportunity to practice or learn the written language. This was especially true with working class people, who were often excluded from a decent school education (Schönfeld 1986:215).

Aside from the natural development of the city vernacular (a process which takes place in every city), there was a more artificial promotion of the vernacular as well. *Berlinish* was used in the local literature (including newspapers and cartoons) and cultural institutions (such as cabaret and theater). New words and vocabulary were purposefully formed which could then start new linguistic trends. These new phrases, words, and sayings were quickly adopted but could also disappear rapidly (Schönfeld 1986:216).

While Germans in the 19th century often responded negatively to the Berlin dialect, they generally acknowledged its friendly foundations. In the 19th century writers like Goethe, Theodor Fontane and even Friedrich Engels wrote that the dialect sounded “rough”, “jerky,” and “brash.” They used similar descriptive terms for the people themselves, remarking that despite these negative characteristics, they were actually very friendly at heart. Negative responses in the 19th cen-

ture were mainly heard from outsiders who did not understand the syntax and semantics of the dialect (Schönfeld 1986:286-287).

Berliners are often described as being funny, straightforward and quick minded. The phrases and word forms of the dialect reflect the need to express emotionality and attract attention (Schönfeld 1986:252). The style of speech is often affectionately referred to as the *Berliner Schnautze*.

Berliner Schnautze (colloquial term for 'snout') is not simply a popular label for Berlin Urban Vernacular (BUV): it is a "mixture of wit and humor, quick-wittedness, powerful verbal expression, self-assertive aggressiveness and loudmouthed behavior. (Dittmar 1986 *In* Barbour and Stevenson 1990:118)

I can attest from my own experiences that this description eloquently captures the nuances of the dialect. The dialect is more than a linguistic repertoire that can be learned by any skilled speaker. It is also an expression of a lifestyle and an attitude. The Berliner likes to "verbally combat" to secure a position of superiority (Barbour and Stevenson 1990:118), but this battle is generally accompanied by a wry smile. Arguing is a routine, ritual-like activity, often performed in the most direct of fashions. It has its own internal structure, like telling a joke or a story. Barbour and Stevenson compare it to "the routine insults exchanged by young Blacks in New York (1990:119)." Additionally, Berliners like to express themselves by using vivid and colorful imagery. Many artists have tried to convey this unique charm of the communication in Berlin, the most famous of whom are probably the late 19th-century cartoonist Heinrich Zille and the 1980s singer Helga Hanemann, both of whom were Berliners by birth.

Another expert on the field of Berlin linguistics, Helmut Schönfeld, describes the Berliner as follows:

Typical for the Berliner's character is his agility, quick-wittedness, his mental and linguistic maneuverability, his brashness and enjoyment of parody, his belligerent nature, his tendency toward the offensive and jokes at the expense of others, his wealth of fantasy... and enjoyment on the linguistic spiel. (Schönfeld 1986:253)

The Berliner also likes to exaggerate. He or she operates under the credo that overstatement is far better than understatement. Youths are especially prone to use adjectives such as *riesig* 'great' or *unheimlich* 'unbelievable.' These types of adjectives are faddish words and enjoy a short life span.

In a similar fashion, the youth of Berlin in the late 19th century used words such as *ochsig* and *knollig* to express excitement (these cannot be adequately translated by the author). In the 1980s, the East Berliner had invented and used slang words such as *fetzig*³, *urst*⁴, *schau*⁵ and *dufte*⁶ to express similar emotions (Schönfeld 1986:255). Through the use of these words, East Berliners were often easily identifiable by West Berliners and other Westerners.

Since the 19th century linguists have observed differences in the use of the Berlin dialect. Several new subdialects became popular. These depended very much on the speaker's social and regional environment. In particular, two main styles of the Berlin dialect developed. One style was very similar to the written standard (also called High German) and one was very dissimilar, the "strong" Berlin vernacular (Schönfeld 1986:259). The Berliner has long been able to discern between the Berlin dialects in its various forms. The most important factors are the choice of variable and the frequency of its use. Originally, dialect use depended primarily upon the Berliner's social background but since the 19th century the social context in which the speaker finds himself also influences his use of language (Schönfeld 1986:269). Hence, dialect variety also functions as a socio-linguistic register.

In the 19th century differing vocabularies and pronunciations could be observed between people who lived in Berlin's center and those who lived in the rural outskirts. This was possible because travel was still difficult. As a result contact with the "center Berliner" was infrequent

³ Comes from *fetzen*, 'to rip apart'

⁴ a slang word that expresses the superlative

⁵ 'great'

⁶ Its origin means 'to smell good.' The word is used to express that something is liked.

among those who lived outside of the city. The people who lived in the outskirts were also influenced by dialects of bordering areas (Schönfeld 1986:263-68). In sum, before 1945, the use of language depended strongly on one's regional background.

At the same time, relative distance to the city center was not the only variable which determined this usage. It also depended strongly on the social groups present in the neighborhood in which one grew up. Certain parts of Berlin were known as "villa quarters," where the bourgeoisie and other upper social classes lived. In these areas (such as Pankow, Zehlendorf, Charlottenburg) people spoke the variant that was closest to the written standard. However, other parts (Prenzlauer Berg, Wedding, Kreuzberg) were populated only by lower paid workers and others with low incomes. These people used the strongest form of the dialect.

Still, compared to other dialects of the period, *Berlinish* had a great degree of uniformity, especially considering the large area over which it spread. This uniformity was possible for a number of reasons, including the development of public transportation, the process of industrialization, and the influence of the educational and mass media systems (Schönfeld and Schlobinski 1995:121).

Social Differences in the Use of the Berlin Dialect before 1945

The dependence of the Berlin vernacular on one's social group and environment was depicted in some contemporary theater pieces. Glassbrenner, a writer in the early 20th century, depicted a worker with a strong Berlin dialect, while persons belonging to higher social groups spoke a variant that was close to the written standard (Schönfeld 1986:271). This conscious use or non-use of the dialect began in the end of the 18th century, following the increasing pressure of teachers and other educated persons who pointed out linguistic mistakes in the dialect. This has been especially obvious since the mid-19th century, when people from the higher social strata began to avoid using what they regarded as the coarsest variables of the dialect to distance themselves from the lower classes. The growth of Berlin's population in the 19th century was accom-

panied by an improving and more open school system. This allowed for more people to learn and use the written standard. Frequently this led to the use of both the near-standard and the vernacular forms by the same speaker (Schönfeld 1986:272).

As early as the 19th century, parents tried to teach their children to speak the written standard and not their local dialect. This tendency depended mainly on the parents' profession and social status (Schönfeld 1986:273). By the early 20th century, the Berlin dialect had acquired a definite negative connotation. The increasing standards in the school systems and the disparagement of the Berlin dialect in the 1920's and 30's added to the negative image.

Berlin Dialect in West Berlin

In West Berlin the linguistic situation from the 1960s to the 1980s remained pretty much the same as it had been at the turn of the century. Socially, working class people, middle class people and upper class people behaved in accordance with the established linguistic rules. However, a politically socialist-leaning government secured the same educational background for everyone. Hence, all children were educated in written standard German and learned the negative associations that were attached to use of the Berlin dialect.

Barbour and Stevenson (1990) describe a study, devised by Wallace Lambert, which revealed the ideas and attitudes an individual has about a language or dialect. In the study people listen to different recordings of several speech varieties and then are asked to attach characteristics to the people who gave the speech samples. Characteristics mentioned include lazy, dumb, intelligent, slow-witted, smart, funny, and so on. This study is supposed to elicit unconscious ideas people have about other people who speak certain languages, dialects, or accents. The test is called the *matched guise test*. Using this kind of test, the most frequent answers by West Berliners concerning their own dialect were: *ordinär* 'common', *vulgär* 'vulgar', *schnodderig* 'brash' and *falsche Grammatik* 'bad Grammar' (Barbour and Stevenson 1990:123).

Negative perceptions of the Berlin vernacular have been present throughout the 20th century. Schönfeld offers this explanation:

Berlinish is so similar to the written standard that a differentiation is not always easily possible, as it is for example between the Low-German vernacular and the standard written German. Therefore is *Berlinish* often perceived as carelessly spoken written standard, or as bad High-German. Additionally there is the social factor. Since the beginning of the 19th century the educated social classes and the bourgeoisie increasingly give up the use of *Berlinish* in its distinctive form. It was increasingly restricted to the worker class. Its use was perceived as being wrong, and the speakers were viewed as being uneducated (Schönfeld 1986:288).

William Labov (1966) was one of the first scholars in the United States to study the relationship of social class and the use of dialect with his study of urban dialects in New York. Interestingly, a similar kind of relationship was also found in studies conducted in West Berlin. In these studies, it was found that the people of a lower social class used the vernacular dialect more strongly and more often than people from higher social classes. When asked, the inhabitants of West Berlin generally associated the use of the dialect with working class people and bad education. The lower social strata were aware of the negative connotations associated with the use of the dialect, as well as possible discrimination against the people who spoke it. Those in the job market were also aware of these distinctions, and therefore tended not to embrace the dialect. As a result, in the eighties a shift towards the standard was noted even in the working class districts of West Berlin (Barbour and Stevenson 1990:124). This shift in language behavior is different from other working class people's behavior where the dialect was maintained among lower social classes as a group identity marker (Belfast: Milroy and Milroy (1978), New York: Labov (1972a) and others).

West Berlin also enjoyed special treatment as an "island city." It benefited from special recognitions and contributions by the West German government. For example, rents were stable and affordable over long periods of time, and military service for males was not mandatory as it was in the rest of West Germany. As a result, many West Germans who lived in nearby areas (Lower Saxon) and opposed the military service moved to Berlin. The people of these areas happened to speak a variety considered standard in current-day Germany. These West Germans effectively brought with them new attitudes, habits, and their "prestigious" variety of speech (Busse 1995:205-211).

These were a few reasons for the increasing stigmatization of the Berlin dialect in West Berlin. West Berliners also had a strong sense of “awareness of an appropriate functional distribution of Berlin dialect and standard according to social contexts (Barbour and Stevenson 1990:124). The Berlin dialect in the Western part was associated with lower social strata and levels of education. People were put into categories and quickly judged by their speaking habits.⁷

Berlin Dialect in East Berlin

The situation in East Berlin was a very different one. In this part of the city, the Berlin dialect stood not so much in contrast to standard German, but to other German dialects such as Saxon. Apart from a longtime mutual resentment between the Prussians and the Saxons, the cold-war era Berliners had other reasons for resentment. The Saxons were usually associated with the East German *Stasi* organization (secret police), which was known to spy on its own people and infiltrate the majority of border patrol jobs. Interestingly enough, here the Saxon dialect was associated with low intelligence because it was spoken more slowly and its consonants were unvoiced. These social and linguistic processes contributed to the increasing dominance of the Berlin dialect (Barbour and Stevenson 1990:124).

Like its counterpart in the West, East Berlin also enjoyed a special status within its own country. As the capital city, it functioned as a “window of socialism” through which the rest of the world peered. Berlin was the cultural and political center of East Germany and as a result, the inhabitants of the city profited from special subsidies and other privileges. Thus, the citizens of East Berlin had a strong self-esteem, a characteristic that led to a certain pride in their dialect (Schönfeld 1993:211-212).

East Berlin parents tried to teach their children the written standard as early as possible. However, the children adopted the use of the dialect as early as kindergarten. This process happened regardless of the social groups to which the parents belonged. In the 1980s, studies

⁷ For further tests on opinion and attitude toward the dialect in East and West read, Dittmar and Schlobinski. 1988.

showed that almost all children and youths that grew up in East Berlin were able to speak and understand the Berlin dialect. Differences in the use of the dialect depending on social class were rarely found (Schönfeld 1986:274).

However, youths have long been ready and willing users of the vernacular in Berlin. In the 19th century as well as in the 1980s, East Berlin youths distinguished themselves by the use of new vernacular (or slang) vocabulary. These inventions were often subsequently adopted by older generations as well but more frequently they were forgotten after a time of popularity. East Berliners used the dialect within reference groups with the intention to dissociate themselves from others. Such “others” could be adults and people (including youths) from other parts of the country (Schönfeld 1986:274).

Personally, I can remember a time when a distant cousin of mine from Saxon came to visit and we went out with some of my friends. During a conversation with my friends, my cousin remarked that he could not understand a single word we were saying. At first we were slightly surprised, but then we smiled smugly. A social identity had been effectively created.

In East Berlin the dialect followed a different trajectory compared to its pre-war incarnation (or the trajectory its western counterpart followed, for that matter). More and more members of all social classes began speaking it. In marked contrast to West Berlin, the negative connotation was increasingly lost. It was used in almost every social context: in school, at work, among friends and family, and even in places of public service. The speakers were able to speak the dialect because they were rarely corrected. There was no official propaganda arguing against its use in schools and public situations (Schönfeld 1996:77).

In East Germany from the 1970s on, the dialect became popular in the media and was used in radio, newspapers, and on television. It was thought to create a more “authentic” tone. Some speakers also used the dialect purposefully when they interacted with youths or low paid workers, knowing they could find common linguistic ground more easily (Schönfeld 1986:283). Schönfeld said that the amazing thing was the absolute confidence of these speakers, who assumed that the other individual was speaking incorrectly (Schönfeld 1986:282).

I recall one student's reaction to a teacher who encouraged him to speak the standard in my class one day. The student answered outraged, "*aba ick berlina doch ja nich!*" 'but I don't speak Berlinish'. He actually had transformed every possible word into the Berlin dialect and also used vernacular forms (as underlined). If he intended to use the standard or high German, the sentence should have said: "Aber ich berliner doch gar nicht!" The Berlin dialect was so ingrained and subconsciously used that people thought they were speaking standard German when in reality they were not.

Most people in 1980s-era East Berlin expressed positive thoughts about the dialect, no matter which age group or social group they belonged to. The use of the dialect gave them a feeling of security, as if they were at "home." They felt comfortable using their dialect and described it as being nice and pleasant-sounding. (Schönfeld 1986:282). Berliners also expected other Berliners to speak the same way. Many continue to feel that the use of the German standard sounds "artificial and unreal (Schönfeld 1986:288-89)." However, the very strong variant of the Berlin dialect was much less accepted even in East Berlin.

The prestige of the Berlin dialect began to develop as the East grew into its role as East Germany's capital city. It soon became a center of politics, culture, and industry. In East Germany, the city of Berlin kept its prestige when it became the capital city in 1949. In this role it received a great deal of attention both nationally and internationally. Early on, nearby border towns (whose vernacular was already similar to the Berlin dialect) quickly adopted the more prestigious form. Schönfeld observed that children coming from other places in East Germany adopted certain markers of the dialect and not vice versa (Schönfeld 1986:293).

In this chapter, a brief description of the historical development and genesis of the Berlin dialect was outlined. An attempt has been made to trace the dialect's origins and its adaptation by the people of Berlin. The dialect's lexical and phonetic characteristics were also noted and analyzed.

After analyzing linguistic and socio-historical backgrounds, explanations have been offered for the divergent sociological and linguistic relationships that had developed in the divided

Berlins. The evolving image of the Berlin dialect speaker during the 20th century has been traced by examining the existing connection between the Berlin dialect and how it related to the character of the Berliner. I also analyzed some of the differences in the use and connotation of the Berlin dialect in the “Two Berlins” (East and West) in the 1970s and 1980s. It became clear that among the people of West Berlin, the speakers of the dialect continued to be identified with low education and lower social strata – just as they had been in the late 19th century and the early 20th century. With the separate political organization and ideology in East Germany, however, these linguistic patterns developed in a very different manner. The use of the dialect among Berliners became almost universal and was spoken with pride. Understanding these two developments is critical in order to understand the complexities and difficulties associated with the reunification process of the two Berlins – and for that matter the two Germanys.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND DATA DESCRIPTION

Description of Participants

I chose to conduct my research in Berlin for two reasons. On a personal level, I was born in East Berlin and spent approximately 16 years under its socialist regime. As a result, I believe I will be able to access nuances of meaning and insights that other researchers may have missed.¹ Furthermore, I believe that Berlin provides a remarkable “laboratory” for sociolinguistic analysis because of its unique setting as a dynamic symbol – first of division, and later, of wide-scale reunification.

In the spring of 1999 I began to conduct my field research by using the “snowball method” for my sampling (Stein 1984:6, Barden and Grosskopf 1998:2, Bernard 1994:94-98). Bernard states that, “snowball sampling is very useful [...] in studies of social networks, where the object is to find out who people know and how they know each other (1994:97).” Since a large part of my study is also concerned with the participants’ social networks I found this method to be very appropriate for my research. To find participants for my study, I began with people I knew through previous interactions and expanded from there, asking these individuals if they knew other people who might be willing to participate in the study. The list of participants is given in appendix seven.

I observed and questioned two language communities: one of 22-26 year olds and one of 30-34 year olds. I am aware that at first glance, the difference between the two age

¹I also found it useful to be an “insider” in the field because I could at times prevent the observers paradox; I was quite easily accepted as “one of them” (Labov 1972b).

groups appears to be minimal. However, the differing mental and physical stages these people were in at the time of reunification are essential to this analysis.

Many books have been published discussing “coming of age,” or the adolescent stage of human development. Scholars in anthropology, psychology and sociology (such as Erikson (1980, 1968), Kroger (1989), Skoe and von der Lippe (1998) and Hinel (1999), to name a few) have written about the troubled life of teenagers. Adolescence is often described as a time of uncertainty and a period of figuring out one’s identity. It is a time in which youth often behave in peculiar ways that are often incomprehensible to older generations. Erikson explains this period of time of a teenager’s inner turmoil and certain “intolerance as the necessary *defense against a sense of identity confusion*, which is unavoidable at a time of life when the body changes its proportions radically, when genital maturity floods body and imagination with all manner of drives [...] and when life lies before one with a variety of conflicting possibilities and choices (1980:97-98).”

Erikson also describes several psychological crises a teenager has to deal with while during this phase. During this phase, the teenager deals with concepts of “self-certainty” versus “identity consciousness,” “time perspective” versus “time confusion,” “role experimentation” versus “negative identity” and “ideological polarization” versus “diffusion of ideals,” to name a few (Erikson 1980:129).

The socio-economic and political changes of 1989 occurred when the “young-group” participants of my study were in the midst of their mental and physical maturation process. This means that at the very time when these teenagers were beginning to come to terms with their own self and their place in society, they suddenly had to deal with a whole new socio-economic and political system as well. East German teenagers also had to deal with new social guidelines, new ideals, new ideologies and new opportunities. It is easy to see why this would be an extraordinary and very threatening experience to a developing teenager.

Nevertheless, I propose that in a way, these changes came at a perfect time for these youth. Already in a phase of individual adjustment and self-discovery, this group of people

was now able to expand their horizons in a number of new ways. The events that brought formidable identity crises to many older East Germans in effect served as a “two in one” deal for the adolescents. The youngsters were able to incorporate the new external changes of their environment in an already ongoing process of personal and biological change and self-awareness. In essence, I believe this young group adjusted more easily to the new socio-economic and political system they suddenly faced.

The 20-24 year olds, on the other hand, were past this stage and hence had already experienced a different and firmer level of self-awareness. In the former East Germany, adolescents were forced to mature at a more rapid pace and were not confronted with a complex decision-making processes. By the age of 20, most had already finished making the most important decisions of their lives. Issues such as one’s education, professional career, and future work had already been clarified. By the time an individual reached 22 years of age, then, he or she was well aware of his or her “place” in society. At the end of an educational career, one was either around 22 (if he or she had the ability to go to the university) or about 19 (after graduating from a three-year apprenticeship)². In short, East Germans had little time to linger in a phase of teenage and young adult angst.

Because of these differences, I expected that my younger participants would adjust more easily to the new social norms and values and would therefore also conform to the prevalent linguistic norms. I also expected my older participants (who had already quite strongly identified with their former way of life) to be less likely to conform linguistically and/or socially. The likelihood of linguistic conformity will be measured using tests of frequency of usage and that of social conformity will be determined by my own subjective evaluation.

²This system of early decision making, having to determine your future early on in life, with few choices of adjustments, was one of the main complaints of former East German citizens. (See *Time*, Nov.27th 1989, v134n22p39 (3) *Life*, Nov 1989v12n13p34 (6), *Maclean’s* Oct v102 n42 p32 (4))

I recorded linguistic data on 20 people. I later excluded several people on the covert prestige item in order to get a clearer idea of the differences in opinion between the two age groups. Furthermore, due to time constraints, some people dropped out before completing the study. As a result, 13 participants (seven males and six females) completed the project, including those who completed the “covert prestige” survey.

I picked the final participants based on pre-determined social characteristics. This type of approach is called *purposive* or *judgment sampling* (Bernard 1994:95). The participants are able to speak Standard German because it was and is the language of instruction in all educational institutions and it is also the language promoted by the media. They are also able to communicate in the Berlin dialect because they have spent their whole life up to the point of reunification in East Berlin. As a result, they are naturally able to code-switch between the two varieties.

All participants share similar socio-economic or social class characteristics. Social class is a concept of stratification that defines groups of people by their wealth, power and prestige. Karl Marx defined an individual’s social class according to his or her position in the production process, especially with respect to control over the means of production (Marx 1994:211). For example, if an individual was located atop the hierarchy of the production process, this individual was deemed to belong to a higher social class. However, if an individual was a worker (and hence on a “bottom rung” relative to the production process), he or she was considered to be of a lower social class.

Max Weber criticized this approach as too one-dimensional, and determined members of social classes by examining a number of criteria. According to Weber, there are three dimensions of potentially overlapping inequality. These dimensions are status groups, the distribution of life chances (a term that Weber used to refer to class), and power (in relation to complex corporations and parties). Weber’s conception of class position depends upon many more factors than Marx’s economic analysis. It incorporated such diverse influences as education, experience, family background and skill (Weber 1978: 43-56).

Bourdieu (1998) relies on a different approach in defining social class in his book *Distinction*. According to this analysis, the members of one social class all share certain cultural interests, music, and fashion tastes (Bourdieu 1998:57). Bourdieu however, fails to give clear definitions of a “middle” class, choosing to focus primarily on the differences between high and low classes.

During my research in East Berlin I chose to concentrate my research on people whom I deemed to fall into the middle class. This was one of the variables I tried to keep constant to better observe the participants’ speech behavior as it pertained to their social networks and age levels.

Defining a “middle” class for my research proved to be a rather difficult task. Because most of the participants of my study are students, their income level considered alone would put them in a social category of low class, while their education would place them in the middle class. Secondly, family backgrounds were difficult to obtain. All participants live on their own and are in this respect independent from their families. To ask about the parents’ income class proved very difficult as well, and the legitimacy of such information could be questioned. In East Germany, “life chances” were very much defined and restricted by the government. It could be, for example, that an individual who was intelligent and interested in studying medicine was unable to do so because his or her parents’ political opinions did not match those of the government. At the same time, a person who came from a working class background without much by way of skills or intelligence could be “chosen” by the government to climb the class ladder because he or she supported the country’s political ideology. Further complicating matters was that a person who was able to go on and pursue higher education was generally perceived as part of an elite class. Hence, the educational process of former East Germany was selective in somewhat arbitrary ways, and this selectivity makes tight categorizations difficult.

Johnson (1995) also discusses the problems of defining middle class:

As analytical concept, middle class is problematic in several ways. The line separating it from the working class, for example is unclear because white-collar occupations are not necessarily associated with higher levels of education, income, wealth, skill, or training when compared with highly skilled blue-collar jobs [...] A second problem lies in the use of the term 'middle,' for it is arguable that the middle class is in any sense of the word midway between the upper class and the lower and working classes. In terms of income and wealth, for example, great proportions of what is considered the middle class are far closer to the working class than the upper class (Johnson 1995:176).

Keeping these potential limitations in mind, I selected the participants according to the following criteria. All participants shared similar levels of education, in that they all have a high school degree or some kind of equivalent. All participants were able to afford a one or two bedroom apartment on their own or together with a partner. In the spirit of Bourdieu, I classify the participants' taste in respect to music, art, interior house decoration, literature and various kinds of entertainment as "mainstream." Except for one participant, who fulfills my criteria in terms of education and taste, all of the participants hold white-collar jobs.

Aside from class, the participants also shared a number of other characteristics: they possessed similar age, ethnic (German), and regional (lifelong Berliners) backgrounds. All participants had grown up in East Berlin and hence also shared historical experiences.

I hypothesized that individuals who have stronger social contacts with the West German or West Berlin population (through work, school or extracurricular activities), or who have lived or spent a lot of time in the Western areas would use the near German Standard variety to a greater extent. I expected this group to code-switch between the Berlin dialect and the Standard more often. I also wanted to determine the frequency of the use of these two codes in the participants' speech in relation to their age and social contacts. I expected that this would occur because East Berliners who have highly multiplex social relations with Westerners are under a lot of pressure to speak Standard German.

Methods

The difficulty of obtaining natural speech data is a well-known problem among linguistic scholars. One of the problems researchers encounter during their fieldwork has been described by Labov as the *observer's paradox*: "...the aim of linguistic research in the community must be to find out how people talk when they are not systematically observed; yet we can only obtain these data by systematic observation (1972b:209)." Labov and others have offered several solutions to overcome this problem. One way is to divert the attention away from the interview situation in order to allow the speaker to elicit more natural speech behavior. For example, this happens if the interviewee focuses on something other than his speech (such as when he is telling a story or when he interacts with a third person). Labov also argued that we receive the most natural speech behavior if a person talks about something to which he/she has an emotional attachment. "One way of overcoming the paradox is to break through the constraints of the interview situation by various devices which divert attention away from speech, and allow the vernacular to emerge (Labov 1972b:209)." A question that proved to be very successful in this respect was: "Have you ever been in a situation where you were in serious danger of being killed (Labov 1972b:209-210)?" I also used this question during my interview sessions with the participants.

I began my interview sessions using another one of Labov's methods designed to obtain fairly natural speech behavior across speech styles that can occur in different circumstances (Labov 1966, 1972b). I began with a lexical questionnaire in which the participants had to read out lists of minimal pairs (appendix three) and also a list of words with vowels or consonants that could be converted into variables of the Berlin dialect. Next, they had to read a story I designed in which many words were used that could have again triggered the use of Berlin vernacular variables. These reading passages are supposed to elicit a person's most formal speech behavior because the person's attention is specifically brought to the task of reading out loud and there is no way to divert their attention away from that. I conducted an interview asking them a question about a rather formal, public topic, the intro-

duction of the Euro currency (valid in all EU countries) as a replacement for the Deutsche Mark (Germany's present currency). In the second part of the interview I used Labov's question of a life-threatening situation so participants would focus on recalling their emotional experience and not on their language use. Both questions were supposed to elicit a less formal speech style or even casual speech because of the way the interview was conducted. The setting was informal, with interviewer and interviewee often sharing a snack or drink. Also, the speakers were not interrupted in their explanations and story telling to that they could for several minutes exclusively focus on the event they were describing, either currency change or threatening experience. I additionally expected to find a difference in speech between the two topics, with the first one still eliciting a more formal use of speech than the last one because even though it was the same structure and social setting, it dealt with a more formal topic.

In the above paragraph I am referring to interview situations in which the researcher tape-records the participants' language. Another way to observe people's language without taping it is by *participant observation*. This means that the researcher participates in group activities while he or she observes the group. Additionally, it is advantageous if the group comes to accept the researcher as a member of this group. However, others have noted that this rarely happens. Milroy (1978) was introduced to the people she observed in Belfast as a "friend of a friend" and was therefore more accepted and not looked upon as a stranger. Participant observers rarely tape people's discussions but often focus on the participant's use of a particular variable (in my case the number of times they code-switched from one language variety to another). These instances are easy to remember and can be written down during a solitary moment. The importance of these notes lies in the fact that they can be used to supplement and support data recorded on tape.

In order to "solve" the observer's paradox, several strategies were implemented. As I have pointed out in my introduction, I am far from a total stranger to East Berlin. I was born in East Berlin and spent most of my childhood and teenage years there. In this sense I

believe I was able to diminish the observer's paradox because I easily fit into the culture under observation. However, having not lived in Berlin for the past three years, I also think I was able to analyze the participants of the study from the necessary "distance" as well.

In their recently published book, Dittmar and Bredel (1999) describe how they went about interviewing the participants in their study. They went to great lengths to make sure that only East Berliners interviewed East Berliners and only West Berliners interviewed West Berliners. They do not explain why they chose to do this except to say that interviewer and interviewee shared the same communicative norms and cultural habits (Dittmar and Bredel 1999:30).

I would like to add to this thought. I think it is extremely critical for my research that I was not from West Berlin or West Germany. This is because I have noticed that people quickly tend to launch into an argumentative speech when they talk about their Eastern past to a Westerner. Easterners are constantly aware of how they are still perceived by those in the West. Public statements made by Westerners such as, "since the wall is gone everything has gone to shit, we have to pay for everything, they are all stupid, just look at the way they stare" (Benecke 1993:218) have helped to promote this negative image. As a result East Berliners very likely feel the need to prove or justify themselves when talking to West Berliners even when the situation does not call for it. The Easterners will in turn think that the Westerner is ignorant and arrogant in his approach toward them, as the following example shows: "yes she didn't know anything about us *ossis* absolutely nothing well she had just picked it up during some chats and that was it now for her so all the *ossis* are lazy the *ossis* can't work and they are all talk but how it really was [...] I was well I was really shocked about that I have to say this in all honesty I was really mad" [punctuation as in original] (Dittmar and Bredel 1999:132).³ These perceptions can profoundly affect a speaker's linguistic behavior. He or she may feel prejudiced towards the interviewer or fear

³ For further examples read interviews in Dittmar and Bredel 1999.

that the interviewer feels that way towards her or him. Normal questions may be understood as provocations and the speaker may behave unnaturally. Because I hailed from East Berlin, I would not have to deal with such problems and could be accepted as an insider.

I observed the participants in diverse social situations to see if they would change their speech behavior according to changing social environments. I visited the participants at work, went shopping with them, or just accompanied them on errands. I also went to their homes or invited them over to see how they would speak to adult strangers (my parents). Additionally, I set up some situations to observe discourse with standard German speaking West Germans. In one instance, I observed a dinner party in which *Wessis* and *Ossis*⁴ spoke with one another.

During the course of research, I also handed out a questionnaire to the participants (see appendix five). The questionnaire asked about their overt feelings toward the dialect, its use, and its speakers. This method, utilized most often by sociologists, is often avoided in anthropology because a common belief is that the participant might manipulate the answers to a question because he or she might feel that a “true” answer could harm him or her. Additionally, anthropologists feel that the participant is not given enough freedom of choice because he or she is confined to choosing predetermined categories. The survey participant is also most likely aware of the *overt prestige* of a certain language. The *overt prestige* of a language or a variety of speech expresses the meaning of this particular speech for a certain speech community as a whole including its public acceptance (Hansen, Carls, Lucko 1996:20). This means speakers may know of the public image of a speech and publicly agree with its use, but they may not find its use appropriate on all occasions.

To get to the core of what people “really” think without evoking anxiety about how they will appear to others, the Canadian social psychologist Lambert developed a technique to find out how listeners react to various speech variables. Lambert (1967) played tapes of

⁴ *Ossi* is a colloquial term for East Berliner or East German.

French and English speech samples in identical circumstances and asked bilingual Canadian speakers to give the speakers certain personality traits. This way the covert prestige of either of the two languages was revealed. What was surprising in this test was that even the French Canadians had a poor valuation of themselves (Lambert 1967:95-97) and referred to the speakers of English in more positive terms. The results indicated that both anglophone and francophone Canadians held strong negative stereotypes of French Canadians.

Covert prestige is not readily admitted because of stigmas attached to its use. In Lambert's case, the francophone speakers covertly as well as overtly evaluated their own speech negatively. Nevertheless, it often happens that a language or dialect is overtly stigmatized but covertly valued and positively appreciated. This means that people often say they like one thing (and may even believe they do), but unconsciously favor another, as in the following case: In a direct survey men were asked to name criteria of an especially attractive woman's voice. A tender, high, whispering voice turned out to be the one most in favor with the men. Thereafter, Batstone and Tuomi (Jakob 1992:172) gave them tape-recorded samples of women's voices and then asked the men to characterize them specifically. It now turned out that the majority actually found dark and husky voices to be especially sexy and attractive. Hence, covertly dark and husky women's voices carry a higher prestige among men.

In West Berlin, a process similar to the one Lambert described can be observed. West Berliners tend to discredit their own Berlin dialect. In my research among East Berliners, I also tested the covert prestige or stigmatization of the Berlin dialect. I tested this by showing them a video whose characters made use of the Berlin dialect to different degrees. I then asked questions pertaining to the characters rather than their speech.

CHAPTER IV

ETHNOGRAPHIC NARRATIVES: ANALYZING THE NETWORKS OF TWENTY PARTICIPANTS

The popularity of social networks as a tool of analysis of speech variation and linguistic change has grown since the 1970s. Certain linguistic variations have been explained using the concept of network analysis when other socio-demographic variables provided little or no help. For example, people may share the same age, social background, and gender and still speak differently. In my introduction I discussed studies by Labov, Milroy and Gal in which social networks were used as a defining factor in speech behavior. Milroy and Milroy claim, “social class is a concept designed to elucidate large scale social, political and economic structures and processes, whereas social network relates to the community and interpersonal level of social organization” (1992:2).

Barden and Grosskopf (1998:163-164) discuss Mitchell’s (1969) characterization of social network types. He was one of the first scholars to describe social networks in terms of morphology and interaction. Some of the morphological markers Mitchell describes are density, availability and accessibility. Interactional markers, which focus on the nature of the interaction between the members of a social group, include intensity, content, and frequency. Barden and Grosskopf add that multiplexity is a characteristic that has gained importance in network analyses (1998:164). These characteristics will be included in the following network analysis of Berlin residents.

Milroy’s (1980) analysis in Belfast represents a classic study of social networks. Milroy chose a more quantitative approach, focusing on the network characteristics of den-

sity and multiplexity to determine the interconnectivity between social network relations and language behavior. Her results reveal a significant connection between a dense and multiplex network and a strong use of the local dialect (Barden and Grosskopf 1998:175). The density of a social network determines the actual links between the people of one group: hence, the more greater the number of links that exist, the denser the social network. This can be calculated by the following formula (Barden and Grosskopf 1998:167): $D = 100 NA / \frac{1}{2} N (N - 1)$, in which NA stands for the actual ties and N for the total of number of people involved.

A dense network refers to a group of friends in which every member either knows or has contact with the other members of the group. For the calculation of density, however, it is important that the number of the members of the group is limited. It is also important to keep in mind that the resulting density factor calculates an average and cannot give information about the structure of the network.

An analysis of the multiplexity of network relationships, on the other hand, examines how strong the actual ties are between members of one group. Relationships can be uniplex (meaning that a member of the group knows another member of the group via a single type of interaction; e.g., school). Multiplex interactions have multiple sources of social contact such as school, recreation, and family. This number can also be calculated. It is usually expected that multiplex relationships elicit higher expectations of one or the other member in terms of social behavior (Barden and Grosskopf 1998:167).

The occurrence of highly dense and multiplex relationships within a network has been previously described by the terms “close-knit” or “close” (Milroy and Milroy 1992). A close group can function as an intensifier of a certain social or linguistic norm. It is in close groups that even stigmatized linguistic markers are maintained and function as group identity markers (Milroy and Milroy 1992). The terms “loose-knit” or “loose” refer to groups with greater geographic mobility and relations with a wider range of people. Within these groups, linguistic markers do not exist for group identification.

The problem with this two-tiered framework for social network analysis is that we do not learn much about emotional attachments among group members. For example, one would expect a multiplex relationship when an individual mentions that a certain group member is a cousin and also works at the same firm. However, it could well be that he or she does not care much for the cousin, and hence the cousin has little influence on the individual's speech or social behavior.¹

I will now give a brief introduction of every participant of the study to provide the reader with an idea about the participants' social background. These descriptions also contain an analysis of the participants' social contact with East and West Berliners and an explanation of the importance of these contacts to the person's speech behavior. I have spent at least two hours with each participant of the study discussing the "internal structure" of their social network relations: referring to relationships that have been formed voluntarily, and their "external structure" relations that are formed at the work place, school, and extra curricular activities (Barden and Grosskopf 1998:159).² The participants were asked to write down at least five — but no more than six — of their closest relationships and to describe them in detail. The type of questionnaire that was used can be seen in appendix four. In 80% of the cases I was also able to verify these relationships through participant observation. I contacted people before the beginning of my study in Berlin during the months of May, June, July and August of 1999. When I arrived in Berlin I began the participant observation work almost immediately. A few months later I was able to continue my studies and participant observation (during the months of January and February 2000). It is very difficult to calculate the time I spent personally with every participant, however I would

¹ Leslie Milroy explained the limitations of this approach in a personal communication during a conference I attended at Pomona College last September.

² I chose to use "internal" and external" where J.L. Moreno has used the terms "surface" and "deep-structure" respectively because of the recent anthropological arguments concerning Moreno's terms.

estimate that on average I spent six hours a day every day with the participants. Since it was impossible to spend the same extensive amount of time with every one of the participants the length and intensity of the ethnographies varied to some degree. However, a minimum of 12 hours of participant observation during the time of study has been spent with every participant. In the discussion of the participants' social networks I rely on a combination of questionnaires and interview materials as well as my personal observations.

The following analysis summarizes the participants' speech behavior in various social settings, their linguistic attitude toward the use of the Berlin dialect and their social relationships in general.

Young Group

Anna

Anna has always lived in the East. All of her long-term relationships have been with East German boyfriends who spoke or speak the dialect in medium to strong form. Of course, boyfriends and live-in partners are potentially strong influences. Anna's social network is a very close one. She indicates that she has known her friends for more than 15 years or, at the very least, since 1991. As Anna tells me, and I have been able to observe to a certain extent, all of her friends interact with each other on a relatively regular basis and most know each other independently from her. Her friends are all East Berliners; however, they display a diverse assortment of linguistic behaviors. She says that half of them speak a near standard German variety and the other half use the Berlin dialect. I have been able to verify this variation through observation since some of Anna's friends are also participants of the study.

Anna worked in a three-year apprenticeship at a bank based in the West to get her degree in banking. Most of her teachers were from the West, and she guesses so were about 60 percent of her fellow students. She has primarily worked in Eastern offices. Because of the status of her job, her role at the bank is a very interactive public one. She frequently

speaks to her superiors in the West, her colleagues, and her customers. Anna's job is one in which people are automatically expected to interact formally and convey a sense of success, trustworthiness and, of course, money. I observed Anna instruct one of her colleagues who spoke the Berlin dialect, "*entweder du stellst dit aus oda ein,*" using a socially marked variable of the Berlin dialect. However, when she spoke to a superior on the phone she only used the standard variety. "*ich habe jetzt hier zwei karten für welche soll ich noch mal ne geheimnummer bestellen?*" (possible changes underlined)

In sum, Anna is mainly influenced by two roles: an official (work) one and her role as a private person. Anna is aware of the stigmas attached to the use of the Berlin dialect and uses them herself. She believes the dialect sounds *prollig*³, especially the variety that is furthest away from standard German and uses "wrong grammar." However, she would rarely judge someone just by his or her speech, since she encounters the dialects so often. Anna therefore code-switches when she feels it is necessary. She is capable of doing it and believes it is necessary to speak both varieties (Standard German and the Berlin dialect) to be able to get along nicely with others and to be able to treat them respectfully. To Anna adjusting to the linguistic standards seems only natural because otherwise she believes one cannot be successful professionally. "It's just like wearing nicer outfits when you go to work at the bank – you adjust to the more formal environment."

Angela

Angela has had a number of encounters with the West during the ten years of reunification. After high school, she spent three and a half years working and living in a town ("T.") in the south of West Germany. There, she got to know her boyfriend (whom she still dates to this very day). Interestingly, he is of Greek descent. During her years in T., Angela said she "learned" to speak the standard German. Her new work environment also forced her to be able to speak the German standard. In the field of hotel management you have the

³ Derived from the word proletarian, it is a negative term. Expresses that the speaker is associated with the lower, poorly educated working class.

role of representing what your hotel stands for. In her case it was luxury, which is always associated with good manners and “perfect” speech. Angela also mentioned that she had to prove to the people in T. that she as an East German can work diligently and is reliable and is not like the stereotyped *Ossi*.

These are some common prejudices that many East Germans claimed they encountered after the reunification. Angela’s attitude toward her Western counterparts differs from Tanja’s attitude. She has not dismissed the partially negative and prejudiced behavior of West Germans toward her. While Tanja tries not to openly criticize West Germans, Angela applies stereotypes to them. She feels they are arrogant, prejudiced and avaricious.

Her boyfriend, who speaks limited German, profoundly influenced Angela’s speech behavior. As many of the participants have pointed out, they feel it important to speak the standard German with people who would not understand the dialect, such as foreigners or people from other areas of Germany.

Since Angela returned to Berlin, she has lived in East Berlin and spent time with friends (all of whom are from the East). Her network of friends is not very multiplex; although her friends know each other they do not spend time together. Again, the possibility of a strong group influence is not present.

Angela speaks both language varieties and mentioned that it is necessary to do so to be able to get along with everyone. She considers it unnecessary to speak the Standard in informal situations with friends because she says it sounds “stuck up.” Nevertheless, Angela also emphasizes that she does not speak the strong form of the Berlin vernacular, and that it can sound *prollig*, “primitive,” and uneducated.

Max

Max went to school in the East and has lived there his whole life. Max also seems to be very influenced by his work life (public sector) which is very formal and focused on “good conduct” and “cordial interaction.” He received some of his education in the East and spent all his work time in West Berlin. Max also has a West Berlin girlfriend. All of

Max's friends are from the East and are partially "new"⁴ (he met them after the wall came down), just like Anna's friends. However, his network seems fairly loose, as only few interact with each other.

Max seems to have been very much influenced by his work and girlfriend. Max speaks a Standard German near variety in almost all situations, private or public. But, he does not attribute this to "new" social changes or pressures. He expresses his sympathy for the dialect because it is a typical marker of the people of Berlin. Nevertheless, he does not think it is always appropriate. Max tries to appear indifferent in respect to the ongoing changes. Everything seems just normal, he claims. He does not see it as a compliment when people tell him that he does not sound like a Berliner. He says he is more comfortable using the standard, but claims not to understand why the dialect has such a negative connotation. Max thinks that to be able to work in the future one has to be able to speak the standard.

Amalie

Amalie went all the way. She is one of the youngest participants in my group. At the time of the fall of the wall she was only 12 years old. After that, Amalie received most of her education in West Berlin, where her fellow students were evenly divided between East and West. Her instructors, however, were West German. Amalie has also only worked in the western part of Berlin. Amalie's work as a legal assistant requires a high level of education and a proper appearance. Amalie has had two relationships with one partner from the East and the present one from West Berlin. She is the only one of the participants who has moved voluntarily to West Berlin. Additionally, Amalie is the only one of the participants who has an almost completely new circle of friends, as she guesses about 80 percent are from the West. She described their relation with them as very close, and says that everyone

⁴In the course of this network analysis I will be using the terms "old" and "new" friends in which will refer to the time a friendship was committed, before or after 1989 respectively.

knows everyone else and they spend a lot of time together. Amalie agrees with several stigmas, such as that the Berlin dialect should be spoken to a lesser extent because it sounds *prollig*. Amalie thinks that Berlin variables are constantly in her speech but only to a very limited degree. During participant observation I could verify that she in fact speaks a near standard variety. She does so even in informal situations and uses dialectal markers that have been identified by Pszolla (1998) to be very resistant.

Claudia

Claudia is still a student. Most of her close friends are from East Berlin, including her roommate. She has lived in the East for all of her life and has also gone to school there. She has only worked part time jobs, but they have often involved fairly public environments (such as marketing and promotion). Her one West Berlin friend does not participate in many social activities with her other East Berlin friends. Claudia is what I would call a typical *Berliner Schnautze mit Herz*, ‘big mouth with heart’ (see essay explanation p.20). She speaks the Berlin dialect most of the time and then suddenly switches to the standard. She says she often surprises herself when she switches. I noticed that she does it if she feels observed. Claudia for example used the following Berlin markers when she spoke to her mother on the phone: *ja nee ick muss aba mittwoch von vierzehn bis siebzehn uhr [...]* *weil=t halt die letzte stunde is. nee[...]* *keine ahnung mama. weess ick echt nich.* ‘yeah no but wednesday i have to from two to five o’clock [...] because it is the last lecture. no [...] i have no clue mama. i really don’t know’

She immediately switched to the standard once she noticed that I was observing her. Claudia’s limited professional contact with the West and close East Berlin network of friends provide an explanation for her language behavior. I also observed that she spoke the dialect variety with her parents – something that many of the participants did not do. Parents tried to encourage standard German, but less successful. However, Claudia is aware that speaking the dialect is not always appropriate and tries to avoid it in highly formal situations or if she wants to leave a “good impression”, as she put it. She is proud of herself

and of the fact that she has been able to experience two socio-political systems. In fact, many of the participants point this out as a positive attribute. Part of her identity is her dialect and when someone comments on it she shrugs it off with a smile.

Simon

Simon is the opposite of Amalie. Where she went “West” all the way, he stayed with his friends in the East. Simon’s social environment has not changed much since the wall came down. He has not even moved out of the city district he grew up in, and still knows most of his friends from back then. Simon spends time with a very close-knit circle of friends who have all grown up in the East. All of his long-term relationships have been with East German girls. At home, his family converses in the dialect. Therefore it is not surprising that Simon uses the dialect in a strong way. He even uses typical Berlin vocabulary – such as *Fläppen* for drivers license – despite the fact that the use of these lexical markers is easily stigmatized. To Simon, the dialect comes natural and is “familiar territory.” He therefore is openly accepting of its use. At the time of study Simon went to school and held a job as a car mechanic to finance his studies. He himself will change to the standard only when he speaks “business” as he calls it, with his customers at work. Simon does not agree with the negative connotation of the dialect because to him it is just like any other dialect, and one in which he feels at home.

Hans

Not many things have changed in Hans’s social life since the wall came down. He lives in a part of town that formerly belonged to East Berlin, works as a salesman in the East, and spends all his leisure time with friends from East Berlin. When he describes his group of friends he says: “We are all best friends and have known one another before nineteen-eighty-nine.” They all speak the dialect among each other in the medium or strong form as I have defined it for this research. As with Simon’s social group of friends, Hans’ is a clique in which language is used as marker for membership. I have actually been told that the members complain about Hans’s new girl friend because she spoke Standard German

using only a few Berlin markers. They felt that she thought she was better than them. This is a strong sign that among this group of friends, language is used to show solidarity with the group.

Tanja

Tanja has spent her high school years in West Berlin immediately after the reunification. These two years were very important for her future linguistic and social development. During these two years individual and collective emotions were still running high.

Tanja talks about being ostracized by teachers and students because she was from East Berlin. She had few friends and would try to avoid telling people that she came from the East. She talks about a particularly telling experience with some of her classmates. They were driving on the train through an eastern area of town when one of her classmates started talking about how horrible this place is and how glad she is that her parents always warned her about the Easterners. She said that they were “weird,” that they smelled bad, and that they were totally stupid. Tanja made sure that this classmate knew where she came from, and this challenge silenced the girl. Certainly, these types of experiences shape impressions and ideas about the people from “the other side.”

Tanja, however, is not burdened with prejudices. She just characterizes the West Berliner one who happened to have grown up on the “other side.” Since her high school years, she has actually had many more contacts with people from the West. The majority of her boyfriends over the last 10 years have been from West Berlin, and she has also has held several jobs in West Berlin and West Germany.

On the other hand, Tanja’s closest friends are all from the East. Most of these individuals she met after the *Wende*, or turn. Her social network itself is not very multiplex, which means that her friends do not necessarily know each other and will not spend time together independently from Tanja. Hence, there is not a strong group identity among the individuals in this network.

Tanja has not let her self be deterred by her experiences with West Berliners. She is very open towards other people, but also very proud of her East Berlin past. She is also constantly aware of a feeling that she has to prove herself. Tanja speaks the Standard German variety when she is in formal social situations, when she is with her boyfriend (who speaks the Standard as well), and when she encounters situations that seem to be of importance. She believes it is good if you speak both language varieties, a form of the Berlin dialect and the High German. She does not like it when people use the strong Berlin dialect since it is essentially “wrong German.” Tanja uses the medium form of the Berlin dialect in situations in which she feels comfortable, such as around her parents, with close friends, and in other relaxed private social settings.

Arthur

Arthur has met all of his close friends after 1989, and all of them come from East Berlin. His network of friends is very dense. Most of them know each other and spend a lot of time together. Here, the group influence could apply. His is a close network of friends who appreciate each others’ opinions. We could therefore expect him to speak the Berlin dialect on a regular basis without much code switching. However, Arthur speaks a near standard variety. The reason for this apparent inconsistency seems to be that his friends are very aware of their speech despite their background. They make use of the Standard in formal and informal situations and only rarely use Berlin markers in their speech. Hence, it seems that this group has accepted a “new” linguistic attitude. Somewhat surprisingly, they are moving toward the use of the Standard German as a group marker in a wider sense. All of them seem to think that this change is necessary if one wants to be competitive in the work force and appear well educated. Most of Arthur’s friends that he included in the survey have so far been quite successful professionally or have voiced their aspiration to become financially secure.

His girlfriends since 1989 have all grown up in East Berlin. Arthur has had a mixed education in respect to location. He spent part of his apprenticeship in West Berlin with

teachers from that part of Germany. For the past two years Arthur has been working in East Berlin, but his boss is from West Germany.

Other explanations for Arthur's speech behavior are that his job as an apartment salesman requires him to deal with many people of relatively high status. Again, like Angela, Anna, Amalie and Tanja before him, he has to appear respectful and trustworthy, and to do this he needs to use the appropriate speech patterns. Finally, it could be that he speaks Standard German because he has four years of experience in theater.

Peter

Peter is one of Arthur's friends. He speaks standard German most of the time and rarely uses forms of the Berlin dialect in speech with friends. Ever since Peter entered the working force, he has worked in West Berlin or Germany. He works as a consultant for different banks. Peter has always had his permanent residence in East Berlin; recently, however, he has also needed to live in West Germany because of his work.

Peter has mentioned in talks with others that he thinks the dialect is just a typical Berlin marker, but for him an expression of a person's educational level. He is very straightforward in his opinion about any dialect. Peter cannot stand it in general when a speaker uses wrong grammatical expressions. As an example he tells me about an experience in which he called a public service number to get some information and the operator could not switch from the dialect he was using to Standard German. The operator used such a strong dialect that Peter had trouble understanding him. Peter thinks that all Germans should be able to speak their national language adequately no matter which part of Germany they come from.

Peter is also proud of his experiences in two socio-political systems. He has often been identified as non-East Berliner and was proud of it because he agrees with most of the stereotypes of East Berlin speech. Here, again, we can observe the belief that one needs to prove that Easterners are intelligent and worldly.

Luci

After her High School education, Luci got an optician degree after a three-year apprenticeship in West Berlin. This was when she first had to deal with West Berlin instructors and fellow students. She also worked in the western part of Berlin until recently. In her job, Luci (like many of the participants) works in the public sector, where speech and appearance are very important.

Luci's boyfriend is one of the participants who speaks the standard German. Her social network of friends is fairly close and multiplex. Luci is part of Arthur's circle of friends, all of whom emphasize the importance of High German. However, Luci does speak a weak to medium form of the dialect when she is among her friends. I have heard her catch herself when she thought she *berlinerte*⁵ too much. She would say, "*Man ich Berlina schon wieda so viel, ist ja fürchterlich.*" Which translates into "Man, I am speaking too much *berlinerisch* again. How annoying!"

Luci says she does like the Berlin dialect because to her it is an identity marker and it is funny at times. However, she believes one has to be able to code-switch depending on the social situation. One time someone thought she was not from East Berlin because of her speech. Luci took it as a compliment but said that she is able to *berliner* a lot, too. Once again, many East Berliner participants appear proud if they have been able to prove that they are not stupid or unworldly. After being mistaken for someone else, these East Germans make sure that the inquirer – usually a West German – knows that they made a mistake. They behave as if to say: "I am an East Berliner and I am proud of it!"

Ida

Ida has lived in East Berlin all her life except for the two years she spent abroad. When she returned, she received part of her education in West Berlin and part of it in the East. Ida has also worked as a secretary in West Berlin for a West Berlin boss. Her boy-

⁵ to speak in the Berlin dialect

friend of seven years was an American who spoke German. I have discussed the influence of foreigners on our language behavior previously during my discussions about Angela's foreign boyfriend. The general idea here is that one has to speak the standard German to be understood by foreigners.

Hence, Ida's work place, which was in the West where the standard form is emphasized, and her boyfriend, being a foreigner, influenced her speech behavior. Recently, she has begun to start dating a man from West Germany whom I met and who also speaks standard German. Ida speaks a weak variety of the Berlin dialect and switches to the standard form in more formal situations. She thinks that using the dialect in a strong way gives a *prollig* impression. Like Claudia, Peter and Tanja, Ida likes it if people identify her as non-East Berliner, nevertheless she is proud to be from the East because she has been able to experience "both sides." Her attitude towards West Germans and Berliners is very neutral, she judges everyone individually.

Summary

After analyzing the network questionnaires and the "participant observation" data it seems that the majority of the young group participants of this study accept the social and linguistic rules enforced by the new socio-economic system they live in today. All of them use the Berlin dialect either to a weak degree that is near the Standard variety and/or they see the necessity to code switch from the dialect to the standard depending on social environment they will find themselves in. Either way, the necessity to speak the standard seems very prevalent among this age group. One of the reasons for this attitude is to appear well rounded and educated to peers, superiors and certainly Westerners in order to eliminate the still existing prejudices about East Germans.

Nevertheless, not all young participants follow this linguistic trend. Social networks can exert a strong influence on the speaker's speech behavior if the network uses a certain speech variety as a group identity marker. This will only work if the group is very close knit, as in Simon's case. His group uses the Berlin dialect as a group identity marker.

In loose knit groups the pressure to fit in the group and identify with it is not as strong. Hence, for people with loose knit social networks outside influences (such as those found in the work place) can be more influential on the person's speech.

Old Group

Klaus

Klaus's social network is one hundred percent East German. He used to go to law school in the western part of town but did not end up making long-term friendships there. He has known his close friends for more than twelve years. His social network is a very close one. These individuals know each other from trips, sports events, parties, nights out, sports practices, and so on. They have all known each other for about a dozen years.

Klaus currently works in a collectibles store in East Berlin selling trading cards. He also plays semi-professional basketball in a minor league of East Berlin. His live-in girlfriend is from East Berlin as well. He says, rarely in his life has he been confronted with formal situations such as those found in job interviews. He has little or no contact with people from the West and spends all of his free time with his girlfriend or eastern friends.

Klaus speaks a strong Berlin dialect in virtually all situations. As he points out, the only time he tries to speak the standard is when he speaks with foreigners. Even at work – where he interacts with many customers who come from the western part of town – he speaks the dialect. He feels quite comfortable using it and sees nothing wrong with it. Using the dialect is natural to him because it is the way he and his friends have always spoken. Interestingly, his mother has noted this and told him recently to “clean up his (speech) act.” He admits with a laugh that people who speak the standard sound particularly distinguished. Klaus has not been identified as a non-East Berliner before and may never will be. If he were to change his way of speech his friends would probably express shock. For them, the dialect is an identity marker, and when they are together it expresses their natural way of speech.

Erwin

Erwin is one of the members of Klaus's clique of friends. However, Erwin also has other friends whom he met while he went to his university. Some of his friends he met after the fall of the wall, but only one of them is from West Berlin. Erwin now works for a company in West Berlin, and I have started to observe a slight change in his language behavior. He generally speaks the dialect, and like Klaus, he does not think much about it. During a basketball game with friends he used a Berlin phrase to express disbelief and astonishment at another player's action, asking him if he was crazy. *Alta biste ne janz knuspa oda wat?*⁶ To Erwin, the dialect is his native language and he prefers it to the standard version. He says he always speaks the dialect and would only speak the standard if the person he is speaking to does not understand it. However, I have observed that he (probably unconsciously) changes to a near standard variety in very extreme formal situations such as public performances (e.g., on an answering machine) and if the majority of the people present speak the standard (e.g., at one of my dinner parties).

Ralf

Aside from a one-year course at a university of West Berlin, Ralf has always lived in East Berlin or East Germany. He has had East German girlfriends, and went to school and worked in East Berlin. All of his friends are from East Berlin and he has known some of them since they were little kids. Together, they constitute one big group of friends who travel together, play sports, and go out. Ralf has had next to no contact with people from West Berlin.

Not surprisingly, Ralf speaks the Berlin dialect in almost all situations, formal or informal. He likes the Berlin dialect and uses an East German relic to describe it: he says

⁶Germans and also Berliner have quite a few ways to openly insult each other. However, this usually happens with a joking undertone and is not taken seriously by the person who is addressed.

it is *klasse*, meaning “cool.” To him, the dialect is a means of expressing his identity in a comfortable environment. He says, *ick berlina jerne* ‘I like to *berlinern*.’ and smiles mischievously. Ralf does not care about prejudices and so called “new social and linguistic norms.” He knows who he is and he likes it. At a dinner party at my house I invited Ralf and two other participants of the study along with several West Berlin and West German speaking friends of mine who spoke standard German. I observed that Ralf kept speaking the dialect throughout the night. At one point he even made fun of me for using a typical West German term for super market, which is *Supermarkt* and not the East German term *Kaufhalle* ‘shopping hall’. This had nothing to do with using dialectal markers or not. However, it is important in the process of linguistic assimilation to western standards. Using the term *Kaufhalle* a speaker will immediately be identified as coming from the East. In the course of the reunification people have tried to avoid such typical eastern words as not be identified with the stigma attached to East Germans by West Germans. Since Ralf made fun of me, it showed that he is unwilling to conform to the new linguistic vocabulary or to different norms and would not expect any other East Berliner to do so either.

As the evening progressed it became clear that the majority of the dinner party spoke standard German, which must have exerted some pressure on the speakers of Berlin dialect. Ralf continued to speak the dialect when he addressed only one person at a time. However, at one point he addressed everyone and chose to use the standard, but he did not comfortable using it: “*Ich weiss nicht, zur Zeit ist das wohl irgendwie noch nicht so geklärt[...] ich hab angerufen*” (‘I don’t know, at this point things haven’t been clarified [...] I have called.’).

Olaf

Since the *Wende*, Olaf has received his university education at a West Berlin school, and also began to work in the West. His relationships have been with girls from East and West Berlin. Olaf has always lived in the eastern part of Berlin and spent all his leisure time playing sports with East Berlin friends in this area. Olaf’s friends are partially new but all grew up in East Berlin (with the exception of his girl friend). His social network of friends

is relatively close. Olaf likes the Berlin dialect as long as it is not spoken in the extreme form with grammatical “mistakes”. Olaf himself speaks a medium intense form of the Berlin dialect, and sometimes shifts to the near standard variety.

Olaf may be aware of his changes, but publicly, he refuses to acknowledge them. He claims he does not know about the social pressures to speak the Standard German. I have observed that Olaf uses the Berlin dialect in many occasions but also switches to a near standard variety if he talks about formal topics or in more formal environments.

Mara

Mara has spent a lot of time in West Berlin. After high school she received several university degrees from West Berlin universities and has also begun to work as an architect in a West Berlin firm. Her boss is from West Berlin and some of her closest friends are from West Berlin as well. Mara has lived in East and West Berlin and also spent a fair amount of time in the West pursuing her hobbies. However, Mara’s partners have always been from East Berlin. Her network of friends is very close.

While there seems to be a very strong West Berlin influence in Mara’s life, it does not appear to have affected her speech behavior. In formal situations (such as talking to a sales clerk), she still uses the dialect. She also recalls an episode at work in which her boss told her to use the standard German “because (she) is so intelligent and using the dialect would hide that intelligence.” She was very upset about this episode but still has trouble changing to the standard. Mara identifies strongly with the dialect. To her, it is a comfort issue. Speaking the dialect feels “natural” to her. She does not understand why she should feel a need to change that. However, she is also well aware of the dialect’s negative stigma.

Sara

Sara’s friends have all grown up in East Germany or East Berlin. Her live-in boyfriend of many years grew up in East Berlin and speaks the Berlin vernacular in a regular fashion without making any situational distinctions. For the past few years, Sara has worked

for a West German travel agency and has had to interact with customers of all social classes there.

Sara identifies with the Berlin dialect but also dislikes it when people use the extreme or highly stigmatized form of the dialect, which uses phonological variables to a strong extent and non-standard syntax, because she feels it sounds uneducated and vulgar. Hence, she agrees with the negative labels attached to the dialect. She will generally speak the Berlin dialect in its medium form and switches to the Standard in very formal situations.

Christa

Christa has only worked in West Berlin since the wall came down. One of her boyfriends came from West Berlin and she spends a lot of her leisure time interacting with members of a West German social club. Her social network of friends, however, consists primarily of friends from before 1989 – and all them are East Germans.

She openly admits that she likes the dialect as one with *Herz und Schnautze*, ‘big mouthed and spoken from the heart’. She thinks that she uses it rarely, though I have observed evidence to the contrary. When she is among friends and in less formal environments she uses the Berlin dialect in its medium form. For example, she would say *dit is ja=n süsset foto*, ‘this is a cute picture,’ referring to a picture in one of the other participant’s homes where we conducted an interview. She does speak the Standard to make a good impression, which means she is aware of the dialect’s stigma. She remarks that everyone should speak in a way that makes them feel comfortable. According to Christa, Berlinish is just a typical regional marker for the people who live there and it does not have to imply anything negative about the speaker.

Robert

Robert has received all of his post-1989 education in the West. He has lived and worked in East and West Berlin, and is currently living in East Berlin again. Most of his long-term relationships have been with women from the East. His friends are partially “new” and partially still from the “old days.” This social network is very close, and all of

his friends know each other independently from him and spent a lot of time together. All of them are from East Berlin.

Robert himself uses the medium variety of the Berlin vernacular and sometimes switches to the standard form when he speaks to a waitress or feels observed. However, he says used to speak “better” when he was still going to the university. Robert does not care much about social pressures and linguistic developments. He believes that the dialect’s negative connotation is not justified because “the majority of people all over the world speak some dialect, so why should one be less prestigious than another?” Robert likes the Berlin dialect and says its charm has “grown on him.” Robert identifies with the dialect but says that “too much of anything is rarely good.” He also dislikes the dialect’s non-standard grammatical aspects.

Summary

All old group participants speak the Berlin dialect to either a medium or strong degree. Not one of the participants speaks the dialect using non-standard syntax. All of the old group participants associate a negative image with the use of this form.

Many of the old-group participants (such as Mara, Christa, Robert and Erwin) still have or have had extensive personal and professional contacts with West Berliners or West Germans. Nevertheless, it has not influenced them as much as the younger speakers. Again, the structure of the participants’ social group is very influential on their speech behavior. For example Erwin, Ralf and Klaus used the dialect strongly because to them it served as a group identity marker, and hence outside pressures of a social or linguistic type are less salient.

In conclusion, it appears that social networks play an important role, in one way or the other, in all of the participants’ linguistic tendencies. I have examined the structure of “internal” social group networks (including those in an individual’s immediate group of friends) as well as “external” group networks (including involuntary associations, such as those with whom the participants work). If relationships among individuals within an inter-

nal group of friends are loose, then their influence on each other is less intense and outside pressures exert greater influence. However, if the internal relationships are dense and multiplex, the dialect will function as a group identity marker and external influences have little impact.

Additionally, the influence of the working environment is not to be underestimated here. All of the participants who have roles in the work force or have gone through an application process indicated that they knew how important it can be to “appear well educated.”

CHAPTER V

THE LABOV TEST

Before I begin to explain my methodological approach of the “Labov test,” as I will call it here, I need to explain a few more characteristics of the Berlin dialect. As I have mentioned in the method section, the Berlin dialect can be spoken to various “degrees.” What can be observed are the standard German variety and differing levels of the realization of the Berlin dialect. Even the so-called standard German, which is oriented to the written standard, will rarely be spoken in the same the way it is written. Every speaker who intends to speak the standard or High German will automatically bring in some vernacular markers of his or her region. These markers can create variations in intonation, rhythm, and/or the different realization of certain phonemes (Braden and Grosskopf 1998:6).

I would like to emphasize again that in my analysis of the taped data I have only examined five phonological variables as they have been identified in Pszolla (1998) and also Dittmar and Schlobinski (1988:49). These variables are the most commonly used, however, and hence evaluating only these and not others will still give a very adequate measure of a speaker’s use of the Berlin dialect. These five markers of the dialect are [ç] as in *ich* ‘I’, [ai] as in *nein* ‘no’, [g] as in *gut* ‘good’, [s] as in *was* ‘what’ and [au] as in *auch* ‘also’.

Pszolla (1998) found in a study of 12 East and West Berlin speakers that 76 percent of them prefer the use of *ick* instead of *ich*. However, when broken down into categories of East and West, it was found that 90.50 percent of East Berliners use *ick*, compared to only 62.59 percent of West Berliners. In my study, I would expect this variable to be one of the last ones to vanish since it seems to be quite popular among individuals hailing from both

sides of the wall. Pszolla also found that East Berliners use the following two dialectal variables much more frequently than their counterparts: [j] instead of [g] and [e:] instead of [ai]. I expected these variables to be dropped first by the participants of my study who are in strong contact with Westerners since they seem to be stigmatized and used to a lesser extent by those the West (Dittmar and Bredel 1999:52). Dittmar and Bredel also point out that the [au] to [o] variable is one that is used more commonly by the Eastern speakers, and the authors even claim that this marker is especially negatively socially marked. Finally, Dittmar and Bredel (1999:52) suggest that the variant [t] to [s] is a signifier for an East Berlin speaker.

I used four categories similar to the ones Dittmar, Bredel and Pszolla used during their joint research work (1999:50). The four categories they used were referred to as weak, medium, strong, and very strong. However, in their book Dittmar and Bredel do not define the specifics of these categories – they only ask participants to identify other speakers using these categories. For the purposes of this project, then, I used these guidelines to somewhat arbitrarily define the makeup of the categories on my own. In the discussion that follows, I will be referring to the linguistic data I obtained after transcribing the participants' taped speech samples.

I divided the categories into four equal parts, or quadrants. One of the criteria used to determine the degree to which participants speak the dialect involves percentage of pos-

Table 2. Linguistic Categories of the Berlin dialect

Category	Weak	Medium	Strong	Very strong
Realization of Dialectal Phonetical Variables in percent (%)	0-25	26-50	51-75	76-100
Use of Syntax	Standard	Standard	Standard	Non-Standard

sible phonological marking sites. The other criteria considered here pertain to proper and improper uses of syntax.

In this research, speakers who use the dialect up to 25 percent of possible phonological marking sites¹ are considered “weak” speakers of the dialect. Speakers who use dialectal markers from 25 percent to 50 percent of the time are considered “medium” speakers. “Strong” speakers are those that use markers between 51 and 75 percent of the time, and “very strong” speakers in respect to the use of phonological variables are such who use dialectal markers to more than 75 percent of the time.

Within the analysis of the “weak” category speakers it will be interesting to keep Pszolla’s findings in mind and see if the phonetic markers used by speakers of weak dialect will be the ones identified by Pszolla as resistant. This represents an interesting hypothesis that has also been alluded to by Dittmar and Bredel (1999:53).

The speakers of the “medium” category use dialectal markers up to 50 percent at the time. Therefore, I would expect these individuals even to use some markers that have been identified by Pszolla as less resistant next to resistant markers. Pszolla (Dittmar and Bredel 1998:115) found that dialectal markers such as *een* for standard *ein* ‘one’ are the first markers to be lost in more near standard speech. Other markers that are easily discarded during such a shift towards nearer standard speech are mid-word phonemes such as [ai] in *mein* ‘mine’ that can be realized as *meen*, or the realization of [g] as [j] as in *aufgehen* ‘to rise.’ I suggest here that these may still be spoken among speakers of the medium category and certainly by the speakers of the strong dialect.

Recall that the criterion for a “strong” speaker of the dialect will be the use of Berlin markers from 51 up to 75 percent of the time. I also expect the speaker to make use of all five phonological markers of the dialect. It is also likely that a speaker who uses the dialect strongly in respect to phonological variables will also use some lexical markers, e.g., some

¹In relation to linguistic variables that could have been changed into Berlin markers.

typical Berlin words or phrases. This would support that he is strong speaker of the dialect. Some examples of lexical markers, or Berlin words are *kieken* for *sehen* ('to look or watch'), *Fläppen* for *Führerschein* ('driving license'), and phrases: *Den mach ick alle!* (a threat to beat someone in competition or physically) or *Mehl jehabbt!* (tells someone that they were lucky) and *Bist wohl meschugge!* (tells someone that they are crazy).²

The fourth category of "very strong" speakers of the dialect includes the use of all the above-mentioned phonological markers from 76 to 100 percent of the time. In connection with the very strong use of phonological variables these speakers also make use of non-standard syntax. A speaker who uses non-standard syntax in connection with a strong use of the dialect is highly stigmatized. This additional criterion is used because Berliners perceive speakers who use non-standard syntax as very strong speakers and associate them with low class and bad education. For example, Berliners would agree that a very strong speaker of the dialect would use the accusative instead of the dative to mark a noun. Take, for example, the following sentence: *Er schläft mit das Kissen*, 'He sleeps with the pillow' as opposed to the standard form, *Er schläft mit dem Kissen*. The same use of accusative in place of dative also affects pronouns. A speaker may say *Ich habe mir verletzt*, 'I have hurt myself' instead of *Ich habe mich verletzt*.

It is because of these extreme cases (in which speakers use non-standard syntax) that speakers of all degrees of the dialect, and not just of the very strong category, are stigmatized as uneducated. All of my East Berlin participants expressed the opinion that this is just plain "wrong German" and that they would not want to be identified with these speakers.

Finally, I want to discuss the difference between vernacular speech and the Berlin dialect. This is necessary because markers of both language variations are sometimes confused. Vernacular markers are vowel reductions as in *sie* 'she' to *se* [zi: -> s], elimination of

² Taken from own observations, experiences and a special edition newspaper on the Berlin vernacular In Der Tagesspiegel April 1999.

end consonants as in *nicht* ‘not’, *ist* ‘is’, *einmal* ‘once’ and *nun* ‘now’, and progressive nasal assimilation as in *haben* -> *ham* ‘have’ or *gehen* -> *gehn* ‘walk’ (Schlobinski 1988:92). Speakers of all German dialects use these markers in their vernacular speech independent of their region of origin. Schlobinski (1988:93) also points out that dialectal changes occur in connection with vernacular changes. If a speaker switches from a near standard or standard German variation to the dialect, he or she will generally begin to use vernacular markers as well. However, when a speaker switches to the vernacular he or she does not necessarily use markers of the dialect.

Analysis

In this section, I used Labov’s construct of a stylistic continuum. The participant is asked to read minimal pairs, word lists, and texts (see appendix three). Finally, he or she is asked in an informal interview to answer several questions so that the interview takes on the format of casual speech. These steps are traditionally differentiated in terms of degrees of formality (from very formal to informal), with casual speech serving as the least formal and least self-monitored style. These variations in style are supposed to reflect social situations in which a shift in formality occurs.

After transcribing the participants’ taped speech, I manually counted the instances in which it was possible to make dialectal changes on one of the above-discussed linguistic markers. Next, I counted the changes that were actually made and calculated the resulting percentage of use of the dialectal markers.

None of the participants made dialectal changes in the reading lists they were given, whether they were reading the minimal pairs, the word list, or the text. On one hand, this might reflect an extremely formal situation in which the participant monitors his or her own speech very closely. On the other hand, as Schönfeld (1986:288) has discussed, the Berlin dialect as a written dialect is very near the standard. As such, the Berlin dialect does not have a large corpus of dialect specific vocabulary and does not make use of non-standard

Table 2.1. The Labov Test Results: Old Group

Code Name	Emotional Topic			EURO Topic			Total of both questions
	Possible dialectal changes	Actual dialectal changes	Percentage	Possible dialectal change	Actual dialectal changes	Percentage	Percentage
Male							
Olaf	20	11	55	18	11	58	57
Ralf	22	8	37	29	23	79	58
Klaus	16	10	63	19	9	47	55
Karsten	19	18	95	17	21	81	88
Robert	12	14	86	2	5	40	63
Total			67			61	64
Female							
Sara	34	0	0	9	0	0	0
Christa	11	0	0	15	0	0	0
Mara	3	16	19	4	11	36	28
Total			6			12	9

Table 2.2. The Labov Test Results: Young Group

Code Name	Emotional Topic			EURO Topic			Total of both questions
	Possible dialectal changes	Actual dialectal changes	Percentage	Possible dialectal changes	Actual dialectal changes	Percentage	Percentage
Male							
Simon	41	14	34	37	21	56	45
Peter	32	1	3	37	1	3	3
Arthur	31	0	0	23	2	9	4
Hans	19	1	5	6	4	67	36
Max	10	0	0	8	0	0	0
Total			14			27	18

Table 2.2. The Labov Test Results: Young Group

Code Name	Emotional Topic			EURO Topic			Total of both questions
	Possible dialectal changes	Actual dialectal changes	Percentage	Possible dialectal changes	Actual dialectal changes	Percentage	Percentage
Female							
Ida	17	0	0	11	0	0	0
Amalie	14	0	0	25	7	28	14
Luci	26	3	12	35	0	0	6
Claudia	30	2	7	18	1	6	6
Tanja	60	15	25	43	10	23	24
Angela	17	6	35	19	2	11	18
Anna	30	6	20	26	0	0	10
Total			9			10	12

intonations or rhythms. Standard German voiceless consonants such as [p] and [t] are not voiced as they are in other dialects such as the Saxon dialect, where [p] and [t] are realized as [b] and [d]. Additionally, not just any vowel or consonant can be changed. For example, the realization of *ich* -> *ick* does not occur with the word *Milch* ('milk'). A [g] will almost never be realized as a [j] when it occurs in front of an [r] or an [l]. The Berlin dialect is therefore merely a matter of replacing one consonant or vowel with another – an action that can be easily avoided and does not cause the speaker too much difficulty, especially when he or she reads. During free speech, however, it becomes more difficult.

I asked the participants to respond to two topics – one emotional and one formal. Labov (1972b:209) suggested that having someone discuss an emotional experience will elicit more natural speech patterns because the person will be caught up in the memory of the experience and not self-monitor their style of speech. The formal topic I asked the participants about pertained to the ongoing changes of the German-European currency. The informal question was Labov's famous question about a life threatening experience. As it turned out, the East Berlin participants seemed to be more caught up in the currency debate than their life threatening experiences. Markers of the Berlin dialect were used to a greater extent when the young and old group of females and the young group of males talked about the currency. Only the old group males used Berlin markers more frequently when they talked about the dangerous experience.

I will now analyze the shifting language use in relation to the two age groups. Looking at the use of the Berlin dialect markers in casual speech among the old group males and females, a number of 36.5 percent was observed (as opposed to 15 percent among the young speakers). This clearly supports my hypothesis that the younger East Berliners of my study are more willing and/or able to adapt linguistically to the new standards.

A closer look at these processes reveals more details. The old group males use the dialect 64 percent of the time, whereas the young males only use it 18 percent. However, the young and old group females use the dialect to about the same extent: 12 percent and 9

percent, respectively. This reveals that only the old group males seem to resist the ongoing linguistic changes and do not adapt to new standards, whereas the young participants as well as the old group females apparently adjust.

Initially I had not intended to look at gender differences. In this instance, however, the findings are so striking as to deserve further discussion. As Chambers states (1997), “In virtually all sociolinguistic studies that include a sample of males and females, there is evidence for this conclusion about their linguistic behavior: women use fewer stigmatized and non standard variants than do men of the same social group in the same circumstances (Chambers 1997:102).” The evidence presented in this study lends further support to this finding and broadens its scope.

To illustrate this point, Amalie, Anna and Claudia are prime examples of the young female group. During the interview session they use 25 percent of the possible dialectal markers in their speech. I also tested if the three were using only the very resistant Berlin dialect markers as identified by Pszolla. Anna says when she excitedly thinks about winning one million dollars:³ *was mach ich mit dem jeld was mach ich mit dem jeld?* ‘What do I do with the money what do I do with the money?’ She changes the [g] from the word *Geld* ‘money’ to a [j], which Pszolla identified as a resistant marker of the dialect. Notice, however that she does not change the [s] of *was* ‘what’ into a –t, or *ich* into *ick*, all of which have also been established as being resistant markers of the dialect. Claudia, on the other hand, talks about the new European currency and says, *und naja so speziell möchte ich jetzt nich drauf eingehen* (‘I don’t like to discuss this in detail’). There are no changes made in the mid-word [g] to [j] of *eingehen* and also not in the diphthong [au] to [u] of the word *darauf* — another prominent dialectal marker. Again, this supports Pszolla’s findings that markers such as *ick*, prefix *je-*, *nee*, and final-s changed to –t are the most resistant markers because

³ Anna could not remember a time when she felt seriously threatened. Therefore, I picked another exciting topic “What would you do if you won a million dollars?”

they are the ones still being used even in weaker dialectal speech, whereas the mid-word [g], which was described as a less resistant marker, is not transformed to a [j].

Amalie talks about the currency as well: *also it jibt jetz verschiedene sichtweisen sozusagen is so kompliziert wo ich jetzt anfangen soll* ('well there are several points of view so it is difficult to know where to start'). Amalie changes the marker [g] to a [j] in the beginning of two words, whereas mid-word [g] as in the word *sozusagen* is not realized as [j]. Both of these patterns have been identified by Pszolla (1998) as markers dropped most rapidly in more formal speech nearer to the standard.

Mara is 32 years old and belongs to the old group. She speaks the medium degree of the dialect in respect to the phonological changes she makes. During the taped interview session, Mara uses the dialect 28 percent of the time. Mara does not make use of the less resistant variables, however she uses the resistant variables more frequently than the weak dialect speakers "*nee denk ich nich da ich eh mit der visakarte bezahle also ick glaube dass irgendwelche unterschiede...*" ('no, I don't think so since I pay with VISA anyway, well I believe that some kind of difference...')

Simon uses the dialect less than 50 percent but more than 26 percent of the time, therefore placing him in the phonological category of a "medium" speaker. Simon also makes use of the Berlin markers that are supposed to be erased more quickly under the influence of more formal speech situations (Pszolla 1998). Since he does not omit them in his speech I include him in the category of "medium" degree speaker. Take, for example, the following sentence of his: *nee ick will ja nich sagen dass dit betrug is aber doch irgendwo verlieste wieda einjet von deim anjepartem geld* 'no, I don't want to say that this is foul play but you do lose your saved money somewhat'. Simon uses resistant and less resistant forms as identified by Pszolla (Dittmar and Bredel 1999:53), such as the *ich* – *ick* and the mid-word change of [g] to [j] in the words *einiges* and *angespartem*.

All of the male speakers of the older group in this study are "strong" users of the Berlin dialect with respect to the phonological changes, except Karsten. They use markers

to more than 50 percent of the time and even make use of typical lexical Berlin dialect markers. Here, Olaf is a good example: *Ick: ach du scheisse, dis schaffste nich mehr. Da hats ooch richtig jeknallt frontal halt wa?* The expression *wa?* is a typical Berlin expression. It is used in a manner similar to the *eh?* in Canada. Olaf uses a second expression, *zerschrotet*, referring to a car that has been totaled in an accident. This expression is not likely to be understood by non-dialect speakers. Olaf also changes the resistant marker [au] in *auch* to [o] as in *ooch*. Dittmar and Bredel (1999:52) mention that during their field research they observed that this realization of [au] to [o] is especially stigmatized and vulgar.

Karsten is the only participant who uses the dialect more than 76 percent at the time and is hence considered a “very strong” speaker in respect to the phonological changes he makes. However, he does not use non-standard syntax. Since I looked at middle class people, it would have been very surprising to find someone who used non-standard syntax. The use of non-standard syntax and a strong use of phonological markers of the Berlin dialect is expected to be used by people with a low level of education and class and is therefore highly stigmatized.

CHAPTER VI

THE PARTICIPANTS ATTITUDE TOWARD THE BERLIN DIALECT

Overt Prestige

I decided to use a questionnaire (see appendix five) to obtain a solid and uniform and comparable corpus of data on the participants' opinion of the Berlin dialect, its use and its meaning to the speakers. The data enable comparison of the overtly expressed opinions of the participants to their actual behavior or privately expressed ideas.

The questions were phrased in an open-ended fashion. After collecting the responses, they were organized into categories according to the participants' responses. For example, one question asked, "What do you think about the Berlin dialect?" Here, the participants gave answers such as charming or *prollig*. When all of the answers were recorded, categories were constructed from the answers given most frequently. The participants could write single words or several sentences. I allowed for more than one choice on questions such as "What do you think about the Berlin dialect?" For example, some people chose to say that it is charming but can also sound brash. In these instances, I marked both answers. Because of this, the numbers of answers will sometimes exceed the numbers of questions.

I gave the questionnaires to 20 of my research participants. All 20 of them came from middle class backgrounds. Each respondent grew up in the former East Berlin and has spent the remainder of his or her lives in a unified Berlin. All spoke both the Berlin dialect and a near standard German variety. The young group participants all graduated from the ten-year school system in June of 1990 – the reunification year – or thereafter and were hence between 12 and 16 years old. This distinction is essential because graduating from

this school system was a major event in East German life. It could be compared with the celebrations and importance of a high school graduation in the United States. The old group participants ranged in age from 20 to 24 at the time of reunification.

Question #1

What do you think about the Berlin dialect?

Not surprisingly, when asked to evaluate the Berlin dialect, the answers confirmed the findings of Schönfeld (1986). A minority of young people valued the dialect as thoroughly positive, with remarks such as “charming.” Two-thirds of the respondents were neutral in their judgment (i.e., use of the dialect is acceptable but should be restricted), and the largest percentage of people (42%) understood the dialect to represent lower education levels, lower class, and incorrect grammar (and therefore an ignorance of proper German grammar). Here, the difference between the old and the young group was extreme. Seventy-five percent of the old group agreed that the dialect stood for positive characteristics such as “charming”, “cool” and “nice” and only 25 percent thought it was brash.

Question #2

Should it be spoken more or less?

In light of the responses to the first question, it would be natural to expect the older participants to speak up for a speech community in which *Berlinish* will (at the very least) be spoken as much as it has been in the recent past. However, on the second question opinions among the old group participants are almost equally divided: 50 percent want the situation to stay the same, whereas 37.5 percent believe the dialect should be spoken less often and the remainder does not care. A similar kind of division appears among the young participants, however with a stronger trend towards speaking the dialect less often (50%). This reveals that the participants are aware of the negative image and appearance of their dialect and that trends toward changing for the “better” more prestigious variety appear to be well underway.

Question #13

What do you think about the Berlin dialect's negative public connotation (as compared to other dialects such as Bavarian where this is not the case)?

At this juncture, it is useful to discuss the responses to question number 13. On this question, I asked the participants what they thought about the dialect's negative public image. Among young participants the majority said that they thought that the dialect sounds *prollig*, and therefore its bad image was justified. However, 44 percent believed that the dialect should be accepted because it is just as good as any other dialect. This once again confirmed Schönfeld's findings. Among the old participants opinions were once again equally divided between positive and negative assessments; however a larger percentage (37.5%) said they did not care or did not know about this. This would indicate that they are less aware of the social changes resulting from language shifts.

Questions # 3 and 4

Do you speak Berlinish once in a while? In which situations?

The responses to this question reveals that ideas change more quickly than language and behavior. While we saw above an increasing tendency to link the dialect to negative images, all but one of the participants admitted that they still speak the dialect. Twenty percent of all participants said they speak the dialect "a lot," and 37.5 percent of the old participants fell into this category. However, when they were asked in question number four which situations they believe they speak the dialect in, they match their western counterparts in behavior (Schönfeld and Schlobinski 1995:130). Sixty five percent of all participants said that they try to speak the dialect only in informal, private situations when they are together with friends and family. It is remarkable, however, that 50 percent of the 30-34 year old participants admitted that they speak the dialect in every social environment.

Question # 5

Do think you should avoid speaking the dialect in certain situations?

Again, the omnipresence of the new social ideas is reflected in the participants' answers to the question: "even though you speak the dialect, do you think it should be avoided in certain situations?" As these individuals understand the social ideas, social changes, and new pressures, it appears that they slowly adjust to them. Mentally, many of them already have done so. Every single one of my young participants agrees that the use of the dialect should be restricted to the private realm, and only one older participant disagreed. All respondents proceeded to discuss the exact situations in which the dialect should be avoided. While citing examples, thirty three percent of my original young group participants said they speak the near standard variety if they want to leave a good impression with someone.

These responses reflect my argument on the nature of interaction among East Germans – and in this case, East Berliners. East Berliners are aware of the prevailing prejudices and will most likely have the feeling that they have to prove themselves. In some of the more elaborate answers to my questionnaires the participants mentioned that they feel they have to show that they are not uneducated or stupid and that they can be "diligent" and "reliable."

Question # 6

Has it happened that you have been identified as a non-Berliner because of your language use? If yes, did you accept it as a compliment?

The types of efforts discussed in the previous section are proven effective when East Berliners are identified as non-Berliners or West Berliners: "But you are not from East Berlin, are you? You don't speak that way." This identification essentially indicates that they have mastered the new linguistic rules. They are identified not with the part of Berlin that stands for a strong use of the dialect (and also with its "baggage" of negative markers), but with the "other" which includes the more positive social appearance. Seventy seven

percent of the young group participants has already had such an experience of “passing the test.” Of those, 77 percent were also aware of the meaning of this interaction as they saw it as a compliment. The others indicated that they did not really care about the implications of these interactions. The opposite development was observed among the old group participants, where 62.5 percent have not been asked if they came from somewhere else because of the way they speak. However, of the 37.5 percent that were asked, the majority also saw it as a compliment.

It is always difficult to constrict social behavior and expressions by placing them in neat categories; however, in this case, I believe it enhances the analysis. In this respect, I would like to mention that several of the participants who were identified as non-east Berliners because of their language use said that they proudly informed the inquirer that yes, they did come from the East. Again, this reveals the need to prove oneself in these types of situations.

Questions # 9 and 10

What does it mean to you to be an East Berliner? What do you associate with the word “West Berliner”?

With these questions I intended to see if the prejudices between East and West are still alive. Here, of course, I can only ask the Easterners. Dittmar and Bredel (1999:128-134) point out that Easterners are much more reluctant than Westerners to give prejudiced descriptions of their neighbors. Sixty percent of all participants said that nothing in particular comes to mind if they hear the word *Westler* or *Wessi* (which are both expressions for the West German or Berliner). At most, they indicated that they acted indifferently. The younger participants knew to differentiate a bit more, however: fifty percent find them different in some way (without any negative associations), but some also find them arrogant or fun to be around. Almost all of the older participants (87.5 percent) agree that there is nothing in particular to think of when it comes to West Berliners.

Two theories could explain this phenomenon. For one thing, the older group could be more mature in their ways and are cautious to use stereotypes. A second explanation could be that they simply do not know because of lack of contact. This would mean that they do not form their opinions according to what other people say, but that they wait until they can judge for themselves. Hence, it seems that we find no stereotypical descriptions among them about the Westerners.

Questions #11 and 12

In which dialect do feel at home? and Is it difficult for you to speak Standard German (High German)? Do you have to concentrate?

In these last two questions, I can clearly see a difference between the two age groups in respect to their ability to adjust linguistically. The majority (75 percent) of my young participants feel more comfortable speaking the standard German variety or a near standard mixture of the Berlin dialect and High German. The question is if they really feel that way or if they know they *have* to (or merely *want* to) feel this way. I tried to ask this question to access the “comfortable factor,” in order to determine in which language they “feel more at home.”

The majority of the older participants decided that they felt much more at home in their vernacular (37.5 percent) or some mixture of it with the standard (25 percent). This shows their lesser desire, need, and ability to adjust linguistically. Fifty percent of the older group’s participants also admit they would have to concentrate more if they wanted to speak the standard German. One respondent indicated that she was faced with a situation like this at work. Her boss appealed to her intelligence, asking if it wasn’t better if she spoke *Hochdeutsch*, the standard variety. My participant was totally taken by surprise. For two weeks she struggled to use the Standard German, but had many difficulties and felt so confused that she confronted him about his insistence. She said that she would not and could not alter her speech patterns, but that he should know that it had nothing to do with her professional expertise. He grudgingly accepted this. In contrast, a total of 92 percent of

my young participants said they did not have to concentrate if they were to use the standard German variety.

Summary

Combining the network data and the questionnaire results, we can see differences developing in language accommodation between the differing age groups. The image of the Berlin dialect is much more positive among older groups, and they speak it more often and have problems switching to the standard when a formal social situation may require it. However, all of them seem aware of the fact one should be able to speak the standard in order to leave a good impression or to be able to communicate with non-dialect speakers. Overtly, it appears that the Berlin dialect is still a strong (and proud) marker of regional identity, even though they are aware of its negative stigma and will avoid using it too often. It is less likely that East Berliners will incorporate these stigmas into their own perceptions and judge Berlin dialect speakers negatively.

Covert Prestige

During this section of the research, I spoke with a more limited range of respondents. I did this because I wanted a more marked age difference between the groups. I ended up with six young group participants and seven old group participants.

Earlier, I explained the method of the *matched-guise test*. In a *matched-guise test*, participants hear different speech samples and then have to evaluate them in terms of the perceived characteristics of the speakers in the sample. For example, we would expect that respondents would report negative impressions of individuals who speak the dialect, and positive impressions of individuals who speak the standard version. In a case in which the speaker is not asked directly about his or her opinion of the dialect, a *covert prestige* – a positive opinion associated with the use of the dialect that does not conform to public standards – may be visible.

During my research time in Berlin, it became evident that I would not be able to find an anonymous person to read texts authentically in the varying degrees of the Berlin dialect and standard German. Hence, I chose another approach to access the same kind of data on covert and overt prestige. I checked out several German TV channels in hopes of finding a show that portrayed Berlin speakers. Dialectal speakers are not common on German television – and those speaking the Berlin dialect are even less common – but occasionally shows do portray individuals with these speech patterns. Fortunately, I discovered a show set in Berlin called *Praxis Bülowbogen*. This show includes stories revolving around a doctor, his staff, and his patients. The show is relatively unknown, and 90 of my subjects were unfamiliar with it. I taped several screenings of the show and picked 20 minutes of a one-hour show in which there many characters spoke the Berlin dialect. I found this particularly interesting because the show seemed to represent the public image of the Berlin dialect. The doctor, for example, does not speak the dialect at all. The doctor's assistants use the dialect in varying degrees, but all use it. The assistants use the dialect as it might be expected from a person of a lower social class. The show also portrays the following characters: the doctor's wife and another successful young women (both of whom use the standard German), an *Urberliner*¹ women who seems to be well-educated but primarily uses the dialect, an old women who works at a newspaper stand (who speaks the strong Berlin dialect), and the doctor's elderly housekeeper and babysitter (who speaks the dialect and the standard German and switches according to the social situation).

While trying to find an appropriate show, I asked family and friends if they could think of some program that portrayed Berliners using their dialect. Many of them came up with the original version of the series *Praxis Bülowbogen*. This show was a West German production that was very popular in the early 80s. Back then, the show included a very different cast of actors. For example, the doctor in the original show used the Berlin dialect

¹ *Urberliner* is a term used positively for and associated with older Berlin citizen who speak the dialect traditionally. There is no negative stigma attached to this expression.

frequently (the actor himself was known to be an *Urberliner*), as did his assistant and some of his patients.

I also recalled another popular show of the late 70s and 80s that was set in Berlin and told a story of a family of entrepreneurs who owned one or two food stands. This show was called *Die drei Damen vom Grill* ('The three ladies from the kiosk'). Even though they would have been considered middle class, these people all spoke a medium to strong variety of the Berlin dialect. Additionally, many popular actors (such as Harald Juhnke and Günther Pfitzmann) portrayed typical Berlin characters. These portrayals were shown on mainstream television channels.

It is interesting to note that this is was not the case with other German dialects. There were very few shows on national television about a group of people using their regional dialect. It would be interesting to see an empirical research project examine these phenomena to determine the degree to which these observations held true. However, it is quite clear that in the 70s and 80s the Berliner dialect seemed to be quite popular on German television (both shows were very well known and popular among old and young populations alike) even in West Germany and West Berlin. Interestingly, a number of positive associations with the Berlin dialect were also present in these instances. The Berlin dialect was then (and still is to a certain degree) associated with charm, a good sense of humor, and good heartedness.

It appears to me that there was not just a shift in popularity of the dialect in East Berlin with the reunification but also before then in West Berlin as the relatively numerous occurrence of the shows and actors shows. Today, there is only one show with similar characteristics: the sequel of *Praxis Bülowbogen*. Here, however, the characters do not use the dialect as they used to; instead they speak according to today's dominant perspectives on the use of the dialect.

I will now return to the analysis and explanation of my method. After I showed the participants a 20 minute excerpt from *Praxis Bülowbogen*, I asked them to pick and de-

scribe a character in the show (see appendix six). The participants' choice could have been motivated by other reasons than language; nevertheless, I tried to see if there was a pattern in respect to the characters' use of language and the participants' choice of the character they described. I found that 86 percent of my old-group participants chose to describe a character that spoke the dialect. Among my young group participants, the majority chose to describe a character who spoke the standard German or a near standard variety. This is an interesting finding that seems to suggest that the old-group participants favored the use of the dialect whereas the young-group participants favored the use of the standard.

Table 3.1. Picked Character Question 1

Person picked spoke:	Old Group			Young Group		
	High German	Berlin dialect medium	Berlin dialect strong	High German	Berlin dialect medium	Berlin dialect strong
<i>N</i>	1		6	4		2
(%)	14		86	66		33

In my second question (see appendix six), I gave the participants a choice of five people from the show and asked them to select their favorite character. I summarized my findings with respect to the age of the participants and use of language of the character. Here, the opinions were equally divided: some preferred characters who used the dialect, and some preferred speakers who used the standard German.

The next question was constructed to minimize potential biases and to better achieve an understanding of the participants' covert opinion of the Berlin dialect. I gave the participants a choice of two similar characters. Both characters are female, helpful, friendly, and not shy about asserting themselves. The differences between the two characters are that one is a young doctor's assistant in her early twenties, and the other is his elderly housekeeper in

her late fifties. Furthermore, the young assistant uses the very strong dialect and does not code switch according to social situations, while the housekeeper code switches on occasion. I asked the participants to compare these two characters.

Once again, virtually all the old-group participants preferred the character who spoke the stronger dialect. They argued that the assistant is nice, friendly, funny, and charming – all characteristics that have in the past been positively associated with the dialect. The majority (66) of the young group, however, preferred the housekeeper. The housekeeper's speech behavior reflects the commonly-accepted practices associated with using the dialect in West Berlin: people use the dialect but mainly in private situations and switch to the

Table 3.2. Picked Character Question 2

Person picked spoke:	Old Group			Young Group		
	High German	Berlin dialect medium	Berlin dialect strong	High German	Berlin dialect medium	Berlin dialect strong
<i>N</i>	5		2	3	3	
(%)	71		29	50	50	

Table 3.3. Picked Character Question 3

Person picked spoke:	Old Group			Young Group		
	High German	Berlin dialect medium	Berlin dialect strong	High German	Berlin dialect medium	Berlin dialect strong
<i>N</i>	1	6		4	2	
(%)	14	86		66	33	

standard in more formal situations. It appears that the young-group participants favor this type of speech behavior.

Another reason for the acceptance of these speech behaviors could be the characters' age difference. The old group favored the young and feisty assistant because she may have been a reminder of their own speech behavior when they were that age. Studies have shown that almost all East Berlin children in the 1980s spoke and understood the Berlin dialect and used it to distinguish themselves from other groups such as adults or speakers of other dialects (Schönfeld 1986:274, Behneke 1993:215).

For my final question I selected a scene in which the doctor's assistant speaks to a couple of doctors. Both doctors use the German standard in their conversation; the assistant, however, continues to use a strong version of the dialect. If one were to evaluate this scene using the western linguistic norms, it would not be appropriate to speak the dialect in this situation. I asked the participants to tell me if they believed that the assistant behaved respectfully towards the two doctors (without citing specific linguistic behavior). The majority of my young participants said that they thought that it was an inappropriate and atypical display of an employer-employee relationship and that the assistant should have been more respectful. In contrast, one hundred percent of the older participants felt that she behaved in an appropriate manner. They said she may have been a little "cheeky," but that this was typical for a Berliner and perfectly fine.

Table 3.4. Question 4
Participant's evaluation of assistant's linguistic behavior

	Old Group		Young Group	
	Behavior Appropriate	Behavior Inappropriate	Behavior Appropriate	Behavior Inappropriate
<i>N</i>	7		1	5
(%)	100		17	83

Summary

The young group may have already been so affected by the new linguistic shift toward a more standardized use of language that they only accepted the dialect if it was used by a member of the older generation. In essence, old men or women are readily accepted as being an *Urberliner*, and no negative associations are attached to their use of the dialect. Perhaps old people are associated with old values and customs, and as such they are “allowed to make use of the traditional” – or the dialect in this case. This is “typical Berlinish,” which sounds familiar and is perhaps reminiscent of the ways a grandparent spoke.

Within this analysis of the four answers of the participants, it turns out that the older participants seem fairly unaware (or may not care to be aware) of the linguistic norms. They favor Berlin dialect speakers over standard speakers, and emphasize the charm and positive value of the dialect. The younger speakers are usually more divided in their opinion, but in most cases a trend toward the new linguistic standards can be observed. The dialect is not generally dismissed as an inappropriate way to express oneself. Interestingly, positive values continue to be attached to its use. Overall, the young group seems to be more aware of language use, which may mean that they are more conscious of their own linguistic behavior.

I did not explain to my participants that the questions about the show had anything to do with language behavior because I wanted to observe underlying linguistic ideas that may have unconsciously influenced their answers. However, in the second part of this project, I gave the participants a sheet with names of different characters and I asked them to evaluate the how strongly (on a one to five scale) the speaker used the dialect. I then compared these evaluations with the character’s actual speech patterns. By using this approach, I could trace the respondents’ dialectal awareness and interpret their feelings about their own language use.

Once again the young-group participants seemed to be a more aware of the use of the speech patterns of the characters, as all but one correctly evaluated the character’s speech

patterns. Among the older group, half of the participants were accurate in their assessment, while the other half misidentified these speech patterns.

This exercise shows that different age groups exhibit a difference in awareness, use, and attitude toward the dialect. No group completely rejected the dialect or its use. However, the younger group tended to favor the public's attitude and use of the dialect. More covertly, they also felt that the dialect could be used in all social situations, and that it may appear inappropriate or rude to use it. The old group participants still attach a very high value to the dialect. They tend to justify its use as normal and associate positive characteristics with the speaker of the dialect. It appears, then, that the older participants do not adjust linguistically as easily as the younger generation.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

During my five months of research in the former East Berlin I raised and attempted to answer several questions pertinent to the lives of Berliners today. In the introduction, I described one specific linguistic problem that East and West Berliners were forced to address in the post-November 1989 era. The problem that soon arose was the “linguistic barrier” between the people of East and West Berlin. During the forty years of separation, the use of a regional language variety, the Berlin dialect, had developed in a different manner in the two parts of Berlin. The use of the Berlin dialect in the West was mainly restricted to lower class people with lower educational levels, and hence was associated with a fairly negative image. Those in the middle classes would use the dialect rarely, and even then they would only use slight versions of it in informal social environments.

The situation in East Berlin was a very different one. On the Eastern side, people of all educational levels spoke the dialect to a fairly strong degree (the official stance in Marxist East Germany was that there were no distinctions to be made relative to social class). The people who spoke the dialect also rarely made distinctions between formal and informal social settings. During the first few years after reunification, the people of East Germany and East Berlin began to notice that this “unification” process was in fact an assimilation of the East on the terms of the West. In this process, those from the former East were left with few real choices. Quick adaptation skills were necessary to be able to survive economically as well as socially in the new system. Many felt coerced to conform to alien standards. These developments naturally led to a sense of loss of purpose and identity (Schönfeld and Schlobinski 1995: 132).

In this environment, one of the few opportunities for expression of a past identity seemed to be linguistic in nature. Blommaert and Verschueren (1998) and others have discussed the importance of language as a unifying force and identity marker. In this paper, these linguistic variables will be prominently featured and discussed.

The new socio-economic pressures proved to be strong enough to influence the research subjects' linguistic behavior. I observed a definite trend among the East Berliners toward a use of a near standard variety of German. I focused on two age groups: 22 to 26 year olds (who were teenagers at the time of the *Wende*), and a group of 30 to 34 year olds. I chose these two groups to see if there was a difference in the pace of adaptation to the new linguistic norms in respect to age.

The results of my analysis confirmed my hypothesis even though the actual age difference between the two groups is fairly small. The younger group in this study clearly showed an adaptation toward the new linguistic standards. They use a near standard variety in most circumstances. The near standard variety is used in formal situations when talking to a superior, when ordering food in a restaurant, when interacting at the work place, or when discussing formal topics. A medium variety of the Berlin dialect is generally used in interaction with friends (and sometimes family) and to establish a loose and relaxed atmosphere. Rarely do young group participants make use of the strong Berlin dialect. This only happens when the person is still very much involved in a close-knit system of old East German friends and where the dialect is used as a group identity marker.

The older group participants seem to be slower in their adaptation to the new sociolinguistic rules. The older group males appear to hold on to their past identities and pre-*Wende* use of the Berlin dialect. They still use the dialect extensively and rarely change to use a near standard variety, even in more formal settings.

Here, however, the females are big exceptions, using the dialect to a lesser degree (just as their younger counterparts do). The majority of the females use a medium variety of the Berlin dialect when they speak to friends and family. They do switch to a near standard

variety, however, when they are in public. The speech behaviors of the younger group and the older group females, then, are very much alike and conform to Western standards. Generally, dialect usage decreases and people code switch according to the shifts in their social environments (e.g., formal and informal), and their work environments in particular.

Overall, the use of the dialect still appears to be strongly linked to ideas about the image of the Berlin dialect. The younger Eastern group is still positively attached to the Berlin dialect. At the same time, however, these individuals realize that the dialect is stigmatized in some situations. To them, the Berlin dialect is on one hand seen as a charming, relatively positive relic of the past. On the other hand, though, these individuals are aware of the negative stigmas attached to the dialect and do not want to be associated with those characterizations. Ideas about language change quicker than actual language use, however, and so usage can still be observed even among those who are uncomfortable with its connotations. At the same time, the dialect is also valued as a means of informal communication in order to create a more comfortable, relaxed atmosphere among friends.

Among the members of the older group, people have stronger and more positive feelings toward the dialect. This is reflected in their usage, which is also stronger in nature. The older group seems to be more attached to the dialect and has more positive things to say about its usage. The older group does not agree with the public image of the dialect and the stigmas, except when the very strong variety is spoken and especially when non-standard grammar is used. Within this group, women appear to express the same feelings as men toward the dialect; however, their usage remains different from that of males. In essence, these older women appear to have adopted the same verbal patterns as the younger group, perhaps reflecting a subconscious desire to “fit in.”

I also looked at the participants' different social environments relative to inner group density and multiplexity as well as contacts with the West. Again, as I have hypothesized, the Berlin dialect appears to be used more often and more strongly in close social groups, where it still can be used as an identity marker. When the social groups are loosely knit,

external contacts have a more significant impact on interaction and ultimately a greater acceptance of external influences can be observed.

At the same time, a close social group does not automatically mean that its members will use the Berlin dialect as a group marker. To illustrate, among Luci's and Arthur's group of friends it appears that they have chosen a near standard variety to serve as their group marker, or at least the most accepted tool of communication. This group is close but its members have a number of opportunities to be affected by other outside influences. It is among this aspiring group of well-educated young people that acceptance of the new idea of success is embraced – an idea which includes the use of a near standard variety of German.

Lastly, I have observed differences in the use of the Berlin dialect in respect to age, especially between the younger and the older men. The older men use the dialect in a much stronger way. This confirms my hypothesis that the older group will have more trouble adjusting while the younger group could incorporate the external changes in their ongoing adjustments associated with maturation. However, the most prominent difference between the two age groups is that of attitude. The older group speaks much more positively about "their" dialect and are less rigid in attaching stigmas to people who use it than the younger group members.

In conclusion, I do not believe the evidence presented here suggests that the Berlin dialect is going to face extinction anytime soon. However, since the older males are the only group to emphasize the use of the dialect, it seems likely that the dialect will suffer a loss of importance. The foremost opinion among old and young alike appears to be that it is useful to be "bilingual," with the younger group tending slightly more toward an overall stronger use of a near standard German and the older males toward the preservation of the dialect. It could very well be possible that the use of Berlin's urban vernacular will begin to be confined to lower social classes, as is already the case in West Berlin. A situation of diglossia (as described by Dittmar and Breidel [1999:53]) seems to be a very possible future outcome of the ongoing process of assimilation in the united Berlin. I have observed a

group of people coming from the social middle class and observed a trend toward the usage of standard German. Therefore, it could very well be that speakers of the lower classes will adopt the dialect more strongly as a group identity marker. This type of language scenario has frequently been described by researchers of other dialects (such as Milroy's [1978] work in Belfast). Hence, I can envision a future scenario in which usage is divided along class lines.

APPENDIX I
INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

My name is Anja Vogel. I am an M. A. student in the department of Anthropology at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. I am preparing for my Master thesis for which I need to conduct an extended study. I have decided, because of personal and academic interest to research the language behavior of former East Berliners, ten years after the reunification.

The purpose of the study is to find out about language behavior and attitudes toward the Berlin Dialect and standard German among young Berliners who were raised in former East Berlin. I will observe speech behavior in various situations, conduct interviews which will be taped, and ask the participants of this study to fill out various questionnaires. The research will be conducted for a total of 4 -5 months during the time of June 1999 and February 2000.

I will represent the results in a master thesis, the American equivalent of a *Magisterarbeit*. Every participant can request to see a copy of the thesis if he or she wishes to read it. Results of the research will eventually be represented at national (American) conferences and parts of it will be published and made available for public reading. Comments of any kind concerning this work are greatly appreciated.

Participation in the study is absolutely voluntary. Every volunteer has the option to terminate its participation in the project at any time. Every thing that will be learned about the participant will be treated confidentially. This means that the names of all participants will be changed in all written reports. The taped linguistic data will only be made available to other people if the participant agrees to it and will further remain in my possession.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Questions about the rights of human subjects can be addressed by the office of Sponsored Programs at (001-702) 895-1357.

Thank you so much for your participation in this study.

Signature

Name

APPENDIXII

UNLV HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE APPROVAL FORM FOR THIS STUDY



DATE: May 25, 1999

TO: Anja Vogel
Department of Anthropology
M/S 5003

FROM: *Marsha Green*
Dr. Fred Preston, Chair
Social/Behavioral Sciences Committee

RE: Expedited Review of Human Subject Protocol:
"Linguistic Behavior in 1999 in Former East-Berlin
(Germany)"
OSP.#: 101s0599-045x

The protocol for the project referenced above has been reviewed and approved by an expedited review by the Institutional Review Board Social/Behavioral Sciences Committee. This protocol is approved for a period of one year from the date of this notification and work on the project may proceed.

Should the use of human subjects described in this protocol continue beyond a year from the date of this notification, it will be necessary to request an extension.

If you have any questions or require any assistance, please contact Marsha Green, IRB Secretary, at 895-1357.

cc: G. Palmer (ANT-5003)
OSP File

Office of Sponsored Programs
4505 Maryland Parkway • Box 451037 • Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-1037
(702) 895-1357 • FAX (702) 895-4242

APPENDIX III

READING LISTS

Minimal pairs

laufen	kaufen	gelesen	gewesen
gehen	sehen	auch	Bauch
keiner	meiner	ich	dich
Beine	Kleine	kaufen	saufen
Haus	raus	das	was
rüber	nüber	deiner	seiner

Word list

Read vertically

1	2	3	4
angeben	gar nicht	ganz	Vater
Apfel	keiner	ist	sagen
einer	Baum	Eimer	gut
arbeiten	Beine	was	Schuster
einkaufen	rüber gehen	Süsses	hereingeholt
eingehen	deiner	Gold	überlaufen
Geld	ausgelaufen	Saures	das
Geist	laufen	Knuspriges	Feier

Text

Marie kam gestern um 14 Uhr von der Schule. Es war mal wieder ein aufregender Tag gewesen. In der ersten Stunde hatte der Lehrer die Klassenarbeit zurückgegeben. Viele hatten eine drei oder eine zwei bekommen, aber Marie war mal wieder unter den Besten mit ihrer eins minus. Sie könnte fast als Streberin gelten, wenn sie nicht so sympatisch

wäre und auch noch gut in Sport. Das war dann auch im zweiten Block an der Tagesordnung, Sport. Darauf hatte sie sich schon die ganze Woche gefreut. Es war Sommer und Leichtathletik stand auf dem Plan. Heute mussten sie „Weitsprung“ und „Streckenlanglauf“ absolvieren. Sie liefen los. Viele waren abends schon vorbereitend im Park gelaufen, murrten jetzt aber, dass ihnen Langlauf überhaupt nicht gefiel. Plötzlich schrie jemand auf. Gabi war umgeknickt! Nun lag sie auf dem Boden und jammerte. Sabine war schon bei ihr und gestikulierte zu der Lehrerin, dass sie Hilfe holen sollte. Was für eine Aufregung! Als Marie dazu kam war Gabi's Bein und Knöchel schon ganz angeschwollen. Glücklicher Weise wusste die Lehrerin natürlich genau bescheid wie man erste Hilfe leistet. Gabi wurde zu der Turnhalle zurückgebracht und kühlte ihr Bein. Jemand passte auf sie auf während die anderen nun doch weiter laufen mussten. Als die Stunde vorbei war, konnte Gabi schon wieder laufen, obwohl sie noch etwas humpelte. Alles nur halb so schlimm. Nach diesem zweiten Block hatten sie noch einen Block Deutsch. Das war nicht gerade Marie's Stärke, aber ihr gefiel die Lehrerin wenigstens. Die Lehrerin fragte natürlich: „Gabi,(120) was ist denn mit dir passiert?“ „Ach, ich bin beim Sport umgeknickt. Es ist gar nicht mehr so schlimm. Frau Lieber, die Sportlehrerin, hat gesagt, ich soll heute trotzdem noch zum Arzt gehen. Sie sagt aber, es ist bestimmt nichts gebrochen. Da habe ich noch mal Glück gehabt.“ Die Stunde drehte sich dann darum, dass die Schüler eigene Erlebnisse aufschreiben mussten in denen sie sich wegen Unachtsamkeit verletzt hatten, oder sich in Gefahr gefühlt hatten. Das war natürlich ziemlich spannend.

Marie kam zu Hause an. Sie nahm sich einen Apfel und und biss genüsslich hinein bevor sie den Fernseher anschaltete.

APPENDIX IV

SOCIAL NETWORKS QUESTIONNAIRE

Part 1

The first part of the network analysis aims at “external” relationships, however including romantic partners.

Table 4. Interview Topics for Social Networks Structure

CONTACT PLACE	TIME AFTER 1990	EAST OR WEST
SCHOOL		
WORK		
PART TIME JOBS		
LEISURE ACTIVITIES		
AREA OF LIVING		
ROMANTIC PARTNERS		

Part 2

Private or “Internal” Social Networks Structure

1. Please, write down the names of five or six people with whom you spent a lot of extracurricular time and to whom you feel personally attached.
2. Next, write down if these people were born in East or West Berlin or Germany.

3. Next, write down if you knew these people before or only after the time of reunification.

4. Question concerning density, intensity and frequency:

Define the relationships you have with these people in more specific terms. How do you know them? How are these people related to you? How much time do you spend with them etc.

5. Question concerning multiplexity:

Describe the relationships each of these individuals with the other, independently from you.

APPENDIX V

QUESTIONNAIRE OVERT PRESTIGE

Overt Prestige

Questionnaire

Table 5.1. What do you think about the Berlin dialect?

	charming and funny		I like it, its cool.		typical Berlin marker		it's ok but shouldn't always be used		its <i>prollig</i> ¹ and brash	
group	young	old	young	old	young	old	young	old	young	old
N	2	3	0	3	4	1	3	2	5	2
(%)	17	37.5	0	37.5	33	12.5	25	25	42	25

Table 5.2. Should it be spoken more or less?

	more		stay the way it is		less		don't know	
group	young	old	young	old	young	old	young	old
N	0	0	4	4	6	3	2	1
(%)	0	0	33	50	50	37.5	17	12.5

Table 5.3. Do you speak *Berlinish* once in a while?

	a lot		yes		no	
group	young	old	young	old	young	old
N	1	3	9	5	1	0
(%)	8.3	37.5	75	62.5	8.3	0

Table 5.4. In which situations do you speak it?

	always		private situations (friends, family)		with other Berliners		emotional situations (anger)		always	
group	young	old	young	old	young	old	young	old	young	old
N	1	4	9	4	1	0	1	1	1	4
(%)	8.3	50	75	50	8.3	0	8.3	12.5	8.3	50

¹ Derived from the word proletarian, it is a negative term. Expresses that the speaker is associated with the lower, poorly educated working class.

Table 5.5. Do think you should avoid speaking the dialect in certain situations?

Yes			No		
group	young	old	young	old	
<i>N</i>	12	7	0	1	
(%)	100	87.5	0	12.5	

Table 5.5a. In certain situations

applying for a job			at work		public/ formal		talking to foreigners		to impress	
group	young	old	young	old	young	old	young	old	young	old
<i>N</i>	7	1	2	1	0	2	0	3	4	0
(%)	58	12.5	16	12.5	0	25	0	37	33	0

Table 5.6. Has it happened that you have been identified as a non-Berliner because of your language use?

yes			no		
group	young	old	young	old	
<i>N</i>	7	2	3	5	
(%)	77	66	25	62.5	

Table 5.7. If yes, did you accept that as a compliment?

yes			no		neither one or the other		surprised	
group	young	old	young	old	young	old	young	old
<i>N</i>	7	2	1	1	1	0	1	0
(%)	77	66	11	33	11	0	11	0

Table 5.8. Are there times where you try to avoid speaking the dialect on purpose?

yes			no		
group	young	old	young	old	
<i>N</i>	12	7	0	0	
(%)	100	12.5	0	0	

Table 5.8b. yes

	yes to impress		yes, at work		in official/ public situations		with friends		don't know	
group	young	old	young	old	young	old	young	old	young	old
<i>N</i>	2	1	6	2	4	4	0	1	0	1
(%)	17	12.5	50	50	33	50	0	12.5	0	12.5

Table 5.9. What does it mean to you to be an East Berliner?

	proud of it / identity		nothing		being other than West Berliner	
group	young	old	young	old	young	old
<i>N</i>	6	4	5	5	1	0
(%)	50	50	42	62.5	8.3	0

Table 5.10. What do you connect with the word "West Berliner"?

	nothing in particular/ person who lives there		superficial and arrogant		different		fun	
group	young	old	young	old	young	old	young	old
<i>N</i>	5	7	2	0	6	0	2	1
(%)	42	87.5	16	0	50	0	16	12.5

Table 5.11. In which dialect do feel at home?

	Berlin dialect		Standard German		HG + BD (<i>my personal language</i>)		depends on situation	
group	young	old	young	old	young	old	young	old
<i>N</i>	2	3	6	2	3	2	1	0
(%)	16	37.5	50	25	25	25	8.3	0

Table 5.12. Is it difficult for you to speak Standard German (High German) do you have to concentrate?

	yes		no		don't know	
group	young	old	young	old	young	old
<i>N</i>	1	4	11	3	0	1
(%)	8.3	50	92	37.5	0	12.5

Table 5.13. What do you think about the Berlin dialect's negative public connotation? As compared to other dialect, such as Bavarian where it is not the case?

	BD should be accepted		BD is as good as any other dialect		understandable because its wrong or <i>prollig</i>		don't know/don't care	
group	young	old	young	old	young	old	young	old
<i>N</i>	3	1	2	1	8	2	1	3
(%)	25	12.5	16	25	66	25	8.3	37.5

APPENDIX VI

QUESTIONNAIRE COVERT PRESTIGE

Covert Prestige**Video Questionnaire****1st page**

1. Pick a character from the video and describe him or her in several short sentences.

2. Which of the following characters did you like best and why (answer in three short sentences).

Housekeeper: dialect use BD medium

Doctor: High German

Doctor's wife: High German

Secretary: High German

Doctor's assistant: dialect use BD strong

3. If you would have to make a choice between the housekeeper and the medical assistant, which one did you like better? Why?

4. Do you think that the assistant behaved respectfully during the talk between the doctor she works for and the emergency doctor?

Covert Prestige**2nd page**

Which of the following characters used the Berlin dialect? Use a number between 0 – representing no dialectal use, and 5 – representing a strong use of the dialect, to mark your impression.

Newspaper seller	4-5
Housekeeper	3-4
Mother of the child	4-5
Father of the child	0
Brother of the father	0
Grandma	4-5
Patient	4

APPENDIX VII

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Table 6. List of Participants

	NAME	SEX	AGE	PROFESSION
1	OLAF	Male	31	Tax official
2	RALF	Male	30	Public services
3	KLAUS	Male	30	Student/ sales man
4	KARSTEN	Male	30	Student
5	ROBERT	Male	32	Film technician
6	SARA	Female	31	Mother
7	CHRISTA	Female	31	Mother
8	MARA	Female	32	Mother
9	SIMON	Male	23	Student
10	PETER	Male	26	Bank Consultant
11	ARTHUR	Male	25	Realtor
12	HANS	Male	23	Sales man
13	MAX	Male	24	Student
14	IDA	Female	26	Student
15	AMALIE	Female	23	Student
16	LUCI	Female	24	Optician
17	CLAUDIA	Female	24	Student
18	TANJA	Female	24	Student
19	ANGELA	Female	25	Student
20	ANNA	Female	25	Banker

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VITA

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Behavior among Former East Berliners**

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