

**A SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE LANGUAGE OF AFRICANS
IN THE DIASPORA: A CASE STUDY OF AFRO-GERMANS IN
GERMANY**

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Abstract

Migration and trade have resulted in a large number of new languages in Africa and the diaspora. They have brought about a lot of trans-border transformation and multiple linguistic identities as a result of human contact. Language structures are also affected by cultural factors, demography and language development. This study examines the language profile of Africans in the diaspora. It further examines the relationship between colonial and African languages, Africans' language attitudes and the problems of interference in the language contact situation. Lastly, it discusses how language is passed on to the younger generations in Germany. The data for this study were drawn from three of the four Afro-Germans who are members of the Bundestag in the new German Federal Parliament since 2021 and some other eminent Afro-Germans. Purposive sampling technique was used to select some successful Afro-Germans in Germany. Internet Ethnography is used for the study. The study reveals that using English as a medium of instruction is problematic for the students in German colonised protectorates and recommends that Kiswahili should be used for instructions in schools. It further reveals that German language needs to be repaired for easy learning; and that the youths have linguistic codes that are creative, spontaneous, direct and flexible. The youths see language as a distinguishing factor between the young and adults.

Keywords: language contact, migration, Afro-German, identity, language

Introduction

Germany came late during the struggle for territories in Africa but it was only able to acquire six territories called protectorates in Africa. These include Togo and Cameroon in the West, Namibia and Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi. In Africa today, it is only in Namibia that German is spoken as a national language. English has been the sole official language since 1990, but German enjoys the official status at a community level.

Afro-Germans are people of sub-Saharan descent who are citizens or residents of Germany. Through modern trade and migration, communities such as Frankfurt, Berlin, Munich and Cologne have an increasing number of Afro-Germans. According to *Afro-Germans*, as at 2020, in a country with a population of 83,000,000 people, there is an estimated 1,000,000 Afro-Germans. The Black people came to Germany for the first time around 1500 AD. According to Ulysses Santamaria in *New Political Science Journal* Published online 13th December, 2007, the Germans had no direct contact with Africa. However, some important merchants from Germany like Fugge, the Welser and the Imhoff had contacts with African countries.

The Germans, especially those in South-West Africa, stayed for about 31 years, precisely between 1884 until 1915. About 20,000 German-Namibians speak German as their mother tongue and they live in Namibia South-west Africa. The number of Afro-Germans increased again in 1914 when the Senegalese arrived in Germany and some of them married German women. By 1920, there were 20,000 Afro-Germans in Germany but they were banned from attending universities and joining the army because of the high level of racism prevalent then. There was a high level of racism. *Besatzungskind*, *Mischingskind* and *Rheinland Bastarde* and some others were sterilized in the army. Some were gruesomely murdered; some were kidnapped, for instance, Burg Saxony Hanholt. Issa Barra, a refugee from Burkina Faso, lived in fear every day. The blacks were constantly attacked. Then, being an African meant something bad. Some of the Afro-Germans were: Sammy Deluxe a Cameroonian was a (Hip-Hop Artist) and a DJ. Pa Synyani, the Country's Manager for the Global Research Consultancy Company (Gallup) was also an Afro-German who had been successful in Germany. Another man was Theodor Wonja XX Michael, a journalist and public servant and a speaker on living as an Afro-German. He worked as a film extra during the Nazi era and as a spy during the cold war. He was born in 1925 (DW Live TV, 2019). There are some of the Afro-Germans that are in films and television industry: Adunni Ade born in 1970, Mo Asumang was born in 1991, Louis Brody (1892-1952), Carol Campbell born in

1966, Elfie Fiegert born in 1946 and Lorna Ishema (1989) just to mention but a few. Black people have lived in Germany for 400 years. Racism was the order of the day.

The main reason for the African Diaspora was the pressures of plantation slavery and the ideologies associated with white supremacy. African in diaspora also meant the voluntary and involuntary movement of Africans and their descendants to various parts of the world during the modern and pre-modern periods.

The Africans in diaspora came about as the result of the European conquest and colonisation of the continent of Africa and its people. The writer is of the opinion that Africans, both diasporian and continental, find themselves facing specific and difficult tasks of survival, especially in the following century. He then suggests that Africans must come to recognise their similarities and differences in order to achieve their goals and have to determine where they will live. The study further revealed that wherever Afro-Germans are, they should see their ancestors' lives as one they can emulate and not as a problem to be solved and that their existence should seek what is fruitful for all people not for selected few. The study also enjoins Africans to base their tradition on both spiritual and physical planes.

Roos (2016) examined Erika Dirkmann, an Afro-German woman who was born in 1920. Her mother was a German and her father a Senegalese French soldier. She spent her youth and early childhood in a school for Christian Arab girls in Jerusalem. According to Roos, after the World War 11, Erika returned to West Germany, and in 1957, travelled to the United States together with her family. Her husband was a white man. The study reveals the complicated role of the conventional female gender prescriptions in processing inter-racial family-building. It also reveals that religion to Erika's social relationships enhances people's understanding of the complexity of German attitudes towards national belonging and race in the first half of the twentieth century.

Relationships between Colonial and African Languages.

During the period of colonialism, colonisers usually imposed their language on the people they colonised, and so indigenes were not allowed to speak their mother tongue. During this period, schools were established and the English language was taught in schools; the western culture was adopted for the local people to be modernised. It is noteworthy that all the British colonised areas use English as their official language. Mateene (1985) also support this fact that all African countries use European languages.

A review of scholars' research on language use of Afro-Germans is considered in this section. Migge and Leglise (2007) suggest that creole communities in the Caribbean and South America do not constitute a homogenous group and, consequently, blanket solutions are not available to change the asymmetrical social and linguistic system inherited from colonizers. Munro (2016) in her study "... but you are not German". - Afro-German culture and literature in the German language classroom? Afro-German culture and literature have only marginally been included in German classes.

Mouton (2019) examines implicit language attitudes towards historically White English accents among young L1 South African indigenous language speakers and the result reveals that more attitudes towards African-accented English are corrected with the language range of participants, the dominant languages spoken in their places or schools they have attended. Akere (1981) examines some dimensions of language interaction. The study analyses the lexical and syntactic characteristics of the utterances of Nigerians purportedly speaking in their native languages. These utterances contain several instances of native elements which have been incorporated into their utterances in the indigenous language resulting in some curious morphological and syntactic structures in the 'hybrid' utterances. The paper reveals that there is constant code-switching from indigenous language, which leads to some communicative strategies used by bilingual speakers to effect differing shades of meaning in their utterances.

Just like many African colonised nations, Tanzania which is one of the nations colonised by Germans use English language as an official language and as the medium of instruction in secondary and tertiary levels of education. Tanzanians have a distinctive indigenous language known as Kiswahili (Swahili), spoken by most Tanzanians and it is the national language and the medium of instruction in the primary schools. Mosha (2019) is of the opinion that the use of English Language as a medium of instruction in Zambia and Tanzania has actually impaired learning. The study reveals that students have difficulties in understanding the context presented in English as a result of English terminologies and students' poor English Background. The students are not competent and do not have confidence in using the language in classroom discussions and even with their mates outside the class. Another problem they have is that the level of knowledge at the entry level is low.

Problems of interference in Language contact situation among Afro-Germans.

Muller (2012), in his paper, linguistic interference between L1 dialects and L2 in an investigation he carried out with 14-15 years old teenagers on the interference

between German as L1 and English as L2. Phonologically, [θ, ð] the voiceless and voiced dental fricatives sounds are difficult for them because those sounds do not occur in their German language, which is their mother tongue. In the test, he also found how students react when asked to read a piece compared to a situation when they are speaking freely. There were also pronunciation problems. This is due to the fact that every language has its own specific structure: it is revealed that 'positive transfer' takes place while using the knowledge from L1 while learning L2. This paper also refers to 'negative transfer' as when there are differences between L1 and L2 and the differences cause difficulties. Pronunciation has been a factor revealing the source of an individual apart from colour and hair. Some other factors that influence foreign accent are age of the learners, length of their residency in the L2 country, the motivation of the learner to learn the L2, intensity of continued use of L1 and the learners' attitude to learn languages.

According to Labov (1972,), black vernacular English, he said black vernacular English is the English spoken by Africans in America. He asserts that 20,000 German-Namibians speak German as their mother tongue and those people live in Namibia South-west African. (14th February, 2020) (<https://www.deutschland>topic>).

How Language is passed to the younger generations in Germany

Language is a unique and powerful means to influence the individual and society's social, economic and educational conditions. <https://www.him.su.se>themes>la...> (2018). Language also helps in identifying a group or individual's identity. It is worthy of note that language has great power and its impact depends entirely on how it is used. Language power theory (LPT) refers to the competence to speaking to be understood and listening to understand. <https://en.m.wikipedia.org>. Words are so often used automatically and unconsciously. Daily, majority of words are spoken from habit, convenience and social obligation rather than from clear intent. Languages are indeed essential to the identity of groups or individuals and to their peaceful co-existence. (Otemuyiwa, 2017)

Germany is a multilingual and multi-ethnic nation. She consists of social groups which use German and groups which use regional minority or migrant minority languages. Germany is also plurilingual due to the fact that individuals from all such communities may often use more than one language. Consequently, the contact of different languages and cultures had led to a variety of linguistic phenomena like bilingualism, biculturalism, linguistic convergence, borrowing and interference. Hence, the various languages are the problem of the adoption of an

indigenous national language judging from the level of diversity. It is as a result of this problem of choice that the country is apparently satisfied with a neutral language and the language used in their secondary and tertiary institutions.

In contrast, critics have been complaining about the deterioration of German language. They said the words are butchered, the grammar is incorrect in WhatsApp and Twitter messages. Critics also complained of Anglicisms everywhere. Mark Twain, a 19th century American writer bluntly expressed himself that German is not easy to learn and that it needs to be trimmed down and repaired. In 2008, two thirds of Germans believed that their language was deteriorating quickly. They believed that online communication, insufficient reading, anglicisms and youth slang were the causes of this deterioration.

Contrary to this view, Ewels, the Director for the Association for the German language, is of the opinion that the German language is not disappearing. However, it seems so because the world is changing more rapidly and extensively than before and that language has to constantly adapt to new living circumstances in order to serve as a method of reflection and communication. She further says, that there is no proof that the way young generations use their language contributes to its decay because youths had always had linguistic codes with which they communicate among themselves. She moreover states that the youth's language is very creative, spontaneous, direct and flexible and that they see language as a way to distinguish themselves from adults.

The German Language Association has the very aim to purify German language, so they vehemently push back against Anglicisms and call for greater loyalty to the German language and make it as an official language. Ewels (2019) is of the opinion that the inclusion of new words that do not have a German equivalent, is an enrichment of German language. She further points out that every third to fifth word in German comes from a foreign language with their roots from Greek, that only 2% of words in English are borrowed into German language statistically. She revealed that the most used Anglicism is "okay".

Germany has the problem of ethno-linguistic diversity and multiplicity of languages; hence, the country is in dire need of educational advancement because education is a dynamic instrument for change. There is therefore the need to harness the language resources of the country for positive divisive purposes. In addition, some German departments have instituted upper-level courses devoted exclusively to the topic of minorities. Such courses focus on the post-1945 period to emphasise content on: post war immigration, leans on citizenship and asylum, violence against

foreigners and the like. They added German-language writings of such diverse ethnic groups, Afro-Germans and Jews. (Willeke, 2001). Furthermore, by forming networking platforms by Afro-Germans where encouragement can be given to the younger generations to study and work in highly-qualified and demanding positions in Germany. It is David Ebele Chukukwelu and his sister, Vanessa, who travelled to the United Kingdom and saw an odema networking platform for aspiring African professionals there and upon their return to Germany, they founded one, though Africans in Germany are a small community among the Germany population of 82 million. (DW live TV)

Migration effects: Transformation Process and the merging of multiple languages

The cultural and political formation of the black German community provides a rich site for exploring the dynamics of the Africans in diaspora. “Blackgerman” emphasises the constructedness of blackness in the German society and the fact that public perception of blackness in Germany is not restricted to the attribute of skin colour. Both Black and Afro-German remain meaningful and relevant designations in the Federal Republic and among the black German population in general, for both implicitly ask the question of what/who is ‘black’ in German society and how blackness is defined.

The Afro-German Women Association is of the opinion that Afro-German identity emerged as a relational concept where the construction of both race/blackness and identity are constituted through a sense of community and relation both to those positioned in similar ways as well as to the discourses and categories of racial differences and identity (Tina 2003). Blacks are Germany’s most visible minority, but they experience racism and discrimination. The blacks are restricted or confined to kitchens of restaurants or worse. They are not allowed in jobs that allow them to engage directly with the public. They also serve as bathroom attendants. They are represented in menial jobs, a sign of structural racism. Black women never get dignified jobs. There is racial discrimination. Crime statistics have it that there were really 20% more racist attacks in 2018 than in 2017.

The new German Federal parliament is more diverse than ever. For the first time, there are four Afro-German members in Bundestag. More women, younger people and people with a migration background have been part of the Federal administration since 2021. Karamba Diaby was born in Senegal in 1961. He believes in social justice, solidarity and openness. According to Diaby (2020), Germany’s first African-Born black MP, in an interview on DW Live TV on the

rate of racism in Germany. He was of the opinion that, suggestion should be made on how to make co-existence better between the blacks and the Germans. He added that the issue of racism is a societal issue and that steps were being taken to stop the menace. The removal of the word 'race' from the constitution showed this. Racism kills the institutions where language could solve the problems. Diaby reveals in his response that diversity is the challenge that arises -people of differing religious beliefs, old and young people, men and women and that the challenges associated must be dealt with.

Diaby also mentioned solidarity as another solution to the problem. Hence, much is to be done by the government to help the situation. The inclusion of many people in the public service is a good example.

Another member of Bundestag of Germany who is an Afro-German is Armand Zorn. He was born in Yaounde, Cameroon on the 18th of July 1988. He attended Martin-Luther University, Halle-Wittenberg. (2011-2015). He is a German Management Consultant and Politician. Armand Zorn learned the German language with the support of his parents since there were no courses for children in Halle on language at that time. He graduated as a lawyer in 2016. Zorn is committed to modernizing schools through more efficient planning and approval processes and through another digital pact, "Digital Pact 2.0". On his Twitter handle on the 25th of October 2020 at 11.55 am, Armand opined that stability and prosperity cannot be achieved by the police special forces but rather by investment in education, healthcare and infrastructure. He made reference to #ENDSARS in Nigeria, that it is more than just fighting police violence but about freedom, democracy and social justice.

Sanae Abdi is another German-Moroccan Lawyer and Politician of Social Democratic Party of Germany who has been serving as a member of the Bundestag for Cologno 1 since 2021. He was born on 7th of July 1986.

Another way language is passed to younger generation is through what Christian Osterhaus did. He was born in 1956 at Circa to Samuel Osterhause and Catharina Osterhaus. In 2015, he welcomed hundreds of thousands of people seeking protection in Germany. Osterhau co-founded a local refugee aid organisation. He told the DW live TV that "we did not want to repeat the mistakes of the past" and that "we don't exclude people again". So, his group catered for 40 to 50 refugees from Syria. Consequently, new culture and new language is added to the already existing ones in Germany. Willkommenskultur Zwischen Stabilitat and Aufbruch "did a survey on the German's attitudes to immigration which is "skepticism". Unlike

Wieland, a co-author on the study that skeptician towards immigration is now declining, especially for the economy. As per integration of individuals, it was discovered that more respondents than in previous years see inequality of opportunity and discrimination as significant obstacles hampering it.

Languages spoken in Germany

The writing system in Germany uses Latin script (German alphabet/Braille). Vocabulary is based on that of the Germanic branch of languages, but minorities of words are also defined from Greek, Latin, English and French. Low German- is a minority language mainly spoken in Northern Germany. It is a language that is quite distinct from standard German and more closely related to other European languages like English, Frisian and Dutch. The speakers of low German are about 5 million in Germany. Minority language spoken in Germany is upper Sorbian by Sorbs living in Germany’s lower Lusatia historical province. It is a Slavic minority group language. It is already close to death as most of the speakers are old. About 0.09% of German population speak both upper and lower Sorbian languages. Frisian is spoken by about 10,000 people living in North Frisia region of Germany. It is a minority West German Frisian language. Saterland Frisian and East Frisian languages are also spoken in Germany.

It is noteworthy that 95% of Germans speak German, 56% speak English, 15% speak French and 5% speak Russian languages. All these depend on the attitudes of people to the languages.

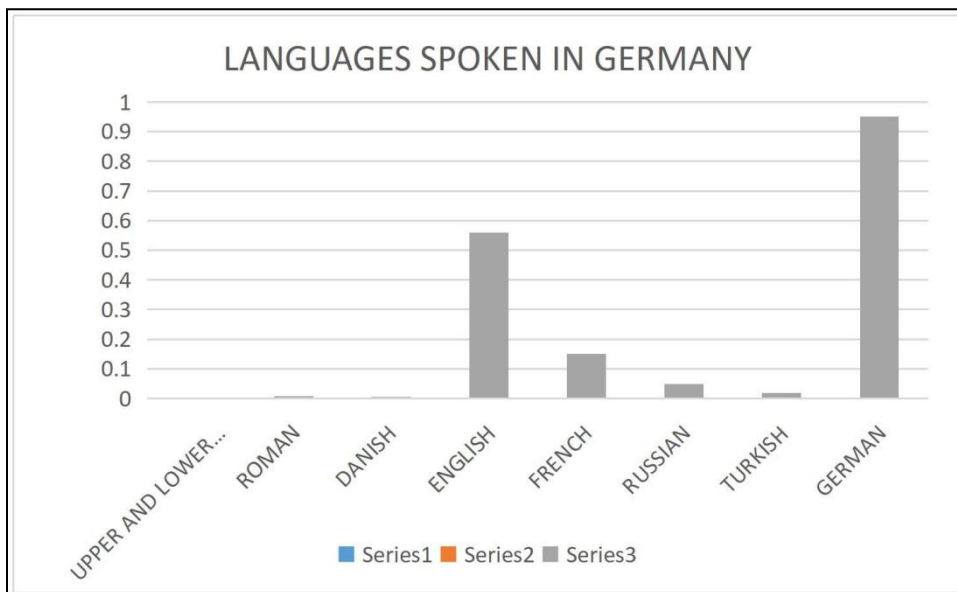


TABLE 1: LANGUAGES SPOKEN IN GERMANY.

Solutions to Language Learning problems in Germany

Language attitude is a disposition towards an object or situation which provides favourable or unfavourable responses. Language is an object of attitude. The use of language in a society is dependent on attitudes held by the individual or the society to respond positively, negatively and ambivalently to it. (Adegbija 1994). In a social context, human beings develop positive attitudes to an attractive language and personal benefit is derived from the language learning process. The behaviourists theory identifies integrative motivation as a factor that affects language attitudes. In a multilingual context, this thought shows the desire for culture and, hence, loyalty to the mother tongue as against the second language. Such bilingual is also loyal to their cultural heritage. (Adegbija 1994)

Many theories have been propounded by early sociolinguists on language. Haugen (1959) based his formulations on orthography, grammar and lexical codification. This thought later developed into 'status' planning and 'corpus' planning. Status planning involves location or relocation of language to the functional domain in society relative to other languages and domains. While corpus planning deals with the prescriptive intervention on the structure of a language intended at generating an adequate standard (Wardhaugh 2008), Hornberger (2006) was of the opinion that an integration of the different typologies and approaches in the planning and policy implementation as far as language policy and planning are concerned especially in a multilingual setting like Germany. According to Hornberger (2006), the focus of status planning is officialisation, nominalisation, standardisation and proscription about the use of language. The third language planning takes care of issues relating to language groups like education and schooling, literacy, religion, mass media to mention but a few. This framework will be helpful if it can be followed since it is an integration of many thoughts and ideas which could be beneficial to a multilingual /multicultural society like Germany. Deo Ngouyani, a Tanzanian educator, (in his paper also) suggests that language policies of African nations must address the question of decolonising the mind, so it is encouraging to note that educators in South Africa consider this problem seriously and assert that education can be imparted in any language. He argued that the standard of education system fell because of the neglect that it faced in Tanzania. That Kiswahili can be used as language of instruction to raise the standard of education. He concluded on what he

observed in the policy decisions and implementation as reported in documents of the ruling party.

Conclusion

The study concludes that there are some problems encountered in the learning of German language as a second language due to pronunciation problems by the Afro-Germans. The factors that influence foreign accents are: the age of learners, length of their residency, motivation of the learner to language 2 (L2), intensity of continued use of L1 and learners' attitude to learn language. Other problems include code-switching and code-mixing.

Furthermore, with the appointment of four of the Afro-Germans as members of Bundestag, there is likely to be improvement in the ways of life of the people. From the interview granted the DW live TV by Karamba Diaby, there is a lot of hope for the Afro-Germans for better life. For instance, he said the word 'race' has been removed from the constitution. The study agrees with Zorn in his opinion that the only way to maintain stability and prosperity in a country is by investing in education, healthcare and infrastructure.

The study reveals that using English as a medium of instruction is problematic for the students in German colonised protectorates and that Kiswahili be used for instruction in schools, which corroborates what the writer of Webster Dictionary (1989) says that the Afro-Germans could emulate their ancestors' lives and that their existence should seek what is fruitful for all people, not for the selected few. It reveals that the youths have linguistic codes that are creative, spontaneous, direct and flexible. The youths see language as a distinguishing factor between the young and adults

Recommendations

The study recommends that coinages and borrowings should be encouraged in Kiswahili in order to allow for growth in the language. Afro-German youths should create Odema networking platforms, which affords forum for Afro-Germans, to rub minds with those that are already in the limelight in order to encourage the younger ones to become somebody in life by being educated and be able to get good jobs.

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