

The role of contact-induced change in informal Namibian German (Namdeutsch)

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Today, there is a German-speaking minority in Namibia, which comprises approximately 20,000 speakers. Almost all of them are also fluent in English (the official language of Namibia) and Afrikaans (which has/had the function of a lingua franca in certain domains). Additionally, some members of the German-speaking community also use Bantu- and/or Khoisan languages on a regular basis (cf., e.g., Shah & Zappen-Thomson 2018, Zimmer 2019). In this multilingual setting a variety of German has evolved that is characterised by several grammatical innovations (i.e. *Namdeutsch*). For example, the *um-zu* infinitive can be used if no purpose is expressed, which is not possible in most other German varieties including Standard German (cf. (1)).

- (1) *dadurch* *is* *es* *schwierig um zu* *sagn* [...] (NAM164W2)
 thus *is* *it* *hard to* *tell* [...]
 ‘thus it’s hard to tell [...]’

Such properties of *Namdeutsch* have usually been explained by contact induced change (cf., e.g., Shah 2007, Riehl 2014, Zimmer 2019). Given the high number of parallel constructions in the main contact languages English and Afrikaans, such explanations do suggest themselves. For example, the Afrikaans *om te* construction closely resembles the *Namdeutsch um zu* (cf., e.g., Shah 2007: 25, Zimmer 2019). However, there is evidence that grammatical transference is at least not the only explanation for such innovations. For example, constructions like in (1) can also be found in German contact varieties that are neither in contact with Afrikaans nor with any other language with comparable features, e.g. in South Tyrol (cf. Riehl 2014: 107).

In my presentation I will scrutinise the role of contact-induced change in the formation of *Namdeutsch*. For this purpose, I will analyse selected grammatical features of *Namdeutsch*. My analysis will be based on data taken from a systematically compiled corpus (cf. Zimmer et al., submitted) and acceptability judgements of 211 speakers. The characteristics of *Namdeutsch* will be compared with properties of German varieties in different contact settings and with parallel constructions in the main contact languages of German in Namibia. By doing so, I hope to draw a more complete picture of the developments in Namibian German and I hope to contribute to a better understanding of the interaction of contact-induced and language internal change in general.

References: Riehl, C. M. (2014). Sprachkontaktforschung. Eine Einführung. Tübingen: Narr. Shah, S. (2007). German in a contact situation: The case of Namibian German. *eDUSA* 2, 20–45. Shah, S. & M. Zappen-Thomson (2018). German in Namibia. In C. A. Seals & S. Shah (eds.), *Heritage Language Policies around the World*, 128–147. Abingdon & New York: Routledge. Zimmer, C. (2019). Deutsch als Minderheitensprache in Afrika. In J. Herrgen & J. E. Schmidt (eds.), *Sprache und Raum – Deutsch. Ein internationales Handbuch der Sprachvariation*, 1176–1190. (Handbücher zur Sprach- und Kommunikationswissenschaft 30.4). Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton. Zimmer, C., H. Wiese, H. J. Simon, M. Zappen-Thomson, Y. Bracke, B. Stuhl & T. Schmidt (submitted). Das Korpus Deutsch in Namibia (DNam): Eine Ressource für die Kontakt-, Variations- und Soziolinguistik.