Production & Perception of Hood German: experimenting with a salient phonetic feature

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Hood German (or Kiezdeutsch) is a variety of German predominantly spoken by adolescents from urban multi-ethnic neighborhoods. Many of these speakers are of Turkish or Arab decent but born and raised in Germany, others are monolingual and mono-ethnic Germans. Hood German/Kiezdeutsch is characterized by a number of morphosyntactical and phonetic/phonological alternations. For example, speakers often omit articles or prepositions before nouns as in Ich fahr _ München or Früher war ich _ Gymnasium; there is often lack of agreement (mein_ Schwester hat geheiratet); there is a very frequent use of ‘so’ or often, temporal adverbials are preposed in this variety (Jetzt ich hab Hunger).

Particularly salient in this variety is the phonetic/phonological alternation of the palatal fricative /ç/ to the postalveolar fricative [ʃ] or [ɕ]. We have conducted production and perception experiments on this alternation ranging from an acoustic investigation of the nature of this alternation to a forced-choice identification test, indicating that this particular alternation is more widely accepted (by younger listeners) than readers’ reactions to newspaper reports on Hood German would suggest. In our talk we will focus on our current project: the elicitation of listeners’ attitudes towards presumed speakers that are associated with this alternation.