

‘Sprache der Heimat.’ Discourses of dialect and identity in modern-day Cologne

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1. Introduction

Associating language with *Heimat* is not a new phenomenon. Heidegger’s lecture ‘Sprache und Heimat’ [Language and Home]¹ (1960), for example, articulated the fundamental yet intangible relationship between dialect as the mothertongue and a sense of ‘home’ (Heidegger 1983: 155–180), and philosophers and linguists alike have attempted to analyse how language can create and represent a sense of belonging in a ‘fusion of language and landscape’ (Hammermeister 2000: 314). This connection is particularly strong with dialect, which in modern times is largely reserved for the familiar, private sphere, or is employed symbolically as a marker of local identity.

This chapter analyses discourses about *Kölsch*, the urban dialect spoken in the German city of Cologne, and about engagement with the dialect by members of a specific community; namely, participants in dialect and dialect-related courses as the *Akademie für uns kölsche Sproch* [Academy for our Cologne Language].² Using data from questionnaires completed by participants in these courses, I explore individuals’ attitudes to the dialect, perceived level of proficiency, and the role the dialect plays in the construction of local identity. I shall argue that the externalisation of this personal, emotional link between dialect and identity that takes place through participation in dialect or dialect-related courses is part of an identity building process – it is about filling perceived ‘gaps’ in the individual’s identity, and/or extending and enhancing identity, in forging and maintaining membership of a community that is defined by its language and geographical location.

¹ For English speakers, the concept of *Heimat* is comprehensible but difficult to translate. Single definitions include ‘home’, ‘home town’, ‘homestead’, ‘homeland’, ‘native country’, and have connotations of ‘belonging’, ‘familiarity’ and ‘security’, but as the term is semantically and ideologically polysemous, interpretations can combine one or more of these possible definitions. Kai Hammermeister describes *Heimat* as ‘this untranslatable German term that oscillates between home and homeland and yet means neither’ (Hammermeister 2000: 212). Similarly, Elizabeth Boa and Rachel Palfreyman comment on its polysemous nature, claiming it ‘bears many connotations, drawing together associations which no single English word could convey’ (Boa & Palfreyman 2000: 1).

² I would like to express my sincere thanks to Christa Bhatt and Alice Herrwegen from the *Akademie für uns kölsche Sproch*, as well as to all the participants who kindly completed the questionnaire.

2. Dialect, *Heimat* and local identity

It has been well-documented that language has a symbolic as well as a communicative function, and can be instrumentalised to signal identification with one or more social groups (Edwards 2009: 95–6), which can be regionally or locally defined. In the analysis, I draw on the notion that identity is a composite phenomenon and is ‘personal, relational, enacted, and communal’ (Hecht 1993: 79). From this we can deduce that the different layers of an individual’s identity are interconnected and that identity construction is an individual and collective endeavour. Identity is often defined in relation to others and constructed and enacted through language (Thim-Mabrey 2003: 2; see also Wodak et al. 2009: 10–18). The link between local identification (*Heimat*) and identity involves the coalescence of external geographical factors and internal states, and as Hermann Bausinger argues, is a phenomenon of modern society (Bausinger 1980: 9–17). Globalisation, migration and movement across local, regional and national borders have led, arguably, to an increased desire to identify with a particular place and its language (Nic Craith 2012: xiii).

Concurrently, the cultural, economical and political dominance of standard language varieties has resulted in dialects largely occupying the sphere of private, colloquial communication. For many, dialect fulfils the role of ‘gesprochene Heimat’ [spoken home(land)] (Göttert 2011: 11), offering a ‘haven’ of familiarity and belonging, even for those who are not dialect speakers (Möller 2008: 24–5; Wiggers 2012: 363). The presence of dialect in the public sphere tends to take the form of symbolic, emblematic performances, enacted through token code-switching or insertion of dialect words and phrases by those who otherwise speak something approaching a standard variety. Dialect is also often commodified by the media for marketing and advertising purposes, in order to link a product or event to the local area, or to draw on stereotypical attributes of the inhabitants to strengthen its local appeal (Bausinger 1980: 17; Reershemius 2009: 141–4 and 2011: 385–6; Straßner 1986: 316–20). Such engagement with the language can be described as ‘postvernacular’, as the primary function of communication has been superceded by its secondary, symbolic function (Reershemius 2009: 131–3; Shandler 2006: 4). This symbolic, emblematic function can take the form of ‘enregisterment’ (Agha 2003), ‘the recognition of the relationship between specific linguistic features and certain cultural values ... These values are tied to people through notions that link language use to beliefs about “authentic” local identity and the uniqueness of the dialect’ (Remlinger 2009: 119).

Focusing on the Pittsburghese dialect in the United States, Barbara Johnstone and Jennifer Andrus (2006) argue persuasively for a focus not just on performance of dialect in any given situation but also discourses *about* the dialect, ‘talk about talk’, and the relationship between the two:

[S]ociolinguists interested in understanding patterns of variation and change in the speech community need to pay attention not just to people’s talk but to the metapragmatic activities in which they create and circulate ideas about how they talk. (Johnstone & Andrus 2006: 99)

These metapragmatic activities are a part of ‘reflexive identity work’ (Johnstone & Andrus 2006: 78) that links the individual to a location. As Jan Blommaert (2005) argues, for example:

People speak *from* a place. Given the deep connections between forms of language and particular places, the use of specific varieties “sets” people in a particular social and/or physical place, so to speak, and confers the attributive qualities of that place to what they say. (Blommaert 2005: 223. Italics in original)

Language therefore functions in both an emblematic and discursive capacity in communicating belonging to a particular place. Performance of a dialect signals local identity, yet language is also the means through which speakers articulate and explain their identity. As my analysis will demonstrate, participants in dialect and dialect-related courses at the *Akademie für uns kölsche Sproch* often combine performance and discourse in responding to some of the questions using dialect, or a combination of dialect and standard.

3. The role and status of *Kölsch* in modern-day Cologne

Kölsch is an urban dialect, spoken in Cologne and its environs, and is one of several Riparian dialects belonging to the Middle Franconian group of dialects (Götttert 2011: 129–31). Engagement with *Kölsch* is in many ways symbolic, emblematic and ‘token’, although it is important to note that this is not a homogeneous phenomenon: there are various levels of engagement, from temporary and fleeting to enhanced, and that these cohere around discourses that link the dialect to geographical, topological ‘belonging’.

Similar to Low German and other dialects and regional varieties in Germany and elsewhere, *Kölsch* is often manifested in emblematic use and token code-switching. In public discourse, dialect competence as an identity marker is encoded in metalingual repertoires such as: *Q. Wie sagt man Blutwurst auf Kölsch?* [How do you say blood sausage (or black pudding) in *Kölsch*?] *A. Flöns* [this is the dialect word for blood sausage (black pudding)]. A true native of the city and dialect-speaker would know this, but a respondent not familiar with *Kölsch* would be expected to fall into the trap and give the wrong answer, *Blootworsch* – an attempt to pronounce the High German word in a Cologne accent, thereby confirming her or his outsider status. Outsiders are affectionately referred to – and refer to themselves – as *Imis*, a contraction of *imitierende Kölsche* [imitators of Cologne natives]. Set phrases or aphorisms, such as *Et es wie et es* [It is the way it is/It is what it is], *Et kütt wie et kütt* [It comes as it comes – there is nothing you can do to change it] and *Et hät noch emmer joot jejang* [It has always gone well – the inference is that there is no need to worry; everything will turn out ok], are referred to collectively as *Das Rheinische Grundgesetz* [The Rhenish Basic Law] by author, musician and comedian Konrad Beikircher in his book *Et kütt wie 't kütt: Das rheinische Grundgesetz* (2001), and are to be found emblazoned on t-shirts, tote bags and postcards, for visitors to the city to purchase. These phrases are supposed to embody the typical characteristics of the native of the Rhineland, a larger regional constellation that Cologne inhabitants draw on in their local identity work, all part of the *rheinische Frohnatur*, the Rhenish cheerfulness that sets the *Rheinländer_Innen* apart from other Germans. Those native to Cologne are, by default, also cheerful, cheeky, smart, have a wry sense of humour and are generally laid-back about life. These are the positive stereotypical attributes associated with speakers of the dialect, and the nature of the dialect – its vocabulary and auditory features – enable the speakers to communicate their philosophy on life effectively and without causing offence. For many, these clichés enable a minimal, temporary emblematic engagement with the *Kölsch*-speaking community.

Kölsch undoubtedly has strong representation in the social and cultural life of the city, the focal point of this being *Karneval*, the Catholic celebration beginning on the Thursday before Lent and finishing on Ash Wednesday. This period is when those outside of Cologne are most likely to hear the dialect, particularly as *Karnevalsitzungen*, Carnival sessions or concerts consisting of Cologne Carnival songs, *Büttenreden* [barrel speeches] – jokes told by comedians usually dressed as clowns – and displays given by leading Cologne Carnival clubs are broadcast by the national television broadcasters ARD and ZDF. Dialect plays are staged by the *Milowitsch-Theater* and *Hänneschen-Theater*, a puppet theatre, and from the latter, the

two characters Tönnes and Schäl, known for their jolly natures and slyness, have become famous and closely associated with the city and the stereotypical characteristics of Cologne natives. Slogans and songs in dialect are employed by fans of the football teams *1. FC Köln* and *Fortuna Köln* and the ice-hockey team *Die Kölner Haie* [The Cologne Sharks]; in addition to traditional Carnival music, *Kölsch-Rock*, rock and pop music sung in dialect by bands such as BAP, Brings and Cat Bayou, have also achieved national fame (Götttert 2011: 139–43; Straßner 1986: 322).

The use of dialect in political activism is not a new phenomenon, and there are many examples of *Kölsch* being instrumentalised for political protest and subversion (Straßner 1986: 321). During the National Socialist regime, for example, the prominent *Carnival* comedian Karl Küpper used his ‘barrel speeches’ to mock Nazi politicians and policies (Bilz 2010). More recently, the initiative *Arsch huh, Zäng ussenander!* [Get off your ass and open your mouth/speak out!], started by Cologne rock musicians in response to right-wing extremist violence in 1992, and still active now, uses dialect slogans to mobilize support in Cologne, the Rhineland and elsewhere.³

As part of the process of enregisterment, publications and other dialect-related paraphernalia have sought to codify and promote the dialect to inhabitants of the city and outsiders. Adam Wrede’s *Neuer Kölnischer Sprachschatz* [New Cologne Treasury of Language], first published in three volumes between 1956 and 1958 and now in its thirteenth edition, is considered to be the most authoritative source for dialect vocabulary (Wrede 2010 [1956/1958]). Swearing dictionaries in *Kölsch* (Gröbe & Dohmen 2001) and publications of iconic texts such as Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* (Hertling 2001), further serve to confirm its status as amusing and charming, but also as a versatile, expressive written as well as spoken language. The press also discusses the status of the dialect, with articles on celebrity speakers of *Kölsch* that demonstrate, with tongue firmly in cheek, the international profile of the language. Lukas Podolski, a Polish-born football player for the German national team and, at the time of writing, signed for Arsenal, is quoted in the tabloid newspaper *Bild* as saying ‘Ich spreche Deutsch, Polnisch, English und Kölsch, damit kommt man überall zu recht’ [I speak German, Polish, English and *Kölsch*; with these you can get by wherever you are] (Feindt & Bauer 2012). Former US president Bill Clinton, when visiting Cologne in 1999 for the G8 summit, reputedly echoed Kennedy’s famous ‘Ich bin ein Berliner’ by declaring ‘Ich bin ein Kölsch’ [lit. I am a *Kölsch*]. Whether true or not, this was taken up by the media and

³ The aims and activities of the initiative are outlined on <www.arschhuh.de> accessed 10 July 2014.

has become a well-known catchphrase.⁴ Other dialect-related paraphernalia include online banking services in the dialect ('Banking op kölsch') introduced by the *Sparkasse KölnBonn* (a local savings bank) in 2010, and a GPS with instructions in *Kölsch* ('Navi op kölsch'). These activities, items, services and discourses all provide the means for individuals to engage with the dialect in a variety of ways.

4. Dialect courses at the *Akademie för uns kölsche Sproch*

The *Akademie för uns kölsche Sproch* was founded in 1983 and is sponsored by the *Stadtsparkasse Köln*, the city savings bank. Throughout the year it offers courses in dialect, dialect history and literature, local history and traditions. Qualifications are offered for those who complete courses successfully: those graduating from from *Mer liere Kölsch ävver höösch* ['We are learning *Kölsch*, but slowly' (a beginner's course)] are awarded the *Kölsch-Abitur* ['*Kölsch* A-Level']; completion of the *Kölsch-Abitur* plus three further semesters of study of language-related or thematic courses results in the *Kölsch-Examen* ['*Kölsch*-Finals'], and the *Kölsch-Examen* plus a dissertation leads to the *Kölsch-Diplom* ['*Kölsch*-Diploma']. Staff from the *Sprachwissenschaftliche Abteilung* ['Linguistics Department'] have developed learning materials, including course books modelled on foreign or second language learning texts, such as *Mer liere Kölsch – ävver höösch. Elementarkurs der kölschen Sprache* (Herrwegen 2009), *Mer liere Kölsch – ävver flöck. Intensivkurs der kölschen Sprache* (Herrwegen 2006), *De kölsche Sproch. Kurzgrammatik Kölsch – Deutsch* (Tiling-Herrwegen 2002) and *Kölsche Schreibregeln. Vorschläge für eine Rechtschreibung des Kölschen* (Bhatt 2002). Accompanying CDs, as well as a range of online resources, are also available to learners.⁵

⁴ Part of the appeal of this apocryphal declaration lies in the fact that it is syntactically incorrect. Unlike its Berlin counterpart, which has the potential double meaning of 'I am from Berlin' and 'I am a doughnut', 'Ich bin ein Kölsch' only has one meaning: 'I am a Cologne beer', as the noun *Kölsch* not only refers to someone as an inhabitant of the city, it is also the name of some twenty-five varieties of beer brewed in the city. If Clinton had wanted to say 'I am from Cologne', he would have had to formulate it as 'Ich bin (ein) Kölner', or 'Ich bin (ein) Kölscher'. His visit to Cologne was widely reported in the German media. See for example, the article 'Ich bin ein Kölsch' in *Spiegel online*, from 18 June 1999 <<http://www.spiegel.de/wirtschaft/staatsbesuch-ich-bin-ein-koelsch-a-27712.html>> accessed 7 January 2014.

⁵ <<http://www.koelsch-akademie.de>> accessed 12 October 2014.

5. Methodological considerations

In my analysis, I draw on sociolinguistic and critical discourse analytical approaches that regard identity formation and identity work not only as enacted or performed but also as part of a discursive process (Blommaert 2005, Stevenson & Carl 2010, Wodak et al. 2009). Each participant negotiates and maps out her or his relationship to the dialect, competence in its spoken and written forms and attitudes to it. In effect, she or he has a language biography, formed by personal, psychological, social, political and geographical factors, that will in turn inform the attitudes to and use of the dialect (Stevenson & Carl 2010: 22–30).

In order to find out more about this community of dialect learners, in February 2013 I distributed a printed questionnaire among participants in the courses listed above and received 145 replies. The questionnaire consisted of a total of sixteen multiple-choice and open ended questions:

1. *Welchen Kurs haben Sie hier an der Akademie für uns kölsche Sproch belegt?* [Which course are you taking at the Academy for our Cologne Language?]
2. *Warum haben Sie diesen Kurs gewählt?* [Why did you choose this course?]
3. *Was ist Ihr Ziel?/Was wollen Sie mit diesem Kurs erreichen?* [What is your goal?/What do you want to achieve with this course?]
4. *Wieviele Kurse haben Sie an der Akademie schon belegt? (Bitte ankreuzen.)* [How many courses have you taken (previously) at the Academy?] Respondents were asked to select one from 0, 1, 2 and 3+.
5. *Würden Sie sich als Kölner(-in) bezeichnen?* [Would you describe yourself as a native of Cologne?]⁶ Respondents ticked either ‘yes’ or ‘no’.
6. *Würden Sie sagen, sie sprechen Kölsch?* [Would you say you can speak *Kölsch*?]. The respondents were asked to choose from the options ‘fluent’, ‘very well’, ‘well’, ‘minimally (a few words or phrases)’, ‘not at all’.
7. *Sprechen Ihre Eltern oder Verwandte Kölsch, oder haben Sie Kölsch gesprochen?* [Do your parents or relatives speak *Kölsch*, or have you (ever) spoken *Kölsch*?] This was a yes/no question.

⁶ The English translation of *Kölner* is more specific than the term suggests in German, which could be interpreted as ‘native of Cologne’, i.e. someone who was born there and perhaps has lived there most of his or her life, or alternatively, as a ‘resident of Cologne’ – someone who lives there but may not have been born or grown up there, but who nonetheless regards him or herself as being a member of the city.

8. *Haben Sie als Kind Kölsch gesprochen?* [Did you speak *Kölsch* as a child?] Another yes/no question.
9. *Wann sprechen Sie Kölsch?(Sie dürfen mehr als eine Antwort ankreuzen)* [When do you speak *Kölsch*? (You may tick more than one answer.)] The options were: ‘at home/with the family’, ‘with friends’, ‘at work’, ‘shopping’, ‘during *Karneval*’, ‘in the pub’, ‘not at all’.
10. *Wie wichtig ist die kölsche Sprache für Sie persönlich?* [How important is the Cologne language for you personally?] The options were ‘very important’, ‘important’, ‘not so important’, ‘not important at all’.
11. *Bitte vervollständigen Sie die folgenden Sätze:* [Please complete the following sentences]

Kölsch bedeutet für mich ... [*Kölsch* means for me ...]

Wenn ich Kölsch höre ... [When I hear *Kölsch* ...]
12. *Wie wichtig ist die kölsche Sprache für die Identität Kölns Ihrer Meinung nach?* [How important is the Cologne language for Cologne’s identity in your opinion?] Respondents were asked to select one option from ‘very important’, ‘important’, ‘not so important’, ‘not important at all’.
13. *Welches der Folgenden würden Sie verwenden? (Sie dürfen mehr als eine Antwort ankreuzen).* [Which of the following would you use? (You may tick more than one answer)] The options were: ‘GPS in *Kölsch*’, ‘Banking in *Kölsch*’, ‘*Kölsch* dictionary’.
14. *Was sind die Zukunftsperspektiven für die kölsche Sprache Ihrer Meinung nach?* [What are the future prospects for the Cologne language in your opinion?] Respondents were asked to tick one of the following: ‘Very good – *Kölsch* will thrive’, ‘Good – *Kölsch* will continue to be heard in *Karneval* and in Cologne songs’, ‘not so good – fewer and fewer people are learning and speaking *Kölsch*, it is losing importance’, and ‘Poor – *Kölsch* is dying out’.
15. *Sollten Ihrer Meinung nach Kinder die Möglichkeit haben, Kölsch in der Schule zu lernen?* [Should children have the opportunity to learn *Kölsch* at school in your opinion?]
16. *Persönliche Angaben* [Personal details]: age, gender, resident in Cologne, and number of years living in the city.

The combination of multiple choice and open-ended questions was intended to elicit qualitative and quantitative data, as part of a mixed-method approach (Angouri 2010). My principle interest, however, was in respondents' attitudes to the dialect: one could assume that those who signed up for such courses had a positive attitude to the dialect, but more than this, the dialect had to play a role in the individual's life, perhaps in her or his personal identification with the city and its residents, linked to competence in the dialect. Whatever these motivations were, they had to move beyond the usual manifestations of enregisterment discussed earlier, as they involved considerable personal and financial commitment. In my focus on the open-ended questions on their attitudes towards *Kölsch*, I wanted to explore the link between individual discourses that communicate a personal connection with the dialect, and the externalisation of this personal connection, i.e. through attendance at courses offered by the *Akademie*. In evaluating the data, I decided to include responses from those who were enrolled on history or cultural courses related to the city, as I considered their responses to the dialect to be as valid as those taking dialect-learning courses at the *Akademie*, particularly as many had previously taken such courses.

6. Results

As figures 1 and 2 show, 58% of the respondents were female and 42% male; the age range was between 16 and 78, with 38% of participants over the aged 61 and over. I was interested to find out how many had been born in Cologne and how many had moved to the city: the former group constituted 59%, while the latter was 41% (see Fig. 3). This indicates that the majority wishing to learn the language, and/or learn more about literature, customs and history were in fact 'natives', and would suggest that they seek to supplement their native status and affiliation to the city by attending these courses. Of those respondents born in Cologne, there is a noticeable gap in the middle of the age range: none were born between 1964 and 1983 (see Fig. 4). By contrast, 18% of participants who had moved to Cologne were born between 1964 and 1983 (see Fig. 5), and, as Figure 6 illustrates, the single largest group moved to the city within the last ten years (15.1%). These data provide some indication that those who are most motivated to sign up for courses at the *Akademie* are likely to have been born in Cologne and aged 61 older, or have come to live in the city relatively recently.

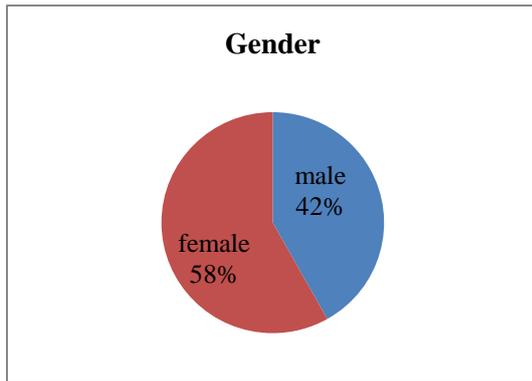


Figure 1

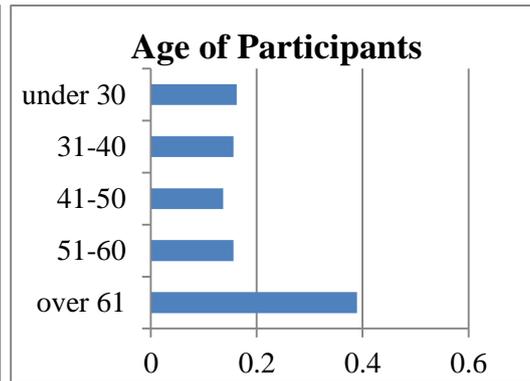


Figure 2

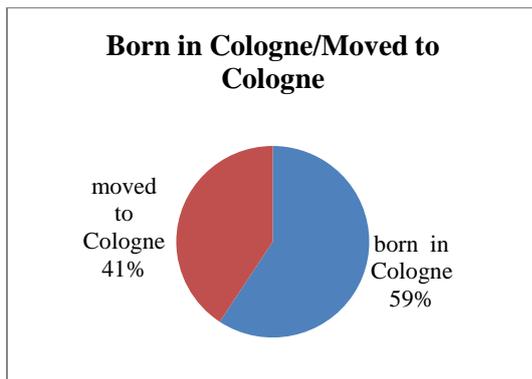


Figure 3

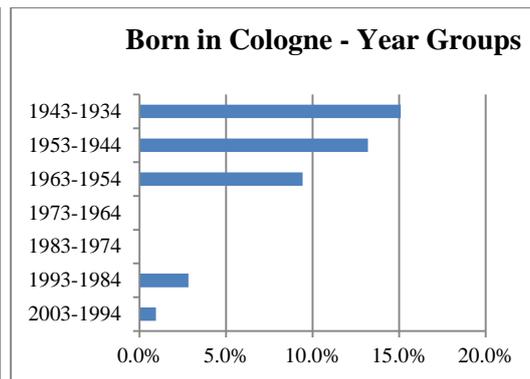


Figure 4

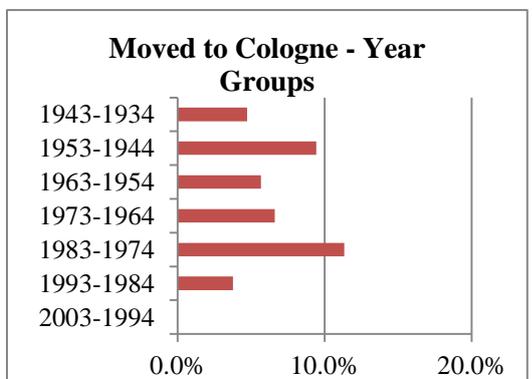


Figure 5

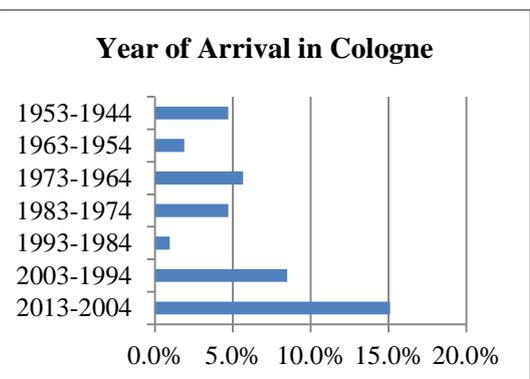


Figure 6

In response to the first question, the respondents indicated that they were enrolled on or had already completed the following courses:

Mer liere Kölsch ävver flöck [We are learning *Kölsch*, but quickly], an intensive twelve week beginner's course;

Mer liere Kölsch ävver höösch [We are learning *Kölsch*, but slowly], a twenty-four week beginner's course;

Kölsch Schwade [Speaking *Kölsch*]

Sprachgeschichte und Literatur [Language History and Literature];
Kölsche Krätzje [*Kölsch* Tales];
Brauchtum [Customs and Traditions];
Stadtgeschichte [History of the City];
Köln zur Römerzeit [Cologne in the Roman Period]
Köln zur Frankenzeit [Cologne under the Franks]
Köln in mittelalterlicher Zeit [Cologne in the Medieval Period].
Straßennahmen in Köln [Street names in Cologne]

Questions 2 and 3 asked why the respondent had chosen her or his present course and what she or he wished to achieve. Of those that were taking or had taken dialect-learning courses, the responses can be categorised as follows (please note that these are not mutually exclusive categories; respondents' answers frequently drew on more than one):

a. To learn *Kölsch*.

Some responses expressed a general interest (*Interesse an Dialekten* [interest in dialects], *Interesse an der kölschen Sprache* [interest in the Cologne language]; others focused on acquisition: *Kölsch lernen* [to learn *Kölsch*]. Many respondents were specific in stating a desire to acquire or improve their spoken or written language skills: *weil ich Kölsch sprechen möchte* [because I want to speak *Kölsch*], *Kölsch sprechen und schreiben lernen* [to learn to speak and write *Kölsch*]. For some, these courses provided them with the opportunity to improve their language skills, or to follow up an interest in dialect that began in everyday experiences: *Faszination von der gehörten Sprache in der Bahn* [Fascination with the language I heard on the tram]. Respondents felt that even if they had some proficiency in the dialect, they required formal tuition in order to speak or write it more correctly: *besser Kölsch sprechen, grammatikalisch korrekt schreiben* [to speak *Kölsch* better, write it with correct grammar], and *um die kölsche Grammatik zu lernen* [to learn *Kölsch* grammar], *sauberes Kölsch sprechen* [to speak proper *Kölsch*]. In these examples, the discourse frames the dialect as a standardised, codified language that can be learnt formally, and signals that some participants in the dialect courses wish to belong to a wider community that is perceived to be fluent in the spoken and written forms of the dialect.

b. For fun/pleasure

Key words in the responses were *Spaß* [fun] and *Freud(e)* [pleasure] and included explanations such as *Us Spass an dr Sproch* [to have fun with the language], *us Spaß an der Freud* [lit. for fun of the pleasure, or rather, for the sheer fun of it], *weil ich hoffe dat ich Spass han* [because I hope to have fun], combining discourse with dialect performance – a prominent feature of many of the answers. For these participants, pleasure and enjoyment are closely associated with the dialect and learning activities.

c. *Heimat/meine Stadt* [Home/my city]

Respondents who had moved to Cologne regarded proficiency in the local dialect as a means to enhance their affiliation with the city, claim ‘native’ status and to feel at home: *Um die Sprache meiner Stadt zu lernen. Ich fühle mich bereits Kölsch* [To learn the language of my city. I already feel *Kölsch*], as one respondent put it; or *in der Stadt angekommen, ‘zu Hause sein’* [to have settled into city, ‘to be at home’]. For those who were born in the city, many express regret at not being (fluent) dialect speakers: *Weil ich in Köln geboren bin, aber leider nie gelernt habe, Kölsch zu sprechen* [Because I was born in Cologne, but unfortunately never learnt to speak *Kölsch*]. Here the respondent typically identifies a perceived rupture between topological and linguistic identity: she or he has the identity claim of being born in the city, but cannot supplement this through the linguistic proof of being able to speak the city’s ‘language’. The precise reasons for this particular respondent not being a dialect speaker despite being a native of the city are not given, but this may have been due to the stigmatisation of speaking *Kölsch* that prevailed until recently, which led to many families abandoning the dialect in favour of *Hochdeutsch* (cf. Cornelissen 2005: 31–5; Niebaum & Macha 2006: 203–4), or because the individual had parents that did not originate from Cologne and so were not dialect speakers themselves. In another response, geographical origin is combined with intellectual interest: *Kölsch Mädchen, Historikerin, Lehrerin = großes Interesse* [Cologne girl, historian, teacher = great interest]. Here, the respondent describes herself as a ‘Cologne girl’, a common expression in the dialect, present in the title of several *Carnival* songs, including ‘*Kölsche Mädcher können bütze*’ [Cologne girls know how to kiss], and ‘*Denn mer sin kölsche Mädcher*’ [Because we’re Cologne girls]. *Mädchen* is generally considered to be applicable to women of all ages, with *kölsche Jung* as the male equivalent.

d. Qualifications

In addition to personal enjoyment and enhancing the individual's affiliation with the city, gaining qualifications offered by the *Akademie* is also cited as a motivating factor for taking courses: *Teil des Kölsch-Ausbildungsgangs* [Part of the *Kölsch* learning pathway], or *Kölsch-Examen* [*Kölsch* finals]. This desire for external validation is in many respects a sign of the symbolic, postvernacular status of the dialect, but also points clearly to the link between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for engaging with it in some form.

In response to Question 4, concerning the number of courses taken at the *Akademie*, the majority of respondents were not newcomers, with 41% having enrolled on at least three previously. This indicates that membership of this community is varied, consisting of participants new to the experience of learning the dialect in a formal context, and those that are inspired to continue their education in the *Akademie*. Questions 5–9 elicit further information about self-identification with the city, proficiency in the dialect, dialect background, day-to-day context for using *Kölsch* and the importance of the dialect for each respondent. 87.4% would identify themselves as *Kölner(in)*, a resident, possibly even a native of the city. The high level of response means that even those not born or brought up in Cologne are also willing to describe themselves in terms of their affiliation to the city. As responses to the open-ended questions indicate, being able to speak, understand and even write *Kölsch* plays a central role, at least in theory, in enhancing self-identification as an inhabitant of the city. Just over one third of the participants (32.1%) claimed to be able to speak *Kölsch* fluently, with the largest group (55%) assessing their fluency as 'good'. Only 3.7%, presumably some of those taking a *Kölsch* course for the first time given the response 'gar nicht' [not at all]. From this, we can deduce that these participants not only identify overwhelmingly as belonging to the city, they also claim moderate to high proficiency in the dialect.

In enquiring into the individual's personal background and the presence of dialect, just over half of the respondents (55.9%) stated that their parents or relatives spoke *Kölsch*, or that they spoke it themselves. The use of the perfect tense in the question asks for a response that points to past rather than present competencies – this is of particular relevance for those participants that may have spoken *Kölsch* at some point in their lives but had lost the ability, and/or for those who were exposed to the dialect in their family circle. This question was followed up by a more specific one, asking if they had spoken *Kölsch* as a child. 58% said that they had not spoken the dialect as a child – one could surmise that these respondents had

either moved to the city from elsewhere, or, if a native of Cologne, had heard the dialect spoken in the family but had not acquired it themselves. In response to specified contexts for speaking *Kölsch* in their present-day lives, *Karneval* was the most likely occasion (76%), and, as stated earlier, this continues to provide a focal point for the dialect, allowing temporary engagement with the dialect for dialect and non-dialect speakers alike. Only 4.7% claimed not to speak *Kölsch* at all (outside of the classroom). This means that the majority of participants are able to use the dialect – although what constitutes ‘use’ would, of course, require further investigation – in more informal contexts, such as at home, with friends, at the pub, and, to a lesser extent, out shopping (21.3%) and at work (14%). The significance of the dialect for the individual, as responses to Question 10 show, are described as ‘very important’ (36.9%) and ‘important’ (54%); this is hardly surprising, given that each person has chosen to participate in dialect courses and is likely, therefore, to be invested in acquisition and use of the dialect. However, 8.5% ticked ‘not so important’, demonstrating that for some, engagement in the wider dialect-speaking community is largely peripheral.

Question 11 instructed respondents to complete two sentences: ‘*Kölsch* means for me ...’, and ‘When I hear *Kölsch*, ...’. Key words in responses to the first half-sentence include *Heimat* [home]; *Identität* [identity], *Tradition* [tradition], *Verbundenheit* [feeling of closeness, connection], and *Zugehörigkeit* [belonging]. Rather strikingly, 51% of responses contained *Heimat* in some form, including the expressions *Heimatgefühl* [feeling of home], *Wahlheimat* [my adopted home] and *heimatlich* [homely], demonstrating a clear connection between the dialect and a sense of belonging to the city. Some explicitly thematised language: *Muttersprache* [mother tongue], *Sprache der Heimat* [language of home], *Identität, Sprache und Getränk* [identity, language and drink], *mich frei ausdrücken zu können* [to be able to express myself freely]. Several responded in dialect: *Levvensgeföhl* [feel-good factor], *ming Muttersproch* [my mother tongue], once again demonstrating their command of the language as well as their relationship to it.

Responses to the second-half sentence (‘When I hear *Kölsch*, ...’) can be categorised under the following thematic headings:

a. Feelings of happiness and well-being

Completion of the sentence focused on the individual respondent’s positive reception of hearing the dialect and its impact on their emotions, feelings and general sense of well-being. Some responses used the expression ‘heart’, and in particular the expression: *geht mir das Herz auf* [lit. lifts my heart], or in dialect, *geht et Hätz op, geht mir et Hatz op, geht mer et*

Hätz op, or in a similar vein, *hüüft mir das Herz* [my heart leaps].⁷ Responses identify feelings of happiness and well-being: *freue ich mich* [I am happy], *geht et mer god* [I feel well], *föhle ich mich wohl und gut gelaunt* [I feel well and cheerful], *fühl ich mich einfach wohl* [I just feel good] or, in dialect, *föhl ich mich god!* Respondents also mentioned wanting to smile (*beginnt mein Gesicht zu lächeln und mein Herz geht auf* [I break into a smile and my heart lifts]), as well as to having fun (*han ich Spass*).

b. Emotions/feelings linked to place:

In addition to reporting the positive feelings associated with hearing the dialect, some respondents also made specific references to place and location. Hearing the dialect leads to associations with home: *denke ich an Heimat* [I think of home], *Föhle ich mich zu Hause* [I feel at home], *höre ich ein Stück Heimat* [‘I hear a piece of home’], *Heimatklänge, bin ich zo Haus* [Sounds of home, I’m home],⁸ *schaltet mein Gehirn sofort auf ‘heimisch’ um* [my brain automatically switches to feeling at home]. References to a specific location or to people are also mentioned: *Denke ich an alte Kölner Viertel, an Urkölnner Nachbarn* [I think of old Cologne districts, of true native Cologne neighbours]. Not surprisingly, given that the participants are engaging in courses that focus on the local dialect and the city, they identify hearing the dialect strongly with feeling at home, or of being reminded of a place or people.

c. Music/*Karneval*

As mentioned earlier, *Kölsch* is associated for many with traditional Cologne songs and with *Karneval* celebrations, and this is reflected in some of the responses, which specifically thematize these two factors: *Vor allem kölsche Musik gefällt mir* [I like *Kölsch* music, above all], *Ist Musik in meinen Ohren* [music is in my ears]; one respondent commented wryly: *Muss wohl Karneval sein, oder mein betrunkenener Nachbar kommt nach Hause* [It must be *Carnival* or my drunken neighbour coming home]. Being able to understand and sing these songs and take part in *Karneval* are regarded as important markers of membership of cultural life in the city.

⁷ The spelling of *Herz* in the dialect varies in the responses. In Wrede’s *Neuer Kölnischer Sprachschatz*, however, only one spelling – *Hätz* – is listed (Wrede 2010 [1956/1958]: 361).

⁸ Here again, the question of translation and interlanguage equivalence comes to the fore. Both *Heimat* and *zu Hause* can be translated as ‘home’, yet, as discussed earlier, *Heimat* has a range of emotional and sentimental associations of attachment, familiarity and longing, that differentiates it from *zu Hause*.

d. Linguistic Participation and Proficiency

Responses also highlight the desire to use the dialect and, moreover, to use it fluently: *versuche ich mitzusingen* [I try to sing along], *möchte ich gern mitsprechen* [I would really like to speak it too], *möchte ich es auch selber sprechen können* [I would like to be able to speak it myself too], *am liebsten würde ich dann auch richtig flüssig Kölsch sprechen können* [Most of all, I would really like to speak *Kölsch* fluently too], *freue ich mich und suche das Gespräch* [I am delighted and attempt to strike up a conversation]. In responses such as these, individuals express the desire to participate, to make contact with those speaking the dialect and communicate with them. Thus, hearing the dialect has primarily social, gregarious associations; learners of the dialect aspire to belong to the wider community of *Kölsch* speakers, further highlighting their motivation for taking courses as the *Akademie*.

As the responses have indicated, participants in the courses express an overwhelmingly positive attitude to hearing the dialect. Associations between dialect and feelings of familiarity and belonging are not new, nor are they limited to the Cologne dialect, but what is striking here is that these feelings of happiness and well-being, of home and belonging – all personal, internal states, are externalised through participation in language and culture courses. Furthermore, the homogeneity of the discourse is also noteworthy, with key phrases containing *Herz*, *Heimat* and *Spaß* occupying a central role in the discourse. These responses may well be regarded as predictable or even cliché to some extent, but they nonetheless point to a community that is united not only by participation in courses, but also by a common purpose and a common language. The feelings of enjoyment, home and belonging are shared equally by those who are natives of Cologne and those who moved to the city from elsewhere, and becomes for all a point of cohesion and identification.

Question 12 switched the focus to the importance of the dialect for the identity of the city and offered respondents multiple choice statements. Unsurprisingly perhaps, 62.5% ticked ‘very important’, and 34.7% ‘important’. Nevertheless, given that the city prides itself on its openness and diversity, as evidenced by dominant media discourses about the city, it appears that the dialect is still a marker of solidarity and cohesion among those that live in and identify with the city.⁹ It could be argued, perhaps, that it is precisely because of the city’s

⁹ See, for example, comments by Joachim Löw, the trainer of the German national football team, about inhabitants of the city: ‘Die Menschen sind tolerant und offen’ [‘People here are tolerant and open-minded’], published in the Cologne edition of the *Express* tabloid newspaper <<http://www.express.de/koeln/loew-lobt-die-domstadt--die-menschen-sind-tolerant-und-offen-.2856,24580330.html>> 10 October 2013, accessed 12 October 2014.

reputation for tolerance and diversity, that the dialect provides an outlet for expression of *Lokalpatriotismus*, an opportunity for locals and *Imis* to engage in a common interest.

Given the level of engagement that participants in courses at the *Akademie* are likely to have, it is likely that they would have or would be willing to make use of a dialect-related paraphernalia such as a *Kölsch*-German dictionary (85.3%), GPS in *Kölsch* (55.3%), and online banking in dialect introduced in 2010, with the input of the *Akademie* – this, interestingly, only appealed to 9.3% of the respondents. In response to Q.14 regarding the future prospects of the dialect, over 60% indicated ‘very good’ or ‘good’, although the same number of respondents (25.3%) opted for ‘not so good’ as for ‘very good’, the most positive option. Only one respondent selected ‘poor’, indicating that a pessimistic attitude to the dialect is not prevalent in this community. Perhaps the responses can be interpreted self-reflexively; namely, that the participants regard themselves and their peers as playing a role in securing the future of the dialect. The presence of *Kölsch* in schools, in the form of *Kölsch AGs* (school clubs promoting dialect learning and use), are often cited as an important tool for ensuring that children acquire the dialect and continue to use it in later life, and the *Akademie* is instrumental in establishing these. Therefore, it is no surprise that 92% of respondents responded positively to the question of whether children should have the opportunity to learn *Kölsch* at school. Whether this opportunity should extend to dialect being part of the curriculum, and whether this would garner widespread support, are issues that would merit closer investigation.

7. Dialect identity, performance and discourse: concluding remarks

For this particular community, dialect learning, use and the resultant discourse bring together inherently ontological and epistemological factors that contribute to identity construction. This local identity can be framed in personal, relational, enacted and communal terms, to refer back to Hecht’s categories of identity (Hecht 1993: 79). Further research is required, to investigate the role of the dialect in the individual learner’s biography, and perhaps to differentiate between the experiences of ‘natives’ of Cologne and *Imis*. In the respondents’ discourse, the dialect is linked to highly personal, internal states of being – happiness, enjoyment and *Heimat*, being ‘home’ – but this is manifested in an external, public environment where knowledge and skills are acquired and valued. Emphasis is placed on spoken and written proficiency, and moreover, on *correct* use of the dialect. Similarly, dialect is described as something personal and individual, yet it is also something that is performed

and is used to establish interpersonal connections with the larger *Kölsch*-speaking community in the city. The dialect is associated with positive values and evokes positive feelings, yet it is also an entity that is codified, can, and indeed should, be acquired formally. The teaching of *Kölsch* as a foreign or second language is an indication of the postvernacular status of the dialect, but it also attributes a formal, elevated status to it. Participants who were born in Cologne typically identify a ‘gap’ in their local identity – being born in the city is not enough – this has to be supplemented by proficiency in the language. For those who have moved to the city, some degree of dialect competence, e.g. being able to sing along, or talk in the pub with colleagues or friends, is an important marker of ‘belonging’. For both groups, filling the identity gap cannot be achieved solely through the usual manifestations of enregisterment, for example, the use of emblematic phrases such as *Et kütt wie et kütt*, or the purchase of dialect paraphernalia such as t-shirts or bags with these phrases. The discourse, with its focus on the ludic aspects of the dialect, and its associations with homeliness and pleasure, provides a point of reference for this community; it creates a homogeneous identity with which participants can identify and align themselves, and relates to broader discourses about Cologne and its dialect, which are in turn anchored in the cultural, political and economic life of the city.

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