English in the Ruhr Valley

This paper introduces the aims and the methodologies to be used in the project *English in the Ruhr Valley*. The project addresses the question how the English language is used in multicultural and multilingual communities residing in the Ruhr Valley metropolis in Germany.

The Ruhr Valley is an industrial region in north-western central Germany and offers large linguistic and cultural diversity (e.g. Bernhard and Lebsanft, eds. 2013). Its cultural diversity goes back to the rise of mining industry and concomitant in-migration of German and non-German speakers in the 19th century and immigration from predominantly European and Mediterranean countries throughout the 20th century. Currently of the more than 5 million inhabitants of the Ruhr Area, more than 13% have foreign nationalities, with roughly one third having roots in Turkey, another third in other European countries and a final third in other countries world-wide. Bi- or multicultural residents with German citizenship are not included amongst these figures.

New migrants often join earlier immigrant communities to create layered immigrant spaces (Blommaert 2010: 7), processes which result in the emergence of super-diversity (Blommaert, ibid.). In addition to their immersion in super-diverse communities, immigrants are now, and in contrast to earlier generations, able to retain ties with their home communities due to improved communication and transportation options (Kaplan and Chacko 2015). Resultantly, migrant language users have access to two arguably divergent linguistic codes: those of their communities of origin and those of their super-diverse communities of residence.

For the purposes of the project *English in the Ruhr Valley*, two different parameters will be considered. On the one hand this is the use and status of the English language particularly in migrant communities in which English has the status of a second language, such as e.g. Cameroonian communities and West-African communities in general (Meierkord, Fonkeu and Zumhasch 2015). On the other hand, we will evaluate usage and status aspects of English for language users for whom English is a foreign language. In this context, both long-settled population groups and recently arriving population groups will be considered. Here, the research focus is on recently arriving immigrants and on their use of and attitudes to English vis-à-vis the local language of the region, German.

Methods used in the study are sociolinguistic interviews to determine language use and collect language data. Furthermore, questionnaire approaches are employed to determine language choices and language attitudes amongst the informants. The informants are approached through extended personal and professional networks of the researchers and through contacts with members of different communities and with community leaders.

