



# **Language ideologies and social disadvantage**

**Guyanne Wilson, UCL**  
**21.02.2023**

# Aims



Reflect on some of the beliefs about language we hold



See how these beliefs have real effects on people's lives

# Language ideologies

- Beliefs about language and language use
- Every country has a national language
- Ladies (and children) should be seen and not heard
- Immigrants to the US/ UK should learn English
- We should work to preserve dying languages

Language  
ideologies  
impact  
people's  
lives

## Education

- E.g. California Proposition 227 (reversed bilingual education), Proposition 58 repealed 227

## Asylum

- Use of English in asylum interviews in Belgium; use of language biographies in asylum interviews in the UK

## Legal settings

- E.g. Miranda warnings

# Case Study 1: Rachel Jeantel

- Remember Rachel?



# Case study 1: Rachel Jeantel

- [\(45\) Zimmerman attorney tries to discredit witness - YouTube](#)
- Rickford and King (2016)
- Rachel's use of AAVE distances her from the defence
- Testimony wasn't considered in jury deliberations

# Case study 2: House hunters

## California and Bremen

- Bremen
  - 300 calls across 4 areas
  - Turkish, American and German accents
- California
  - 1180 calls across 5 areas in Greater San Francisco
  - AAVE, ChE, SAE

# House hunting in California

- Tables taken from Baugh (2018: 103)
- In areas with large African American populations, AAVE voice gets most offers for a viewing, same for ChE and Hispanic American populations (East Palo Alto)
- In areas with largest white populations, SAE voice gets most offers (Woodside)

Table 7.1 *Confirmed appointments to view apartments advertised for rent in different Greater San Francisco geographic areas (in percentages)*

Dialect Guise	Geographic Area				
	East Palo Alto	Oakland	San Francisco	Palo Alto	Woodside
AAVE	79.3	72.0	63.5	48.3	28.7
ChE	61.9	58.3	53.2	31.9	21.8
SAE	57.6	68.7	71.9	63.1	70.1
Total number of calls for each locale	118	211	310	263	87

*Note.* AAVE = African American Vernacular English; ChE = Chicano English; SAE = Standard American English.

Table 7.2 *Population in different Greater San Francisco geographic areas by race and ethnicity (in percentages)*

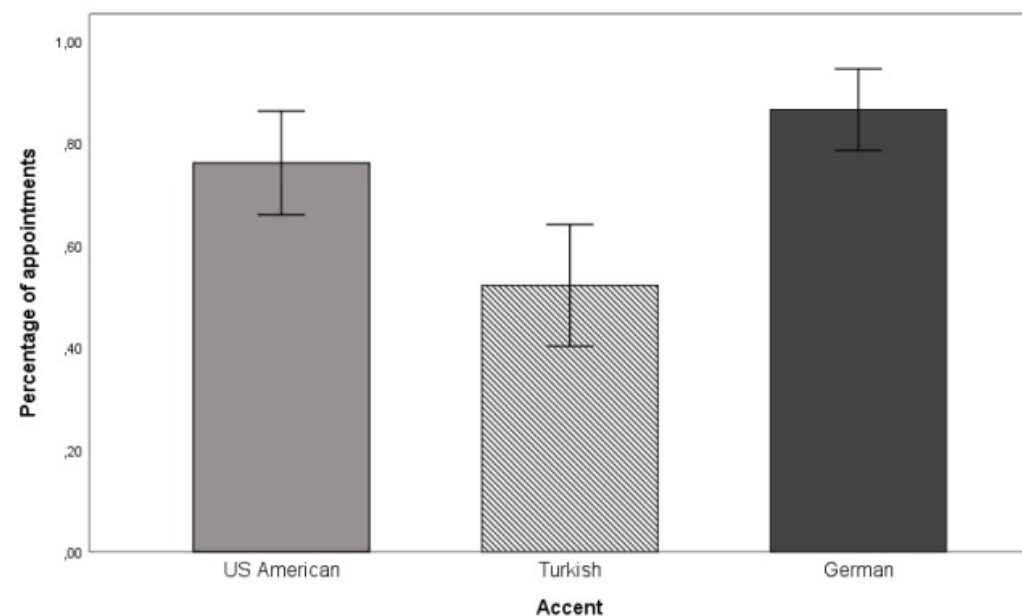
Population	Geographic Area				
	East Palo Alto	Oakland	San Francisco	Palo Alto	Woodside
African American	42.9	43.9	10.9	2.9	0.3
Hispanic	36.4	13.9	13.9	5.0	3.8
White	31.7	32.5	53.6	84.9	94.7

*Source:* US Census Bureau (1990).



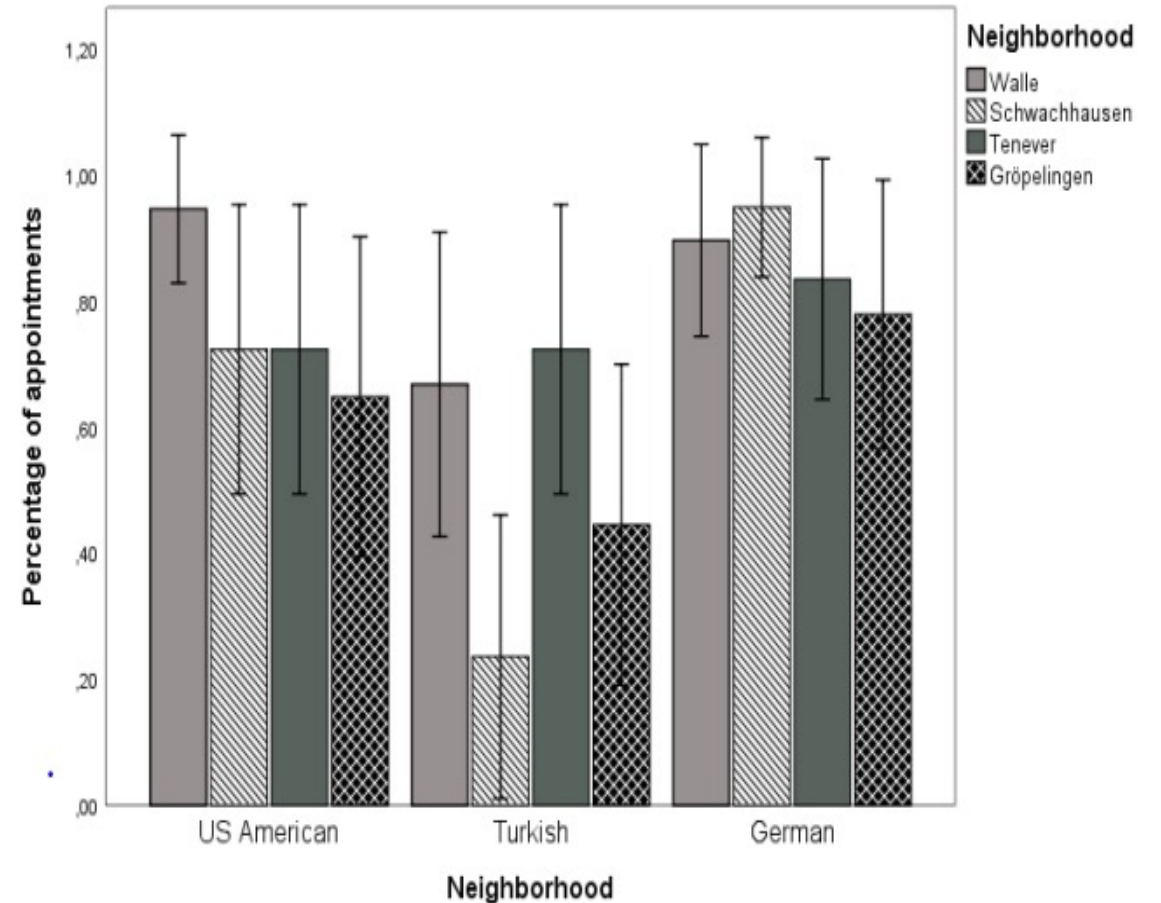
# House hunting in Bremen

- Figure taken from Du Bois (2019: 102)
- German accented speech receives most offers, Turkish accented by far the least



# Differences by neighbourhood

- Walle (largest migrant population)- most receptive to American accent
- All other neighbourhoods- German accent highest
- Especially Schwachhausen
- All neighbourhoods- Turkish accent fewest offers
- Especially Schwachhausen



**Figure 4:** Means of appointments by neighbourhood and accent.

# Case study 3: Syrian refugees in Germany

- Germany was largest receiver of people fleeing from Syria **outside** of neighbouring countries
- Syrian refugees came knowing: Syrian Arabic, some English, some French
- Expectation: use English as a lingua franca, since Germany prides itself on high proficiency of English

# Reality

- Speak English at beginning but switch to German relatively early
- Officials in places like the immigration office refused to speak English
- Mahdi: He doesn't trust himself that he could speak English and I couldn't speak German like nothing
- Mrs Rahal: In the immigration office, at the Job Centre, they always avoid speaking English [. . .] We spoke English with them at the beginning [. . .] and they were most of the time unfriendly when they heard that we spoke English. They would always say, we speak German here. The official language is German [. . .] It's different from person to person but one sees that with English you can't get far

# Reality

- Lack of German proficiency → lack of employment opportunities, effects for healthcare
- Mahdi: It's a big disappointment for them because now they are not able to use what they have learned their whole life. It's either they learned the wrong language or they are in the wrong country
- Hassan: I couldn't find an Arabic doctor so I had to go to a German doctor and I just spent two nights learning the words for this topic so that I could explain my problem to the doctor

# Conclusions

- Three main issues pervade the case studies:
- Standard language ideology
- Linguistic profiling
- Immigrant integration ideology

# References

- Baugh, J. (2018). *Linguistics in Pursuit of Justice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/9781316597750
- Du Bois, I. (2019). Linguistic discrimination across neighbourhoods: Turkish, US-American and German names and accents in urban apartment search. *Journal of Language and Discrimination* ().
- Rickford, J. R., & King, S. (2016). Language and linguistics on trial: Hearing Rachel Jeantel (and other vernacular speakers) in the courtroom and beyond. *Language*, 948-988.
- Wilson, G. (2021). Language Use among Syrian Refugees in Germany. In C. Meierkord & E. W. Schneider (Eds.), *World Englishes at the Grassroots* (pp. 211–232). Edinburgh University Press. =