

A note on MBG pronunciation: 'multicultural Berlin German'

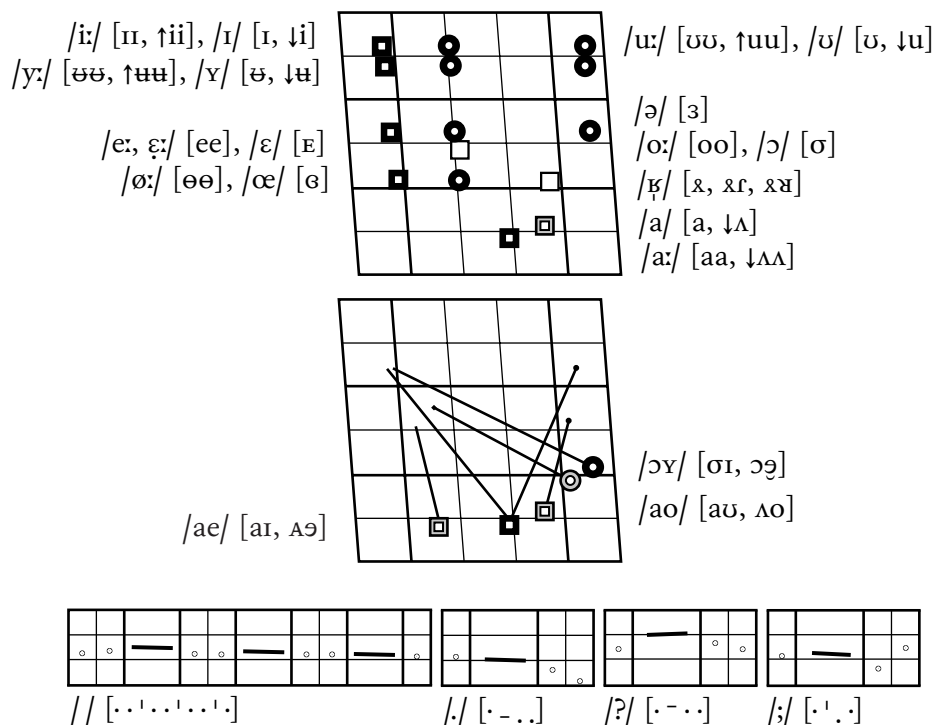
Luciano Canepari & Maurizio Pugliese (© 2018)

As with many other big cities in the world, even Berlin has its own *multicultural* accent: ie an accent influenced by both the language learners' pronunciations (by Turkish speakers, in particular) and either by mediatic German or the local way of speaking, but not only restricted to just sons of immigrants; infact, many younger Germans by descent can have it, as peer groups.

And, just as with many other big cities, even this multicultural accent is rather recent. It emerged in the late 20th century, and is therefore more typical of younger people, although not exclusively.

This speech is often accompanied by many 'dialectal' grammatical and lexical differences, and is commonly (and often pejoratively) known with terms such as *Kanak Sprach*, *Kanakendeutsch*, *Kiezdeutsch* and even *Türkendeutsch* (this latter term is particularly wrong and risky, since sons of Turkish descent are only a fraction of its speakers, contrary to popular opinion). As one can imagine, even this accent is rather stigmatized.

As for the *vowels*, let us start with the fact that 'long' vowels are monotimbric



diphthongs: [VV]; particularly striking is the lower nature of the long high vowels /i(:), y(:), u(:)/ [ɪ(ɪ), ø(ø), u(u)] (although, including ↑[i(i), œ(œ), u(u)]).

The short lower-high ones, in turn, can be higher /ɪ, ʏ, ʊ/ [ɪ, ʏ, ʊ] ↓[i, œ, u]. /ɛ, œ, ɔ/ are higher than in international and neutral German, [ɛ, ɐ, ɔ], and /a, a:/ [a, aa] can be both higher and backer ↓[ʌ, ʌʌ]. Meanwhile, (unstressed) /ə/ is lower: [ɜ]. The three diphthongs are /ae, ao, ɔʏ/ [aɪ, aɔ; aʊ, ʌo; ɔɪ, ɔɔ]. Occasionally, /iɪ, i; yɪ, ʏ; uɪ, ʊ/ (not shown in the vocogram) can be slightly fronter, becoming more similar to neutral or international German.

As for the *consonants*, we have some typical peculiarities: /ç/ [ʃ], /ʁ/ [r, ʀ]. In addition, final *b, d, g, v, s* /p, t, k; f, s/ occasionally, can be voiced: ↓[b, d, g; v, z].

/ʁ/ is vocalised differently according to the height of the preceding vowel: if the vowel is high, lower-high or higher-mid, /i(:), y(:), u(:); ɪ, ʏ, ʊ; e(:), ø(:), o(:)/ (including /ɛ:/, which is mostly merged with /e:/) + /ʁ/, the result is [Vɜ, VVɜ]; with lower-mid, higher-low and low vocoids, /ɛ, œ, ɔ, a, a: + /ʁ/, the result is [Vɛ, VVɛ]. /Cʁ/ is [Cɛ, Cɛr, Cɛʀ].

The *intonation* patterns are a kind of compromise between the Türkisch and the unmarked Berlin ones.