

The meaning of english word “kids” in german

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Even though German has been in contact with English for centuries, the impact of English on German and other European languages became stronger in the second half of the 20th century. With the advent of new media such as the Internet and with the dominance of English in domains such as advertising and computing this influence has become especially pervasive since the 1990s. Nowadays some social groups, such as youngsters and advertising agencies, quite purposefully draw on Anglicism or on code-mixing and -switching to distance themselves from others or to capture the attention of potential customers.

In consequence many language users feel rather disconcerted about the use of Anglicisms in the media, because they have difficulty in understanding them, feel excluded from discourse in certain domains, or may have objections on principle to cultural and linguistic "Americanisation".

The increasing use of Anglicism is often negatively labeled as *Denglisch*, *Germang*, *Engleutsch*, *Neudeutsch*, *McGermish*, or *BSE*. According to observations of scientists, *Denglisch* seems to be the term used most often. The term is modeled on the precedent of *Franglais* used by Rene Etiemble as early as 1964. The blending of etymologically heterogeneous word material is to suggest the pending danger of a 'pidginisation' of German. The term *McGermish* implies a linguistic 'McDonaldisation' of German, and *BSE* is a transferred use of the acronym *bovine spongiform encephalopathy*, commonly known as *mad-cow disease*, in the sense of Bad Simple English as in the following example:

Save theDenglish-Engleutsch! Kennen Sie BSE? Namlich Bad Simple English?
Ein Rindvieh freilich, wer's im Deutschen spricht - und dabei so man- chen
Anglizismus wiederkaut: Wir *talken*, *shoppen*, nehmen'seasy.

By contrast, in his study, Bar is of the opinion that words such as *Kids* can be used deliberately to express a particular attitude towards life as in the following concocted example:

'Ich muss nur eben noch schnell die Kids ins Bett bringen und mein Handy catchen, dann sind wir weg, okay?' Wer so redet, mochte jugendlich, dynamisch, zeitgemäÙ (*trendy*) und weltläufig wirken.

Negative attitudes towards the use or abuse of individual words are often voiced in letters to the editor (see Stickel 1984; Hoberg 2002) or in special columns of newspapers and journals.

In order to scrutinise the prevailing attitudes of Germans towards their mother tongue, the *Institut für deutsche Sprache* in Mannheim carried out a representative opinion poll (see Stickel and Volz 1999). One question asked was whether present-day German had undergone a great number of lexical changes over the last five to ten years or not. Almost 60 % of the participants were of the opinion that (very) many changes had taken place

Among the many changes, words borrowed from English feature prominently. All in all, Anglicisms were mentioned 182 times (75 times in West Germany and 107 times in East Germany). Out of the 29 items criticised individually, there are no less than 20 Anglicisms. In order of declining frequency these were: *cool*, *Kids* (instead of *Kinder*), *okay/o.k.*, *Team*, *in*, *out*, *Internet*, *Shopping/shoppen*, *mega-* (*gut*, *in/out...*), *Handy*, *hallo* (as a greeting), *relaxen/relaxed*, *Elchtest*, *managenlManager/Management*, *Mobbing*, *Peanuts*, *Shop* (instead of *Geschäft*, *Laden*), *City*, *Job* (instead of *Arbeit*) and *Power*. In addition, several other words of English origin were mentioned, but occurred only once.

Given this background of diverging and even disquieting attitudes towards the impact of English on present-day German word stock it seems all the more interesting to investigate how lexicographers deal with this problem at the level of the individual word. Since the word *Kids* was high on the agenda of reprehensible Anglicism, its treatment in selected German dictionaries will be highlighted by taking a look at how dictionaries of Anglicism, foreign word dictionaries, learners' dictionaries and general dictionaries handle the case.

Before we can outline the development of the borrowed term in German and its treatment in selected German dictionaries, it seems advisable to sketch the

semantic and pragmatic history of the English word first. For this reason an outline based on the *Oxford English Dictionary* [OED] (1992) will be provided next. The OED-entry shows that the English term is etymologically related to German *Kitz* and that it came into the English language in the Middle Ages (c. 1200) in the sense of 1.a. The sense divisions are given below; the time range of the illustrative citations is added in brackets:

1. a. The young of a goat [*c* 1200-1887]
t b. A young roe-deer during its first year. *Obs[olete]* [1486-1891].
c. A young antelope [1884].
2. The flesh of a young goat [*c* 1430-1888].
3. a. The skin of a kid.
b. Leather made from kid-skins, or from lamb-skins, or other substitutes; chiefly used in the manufacture of gloves and shoes; *pi.gloves* (or boots) made of this leather [1677-1891].
4. *sing, or pi.*
5. *slang.*
 - a. A child, esp. a young child. (Originally low slang, but by the 19th c. frequent in familiar speech.).
 - b. In low sporting or criminal circles: A term of admiration for an expert young thief, pugilist, etc.
+ c. In American Colonies (see quotes.) *Obs.*
d. A young man or woman, *colloq.*
6. *attrib. and Comb., as* (sense 1) *kid-fell, -flesh, -leather* (also *attrib.*), *-milk*, *kid-like* adj.;

The senses 5.a. and d. are of particular relevance for the origin of the modern borrowing into German. They show that the English word had undergone amelioration from a low slang term to one used in familiar speech by the 19th century and that the meaning of 'youth, adolescent' was first recorded in the United States in the late 19th century. As regards its style level, this usage is considered as colloquial.

The *Anglizismen-Wdrterbuch* [AWb] (1993-1996) is a dictionary especially devoted to the description of Anglicisms in present-day German. It is based on a corpus consisting mostly of newspapers and periodicals. The entry for *Kids* (1994: 767-768) reads as follows. The meaning is glossed by the two "synonyms" 'Kinder, Jugendliche'. This is the only sense given and it is documented with twelve citations ranging from 1973 until 1990. As the dictionary focuses on the lexical impact of English after the Second World War, the older senses 'goat skin' and 'gloves made of goat skin', both borrowed at the beginning of the 20th century, are not attested. According to the AWb, these older borrowings were first recorded in Tesch (1915).

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