Vallah, Gurkensalat 4U & me!

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"*Da gibs so Billiardraum**"
The Interaction of Grammar and Information Structure in Kiezdeutsch

* There is SO$_{PARTICLE}$ snooker.room

Abstract
Eine interessante Entwicklung im Bereich von Jugendsprachen ist das Entstehen neuer sprachlicher Routinen in Gebieten mit hohem Migrantenanteil. Diese können als Multiethnolekte beschrieben werden und vereinen Merkmale von Jugendsprachen mit denen von Kontaktsprachen. Wir diskutieren ein Phänomen aus Deutschland, „Kiezdeutsch" (‚(neighbour)hood' German). Kiezdeutsch ist gekennzeichnet durch grammatische Reduktion und durch Konstruktionen, die auf Mustern des Standarddeutschen oder der Umgangssprache basieren oder diese erweitern.

Besonders interessant aus grammatischer Perspektive ist die Interaktion von Morphosyntax und Informationsstruktur beim Entstehen solcher Konstruktionen. Vor diesem Hintergrund untersuchen wir neue Gebrauchsweisen der Partikel „so" in Kiezdeutsch. Wir schlagen vor, dass „so" gebraucht werden kann, um Fokus zu markieren, und zeigen, dass ein solcher Denkansatz eine gute Interpretation für eine Reihe von Sätzen liefert, für die herkömmliche Erklärungsmethoden unbefriedigend sind.

Introduction: Kiezdeutsch

This article investigates the use of the particle "so" in *Kiezdeutsch* (*'hood / neighbourhood German*) – a multiethnic youth language that has gained public awareness in Germany since the middle of the 1990s. Kiezdeutsch is a variety of German used mostly in peer-group communication among adolescents in multi-ethnic neighbourhoods. It can be classified both as a "multiethnolect" in the sense of Quist (2000; 2008; cf. also Clyne 2000), and as a youth language. Kiezdeutsch and related linguistic practices in multiethnic urban Germany have been investigated in research projects in Mannheim (e.g. Kallmeyer & Keim 2003), Freiburg (e.g. Auer 2003), Hamburg (e.g. Dirim & Auer 2004), and Berlin (e.g. Eksner 2006, Kern & Selting 2006), among others. Apart from "Kiezdeutsch", there are a number of other labels that have been used in the literature:

1. "Gemischtsprechen" ('mixed-talking') (Hinnenkamp 2003)
2. "Ghettodeutsch" ('Ghetto German') (Keim 2004)
3. "Türkendeutsch" ('Turks' German') (Kern & Selting 2006),
4. "Kanak Sprak" ('wog language') (Zaimoğlu 1995).

Following Wiese (2006), we will use the term "Kiezdeutsch" for a number of reasons: it does not carry the negative connotations of most of the other labels, most notably "Kanak Sprak" (cf. also Androutsopoulos 2007 on the language ideology aspects of this), but is a term that is also used by the speakers

themselves. The term "Kiezdeutsch" also emphasises that the locus for this linguistic practice is a "Kiez", a local neighborhood; it does not restrict itself to a certain ethnicity (e.g. Turks), and it indicates that this linguistic practice is part of German (Kiez*deutsch*).

Phenomena similar to Kiezdeutsch have been described for other European countries as well, e.g. *Rinkebysvenska* ('Rinkeby Swedish' – Rinkeby is a multiethnic suburb in Stockholm) in Sweden (Kotsinas 1992, Fraurud 2003, Bijvoet 2003), *københavnsk multietnolekt* ('Copenhagen multiethnolect') in Denmark (Quist 2005), or *straattaal* ('street language') in the Netherlands (Nortier 2001, Appel 1999).

From a grammatical perspective, typical features that have been noted in the literature include:
 (i) influences from the speakers' different background languages, such as lexical
     or phonological borrowings from Turkish, Kurdish, Arabic, or Persian;
(ii) phenomena of morphological and syntactic reduction.

As argued for the case of Kiezdeutsch in Wiese (2006, 2009), a third characteristic is the expansion of patterns that already exist in the host language.

Previous research on Kiezdeutsch in Germany has, for a large part, focused on sociolinguistic and language-ideological aspects (cf. for instance Eksner 2006, Keim 2002, Kotthoff 2004, and Hinnenkamp 2005 on multiethnolectal practices as a markers of their speakers' hybrid self-perception; Androutsopoulos 2001, Auer 2003, on language ideologies produced – and reproduced – in public discourse and popular culture).

In this paper, we approach Kiezdeutsch from a grammatical point of view, thus contributing to an understanding of such multiethnolects on the level of the linguistic system. In order to shed light on the grammatical status of new developments in Kiezdeutsch, we focus on a particular phenomenon, namely novel usages of the particle "so" in Kiezdeutsch. We argue that these novel usages cannot be captured by traditional accounts of "so" in German: while we do not claim that these accounts never apply, we question the *generality* of their explanatory power in Kiezdeutsch. In order to account for this, we propose the integration of information structure as an explanatory factor and treat novel usages of "so" as evidence for a pragmaticalisation process in progress.

Incidences and functions of "so" in Kiezdeutsch

"So" is a multifunctional particle in German that occurs in a range of different contexts. This makes it difficult to assign a precise syntactic category to it and to identify an exact meaning (an overview of attempts to classify "so" can be found in Hennig 2006).

In what follows, we consider four major accounts of German "so" and test whether they apply to the novel usages we find in Kiezdeutsch:
Explanation 1: "so" as a comparison particle   (Thurmair 2001, Lenerz & Lohnstein 2005)
Explanation 2: "so" as a intensity marker
  (Henning 2006, Auer 2007)
Explanation 3: "so" as a hedging strategy
  (Henne 1986, Weinrich 1993, Androutsopoulos 1998)
Explanation 3: "so" as a type-token article
  (Hole & Klumpp 2000, Lenerz & Lohnstein 2005)

The novel usages of "so" in Kiezdeutsch that we are interested in are illustrated by the following examples. These speech samples are taken from a corpus of informal, conversation-like recordings conducted with groups of adolescents in youth clubs or in the street in multiethnic areas of Berlin (Wiese 2007, 2009).

(1) *wenn isch SCHLUSS hab   geh ich dahin arbeite ischn   bisschen*
      when I   finish   have go I   there work I.a$_{CLITIC}$ little

   und denn komm ich zurück
   and then come I   back

   wie   auch immer
    how   also ever

   aber son   dingsladen is auch nich schlecht
    but   such.a$_{CLITIC}$ thingy.shop is also not   bad

   so WASserpfeifeladen
   SO shisha.shop

   "When I am finished, I go there and work a little bit, and then I come back, whatever. But such a thingy-shop is not bad either, SO shisha-shop."

[male, 28 years old, Turkish background, conversation with a German-background friend of about the same age, in the apartment of the latter, about his future plans about work]

(2) *Interviewer*: *könnt ihr n bisschen erzählen aus eurer freizeit*
               could you a little.bit tell   from your leisure.time

   Speaker: *wir sind imma bei haus der   jugend da (.)*
           we are always at house of.the youth there

         *da   gibs **so CLUB** imma bei [h.]   wir sin imma da*
         there is   SO club always near   [PLACE] we are always there

         für JUgendliche so
         for adolescents SO

         *zum beispiel   da   gibs **so BILliard-raum***
         for   example   there is   SO snooker-room

"Can you tell me a little bit about your leisure time?" – "We are always at House of Youth, there is always SO club, at [PLACE], we are always there, for young people SO."

[male, 15 years old, Turkish background, interview in Wedding, a multiethnic neighbourhood of Berlin, on the street, about hobbies and activities in leisure time]

(3) *dicker isch hab   isch weiss nisch also*
   fatty I   have I   know not   well

   die stadt is nisch mein dings so weisst was   isch meine
   the city is not   my   thing so know what I   mean

   *ich bin mehr **so naTURtyp** für natur dorf*
   I   am   more SO nature.type for   nature village

   ***so im   GRÜnen** das is mein ding*
   SO in.the green   that is my   thing

"Buddy, I have, I don't know, well, the city is not my thing, you know what I mean? I am more SO a nature type, for nature, village, SO on the country side, that is my thing."

[male, 28 years old, Turkish background, conversation with a German-background friend of about the same age, in the apartment of the latter, about places where he likes to live]

(4) *Sie müssen (.) äh (.) daRUNter   gehen,*

you must   ahm down.there go

*unten, wo   **TUNnel so** is, also nicht oben, UNten*
down   where tunnel   SO is   thus not   up   down

*da   gibts **so HERmannstraße und WITtenau***
there is   SO Hermann.street   and Wittenau

du musst HERmannstraße
you must Hermann.street

"You must go down there, down where there is SO tunnel, that is, not up there, but down there, there is SO Hermann street and Wittenau [directions of the U7 subway line in Berlin], you must take Hermann street."

[male, 13 years old, Turkish background, conversation in Neukölln, a multiethnic neighbourhood of Berlin, on the street, response to the question of how to get to Hermann Square]

What is interesting about these occurrences is that they deviate from conventional usages of "so" in German, but seem to follow a common pattern. In order to shed some more light on this, we will first test the four explanations for "so" from above for these examples in turn, and then propose an account for these novel usages.

Explanation 1: "so" as a comparison particle
The prototypical function of "so" in German is that of a comparison particle. "so" in this context is part of a construction in which it is combined with an adjective that identifies the property [a] serving as the base of the comparison, ie., the property in regard to which two objects [X, Y] are compared.

Consider standard German example (5):
(5)   *Anna$_X$ ist so klug$_a$ wie Maria$_Y$*
      Anna is as smart as Maria

A possible paraphrase of this grammatical construction is
          '[X] is compared to [Y] with regard to property [a] '.

Constructions   of   this   form   are   called   "modal   comparisons" ('Modalitätsvergleiche', cf. Thurmair 2001, 170). "so" in this context is largely grammaticalised; it retains only a bleached lexical meaning "in this manner", and cannot be replaced by other expressions. This kind of usage is also possible

in Kiezdeutsch. Consider example (6) (also taken from the corpus mentioned above):

(6) *sie darf halt kein FREUND habn (.)*
  she may MP no   boyfriend have

  und eigentlisch darf ich auch keine freundin habn
  and strictly.speaking may I   also no   girlfriend have

  *aber (.) für MICH is ja   nich **so schlimm wie** für sie$_Y$*
   but for me is MP not SO bad as   for her

 "She is not allowed to have a boyfriend, and strictly speaking, I am not allowed to have a girlfriend either, but for me$_X$ it is not as bad$_a$as for her$_Y$."

[male, ca. 20 years old, Arabic background, informal interview in Kreuzberg, a multiethnic neighbourhood of Berlin, about his experiences with a former girlfriend]

In examples (1)-(4), however, "so" cannot be analysed as a comparison particle: there is no comparison context, either explicit or implicit, that "so" could link to. Example (2), repeated here for convenience, illustrates this point:

(2) *Interviewer*: *könnt ihr n bisschen erzählen aus eurer freizeit*
      could you a little.bit tell from your leisure.time

 Speaker: *wir sind imma bei haus der   jugend da (.)*
     we are always at house of.the youth there

    *da   gibs **so CLUB** imma bei [h.]   wir sin imma   da*
    there is   SO club always near   [PLACE] we are always there

    für JUgendliche so
    for adolescents SO

    *zum beispiel   da   gibs **so BILliard-raum***
    for   example   there is   SO snooker-room

In these examples, the expressions with which "so" is combined are not compared to anything: there is no property retrievable that would serve as a basis for comparison: the club and the snooker room are identified, rather than compared, and similarly, the club's function as being "for adolescents" is not part of a comparison. In the latter example, an additional interesting

characteristic that distinguishes this usage from conventional "so" is the fact that "so" follows the phrase it is combined with ("für jugendliche", *for adolescents*), rather than preceding it.

Thus, while Explanation 1 applies for some instances of "so" in Kiezdeutsch (cf. 6 above), it cannot account for these novel usages.

Explanation 2: "so" as an intensity marker
In colloquial German, "so" can function as an intensity marker. In this usage, "so" serves to amplify and strengthen statements. Auer (2007, 11) argues that such constructions evoke emphasis and expressiveness. More often than not, stress and phonetic lengthening of "so" supports the emphasis.

There are also examples of this in Kiezdeutsch, cf. (8):

(7) *das war halt **SO (.) EINmaliges feeling** also   in der wm*
     that was MP SO   unique   feeling that.is in the world.cup

     das man so öfter   gesehn hat (1.0)
     that one   so more.often seen   has

     das war (1.0) nisch nur   das WETter   war bombe
     that was   not   only the weather was bomb

     die WELT war bombe alles   war BOMbe
     the world was bomb everything was bomb

"There was such a unique feeling during the soccer world cup. It happened frequently. Not only was the weather great, the world was great, everything was great."

[male, ca. 20 years old, Arabic (Palestinian) background, informal interview in Berlin-Kreuzberg, about the question what a perfect place to live would be like]

(8) *man solltes   schon KENnen so wie es hier IS*
    one   should.it MP   know   like   it here is

    und dann erstma sein kommenTAR dazu   geben
    and then once   one's comment   to.that give

    *weil   es gibt   **SO viele vorurteile** gegen   KREUZberg*
    because there are   SO many prejudices against Kreuzberg

"One should really know what it is like here, and only then comment on it, because there are so many prejudices against Kreuzberg."

[male, 18 years old, Turkish background; informal interview, youth club in Berlin-Kreuzberg, about opinions about Kreuzberg]

In (7) and (8), "so" marks the intensity of "unique feeling" and "big experience", respectively. In both cases, "so" carries the main stress. In contrast, in our sample of novel usages "so" does not get stress itself, but rather, precedes expressions that carry the main stress, cf. example (3) from above as an illustration:

(3) *ich bin mehr* **so naTURtyp** *für   natur dorf*
    I   am more SO nature.type   for   nature village

What is more, from a semantic point of view, concrete objects like "shisha shop", "Hermann street", and "snooker room" cannot undergo intensification without considerable adjustments, which provides a further argument against the usage of "so" as an intensifier in these cases.

However, there is a sense in which "so" in these novel usages assigns some emphasis to the phrases it precedes. We will come back to this at a later point. For the time being, we note that "so", while it might add emphasis, is not used as an intensity marker here, and move on to testing explanation 3 against our examples.

Explanation 3: "so" as a hedging strategy
In spoken informal German, "so" is frequently employed for hedging and vagueness purposes (cf. Lütten 1977:302f), and can precede phrases of different syntactic categories. Formalised expressions like "und so"/"oder so" that implement vagueness are very common in youth language – Henne (1986:148) goes so far as to call them the "favorite particles of adolescents" (Weinrich 1993,833 classifies them as "vagueness indicators"). When used at the end of a turn, they can signal that the speaker has no further relevant information to provide. During a turn, they are used to generalise the given information ("*und so*") or to relativise it (*"oder so",* cf. Androutsopoulos 1998, 499).

This kind of usage of "so" is also found in Kiezdeutsch (examples from our corpus again). In example (9), the speaker hedges several major parts of his utterance: the topic (*Bushido und so*), the dimension of his favour (*so mehr*), and the justification (*so mit der melodie*).

(9) *ja am MEIsten gefällt mir **so mehr buSHIdo und so***
     yes most.of.all pleases me SO more Bushido and SO

   das halt (.) so mit der meloDIE ähm
   that just   SO with the melody   ahm

"Yes, most of all I like Bushido [rap singer] and so on, with the melody."

[male, 23 years old, Turkish background, informal interview at a kebab shop, about his favourite music]

In example (10), the speaker makes a generalisation: "wegen familie" ('because of family') is just one among several reasons why he no longer has a girlfriend.

(10) *also ISCH hab keine freundin   mehr*
       well I   have no   girlfriend anymore

   *das hat nicht geKLAPPT   wegen   **faMIlie und so***
   that has not   worked.out because.of family   and so

"Well, I do not have a girlfriend anymore, that has not worked out, because of the family."

[male, ca. 20 years old, Arabic (Palestinian) background, informal interview in Berlin-Kreuzberg, answer to the question whether he has a girlfriend]

In example (11), the speaker says his parents would prefer his girlfriend ("sie", 'she') not to wear a headscarf. "oder so" generalises this: the sentence can be understood as claiming that she should not be too traditional in general.

(11) *sie muss ein GUtes mädchen sein*
       she must a   good girl   be

   *sie soll kein **KOPFtuch oder so** tragen*
   she must no   headscarf   or   so wear

   also das ist kein MUSS bei   meinen eltern
   well that is no   must with   my   parents

"She must be a good girl. She need not wear a headscarf or something, that is not a requirement for my parents."

[male, 18 years old, Turkish background, informal interview, at a youth club in Berlin-Kreuzberg, about his parents' expectations of girlfriends]

To interpret "so" as a hedging strategy may explain a *part* of what "so" does in our example from (3) above:

(3) *ich bin mehr* **so naTURtyp** *für natur dorf*
    I am more SO nature.type for nature village

However, "so" is *more* than just a hedging strategy in this sentence. If one left out "so", the information "naturtyp" would lose some of its importance. We will return to this point later in the article.

In example (4) from above, the hedging interpretation clearly fails:

(4) *da   gibts* **so HERmannstraße** *und WITtenau*
    there   is   SO Hermann.street   and Wittenau

Hermannstraße and Wittenau are subway directions – it seems unlikely that there is anything fuzzy or vague about their interpretation. Thus, "so", as it is used here, cannot be regarded as a hedging particle.

Explanation 4: "so" as a type-token article?
The following example illustrates a colloquial usage of "so" in combination with an indefinite noun phrase:

(12) (While talking about different salient types of jumpers in a shop window)
    Kaufst du mir **sonen pullover***?*
    buy   you me SO.a   jumper

"Will you buy me a jumper like this?" (Hole & Klumpp (2000, 237))

In this example, it is not vagueness that is transported. Rather, "sonen Pullover" refers to an instance of a certain type. A paraphrase for "so" in these contexts would be '*such a kind of X*' (with X being the noun's contribution). In Kiezdeutsch as well as in other informal, spoken varieties of German, the indefinite article in this construction frequently cliticises to "so", resulting in "son-".

Hole & Klumpp (2000) argue that this form can be analysed as a 'type-token-article' article which fills an empty position in the German article paradigm by singling out one item (the token) from a set (the type). Although the

classification as a new article is challenged by Lenerz & Lohnstein (2005), they basically agree with the semantic analysis of this construction: for them, the form is complex, consisting of the type-definite adjective "so" and a token-indefinite clitised article "ein".

In addition to the form "son-" (ie., "so" with a cliticised indefinite article), we also find "so" alone, namely with plural count nouns that can appear in bare noun phrases without an article. This shows that, in principle, the use of bare "so" as a type-token article is possible in German. In Kiezdeutsch, we often find singular count nouns in bare NPs as well, ie., in constructions where standard German requires an article (in line with the tendency of morphosyntactic reduction observed for Kiezdeutsch). Hence, in the examples for novel usages from above, "so" could in principle serve a type-token function (the conventional counterpart of "so" would then be inflected forms "son-").

However, a look at example (4) from above shows that this account fails here:
   (4) *da gibts* **so HERmannstraße** *und WITtenau*
      there is SO Hermann.street   and Wittenau

Given that Hermannstraße and Wittenau are clearly defined, unique subway directions, an interpretation of "so" as a type-token article does not work out: we cannot get an interpretation along the lines of "an indefinite instance of a general set of Hermannstraße directions".

Preliminary conclusion
As we have seen so far, the four traditional explanations for German "so" that we have investigated here do not give satisfactory accounts for our examples (1)-(4). We do not claim that the previous explanations cannot account for any occurrences of "so" in Kiezdeutsch – the examples above have shown that in many cases, they do work. Our point is rather that for a fuller understanding of "so" we need to complement them by an account that covers the novel usages of "so" we found in Kiezdeutsch.

A possible avenue to develop such an account is to add another dimension to the analysis of "so" in Kiezdeutsch: information structure. As Wiese (2007, 2009) argues, the morphosyntactic reduction we find in Kiezdeutsch indicates a weakening of grammatical restrictions that might allow speakers to realise informational-structural preferences more directly than would be possible under strict syntactic constraints. This could account for phenomena like word order deviances from standard usages as well as for the emergence of new particles that might take on an information-structural function. For the case of "so", this

means that the novel usages we found might be accounted for if we characterise "so" as a new grammatical marker of focus in Kiezdeutsch (Wiese 2007).

While more empirical data is needed to adequately test this hypothesis, we will explore its tractability for the samples we have so far and see in how far it can account for the novel usages illustrated in (1) to (4) above. In the following sections, we first sketch the relevant notions of information structure and than discuss how the concept of focus might help us understand the role of "so" in Kiezdeutsch.

Information structure and strategies to mark focus

In a general approach, information structure can be described as a way to package information that responds to the communicative needs of speaker and hearer (cf. Chafe 1976). Information-structural preferences reflect communicative strategies of a speaker, who makes use of the grammatical and lexical of a language in order to realise these preferences (cf. Féry 2006).

Focus identifies the key information in a sentence and contrasts it to alternatives, "focus indicates the presence of alternatives that are relevant for the interpretation of linguistic expressions" (Krifka 2006, 6). Focus expressions can be constituents of varying size, reaching from subconstituents to whole sentences.

Focus can be marked by different grammatical and lexical means. Crosslinguistically, a common way to mark focus is stress. "If a phrase P is chosen as the focus of a sentence S, the highest stress in S will be on the syllable of P that is assigned highest stress by the regular stress rules." (Jackendoff 1972, 37). On the syntactic level, a common strategy that has also been observed as a general tendency in Basic Variety is to place the expression for information focus towards the end of the sentence ("focus last", cf. Klein & Perdue 1997). In standard German verb-second sentences, the expression that carries information focus usually occupies a late position in the sentence, based on a preference to place it in the deepest embedded position of the verb phrase (Drubig & Schaffar 2001). On the lexical level, *focus particles* can be used to mark focus on the element preceding or following them.

While standard German does not have grammaticalised focus particles, it features focus-*sensitive* particles like "*nur*" ('*only*'), which add extra lexical content to the focus expression in their scope and thus contribute to the semantics of the sentence. Consequently, in (13), "nur" not only marks focus for the number of dwarfs ('six'), but also indicates that this number is unexpectedly low:

(13) *Schneewittchen sieht   nur   sechs   Zwerge.*
     Snow.white   sees   only   six   dwarves

For Kiezdeutsch, we hypothesise that "so" takes the role of a grammaticalised true focus particle that does not add lexical content, but serves to mark focus for the expression in its scope. There is some evidence for such particles coming from informal varieties of related Germanic languages. Underhill (1988) and Meehan (1991) show that in colloquial North American English "like" can mark expressions that are in focus. According to Toril Opsahl (p.c.), "sånn" in Norwegian Youth Language can be interpreted along similar lines, and "bara/ba'" in Swedish Youth Language has been characterised as a conversational/discourse marker (cf. Erman & Kotsinas 1993) that might also fulfill focus marking functions.

(14) *She's **like** really pregnant.* [Colloquial English] (Meehan 1991,44)

(15) *Du e   **ba'** språkforskare.*   [Swedish Youth Language]
     you are only a.linguist   (Erman & Kotsinas 1993,83)

(16) *Det er **sånn** ok greit.*   [Norwegian Youth Language]
      it   is   like ok good   (Opsahl & Røyneland 2008,3)

These particles do not contribute to the semantics of the sentences directly, but rather to their information structure: they mark focus on the constituent in their scope. As focus particles, they cannot receive stress themselves, while the constituent they precede, being in focus, receives the main sentence stress.

In sum, focus particles are characterised by the following properties: They...
1. do not have any lexical content and thus can be left out without changing the meaning;
2. cannot receive stress;
3. occur with syntactically different types of constituents.

"so" as focus-only particle
Property (i) is clearly fulfilled in our examples (1)-(4): In each case, "so" does not contribute to the semantics of the sentence. What is more, in none of the cases does it receive stress: in compliance with condition (ii), the main stress is always on the constituent in its scope, supporting its interpretation as a focus expression:

(1) *so WASserpfeifeladen*
SO shisha.shop

(2a) *da   gibs **so CLUB** imma*
there is   SO   club   always

(2b) ***für JUgendliche so***
for adolescents   so

(2c) *zum beispiel da   gibs **so BILliard-raum***
for   example there is   SO snooker-room

(3a) *ich bin mehr **so naTURtyp** für natur dorf*
I   am more SO nature.type for nature village

(3b) ***so im   GRÜnen** das is mein ding*
SO in.the green   that is my   thing

(4a) *unten, wo   **TUNnel so** ist*
down   where tunnel   SO is

(4b) *da   gibts **so   HERmannstraße und WITtenau***
there is   SO Hermann.street   and Wittenau

As required by condition (iii), "so" can also occur with syntactically different types of constituents. While in most of the examples we discussed so far, "so" is combined with noun phrases, we also find prepositional phrases, as in the second examples in (2) and (3) ("für jugendliche", 'for adolescents', and "im grünen", 'on the countryside'). More evidence comes from the following two examples, where "so" equally fulfils conditions (i) and (ii) (it does not contribute to the semantics of the sentences, and it does not receive stress, the main stress is on the expression in its focus), and is combined with another prepositional phrase (17) and an adjective phrase (18).

(17) *ich höre   alpa gun weil   er [**so aus SCHÖneberg**]$_F$ kommt*
I listen.to Alpa Gun because he SO from Schöneberg   comes

"I listen to Alpa Gun [rap singer], because he comes SO from Schöneberg [Berlin district]."

[male, 19 years old, Arabic (Palestinian) background, informal interview about his music preferences]

(18) *die HÜBschesten   fraun   kommn von   den schweden*
      the most.beautiful women come   from the Swedes

      *also   ich mein [so BLOND so]*_F
      that.is I   mean SO blonde   SO

"The most beautiful women come from Sweden, I mean SO blonde SO."

[male, ca. 20 years old, Arabic background, informal interview about the soccer world cup 2008 in Germany]

In example (18), we observe a doubled "so" that forms a bracket around the constituent. The function of this "so"-bracket in contrast to a single "so" is not altogether clear to us at present. A possible explanation would be that this bracket deliminates the focus scope more clearly. In this context, it is interesting to note that we also found cases where "so" follows, rather than precedes the focus-marked constituent (cf. "für jugendliche so", 'for adolescents so' and "tunnel so" from (2) an (4) above). If the position of "so" is not altogether fixed yet, then a bracket might draw on this and combine two possible positions.

The following example illustrates the use of a "so"-bracket as a focus marker in a particularly clear case, that is, in a context where the contrastive aspect of focus is especially emphasised for the constituent that is marked by "so":

(19) Interviewer: *also ist die muttersprache   für dich*
                   so   is the native.language for you

      Speaker: *aRAbisch*
               Arabic

               wobei   ich sie ja selber nicht perfekt KANN
               although   I   it   MP myself not   perfectly can

               isch mein   weil   isch bin ja   hier geBOren
               I   mean because I   am MP here born

               *isch hab   ja   mehr [so DEUTSCH so]*_F
               I   have MP more SO German SO

               zu hause red   ich mehr DEUTSCH als   arabisch
               at home speak I   more German   than Arabic

"So your native language is…"
"Arabic. Although, I don't speak it perfectly myself. I mean, I am born here after all, I have more German, at home I speak more German than Arabic."

[male, ca. 20 years old, Arabic background, interview in Berlin-Kreuzberg, about his language competences]

In this example, B's answer to A's question about B's native language is initially "arabisch" ('Arabic'). But then, B emphasises a different point that is in disagreement with this, namely that he cannot speak Arabic properly, that he is born in Germany and has in fact better mastered German. In this context, where a highly emphasised, contrastive focus is needed, we get a "so"-bracket around "deutsch" ('German').

Conclusion and outlook
In this article, we have presented novel usages of "so" in Kiezdeutsch that cannot be accounted for by conventional descriptions of "so" in German. Investigating these usages, we found that an account that characterises "so" as a focus marker can capture these constructions best. If this account is correct, then what we are currently observing in Kiezdeutsch is an instance of grammaticalization in progress, where "so" is adding a new function to its repertoire. For the data we discussed here, the explanatory power of the focus particle hypothesis seems convincing. It therefore seems promising to undertake further studies as to whether this hypothesis can be confirmed by broader empirical data (e.g., for a larger corpus, and by testing it with speakers in different kinds of settings). If this novel function of "so" is indeed that of a focus marker, then it relates the use of "so" in syntactically new environments to information-structural preferences, suggesting that in multiethnolects like Kiezdeutsch, we can observe an interesting case of interaction between grammar and information structure.

Abbreviations in interlinear translations & transcriptions
MP   - modal particle
F   - focus
(.), (1.0)   - short pause; pause (seconds)

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