Tuesday December 17th
Room DZ 3 (Dante building)

09:00 – 09:40  Presentation Annelies Kusters
Language ideologies in the shared signing community of Adamorobe

‘Designer immigrant’ students in Singapore:
Challenges for linguistic human rights in a globalizing world

10:30 – 10:40  Coffee break

10:40 – 11:20  Presentation Kamran Kahn
The securitization of language in integration regimes: the British context

11:25 – 12:05  Presentation Liva Hyttel-Sørensen
Gangster talk on the phone
Copenhagen Street Language in popular culture and everyday interaction

12:10 – 12:50  Presentation Samu Kytölä
‘I be da reel gansta’ – Metapragmatic evaluations of the performance and authenticity of English in Finnish professional footballers’ tweets
Abstracts

Language ideologies in the shared signing community of Adamorobe

Annelies Kusters

This presentation describes analyzes language ideologies with regard to sign language in Adamorobe, a “shared signing community” in southern Ghana. Adamorobe Sign Language (AdaSL) is a “shared sign language”, used by all deaf people and a large number of hearing Akan-speaking people. Deaf schoolchildren from Adamorobe attend a school where Ghanaian Sign Language (GSL) is taught. Hearing interviewees have experiential knowledge that everything can be said in AdaSL, emphasize the shared roots of AdaSL and Akan, and called AdaSL “natural”. Deaf interlocutors describe Akan, AdaSL and GSL as three distinct but equivalent languages. AdaSL is said to be a “hard” language, more pleasant to use, and more expressive than GSL, but sign bilingualism is highly valued. These findings are compared and contrasted with accounts on language ideologies with regard to other shared sign languages and larger urban/national sign languages.

‘Designer immigrant’ students in Singapore: Challenges for linguistic human rights in a globalizing world

Jiqun Luke Lu

Linguistic Human Rights has developed as a prominent response to the threat of linguistic discrimination and marginalization of peoples who speak and use a minority language. This paper, however, suggests that super-diversity triggered by globalization and transmigration pose difficult questions for LHR’s normative assumptions regarding language and linguistic practices. I draw on questionnaire data of five individuals, who are part of a specific group of migrants in Singapore previously labeled ‘designer immigrant’ students. With low proficiencies in English, their linguistic human rights may be perceived to be neglected by schools that use only English as medium of instruction. In uncovering their attitudes toward language learning and aspirations, it will be shown that they (a) demonstrate changes in their identity and language use over time; (b) constantly cross national borders on their own terms; and (c) exhibit conscious choice in their behaviors with some not wishing to be bound to any cultural identity. I argue that LHR’s theoretical precepts regarding language and identity are unable to accommodate the sociolinguistic practices of such interstitial actors who translocate indefinitely over time and space.
The securitization of language in integration regimes: The British context

Kamran Kahn

My paper will examine how language has become a prominent feature of British integration politics. Using a conceptual understanding of security and securitization drawing upon work from the Copenhagen school in security studies, I will argue that language ideology and securitized discourses create a potent combination in discursively constructing language as a threat to society. Through securitized discourses, governments are able to establish legislation and measures which now more than ever in the UK use language as a means of creating barriers to entry for migrants. These threats are not necessarily played out in everyday settings.

At a security conference in 2011, Prime Minister Cameron conflated issues of (1) national security in relation to terrorism and the military (2) national, local, ‘community’ identity, citizenship and language proficiency. Thus, there was an explicit and implicit connection between issues of language, integration and security.

Security studies have seen a shift in scholarship from viewing threats to the state to aspects of society. The Copenhagen School identified five areas in which threats may be posed with: military, politics, economic, environment and of most relevance, societal security. Societal security is defined as ‘the sustainability, within reason in acceptable for evolution, of traditional patterns of language and religious and national identity and custom’ (Buzan 2007: 38). Societal security is often challenged by migrants through their linguistic practices, religions and customs. In 2002, British citizenship language requirements were linked to solidifying a shared national identity, language and community cohesion in response to the 2001 riots involving British-Asians in the north of England

The UK has continued to use language proficiency requirements in immigration legislation. In so doing, politicians often use discourses of various forms of security in presenting English as necessary for societal security. Multilingualism or the languages of migrants, and by definition migrants themselves, are presented as ‘security’ threats.

The paper will focus on the role of language within wider discourses of security. I will also use data collected from my thesis to evidence everyday experiences of British citizenship as a counter point to security discourses.

Gangster talk on the phone
Copenhagen Street Language in popular culture and everyday interaction

Liva Hyttel-Sørensen

The Amager project studies the semiotic practices and social behavior of a group of students in superdiverse setting in Copenhagen. In the project we collect ethnographic data in a range of everyday contexts, including the social network site Facebook. Focusing on the preadolescent pupils, this paper analyzes how a register on one hand exists at a value boundary, valorized as an emblem of in-group identity, while it on the other hand is widely dispersed through popular culture.

Among the pupils’ linguistic resources is a clustering of resources that they label “street language” (or “gangster language” or “slang language”). Ethnographic studies have documented how street language plays a part in constructions of streetwise, pan-ethnic personas. When describing street language and norms for its use, our participants stress that only “immigrants” or people growing up with immigrants should use it. Although the participants describe it as “their” private language only for use in specific contexts, street language has come to play an increasingly significant role in Danish popular culture during the last decade. An example of use of street language in popular culture was brought to my attention when one of the pupils posted a sketch called “Gangster talk on the phone” on Facebook. In this presentation I give a brief introduction to the representations of street language in the media in general and in the TV sketch show “It’s still veiling” and the sketch “Gangster talk on the phone” in particular. I then analyze the pupils’ reactions to the use of street language in this sketch, and show how concepts such as authenticity and legitimacy are made relevant by the pupils. Finally I discuss what these reactions say about the ongoing processes of enregisterment of street language.
'I be da reel gansta’ — Metapragmatic evaluations of the performance and authenticity of English in Finnish professional footballers’ tweets

Samu Kytölä & Elina Westinen

This paper explores, first, three Finnish soccer professionals’ uses of the micro-blog Twitter, and second, normatively oriented meta-commentaries by Finnish football fans on language use in those short messages (tweets), with a specific focus on the emically emerging category of ‘gangsta’ English and its authenticity. The main focus is on tweets by Mikael Forssell, accompanied with those by Mika Väyrynen and Tim Sparv. Their life and career trajectories are characterized by multiculturality, and as their digital writing has diverse audiences across Europe, their tweets show orientation to multiple centers and audiences, being polylingual (Jørgensen 2008; Jørgensen et al. 2011) and heteroglossic (Bakhtin 1984; Androutsopoulos 2011) in nature. During a ‘thick’ momentum in the trio’s online activity they, Forssell in particular, deploy several recurring linguistic features that can be associated with African American Vernacular English, and possibly with the register of ‘gangsta’ talk, emphasized by explicit cultural references to American hip hop culture. All this occurs with a heightened sense of jocularity and performance. In the ‘next stage’ of the digital mediation chain, a community of Finnish football fans at Futisforum2.org (Kytölä 2012, 2013) initiate and maintain metapragmatic, sarcastic commentaries on the acceptability and authenticity of the language of these tweets. We focus here on these fans’ evaluations of non-Standard English uses, the labels ascribed to that register/style ranging from ‘wanabee rapper’ and ‘unintentional comedy’ to ‘pathetic’ or ‘retarded’, belonging to teenagers rather than grown-up professionals. The uptake and response thus show a degree of conventionality, purism, and normativity, with biases against non-Standard writing. However, some of the Futisforumists show not only a strong awareness of genre/register differences but also a readiness to play around with them by appropriating similar ‘gangsta’ features in their own online forum performance. It is this tension between normativity and appropriation that this paper attempts to showcase, anchored in the frameworks of transculturality (Pennycook 2007; Jacquemet 2005; Leppänen et al. 2009) and sociolinguistic superdiversity (Creese & Blackledge 2010; Blommaert & Rampton 2011).