

**Seminar coordinators: *Angela Creese and Adrian Blackledge, MOSAIC Centre for Research on Multilingualism, School of Education, University of Birmingham.***

### **Seminar abstract and rationale**

#### ***Conceptualizing multilingualism under superdiversity: membership claims, social categories and emblems of authenticity***

In complex societies people belong to, or are ascribed membership of, multiple social categories. The papers presented in this colloquium ask questions about the value and force of social categories. They consider how and why people claim or reject membership of those categories, and how trajectories of belonging change across time and space. They interrogate the stability of membership of social categories, and of the categories themselves. Furthermore, the papers engage with the implications of these questions for social policy. In this seminar the presentations consider how membership of social categories is negotiated in the delicate weave of social interaction. The papers argue that analysts may gain purchase on what we commonly refer to as ‘identity’ by attending to acts of performance and construal through which emblems and social personae are linked.

### **Individual Paper abstracts**

#### **‘You can tell he’s public school’: Metapragmatic stereotypes as systems of distinction Adrian Blackledge and Angela Creese (University of Birmingham)**

In this paper we consider the discursive means by which families and peer groups create systems of distinction between categories of persons. This ‘metacommentary’ serves as a resource to reproduce the existing social order. As such, metacommentary and the representation of metapragmatic stereotypes are recruited in the service of unequal relations with respect to social class, ethnicity, and national belonging. In order to discuss the deployment of these resources we engage with the notion of ‘register’ and ‘stereotypes’. The study reported here is the United Kingdom section of an international linguistic ethnographic research project, ‘Investigating Discourses of Inheritance and Identity in Four Multilingual European Settings’ (09-HERA-JRP-CD-FP-051).

#### **Language as talisman: Realising materialisations of dialect Hugh Escott and Kate Pahl (University of Sheffield)**

Language as Talisman involved young people from youth centres and schools together with academics from English and Education departments and was based in Rawmarsh, Rotherham, UK. We explored the way in which contemporary dialect was understood and then semiotically and materially realised. The project used a collaborative ethnographic approach with a focus on linguistic ethnography (Lassiter 2005). We consider the materially situated concept of language, drawing on a theoretical framework from Blommaert (2008), Kress (2010) and Snell (2013). We apply this understanding to an understanding of language and dialect as a site for belonging and for forging identities.

#### **Ideological Becoming as an entry point to investigating belonging and community Kamran Khan (University of Birmingham)**

Gaining citizenship represents entrance to a national ‘community’ and a form of legal belonging. My paper examines the process of becoming a British citizen through an ethnographically-informed case study in two ways. Firstly, on an individual level I will explore Bakhtin’s notion of ‘ideological becoming’ using the ‘Life in the UK’ citizenship test as a ‘zone of contact.’ I explore how individuals assimilate authoritative discourses promoted by politically and ideologically oriented preparation

materials. Secondly, this opens up how a community functions in preparing to pass the test by drawing on their multilingual resources. This not only undermines the ideological nature of such tests, but also shows how multilingualism is used in relation to providing practical assistance. Combined with Baumeister & Leary's theory on belonging (1995), this paper will investigate how such communities provide belonging and multilingual assistance. This is then viewed alongside prevalent political discourse which promotes notions of community, language and belonging.

**Between skepticism and credulity: Interdiscursivity, stance, and social category  
in Luso-Descendants' talk about the supernatural  
Michele Koven (University of Illinois Urbana Champaign)**

Scholars have long discussed the relation between transient micro-interactional footings and how those footings signal "types" of people. I discuss how participants link locally recognized stances and identity categories in Luso-descendants' (LDs) storytellings about potentially supernatural events. In these stories, these young women, daughters of rural Portuguese migrants raised in urban France, must display recognizably skeptical or credulous stances. I investigate how their narrating stances toward narrated supernatural events summon up broader French and Portuguese categories of person. In other words, it is through these stances that they assign each other to and recognize each other in more and less valued identity types. As such, I examine the reflexive, interdiscursive work participants engage in, as they interpret each another's transient footings as signs of each other's inhabitation of more perduring social types.

**How not to learn English in South Korea: Gender, modernity, and multilingualism  
Adrienne Lo (University of Illinois Urbana Champaign)**

In South Korea, multilingualism is often presented as a key emblem of modernity, as an individual's multilingual proficiency elevates his status and the status of the nation. Yet for South Korean women, displays of English can instead frame them as non-moderns who are linked to chronotopes of postwar South Korean poverty and gendered subjugation. This paper traces the indexical processes through which contemporary South Korean women's language learning trajectories are moralized and they are linked to gendered, sexualized, raced, and classed models of personhood. By showing how women are understood as speakers of restricted vernaculars that tie them to a supposedly bygone past, while men are imagined as speakers of a global standard that links them to the expansive global future, this paper looks at the importance of historical figures of personhood in mediating understandings of authentic multilingualism.

**Styling in a language learned later in life  
Ben Rampton (Kings College, University of London)**

This paper tackles the traditional split between sociolinguistics and second language research with an integrated account of linguistic form, language ideology and situated practice – what Silverstein calls the 'total linguistic fact' (TLF). Emphasising one or two of these dimensions to the exclusion of the third leaves us vulnerable to the default interpretations of SLA and sociolinguistics – erasing or romanticising our informants' political, rhetorical or linguistic positioning. But if we pursue the TLF, we can watch what happens in conditions of contemporary superdiversity, where the old predictabilities dissolve and forms, acts and social categories no longer co-occur in the patterns that we once expected. The paper draws on an ESRC-funded project in a London suburb where >40% of the population was born abroad, and explores these issues through interactional and variationist analyses of the stylistic practice of an adult who started to use English in his late 20s.

**Negotiating social roles in semi-public online contexts**  
**Caroline Tagg (University of Birmingham)**

Communication on social media takes place in an environment defined by ‘context collapse’, whereby various offline audiences (e.g. family members, work colleagues, friends) are brought together into one online space. In negotiating ways to conduct interpersonal relationships within this ‘semi-public’ environment, users reveal their interpretations of their own social roles, as well as their perceptions of the people and communities with which they interact. For example, a father is likely to be restrained in what he posts on a social network site by the knowledge that his children may have access to his posts (even if he is not addressing them directly) and thus he needs to conform to certain expectations of his own parental role. Such practices show how social identities – and claims to authenticity – are interactively co-constructed online through responses to perceived social categories and conventions.

**Voices of Russia: The making of a band**  
**Sabina Vakser (University of Melbourne)**

This paper draws on one case study from my doctoral research to trace the recontextualization of resources in the creation of a ‘Russian’ band. This trajectory begins in 20<sup>th</sup> century USSR and ends in present-day Melbourne. I consider how multiple sources of inspiration are ‘re-sourced’ over time and space, serving various social agendas, before leading to the band’s inception. These sources include song lyrics, musical genre, tone, style, as well as political struggles, ideas, and even human legacy, all of which become emblematic in the creation of an ‘authentic’ image of the band. I explore the complexity of this historical echoing, as well as what it might contribute to a deeper understanding of dialogism and authenticity in globalization (Blommaert & Varis, 2011).