Translanguaging and repertoires across signed and spoken languages
Insights from linguistic ethnographies in (super)diverse contexts

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- Abstracts -
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ABSTRACTS IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

Monday, 20 June 2016
09:15 - 09:40

Bridging signed and spoken language sociolinguistics in superdiversity

In the light of the emergent field of the sociolinguistics of super-diversity, the present contribution wishes to act as a mature theoretical exercise that tackles key concepts in the study of (signed and spoken) language in superdiverse societies. It shows how the study of language has shifted its terminology and its conceptual understanding of language use by moving from (individual and societal) bilingualism to multilingualism and (trans)languaging, ending with the revitalization of a much abandoned concept, that of (multimodal) language repertoires. In our review, we focus on the full spectrum of human language use. This is innovative because the study of signed and spoken languages sociolinguistics have developed rather separately from each other. The focus on multimodal translanguageing and repertoires will be instrumental in bridging these separate strands, which is a much needed development in order to understand human language production in general. Thus, concepts of translanguageing in particular and sociolinguistics in general are extended, because of the unique ways in which gesture and signed and spoken languages are often used together. In so doing, the chapter discusses selected key assumptions, topics and analytical developments in the field. It further considers how the past decades of the study of (signed and spoken) language use have reached a post-Fishmanian stage of maturity in its theorizing moving from a sociolinguistics of distribution to grapple with questions of ‘new speakerhood’ and praxis within complexity.

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Unlocking dialogue through translanguaging in deaf education

This paper explores the meaning of translanguaging in the context of deaf education. Deaf children who use sign and spoken language(s) in their daily lives share many of the language and learning experiences that other bilingual children encounter. However, because this experience of bilingualism involves a visual and gestural, as well as spoken and written language modality there are particular opportunities for the mixed and blended use of languages that are unique to this context. This aspect of bimodal bilingualism has been researched to some extent in terms of language interaction. However, the relationship between bimodal bilingual language interaction and learning has yet to be fully explored. The concept of translanguaging realizes this by providing a perspective on deaf children’s mixed and blended sign and spoken language practices as meaning making, and a focus on the dialogic nature of teaching and learning.

This paper defines the concept of translanguaging in deaf education and argues the importance of the distinction between individual and a pedagogical translanguaging in this context. In individual terms, translanguaging is described as the way in which deaf children draw on their sign and spoken language repertoires to make meaning. Pedagogically, translanguaging is explored as the critical use of two or more languages in the classroom as a means of unlocking dialogue to facilitate learning. The paper draws on examples from deaf education pedagogy, and individual case studies, to illustrate both of these perspectives and demonstrate the potential translanguaging to enhance learning in deaf education classrooms.

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SESSION 1: TRANSLANGUAGING IN EDUCATION

Monday, 20 June 2016
10:15 - 10:35

‘Chicken’ in Somali class. Unbounded use of linguistic resources across a compartmentalised language curriculum

This paper presentation focuses on the unbounded and playful ways in which pupils put their linguistic resources to use across a highly regulated and compartmentalised language curriculum. The paper is based on a linguistic ethnographic study focusing on language teaching across the curriculum in a Year 2 class in a public primary and lower secondary school in Denmark (Daugaard 2015). While Danish and English teaching is obligatory for all pupils in Year 2, most pupils furthermore participate in ‘mother tongue teaching’ in Arabic, Dari, Pashto or Somali. A multilingual and multimodal material consisting of fieldnotes, photographs and video and audio recordings produced through participant observation in the language classroom and supplemented by interviews with pupils, language teachers and school management forms the empirical basis for the paper presentation.

While translanguaging practices have been amply described among adolescents and young people, I instead direct my attention to translanguaging in the early years of schooling. In the paper presentation, I zoom on one particular 8 year old pupil, Abdullahi, and follow him across the language curriculum – in obligatory Danish and English lessons as well as in ‘mother tongue teaching’ in Somali. Abdullahi occupies a complex position in class, simultaneously acting as class clown and being celebrated by his teachers and peers for his Danish reading skills. His linguistic practices are similarly many-faceted. While Abdullahi symbolically stresses the importance of developing his Somali skills, he during Somali class works systematically to create space for English language use and resourcefully draws on a varied range of Englishes as well as a broad repertoire of stylised learner voices.

Abdullahi’s playful use of linguistic resources across the language curriculum challenges established notions about language competences and language teaching. Conteh, Copland & Creese conceptualise such established notions as myths about language teaching and learning which they define as common-sense
notions with high intuitive appeal and strong impact on what counts as desirable language(s), apt linguistic norms and ideals, relevant activities and appropriate ways of managing linguistic diversity in the classroom. A linguistic ethnographic analysis of Abdullahi’s skilfully calibrated linguistic performances in the language classroom at the same time contributes to highlight and destabilise such myths about language teaching and learning.

References


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Translanguaging in the sign bilingual scientific meaning making

Collaborative meaning making in a science classroom is a process in which the students learn to understand, and make use of, scientific language. Given that the science classroom is filled with artefacts such as tables, charts, test tubes and Bunsen burners, classroom interaction is a process of multimodal meaning making in the scientific practice. Thus, studying collaborative meaning making in the science classroom implies some challenges, reinforced when the class is sign bilingual. In the light of Camilla Lindahl’s doctoral dissertation “Signs of significance: A Study of Dialogue in a Multimodal, Sign Bilingual Science Classroom” (2015) the aim of this presentation is to discuss if, and in that case how, the concept of “translanguaging” may compose a theoretical tool for understanding sign bilingual learning and teaching in science. A second aim with the presentation is to discuss how to visualize translanguaging in a sign bilingual dialogue. Seventeen science lessons with two teachers and eight students, all of them deaf and sign bilingual, were filmed and analysed with a multimodal social semiotic perspective as a point of departure. The main questions in the study are how Swedish sign language and written Swedish is used and how the languages, in interaction with other modalities, contribute to scientific meaning making. With respect to the sign bilingual dialogue, the specified questions is a) what characterises language shift that can be identified and b) to what extent, and in what way, does the language shift contribute to scientific meaning making. The results depict a dynamic usage of both languages through spontaneous and seamless language shift, which is utilized as educational tool. Within a framework of theory of translanguaging, language shifting is discussed as a factor that drives the dialogue further and shows how we can analyse the sign bilingual dialogue which itself is multimodal.

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BENGT-OLOV MOLANDER, Stockholm University (Sweden)
My ethnographic study of a Tamil Saivite Hindu temple looks at the role of religion in supporting heritage language maintenance for migrants in Australia. Previous research has found that, for Sri Lankan Tamils, a devout faith in Hinduism helps families to maintain the Tamil language in the home (Smolicz, Lee, Murugaian, & Secombe, 1990; Fernandez & Clyne, 2007; Perera, 2015) and, while this is true for the first generation, something more complex is occurring for subsequent generations. These younger generations, being raised and educated in an English-speaking country, show a preference for English in most domains of their lives. At the same time there are certain forces motivating them to incorporate Tamil into their linguistic repertoires, and for a small sub-section, religion is one of these forces.

I focus on a group of children who attend the Tamil temple’s weekly religious school. For this group, Tamil was the first language they learnt and they continue this education by attending a separate Saturday language school. However the temple’s religious school offers a different forum: it is a Tamil-medium school with an emphasis on transferring the teachings of Saivism. Children are expected to communicate in Tamil however language is not always at the forefront in this setting. In one particular class, the teacher aims to transfer Saiva values and principles to the students and is flexible about the Tamil language requirement.

In such a setting, some interesting translanguaging takes place. Since the religion is conceptualised in Tamil, students have to draw on a particular Tamil repertoire in order to communicate about religion. They are also motivated to use Tamil as part of their self-identification amongst other Tamils. However in the discussion of complex and interesting topics they sometimes access the English language to help them to clarify their meaning. Gestures play an important part in this since their teacher is not fluent in English. I will present some examples of translanguaging in this context to demonstrate how religion can influence younger generations of migrants to make use of different languages and different modalities in order to learn more about and challenge their religion.
References

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Multimodal-multilingual language between deaf teachers and students in a higher education setting in Sweden

From previous studies of teaching, we know that students with diverse backgrounds and linguistic repertoires come together in the context of higher education with the aim of developing new knowledge and skills. Teachers in such settings then use a range of strategies to facilitate student learning in various ways. However, only a few studies have previously focused on the practices of deaf-led higher education.

Drawing on ethnographically created data from a higher education setting in Sweden, this case study examines the use of different languages and modalities by three deaf lecturers when teaching deaf and hearing (signing) students in theoretic subjects. The analysis is based on video-recordings of the deaf lecturers during classroom activities at a basic university level in which Swedish Sign Language (SSL) is used as the primary language.

The results illustrate how these deaf lecturers creatively use diverse linguistic resources in several modalities when teaching deaf and hearing (signing) students, which creates practices of translanguaging. This is illustrated by classroom activities in which the deaf lecturers use different language varieties, for example SSL, Swedish, and English, along with PowerPoint and whiteboard notes. The characteristics of these multimodal-multilingual resources and the usage of them will be closely examined in this presentation.

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In contemporary sociolinguistics, two parallel movements – linguistic landscapes and translanguaging – appear complementary but have yet to engage more deeply with each other. Studies of the linguistic landscape that move beyond the logocentric approaches of early work – engaging instead with space, place, bodies, languages, and senses – pose several important questions for this emerging domain, including the status of the notion of language (as text or discourse) in relation to the broader semiotic field, and the intersectional relationships among different types of semiosis, society and space (signs, architecture and touch, for example, or gender, bodies, tattoos and place). Work on translanguaging, meanwhile, understood as “the deployment of a speaker’s full linguistic repertoire” without regard for what are seen socially and politically as separate languages (Otheguy, García and Reid, 2015, p. 281), has broken down the boundaries between languages but not between languages and other forms of semiosis. Work in this field typically focuses on linguistic repertoires, and although this might include nonverbal communication, gesture and some wider communicative resources, it has not been open to the wider semiotic sweep of linguistic/semiotic landscapes. Put another way, what might translanguaging look like if it included buildings, tattoos and smells, or, on the other hand, what might semiotic landscapes look like if they included an understanding of spatial repertoires? Drawing on olfactory ethnographies (Pennycook and Otsuji, 2015) and studies of intersectional sensescapes in shops and markets in Sydney and Tokyo, this paper looks at how the intersection of people, objects, activities and senses make up the spatial repertoire of a place. Focusing on intersectional semiotics – where the question is not just of adding items to our semiotic inventory or renaming mixed language use as translanguaging – this paper asks how we can move towards an integrated understanding of interrelated ways of meaning.
References

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The patterned ways of interlinking linguistic and multimodal elements in visually oriented communities


The material for the paper comes from two ethnographic research projects: 1) a research project on English in the everyday life of Finnish Sign Language signers (Tapio 2013) which focused on multimodal resources in face-to-face interaction when dealing with English language, and 2) an ongoing research project which examines the use of multiple signed and spoken languages via different modalities in the context of higher education. The primary data used for this presentation consists of videorecordings of classroom interaction, screen videos, fieldnotes and chatlogs. Both projects reside in multimodal approach stemming from mediated discourse analysis (Norris 2004, Scollon & Scollon 2004).

The goal of this paper is to discuss the concepts of chaining and translanguaging from the social semiotic point of view and frame chaining in these contexts as a practice of resemiotisation and remodalisation (Iedema 2004, Scollon 2008, Tapio 2014). Further, the paper discusses how multimodal languaging (Dufva 2013) is seen as rich point for learning language from ecological and dialocical point of view (see, e.g. Kramsch 2002, van Lier 2004, Zheng, Newgarden 2012). The paper argues that such practices with visual and embodied semiotic resources are used actively among the signing learners and play an important role in their participations to academic discourses.

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My language or translanguage? Rethinking the representation of translanguaging in multilingual data

The aim of the paper is to explore methodological and theoretical concerns when representing translanguaging practices in classroom data. In recent years, the Eurocentric and (post)colonial perception of languages as fixed and systematic has been criticized by a number of scholars. Makoni and Pennycook (2007:2) argue that “Languages do not exist as real entities in the world and neither do they emerge from or represent real environments; they are, by contrast the invention of social, cultural and political movements”. The concept of translanguaging offers a holistic understanding of an individual’s linguistic experience and the simultaneous use of different kinds of linguistic forms, signs and modalities (García & Wei 2014). However, if we do take such a point of departure, how can we as researchers talk about and represent our data without using established concepts such as language (Spanish, Arabic, etc.), multilingualism, mother tongue and second language learning? This paper analyzes empirical material from the ethnographic study CIC, Categorization, Identity and Communication[1], which targets the social practices and discourses that frame a language program designed for adult immigrants in Sweden, Swedish for immigrants (SFI) is analyzed. The typical SFI classroom comprises between 10 to 20 people categorized as adult immigrants with diverse language experiences who have migrated to Sweden from different geographical places. Despite a “Swedish only policy”, the linguistic landscape of the classrooms included in the study is marked by the use of a wide range of different language varieties (Rosén & Bagga-Gupta 2015). In the paper, an empirically driven analysis raises questions of legitimacy, authenticity and belonging in the language learning classroom (i.e. Creese, Blackledge & Takhi 2014; Ganuza and Hedman 2014). Finally, ethical considerations in relation to categorizing and representing translanguaging are addressed.
References


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SESSION 2: TRANSLANUGAGING THEORY

Monday, 20 June 2016
14:55 - 15:15

Renegotiating language and cultural norms in developing a parent ASL curriculum

As Canagarajah (2013) notes, “labeled languages and language varieties have a reality for social groups. More significantly, they are an important form of identity for these groups” (pp. 15-16). The view of sign languages as bounded systems is often important for deaf community empowerment and for pedagogical practice in terms of supporting deaf children’s language acquisition and second language learners’ communicative competence. This presentation reports how translingual practice was embedded in an ethnographic action research study of developing and field-testing an American Sign Language (ASL) curriculum for parents of young deaf children that is aligned with the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR). The CEFR brings to light a potential tension in teaching approaches that proclaim a plurilingual orientation while promoting language proficiency benchmarks that are seemingly based in monolingual norms (Barni, 2015). In this study, beneath the seemingly homogeneous surface of ASL teaching lurk opportunities for superdiversity (Vertovec, 2007), where onedimensional approaches to identity and learning are superseded by an interplay of variables and of language systems. The range of ethnic, cultural, and spoken language backgrounds that were observed among parent participants meant superdiversity was taken up by and engaged with during the parent course and ASL teachers learned to stretch the boundaries of Canadian deaf cultural norms. As well, the goal of supporting parents’ ASL communicative competence facilitated the development of language teaching strategies that enabled learners to “modify, appropriate, and renegotiate dominant norms as one adopts them” (Canagarajah, 2013, p. 12). Such renegotiation of language and cultural norms is the basis of translingual practice.
References


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Translanguaging and repertoires across signed and spoken languages

SESSION 3: TRANSLANGLUAGING ON THE STAGE

Monday, 20 June 2016
16:10 - 16:30

Translanguaging in interpreted signed language communication – an exploratory study

In this exploratory study, we examine the process of translanguaging in interpreted signed language communication. This work draws on cross-disciplinary work that describes human interaction in terms of multimodal composite utterances that integrate a range of semiotic behaviors to prompt meaning construction (e.g., Kendon, 2004; Enfield, 2009). In particular, we will be examining how terms and concepts from spoken languages are produced in signed language-spoken language interpreted situations. We explore how a signer makes sense through the integration of multiple languages, gestures, eye gaze and context. While it is quite common for a deaf community to be familiar with and use the national ambient spoken language, it is also becoming necessary to access and use other foreign spoken languages.

Drawing on work from both linguistics and anthropology, this study examines how English and Norwegian terms used in academic discourse are expressed and used effectively in Norwegian Sign Language by analyzing collaboration between a deaf researcher and a designated interpreter (Hauser et al., 2008). Data for this study involves 1) a Ph.D. defense conducted in Norwegian Sign Language and English and 2) an academic lecture about the future of the deaf community in Norway, presented in Norwegian Sign Language. Findings show that this signer uses a variety of semiotic resources to integrate spoken languages into her signing. For example, while trying to express the concept “mass distribution,” the signer produces a slight hesitation as she directs her eye gaze to the interpreter, where she then produces two general Norwegian signs while mouthing the English word “mass distribution.” She then waits to see if the interpreter understands before moving on and turning her gaze back to her main interlocutor.

It is often assumed that the interlocutors in interpreted communication do not know each others’ languages. In our analysis however, the signed language user knows English and Norwegian (and commands an academic register in these languages better than the interpreters). However, she does not speak these languages. We will argue that through the coordination of gaze, timing, mouthing,
text and signs, along with contextual knowledge of the setting, this signer is able to prompt meanings effectively while utilizing both signed and spoken/written languages. In this setting, the signer uses the interpreter to voice the concepts she presents through a process of translanguaging.

References
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Creative translanguaging methods utilised on stage – ie: movement from British Sign Language (BSL) to Sign Supported English (SSE) to spoken English to Visual Vernacular (VV) and back again; introduction of seemingly familiar neologic signs to draw in those unfamiliar with BSL; or creating stage-specific sign-adaptations – are consciously and consistently appropriated by Deaf performance artists in London. Through these language shifts, they attempt to include more Deaf sign-users in theatre, while also narrowing the perceived cultural divide between Deaf performers and their Hearing-majority audiences.

In the past, translanguaging methods have primarily served to reflect Deaf experience to a Deaf-centric audience, while also increasing cross-cultural Deaf and Hearing understanding via theatrical performance. In the face of diminishing arts funding in austere Britain, however, not only is conscious artistic manipulation of sign language on stage viewed as an effective way of improving understanding by Hearing audiences of “Deaf Awareness” and “Deaf Way” (as defined in Ladd & Lane, 2013; West & Sutton-Spence, 2012; Young & Bogusia, 2014; and Young & Hunt, 2011), it is also increasingly being seen as a step towards relevance and therefore stability for Deaf creative professionals and their companies through increasing employment opportunities for Deaf artists; encouraging more ‘mainstream’ theatres to use sign languages; upholding government ‘access’ initiatives in the arts; and supporting more creative adaptations of sign-centric practices in theatre. Additionally, in many cases these kinds of outcomes have attracted continued (or new) financial support from both public and private funders, driving more companies to utilise different forms of sign on-stage; but also potentially deciding the direction and future viability of Deaf-led artistic companies. In this way, a new experience of Deaf inclusion/exclusion is being wrought on stage through the flex of sign-influenced artistic praxis.

In this paper, I will first touch on particular cases from my field research in which this ‘conscious artistic translanguaging’ occurs: where language shift
is used as a means of introducing a theatre classic to a Deaf audience, while simultaneously introducing ‘Deafness’ to a classical theatre audience; where sign words are used as a basis for the creation of a new sign-dance language; and where Deaf practices such as sign-naming are adjusted to serve as tools for accelerating Hearing understanding of sign language rules as well as enhancing bonding between the Deaf and Hearing performers themselves. I will then shift to addressing how conscious artistic translanguaging affects sign language usage on stage – how hybridisation impacts comprehension by Deaf sign-users; reasons why the rapid acculturation of Hearing audiences in Deaf Way may be occurring; and how mobilisation of ‘successes’ to approach financial supporters is changing artistic approaches to inclusive theatre itself. Ultimately, through this paper, I seek to address the impact conscious artistic translanguaging has had on the Deaf artistic landscape in London, and what it means for the future.

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SESSION 3: TRANSLANGLUAGING ON THE STAGE

Monday, 20 June 2016
17:05 - 17:30

Flying words project: Translanguaging in performance

In 1984, Flying Words Project (FWP) was born when deaf poet Peter Cook attended a workshop by hearing poet Allen Ginsberg. Ginsberg contended that the rhythm, the wit, and the rhyme of a poem cannot always be translated, but that a hard clear image can be. When asked to translate a poetic line, "hydrogen jukebox," deaf poet Patrick Graybill spontaneously translated the line. In sign language, a record landed on a spinning turntable, the needle came down, and music, music, music literally exploded in nuclear holocaust. When Cook witnessed this translation, he realized that he was a poet, and that his goal was the same as the Beat poets, to create images.

At this point Peter was invited to perform in a hearing poetry series. But who would be his voice? Kenny Lerner knew sign, but had not trained as an interpreter. He proceeded to come up with a new form of creative voicing.

During this presentation, Kenny and Peter will alternate between performance and lecture, specifically deconstructing and explaining the techniques Kenny employs in his vocal renditions. Because ASL is a picture language, Flying Words wants the audience to see the images in the work for themselves. This is the only way to truly understand the work. So together they choose wording that allows the hearing audience to visualize the moving pictures created. Depending on the piece, he may voice quite a bit. Sometimes his voice comes and goes. He often sets the scene up and then lessens his vocal input until eventually he is quiet. When appropriate he provides sound effects to accompany the signs. For the most part, he uses words/phrases that parallel the action of the piece. With eyes closed, there is not enough vocal information to understand the work, but watching it along with the voicing, the viewers "see" what is occurring - even audience members unfamiliar with sign language. With foreign audiences, these words and phrases are projected on a screen for both the deaf and the hearing. Even during their on-stage banter, Kenny and Peter depart from traditional interpreting delivery. In a sense they create a contact performance language which allows access for all members of the audience.
Flying Words Project creates a new language community that lasts as long as each performance. By the end of this presentation, you will have become a part of this community.

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Translanguaging multimodally: Insights from linguistic ethnography in a superdiverse city

This presentation reports emergent findings from a research project which investigates how people communicate when they bring different histories, biographies, and trajectories to interaction in contexts of superdiversity. The talk focuses on interactions in three city centre sites: a busy meat and fish market, a new, state-of-the-art public library, and a volleyball club. Data were collected through a linguistic ethnographic approach, in which teams of researchers spent substantial, repeated periods engaged in observation of people as they went about their daily business. As we observed we wrote field notes, audio-recorded key participants, took photographs, made video-recordings, and conducted interviews. We found that in each of the sites people communicate multimodally. That is, their repertoires are not limited to the spoken word, but include other ritual interactions such as gesture and signing. In each setting people make what they can of available multimodal resources, translanguaging as they transform potentially miscommunicative interactions. In each space people in interaction found creative ways to communicatively overlap, for example by trying out resources from each others’ repertoires, and in the process expanding their own. Translanguaging was a means by which difference (linguistic, semiotic and otherwise) became a resource, and people in the superdiverse city were able to engage convivially. With reference to Goffman’s discussion of interaction ritual, and Bakhtin’s notion of becoming, we present new insights from linguistic ethnography in superdiverse contexts.

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The notion of superdiversity (Vertovec, 2007, 2010) has increasingly become the focus of attention in linguistic work aimed both to understand changes in language use in today’s extremely diverse societies (Blommaert & Backus, 2012; Spotti & Blommaert, 2016; Spotti & Kroon, 2015) and to trace the complex social layering of superdiversity of a given place as indexed by situated language (Blommaert, Spotti, & Van der Aa, 2015; Blommaert, 2012, 2013).

Along with critiquing the inadequacies of traditional sociolinguistic inquiry for the investigation of the complex and extremely mobile layering and interplay of socio-cultural-economic variables of superdiversity (Blommaert, 2012, 2013; Rampton, Blommaert, Arnaut, & Spotti, 2015; Spotti & Blommaert, 2016), these works acknowledge also the intrinsically multimodal nature of communication and the need of considering all modally-constituted signs as indexing forms of superdiversity in today’s semiotic landscape. Yet, while Ethnographic Linguistic Landscape - ELL (Blommaert & Backus, 2012; Blommaert & Maly, 2016; Blommaert, 2012) allows for a fine-grained investigation of language-based signage, the analysis of non-verbal signs of superdiversity would require further systematization.

In this sense, the paper will discuss the potential of integrating ELL with a social semiotic (Hodge & Kress, 1988; Kress, 2010; van Leeuwen, 2005) multimodal analysis (Bezemer & Jewitt, 2010), as a means of mapping the complex dynamics of sign-making in a superdiverse space. The discussion will draw on the preliminary findings of the early-stages of a longitudinal study on superdiverse sign-making practices taking place in Kirkgate Market (Leeds, UK).

Multimodal analysis enables a socially-situated fine-grained description and explanation of meaning made through the interaction between both disembodied (e.g., 3D objects, display and layout, dress, colour and lighting, lettering and writing) and embodied modes (gestures, speech, face expression,
body movement and proxemics). When combined with ethnographic landscaping and immersive experiential navigation of such a multisensory environment as a market, multimodal analysis enables the mapping of the signs of transformative, conflicting, adaptive, negotiating and accommodating practices entexted and enacted in the “semiotic space” (Gee, 2005). These evidence the need to address both the market’s extremely diversified population and the complex of social, economic and political pressures investing the place at various levels.

References


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Gesture based translanguageing in deaf-hearing customer interactions: Mumbaikars’ multimodal and multilingual strategies

In Mumbai, fluent deaf signers and hearing non-signers use conventionalised and spontaneous gestures to communicate with each other, often combined with mouthing and/or writing in different languages. In doing so they are drawing on personal linguistic repertoires and on spatial repertoires. In order to investigate such language practices, linguistic ethnography was undertaken in public and parochial spaces such as markets, shops, food joints and public transport in Mumbai. The six deaf research participants (including one deaf blind), whose interactions with hearing strangers and acquaintances were video-recorded, were either the ones buying or ordering, or the ones selling or serving. Their interactions are analysed through the lens of translanguageing, a holistic lens which allows researchers to pay attention to the total linguistic fact, including the experience of language practices, and language ideologies. In-depth and impromptu interviews were conducted with both deaf and hearing individual participants. This article focuses on multimodal and multilingual strategies used by participants in order to make themselves understood: the knowledge of spatial repertoires, the use of gesture, writing, speaking, voicing, mouthing, pointing, and objects; and connects the study of these practices with participants’ explanations and interpretations of their communication strategies. In short, the article considers “success formula for deaf-hearing translanguageing”.

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SESSION 4: EVERYDAY TRANSLANGUAGING IN SUPERDIVERSE CITIES

Tuesday, 21 June 2016
10:15 - 10:35

Speaking about language practices in everyday life – (Meta-)discourses about translanguaging in the City of Munich

In my presentation, I will discuss empirical findings from my recently finished Ph.D. project, which was concerned with the role of language(s) in the (re-)production of social inequalities. Therefore the ethnographic study analysed, among other things, metadiscourses about languaging in two wards in the City of Munich/Germany. One reoccurring theme that I want to discuss in my presentation is the issue of language mixing and language separation. Therefore I will discuss in my presentation (meta-) discourses about translanguaging which occurred in my field and associated (meta-)discourses around language separation. While the separation of languages is often communicated as an ideal conception, many multilingual speakers in the field emphasis the normality of translanguaging practices in their life. Although translanguag-ing is being talked about as everyday normality, the conception of language separation is still kept as an ideal. Therefore in a last step I will discuss in my presentation how these (meta-)discourses about translanguaging and language separation lead to (de-)valuation of translanguaging in different contexts and how this is connected to (re-)producing social ine-qualities in society.

SUSANNE BECKER, MPI-MMG (Germany)
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“Cross-signing” – Improvised signed communication without a shared language

This presentation reports on data from one of the strands in a project on Sign Multilingualism, which investigates various multilingual behaviours in sign language users. The “cross-signing” strand investigates the ad-hoc improvised conversations of small groups of deaf sign language users with no shared language, filmed in pairs when they meet for the very first time, and after a contact period of 4-6 weeks together as a group.

The two groups of deaf signers involved in this study are from the UK, Jordan, Indonesia and Japan on the one hand, and from India, Jordan, Nepal and Indonesia on the other hand. All signers are highly fluent in their own sign language, with varying competence in a language of literacy from their home country, but minimal or no competence in International Sign, English, or any other shared language between them. The participants use a wide range of linguistic and communicative resources, including their own and invented signs, fingerspelling, pointing, mouthing, gesture/mime, and various representations of writing. It can be argued that they construct shared multilingual-multimodal spaces for the purpose of these conversations (Zeshan 2015).

The presentation explores two strands of data:

a) **Quantitative data from signed interactions during a picture-based elicitation game.** While the elicitation task is completed 30% faster on average at the end of the contact period compared to the initial contact, differentiating factors are at work that lead to different degrees of “improvement” in the individual signers.

b) **Qualitative data based on the initial conversations along with introspective interviews conducted after these interactions.** These interviews, where participants viewed the videotaped interactions and were asked to comment on them, are important for revealing hidden complexities in the data. In this analysis, the focus is on strategies for overcoming miscommunication, and looking at the video recordings alone...
often does not reveal the source of miscommunication and the rationale behind resolution strategies.

Together, these two data sets allow some interesting insights into how communication between the individuals develops over time, as well as identifying a wide range of meta-linguistic skills that are active in these conversations.

References

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Translanguaging in an educational context: Examining practices between a teacher, interpreters and students communicating in International Sign and spoken English

This presentation will examine how a teacher, students and interpreters make meaning in a postgraduate university classroom where there is no common sign language, and participants essentially draw on their linguistic repertoires by using cross-signing (Zeshan, 2015) and International Sign. To date, comparatively little research has been done on interpreting International Sign, and the research that has been carried out has focused on interpreting spoken English into International Sign (McKee & Napier, 2002; Rosenstock, 2004). A new volume explores the use of translanguaging in the form of International Sign (Rosenstock & Napier, 2016) and one chapter in particular examines the strategies involved when interpreting from International Sign into spoken English (Best et al, 2016). Using a case study approach, the results of an exploration of the strategies utilised by a teacher and interpreters in an authentic interpreter-mediated educational environment will be presented. Considering that the research confirms that International Sign is not a language (Suppalla & Webb, 1995; Rosenstock, 2004), lacks an established lexicon (Allsop, Woll & Brauti, 1995) which may be dependent on the specific interlocutors as a form of language contact (Adam, 2012), and often necessitates the conveyance of broader generalities in lieu of specifics (Allsop, Woll & Brauti, 1995), it is particularly interesting to delve into the translanguaging strategies employed by the teacher and interpreters in such a visually-rich, situation-specific communicative context.

References

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In this talk, I will present the communicative situation of Yucatec Maya signing communities as a vivid example for translanguaging.

Yucatec Maya sign languages are indigenous sign languages that developed in villages with a high incidence of deafness in the peninsula of Yucatán, Mexico. Similar to other shared sign languages (Nyst 2012), they are used by both deaf and hearing community members. The local spoken language is Yucatec Maya, but today, hearing people are becoming increasingly bilingual in Yucatec Maya and Spanish. This creates a complex multilingual situation in the communities, whose members make use of a broad spectrum of communicative resources in their daily interactions.

When we analyse these sign languages, it seems useful to move away from a conception of languages as strictly separate entities towards a more fluid and dynamic view, as offered by the concept of translanguaging (see e.g. García/Wei 2014). It describes “the deployment of a speaker’s full linguistic repertoire” (Otheguy, García & Reid 2015: 281), that transcends boundaries of defined languages and language modalities.

I will present linguistic and ethnographic data from four villages: Chicán, Nohkop, Trascorral and Cepeda Peraza. Their sign languages are historically unrelated, but display intriguing similarities on a lexical level and beyond. We can assume that this can partly be attributed to common underlying gestural precursors. It has been shown that conventional co-speech gestures of hearing Yucatec Mayans are taken up and further conventionalised into signs (see e.g. Le Guen 2012 for transfers in the domain of time). Similarities between Yucatec Maya sign languages, however, can also be found on other linguistic levels, e.g. the use of signing space (Le Guen & Safar, in prep.) or formational principles such as noun-verb distinction (Safar, in prep.).

Moreover, we observed that the sign languages seem to be to a certain extent mutually intelligible. Deaf people from different signing communities have never been in contact, but when a hearing bilingual signer from one village visited another community for the first time, she was able to have extensive fluent conversations with deaf people there. Also hearing Yucatec Mayans, who do not
have direct deaf relatives and are less fluent signers, are capable to communicate with ease when talking to deaf people they never met before.

Such processes of bidirectional linguistic adaptation can adequately be described as instances of translanguaging. I will argue that in the Yucatec Mayan context, a general human predisposition towards translanguaging is further facilitated by several factors:

- The high use of conventional, often emblematic co-speech gestures among the Yucatec Maya and an affinity for multimodal communication, where gesture often complements speech in a meaningful way (see Petatillo Balam 2015)
- A positive, non-discriminatory attitude towards deaf people and sign language
- A high degree of shared contextual and cultural knowledge

By softening up rigid boundaries between languages and linguistic repertoires, the concept of translanguaging allows to take all these features into account and to capture the multifaceted, diverse communicative settings in Yucatec Maya signing communities in a comprehensive way.

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As a point of departure for analysis, I adopt Makoni and Pennycook’s (2007) problematization of language(s) as enumerable, discrete entities. First, I will draw on 15 months of fieldwork conducted in Cambodia between 2009 and 2016 to describe the ways in which deaf people’s linguistic repertoires change as they migrate from rural settings to more populous settings where NGOs have created formal spaces for the transmission of a national signed language. I examine the ways NGOs contribute to deaf peoples’ linguistic repertoires and the various additions/subtractions to/from their linguistic repertoires that occur as a result of their encounters with NGOs and national signed languages. I consider how notions of an urban/rural dichotomy create ideologies that index various signed language(s) and modalities for communication (such as drawing) into a hierarchy. I examine ideologies that shape the linguistic practices of deaf people in Cambodia, especially the flexible accumulation of what is commonly understood as discrete languages (e.g. written English, “International Sign,” American Sign Language and Cambodian Sign Language). These same ideologies marginalize the deployment of modalities in everyday languaging that are not commonly indexed as parts of a linguistic repertoire because most people do not consider these as components of a language (e.g. drawing a picture to communicate, gestures, the use of physical objects such as city maps). I show that deaf people’s linguistic and social practices, as observed in Cambodia and on social media, challenge essentialisms regarding modalities and understandings of “language.” I argue that we should consider Makoni and Pennycook’s (2007) call to interrogate how the “invention” of languages results in distinctions between groups and individuals, especially in terms of access to “elite” linguistic resources such as a national signed language and the use of “non-elite” modalities. Drawing on my ethnography of deaf people in Cambodia, I argue that differences in modalities function as subtle, hierarchical distinctions between groups and individuals. Finally, I call for closer attention to “non-elite” modalities such as gestures, the drawing of pictures and the use of physical objects in everyday languaging.
References:

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Translanguaging and repertoires across signed and spoken languages

In more recent (socio-)linguistics research it is often stated, that most of the people in the world live in multilingual, superdiverse, contexts (Blommaert, Rampton, & Spotti, 2011; Vertovec, 2007 a.o.); a concept which not only includes “language” but also all kinds of styles, lects and non-verbal expressions that can be used to communicate. Yet, when considering translanguaging practices, sub-Saharan Africa, an area with one of the highest levels of linguistic diversity, often remains understudied. Apart from a couple of recent works e.g. in Juffermans (2015), who investigates in languaging practices of multilingual speakers in Gambia and Carlo & Good (2014), looking at linguistic diversity from an areal and ethnographically-informed perspective in Northwester Cameroon, work on superdiversity and translanguaging tends to focus on language use in urban or educational environments (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Garcia & Wei, 2014).

This presentation, however, will focus on fluid translanguaging practices in a highly multilingual setting in Senegal. Our research is conducted with people in the Casamance region of Southwestern Senegal, where peoples’ daily-lived experience is inherently multilingual. In this paper, we provide data from video clips focusing on actual instances of language use and participants’ individual repertoires. In this diverse context, where people are highly mobile, moving for private, work or study purposes, participants have different repertoires according to their lived experiences. The multilingual repertoires of participants often extend beyond languages of identity tied to respective villages, such as Joola Kujireray, Joola Banjal, and Baïnounk Gubéeher. Furthermore French, the official language of Senegal and other languages that can be learned in public formal contexts, Wolof the most widely spoken language in the country, diverse Joola- and various other languages, all dependent on an individual’s life history can be applied in all possible blends, depending on different impacts.

In addition, many participants also engage in wider translanguageing practices than speaking or writing, as there are signing practices present in the region and although there is currently only one non-hearing participant in the area, many hearing participants are able to communicate with him, using flexible
linguistic practices, which include gestures or signs to varying degrees. Using naturally occurring language data from observed communicative events as well as repertoire and interview data from a wider sociolinguistic survey, we will demonstrate how, by starting with analysis of the speech event itself, and then working out from there, we are able to better describe how participants readily access linguistic resources in their repertoires according to the situation and context to most effectively communicate. Thus we are aiming to build up a better description of multilingual practices in an African superdiverse context considering people’s mobility, flexibility and adaptability.

References

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In multilingual societies, the official language of education is frequently a language not previously known by young learners. The problem is acute in many rural indigenous communities where minority languages are spoken that are largely oral or nonliterary. Whether the language of education is an areal or international language, such minority communities are typically sidelined from full participation or success in the educational sphere. A traditional view is that educational efforts will not be successful unless either (1) the minority language community transitions to using a majority language or (2) official educational institutions fully implement education in each minority language. Translanguaging offers a mediating perspective between these two seemingly irreconcilable viewpoints. Realistically, education in minority communities relies on the unofficial multilingual repertoires of teachers and other members of these communities and takes into account the limitations as well as the capabilities of children; in such contexts, translanguaging can be leveraged to implement effective learning of basic literacy skills and other goals of primary education.

In this paper, the experiences of the Safaliba language community (approx. 7-9000 speakers) in Ghana is offered as an example of a realistic translanguaging approach to education by an indigenous society that arises from drawing on the natural use of translanguaging practices both inside and outside of school to affirm both the intrinsic value and practical utility of the minority language. The paper documents Safaliba farmer-teacher-activists improving the quality of education and broadening its accessibility in their community in a variety of ways. For example, teachers use oral Safaliba during English lessons to communicate concepts so that children whose repertoire includes little English learn and stay interested. And even when spoken English predominates, farmer-teacher-activists permit children to answer in either language. Similarly, activists outside the formal education system have re-purposed informal adult-education night school into family literacy evenings by including children and children’s friends. In this way, children might learn their initial reading and writing skills in either their
own first language, or in a language used by their friends and neighbors and thus a familiar part of their linguistic repertoire.

The paper documents and analyzes the above community efforts as well as transcripts of translanguaging from the community, from the children (6-10 years of age) and from their teacher-farmer-activists and allies. The documentation validates Safaliba activists’ intuitions that Safaliba has a legitimate and valuable place in their children’s education, despite its outsider status in official Ghanaian language policy. The research also facilitates a nonthreatening context where those in the formal education sector can view the use of minority languages as an asset to the shared goal of successful primary education, as a resource to be utilized rather than as a threat to linguistic or educational purity.

**Detailed Description.** Safaliba is one of approx. 81 languages in Ghana’s multilingual landscape (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig, 2015). It is an indigenous Ghanaian language spoken by approx. 7-9000 people comprising 7 villages in a 120-square kilometer area west of Tamale and south of Wa. The area is one of the more linguistically diverse rural areas in Ghana, with at least 11 other local Ghanaian languages spoken within a radius of 20 miles (Gonja, Choruba, Vagla, Deg, Birifor, Dagaare, Waali, Lobiri, Jula, Siti and Kamara), speakers of which interact with members of the Safaliba communities regularly in marketing, farming, and other typical activities.

With few books and no official or government status for use in government forums, documents, or schools, the Safaliba language is nevertheless experiencing a renaissance (Schaefer, P. 2009; 2015; Schaefer, P. & Schaefer, J. 2003; 3004). Indigenous activism, self-determination, and pride in the links between the indigenous language and identity, issues related to land and governance are evidenced in these communities as have been documented elsewhere (Coulthard, 2008; Patrick, 2012). Local Safaliba farmer-teacher-activists and their allies are resisting dominant school discourses (Gonja and English) and government policies in order to teach Safaliba children to read and write their language (Sherris, 2015). Paradoxically, perhaps, the move to teach the indigenous language is bringing translanguaging into the open, as additional activists and classrooms have begun intentionally using Safaliba for reading instruction. As part of a larger database in an ongoing linguistic ethnography, the data analyzed in this paper are an exploration of readily observable practices in Safaliba literacy classes for young learners (6-10 year olds) that can be catalogued/framed/identified as translanguaging (Canagarajah, 2013; Garcia & Wei, 2013). These are putatively normal modes of communication and as such are unmarked forms. Rather than
framing them as borrowed or loaned lexical items and their use as examples of code switching in and out of a separate and discrete language or some pure standard form, we are taking an alternative route. The data are indicating that literacy repertoires include translanguaging are soft assembled and co-constructed (see Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008; Garcia & Wei, 2013) through community-based interaction and activism. Video clips and transcriptions will be analyzed and discussed.

In these classes, teaching and learning events, what we are calling “literacy repertoires,” organized by farmer-teacher-activists and allies afford multiple opportunities for stimulated recall by children learning about their society from community members (e.g., a yam farmer, cashew farmer, woodcarver, blacksmith, dress designer, bike repairer, petrol station attendant, drummer, chief, pastor, imam, traditional religious leader, etc.). These learning events are videotaped and followed immediately by videotaped reflections (stimulated recall) on the event by these young learners. As students share out their reflections, the teacher transcribes some of what is shared orally. The transcriptions on the chalkboard are photographed, keyboarded, added to photos of the event with the community member and printed as little books distributed the following week to each child. The books are used to instruct reading through read aloud activities, shared reading, and choral reading as well as through a variety of reading comprehension strategy activities related to lexical, syntactic, and morphological linguistic units. The students also draw and invent writing/spelling each day in unlined copybooks from questions and topics related to the book. As they do this, their farmer-teacher-activist circulates the classroom and asks what the invented spellings say in order to write them in the Safaliba orthography. The children learn alphabetics and penmanship through skill-based practice of phoneme-grapheme and digraph practice that is game-like and conducted as separate and distinct mini-lessons each day. What is intriguing about this project are the translanguaged lexical items that appear in the data from adult community members using Safaliba to show and tell about their experiences and the items that appear in the language the children use and later read in their little books.

The pedagogical components from which translanguaging is captured in sequence are as follows: (1) videotaped community-based experiences/show and tell sessions with adults/language in action and in the community; (2) videotaped stimulated recall sessions that elicit the voices of young learners verbalizing their experiences; (3) the teacher capturing some of this in order to bring it back to the classroom as something that might be read; and finally (4), the children drawing and inventing spelling to write about a topic germane to the experience or its
rendering in the little book. The larger goal of the ongoing ethnography is to provide a case study of indigenous activists and their allies overcoming purist arguments that inhibit literacy instruction. Producing such an ethnography potentially helps other indigenous communities facing similar resistance by governments, school officials, politicians, and speakers of dominating indigenous and colonialist languages. The purists argue indigenous languages new to an orthography (such as Safaliba) lack standardized practices (particularly spelling), contain foreign or undesirable lexical or morphosyntactic structures (Langer & Nesse, 2014), and are thin on technical and scientific vocabulary. Purists extrapolate that large financial expenditures would be required to develop a literacy modality and attendant materials in the schools and in the community. We argue differently and push back against all these points. We show that translanguaging is a natural practice that when brought into view and civil discourse might potentially mediate conflict and assuage purist dissent especially if documented from the mouths of community members and transcribed into little books for children to develop their literacy repertoires. Quite simply when the conception of language as a separate and distinct form/frame/representation is lifted, translanguaging variations, blends, and even the sources of cosmopolitan super-diverse urban practices can be seen as a natural progression or proclivity that is even evidenced in smaller, less intense language contact zones such as in Safaliba rural communities.

References


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Writing what we feel: SignWriting and the sensuous qualities of translanguageing in a German classroom

In an Osnabrück classroom for deaf students, pupils learn to write both German and German Sign Language using SignWriting (SW), a movement writing system derived from dance notation. While these languages are often framed in popular and scholarly ideologies as employing distinct modalities, analysis of the students’ diverse and shifting communicative repertoires breaks down notions of the discreteness of both these communicative practices and the modalities in which they are enacted (Hoffmann-Dilloway 2013). Indeed, all linguistic repertoires are characterized by (varying degrees of) multimodal multilingualism (subjected to different political economies of use and evaluation) (e.g., Blommaert and Backus 2011; Makoni and Pennycook 2007). However, of interest in this ethnographic case are the ways in which the affordances of SW encourage particular kinds of metapragmatic (Silverstein 1976) framings of transmodal translanguageing on the part of the classroom participants.

In particular, as students use SW to represent the moving body (including not only externally visible articulators but also the vocal tract) from the embodied origo of the someone producing language (rather than from the embodied origo of an addressee), use of this writing system focuses students’ attention on kinetic, haptic, and proprioceptive experiences of producing language (whether spoken or signed). Metapragmatic discussion of the relationships between elements of students’ repertoires thus often focuses on the qualia (“indexes “that materialize phenomenally in human activity as sensuous qualities”) that characterize the “feeling of doing” multimodal language practices in the classroom (Harkness 2015:574). As most students were previously socially isolated in strictly oral classrooms and entered this class with highly truncated communicative repertoires (Blommaert and Backus 2011), fostering interactionally achieved intersubjective alignment is explicitly framed as a classroom goal. Thus, rather than framing such feelings as solely individual and subjective, metapragmatic framings of the qualia SW work to encode help students achieve an intersubjective feeling of shared experience (Chumley and Harkness 2013:7).
References

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This paper investigates the writing space one young person creates when writing Bollywood inspired poems in and outside of school. The 20 year old Saynab was born into a Somali speaking family in Somalia, expanded her repertoire by Hindi from watching Bollywood movies while in transit in Kenya, and by Norwegian when she settled in Norway three years prior to the start of my study.

To analyse her poems, I use Li Wei’s (2011) concept of *translanguaging space*, which comprises a translanguaging event and the social space it creates. Furthermore, the idea of a translanguaging space embraces both creativity and criticality; creativity in the sense that language users have the ability to choose between following or disdaining language norms, and criticality in that existing views are questioned, problematized and expressed.

Here, I am concerned with translanguaging spaces created through multilingual literacy practices. I follow Nancy Hornberger’s (1990, p. 213) understanding of multilingual literacy as “any and all instances in which communication occurs in two (or more languages) in and around writing.” More precisely, I am interested in transnational literacy practices which are practices whose referent and meanings extend across national borders (Warriner, 2007). I will show in which ways Saynab’s poems are creative and critical acts and analyse the social spaces they create.

The study is a linguistic ethnography in an upper secondary school in Norway, and the material consists of fieldnotes, transcriptions and translations from audio recordings and interviews, as well as texts produced by young people in and outside of school.
References

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The Baobab tree: A study of translinguaging in a multimodal translation

This paper looks at the processes of translanguaging that occurred during the translation and reception of a bilingual iPad storybook app, *The Baobab Tree*, from ASL/written English to Norwegian Sign Language (NTS)/Norwegian.

The original app was created in ASL then translated into English. The translation of the app into a Norwegian version deviated from a traditional translation process of translating from a source language (ASL) to one or more target languages (Norwegian and Norwegian Sign Language). Instead, a fluid, cross-linguistic translation process took place, with differences in modalities being a decisive element in choices made during the translation process.

Doing the project involved translanguaging among the four project languages during filming and during the final crosscheck of the translations, with signed, written, and spoken modalities playing off each other. The translation process uncovered similar storytelling elements in the signed versions not found in either written version. The final written Norwegian text was changed to more closely align with the signed version. The multimodal nature of the project, as well as the project’s goal of ensuring the primacy of the signed version, inserted elements of storytelling elements in sign language into the written modality.

While studies of translanguaging often study contemporaneous linguistic settings with multilingual users, this project had the added dimension of these transidiomatic practices (Jacquemet 2005) taking place around an ostensibly frozen literary text. This paper will also show how the communicative competencies of the members of the project team, who had widely disparate degrees of knowledge of the four project languages, ranging from null to native fluency, were key factors in the translinguistic translation process.

The Norwegian version of the app was launched with groups of deaf children from 5-7 years of age, two in the USA and one in Norway, in December 2015. Initial analysis of translanguaging behaviors during the launch show a high level of comprehension of the Norwegian version by native ASL users, with all groups remaining receptive to identifying individual lexical items in the other signed
language throughout the story. The launch saw the target groups engaging in pragmatic acts of negotiating difference (Canagarajah 2007). Of note is that children from both countries showing a marked preference for comparing the signed versions over the written versions, and little cross-linguistic intelligibility in the latter modality was seen from either group. The launches resemble what Canagarajah calls *translinguistic contact zones* and thus contributes towards emerging studies of translingual classrooms and, more specifically, how they can be applied to classrooms using sign languages and various modes of spoken languages (Canagarajah 2013). The presentation will also include data collected from showings of the apps to groups of deaf, hard of hearing, koda (hearing children with signing parents), and hearing non-signing children in Norway in Spring 2016.

**References**


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