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Ellen Hurst-Harosh (Cape Town)

Slang, modernity and identity – global connections in the language of African youth

Researchers looking at the language practices of youth often point to their connections to identity – that youth use language to express individual and shared identity. Identity itself is often under-theorised in youth language research. This talk first considers what we mean by identity and how language is used stylistically/indexically by youth.

Examples of linguistic forms in youth language being used to ‘take stances, create alignments, and construct personas’ (Bucholtz 2009) in order to create social meaning are then drawn from a body of work on the practices of African youth. Media representations and previous publications which emphasise identity and African youth language provide the framing (Kießling and Mous 2006, Mesthrie, Hurst-Harosh & Brookes 2021). Empirical examples of interactional data demonstrating how youth use language and style to index social identities via metapragmatic stereotypes come mainly from a database of video recordings of youth language practices from South Africa.

The data demonstrates how African youth draw on both local and global resources and social identities. In youth practices in Africa, particular performances, linguistic forms, international brands, music etc., are drawn on as symbols of ‘cosmopolitanism’ and link to constructions of youthful masculinity. The paper argues that African youth are constructing identity in dialogue with notions of ‘modernity’ that are both locally situated and global. Through a complex blend of local and global popular culture and trends they develop metaphors, vocabulary and styles which are then employed in interactional moves to express identities. In this way, African youth language practices enable the global to intersect with the local and be recontextualised for local contexts.

Ellen Hurst-Harosh is Associate Professor in the Humanities Education Development Unit at the University of Cape Town (UCT). She holds a PhD in Linguistics from UCT. Her research focuses on African youth language practices, including stylets and registers, as well as translanguaging pedagogies and the use of African languages in higher education. Recent publications include the monograph *Tsotsitaal in South Africa: Style and Metaphor in Youth Language Practices* (Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 2020) and two edited collections *African Youth Languages: New Media, Performing Arts and Sociolinguistic Development* (with Fridah Kanana, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018) and *Sociolinguistics in African Contexts: Perspectives and Challenges* (with Augustin Ebonguè, Springer, 2017).

Institutskolloquium Sommersemester 2021 (Leitung: Nico Nassenstein)

Wann? Dienstag, 4. Mai 2021, 18:00–19:15 Uhr

Wo? Konferenzschaltung via Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4362747051?pwd=ZW85YmFKUjQ1aHZFeFIWVjF0bVdnZz09>

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