Deliberate and Default in multilingual speech: a comparison

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It is generally assumed that deliberate language manipulation has a limited impact on the structure of a language [cf S. Thomason 2007 for references]. What these limits exactly are, however, is still a question. Obviously speakers can only manipulate those features they are aware of. Some models about these 'limits of awareness’ exist (e.g. Silverstein 1982; Van Coetsem, 2000).

In our talk we will take an empirical approach: we will compare two multilingual codes spoken in the Netherlands. One of these codes is an Urban Youth Speech Style, employed by speakers with various heritage backgrounds in which deliberate manipulation and language play plays an important role; the other one is a bilingual mixed code, which is perceived by its speakers as the default code, the most effortless way of talking. This code is only used in in-group communication. It is the least monitored form of speech, deliberate manipulation does not play a prominent role.

We will systematically compare contact features in both speech styles and discuss how the differences and similarities in both codes can help to shed light on the extent to which language can be manipulated consciously and to contribute to the development of theories about conscious versus not-conscious language use.

References

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