Children with a migration background often participate in so-called Mother Tongue / complementary education. In addition to linguistic instruction in the perceived Mother Tongue this also includes cultural themes somehow related to the families’ understood 'country of origin’. Yet this part of the educational focus has been relatively little explored (e.g., Li et al. 2012, Blackledge & Creese 2010). One influence on the cultural dimension of the classroom is the political situation in the country of origin, and how this compares to the families’ and teachers’ ideological positions and histories of migration. This can be accessed through the (choice of) instruction material, lexical forms, explicit metapragmatic comments, and (addressed topics and responses in) interactional encounters.

We will present a study from two complementary Farsi classrooms in and around Copenhagen, Denmark. On the basis of linguistic ethnography (Creese 2008; Rampton 2007) and through a focus on language as form, use and ideology, or the total linguistic fact (Silverstein 1985), we will demonstrate how political/religious ideologies, in these classrooms, are argued to be important to exclude, and how at the same time they are constantly present and relevant issues, although only rarely explicitly named. We will also show how the politically sensitive situation of the families becomes a methodological challenge for the researcher.

The paper falls in line with the sociolinguistics of globalization (Blommaert 2012; Coupland 2012). It adds to our understanding of language in an era characterized by human mobility and of language as an ideological phenomenon.

Selected references:

Blackledge, A. & A. Creese. 2010. Multilingualism


Keywords: mobility, ideology, mother tongue classrooms.