How Speaker Design shapes linguistic landscapes

Barbara Soukup

University of Vienna, Austria

Opening our panel on Speaker Design, this presentation functions both as an introduction and as an individual contribution in its own right. It first sets the stage in terms of outlining the panel’s structure and rationale as well as providing some background on and conceptualization of the phenomenon of Speaker Design under current sociolinguistic theorizing. The phenomenon is then illustrated in some synchronic data in the form of public signage encountered in the Viennese linguistic landscape (in the ‘classic’ definition of Landry & Bourhis 1997). On the basis of the constructionist argument that meaning is a joint interactional achievement in which both a sign-writer and a sign-reader are implicated, the claim is made that a significant amount of signs in the Viennese LL nowadays feature (elements of) the English language because sign-readers go through steps of identifying the language and associating it with certain (positive) social meanings. This leads to the exposition of a general, integrated cognitive-sociolinguistic and interactional sociolinguistic model of the process of meaning-making via the strategic use of linguistic variation. By combining an individual perspective on Speaker Design (describing metonymic steps from perceptual differentiation to social association—cf. Kristiansen 2008) with an interactional perspective (describing the exploitation of contextualization mechanisms— cf. Gumperz 1982), this model proposes to advance the agenda of understanding human meaning-making via language choice, past and present.

References:


Keywords: variation study, linguistic landscapes, code-switching.