Citéduits – a polyethnic industrial youth style

Peter Auer¹, Leonie Cornips²

¹U Freiburg, Germany
²U Maastricht, Netherlands

It has become relatively clear over the last years that multilingual settings resulting from migration support new types of linguistic variation and the emergence of new linguistic patterns. The aim of our talk is to focus on the historical social conditions of the emergence of a new hybrid variety in a linguistically isolated multiethnic and multilingual community – a coal mining community (cité) in Eisden (Belgium) in the 1920s and 1930s.

We will focus on three aspects: (i) a historical outline of how the community emerged, detailing the changing size and composition of the migrant labour force in order to account for the German elements of Cité-Duits in a Flemish/Dutch dialect language area in which very few native speakers of German were around; (ii) a first phonological and morpho-syntactic description of of four speakers and (iii) a sociolinguistic comparison with emerging ‘contemporaray urban vernaculars’ as described in the sociolinguistic literature (Auer 2012; Cornips & Nortier 2008; Quist & Svendsen 2010). Cité-Duits provides us with crucial cues about which linguistic forms are put into use in a contact setting and which ones will remain or disappear in the course of a life time. Consequently, our paper provides information about the route(s) individuals may take to overcome linguistic ‘restrictions’ and the structural relations between linguistic features and their origin (L2 features, contact features, etc.).


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