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Einladung zum Vortrag

Fridah Kanana Erastus, PhD

(Department of Literature, Linguistics and Foreign Languages, Kenyatta University, Kenya)

Metaphors in Transition: The recontextualisation of global to local in African youth languages and language practices

This presentation is an overview of youth languages in the era of globalisation and aspects of youth participation in linguistic change in Africa. It is premised on a multi-sited research collaboration, over a period of 10 years, that aimed to understand youth language practices in Africa, their structure, characteristics, and the role African languages, media, technology and globalisation play in the growth of these youth language practices.

As a number of researchers have shown, African youth language has become a key player in global youth language research, and the role of the global media, as well as indigenous metaphors, in charting its narrative has been phenomenal. The term, glocal has been employed aptly to describe this fusion of global and local youth traditions. It encompasses the manner in which the global and local cultural, linguistic and technological environment has shaped their trajectory. Using examples from a comparative data base, I illustrate how youth linguistic cultures are practiced in everyday interactions, exemplify ways in which global cultures intersect with the local, and how the youth in Africa recontextualise the global and create local traditions of youth culture. In this recontextualisation, metaphor plays a central role. Metaphors in this presentation are viewed as mini-narratives that index the particular culturally—and contextually—shared experiences of a generation of young people, and for this reason tend to be specific to a peer group. The talk therefore considers aspects such as generational narratives, the transition of a metaphor from a generational peer group context into a conventionalised metaphor, as well as multiple salience and ambiguity. I illustrate the deployment of metaphor in youth language and its relationship to popular culture, to make the case that youth language involves the innovation of new terms from popular culture. Finally, I look at the relexicalization process that is central to youth language practices. Indeed, the role of youth as catalysts of this process is what makes the term ‘youth language’ apt, notwithstanding some critical stances to the contrary. I use two African youth languages as exemplar in this discussion – Sheng in Kenya and Tsotsitaal in South Africa – and I draw data extensively from these languages for the discussion.

A brief biography

Dr. Fridah Kanana Erastus is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Literature, Linguistics and Foreign Languages, Kenyatta University, Kenya. She holds Bachelor of Education (Arts), Master of Arts degrees in English and Linguistics from Kenyatta University, and a PhD in Linguistics from Goethe University Frankfurt/am Main, Germany.

Dr. Kanana is currently on Sabbatical at the Institute of Phonetics and Speech Processing (IPS), Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich on a Georg Forster Research Fellowship for Experienced Researchers with funding from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, Germany. Her research interests lie in dialectology, multilingualism in Africa, language contact, African youth languages practices, and English language pedagogy. She has published widely on these topics.

Publications Summary: <http://humanities.ku.ac.ke/index.php/faculty/staff-profiles/87-faculty/259-dr-kanana-fridah-erastus>