Changing linguistic norms in the audiovisual media

The specific role of radio and television in language change has been debated throughout the history of sociolinguistics (Milroy & Milroy 1985, Chambers 1998). By now it seems generally accepted that the media do play a role in language change, but an indirect one. The media present viewers with language features they may not be exposed to in their daily interactions, and in this way enhance the construction of shared knowledge of varieties, norms of usage, and stereotypical characteristics of the users of different features (Stuart-Smith et al. 2007, Tagliamonte & D'Arcy 2007, Coupland 2009).

The panel will continue the discussion of the role of the audiovisual media in relation to linguistic change, but it will do this indirectly by zooming in on the changing norms of language *in* the media, the image of language that the media promote.

In many studies of the role of the media in language change, media language is either seen as monolithic or focus has been on how a single (type of) program has promoted certain linguistic varieties and stereotypes for the listener or viewer. Examples of the monolithic type are when national broadcasting media are seen as propagating the standard language, e.g. RP through the BBC or GA through the news networks of the U.S.A. An example of a single influential program is the British East Enders which is perceived as promoting certain images of users of th-fronting which spread the use of this feature into new areas. However, few studies have empirically investigated the linguistic output from audiovisual media and the ways in which this output and its concomitant norms vary across genre and change over time. Presumably different genres have always given room for different language norms. The panel welcomes participants who compare the language of different genres, in particular variation in the traditional sociolinguistic sense of accents and dialects.

Within the last decade, the Internet has made it possible for media institutions to make their archives available to the public, and to an increasing degree institutions are exploiting this possibility. A case in point is the BBC online archive (www.bbc.co.uk/archive). For sociolinguistics this means access to data that allow us to investigate the language of the media diachronically. It is reasonable to expect that the language in the media changes along the same lines as language in the society at large, but the media's role as either prime movers or as a conserving force is open to investigation. In addition to diachronic changes in the media language as reflective of linguistic changes in the community, the social norms of the media have also changed from the early broadcast media viewed as an educator, to a more modern view of the media as entertainer. The panel thus also welcomes participants who compare the language of the media across time, and also participants who will make theoretical suggestions about the changing role of the media and its effect on the linguistic output of the media.

On a more general level, the panel explores the role of the media in a variety of processes of standardizing (national) languages all through the 20th century, and their more recent role in language destandardisation. The conference theme "Language and the City" is only peripherally touched upon, but we note that the language norms of the media have traditionally been associated with the linguistic norm(s) of the city – the city *standard* for news and "serious" media, and the city *vernacular* for entertainment and soap operas. This picture is now being challenged through (organizational) regionalizations of the media institutions and through a greater emphasis on listener and viewer participation in the media.

Discussion questions
- to what extent are changes in the national, standard language reflected, promoted or counteracted in the media language;
- to what extent have changes in the media landscape and media norms had an effect on the linguistic norms of the media;
- in what way is a standard language (and its concomitant ideology) implicitly and explicitly communicated by and through the media?

Format
The format of the panel will be an introduction + 4-5 papers (25+5 mins) + discussion (30 mins) = 3 hours.

Suggested speakers
Nikolas Coupland, Univ. of Cardiff
Allan Bell, Auckland Univ. of Technology
Jan-Ola Östman, Univ. of Helsinki
Agnete Nesse, Univ. of Bergen
Jacob Thøgersen/Tore Kristiansen, Univ. of Copenhagen.

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