

34. Annual Conference of the German Association for Applied Linguistics (GAL)
"Sprache[n] in der Wissensgesellschaft"
[Language(s) in the Knowledge Society]
25.09.-27.09.2003
University of Tübingen
<http://www.gal-ev.de/>

Session 7: Sociolinguistics

Until a few years ago it seemed as if the new technologies would lead to English monolingualism and Anglo-American monoculture. In the meantime, however, multilingualism, cultural diversity and the importance of cultural heritage have become crucial factors not only in Europe but in the USA and other parts of the world, too. In addition, smaller language communities are increasingly seizing the opportunities offered them by multimedia, internet and world-wide-web to assert the presence on the world stage of their cultures, languages and cultural heritages. Politically, economically or socially disadvantaged groups, such as women, are able to make use of the new technologies to demand not only visibility, but to be present in their own right with www-sites and dedicated portals. The use as well of dialect as a communicative means of identity-creation among young people in chat-rooms and in sms communication is another interesting phenomenon.

The knowledge society cannot be characterised solely by the new technologies, however. Laying the foundations for increasingly complex social forms depends on the continual renewal and development of knowledge. This process takes place in knowledge environments: institutions such as the EU, social movements like that of the women's movement, and professional social worlds, e.g. the education system, contribute to the generation of understanding and critical evaluation of this new knowledge through a permanent process of mutual discursive interaction. Such a variety of discursive meanings renders identity formation, both individual and collective, all the more complex and demanding. The presentation of self, the regard of significant others, and how others are seen becomes a central focus of interaction. Alongside self-presentation and the presentation of others in texts and conversation, how individuals manage to position themselves in relation to collective identity construction, e.g. in their relationship to a dominant culture and language, has become enormously important.

Contributions to these aspects of the knowledge society - the creation of knowledge in texts, conversation, and new media; the discourses of knowledge environments; and individual and collective identity formation - all linked as they are to the linguistic construction of the knowledge society, are welcomed which examine any aspects of the following topics and themes:

- Text and interaction analysis of "meta-discourses" of the knowledge society in institutions, movements and social worlds (e.g. planning teams, multilingual schools, cultural associations, digital media, debates in the print media and in the internet)
- Self and Others in texts, talk and media
- Aspects of individual and collective identity construction
- The significance of multimedia, the web and the internet for the presence of languages and dialects
- The importance of multimedia presence for the self-confidence and self-image of language communities and under-represented groups

- Linguistic biographies and the use of language to negotiate the new and the foreign
- Intercultural communication and the analysis of intercultural situations
- Attitudes to multilingualism in the knowledge and information society and the question of a lingua franca
- The presentation of digitalisation projects regarding linguistic cultural communities and under-represented groups
- The possibilities of linguists and ethnologists in the knowledge society