

## SS22 Invited Colloquium

**Overall Colloquium Title:** An invited session in memory of Tope (Sky) Omoniyi

### Overall Colloquium Abstract

The late Tope Omoniyi, whose sudden death prevented him presenting a plenary address at this conference, was widely known for his pioneering work with the late Joshua A. Fishman in the development of the study of the sociology of language and religion and in his contributions to the role of English in public health intervention in Africa. In this colloquium, some of his many followers and friends will pay tribute to his work and influence.

**Colloquium Chair:** Bernard Spolsky, Bar-Ilan University

### PAPER 1

#### **Title: Multilingual liturgical literacy acquisition in 21<sup>st</sup> century faith-based supplementary schools**

**Abstract:** In June 2002 at Roehampton, at the first ever colloquium of the then fledgling sub-discipline the Sociology of Language and Religion (SLR), I presented data which revealed the multilingual contexts of UK mosque schools offering children liturgical (Qur'anic) literacy acquisition. The colloquium was organized by one of SLR's twin founders, Tope (Sky) Omoniyi, and also provided the platform for Joshua Fishman's first public outline of his *Decalogue* for SLR. The data in question, gathered at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, suggested relatively stable but complex patterns of language use including codeswitching, decoding, memorization and localized diglossia involving both established H and L community languages, a religious classical and a majority language, English. This research later appeared in Rosowsky (2008). Nearly two decades later, data from similar UK contexts often present quite different linguistic profiles with less stable and much greater linguistic diversity, the more widespread – in some cases the dominant – use of English and the ever-increasing publication and use of bilingual teaching resources and practices. This paper, therefore, attempts to bring research into liturgical literacy practices in such settings up to date by sharing data drawn from field notes and interviews with participants gathered recently across a range of mosque schools in a northern city in England. These findings suggest more fluid and dynamic linguistic landscapes informing and impacting upon faith-based supplementary schools in the UK. New configurations of language and identity resulting from changing patterns and directions of human mobility (forced and other) are here complexified by the inclusion of the languages and literacies traditionally associated with faith practices. A number of the precepts from Fishman's *Decalogue* are relevant in this paper, particularly i, ii and vi.

#### **References**

- Fishman, J. A. (2006) A Decalogue of Basic Theoretical Perspectives for a Sociology of Language and Religion. In T. Omoniyi, & J.A. Fishman (2006) *Explorations in the Sociology of Language and Religion*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins
- Rosowsky, A. (2008) *Heavenly Readings: Liturgical Literacy in a Multilingual Context*. Multilingual Matters: Clevedon

**Author: Andrey Rosowsky (University of Sheffield)**

## **PAPER 2**

**Title:** The Baha'i Faith and the Global Language

**Abstract:** For the first time in religious history, an emergent faith has proclaimed a "new world order" where a global language will be taught to children in schools around the world as a means to ensuring the well-being of the human race. This is a discussion of the Bahai Faith's unique involvement with language and languages. In what way is this a contribution to the Babelistic account in the Bible? What are the sociolinguistic implications of religion and language? How has religion influenced language choice in times past and how will emergent religion influence language choice? Where does human right come into play with regards to language death and language loss.

**AUTHOR:** Phyllis Ghim-Lian Chew, Nanyang Technological University

## **PAPER 3**

**Title:** The language of religion in Israel

**Abstract:** This paper, dedicated to the perspicacious Tope Omoniyi ZL, will explore the language of religion in Israel. For example, it will describe how (secular) scholarship surrounding the Israeli language, misleadingly a.k.a. "Hebrew" (instead of "Reclaimed Hebrew"), is in fact religious in disguise. For example, instead of One God, scholarship surrounding Israeli deifies the historically and linguistically mistaken idea of One Source for Israeli; *mitzvot* "religious good deeds" are supplanted by *khukéy lashón* "rules of language" that must be adhered to. The paper will argue that secular politicians such as left-winger Yossi Sarid are still religious when it comes to language and linguistics.

**Author:** Ghil'ad Zuckermann, The University of Adelaide, Australia

## **PAPER 4**

**Title:** The Linguistic Landscape inside the Grand Mosque in Mecca: One domain or five?

**Abstract:** Most of the existing literature on linguistic landscapes (LL) has tended to focus on streetscapes and public commercial spaces. There is comparatively little work in LL on shared spaces (Hanauer, 2010) and few research works that have considered the LL of religious sites (Coluzzi & Kitade 2015). This paper aims to begin to fill this gap by investigating the LL of the Grand Mosque of Mecca, a religious site that serves as a pilgrimage for Muslims of different nationalities and language backgrounds. By exploring the LL of the ground floor of this religious site during a Saudi national holiday, we document the rich nature of the Grand Mosque as a LL and the competing and complementary roles of the languages in its midst, in monolingual and multilingual signage. We show how *Arabic* functions as both an official and religious language, *English* functions as both a lingua franca and official foreign national language, *Urdu* serves as both the language of pilgrimage and of daily work, and how other languages, which are omnipresent, serve comparatively minor complementary roles. We then argue that if we look at the overall patterns in monolingual and multilingual signage we can see how different types of language use in this large public open space play a critical role in defining five separate domains: the domains of Holiness, Education, Work (Construction), Local Government and the Public sphere. The findings raise interesting issues about religion as a single domain, shared spaces as LL, and the nature of competing language policies in shared spaces.

### **References:**

Coluzzi, P., & Kitade, R. (2015). The languages of places of worship in the Kuala Lumpur area: A study on the "religious" linguistic landscape in Malaysia. *Linguistic landscape*, 1(3), 243–267. doi:10.1075/ll.1.3.03col

Hanauer, D.I. (2010). Laboratory identity: A linguistic landscape analysis of personalized space within a microbiology laboratory. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, 7 (2/3), 301–321. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15427581003757442>

**Authors:** Reema Ali S AlSaif and Donna Starks, La Trobe University (both presenting)

## PAPER 5

**Title:** “When I say I’m Tamil, I’m Hindu as well” - The role of religion in second-generation migrants’ identifications

**Abstract** In the nearly 15 years since Spolsky (2003) identified a scarcity of research into immigrant experiences of language maintenance and shift in various religious denominations, there has been a gradual growth in studies of this aspect of the sociology of language and religion. Of particular interest is the role of language in faith-based teaching in the migrant context, with most studies situated in the UK (such as Gregory, Choudhury, Ilankuberan, Kwapong, & Woodham, 2013; Rosowsky, 2014; Souza, Kwapong, & Woodham, 2012). My presentation is based on data collected as part of an ethnographic study of the language practices in a Tamil Hindu temple in Australia. I analyze the linguistic practices of second-generation Sri Lankan Tamil migrant youth who are students in the temple’s religious school. These students have Tamil as their first language and come from families committed to heritage culture and faith transmission, yet English dominates their daily lives. This hybridized existence is reflected in the translanguaging practices of the religious classroom. By applying Omoniyi’s theory of the hierarchy of identities, I explore how religion interplays with other features from identity repertoires in the students’ “moments of identification” in the classroom discourse and research interviews (2006, p. 19). In doing so I interrogate how language, religion and culture, in particular, interplay as aspects of identity that are highly intertwined for Tamil Hindus. I also look at the significance of citizenship, country of birth and the place of Sri Lanka in their expressions of identification. Through analysis of the data I aim to combine notions from the sociology of language and religion, the sociolinguistics of identity, and the study of translanguaging in a migration and education context.

## References

- Gregory, E., Choudhury, H., Ilankuberan, A., Kwapong, A., & Woodham, M. (2013). Practice, performance and perfection: Learning sacred texts in four faith communities in London. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 2013(220), 27–48. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2013-0012>
- Omoniyi, T. (2006). Hierarchy of identities. In T. Omoniyi & G. White (Eds.), *The sociolinguistics of identity* (pp. 11–33). London ; New York: Continuum.
- Rosowsky, A. (2014). Faith, phonics and identity: Reading in faith complementary schools. *Literacy*, 47(2), 67–78. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-4369.2012.00669.x>
- Souza, A., Kwapong, A., & Woodham, M. (2012). Pentecostal and Catholic migrant churches in London – The role of ideologies in the language planning of faith lessons. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 13(2), 105–120. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2012.678977>
- Spolsky, B. (2003). Religion as a site of language contact. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 23, 81–94.
- Author:** Nirukshi Perera (School of Languages, Literatures, Cultures & Linguistics, Monash University, Australia)

## PAPER 6

**Title:** Kaqchikel and Spanish in a hybrid sacred dialogue of Mayan spirituality

**Abstract:** Kaqchikel spirituality manifests itself in the veneration of Mayan deities and in the Kaqchikel ritual language. Mayan deities are represented by Christian saints and symbols, and named by a combination of Kaqchikel and Spanish terms. Based on an in-depth study of

anthropological, linguistic and literary approaches we show how religion affects language and language affects religion (Omoniyi & Fishman 2006). From a set of 130 Kaqchikel prayers we analyzed those prayers that include specific words and utterances that show a mutual interaction between Catholic Doctrine and Kaqchikel Maya spirituality. Kaqchikel and Spanish are intertwined in highly structured prayers representing both, the allochthonous Roman Catholicism and the native Maya spirituality. Kaqchikel spirituality by means of a hybrid conception of sacred beliefs has become resistant to the penetrating Catholic faith and its orally transmitted doctrine. In particular, intercultural semantics and the ‘common’ understanding or ‘inner view’ (Fishman 1997) of the Kaqchikel spiritual specialists provides an interpretation as faithful as possible without leaving aside the limits of an overall intercultural communication. The important role that language plays in the religious tradition of the Kaqchikel confraternity will be brought up in the understanding of the meanings. We conclude that, apparently, the real spiritual statement is wrapped in a Christian-Catholic context in a kind of ideological and linguistic camouflage.

### References

- Fishman, Joshua A. 1997 Language and ethnicity: the view from within. In *The handbook of sociolinguistics*, Florian Coulmas (ed). Oxford, Melbourne & Berlin: Blackwell Publishers.
- Omoniyi, Tope & Joshua A. Fishman. 2006 *Explorations in the Sociology of Language and Religion*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: J. Benjamins.
- Authors:** Andreas Koechert (Universidad de Quintana Roo, Mexico)  
Barbara Pfeiler (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México) (PRESENTER)

### Paper 7

**Title:** What distinguishes language of religion from other varieties of language?

**Abstract:** This paper addresses the question, “what differentiates the variety of language of religion from other non-religious varieties?” McArthur (1992) in *Oxford Companion to the English Language*, points out two types of language varieties: user-related and use-related. User-related varieties include regional variation in the speech/code used by the people while use-related varieties can be defined by the difference in the function of the codes. For example, legal, literary, business varieties are differentiated by their function(s) in the speech community. These varieties differ from one another vis-à-vis linguistic features such as pronunciation, spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and patterns of discourse and their social function in the speech communities.

The paper claims that language of religion cannot be differentiated from non-religious varieties merely on the basis of the special linguistic features and their social function. What differentiates language of religion from non-religious varieties is the reality it signifies. In other words, language of religion differs from its non-religious counterpart in terms of the system of beliefs about the reality. Thus within a speech community, the signifier–signified relationship is believed to be different in language of religion from its non-religious counterpart. For example, a word such as “mountain” in non-religious language signifies a physical entity while in religious language it can signify a “divine abode.” Language of religion symbolizes/signifies a universe which is different from the one symbolized/signified by its non-religious counterpart.

The paper discusses the implications of this hypothesis for language change or replacement of language of religion in the diasporic context and mixing of codes in the religious contexts.

**Author:** Rajeshwari V. Pandharipande, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA.