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10.15 Uhr, Raum F -105, Unitobler

Linguistic Evidence as Forensic Evidence in Asylum Cases

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A number of border agencies around the world commission linguistic analysis of asylum seekers as a way of verifying the claimants' origins. In this practice, the linguistic behaviour of the asylum seeker is thus treated as 'forensic evidence'.

The procedure followed in obtaining the linguistic samples to be analysed resembles a 'sociolinguistic interview'. The sample of speech is then subjected to linguistic analysis by a linguist who supplies the authorities with a report detailing the evidence for and against the origins or 'socialisation backgrounds' of the applicants. In this presentation I will cover two topics: (i) outline the procedure and its rationale; (ii) on the basis of my experience as an analyst and sociolinguist, I will discuss the difficulties and complexities of linguistic analysis in this field.