# Language Variation and Change in Diaspora Communities

**Workshop**
**University of Bern**
**6. – 8. November 2019**
For more information:
www.csls.unibe.ch

**Keynote speakers**
Prof. Robert Podesva, Stanford University
Prof. Devyani Sharma, Queen Mary University of London
Prof. Naomi Nagy, University of Toronto

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UNIVERSITÄT
BERN

# Workshop Program

*Wednesday, 6. Nov. 2019*    *Location: UniS, Room B-102 (Underground)*

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|---|---|
| 09.15 – 09.30 | **Welcome** |
| 09.30 – 10.30 | **Keynote** – Naomi Nagy |
| | *Cross-generational change in heritage languages in Toronto* |
| | **COFFEE BREAK** |
| 11.00 – 11.30 | Silvia Natale |
| | *„New" Italians in Switzerland. The current Italian emigration wave towards Switzerland and its linguistic impacts.* |
| 11.30 – 12.00 | Susan Fox |
| | *Multicultural London English: social stereotyping and standard language ideology* |
| | **LUNCH** |
| 14.30 – 16.00 | **BERN CITY TOUR (optional, free of charge)** |

*Thursday, 7. Nov. 2019*    *Location: UniS, Room A015*

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| 09.30 – 10.30 | **Keynote** – Rob Podesva |
| | *Shifting social meanings in the Southern diaspora: The emergence of a 'country' style in California* |
| | **COFFEE BREAK** |
| 11.00 – 11.30 | David Britain |
| | *The urban diaspora in rural England and its consequences for traditional dialect* |
| 11.30 – 12.00 | Andrin Büchler |
| | *Phonetic stability across time: a diaspora community in Switzerland* |
| | **LUNCH** |
| 14.00 – 14.30 | David Natvig |
| | *Community and bilingualism in American Norwegian: Contact, variation, and phonetic-phonological change* |
| 14.30 – 15.00 | Eva Kuske |
| | *Language change in Guam's Philippine Diaspora Community* |
| 19.00 | **WORKSHOP DINNER, RESTAURANT ROSENGARTEN** |

*Friday, 8. Nov. 2019*          *Location: UniS, Room A015*

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|---|---|
| 09.30 – 10.30 | **Keynote** – Devyani Sharma |
| | *Social networks and language variation among British Asians* |
| | **COFFEE BREAK** |
| 11.00 – 11.30 | Axel Bohmann |
| | *West-African asylum seekers in Germany:* |
| | *Metalinguistic perspectives on multilingual realities* |
| 11.30 – 12.00 | Adina Staicov |
| | *Language in San Francisco Chinatown: A look at morphosyntactic variation and ethnic identity* |
| 12.00 – 12.15 | **Wrap-up** |
| | **LUNCH** |

# Location

University of Bern, UniS

Wednesday, 6. Nov: Room B-102
Thursday/Friday, 7./8. Nov: Room A015
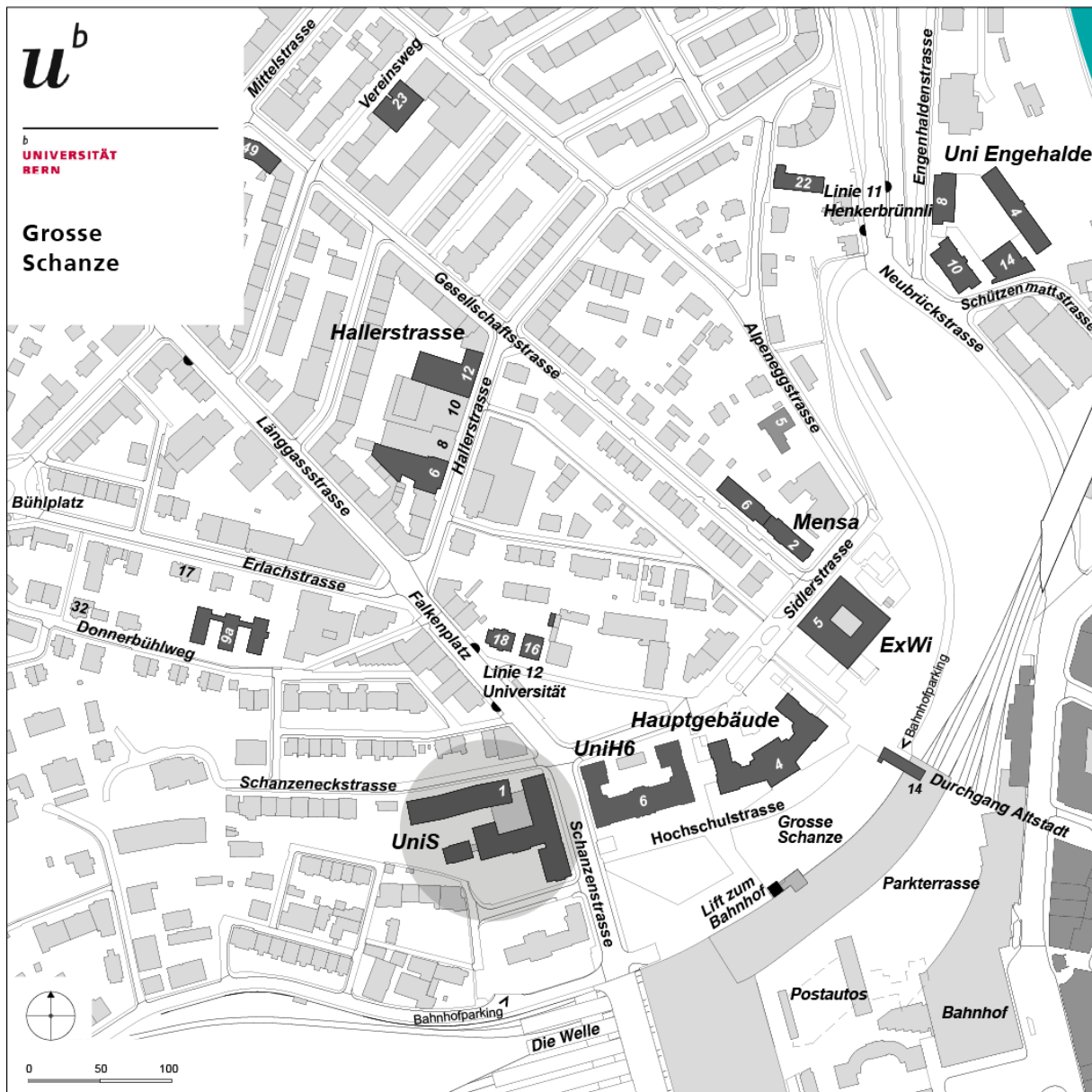
# Abstracts

*Cross-generational change in heritage languages in Toronto*
**KEYNOTE - Naomi Nagy, University of Toronto**

The Heritage Language Variation and Change project (Nagy 2009, 2011) is based on intergenerational comparisons (i.e., how many generations since the family immigrated to Toronto?) of speakers in language diaspora in Toronto. I will discuss some differences between the results of experimental studies and our variationist sociolinguistic studies based on spontaneous speech. The focus will be on the picture we see of intergenerational differences, as well as homeland vs. heritage variety differences. In general, greater linguistic stability is illustrated by the variationist approach than experimental methods. The data are from studies of Voice Onset Time (VOT), case marking, and null subject pronoun variation (listed at http://projects.chass.utoronto.ca/ngn/HLVC/1_5_publications.php). The languages discussed include Cantonese, Faetar (a Francoprovençal variety spoken in southern Italy), Italian, Korean, Polish, Russian and Ukrainian.

*References*

Nagy, N. 2009. Heritage Language Variation and Change in
       Toronto. http://projects.chass.utoronto.ca/ngn/HLVC/
Nagy, N. 2011. A multilingual corpus to explore geographic variation. Rassegna Italiana di
       Linguistica Applicata 43.1-2:65-84.

***„New" Italians in Switzerland. The current Italian emigration wave towards Switzerland and its linguistic impacts.***

**Silvia Natale, University of Bern**

This paper addresses the actual Italian migration that is occurring since 2008. During former waves of migration within Europe mostly unskilled labor forces moved from Italy to countries such as Germany, France, Switzerland etc. The most recent migration wave, which increased after 2008 as a consequence of the economic crisis, is instead characterized by a large amount of educated and highly skilled people. The aim of this talk is to draw a comparison between the two Italian emigration waves highlighting their linguistic characteristics. Furthermore, a focus is placed on how new highly skilled emigrants construe their social networks and which languages they use when moving to Switzerland.

*References*

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Natale S., Krakenberger E. R. (2017), *Reti sociali e abitudini linguistiche dei 'cervelli in fuga' italiani in Svizzera*, in B. Moretti, E. M. Pandolfi, S. Christopher, & M. Casoni (a cura di), *Linguisti in contatto 2 : ricerche di linguistica italiana in Svizzera e sulla Svizzera : atti del convegno, Bellinzona, 19-21 novembre 2015*, Bellinzona, Osservatorio linguistico della Svizzera italiana, pp. 199–210.

*Multicultural London English: social stereotyping and standard language ideology*

**Susan Fox**, University of Bern

London has a long history as a destination for immigrants from overseas and newcomers from other parts of the British Isles, and many of the city's neighbourhoods are thus characterised by considerable ethnic and linguistic diversity. It is in the extensive language and dialect contact in these parts of the city that the multiethnolect, Multicultural London English (MLE), has its roots (Cheshire et al. 2011). MLE is best defined as the variable output of a feature pool derived from various native varieties of English (namely the local Cockney dialect, other UK regional varieties of English, Standard English, as well as African, Caribbean, and Asian Englishes from those countries that have a British colonial past), different learner varieties of English, Jamaican Creole, and further languages other than English. Portrayals of MLE in the British press often position it as a threat to British people and their cultural values or that it indexes inauthenticity, foreignness and bad behaviour (Kerswill 2014). Using data collected via an online questionnaire from both MLE-speaking and non-MLE-speaking Londoners, this paper will explore representations of MLE within the context of the standard language ideology (SLI) that prevails in Great Britain. While the discourses from both sets of speakers reflect the SLI that exists in Great Britain, the non-MLE speakers were found to hold much stronger, and negative, social stereotypes of multiethnolect speakers than the MLE speakers themselves.

*References*

Cheshire, J., P. Kerswill, S. Fox, and E. Torgersen. 2011. "Contact, the Feature Pool and the Community: The Emergence of Multicultural London English." *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 15 (2): 151-196.

Kerswill, P. 2014. "The Objectification of 'Jafaican': The Discoursal Embedding of Multicultural London English in the British Media." In *The Media and Sociolinguistic Change*, edited by J. Androutsopoulos, 428-455. Berlin: De Gruyter.

*Shifting social meanings in the Southern diaspora: The emergence of a 'country' style in California*
**KEYNOTE - Rob Podesva, Stanford University**

This talk examines the linguistic consequences of large-scale migration from a social meaning perspective. During the Dust Bowl of the 1930s, residents of the Great Plains moved en masse to the Western US, particularly California, in search of economic opportunity. The distinctively Southern features of "Okie" speech were initially seen as markers of regional identity. But as millions of Okies settled and developed communities in California, their Southern speech features were incorporated into local dialects, endowing these features with the potential to take on new meanings at higher orders of indexicality. I draw on acoustic analyses of a number of sociophonetic variables (Southern vowel system, PIN-PEN merger, retracted /s/, strongly voiced stop closures) to first illustrate that features of Southern US English are robustly present in non-urban California. Data consist of interview and word list recordings from the Voices of California corpus, which currently comprises data from nearly 900 lifelong residents of 8 Californian communities. Drawing on ethnographic insights and speaker commentary, I then show that orientation to the country (vs. towns) is a salient dimension of social distinction across rural California. Further, the realization of all variables is predicted by country orientation, the only social factor that predicts all features under consideration. Features that originated as regional markers now most centrally represent a particular and partial characteristic of their original speakers: ties to the land. While the linguistic form of Southern features has not changed dramatically in California, their social meanings have shifted considerably. I conclude by briefly deconstructing the concept of country orientation, focusing on its affective dimensions.

*The urban diaspora in rural England and its consequences for traditional dialect*
David Britain, University of Bern

In the developed and the developing world alike, we have become used to urbanisation as a demographic and socio-economic process. In the search for a better job, a better life, a better future, hundreds of millions of people around the world have left the countryside for the city. Urbanisation has been the dominant demographic trend of at least the past three or four hundred years. However, much more recently, over the past half century or so, many northern European and North American capitalist economies have been witnessing the reverse trend – *counterurbanisation*, with the largest cities shedding population in favour of (often relatively remote) rural areas. These migratory movements have gone hand in hand with the expansion of a range of other rather mundane mobilities that have also especially affected rural areas, such as (long-distance) commuting.

In my talk, I examine some of the linguistic consequences of counterurbanisation and other mundane mobilities for rural areas that are experiencing rapidly expanding populations as a result of out-migration from London and the urbanised South-East of England. Here I focus on East Anglia in Eastern England and conduct a variationist analysis of phonological and morphological change on data collected from a number of rural and urban locations in that area. As we will see, salient traditional dialect features are faring badly as a result of the population churn triggered by the urban diaspora into the countryside and other mobilities.

The sociolinguistic literature expects us urban innovations in the countryside to affect other urban centres first, with innovations trickling down to every smaller population clusters. In the case of traditional dialect in East Anglia, this is not what is happening. The paper will attempt to demonstrate, using demographic evidence, why this is the case.

## Phonetic stability across time: a diaspora community in Switzerland

Andrin Büchler, University of Bern/University of Freiburg

Adrian Leemann, University of Bern

The present paper shows results of a study on two historically related but geographically separated Swiss alpine communities. Between the 12th and 14th centuries, speakers of Valais German emigrated to the Grisons, forming diasporic communities (enclaves) in a Romansh-speaking area (cf. Zinsli 2002; Waibel 2013). Zooming in on one of these enclaves, namely Obersaxen, we see substantial changes in the sociolinguistic situation having taken place in the 20th century. Incoming germanisation of the Romansh-speaking area as well as a flourishing tourism industry (Collenberg 2016) have led Obersaxen's inhabitants to increasingly converse with speakers of mostly Eastern Swiss German origins. In the present contribution, we study how the diasporic community has changed linguistically over the past decades in relation to the "homeland" community in Valais, which has not seen a linguistic influx of such magnitude. We expect that increased contact to speakers of other Swiss German varieties in the enclave has led to dialect levelling on a number of linguistic levels.

Data for this study was gathered via an online-questionnaire, using crowdsourcing methods to reach out to speakers. Different tasks such as sentence completion were used to test ten variables situated in the phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical domains. To examine how the two dialects have developed over time, we took a real-time approach: the responses of 300+ participants were compared to the most recent large-scale description of Swiss German dialects, the *Sprachatlas der deutschen Schweiz* (SDS), which largely reflects the linguistic situation around 1900.

Results suggest stability on the phonetic level and somewhat more flux in the morphosyntactic and especially the lexical domain – a general trend of linguistic change which has been reported previously for German-speaking Switzerland (cf. Christen 1988). The unrounding of Middle High German (MHG) /y/ to /i/, for example, is still consistently prevalent in both regions. The other phonetic variables examined show a similar pattern – thus the two dialects appear to still sound very similar. Morphosyntax and lexicon, however, exhibit substantial change. Our findings reveal clear tendencies towards adoption of supralocal variants. For example, the positioning of auxiliary and participle of 'to be' in subordinated clauses has remained stable in the Valais but has been reversed in Obersaxen. We discuss historic and

sociodemographic factors (such as increased mobility, tourism and age) that may explain these patterns.

*References*

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*Community and bilingualism in American Norwegian: Contact, variation, and phonetic-phonological change*
David Natvig, University of Oslo, Center for Multilingualism in Society across the Lifespan


Immigrant languages and communities in the United States offer exciting opportunities to investigate the impact of language contact and variation on linguistic structures. American Norwegian (AmNw), for example, is a moribund heritage language spoken in various communities mostly in the American Upper Midwest. Contemporary speakers are typically elderly descendants of Norwegian immigrants who migrated to the United States over approximately a century starting in 1825 (Haugen 1969:29). They tended to settle together, establishing their own social institutions and practices (Pedersen 1992). Although these organizational patterns contributed to the maintenance of Norwegian for up to three or four generations, these settlements were often surprisingly heterogeneous with respect to immigrant background and home language. Take Ulen, MN — a town settled by Norwegian immigrants in 1886. According to the 1900 U.S. Federal Census, approximately 22% of the village's and neighboring rural township's residents had no ties to Norway or Scandinavia, and by 1910 just 5% of the population was Norwegian monolingual, only 17 individuals (United States Census Bureau 1900–1940). Yet AmNw speakers born in and around Ulen report some level of home and community maintenance of Norwegian as late as the 1940s and 1950s (Natvig in prep). In this regard, Ulen is consistent with other places where AmNw speakers grew up and call home. Rather than being isolated and monolingual, these groups experienced varying degrees of contact with the extended American society and managed stable bi– and multilingual communities until the first half of the 20th century (Haugen 1969:52).


I explore two examples of contact effects in the sound patterns of AmNw speakers: the transfer of the English-like approximant [ɹ] into Norwegian, and the variable lack of a surface distinction of /s~z/ in English. Data from present-day AmNw bilinguals' speech, from recordings stored in the Corpus of American Nordic Speech (CANS; Johannessen 2015), indicate varied, yet structured, bilateral transfer between Norwegian and English (Natvig 2019; Salmons forthcoming). However, Einar Haugen's recordings of AmNw from the 1940s and analyses of the English of American-

Norwegian communities since the 1930s (Simley 1930; Haugen 1969; Allen 1973–1979: vol. 1: 138; Moen 1991; Salmons forthcoming) reveal the same and similar sound patterns over time and among different generations of speakers. What appear to be clean examples of bilingual influence on individuals' phonological and phonetic systems may in fact be natively learned structures and alternations resulting from generations of community-wide multilingualism. Accordingly, these case studies clarify the relationship between phonetic variation and phonological structure in sustained contact situations.

*References*

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*Language change in Guam's Philippine Diaspora Community*
**Eva Kuske, University of Bern**

This paper examines language change in the large Philippine diaspora community in Guam. Guam, the island located in the North-Western Pacific Ocean, has had a complex colonial past, with Spain, Japan and, more recently and more extensively, the US having taken administrative control. Throughout Guam's history, Philippine workers have arrived on the island, initially under the Spanish flag, as soldiers and missionaries, later under the American flag, predominantly to help rebuild the island and its economy after WWII. Nowadays, Filipinos make up more than a third of Guam's population and have both assimilated as well as remained separate to the island's indigenous community, the Chamorros, in many ways.

Linguistically, Filipinos that were born and raised on the island have followed the indigenous community's development towards speaking English as the main and often only language of communication. In doing so, the younger generation shows great linguistic differences to the older generations. In taking a closer look at the short front vowels of representative Filipino speakers in Guam, I will demonstrate a tendency of the younger Filipinos to assimilate towards Guam English, which is in itself a moving target, as the variety shows a development towards American English. Philippine English features, such as the merged production of TRAP and PALM, as well as KIT and FLEECE, which are found in older, first-generation Filipinos on Guam, are produced distinctly in younger, second generation Filipinos on the island. To explain these developments, both a cultural assimilation towards Guam's indigenous population, as well as a shared assimilation towards the US and American English are considered.

*Social networks and language variation among British Asians*
**KEYNOTE – Devyani Sharma, Queen Mary University of London**

In diasporic communities, inter-generational change in language almost always takes place alongside changes in social network structures. But do language and network always co-vary? In this talk I examine the British Punjabi community in West London, and explore how different network properties (ethnicity; nationality; diversity; level of transnational activity) correspond to different types of language use (phonetic; Punjabi use; accent repertoire). The first finding is that network qualities (ethnicity; nationality) are more historically and culturally specific than network structures (diversity), which seem to exert a more constant effect. The second finding is that transnational activity is strongly correlated with language use (retracted /t/; Punjabi use) among older second-generation individuals, but as overall levels of transnational activity decline among younger individuals, this correlation—not the usage itself—disappears, and we witness a reallocation such that new social factors, sometimes more ideological than material, come to govern the use of these language forms. In closing I offer an account of these findings and reflect on how such observations are informative not only for the study of diaspora communities but also for wider theories of language variation and change.

*West-African asylum seekers in Germany:*
*Metalinguistic perspectives on multilingual realities*
**Axel Bohmann, University of Freiburg**

The study of language and migration in Europe has garnered renewed interest with the recent influx of new groups of asylum seekers. Research at the intersection of language and asylum at present exists mainly in two areas: discourse-analytical studies of how migrants are represented by various institutional actors (e.g. Gabrielatos & Baker 2008; Blommaert 2009) and analysis of communicative problems in high-stakes institutional encounters (e.g. Maryns 2014; Jacquemet 2011). Comparatively little work exists on the everyday linguistic practices in asylum seekers' lived realities (but see Goglia 2009).

To address this gap, this paper discusses metalinguistic accounts offered by residents of a preliminary reception center for asylum seekers in Southwestern Germany. The data come from 7 hours of interviews conducted with 8 participants from English-speaking, West-African countries (Nigeria: 5, Gambia: 2, Cameroon: 1). The analysis traces how members of this highly transient, multilingual and multiethnic community construct the role of English in their communicative environment in relation to other languages. It also discusses participants' awareness of different kinds of English and the indexicalities they associate with these.

The paper demonstrates how speakers of heterogeneous ethnolinguistic backgrounds who co-inhabit a tightly confined space draw on histories, geographical trajectories, and circulating ideologies in order to give structure to their complex communicative environments. Close attention to local metalinguistic accounts reveals how global relationships in the World System of Englishes (Mair 2013) are enlisted for situated interpretations. At times, these interpretations assume predictable forms; at others, innovative and surprising connections are drawn that re-work the global system of Englishes into novel relationships at the local level. The study therefore highlights the dynamic interaction of global and local indexicalities in a transient, multilingual setting.

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*Language in San Francisco Chinatown: A look at morphosyntactic variation and ethnic identity*
**Adina Staicov, Hiroshima University**

Established in the mid-nineteenth century, San Francisco Chinatown is one of the oldest diaspora communities in North America. Today, Chinatown is home to old and new immigrants and represents an ethnic enclave in which heritage culture is maintained but also influenced by customs and traditions of the host culture. Despite the long history of Chinatown, little is known about the linguistic practices in the community. Focussing on the use of English, this paper discusses if and how morphosyntactic variation is employed to signal belonging in first- and second-generation Chinese Americans.

Based on quantitative and qualitative analyses of original, interactive speech data collected in the field, I show how non-standard feature use is a way of co-constructing (ethnic) identity. While first- generation Chinese Americans' speech could largely be characterized as learner English, second- generation speakers seemed to use non-standard features to position themselves within the Chinese American and mainstream American communities. Linguistic practices in the second generation were influenced by gender, changes in social conditions, and ties to the Chinatown community. In addition to English, the heritage language Cantonese was another critical aspect of identification across both generations. These results show how linguistic practices interrelate with a complex network of factors. Only a holistic approach allows us to fully understand the dynamic relationship between migration and language variation and change.