

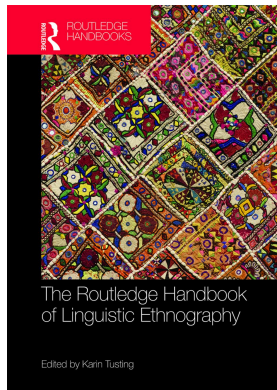
This article was downloaded by: 10.2.97.136

On: 28 May 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



## The Routledge Handbook of Linguistic Ethnography

Karin Tusting

### Youth language

Publication details

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315675824-19>

Rickard Jonsson, Henning Årman, Tommaso M. Milani

**Published online on: 20 Sep 2019**

**How to cite :-** Rickard Jonsson, Henning Årman, Tommaso M. Milani. 20 Sep 2019, *Youth language from*: The Routledge Handbook of Linguistic Ethnography Routledge

Accessed on: 28 May 2023

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315675824-19>

**PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT**

Full terms and conditions of use: <https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms>

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

# Youth language

*Rickard Jonsson, Henning Årman and Tommaso M. Milani*

---

## Introduction: definitions and key terms

Penelope Eckert famously stated that “adolescents are the linguistic movers and shakers” (Eckert, 1997, p. 1); their linguistic creativity has triggered the curiosity of researchers who aim to tease out the relationships between language and social processes. Young people are also early adopters of new communicative technologies that shape language use under contemporary late modern conditions. Their linguistic practices are therefore rich empirical ground for those who want to understand language variation and change. Yet recognising creativity and innovation should not obfuscate the fact that linguistic agency is always conditioned by societal forces which are well beyond speakers’ control. This means that the social location of young speakers cannot be bracketed out of the study of youth language. One should also be careful not to romanticise youth’s language use or suggest that young people are always creative and/or in opposition to social structures. Representations of young people and their linguistic practices are also imbricated with the production of specific normative orders that structure youth’s living conditions.

These considerations have given rise to a considerable body of academic work on youth language. It lies beyond the scope of a handbook chapter to give a comprehensive overview of all the different aspects of this scholarship. Therefore, we have decided to concentrate on the intersections of multilingualism and urbanity in contexts of migration in European cities, which saw the emergence and development of a variety of linguistic practices that have come to be known as *kebabnorsk* in Norway (Aasheim, 1997), *Kiezdeutsch* in Germany (Androutsopoulos, 2001; Wiese, 2006), *rinkebysvenska* in Sweden (Kotsinas, 1988a), *Strattaal* in the Netherlands (Appel, 1999; Nortier, 2001) and *Verlan* in France (Doran, 2004). These linguistic practices employed by young people in multilingual settings have been the target of much sociolinguistic research since the early 1980s (for early works, see Hewitt, 1982; 1986; Kotsinas, 1988b; see also Quist & Svendsen, 2010; Kern & Selting, 2011; Nortier & Svendsen, 2015). And what may appear at first glance a relatively narrow object of study is actually a window into understanding a wide range of social issues, power relations and societal norms: age, space/place and urbanity, language usage and linguistic (anti-)norms.

As Doran (2004) put it in her analysis of *Verlan* in the French context, non-standard linguistic practices spoken by youth in multilingual settings acquire their meaning through a monolingual language ideology. While this ideology of the standard may construct a fantasy of a common national identity and a concomitant homogenous language, it simultaneously seeks to suppress the possibility of a heterogeneous society, devaluing non-normative linguistic practices and making them unintelligible. That being said, Foucault (1990, p. 95) famously wrote that “where there is power there is resistance”, or to put it differently, where there is a norm, there are the conditions through which to challenge it.

Overall, the study of urban youth styles offers a vantage point onto the mundane ways in which contestation of the social order goes hand in hand with processes of reproduction of the status quo. More specifically, in this chapter, we take linguistic practices as starting points from which to address some key issues in research on language and youth, as well as offer a self-reflexive discussion on the dialogic relationship between language practices and sociolinguistic inquiry. The latter follows from the observation that research itself has played a role – often a problematic one – in the “enregisterment” (Agha, 2007) of youth’s linguistic practices. By “enregisterment”, we mean “processes and practices whereby performable signs become recognized (and regrouped) as belonging to distinct, differentially valorized semiotic registers by a population” (Agha, 2007, p. 81). In this definition, “registers” need to be understood as “cultural models of action that link diverse behavioral signs to enactable effects, including images of persona, interpersonal relationship, and type of conduct” (Agha, 2007, p. 145).

Against this backdrop, we elaborate on the different labels, their different vantage points and merits, and the analytical dilemmas that emerge whenever youth’s language usage is given a name. Aware of this conundrum, we concur with Rampton (2015) that *contemporary urban vernacular* (CUV) is perhaps the least problematic and most appropriate label through which to encapsulate the diversity of linguistic styles without simultaneously encoding ethnicity and youth in the very sociolinguistic label one employs, as in the case of, say, *ethnolect*, *multiethnolect* or *youth language*, etc. (see also ‘Critical issues and debates’, below, for a more detailed discussion). Rampton describes CUV as a “hybrid style”

that has emerged, is sustained and is felt to be distinctive in ethnically mixed urban neighbourhoods shaped by immigration and class stratification, that is seen as connected-but-distinct from the locality’s migrant languages, its traditional non-standard dialect, its national standard and its adult second language speaker styles, as well as from the prestigious counter-standard styles (such as American Vernacular Black English) circulating in global popular culture, that is often widely noted and enregistered beyond its localities of origin, represented in media and popular culture as well as in the informal speech of people outside.

(Rampton, 2015, p. 39)

All in all, the expression *CUV* seeks to capture the diversity of linguistic forms and practices (including crossing and stylisation), as well as the ideological processes surrounding them; it also broadens the age spectrum considering how what originally began as a youth phenomenon has over time become solidified and is used by adult speakers (see also Eliaso Magnusson & Stroud, 2012). That being said, *CUV* is a relatively new terminology that still has not gained widespread usage. Therefore, in order not to superimpose this new notion onto research that has not explicitly employed this expression, we also employ the broader and more established denomination “*youth styles*”. Indeed, the modifier “youth” foregrounds the age dimension,

but the plural form “styles” seeks to highlight the multiplicity and heterogeneity of these linguistic expressions. Moreover, the word style, a synonym of design, brings with it a sense of branding, and hence of identity (cf. Coupland, 2007), thus highlighting the connections between linguistic forms and the discursive construction of Self and Other.

## Historical perspectives

Taking a bird’s-eye view on the study of youth styles over the last 30 years or so, it is possible to see that existing scholarship is extremely diverse and has been pursued from a broad set of epistemological vantage points and theoretical perspectives. In the remainder of this section, we take the historical trajectory in Swedish research as a case in point because we feel that it is to a certain degree representative of the epistemological debates in other contexts as well, although we are aware that focussing on a specific academic location is bound to erase the specificities of others.

Language practices amongst youth in the outskirts of major Swedish cities such as Gothenburg, Malmö and Stockholm began to catch the interest of Swedish (socio)linguists in the late 1980s. Kotsinas (1988b) was perhaps the first scholar who systematically investigated linguistic phenomena amongst multilingual youth in the suburbs of Stockholm. In her prolific work, Kotsinas discussed whether such phenomena could be understood with the help of concepts from language contact research such as pidgin, creole and creoloid, or could be studied with the help of methods and terminology borrowed from dialectology. Moreover, Kotsinas employed the label *rinkebysvenska* (Rinkeby Swedish),<sup>1</sup> which was arguably the emic label used by the participants in her study.

At the risk of falling into undue oversimplifications, early research on *rinkebysvenska* can be characterised as what Svendsen and Quist (2010) call “a structural, variety approach”. Grounded in structuralist sociolinguistics, such a research perspective had two main aims: (1) to map the linguistic features and structure of *rinkebysvenska*, and (2) to find correlations between specific linguistic features and macro-sociological structures and categories. Similar to Labov’s (1972) work on, and public social engagement with, African American Vernacular English (AAVE), the structural variety approach emphasised that youth language, like other registers, *lects* or varieties should not be treated as ‘deficient’, but should rather be understood *in its own right* – not a lack or a problem to be solved, but a register that should be recognised and valued in itself. There is no doubt that Kotsinas broke important ground in the study of *rinkebysvenska*, and several scholars who followed her attempted to test whether some of her arguments would be confirmed or refuted by larger empirical investigations (see e.g. Ganuza, 2008; Bodén, 2011). An important insight provided by this strand of research is that language practices amongst urban multilingual youth are in no way the result of poor language skills in the majority language; rather, speakers are able to switch between linguistic styles depending on the speech situation (Bodén, 2004; however, see Jaspers, 2016 for a critical discussion).

Linguistic description, however, is but one perspective on the study of multilingual youth styles. Quist and Svendsen (2010) point out that the late 1990s saw the emergence of “a practice-oriented approach”, which is based on a post-structuralist and performative understanding of language and language use. The practice-oriented approach was inspired by Rampton’s (1995) groundbreaking book *Crossing* as well as Butler’s (1990) seminal work on performativity. While Butler’s theoretical reflections are on gender and not linguistic styles,

1 Rinkeby is one of Stockholm’s suburbs, where the style is said to have originated.

her thinking produced what could be called a ‘performative turn’ in the study of language in society (see also Cameron, 2005). In brief, Butler brings together three very different theoretical insights: (1) Austin’s (1975) notions of the performative and language as social action, (2) Derrida’s (1982) view on the ‘iterability’ (i.e. repetition and citation) of linguistic signs and (3) Althusser’s (1971) concept of interpellation, that is, how subjects are called into social existence by acts of ideological ‘hailing’. This eclectic theoretical blend enabled Butler to conceptualise how identities are linguistic enactments based on the simultaneous (re)iteration of and departure from an existing matrix of dominant norms. A performativity perspective entailed a shift away from the commonly taken-for-granted attitude that people spoke the way they did because of who they already were towards an understanding of how people deploy linguistic resources in order to *style* themselves in particular ways through social interaction (see also Cameron, 1997, and Jaspers and Van Hoof, this volume). This does not mean, however, that identities can be chosen freely; rather, some identities may be more or less performable and negotiable than others in interactions.

The practice-oriented approach seems to have become the dominant paradigm in the study of linguistic practices amongst multilingual youth, and most studies employ linguistic ethnography as their analytical and methodological lynchpin. This is because linguistic ethnography enables an in-depth understanding of the local situatedness of language usage as well as tracing the emergence of identities as interactions unfold (Jaspers, 2008; Jørgensen, 2008; Rampton, 2006, 2011; Milani & Jonsson, 2012; Madsen, 2015). While there is a general agreement on the usefulness of a practice-oriented approach, there remain some important terminological, analytical and methodological discussions within this paradigm. In the next section, we engage in more detail with such debates. We begin with the issues of linguistic labelling, and we then move on to problematic links between youth styles, ethnicity and gender.

## Critical issues and debates

### *The problem of labels*

Several scholars have pointed out that the labels given by a variety of social actors (expert and lay) to urban youth styles entail a wide range of problems (Stroud, 2004; Milani, 2010; Milani & Jonsson, 2011, 2012; Cornips et al., 2015). By giving a style a label and by pointing out which groups it ‘belongs’ to, both identities and language use are congealed – they become fixed and limited. This means that any label inherently risks oversimplifying and reducing the variation and diversity of linguistic practices, turning them into a problematically uniform and conventionalised whole or unit (Rampton, 2011; Madsen, 2013). Related to the process of naming are also the connotations that (socio)linguistic labels, and the phenomena they signify, acquire over time through *indexical links* that tie youth styles to broader social phenomena. For example, *rinkebysvenska* has become an *icon* (Irvine & Gal, 2000) of ethnic Otherness, social and educational failure, and of an aggressive sexist and homophobic masculinity (Stroud, 2004; Milani, 2010; Milani & Jonsson, 2012). Such a negative image, in turn, is more or less overtly constructed against the benchmark of a ‘national’ standard language as a ‘good’, ‘equal’ and ‘emancipatory’ linguistic code (Milani, 2010).

Cognisant of their own role in such processes of “ideological becoming” (Rampton, 2015), scholars have been debating which analytical terms are most ethically suited to describing linguistic styles amongst multilingual youth. It has been suggested that modernist notions of language as a bounded entity (see Heller, 2007 for a critical discussion) cannot be employed

when trying to describe and analyse actual use of different linguistic resources in social processes of meaning-making (Makoni & Pennycook, 2006; Jørgensen, 2008; Pennycook, 2010). Moreover, there is strong resistance against characterisations of youth styles that tie them to predefined social categories – age and ethnicity in particular (Møller & Jørgensen, 2011; Milani & Jonsson, 2012; Madsen, 2015). In this respect, it has been argued (see Jaspers, 2008, Rampton, 2015) that labels such as *rinkebysvenska* or *kebabnorsk* and sociolinguistic notions such as *ethnolect*, *multiethnolect*, *urban youth speech styles* or *youth language* should be avoided as analytical concepts as they encode an ethnification and/or juvenilisation of linguistic practice. As an alternative, it has been suggested to attend to what Agha (2007) calls “enregisterment”, that is, those processes through which linguistic phenomena come into being as social constructs and enter a symbolic economy of social meaning. In line with this perspective, more general notions such as *linguaging* (Møller et al., 2014), *everyday linguaging* (Madsen et al., 2015) or CUVs (Rampton, 2011, 2015) are seen as more appropriate (see Pennycook, 2016 for a critical overview).

### *Ethnification and gendering*

Madsen and Svendsen (2015) have contended that sociolinguistic researchers themselves have actually played a crucial part in the enregisterment (Agha, 2007) of urban speech styles as an indexical sign of ethnic Otherness associated with various social problems in specific urban areas. Madsen (2015, p. 109) argues that the highlighting of ethnicity – as, for example, through the very notions of *ethnolect* or *multiethnolect* – has socio-political and language ideological consequences that researchers should consider. Such a process of ethnification is particularly challenging if one concurs with Svendsen and Quist (2010, p. xvi) that there is no empirical evidence to suggest that youth styles employed in multilingual urban settings necessarily index ethnicity alone. Various other categories such as class, gender, place and generation could equally be important aspects of what is being played out through these linguistic practices (see Mendoza-Denton, 2008; Jaspers, 2011; Rampton, 2011).

A cogent example of the intersectional nature of youth styles is offered by Madsen (2013) who shows how, in the context of Copenhagen, a sociolinguistic transformation is underway. Linguistic features that have traditionally been associated with migration, or indexed as belonging to ‘non-Danish youth’, are now also related to broader conceptions of ‘high’ and ‘low’. Whereas sociolinguists searched for and emphasised ethnicity in the study of ‘street’ register, Madsen (2013) illustrates how ethnicity and social class are intertwined in the language ideologies surrounding *one and the same style*. Departing from youths’ metalinguistic reflections on two contrasting registers, labelled ‘integrated’ and ‘street language’, Madsen convincingly demonstrates that to speak ‘integrated’ is not just a matter of being perceived as ‘well integrated’ but is also associated with social mobility and high socio-economic status. Correspondingly, ‘street language’ is also related to societal conceptions of status on a ‘high’ and ‘low’ dimension, however at the other end of the same linguistic axis. These findings lead Madsen to link integrated speech to what Danish sociolinguists previously described as a conservative standard code (see Maegaard, 2005), while street language is enregistered partly as the opposite of the same style. Social class, therefore, “can be seen as an awareness of a ‘high’ and ‘low’ societal stratification and ethnicity as an awareness of territorial belongings involving ‘inside/outside’ relations” (Madsen, 2013, p. 118).

Ethnification, however, is not the only problem. A no less challenging process of gendering – masculinisation – has also been part of the “linguistic ideologization” (Androutsopoulos, 2010) of youth styles. Research in Denmark and Sweden illustrates how resources associated



with multilingual youth styles are used in peer interactions to construct tough masculine youth identities (Milani & Jonsson, 2011; Madsen, 2015). This is *not* to say that girls do not employ multilingual youth styles as well, as some commentators have argued. However, because of its ideological enregisterment as a gendered (i.e. masculine) variety, multilingual youth styles play a particular role in the negotiations of a “local masculine order” (Evaldsson, 2005) in all-male peer encounters at school and play important functions in the production and contestation of in-group solidarity and friendship (see, among others Jonsson, 2007; Madsen, 2013; Stæhr, 2015).

With hindsight, however, researchers – two of us included (Jonsson and Milani) – may have been too preoccupied with deconstructing the link between multilingual youth styles and masculinity, so that paradoxically this very deconstruction might have contributed to further enregistering these practices along intersectional lines of gender (masculinity) and ethnicity/race. Accordingly, no matter how well-meaning our intentions might have been, we could be criticised for contributing to consolidate a specific image of who the speaker of this style is (see also Milani & Jonsson, 2018 for a detailed discussion about reflexivity and enregisterment). This is not necessarily to say that we should discard altogether our and others’ work. However, these self-reflections might be useful to remind ourselves that the performance of toughness and masculinity must always be investigated as a contextual question, and that many other identities and social manoeuvres may be performed through the same linguistic resources.

### Current research areas

It is impossible to do justice to the empirical breadth and theoretical richness of current research areas within the ‘practice-oriented approach’ to the study of CUVs. Because of our own intellectual trajectories, we have decided to foreground three interrelated areas of inquiry: (1) the study of language ideology and the enregisterment of CUVs; (2) research that seeks to move beyond the notion of language as a bounded entity so as to grasp the messiness of multilingual encounters; and (3) youth style and research about them in relation to global flows.

#### *Language ideologies*

In the introduction to this chapter, we said that ‘enregisterment’ (Agha, 2007) can be useful to capture the ideological process through which specific linguistic features, varieties and styles become associated with broader sociocultural images. Earlier research within the practice-oriented approach to youth styles was broadly divided into two main strands: one that focussed primarily on media texts and practices (see e.g. Stroud, 2004; Androutsopoulos 2010; Milani 2010) and another that privileged naturally occurring interactions in schools and other environments (Jaspers, 2005; Jonsson, 2007; Quist, 2008). More recently, however, there has been increased agreement that the social life of language can only be fully understood through a multi-focal approach that simultaneously targets media discourse and linguistic interactions across a variety of discursive sites. Such a multi-pronged analytical lens enables us to tap into larger *societal* discourses about the cultural value of a particular linguistic phenomenon; at the same time, it allows us to delve into more *localised* instances of the ways in which speakers strategically mobilise available “ideological resources in complex and creative ways” (Cameron & Kulick, 2003, p. 136).

To take once again Sweden as a case in point, we saw earlier that *rinkebysvenska* has been enregistered by media discourses as an icon of social problems and of a tough masculinity connected to the ‘immigrant Other’. These cultural images are, in turn, pitted against normative ideas of standard Swedish, and its speakers, as the ‘golden mean’. These language ideological boundaries are highly relevant in school interactions as well. As Milani and Jonsson (2011) point out in an ethnographic study of two schools outside Stockholm, standard Swedish is viewed by teachers and students alike as an index of being a good student, whereas *rinkebysvenska* and slang more generally are synonymous with unruly behaviour. Ethnographic observations testify to the fact that this opposition on a linguistic plane recurs on ethnic and gender levels as well. For example, it was not uncommon in Milani and Jonsson’s (2011) study, to hear jokes about ‘ethnic Swedes’ – whether boys or girls – being ‘good’ and ‘orderly’ in opposition to ‘bad’ and ‘disruptive’ ‘immigrant young men’.

In the light of this ideological background, it is perhaps not unexpected that, as long as the conversation amongst the adolescents in Milani and Jonsson’s study centred on neighbourhood rivalry and conflict, it was peppered with linguistic ingredients typically associated with *rinkebysvenska*, but, as soon as the topic shifted to ‘good relations’ and orderliness, it was linguistically rendered through the means of standard Swedish. Furthermore, dominant ideas of who the urban vernacular speaker is can partly overlap with a moral panic about boys’ educational failure (Jonsson, 2015). While the figure of the ‘rowdy boy’ has a very long history and is a well-known figure in educational settings in Sweden and elsewhere, what it is called and who is presumed to embody that position vary. Jonsson (2015) shows how the ‘immigrant young man’ who employs CUV in the classroom may evoke ideas of anti-school culture masculinities.

That being said, school ethnographic research illustrated complex patterns of reproduction and contestation of the status quo. Multilingual adolescents, for example, employ a plethora of accents (both standard and non-standard) to perform a variety of personae. Moreover, by skilfully employing humorous keying of parody and metaparody, they challenge the social order in daily interactions. Of course, one might wonder to what extent “local practice [can] challenge the hegemony of national and global policy” (Blackledge & Creese, 2010, p. 6). But what is nonetheless clear is that multilingual youths are not straightforwardly (re)producing dominant discourses.

### *Everyday languaging*

We saw earlier that one of the most powerful language ideological constructs is the idea that languages, and linguistic styles, are distinct entities ready to be isolated and counted (Woolard, 1998). The study of language usage in urban multilingual environments instead has demonstrated that young people can use a wide range of linguistic resources in a way that challenges ideas of fixed languages, as well as the well-established notion of code-switching between such separate linguistic entities. As an alternative, a number of analytical concepts have been proposed to capture such linguistic practices: *metrolingualism* (Pennycook, 2010), *translanguaging* (García, 2009) or *poly-languaging* (Jørgensen, 2008) to name just a few (see also Pennycook, 2016 for a critical overview). In this context, we want to highlight the notion of *everyday languaging*, which has been fruitfully used in analyses of CUVs by a group of Danish sociolinguists who have followed Jens Norman Jørgensen’s groundbreaking work on multilingual youth in Copenhagen. Speaking about languaging is an attempt to avoid a naturalised division of linguistic resources into distinct languages. Instead, the analytical gaze is directed



towards the huge variety of linguistic resources that young people may employ in their everyday linguistic practices. Language is thus treated as an everyday phenomenon, which is constantly being constructed and ascribed meaning, when used by participants in mundane talk in various local contexts. The concept of everyday languaging, as Madsen et al. (2015, p. 7) state, allows an investigation of “the social goals that actors pursue with and through language, and (...) to identify the connections between isolated moments in time, and between different individuals’ trajectories of socialisation”.

The concept of languaging is furthermore a reply to the risk of ethnification as discussed above. However, in the effort of trying to “de-ethnify” the labels, researchers also run the risks of broadening the terms to the point where they become all-encompassing and something of a “floating signifier”. When talking of *everyday languaging*, are scholars studying *any* everyday language use? Everyday languaging as a concept is today used in the analysis of language use among youth in urban settings. It is to our knowledge not used to analyse other linguistic practices, say, for example, the communication amongst adults in boardrooms. If researchers are studying a predefined and finite facet of language, a very capacious label like *everyday languaging* might conceal our own methodological choices. On what basis do we choose the participants in our studies and decide where to conduct our fieldwork? The analytical terms might be de-ethnified, but what about our research practices? Are we not still preoccupied with ethnicity as we decide to collect data in certain areas of the city, or amongst a specific group of youth?

### *Global flows*

Today, few would deny the profound impact of social media and digital communication on language practices, not least amongst youth. Stæhr (2015) argues that these new means of communication change the status of what counts as written vs. spoken discourse. Historically, linguistic ethnographers studying multilingual youth styles have often been prioritising spoken discourse as data. However, as online and offline meaning-making becomes entangled and even inseparable, researchers are increasingly trying to incorporate online interaction in their analysis and explore new ways of theorising youth’s digital language practices (Androutsopoulos, 2015; Nørreby & Møller, 2015; Nortier, 2016; Dovchin, 2017). As a consequence, research practices are being pushed towards new directions and online ethnography entails new challenges as well as ethical considerations of its own.

Moreover, recent studies from the Global South on young people’s online/offline linguistic practices illustrate how youth “in the periphery” (Sultana et al., 2013) are not passive recipients of global cultural circulation but agentively appropriate and resignify global discourses, engaging “in a playful stylization and reconfiguration of what the local means” (Sultana et al., 2013, p. 687). Such a focus on circulation, in turn, raises the issue of other exchanges, namely the epistemological dialogues between Europe-based research and work on contexts from the Global South.

Firmly grounded in the tradition of sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology, the study of CUVs has had a strong focus on the linguistic practices amongst young people in Western/Northern urban milieus. Admittedly, these adolescents and/or their families often originate from Southern Europe and/or the Global South. However, their lived experiences and multilingual encounters are strongly framed by the ideological and structural conditions of the Northern/Western countries in which they currently live. Therefore, one could go as far as suggest that the study of CUVs suffers from an inherent Eurocentric bias not least because it has engaged very little with research on youth language in the Global South (see

however some of the contributions to Nortier & Svendsen, 2015 for notable exceptions), which has a very long tradition in Africa and Asia (see e.g. Mesthrie, 2008; Djenar & Ewing, 2012; Hurst, 2014; Nassenstein & Hollington, 2015; Mensah, 2016; Dovchin et al., 2017). This is furthermore a body of scholarship that has provided convincing empirical evidence of the transglossic, fluid and messy nature of multilingual encounters, testifying to the difficulty in drawing clear-cut lines between languages in interaction (see e.g. Makalela, 2015).

We strongly believe that there should be more cross-fertilisation of ideas between research on CUVs in Europe and other Northern/Western contexts, on the one hand, and scholarship on youth linguistic practices in the Global South, on the other. This is because the global margins are “ex-centric” windows, as the Comaroffs call it, “on the world at large” (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012). Put differently, perspectives from the Global South are helpful to “provincialize” Europe, to use Chakrabarty’s (2000) turn of phrase. This is not “a project of rejecting or discarding European thought” but of “exploring how this thought – which is now everybody’s heritage and which affect us all – may be renewed from and for the margins” (Chakrabarty, 2000). In light of this, perspectives on youth styles from the Global South could help us not to fall into the trap of “universalizing” research results that are instead particular to European contexts.

### Future directions

In this final section, we want to outline some possible future directions within research on multilingual youth styles. First, based on our ethnographic insight into the Swedish context (see also Androutsopoulous, 2016 for Germany), we believe that humour is a key “epistemological site” (Sunderland, 2004) which requires further investigation. Such interest in humour stems from the kind of play-acting communication that Jaspers (2005; see also Jaspers, 2011) has described in his ethnographic work, when some Moroccan boys in a Belgian school call their own linguistic practices “to do ridiculous”. The art of doing ridiculous included the use of various playful linguistic resources so as to disrupt the classroom order or to shift attention during the lessons to non-school topics. This “linguistic sabotage”, Jaspers argues, is employed by the students to negotiate their classroom participation and as a way to resist stereotyping identity categories. In a similar vein, Charalambous (2012) has shown how some Greek-Cypriot adolescents use what she calls “silly talk”, that is, short playful utterances, as a way to engage in politically loaded issues in classroom practices. Pomerantz and Bell (2011) have argued that humour in classroom interactions may function as a resource for students to construct, negotiate and play with institutional identities. Finally, Chun’s (2013) analysis of how students make fun of other students’ learner language shows how humour “is an ideal space for engaging in ideological work, given that humorous performers have licence to break with everyday norms of interaction” (p. 278). However, much of the work on humoristic talk in classrooms – as well as the research on urban youth styles – has emphasised the possibility of constructing, negotiating and *resisting* ethnic identities through humorous speech acts (Svendsen & Quist, 2010; Rampton, 2011; Nortier & Svendsen, 2015). Accordingly, we call for an analysis of CUVs, where humour is not solely treated as a linguistic tool for constructing identities, but also an analysis with a focus on affects and the joint creation of laughs (see Jonsson, 2018). Moreover, drawing upon Michael Billig’s (2005) reflections on humour, we might ask ourselves: what happens when the stereotypes, surrounding the *rinkebysvenska* speaker, become the target of jokes and ridicule? And finally, what are the subversive possibilities in the laughs connected to specific contexts where CUVs are spoken?

Second, researchers are currently exploring ways to sensitise the research on CUVs in relation to social and geographical mobility of youth speakers. The Swedish context can again serve as a case in point. In Stockholm, high school pupils are free to apply to any high school regardless of whether or not the school is located in the neighbourhood the pupils live in. This has resulted in a flow of young people commuting through the city in order to attend attractive schools. As Blommaert (2005) points out, moving through a city also means moving through a stratified sociolinguistic space. Youth's spatial movement thus also constitutes a movement through shifting expectations of language use.

In a study of the regimentation of CUV in a high school in Stockholm, Årman (2018) draws upon a linguistic/semiotic landscape perspective (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2011) on signage, space and the material environment. Such a theoretical framework allows him to describe the ideological production of social space and the resemiotisations (Iedema, 2003) of discourses used to comment on language use in the high school. In the social space that was conjured up by the students and teachers, stylisations of CUV become an ideological battleground about who has the right to use these linguistic resources, and who instead is dismissed as illegitimate or accused of pursuing a problematic project of cultural appropriation (Årman, 2018).

In similar vein, Nørreby (2017) analyses stylisation performances of CUV in two different school settings in the Danish context: one public school, described as an average Copenhagen public school, and one private in one of Denmark's most expensive neighbourhoods. Nørreby argues that the findings

support the image that the contemporary urban vernacular in Copenhagen has become a widespread phenomenon by illustrating how prevalent features associated with the register are not just part of the linguistic repertoire of children from the urban, public schools but also of children attending socioeconomically privileged private elite schools.

(Nørreby, 2017, p. 28)

Furthermore, the study shows that speakers in both settings have a fine-tuned understanding of macro-level discourses on language hierarchies in Denmark, and they draw on indexical values of CUV in their parodic stylisations.

A focus on mobility invites us to change gears and turn our gaze to the parts of the city which have typically not been associated with urban vernaculars. Such a perspective also challenges us to carefully (re)think space in linguistic ethnographic studies. Perhaps it is towards a renewed interest in space that future studies of CUVs should turn.

## Further reading

Madsen, L.M., Karrebæk, M.S., & Møller, J.S. (Eds.) (2015). *Everyday languaging: Collaborative research on the language use of children and youth*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. (This volume introduces the term "everyday languaging" and provides an important critique of the possibilities and pitfalls of giving non-normative linguistic styles a reductionistic and essentialising label. Through many examples taken from a wide range of contexts in urban Denmark, the book investigates how children and youth construct, negotiate and navigate between different linguistic and sociocultural norms and resources.)

Nortier, J., & Svendsen, B.A. (Eds.) (2015). *Language, youth and identity in the 21st Century – linguistic practices across urban spaces*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Nortier and Svendsen's edited volume collects several contemporary key texts that have been referred to in this chapter. The chapters investigate how youth's language use intersects with age, ethnicity, gender and class in specific

cultural contexts. One of the book's major strengths lies in the fact that it covers the topic of youths' linguistic practices from a global perspective.)

Rampton, B. (1995). *Crossing: Language and ethnicity among adolescents*. London: Longman. (This is a seminal study of language crossing amongst adolescents of African-Caribbean, Punjabi and Anglo descent. Rampton's groundbreaking research raises questions about what the processes of language exchange amongst youth actually do, both in terms of challenging race stratifications and constructing a sense of new mixed youth, class and neighbourhood community.)

## Related topics

Interactional sociolinguistics; Sociolinguistic ethnographies of globalisation; Heteroglossia; Social class; Style and stylisation; Mixing methods?; Reflexivity; Language diversity in classroom settings.

## References

- Aasheim, S. (1997). Kebab-norsk – fremmedspråklig påvirkning på ungdomsspråket i Oslo. In U.B. Kotsinas, A.B. Stenström, & A.M. Karlsson (Eds.), *Ungdomsspråk i Norden: föredrag från ett forskarsymposium* (pp. 235–242). Stockholm: Stockholms Universitet.
- Agha, A. (2007). *Language and social relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Althusser, L. (1971). *Lenin and philosophy and other essays*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Androutsopoulos, J.-K. (2001). *From the streets to the screens and back again: On the mediated diffusion of ethnolectal patterns in contemporary German*. Duisburg: Linguistic Agency University of Duisburg.
- Androutsopoulos, J. (2010). Ideologizing ethnolectal German. In S. Johnson & T.M. Milani (Eds.), *Language ideologies and media discourse: Texts, practices, politics*. London and New York: Continuum.
- Androutsopoulos, J. (2015). Negotiating authenticities in mediatized times. *Discourse, Context & Media*, 8, 74–77.
- Androutsopoulos, J. (2016). Performing the exemplary speaker: Multimodal enregisterment in German ethnic comedy. Keynote address at CADAAD 6, 5–7 September 2016, University of Catania, Italy.
- Appel, R. (1999). Straattaal: de mengtaal van jongeren in Amsterdam. *Toegepaste Taalwetenschap in Artikelen*, 62, 39–55.
- Årman, H. (2018). Speaking 'the Other'?: Youths' regimentation and policing of contemporary urban vernacular. *Language & Communication*, 58, 47–61.
- Austin, J.L. (1975). *How to do things with words*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Billig, M. (2005). *Laughter and ridicule: Towards a social critique of humour*. London: Sage.
- Blackledge, A., & Creese, A. (2010). *Multilingualism: A critical perspective*. London: Continuum.
- Blommaert, J. (2005). *Discourse: A critical introduction, key topics in sociolinguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bodén, P. (2004). A new variety of Swedish. In *Proceedings of the Tenth Australian International Conference on Speech Science and Technology* (pp. 475–480). Sydney: Macquarie University.
- Bodén, P. (2011). Adolescents' pronunciation in multilingual Malmö, Gothenburg and Stockholm. In R. Källström & I. Lindberg (Eds.), *Young urban Swedish: Variation and change in multilingual settings*. Gothenburg: Department of Swedish Language and University of Gothenburg.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Cameron, D. (1997). Performing gender identity: Young men's construction of heterosexual masculinity. In S. Johnson & U.H. Meinhof (Eds.), *Language and masculinity* (pp. 47–64). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Cameron, D. (2005). Language, gender and sexuality: Current issues and new directions. *Applied Linguistics*, 26(4), 482–502.
- Cameron, D., & Kulick, D. (2003). *Language and sexuality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chakrabarty, D. (2000). *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial thought and historical difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Charalambous, C. (2012). 'Republica de Kubros': Transgression and collusion in Greek-Cypriot adolescents' classroom silly-talk. *Linguistics and Education*, 23, 334–349.
- Chun, E.W. (2013). Ironic blackness as masculine cool: Asian American language and authenticity on YouTube. *Applied Linguistics*, 34, 592–612.

- Comaroff, J., & Comaroff, J. (2012). *Theory from the South: Or, how Euro-America is evolving toward Africa*. New York: Routledge.
- Cornips, L., Jaspers, J., & Rooij, V. de (2015). The politics of labelling youth vernaculars in the Netherlands and Belgium. In J. Nortier & B.A. Svendsen (Eds.), *Language, youth and identity in the 21st century: Linguistic practices across urban spaces*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Coupland, N. (2007). *Style: Language variation and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Derrida, J.J. (1982). Signature event context. In J.J. Derrida (Ed.), *Margins of philosophy* (pp. 307–330). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Djenar, D., & Ewing, M.C. (2012). Language varieties and youthful involvement in Indonesian fiction. *Language and Literature*, 24(2), 108–128.
- Doran, M. (2004). Negotiating between bourge and racaille: Verlan as youth identity practice in suburban Paris. In A. Pavlenko & A. Blackledge (Eds.), *Negotiation of identities in multilingual contexts*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Dovchin, S. (2017). The ordinariness of youth linguascapes in Mongolia. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 14, 144–159.
- Dovchin, S., Sultana, S., & Pennycook, A. (2017). *Popular culture, voice and linguistic diversity: young adults on- and offline*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Eckert, P. (1997). Why ethnography? In U.B. Kotsinas (Ed.), *Ungdomsspråk i Norden: föredrag från ett forskarsymposium* (pp. 57–62). Stockholm: Institutionen för nordiska språk and Stockholm University.
- Eliaso Magnusson, J., & Stroud, C. (2012). High proficiency in markets of performance: A socio-cultural approach to nativelikeness. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 34(2), 321–345.
- Evaldsson, A.C. (2005). Staging insults and mobilizing categorizations in a multi-ethnic peer group. *Discourse & Society*, 16(6), 763–786.
- Foucault, M. (1990). *The history of sexuality, Vol. 1, The will to knowledge*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Ganuzza, N. (2008). *Syntactic variation in the Swedish of adolescents in multilingual urban settings*. Stockholm: Centre for Research on Bilingualism and Stockholm University.
- García, O. (2009). *Bilingual Education in the 21st Century: A Global Perspective*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Heller, M. (2007). Bilingualism as ideology and practice. In M. Heller (Ed.), *Bilingualism: A social approach*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Hewitt, R. (1982). White adolescent Creole users and the politics of friendship. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 3, 217–232.
- Hewitt, R. (1986). *White talk, Black talk: Inter-racial friendship and communication amongst adolescents*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hurst, E. (Ed.) (2014). Tsotsitaal studies: Urban youth language practices in South Africa. *Special issue of Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies*, 32(2).
- Iedema, R. (2003). Multimodality, resemiotization: Extending the analysis of discourse as multi-semiotic practice. *Visual Communication*, 2, 29–57.
- Irvine, J.T., & Gal, S. (2000). Language ideology and linguistic differentiation. In P.V. Kroskrity (Ed.), *Regimes of language: Ideologies, politics and identities*. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.
- Jaspers, J. (2005). Linguistic sabotage in a context of monolingualism and standardization. *Language & Communication*, 25(3), 279–297.
- Jaspers, J. (2008). Problematizing ethnolects: Naming linguistic practices in an Antwerp secondary school. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 12, 85–103.
- Jaspers, J. (2011). Strange bedfellows: Appropriations of a tainted urban dialect. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 15, 493–524.
- Jaspers, J. (2016). (Dis)fluency. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 45, 147–162.
- Jaworski, A., & Thurlow, C. (Eds.) (2011). *Semiotic landscapes: Language, image, space*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Jonsson, R. (2007). *Blatte betyder kompis. om maskulinitet och språk i en högstadieskola*. Stockholm: Ordfront.
- Jonsson, R. (2015). *Värst i klassen : berättelser om stökiga pojkar i innerstad och förort*. Stockholm: Ordfront.
- Jonsson, R. (2018). Swedes can't swear: making fun at a multilingual upper secondary school. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 17(5), 320–335.
- Jørgensen, J.N. (2008). Poly-lingual languaging around and among children and adolescents. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 5(3), 161–176.



- Kern, F., & Selting, M. (Eds.) (2011). *Ethnic styles of speaking in European metropolitan areas*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing.
- Kotsinas, U.B. (1988a). Rinkebysvenska – en dialekt? In P. Lindell (Ed.), *Svenskans beskrivning* 16 (pp. 264–278). Linköping: Linköping universitet.
- Kotsinas, U.B. (1988b). Immigrant children's Swedish – A new variety? *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 9, 129–140.
- Labov, W. (1972). *Language in the inner city: Studies in the Black English vernacular*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Madsen, L.M. (2013). “High” and “low” in urban Danish speech styles. *Language in Society*, 42(2), 115–138.
- Madsen, L.M. (2015). *Fighters, girls and other identities: Sociolinguistics in a martial arts club*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Madsen, L.M., Karrebæk, M.S., & Møller, J.S. (Eds.) (2015). *Everyday languaging: Collaborative research on the language use of children and youth*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Madsen, L.M., & Svendsen, B.A. (2015). Stylized voices of ethnicity and social division. In J. Nortier & B.A. Svendsen (Eds.), *Language, youth and identity in the 21st century: Linguistic practices across urban spaces* (pp. 207–230). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Maegaard, M. (2005). Language attitudes, norm and gender: A presentation of the method and results from a language attitude study. *Acta Linguistica Hafniensia*, 37, 55–80.
- Makalela, L. (2015). Translanguaging practices in complex multilingual spaces: A discontinuous continuity in post-independent South Africa. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 234, 115–132.
- Makoni, S., & Pennycook, A. (2006). *Disinventing and reconstituting languages*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Mendoza-Denton, M. (2008). *Homegirls: Language and cultural practice among Latina youth gangs*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Mensah, E. (2016). The dynamics of youth language in Africa: An introduction. *Sociolinguistic Studies*, 10 (1–2), 1–14.
- Mesthrie, R. (2008). ‘I’ve been speaking Tsotsitaal all my life without knowing it’: Toward a unified account of Tsotsitaals in South Africa. In M. Meyerhoff & N. Nagy (Eds.), *Social lives in language – Sociolinguistics and multilingual speech communities. Celebrating the work of Gillian Sankoff* (pp. 95–109). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Milani, T.M. (2010). What’s in a name? Language ideology and social differentiation in a Swedish print-mediated debate. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 14(1), 116–142.
- Milani, T.M., & Jonsson, R. (2011). Incomprehensible language? Language, ethnicity and heterosexual masculinity in a Swedish school. *Gender and Language*, 5(2), 239–276.
- Milani, T.M., & Jonsson, R. (2012). Who’s afraid of Rinkeby Swedish? Public debates and school practices. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 22(1), 44–63.
- Milani, T.M., & Jonsson, R. (2018). Linguistic citizenship in Sweden: (de)constructing languages in a context of linguistic human rights. In L. Lim, C. Stroud, & L. Wee (Eds.), *The multilingual citizen. Towards a politics of language for agency and change*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Møller, J.S., & Jørgensen, J.N. (2011). Linguistic norms and adult roles in play and serious frames. *Linguistics and Education*, 22(1), 68–78.
- Møller, J.S., Jørgensen, J.N., & Holmen, A. (2014). Polylingual development among Turkish speakers in a Danish primary school – A critical view on the fourth grade slump. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 17, 32–54.
- Nassenstein, N., & Hollington, A. (2015). *Youth language practices in Africa and beyond*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Nortier, J. (2001). *Murks en Straattaal. Vriendschap en taalgebruik onder jongeren*. Amsterdam: Prometheus.
- Nortier, J. (2016). Characterizing urban youth speech styles in Utrecht and on the internet. *Journal of Language Contact*, 9, 163–185.
- Nortier, J., & Svendsen, B.A. (Eds.) (2015). *Language, youth and identity in the 21st Century – Linguistic practices across urban spaces*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nørreby, T.R. (2017). Stylizations, stratification and social prestige. *Tilburg Papers in Culture Studies*, paper 195.
- Nørreby, T.R., & Møller, J.S. (2015). Ethnicity and social categorization in on- and offline interaction among Copenhagen adolescents. *Discourse, Context & Media*, 8, 46–54.



- Pennycook, A. (2010). *Language as a local practice*. New York: Routledge.
- Pennycook, A. (2016). Mobile times, mobile terms: The trans-super-poly-metro movement. In N. Coupland (Ed.), *Sociolinguistics: Theoretical debates* (pp. 201–216). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pomerantz, A., & Bell, N.D. (2011). Humor as safe house in the foreign language classroom. *The Modern Language Journal*, 95, 48–161.
- Quist, P. (2008). Sociolinguistic approaches to multiethnolect: Language variety and stylistic practice. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 12(1–2), 43–61.
- Quist, P., & Svendsen, A.B. (2010). *Multilingual urban Scandinavia. New linguistic practices*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Rampton, B. (1995). *Crossing: Language and ethnicity among adolescents*. London: Longman.
- Rampton, B. (2006). *Language in late modernity: Interaction in an urban school*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rampton, B. (2011). From 'Multi-ethnic adolescent heteroglossia' to 'Contemporary urban vernaculars'. *Language and Communication*, 31(4), 276–294.
- Rampton, B. (2015). Contemporary urban vernaculars. In J. Nortier & B.A. Svendsen (Eds.), *Language, youth and identity in the 21st century: Linguistic practices across urban spaces* (pp. 24–44). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stæhr, A. (2015). Reflexivity in Facebook interaction – Enregisterment across written and spoken language practices. *Discourse, Context & Media*, 8, 30–45.
- Stroud, C. (2004). Rinkeby Swedish and semilingualism in language ideological debates: A Bourdieuean perspective. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 8(2), 196–214.
- Sultana, S., Dovchin, S., & Pennycook, A. (2013). Styling the periphery: Linguistic and cultural takeup in Bangladesh and Mongolia. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 17(5), 687–710.
- Sunderland, J. (2004). *Gendered discourses*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Svendsen, B.A. (2015). Language, youth and identity in the 21st century: Content and continuations. In J. Nortier & B.A. Svendsen (Eds.), *Language, youth and identity in the 21st century: Linguistic practices across urban spaces* (pp. 3–23). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Svendsen, B.A., & Quist, P. (2010). Introduction. In P. Quist & B.A. Svendsen (Eds.), *Multilingual urban Scandinavia. New linguistic practices*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Wiese, H. (2006). "Ich mach dich Messer": Grammatische Produktivität in Kiez-Sprache ("Kanak Sprak"). *Linguistische Berichte*, 207, 245–273.
- Woolard, K.A. (1998). Language ideology as a field of inquiry. In B.B. Schieffelin, K.A. Woolard, & P. V. Kroskrity (Eds.), *Language ideologies: Practice and theory*. New York: Oxford University Press.