



TGIF: The NTU Linguist Chatroom

**Join us! Friday, 9 November 2018, 3.30pm
@ HSS Conference Room (HSS-05-57)**

Who's the boss? singing in the 'white dialect'

In this talk, I will gossip a bit about an alleged serial sexual offender, play some of his music, and, most importantly, discuss the linguistic and semiotic strategies he has adopted in some of his songs so as to become an Arabic pop superstar... You're more than welcome to dance!

On May 2, 2015, Saad Lamjarred, a young Moroccan singer whose previous hits had already gained him a huge fandom across the Arab world, released his single 'LM3ALLEM' (لَمْعَلَم). Three months later, this became the most viewed Arabic music video in the history of YouTube. In the song, Lamjarred employs what in one interview he referred to as 'the white dialect' ('le dialecte blanc', in Arabic also known as اللهجة البيضاء) – a deliberate linguistic strategy that has not gone unnoticed among the commentators (as well as critics) of his work, and is, arguably, one of the key factors in the reception and popularity of this hit. LM3ALLEM has since been 're-dialectalized' through several adaptations, including a popular mahraganat-style version in Egyptian Arabic.

In my talk, I will provide a sociolinguistic exploration of the 'Saad Lamjarred phenomenon' and assess what appears to be a rising sociolinguistic potential of contemporary Moroccan pop. I will offer a linguistic analysis of the lyrics of LM3ALLEM with reference to the lyrics of some of Saad Lamjarred's other hits. I will then contextualize this analysis against a corpus of online metalinguistic comments on Lamjarred's linguistic choices. In addition, I will draw on my interviews with young Arabs in Cairo. Finally, I will argue that intentional linguistic and semiotic strategies, such as dialect bleaching (used here to refer to the employment of the so-called 'white dialect') and pan-Arab (dialectal, as well as musical and cultural) crossing (as exemplified in Saad Lamjarred's fusion of contemporary Moroccan pop song with some 'Khaliji' musical and cultural elements), bring about new potentials and developments whereby the dominance of Egyptian (and Levantine) varieties of Arabic will be increasingly, and successfully, challenged by linguocultural products coming from the sociolinguistic 'periphery' of the Arab world.

Speaker



Ivan Panović, DPhil (Oxon), is an assistant professor of Linguistics and Multilingual Studies in the School of Humanities at NTU. Prior to this appointment, he was a Mellon postdoctoral fellow at the University of Oxford. Ivan is a sociocultural linguist who draws on ethnography and multimodal discourse analysis to study vernacular writing and literacies as social practices, language ideologies, language creativity, sociolinguistic aspects of migration and social and spatial mobility, as well as relations of language, gender, and sexuality.

