
Workshop on Linguistic Analyses within the Asylum Procedure



23rd-24th July 2008
Lausanne, Switzerland

Welcome

The work done by the different European units establishing linguistic analyses within the asylum procedure seems still to be relatively badly (or only partially) known by the academic world and the public in general.

Also, through our daily work with our analysts and contacts with the scientific world, it became apparent that regular exchanges with these interlocutors are of the utmost importance in order to establish the criteria necessary, from a scientific point of view, to define the possibilities and the limits of our activity since it can have important consequences on people's lives.

We therefore decided to organise this workshop, in order to address, and hopefully contribute to positively develop, these two points.

The fact that the annual conference of IAFPA (International Association for Forensic Phonetics and Acoustics) was going to be held in Lausanne and would focus, among other things, on the topic of linguistic analyses of origin, was an excellent occasion for us to bring together practitioners and academics.

LINGUA has therefore the pleasure to welcome you to this workshop on linguistic analyses. We hope that the discussions arising from it will allow to shed more light on the daily work done in this field and to intensify the contacts among us. Such contacts will enable us to enhance and develop our work as well as guarantee a high degree of quality in this very sensitive domain.

We want to warmly thank Dr. Drygajlo, the organizer of this year's IAFPA conference for his availability in coordinating the two events. We are also very grateful to all our partner units for putting a lot of time and energy in furnishing information material for this workshop. And finally, thanks a lot to all our LINGUA colleagues, who worked really hard to ensure that this workshop be a success.

Enjoy your stay in Lausanne!

For the LINGUA team,

Eric Baltisberger and Simonette Favaro-Buschor

Program

Wednesday, July 23rd 2008

Registration for the workshop will be open between 8:30-13:00 at the Centre Général Guisan

This morning's presentations belong into the IAFPA's conference program, but since some of these presentations deal with the topic of the workshop they have been included here.

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| 9:00-10:30 | 9 th session of IAFPA conference (see IAFPA program) |
| 10:30-11:00 | Break |
| 11:00-13:00 | 10 th session of IAFPA conference <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Native Swahili from Buyenzi (Bujumbura); preliminary results from a fact finding fieldtrip to Burundi</i> Gerard J. Tolsma• <i>Language Analysis to Determine the Origin of Asylum Seekers (LADO): The 'Guidelines' in Phonetic Perspective</i> Helen Fraser• <i>Guidelines? What guidelines?</i> Anders Eriksson |
| 12:30-13:00 | IAFPA Closing Ceremony: President & Chair of IAFPA |
| 13:00-14:00 | Lunch |
| 14:00-15:30 | Governmental units present their working methods: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sprach- und Textanalyse (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge – BAMF), Germany• Office for Country Information and Language Analysis (Immigration and Naturalization Service), The Netherlands• LINGUA (Federal Office for Migration – FOM), Switzerland |
| 15:30-16:00 | Break |
| 16:00-17:30 | Private companies present their working methods: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• De Taalstudio, The Netherlands• Sprakab, Skandinavian language analysis, Sweden• Verified AB, Sweden |

Program

Thursday, July 24th 2008

- 9:00- 9:30 *On issues of phonetics and lexicon in LADO*
Dr. Marika Butskhrikidze (University FAMA, Prishtinë, Kosovë)
- 9:30-10:00 *Minimal Parameters of Linguistic Analyses for the Determination of Linguistic Background and Place of Predominant Socialization*
Dr. Lutz Rzehak (Humboldt-University Berlin, Germany)
- 10:00-10:45 Discussion
- 10:45-11:15 Break
- 11:15-11:45 *Sociolinguistic principles and issues of expertise in the LADO process*
Prof. Peter L. Patrick (University of Essex, UK)
- 11:45-12:15 Discussion
- 12:15-14:00 Lunch
- 14:00-14:30 *How to prepare and conduct a good interview in order to ensure a sufficient amount of data for the expertise, from the expert's point of view*
Agnieszka Stec (Warsaw University, Poland)
- 14:30-15:15 *Research project on LINGUA interviews: proceedings and results*
Dr. phil. Olaf Behrend (University of Siegen, Germany) and Liliane Meyer (LINGUA, Switzerland)
- 15:15-16:00 Discussion
- 16:00 Drinks

Abstracts IAFLPA-Conference - 10th Session

Native Swahili from Buyenzi (Bujumbura); preliminary results from a fact finding fieldtrip to Burundi

Gerard J. Tolsma

Due to the asylum policy in our country, which offered a temporary asylum status to anyone fleeing from Burundi in a certain period (1996-2006), many asylum seekers come to the Netherlands and claim to be from Burundi. In Burundi, Kirundi is the national language, yet there are quarters in cities like Bujumbura (the capital city) in which Swahili is the main language and the mother tongue of many speakers. Quite a number of asylum seekers claiming to be from Burundi claim to come from such a neighbourhood, and speak only Swahili. For these cases, it is essential to know: (1) to what extent people from these Swahili speaking quarters may be expected to speak some Kirundi beside Swahili, and (2) how the Swahili which is spoken in these quarters differs from other kinds of Swahili.

As it turns out, opinions differ strongly on these matters. In a large number of cases, linguists specialized in Swahili disagree with native speakers who have been trained as language analysts on what constitutes evidence for a Burundi origin. Features which are claimed by one party to be typical of Burundian Swahili are said to occur in other varieties of Swahili by the other party, and features which are claimed to point to an origin elsewhere are said to occur in Burundian Swahili as well by the other party. Unfortunately, there are no published sources about this variety of Swahili which can settle these arguments.

In order to solve this problem, our office felt the need to make recordings of native Swahili from Burundi for future publication. Last March, I went to the Swahili-speaking quarter of Buyenzi in Bujumbura and made various recordings of native Swahili. In my presentation, I will present my preliminary findings regarding phonological, morphological and lexical features of this variety of Swahili and contrast these with the features that both linguists and trained native speakers have described as typical features of Burundian Swahili in individual cases.

Abstracts IAFLPA-Conference - 10th Session

Language Analysis to Determine the Origin of Asylum Seekers (LADO): The 'Guidelines' in phonetic perspective

Helen Fraser and Carol Pedersen

The fact that language, as well as conveying linguistic meaning, also encodes information about a speaker's regional and social identity, has been successfully used in forensic contexts for some time (Labov, 1985). In principle, such information provides a useful tool for immigration departments seeking to determine the national origin or community membership of asylum seekers presenting without papers. However, cases have been documented (Eades et al., 2003) in which language analysis used for this purpose has not conformed to acceptable standards of linguistic rigour. A set of Guidelines (LNOG, 2004) has been published, and endorsed by many linguistic organisations (McNamara, 2005, Patricks, 2008), to aid governments using language analysis for the determination of origin (LADO).

However, these Guidelines were formulated mainly on sociolinguistic considerations. Since a major indicator of origin, especially in cases where a speaker may be attempting to assume an inauthentic identity (Cambier-Langeveld, 2007) is accent, phonetic issues are also relevant. Phonetic science has been researching listeners' ability to use subtle differences of accent to identify speakers' regional and social background for many years, developing a body of knowledge about:

- what phonetic cues affect identification
- what social and personal factors affect a speaker's accent
- what social and personal factors affect a listener's ability to identify an accent
- what factors cause a speaker's accent to change in the long or short term
- the extent to which people can fake an accent other than their authentic accent
- the extent to which speakers are consciously aware of which features affect accent identification

To date, however, the question, crucial in forensic contexts, of how to judge the accuracy of accent identification under various conditions has received relatively little attention. The present paper

- presents background on the contexts in which LADO is undertaken in immigration cases;

- considers points of similarity and difference between LADO and fields such as earwitness testimony and perceptual dialectology;
- reviews the current state of knowledge about accent identification; and
- considers whether and how the Guidelines need to be extended to take account of specifically phonetic aspects of language analysis.

References

Cambier-Langeveld, T. (2007). Hot Issues in the Field of "Language Analysis". *IAFPA 16th Conference, Plymouth, UK*.

Eades, D., H. Fraser, J. Siegel, T. McNamara & B. Baker (2003). Linguistic identification in the determination of nationality: A preliminary report. *Language Policy* 2, 179-99.

Labov, W. (1985). The judicial testing of linguistic theory. In Tannen, D. (ed.) *Linguistics in Context: Connecting Observation and Understanding*. Norwood: Ablex Publishing Corporation. 159-82.

Language and National Origin Group (2004). Guidelines for the use of language analysis in relation to questions of national origin in refugee cases. *International Journal of Speech Language and the Law* 11, 261-6.

Abstracts IAFPA-Conference - 10th Session

Guidelines? What guidelines?

Anders Eriksson

In 2004 a paper with the title "Guidelines for the use of language analysis in relation to questions of national origin in refugee cases" was published in the IJSL. For reasons which are unclear to the present author it has in some circles received the status of guidelines for practitioners in the field.

In the call for papers *Lingua*¹, the scientific unit for linguistic analyses within the Swiss Federal office for Migration writes "In 2004, a group of linguists edited a set of Guidelines designed for all practitioners in this field. Its concern is to ensure and guarantee a sufficient quality level." and the home page of the *Taalstudio*², a Dutch company performing language analysis, includes the following statement "Since June 2004, guidelines have been available for the use of Language Analysis to determine origin in asylum cases."

There would be nothing remarkable about this if it were not for the fact that the document they refer to is not about guidelines for practitioners at all. This is explicitly stated by the authors: "The following guidelines are therefore intended to assist governments in assessing the general validity of language analysis". We are thus led to believe that the guidelines are not intended for practitioners but for government officials evaluating analyses already performed by others. But the text which follows does not live up to this promise. Much of the paper is a rather general treatise on language variation. There are also some remarks about what qualifications an analyst should have like "Language analysis must be done by qualified linguists" and "The expertise of native speakers is not the same as the expertise of linguists" and general observations like "Language analysis requires useful and reliable data". But there are no instructions as to how these requirements and observations may be used in an evaluation process. Assuming that the reader of the paper is a government official who has received a language analysis report and seeks advice on how to evaluate the report, it is difficult to see how these guidelines could be of much use. And as has been pointed out above, they are not even intended as guidelines for practitioners. I will therefore argue that from statements by analysts that their analyses are performed in accordance with the guidelines it is not possible to draw any definitive conclusions about what methods are actually used in the analyses.

Reading the paper leaves the reader with at least two big questions. Why is this paper referred to as guidelines by practitioners? Have they been misled by the title?

References

Arends, J et al. (2004). Guidelines for the use of language analysis in relation to questions of national origin in refugee cases. *International Journal of Speech, Language and the Law*, **11**(2), 261–266.

¹⁾ http://www.bfm.admin.ch/bfm/en/home/themen/laenderinformation/sprachanalysen/call_for_papers.html

²⁾ http://www.taalstudio.nl/taalanalyse/index_uk.html

Short Description - Governmental Units

Sprach- und Textanalyse

(Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge – BAMF), Germany

Linguistic analyses (speech and text) have been developed with the academic world and are in use since 1997/98.

After applying for asylum the asylum seeker will be interviewed by a so-called asylum official (before: decider). If the reasons for the request for asylum or the knowledge of the claimed country of origin are doubtful and if the applicant cannot provide personal papers, the procedure for the speech-and text analysis will start. Under the supervision of an asylum official an interpreter will ask the applicant all important questions about the claimed country of origin regarding his/her social background, the education and occupation and daily life. This recording will be sent to the responsible section of the Federal Office. This section will choose the suitable linguist to do the analysis.

The most important point of the analysis is the language but also the knowledge of the claimed country will be considered. Thus the Federal Office is working with independent linguists who have the qualification (academic training which qualifies them in certain language areas) and also the knowledge of the countries. This will happen anonymously. That means that with reference to the data protection law in Germany the name of the applicant is unknown to the expert. Also the name of the expert will not appear on the report (only a coded ID). The expert's qualification will be attached.

The goal of an expert report is to establish a person's main socialization – not the citizenship - absolutely or with a certain degree of probability. The result of this report is one element to be considered for the later decision about the asylum application.

The basis of every report will be a sufficient recording. If it is not, the expert will give advice to improve the procedure of recording. The whole procedure of speech- and text analysis will permanently be developed and improved to grant the demands of all sides. This kind of procedure is accepted by the German administrative courts.

Short Description - Governmental Units

Office for Country Information and Language Analysis (Immigration and Naturalization Service – IND), The Netherlands

Our unit employs four linguists with a permanent position: a forensic phonetician (PhD), a linguist and Arabist (PhD), a descriptive linguist (PhD) and a language typologist (MA). The unit is part of the “Office for Country Information and Language analysis”, which is charged with the collection of reliable information on relevant countries of origin, enabling it to answer background questions from decision makers in asylum cases.

The linguists work with freelance language analysts, who generally have native competence of a language relevant for asylum cases, and who have a language background in a relevant country. We currently have a database of some forty analysts. Most of our cases are concerned with Somali, Arabic, Kirundi and West-African varieties of English.

Our analysts undergo a selection procedure in which their ability (talent) to recognise relevant language varieties is tested, and an assessment is made of their ability to communicate about language, i.e. to provide relevant linguistic examples. Testing continues after the selection procedure. Information provided by analysts about distinctive features of language varieties must in part be verifiable from other sources, e.g. publishes sources or information from other experts, as known by the supervising linguist.

The linguist provides specific training and extensive feedback to analysts on a one on one basis. Individual analyses are discussed with the linguist at the office, and each report is signed by both analyst and linguist. Double-checks and cross-checks are done in order to ensure quality and objectivity of analyses.

In the Netherlands, counter expert reports are submitted quite regularly. It is the task of the linguists to provide statements of reply to these reports, after consulting the analyst on relevant points if necessary

Short Description - Governmental Units

LINGUA (Federal Office for Migration – FOM), Switzerland

LINGUA is the unit within the Swiss Federal Office for Migration (FOM) that is in charge of producing scientific linguistic and socio-cultural analyses for asylum seekers and other foreigners whose allegations concerning their origin are doubtful. LINGUA analyses aim to give more information on a person's country, region and/or milieu of socialisation on the basis of an interview that is conducted exclusively for this purpose. The analyses are written by external experts, i.e. linguists who are not only specialized in the different languages but who also have a first-hand experience in the country, region and/or milieu under scrutiny. In order to ensure that the interview contains information and linguistic data relevant for the ensuing analysis, LINGUA developed the so-called 'direct analysis': whenever possible, the experts who will write the analysis will also conduct the interview. A research project by an external research team on this very specific kind of interview has just been concluded and the results of the research will be presented for the first time at this workshop.

LINGUA exists since 1997. Initially composed of two people it currently comprises a staff of 10 people. Recently, LINGUA has expanded its activity and is now also in charge of controlling the quality of interpreters working for the FOM and testing the competence of people who apply for a job as interpreter at the FOM. This new task has led to the development of a test that all new interpreters must pass before being employed by the FOM. Currently, LINGUA is refining the test procedure and tries to define and implement the quality standards that must be fulfilled by all interpreters working for the FOM.

Short Description - Private Companies

De Taalstudio, The Netherlands

De Taalstudio (www.taalstudio.nl) is an independent private company which provides products and services with a strong linguistic component. Since 2003, De Taalstudio provides language analysis and contra-expertise for many languages.

Our reports are written by independent professional linguists specialised in the language and region under investigation. To date, most of our customers are asylum seekers and their representatives, seeking a contra-expertise for a language analysis carried out by order of the Dutch Immigration Service. De Taalstudio functions as an intermediary between asylum seekers and their legal representatives on the one hand, and the linguists (contra-experts) on the other. The *Guidelines for the Use of Language Analysis in Relation to Questions of National Origin in Refugee Cases* form the basis of our quality standards, and we have implemented the Guidelines in all facets of our procedures. This refers not only to the selection of experts but also, amongst other things, to the selection of cases, the degree of certainty in the conclusions, and due attention to issues arising from the complex relationship between language and origin.

De Taalstudio employs four linguists, two administrative staff and one specialist in refugee law. An independent advisory board consisting of linguists, an immigration judge, and a solicitor, advises De Taalstudio on all aspects of quality in this domain. Next to our daily case work, De Taalstudio collaborates with various universities in the Netherlands and abroad on research projects into aspects of language analysis, including its methodology. Since 2004 a workshop was organised each year about language analysis, in which practitioners as well as academics participated. In so doing we created a platform for the much-needed discussion in this rather new field of applied/ forensic linguistics. Finally, we play an active role in informing a general audience of legal professionals about language analysis, its possibilities and its limitations.

Short Description - Private Companies

SPRAKAB, Scandinavian Language Analysis, Sweden

Scandinavian Language Analysis (SPRAKAB) is a privately owned company located in Stockholm, Sweden whose primary mandate is conducting linguistic analysis. Linguistic analyses are performed at the request of asylum determination bodies and police authorities in countries around the world, who have questions about an individual's region of origin and who wish to determine a person's linguistic background.

SPRAKAB has conducted linguistic analysis since 2000 and has completed approximately 40,000 linguistic analyses.

SPRAKAB's staff consists of linguists, as well as administrative personnel. The linguists employed are university educated in areas such as linguistics, forensic phonetics, phonetics, interpreting and translation. In addition, the company maintains a broad network of experienced analysts who are generally native speakers or who speak at the native level in the language they are asked to analyze.

Along with linguistic analysis, SPRAKAB also conducts forensic phonetics. Forensic phonetics is an interdisciplinary research area that examines and compares a large number of speech characteristics possessed by a person. This can be used, for example, to determine if speakers on two different recordings, one where the person is known and one where the person is unknown, are one and the same speaker or two different people. Police authorities are just one of our clients who make use of our forensic phonetics analyses.

Short Description - Private Companies

Verified AB, Sweden

Verified started its activities in autumn 2004 to offer a language analysis service of higher quality. Our management and staff have many years of experience in language analysis and asylum case investigations. In 2005 we became the exclusive contractor for the Swedish Migration board and our clientele has expanded to include other migration authorities, as well as police departments.

The company board and associates aim to ensure competence in language, jurisprudence and quality control. Our business approach is to meet our customers' needs for expertise in all matters concerning language and deriving origins via language.

The analysing process is based on the work of a native speaker and a supervising linguist. The analyst analyses the speech material regarding phonology, lexicology and grammar and if requested, performs a knowledge check of the region in question. The analyst's work is supervised and critically reviewed by the linguist. The quality of the analysis is safeguarded through rigorous initial testing of the analysts followed by frequent crosschecks.

Abstracts

On issues of phonetics and lexicon in LADO

Dr. Marika Butskhrikidze (University FAMA, Prishtinë, Kosovë)

The presentation focuses on the particular importance of two linguistic domains in the linguistic analysis: phonetics and lexicon in determining an applicant's place of socialization.

Concerning phonetic domain, two aspects: pronunciation and intonation are discussed. Both are essential cues for revealing native/non native status of an applicant's language and dialectal nuances of the applicant's speech. An essential observation concerning these two aspects is that: while characteristics of pronunciation can be established even on the basis of short interviews, establishing characteristics of intonation sometimes needs longer period of time. Based on my experience it is at least 30 minutes. It is well known that an interview is a stressful event for an applicant and natural/spontaneous speech from the applicant's side is usually achieved only towards the end of interview. Content of interview questions seem also to affect revealing native intonation characteristics. There exists strong evidence to argue that native patterns of intonation are often shown up when the applicant is asked about traditional food, or local customs, etc. Discussion is supported by illustrative material from Georgian and Russian.

Concerning the lexical domain, importance of sociolinguistic aspects and language contact are outlined. The discussion is based on languages/dialects spoken within the territory of Georgia. The main suggestion among others for experts is to keep updated with current developments of language in question and instead of focusing on characteristics of standard language, to pay more attention to features of spoken language.

Abstracts

Minimal Parameters of Linguistic Analyses for the Determination of Linguistic Background and Place of Predominant Socialization

Dr Lutz Rzehak (Berlin Humboldt-University, Privatdozent)

A justified criticism of linguistic analyses for the determination of origin of asylum seekers says that a few key words and their pronunciation cannot reveal a person's nationality or ethnicity. Taking this criticism as a starting point, my paper will define indispensable parameters of a linguistic analysis which would be as solid as possible from a scientific point of view. It is self-evident that the linguist must not only know, but speak the language(s) in question. At the same time one must recognize the fact that our linguistic knowledge of some regions of the world may be insufficient to fulfil all outlined parameters.

The concept is based on the idea that in such linguistic analyses the object of investigation is not the *language*, but the *speech style* of a person as shown in a given communicative situation like a recorded interview. In a wider meaning the object of investigation is *linguistic behaviour*. For a responsible assessment of the linguistic behaviour a set of criteria will be defined in a multilateral system of the following coordinates:

- Biographical information given by the interviewed person: Which language(s) and/or which language varieties (dialects, sociolects) can be expected according to a speaker's information about her or his place(s) of origin and socialization, ethnic belonging, social status and educational level?
- Socio-linguistic situation in the claimed region(s) of origin and/or socialization: Which language(s) are spoken in the region(s) in question? Are there any distinguishable language varieties and of which ethnic or social groups are these varieties considered characteristic? Do these languages have different norms (classical, modern literary/formal spoken, educated colloquial, local dialects) and in which communicative situations are they commonly used? Are people in the stated regions of origin and socialization monolingual, bilingual or multilingual?
- Communicative situation: Which language(s) or language varieties were used by the interviewer and interviewee? Did they understand each other without problems or were there cases of misunderstanding? Was the speech style of the interviewed person, possibly, influenced by the formal character of the interview? Did the interviewed person, probably, adjust her or his speech style toward the speech style of the interlocutor or vice versa? Were there any indications of feigning a false linguistic identity? Were there significant changes in

speech speed? Did the interlocutors change the language or language variety during their conversation?

- Striking features in phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon: Which features are characteristic or non-characteristic against the background of the criteria mentioned above? Were these features observed in individual cases only or can they show an evident tendency in the linguistic behaviour? In which semantic context did these features appear?
- Conversational features: Does the usage of idiomatic expressions, fillers, interjections or colloquial expressions correspond to the social status the speaker should have according to her or his biographical information?
- Multilingualism and language contact: Which other language(s) or vernaculars may have influenced the linguistic behaviour of the interviewed person according to biographical information? Which features can be interpreted as influence of other languages on the speech style of the interviewed person? In which semantic contexts were these features observed? Which language can be regarded as the speaker's first language if she or he used different languages or language varieties in the interview?
- Temporal features: Are there any indications that the speaker really left the mentioned region(s) of origin or socialization at the time she or he stated? Did the speaker use or understand the names of institutions, technical innovations or other things which had appeared only recently before that time? Did the speaker use buzzwords or other ephemeral lexical items which would be characteristic of a certain period of time?
- Verification of the results: If there are evident sources of trouble or error they must be mentioned in the report. It seems impossible to prove afterwards if the result of an analysis indicates a speaker's real linguistic background and place of predominant socialization. The only way to examine the probable accuracy of linguistic analyses for a given region would be a series of tests with speakers who are not involved into an asylum procedure.

Regardless of empirical tests, the best quality assurance of such linguistic analyses is a proof that minimal parameters have been fulfilled which are accepted both by leading linguists and migration offices.

Abstracts

Sociolinguistic principles and issues of expertise in the LADO process

Prof. Peter Patrick (University of Essex, UK)

Individuals with varying types of language expertise – linguists with academic credentials, interpreters with different levels of qualification, native speakers with few or no academic qualifications – are increasingly involved, in different configurations, in the determination of national, regional or ethnic origins of refugees as part of the asylum process (Eades 2005). There has been considerable controversy over the role, if any, that language experts and linguistic expertise should play in this process, and each host nation differs in its practices. Attempts to draw up a minimum set of standards (Language and National Origin Group, 2004), though widely endorsed by linguists, are still preliminary and have been contested in proceedings.

This talk considers related issues and developments, drawing comparisons to common practice in the closely related field of forensic linguistics as practiced in courtrooms. Though important similarities characterize the two contexts, I argue that instead of the Axiom of the Idiolect (which frequently informs argumentation and evidence presentation in forensic linguistics, where the unique identity of a speaker or text is at issue), in LADO the crucial principle is the Axiom of the Speech Community (Patrick 2002). The research base of Speech Community studies is summarized and compared to the research base used until now in LADO. Conclusions are drawn concerning the nature of expertise that is recommended for LADO practitioners.

References

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- Patrick, Peter L. 2002. The speech community. In JK Chambers, Peter Trudgill & Natalie Schilling-Estes, eds. *The Handbook of Language Variation & Change*. 573-597. Oxford: Blackwell.

Abstracts

How to prepare and conduct a good interview in order to ensure a sufficient amount of data for the expertise, from the expert's point of view

Agnieszka Stec (Warsaw University, Poland)

The paper analyzes the conditions which have to be met for an interview to be successful, which is an important stage in the process of determining the applicant's origin. Such interviews have to provide sufficient data to enable identification of the applicant's place of socialization, which is necessary information for both repatriation and asylum procedures. The interviewer has to make the following steps before and during the interview:

- 1). The first and very important preliminary step must include an analysis and verification of the entire information about the applicant available before the interview, which is received from the preliminary interview with the applicant. The expert should pay attention to any possible inconsistencies in this information. This can prevent some unexpected situations during the interview. At that moment, some ideas about the applicant, which build the general vision of the interview, are developed.
- 2). The second step consists of the obligatory questions about the applicant's personal data, which should open the interview. It is important to form those questions in such a way so as to get the greatest possible amount of information about the applicant. This information will be used by the expert as a basis for reconstructing the applicant's biography in the chronological order. This moment of the interview is very important to win the applicant's trust, which can pay off later, when the applicant will have to answer further, more difficult next questions.
- 3). The third step should include detailed questions about all the places indicated by the applicant as his/her residences as well as questions concerning the knowledge about the country (-ies) where such places are located, its culture and everyday life. It is very important to adjust the questions individually to the applicant and to the special situation existing in the country (-ies) where the indicated places are located, as well. The expert should not ask about commonly known facts or about those which are not specific for one country. The interviewer should try to find something that could be known only by a person who really lived in the indicated places. Questions asked during the interview should help us form our subsequent opinion about the possible origin of the applicant. When we want to ask questions, we must think what kind of answer we will receive and whether we really need it to determine the place of the applicant's socialization.

4). It is very important to conduct the interview in the language declared by the applicant as his/her mother tongue. Nevertheless, the expert has to check the applicant's command of all the languages reportedly known by the applicant as well as those spoken in all the countries where the applicant lived. In addition to the conversation, at this stage of the interview, the applicant should also be asked to translate some words and phrases from the language indicated by the applicant as his/her native tongue into the languages of all the countries where the applicant resided and vice versa. As a rule, such phrases and words should concern everyday life. The interviewer should also try to find some words which could be known only in the area indicated by the applicant as his/her place of residence; some local dialect words. The applicant's language skills can reveal whether he/she really lived in the indicated places for the declared period of time.

Moreover, the expert should try to create a nice atmosphere during the interview, even when the applicant is not willing to collaborate and disturbs the expert. An attempt should also be made to answer the question what necessary competences the expert/interviewer must have. Judging from my experience, the expert should be a qualified linguist or philologist with extensive knowledge, which covers a broader scope than his/her major specialization (the entire political or geographical region and not just an area limited only to one country). The expert should know fluently more than one language spoken in a given political or geographical region. It is also important to have some idea about the languages spoken in the neighboring countries so as to have an opportunity to compare them, let alone dialects of a given language.

Abstracts

Research project on LINGUA interviews: proceedings and results

Dr. phil. Olaf Behrend (University of Siegen, Germany)
Liliane Meyer (LINGUA, Switzerland)

LINGUA is the scientific unit within the Swiss Federal Office for Migration in charge of producing linguistic analyses for those asylum seekers and other foreigners whose allegations concerning their origin are doubtful. LINGUA has developed its specific procedure in order to obtain the necessary data for the analyses by letting the experts (or trained interviewers) lead interviews themselves with the above mentioned persons. Based on the analysis of the recording of these interviews, the experts edit a scientific report in which they outline the knowledge the interviewed subject has displayed about his/her country of origin, as well as the linguistic traits that characterize his/her speech.

This interview is therefore of capital importance because it constitutes the corpus which enables to carry out a thorough analysis and, thus, to edit a reliable report. Although much research on interview techniques has been done, up to now none of it has focused on the particular kind of interaction taking place in interviews serving as a basis for linguistic analysis of origin.

This is why LINGUA launched a research project with the precise purpose of achieving a better understanding of the LINGUA interview process, the goal being the enhancement of the quality of the interviews (and therefore of the scientific reports based on these interviews). This implies changes of established procedures where necessary as well as the improvement of the interview training offered to experts/interviewers.

The research has been conducted by an independent research team with the support of LINGUA. In this paper, we aim to present our views of the project idea and its development, to give an overview of the research methods and procedures employed, and to share the outcome of this project with a wider audience. Finally, we also want to project the practical consequences this research will have on the daily work within LINGUA.

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