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Director

## Centre for Communication, Culture and Society

The Centre for Communication, Culture and Society (CCCS) was initiated in 2012 as a sociolinguistic research group, founded by Sharon Millar and Rasmus Nielsen, with the purpose of strengthening the links between teaching and research across the degree programs offered by the Department of Language and Communication at the University of Southern Denmark (SDU). The main objective was to stimulate interest for research among undergraduate and MA students by providing them with a space for discussion and feedback from peers and research staff, while getting involved in actual research projects.

CCCS achieved center status in 2014 with the aim to promote research within socially and culturally based approaches to language and communication in contexts of diversity and change. The center was established with a non-paradigm openness towards interdisciplinary collaborations between departments and faculties at SDU in addition to working with colleagues from other national and international institutions. Further, the center benefitted from adding members with various language backgrounds and competences, including Danish, English, and German. Early projects included sociophonetic and pragmatic variation in varieties of English such as Irish English and African American English (see, e.g., Nielsen 2010, 2013), but the center gradually shifted into areas of conflict in modern society, particularly tension found in new media and in the online sphere. Focus was placed on oppositional and even hateful language directed towards ethnic, religious, and LGBTQ minority groups in Danish society, and center members started to investigate the boundaries found in discussions of freedom of speech vs. legal definitions of hate crime.

As a consequence, the center landed a grant from the European Union, which turned into the hate speech project *C.O.N.T.A.C.T* (Creating an Online Network, monitoring Team and phone App to Counter hate crime Tactics). The project focused on hate speech and hate crime of a racist, xenophobic, homophobic or transphobic nature and included partners from Cyprus, Denmark, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Spain, and the UK. The partners worked to train and raise awareness about hate speech among relevant actors such as the police, media professionals and youth, while setting up a hate crime recording website. Some of the outputs from the project included seminars and training events with members of the LGBTQ community and community organizers from the culturally diverse area Vollsmose, Odense, in addition to several international publications (see, e.g., Assimakopoulos 2017, Geyer 2018, Millar 2019, Millar et al. 2017).

The C.O.N.T.A.C.T-project evolved into the present-day Velux funded XPEROHS-project, which focuses on xenophobic hate speech on Facebook and Twitter, while comparing Danish and German linguistic expressions of hate speech. The article in this volume constitutes an initial exploration of data extracted from the project's large-scale Facebook and Twitter corpora. The findings presented here are based on four subprojects involving the semantics and pragmatics of denigration, the covert dynamics of hate speech, perceptions of spoken and written hate speech, and rhetorical hate speech strategies employed in online interaction. Both overt and covert examples of hate speech towards minority groups are explored as are larger societal othering and stigmatization processes. The XPEROHS-project represents the culmination of the center's interdisciplinary and methodological collaborations across faculties at SDU (Arts and Sciences) and universities (e.g., The University of Sheffield), as the project takes advantage of philosophy, interactional sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, sociophonetics (see, e.g., Niebuhr 2010), and corpus linguistics (see, e.g., Bick 2005), in addition to more traditional semantic and pragmatic approaches. The project concludes in early 2021, and results have already been presented and published at major international outlets (see, e.g., Millar et al. forthcoming).

Future studies in related areas include work place and labor market tension involving minorities. Currently, the center has initiated a study into the linguistic and (inter)cultural repertoires and practices of international health care workers with a non-Danish background. Two prominent groups are in focus: nurses, whose communication is heavily under-researched, and medical doctors. According to Dansk Arbejdsgiverforening, recent statistics show (DA 2018) that more than 10,000 full-time employees with a non-Danish background are working in the health and social sectors in Denmark, posing everyday cultural and linguistic challenges (Geyer 2017). Theories include notions of translanguaging, which is to be understood as how bi- and multilinguals "strategically mobilise and make use of linguistic and semiotic resources and modalities to construct meaning and carry out the different tasks of their everyday life" (Mazzaferro 2018:1).

Outside of the already mentioned projects, the center has a strong interest in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Previous research includes studies on cross-linguistic influence and word choice transfer; for instance, whether or not a person's L1 can have an effect on that person's lexical signature, a person's unique and overall use of word patterns, in an L2. These studies were based on large-scale studies of almost 450 participants from five L1 backgrounds: Finnish, Swedish, Danish, Spanish, and Portuguese (see, e.g., Jarvis et al. 2012). Recently, the center has expanded its focus to technologically mediated language learning and made investigations into communication, language learning, and literacy practices in young children, ages 5-11. Future endeavors will continue the exploration of engagement, communication, and learning through technology for young learners, given the speed with which digital technologies and access to these have grown in recent decades. It appears to be a particularly interesting age group for researchers and society at large considering that early learning informs much subsequent learning, and has a tremendous impact on formal education (Hannibal Jensen 2017, 2019).

Finally, based on its research, CCCS has been the supplier of many courses for the degree programs offered by the department. The center has also arranged a number of high-profile

guest lectures that received considerable attention across the news media in Denmark. Most recently, the center hosted a lecture series on Forensic Linguistics with two of the world's premier experts in the field (Møller 2018). In its future work, the center will continue to embrace international and interdisciplinary collaborations as well as methodological diversity in a constant effort to advance the study of language and communication.

The current members of the Centre for Communication, Culture and Society are:

*Andrea Kleene, Anna Vibeke Lindø, Christina Clarson Meiland, Ditte Aakær Iversen, Eckhard Bick, Esben Nedenskov Petersen, Jana Neitsch, Katalin Fenyvesi, Klaus Geyer, Nicole Baumgarten, Oliver Niebuhr, Rasmus Nielsen, Signe Hannibal Jensen, Uwe Kjær Nissen.*

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