Language Works 4(2)

Language works and something is worked out through language. This is shown by the four authors of this issue in different ways and by using different methods. The authors address linguistic topics and demonstrate convincingly how linguistic phenomena affect our ability to gain common understanding and perceptions of the social world, and how meaning and action are accomplished through language. The analyses presented are rooted in and related to socially relevant issues, such as second language teaching, diagnosis of depression, gender, and threats as a criminal act. It has been a great pleasure to read the contributions to this issue, and we hope you will enjoy it too!

The articles in this issue

Liv Moeslund Ahlgren has conducted a psycholinguistic experiment to investigate whether gendered language affects gender perception. In the article *Om kønnet sprogs indvirken på stereotype kønsopfattelser* [On the impact of gendered language on stereotypical gender perceptions], she presents an experiment consisting of a reading test that includes sentences where a person category is referred to using a pronoun that does not match the stereotypical gender of the noun (as, for example, in *the Midwife was very tired when he came home from work*). Contrary to expectations, the results of the reading test show that these sentences do not appear to be read more slowly than the sentences where there is a match between the personal category used and the pronoun that is subsequently indicated (as in *The mechanic shouted out loud for he was really angry*). The reading test also shows that the pronoun *han* [he] is read faster than the pronoun *hun* [she]. On the basis of these results, Ahlgren suggests that an explanation may be that the informants have a strong expectation of the agents' gender, and she discusses the extent to which the names included in the reading test can be said to be gendered in the first place.

The article *Arabisktalendes realiseringer af de danske klusiler* [Arabic speakers' realizations of the Danish plosives] by Thea Helene Nørgaard examines how Arabic speakers with Danish as a second language realize the Danish plosives, i.e. / p, t, k, b, d, g /, when they occur word initially. She does this by comparing measurements of how these sounds are realized in recordings of structured and spontaneous speech in a group of Arabic speakers who speaks Danish as a second language and Arabic as their mother tongue with a group having Danish as their mother tongue. She finds, among other things, that Arabic speakers realize the Danish plosives with significantly less aspiration than Danish-speakers and suggests, on the basis that she also finds that the differences are related to how long the Arabic-speakers have spoken Danish, that the pronunciation of Danish plosives can be something language teachers could pay attention to in their teaching.

Katrine Bønneland Tølbøll presents in the article *Linguistic features in depression: a meta-analysis* a study of the relationships between selected linguistic features and depression that other studies have found. Based on systematic literature reviews and subsequent statistical analyses on a corpus of

research articles, Tølbøll finds that, across studies, an increased use of first person singular pronouns and so-called negative emotion words in the language of people who suffer from depression, while so-called positive emotion words are found relatively less in languages produced by people suffering from depression compared to control groups. Based on the statistical correlations that a large number of studies find between certain linguistic features and depression, Tølbøll discusses how this knowledge can be included in predicting, diagnosing and providing new perspectives on depression.

The article *Læs dette da det er et bankkup: Om imperativers funktioner i danske trusselsbreve* [Read this as it is a bank robbery: On the functions of imperatives in Danish threatening letters] by Hannah Fedder Williams examines the functions imperatives have in a collection of 66 threatening letters. She does this by categorizing and describing threats as speech acts, and by examining what types of rhetorical actions imperative constructions occur in as part of a threat. The results show that imperatives are used in eight different rhetorical actions, all of which fulfil different sub-goals in the common overall purpose shared by the threats: to manipulate the recipient by threatening him or her. In doing so, Williams demonstrates that imperatives are used not only to get the recipient to perform an action, but can also conduct rhetorical actions such as introducing the recipient into context and intimidating the recipient.

Your article in the next issue?

Do you have a good idea or a project that could interest others? As a student, you may have an essay that could be turned into an article. As a teacher, you may have supervised or assessed an essay that you think could become a good article. Or perhaps you have participated in a conference, workshop, seminar or course that could be the basis for a thematic section/special issue of Language Works?

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