"They're not proud of the fact that they're not from here": Acquiring Northern Irish English as linguistic camouflage

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2015 will be remembered as the year in which over one million people migrated to Europe. Northern Ireland - once synomymous with emigration - has fully participated in this phenomenon, experiencing significant socio-demographic changes arising from both these globalising trends and the Peace Process (NISRA 2011). This presentation explores the first project to investigate the sociolinguistics of globalization and migration in Northern Ireland (Collins et al. 2009; Blommaert 2010; Slembrouck 2011).

Some of the newcomers speak L2 varieties that bear strong traces of their heritage languages and contact induced change (Cornips 2000; Clyne 2003; Howard et al. 2013; Labov 2008; Regan 2010; Thomason 2009). Other migrants have speech patterns that camouflage their linguistic identities since they incorporate acquired Northern Irish English features. These are characterised by both 'local' and 'translocal' linguistic resources. The idiosyncratic after-perfect is an excellent example of the former (Corrigan 2010: 62; Labov 2008: 315) while the BE-LIKE quotative exemplifies the latter (Buchstaller and D'Arcy 2009: 292; Corrigan 2010: 101).

Research in England, Scotland and the Irish Republic shows that migrant speech patterns can differ from those of local peers (Diskin 2016; Diskin & Regan 2015; Drummond 2012; Nestor et al. 2012; Verma et al. 1992; Schleef et al. 2011 inter alia). This presentation hones in on the following:

(i) Do newcomers adopt the same linguistic constraints as Northern Irish locals?
(ii) Do speakers make use of variation to index belonging and/or dissonance?

In order to address these, ethnographic interviews with young transnationals were conducted, generating linguistic data that was interrogated from a dialectological perspective. This aspect of the presentation thus addresses (i) and illuminates our understanding of language acquisition and innovation in contact settings more broadly. The interviews also probed migrants' attitudes to local linguistic norms and their own repertoires, revealing answers to (ii).