LANGUAGE AND HIP-HOP CULTURE
IN A GLOBALIZING WORLD

hosted by the UIUC Department of Linguistics

Saturday, November 10, 2007
8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Lucy Ellis Lounge, 1080 Foreign Languages Building
707, S. Mathews Ave, Urbana, IL61801

ABSTRACTS BOOKLET

http://www.linguistics.uiuc.edu/hhc/index.html

Program

8:30-9:00		*Breakfast and Registration*	

Chair: Marina Terkourafi

9:00-10:00	Awad Ibrahim	University of Ottawa	*When Life is Off da Hook:* Hip-hop as a Testimonial Speech Act
10:00-10:30	Angela Williams	UIUC	Talkin' Street in the Middle East: An Analysis of Egyptian Arabic Hip-Hop Nation Language
10:30-11:00	Sarah Simeziane	UIUC	Roma Rap and the Black Train: Minority Voices in Hungarian Hip-Hop
11:00-11:30		*Coffee Break*	

Chair: Jennifer Cramer

11:30-12:00	Matt Garley	UIUC	"...mal ein Bisschen Englisch rappen": Anglicisms in the German hip-hop community
12:00-12:30	Mike Putnam & John Littlejohn	Carson-Newman College & Clemson University	Multi-kulti Nazi? Gangsta Rap in Germany
12:30-13:00	Jamie Shinhee Lee	University of Michigan- Dearborn	'English from below': A case of K-Hip Hop
13:00-13:45		*Lunch*	

Chair: Sarah Simeziane

13:45-14:45	Elaine Richardson	Ohio State University	Making Dollars and Sense: Young Women and Critical Literacy in Hiphop
14::45-15:15	Abby Lyng	UIUC	'You Wanna Battle?!': Breakdancing, Conflict, and Aesthetics in Hip Hop Visual Media
15:15-15:45	Marina Terkourafi	UIUC	Turning the Tables: Hip hop Past, Present and Future
15:45-16:00		*Coffee Break*	

Chair: Matt Garley

16:00-17:00	Cecilia Cutler	CUNY	'King of the 'burbs': Stance and Self-Projection on the White Rapper Show
17:00-17:30	Jennifer Cramer & Jill Ward	UIUC	From Chi-Town to the Dirty-Dirty: Regional Identity Markers in U.S. Hip Hop
17:30-18:00	George Figgs	University of Colorado, Boulder	How 'Freestyle' is Freestyle?: Formulaic Language and Creativity in Freestyle Rap Genres
18:00-18:15		*Coffee Break*	

18:15-19:15	Roundtable discussion with Rayvon Fouché (AASRP & History, UIUC) Celiany Rivera-Velasquez, ICR, UIUC), Asad Jafri, (Chicago Hip-Hop Congress), and Krukid

A book display by Routledge will be open throughout the day

From Chi-Town to the Dirty-Dirty: regional identity markers in U.S. Hip Hop

Jennifer Cramer and Jill Ward, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
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While hip hop is a vehicle for the "'global spread of authenticity' – a culture of being true to the local, of telling it like it is (Pennycook 2007: 14)", hip hop is a strong indexer of regional affiliation. Lexical choices in hip hop establish in-group solidarity, while marginalizing those unaffiliated with the region. These regional markers, once only inclusive of the East Coast-West Coast rivalry prevalent in the 1990s, now index identity aspects of the Midwestern and Southern United States.

As artists from these regions emerged on the hip hop scene, local identity markers for those regions also emerged. Artists like Chicago's Common and St. Louis' Nelly speak of local experiences in their respective hometowns; Ludacris samples "Georgia on My Mind" to reflect a familiar, yet more complicated Georgia; Lil Wayne addresses the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in "Georgia Bush".

Regional identity is indexed by mention of local foods, towns, and other lexical items to convey in-group solidarity and out-group marginalization (cf. Morgan 2001). In this paper, we examine the community and group identification tactics used by hip hop artists in different regions of the United States, arguing that artists' strategic lexical usage constructs in-group solidarity and successful identity construction.

References

Common (2002) "Between Me, You & Liberation (feat. Cee-Lo)". From *Electric Circus*. MCA.

Lil Wayne (2006) "Georgia…Bush". From *Dedication, Vol.2*. BCD Music Group.

Ludacris (2005) "Georgia on My Mind". From *Disturbing Tha Peace*. Def Jam.

Morgan, Marcyliena (2001) "'Nuthin' but a G Thang': grammar and language ideology in hip hop identity". In *Sociocultural and Historical Contexts of African American English*, ed. Sonia L. Laneheart. Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Nelly (2000) "Country Grammar". From *Country Grammar*. UMVD Labels.

Pennycook, Alastair (2007) *Global Englishes and Transcultural Flows*. New York: Routledge.

King of the 'burbs: stance and self-projection on the White Rapper Show

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So-called "reality television" is a genre that purports to be a realistic portrayal of individuals interacting in naturalistic settings. In truth, these shows are often highly scripted; contestants are chosen more for their looks than for their talent, and screenwriters cynically plot out scenarios that will cause tension on the set. Despite these limitations, reality TV has aspects of a social experiment and can potentially offer a window onto ideologies about social relationships and language.

This paper looks at the reality TV series, "Ego Trip – The (white) Rapper Show" that aired on VH1 in the U.S. in early 2007. The show is set south Bronx in New York City where hip-hop originated. Ten white male and female contestants face challenges that demonstrate their talent as rap performers, knowledge of hip-hop culture, and ideas about race. Focusing on speech data from five of the contestants, this paper analyzes how style shifting is involved in the production of different types of personae that are available as authentic archetypes in hip-hop culture. Whereas the producers want the contestants to acknowledge the tenuousness of their position as whites in hip-hop, the contestants themselves project personae that they feel obviate the need to do so, pointing to the potential of reality TV as a site for analyzing social reproduction.

"How 'Freestyle' is Freestyle?: Formulaic Language and Creativity in Freestyle Rap Genres"

George Figgs, University of Colorado, Boulder
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While freestyle rap is intended to be improvisational, i.e. not prepared or written out ahead of time, MCs often use language that is formulaic, containing expressions recognizable as being common to hip-hop and other cultural contexts. Formulaic language has long been a focus of studies in epic and oral tradition and has recently re-emerged as an area of inquiry within the more 'core' linguistic sciences, especially as it contribution to discussions on the nature of the lexicon and syntactic representations.

In an analysis of freestyles from national and local MCs, I show how formulaic language is used strategically for a variety of purposes. First, formulaic expressions serve to key the performance event itself, putting the performer in-character and inviting audience participation. Much of the formulaic language in rap music stems from expressions common to the variety of English Alim (2004) calls Hip Hop Nation Language (HHNL), with formulas ranging from individual lexical items or other slang expressions to larger syntactic constructions. MCs may also borrow expressions associated with other rappers, and by doing so, position their own identity in relationship to the individual who is associated with the borrowed expression. Thus, the use of formulas that reference hip-hop culture in general exhibit the performer's level of hip-hop 'literacy'. Finally, formulas may free up processing time for the innovation of novel language, or function as templates onto which MCs can incorporate novel expressions, resulting in a performance that appears to be more spontaneous and creative, yet familiar to the listening audience.

"...mal ein Bisschen Englisch rappen": Anglicisms in the German hip-hop community

Matt Garley, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
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This study investigates anglicisms, instances of lexical borrowing from and codeswitching into English within the German hip-hop community through analysis of data from an online forum. Attitudes of German speakers toward English are complex: English is the language of the ubiquitous American media, a prominent language of the EU, and a lingua franca throughout the increasingly interconnected globe. German-language rap artists have varying attitudes toward anglicisms, and these are evident in their lyrics—as in this parodical verse from Munich group Blumentopf:

Was ich lieb' -- an Mic steppen und fake MCs mit Punchlines dissen / Was ich hass' -- Standart Battlephrasen und Anglizismen.

What I love – stepping to the mic and dissing fake MCs with punchlines /
What I hate – standard battle-phrases and Anglicisms.

This analysis examines data collected from the German-language Internet hip-hop forum MZEE.com, revealing fans' attitudes toward English influences on German rap and capturing fans' rationale for borrowing and codeswitching in their own textual identities. Hip-hop Anglicisms used by German fans are compared with Onysko's (2007) findings on borrowing and codeswitching in order to investigate usage patterns in overt vs. covert prestige situations, and situate a discussion of the German hip-hop community of practice. Coupland's (2007) discussion on the styling of social identities informs the further analysis of the data, which reveal the complex relationship between German, English, rap artists, and their fans. This undertaking sheds light on the status of English in the German-speaking world through the eyes of the hip-hop subculture.

References

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Coupland, Nikolas (2007) *Style: Language variation and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Onysko, Alexander (2007) *Anglicisms in German: Borrowing, lexical productivity, and written codeswitching.* Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

When Life is Off da Hook: Hip-Hop as a Testimonial Speech

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Melancholic as it may, what does it mean to forecast one's own death? What impact this "work of mourning" has on how one conducts one's own life? Indeed, how and what kind of life will I endure if I can foresee my own death? Bearing witness to lost possibilities, what self-narrative is engendered in the face of history, memory and language? Simply put, what value will I put on life itself, if ever that is possible, and if ever I am to envision a future, what will it be? Positing the life and lyrics of Tupac Shakur this paper is a response to these questions. Here, Hip-Hop is approached as a form of testimony, a historical record that needs closer attention. It is a language of critique in a space of hopelessness.

"English from Below": a Case of K-hip hop

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This study presents an analysis of formal linguistic features of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in Korean hip hop (K-hip hop). AAVE in K-hip hop can be understood as a prime example of "English from below" (Preisler 1999) to informally express subcultural identity and style. AAVE is utilized at different linguistic levels in K-hip hop encompassing lexical, phonological, and morpho-syntactic elements. The area of K-hip hop with the heaviest influence from AAVE is found to be lexis followed by phonology. The use of AAVE by Korean hip hoppers has both cross racial (Bucholtz 1999) and cross *national* components because it involves inter-language crossing, that is, the use of a foreign language entirely unrelated to their own mother tongue (Lee 2007). In comparison to more widespread lexical and phonological features, the presence of AAVE syntactic features is somewhat restricted in type and occurrence. This observation supports the argument that the verbal markers in AAVE are considerably varied and intricate and that it is not easy for non-AAVE speakers to master and use them proficiently.

References

Bucholtz, M. (1999) You da man: Narrating the racial other in the production of white masculinity. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 3: 443-460.

Lee, J. S. (2007). *I'm the illest fucka*: An analysis of African American English in South Korean hip hop. *English Today* 23(2): 54-60.

Preisler, B. (1999) Functions and forms of English in a European EFL country. In T. Bex and R. Watts (eds*.) Standard English: The widening debate.* London: Routledge. 239-267.

'You Wanna *Battle*?!': Breakdancing, Conflict, and Aesthetics in Hip Hop Media

Abigail Lyng, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
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This study focuses on key debates that have been circulating in the hip hop community for the last seven years. The formulation of hip hop as a unified culture comprising breakdancing, DJing, rapping, and tagging, or writing graffiti began in the early 1980s and quickly disseminated via the visual media to most urban areas in the U.S. This "culture" experienced a revival in both New York City and Chicago in the early 1990s. In the course of my fieldwork among breakdancers in Chicago, contentiousness has surfaced repeatedly regarding certain stylistic and ethical parameters surrounding the dance. The central conflict involves two camps: traditionalists, who argue that breakdancers should adhere to a New York-centric conception of dance structure, moves, and music; and a smaller contingent that subscribes to ideas of creative innovation and accuses traditionalists of being static and exclusionary. In this paper, I argue that verbal and physical confrontations between the two groups, rather than dividing them into separate art forms, actually work to reinforce a single, shared "battle" aesthetic. Thus, engaging in the "battle" allows each group to reference a shared socio-cultural history while also retaining their own individual styles.

Multi-kulti Nazi? Gangsta Rap in Germany

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In recent years, German Hip-Hop music has seen a marked rise in the number (and popularity) in references to Adolf Hitler and National Socialism, at the same time German-language Gangsta Rap took hold in Germany. In our presentation, we explore the function that these references serve, and forward the hypothesis that Hitler and the Nazis serve as stand-in "Gangstas." American gangsters of the 1920s and 1930, such as Al Capone or John Dillinger, and the gangster culture as a whole were not a part of the cultural history and psyche of contemporary German rappers, therefore preventing these artists from drawing upon these references in their music. We suggest that Hitler embodies the essential characteristics of a gangsta archetype thus making his persona and image the logical choice of reference for German gangsta rappers. Our analysis also offers a working hypothesis why a high proportion of German rappers of "immigrant" status employ these National Socialist references in their music. Having lived in Germany their entire lives, these immigrant communities can affiliate themselves with many aspects of contemporary German culture and identity, but most importantly, as cultural outsiders they can distance themselves from taboo aspects of the German past enough to discuss and employ even the ugliest and most painful references and allusions to figures and events in recent German history in ways that bio-Germans cannot.

Making Dollars and Sense: Young Women and Critical Literacy in Hiphop

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In this talk I present some ways that young Black women negotiate stereotypical and hegemonic representations of Black men and women in mass media, especially as they appear in rap music videos. I pay particular attention to their reliance on their special knowledge of the world as Black women and how this knowledge informs their language, rhetorical and communication practices.

Roma Rap and the Black Train: Minority Voices in Hungarian Hip-hop

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As hip-hop has become a world-wide phenomenon international hip-hop artists have applied the core of the genre itself by cutting and mixing African-American hip-hop and adapting it to their own sound and experiences. In this paper I examine how constraints on language choice interact with the artistic, social, and political aims of a popular late-90's Hungarian Roma hip-hop group, known as *Fekete Vonat* (*Black Train*).

Within other genres of Roma music, the use of Romani is common, particularly in traditional music. In *Fekete Vonat*'s work, however, Romani appears to be a marked choice within Hungarian-Roma hip-hop. In the album *A Város Másik Oldalán* Romani emerges as the in-group code, while Hungarian is the sole language used to convey political and social messages about the conditions of the Roma within Hungarian society.

I examine various constraints on code choice both by Hungarian Roma and in popular music and show that code choice in music cannot be viewed as simply mirroring everyday linguistic practices. Several other factors intrinsic to the act of producing a commercial artistic expressive form constrain linguistic choices: the intended audience, in particular mutual intelligibility and differences in status between the artist and audience, the subject matter, and marketability. The goal of this paper is to examine how *Fekete Vonat* work within these constraints in order to establish their own identity and the identity of their intended audience with respect to the various topics they address.

Turning the tables: Hip-hop past, present and future

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Frequently in recent years the press and media have accused hip-hop artists of disseminating patterns of violence and discrimination. Hip-hop, in this context, is accused of reproducing expressive forms purported to be current among members of black communities but taboo-ed if used by outsiders, making the boundaries between their legitimate (when, by whom, to whom) and illegitimate use increasingly hard to discern. This paper considers two related questions: Is this a just accusation? Concomitantly, *can* hip-hop reform itself without changing its distinct identity as a genre?

To answer the first question, one must consider the cultural roots of hip-hop in African American and Creole 'sounding' practices (Labov 1972, Garett 2005). The highly elaborated form that sounds can take requires a homologous habitus in order to be recognized, evaluated and responded to. In this way, sounding effectuates both in-group belonging and outsider exclusion. The worlds of hip-hop, and of the 'sounding' practices in which it is partly rooted, are thus predicated on the notion of performance, through which a *non-literal* representation of the world is constructed. Mirroring Aristotle's definition of tragedy, in hip-hop too, stakes, passions and their outcomes are magnified, and serve to provide, through the audience's empathy with the actors, an outlet for the audience's own emotions.

This situation becomes problematic if the link between the performance and the habitus that can generate, recognize and evaluate it, is lost. This is occurring today as hip-hop spreads both into mainstream US culture and globally. New audiences lack the familiarity with the cultural practices that both shaped, and allowed it to fulfil, its functions until now. It remains to be seen whether its original functions of solidarity-building, exclusion, and cultural capital accrual, will be abandoned and replaced by others, or discursively re-cast to meet the needs of these new audiences. In either case, a new genre of global hip-hop is emerging.

References
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Labov, William (1972) *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Talkin' Street in the Middle East: An Analysis of Egyptian Arabic Hip-Hop Nation Language

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Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) have defined a community of practice as "an aggregate of people who come together around some enterprise…That endeavor develops a life of its own as local practices develop around it." Hip-hop, is one of the largest cultural exports today. Originating in America as an expression of resistance to status quo and racist regime, the music has become a cultural movement, mediated by global communications. This study looks at the music of two Egyptian hip-hop artists, *Saifullah* and *Getto Pharaoh,* to examine their usage of Hip Hop Nation Language (HHNL) in English. The methodology is adopted from Androutsopoulos (2006), who establishes a framework for the analysis of lyrics. I analyze the discourse in the lyrics under two perspectives: *verbal action* and *cultural reference,* as qualitative research, as well as quantify the HHNL and Egyptian Arabic usage in each of the artists' songs. It is seen that the syntax, phonology, and lexicon of HHNL, which adopts forms from African American Vernacular English (AAVE), marks the lyrical discourse as being one of resistance and political struggle, while the local forms of Egyptian Arabic are used in the discourse as a reinforcement of identity and cultural/religious expressions.

References
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Eckert, Penelope and McConnel-Ginet, Sally (1992) "Adolescent social structure and the spread of linguistic change." *Language in Society* 17.