

‘What does wallah mean?’

Sociolinguistic change, language-in-use, and Arabic in Danish

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Children in contemporary Denmark encounter linguistic resources that are linked to different ways of speaking; Danish, Arabic, or the way you talk to your friends. In this way, linguistic diversity is an everyday fact. What this means for the development of Danish for the language user is an important question. In a social approach to language, meaning involves more than semantics. Activities, domains, and the negotiations that take place via and in relation to language are essential for the analysis of what ‘language’ means. In this article, I contribute to the discussion of the relationship between sociolinguistic language change and children’s situated language encounters. I examine language-in-use among children in a fairly ordinary Copenhagen school class with students from different social, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds from 0 to 4th grade. The central participant is a boy with a Danish background. My focus is on the ideological and metapragmatic understanding of linguistic resources associated with non-Danish(-ness). My analysis uses a conceptual apparatus of linguistic anthropology such as *enregisterment*, *indexicality*, the *total linguistic fact*, and *axes of differentiation*. Data include recordings of everyday life and more elicited language-in-use.

KEYWORDS: linguistic diversity; sociolinguistic change; enregisterment; linguistic anthropology; axes of differentiation