

**Language contact as it happens: multilingual speakers in an old contact area in
Burkina Faso**

Klaus Beyer

Humboldt University, Berlin - Germany

The upper Sourou valley in Burkina Faso and Mali is a contact area where speakers of Dogon, West- and East-Mande, and Gurunsi languages live in close contact since centuries. While all languages of the area display mutually induced contact features to different degrees, the historical scenarios that account for these interferences are often difficult to grasp. A look at synchronic findings of the actual use of contact features in the speech of multilingual speakers will help to gain insights in the processes that probably have been also at work in ancient times.

The talk elaborates on correlations between speakers' social attributes and their use of phonetic and morpho-syntactic contact features from the viewpoint of Gurunsi-as-first-language speech communities in the area. Results from these observations propose a multilayered explanation for the innovation of contact induced features and their spreading throughout the community. While for instance family ties with speakers from other language communities have an effect on linguistic innovations of individuals and small groups the setting of a general linguistic standard over the investigated community as a whole seems to be driven by other social factors. One case in point is the language of prestigious speakers that influence the linguistic standard to a considerable degree through their multiple social ties within the given community.