Deception detection in airport settings

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This talk initially explores an interaction between an official and a foreign national seeking to secure a visa so that they can enter another country. The aim in so doing is threefold: (1) to discuss how stress-inducing such interactions can be, thereby problematising deception detection; (2) the potential for assessing deception nonetheless, using methods such as the Six Channel Analysis in Realtime (SCAnR); and (3) the viability of Behavioural Detection Officers (BDOs), Air Marshals (AMs) and other airport personnel using "small talk" as a strategic tool for determining whether someone constitutes a Person of Interest requiring further surveillance (by them/others) and/or more formal/official questioning (by others in order to establish potential deception, malintent, etc).

SCAnR is a multichannel approach to deception detection (Archer and Lansley, 2015). 150+ airport personnel (including BDOs and AMs) were trained in the method as part of a pan-European project funded by a 1.6 million euros grant from the EU's *Prevention Of and Fight Against Crime Programme* (Lansley et al., 2016 and 2017). They were also trained in subtle ways of being able to extract information from POIs, given that the AM and BDO roles, in particular, are clandestine ones. This results in a transactional type of "small talk" that is not often discussed in the linguistics literature (but see Archer et al., 2019 and Archer et al., 2020). The talk will outline the results of an airport-based study (with the support of a European intelligence agency and an international airport), which saw participants being tested on their training in SCAnR and the use of elicitation techniques veiled as "small talk" (Lansley et al., 2016; Lansley et al., 2016; Archer et al., 2020). The talk also touches upon a (continuing) 'debate in respect to the use of behavioural detection in airport settings' (Archer et al., 2019: 466) and puts forward the case 'that the efficient use of elicitation techniques is a must if behavioural observations are to be probed and (in)validated effectively in real-time without triggering resistance' from passengers or without 'being unduly intrusive' (ibid). Not least because, when done well, it means that, from the perspective of most passengers that AMs or BDOs engage with, they're involved in no more than 'simple, light, airy conversation' (ibid.; Archer et al., 2020). The implication of such work, when it comes to the global training of future AMs/BDOs, etc., is that 'linguistic insights relating to elicitation probes' need to be 'given equal treatment alongside behavioural detection insights associated with identifying potential malintent' (Archer et al., ibid: 466). This would help to ensure that the decisions to highlight a POI for further questioning upwards are based upon more than behavioural cues alone (cf. Reding et al., 2014), thus making those decisions more 'robust' (ibid: 467).

References

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