SS25 Keynote Speakers Abstract

Ana Deumert

'A spell that rouses the spirit/ that lives in bone and stone' – Sociolinguistics as philosophy and insurgency

Writing about 'radical hope', Jonathan Lear (2006) described his work as 'philosophical anthropology', a project that does not focus on the collection, classification, and interpretation of data, but rather explores ethics, politics and the possibilities of being (under colonial-capitalist conditions of collapse and destruction). Similarly, one can talk about 'philosophical sociolinguistics' as an ethical, political, and ontological project, exploring not only what is, but also what could have been and what could be otherwise.

In my talk I will link these broader reflections on sociolinguistics and philosophy to ongoing work on decolonization and southern theory; projects that are grounded in the political philosophy of the Black Radical Tradition (including Black surrealism, Kelley 2002). I further connect the debate to work on affect and emotion (as well as posthumanism and materiality); that is, an understanding that 'the real' cannot be reduced to what is visible or audible, but that it exists across the diversity of our senses. It is experienced in oscillating intensities, and includes not only what is present, but also the repressed and prohibited (Derrida, 2006).

The quote in the title comes from an epigraph by Harry Garuba (2017), and it reminds one that soundings – their vibrations, resonances and echoes as well as the feelings and atmospheres they engender – can, quite literally, rouse, and awaken, the world.

Therefore, the second part of my presentation explores the idea of 'expressive insurgency' (Nichols 2020) and 'insurrectionary sensibility' (LaBelle 2018); that is, the diverse sensory impulses – from sound to silence – that generate feelings of insurgency, of resistance and defiance; that keep the struggle against oppression alive; that make us imagine new worlds. I conclude by asking what it might mean to imagine 'sociolinguistics as insurgency', and how we can apply 'large' (and potentially universalizing) concepts (such as insurgency) to specific contexts and situations.

Annelies Kusters

Ideologies of Modality

Ideologies of modality encompass the underlying beliefs and values that influence perceptions, uses, and valuations of language modalities such as spoken language, written language, sign language, gestures, and fingerspelling in various social and cultural contexts. This presentation examines how

these ideologies shape and are shaped by interactions among deaf, deafblind and hearing sighted people across diverse settings, including family life, educational environments, and customer services. Central to the discussion is the concept of modality hierarchies, which prioritize certain modalities over others.

The experiences of deaf and deafblind people provide an ideal vantage point from which to study these ideologies because for them, modality choices are linked to experiences of sensory differences, combined with their literacies and language knowledges. Based on studies that employed a linguistic ethnography approach, this presentation focuses on ordinary everyday interactions supplemented by interview quotes to illuminate the choices made in these contexts.

Three examples will be discussed to illustrate the relationships between modality choices and ideologies of modality:

The complex decisions of signing deaf parents on whether to use spoken language with their hearing children, because of a tension between natural inclinations to speak and the desire to prevent future communication barriers in the family.

Interactions between a deafblind customer and hearing sellers in Mumbai, highlighting modality choices that range from Braille to embodied finger writing.

The use of International Sign, demonstrating how multimodal adaptations facilitate clearer communication and challenge purist ideologies about International Sign.

Ultimately, these examples show that through the lens of disability, we achieve a nuanced understanding of modality choices and modality ideologies. This focus is crucial not only for deaf and deafblind individuals but also holds significant relevance for hearing, speaking, and sighted people, and for people with other disabilities. This research demonstrates how ideologies of modality influence a wide range of communication practices, thus urging scholars to reconsider and expand their approaches to multimodality and to language ideologies.

Peter De Costa

Linguistic Entrepreneurship and Emotion Labor in Transnational Higher Education

Through the notion of linguistic entrepreneurship, my colleagues and I (De Costa, Park & Wee, 2016, 2019, 2021) have emphasized the affective, cultural, and moral dimensions of neoliberalism in language education. Through this construct, which we define as
"the act of aligning with the moral imperative to strategically exploit language-related resources for enhancing one's worth in the world" (De Costa et al., 2016, p. 697), we have illustrated how

language learners and organizations often come to internalize the ideology of neoliberalism through the mediation of language. In a separate and parallel body of work on language teacher emotions, I have explored the emotion labor (Benesch, 2012, 2017) that teachers generally have to bear as a result of neoliberal demands placed upon them (De Costa, Rawal & Li, 2019; Lee & De Costa, 2022). In other words, teachers often comport their emotions in ways that are expected of them by their educational institutions, as they are subjected to the feeling rules (Zembylas, 2007) that these institutions impose upon them. Building on these lines of inquiry – linguistic entrepreneurship and emotion labor – I explore a sociolinguistics of education by looking at the dark side of English as a medium of instruction transnational higher education (EMI-TNHE; De Costa, Green-Eneix & Li, 2020, 2021) and its attendant emotional landscape. In particular, I examine the multi-scalar emotional consequences of EMI-TNHE on various language policy arbiters who are at once complicit in sustaining linguistic inequalities, while also falling victim to power disparities that characterize this global educational phenomenon.

Robyn Ober

Slipping and Sliding through Aboriginal English – Taking the ordinary to create extraordinary Indigenous educational spaces

Aboriginal students enter schools and other educational institutions with a rich linguistic repertoire, including traditional languages, creoles (e.g., Kriol) and Aboriginal English. This dialect of English is the first language spoken by many Aboriginal people in Australia, although it should be noted that there are regional varieties of this. When communicating with others, Aboriginal people often move between their different languages and dialects by 'Slipping and sliding'. This is a term coined during my PhD study to express how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics and students engage, move and interact within a both-ways Indigenous Tertiary Educational Context by drawing on their full linguistic repertoire. In the current literature it is now most often called 'Translanguaging'.

Slipping and sliding within Aboriginal and Torries Strait Islander inter-cultural environments is not new and certainly something individuals become adept in as part of their everyday lives, often triggered by the communication demands of diverse contextual situations. It is both ordinary, but also powerful - a simple, subtle and organic phenomenon. It is so ordinary that it may go unnoticed by Aboriginal people themselves and even by non-Aboriginal people.

Although there are cultural rules, processes and protocols that are instigated when Aboriginal people come together, their responses also can be innovative as they 'slip and slide' according to the cultural dynamics of interactions. In this way they can use their language to minimise obstacles, barriers and boundaries and instead engage in authentic, meaningful and genuine conversations.

In this presentation I explore the ordinariness and innovation of 'slipping and sliding' as Aboriginal students and educators embrace Indigenous ways of being, doing and knowing to make meaning, create new knowledge and establish conceptual understandings in teaching and learning spaces.

Sari Pietikäinen

Arctic Cold Rush Assemblage: Towards a sociolinguistics of connections

The accelerating climate change has turned the Arctic into a hotspot of intertwined ecological, economic, and political processes, with an unprecedented impact on life in the region. I have explored these changes ethnographically through the lens of Cold Rush, understood as an intensified race for the extraction and protection of Arctic natural resources. My focus has been on how people struggle, strategize, and profit from this ongoing and multidirectional change.

To examine and explain this complex change, I applied assemblage thinking by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) with critical sociolinguistic and discourse analytical approaches. In this paper, I will discuss the key takeaways of critical assemblage analysis. This framework, I will argue, suggests three shifts for sociolinguistic research: a move from singularity to multiplicity, from essences to processes, and from representation to production. It provides an alternative way to explore the dynamics between language and society, one that helps us to understand how material and discursive, human and nonhuman are interconnected and interdependent.

Zhu Hua

Hierarchy of things: What can we do with folk theories of language and culture?

Folk theories of language and culture are informal beliefs and assumptions about languages, language users, and cultures, and language users. Whilst previous studies in sociolinguistics (e.g. Preston, 1993) and applied linguistics (e.g., Wilton & Stegu, 2011) have attempted to understand the nature and significance of folk knowledge and attitudes, recent shifts towards concepts such as language ideologies have somewhat diluted the interest in folk linguistics. In this talk, I seek to redirect attention to the overlooked, 'dark' side of ordinariness of folk theories that reflects and sustains hierarchies and inequalities in languages and human relationships. Drawing on my lived experiences in China and in the UK with linguistic and cultural hierarchies, I illustrate the omnipresence of folk views and the forces shaping and sustaining these views. I then reflect on how folk knowledge has been navigated in my research about family language policy and practice and potential avenues for further exploration. I argue that we need to take folk theories, particularly those related to hierarchies, seriously, due to their profound impact on ordinary, everyday linguistic practices and social inequality.