

Qualitative Methods in Sociolinguistics – schedule and abstracts

Main building, Hochschulstrasse 4, Room 331

Mon, October 2	
09:00 – 09:15	Welcome
09:15 – 10:30	Keynote 1 – Marie Maegaard Situating sociolinguistic studies of variation: (Implicit) theories of language and place
10:30 – 10:45	Coffee break
10:45 – 12:15	Participant presentations 10:45 – Laura Strub 11:10 – Danielle Tod 11:35 – Laura Wohlgemuth, Charmaine Kong, Alessandro Pellanda
12:15 – 13:30	Lunch
13:30 – 15:15	Workshop 1 – Marie Maegaard Combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies in variation studies
15:15 – 15:30	Coffee break
15:30 – 16:20	Participant presentations 15:30 – Adejoke Balogun 15:55 – Sabine Karlen
18:00 – late	Apéro *

* Apéro location: Walter Benjamin Kolleg, Muesmattstrasse 45

Tue, October 3	
09:15 – 10:30	Keynote 2 – Florian Busch Interactional Approaches to Mobile Communication: Investigating the Social Fabric of Texting in Time
10:30 – 10:45	Coffee break
10:45 – 12:30	Workshop 2 – Florian Busch Digital Contextualization: Structures, Practices, Ideologies
12:30 – 13:45	Lunch
13:45 – 15:30	Keynote 3 – Scott Kiesling Communicating toughness: Why is 'toughness' a common explanation for sociolinguistic patterns?
15:30 – 15:45	Coffee break
15:45 – 17:00	Workshop 3 – Scott Kiesling Analysing and Theorising Stance

Abstracts

Keynotes

Marie Maegaard | University of Copenhagen

Situating sociolinguistic studies of variation: (Implicit) theories of language and place

Research on language and place is usually focused either on rural places and older people, or on urban places and younger people. In this talk another perspective is proposed – a perspective which combines insights from both variationism and interactional sociolinguistics. This is done by presenting and discussing two major strands in (socio)linguistics, which more or less explicitly have focused on language and place, however in two very different ways. The first is dialectology, which is usually defined in ways that combine language and geographical place. The other is less clearly delimited, but concerns what we might call multilingual urban studies. This research strand centres its attention on urban contexts, mobility and language contact. In the talk I will argue that a combination of the two, especially when it comes to young people, will contribute to our understanding of how language and place is constructed as connected by language users.

Florian Busch | University of Bern

Interactional Approaches to Mobile Communication: Investigating the Social Fabric of Texting in Time

Mobile media devices, especially smartphones, which have become the core driver of societal mediatization, also pose new challenges for linguistics and our methodologies: Digitally mediated interactions are becoming more temporally and spatially dynamic than ever before, so that social actors with a smartphone in their pocket can potentially start or continue strands of communication anytime, anywhere. Beyond the interactional approaches focusing on chat room communication that have emerged in linguistics since the early 1990s, new perspectives are needed that can capture the embeddedness of digital communication in people's social lives to a greater extent. Using the new research project "Texting in Time: Communicative Practices of Smartphone Interactions in Process" as an example, the talk will discuss the methodological consequences for such a sociolinguistics of mobile communication, paying particular attention to aspects of temporality and rhythm in everyday digital communication. For this purpose, the data type of screen captures will be introduced as a means of "looking through the eyes" of the participants. The lecture will outline the workflows of data collection and data preparation that are required for this relatively unexplored data type and discuss the ethical, practical, and analytical challenges that arise. In addition, the lecture will address the types of research questions that can be answered using screen capture data (where static log files or screenshots may not be sufficient) and provide early insights into some exemplary analyses.

Scott Kiesling | University of Pittsburgh

Communicating toughness: Why is 'toughness' a common explanation for sociolinguistic patterns?

Toughness has been used for decades in sociolinguistic studies as a concept to explain the motivations for the use of different linguistic forms, especially in sociolinguistic variationist work (for example, see Trudgill's 1974 classic use of the term to explain covert prestige). But toughness has never been interrogated as a concept itself. In this talk, then, I turn a spotlight on this term, and reveal that it has much to teach us about explanation and meaning in sociolinguistics. After demonstrating its wide use both numerically and in what *tough* comes to modify, I show how *toughness* can be theorized as a transportable *quality* that participates in dense *assemblages of meaning* (similar to the *semiotic assemblages* of Pennycook 2021 or *language ideological assemblages* of Kroskrity 2021). I explore

how these terms encompass and improve upon current models for social meaning in sociolinguistics such as *indirect indexicality*, *semiotic alignment*, and *indexical field*.

Workshops

Marie Maegaard | University of Copenhagen

Combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies in variation studies

In this workshop participants will gain insights into how qualitative methodology may enrich understandings of the quantitative findings resulting from typical variationist studies. We take our point of departure in the quantitative results deriving from the Dialect in the Periphery project (Maegaard et al. 2020), and participants will work with illustrative cases illuminating and nuancing these quantitative patterns, by using methods from interactional sociolinguistics.

Florian Busch | University of Bern

Digital Contextualization: Structures, Practices, Ideologies

The digital interactions that permeate people's everyday communicative lives take place largely in the mode of keyboard-to-screen communication: Participants act on the basis of graphic sign inventories provided by media platforms, which make it possible to unfold precisely fitting textual contributions for very different communicative and social situations. Through their varied use of graphic means (i.e., of letters, punctuation marks, and pictograms), actors engage in the practice of digital contextualization. In this workshop, we will explore a formal categorization of graphic contextualization cues in text-based digital communication, and then consider through examples how we can study these phenomena as holistic objects in terms of their structures, practices, and metapragmatic ideologies. In this sense, we will engage in both qualitative sequential analysis of digital threads and ethnographically oriented analysis of metadiscourses about digital writing practices.

Scott Kiesling | University of Pittsburgh

Analysing and Theorising Stance

Stance and stancetaking have been increasingly used as analytic concepts in sociolinguistic research in recent years. In this workshop, I theoretically motivate an operational definition for stance, and then demonstrate how that definition can be employed in the analysis of spoken interaction (discourse). Finally, I provide hands-on practice with new data, with the option to use your own data to explore how to incorporate stance in an analysis.

Participant presentations

Laura Strub

Language Barriers in Bernese Correctional Institutions

The influence of language in the correctional system and the communicative hurdles that must be overcome do not form a large field of research, especially in Switzerland. Gabriele Klocke (2004)

investigated the linguistic practices in Germany's male prisons almost two decades ago, coming to the conclusion that there are no universally applicable language practices in German prisons. Concerning the criminalisation but also victimisation of migrants, multiple studies have already been conducted, see e.g. Killias (1997), but in this study the focus will be on linguistic exchange and its problems in the Bernese penal system:

What communicative hurdles arise in everyday work between prison staff and inmates, especially in the cases of inmates who have little to no knowledge of the German language?

To carry out this analysis, the 'rules and regulations' and the leaflets of all eleven Swiss correctional institutions that provide penal services will be examined textually in a first step. The 'rules and regulations' guide daily interactions and are often supplemented by complementary leaflets, making all documents together important to understand the structure of interaction within the prisons. "Getting to know the most significant terms in a corpus of specialised texts can definitely contribute to a better understanding of the texts themselves" (Marín, 2017, p. 28) which should help to uncover the differences in priorities each institution sets for the achievement of the goals for the inmates.

In a second step, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with employees of the three Bernese correctional institutions that offer penal services. The aim is to create a portrait of the current language barriers in Bernese Correctional Institutions from the perspective of the staff, how they are overcome on a daily basis by them and to find possible solutions that could eliminate or at least reduce existing problems in future justice reforms.

Danielle Tod

"they see that I'm just Tongan, but like with really good English": Language ideologies in the Kingdom of Tonga

In this presentation, I report on language attitudes and ideologies surrounding English in the Kingdom of Tonga, an island nation in the South Pacific. English has had official status alongside Tongan since 1921 (Taumoeofolau 1998) and is the language of many formal domains, but it is beginning to encroach on the private sphere for a growing number of individuals. A mixed methodology is employed, including a qualitative analysis of 91 interviews conducted in Tonga in 2019, ethnographically informed observations of language use in the community and a review of previous literature. Findings are presented in terms of a dichotomy proposed by Besnier (2011) and Tuitavuki and Hawkins (2010), whereby English is valued as a gateway to education and employment on the one hand, but an aversion to speaking the language or illustrating high levels of proficiency exists on the other. Despite these tensions, an ideology of bilingualism as ideal for the community prevails. I report several strategies used by Tongans to negotiate this tension.

Laura Wohlgemuth, Charmaine Kong, Alessandro Pellanda

Articulating Rubbish - A Sociolinguistic Approach to the "Crisis of Waste"

At its core, our project explores the following question: what is the role of language in this "crisis of waste"? Waste is clearly a matter of great ecological concern, but it is also a phenomenon which pushes at the edges of language in epistemologically and methodologically important ways. On the one hand, language plays a powerful role in naming and categorizing the stuff we throw away; as such, words not only define what waste is and isn't, but also help produce, maintain, and regulate everyday practices of waste-making (Thurlow, 2022; Thurlow et al., 2022). On the other hand, waste exists beyond words as a fully material, spatial, and sensory practice; as such, it is also a non-representational experience. For these reasons, waste is a perfect site for exploring new sociolinguistics perspectives on language materiality (cf. Barad, 2003; Shankar & Cavanaugh, 2017) which, in turn, also demands new, more "messy" methodologies (cf. Law, 2004). Waste is a quintessentially ordinary practice of everyday life. Its ordinariness is, however, precisely why waste is

systematically – and conveniently – disregarded. Waste and waste practices are certainly something which, until relatively recently, sociolinguists have overlooked or ignored. Turning to waste as a thematic in our field is itself innovative; more than this, though, waste demands innovative ways of thinking and innovative ways of researching.

The Articulating Rubbish project is organized around four interrelated sub-projects each addressing a different cultural site:

- mediatization and institutional discourses (Thurlow);
- domestic life and the discursive production of value (Wohlgemuth);
- “elsewhere” and the social lives of/in waste (Kong) ;
- public space and waste as a communicative resource (Pellanda).

While the first three sub-projects focus primarily on the Swiss context, the fourth provides an essential transnational perspective from beyond Europe.

Adejoke Balogun

“How do you say... in French?” An Examination of Translanguaging as a Pedagogical Tool in a French Immersion Classroom.

This paper explores the utilization of translanguaging as a pedagogical tool in an adult A2-level French immersion class. The study investigates the effectiveness of incorporating students' existing multiple languages during instruction to create a translanguaging space. The aim is to examine the impact of translanguaging on instructional practices, classroom dynamics, and learning outcomes for adult learners of French with varied linguistic backgrounds. The research draws on theoretical frameworks from scholars such as Ofelia García, Blackledge and Creese, and Cenoz and Gorter to understand the principles and implications of translanguaging.

The methodology employed in this study is ethnography, utilizing participant observation and interviews to collect data. Field notes and photographic documentation of classroom activities were compiled, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with the French teacher and an English-speaking student. The data analysis uses discourse analysis to understand the function of language in the pedagogical space, focusing on the linguistic and social aspects of translanguaging. Fairclough's model of discourse analysis provides a comprehensive framework to uncover underlying ideologies and social processes embedded in translanguaging practices.

The analysis of the data reveals that translanguaging in the classroom has advantages in promoting comprehension and engagement among students. The teacher's use of different languages and inclusive questioning techniques fosters a sense of collective responsibility and participation. The teacher's willingness to utilize their multilingual skills demonstrates an openness to bridging language gaps and facilitating student understanding. The study also highlights the value of translanguaging in creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment, where every learner's language is valued. However, it acknowledges the potential challenges and limitations associated with the implementation of translanguaging practices.

Overall, this research contributes to the understanding of translanguaging as a pedagogical tool in multilingual classrooms. It sheds light on its potential benefits, challenges, and implications for language acquisition, metalinguistic awareness, language proficiency, and positive learning experiences for adult learners. The findings have practical implications for instructors and educators in designing effective language instruction strategies in diverse linguistic contexts.

Sabine Karlen

The Graphic-Visual Design of 15th Century Astromedical Compendia — Methodological Perspectives and Problems

The focus of my dissertation is on the graphic-visual design of 15th century astromedical manuscripts. On the basis of a selected collection of eight astromedical compendia from the southern part of the German-speaking area, significant patterns within the visual design of the compendia in question are identified. It is then discussed to what extent these graphic-visual patterns imply principles of visual design and how these can be linked to the discursive environment of late medieval manuscript cultures. In addition, questions of the mutual interrelations between text and image will be considered, as well as questions of the discursive construction of (scientific) knowledge through the various means of visual communication used in the compendia.

In my presentation, I will discuss the methods used to analyse the astromedical compendia, and the resulting challenges: on the one hand, graphic-visual patterns throughout the corpus should be identified by using quantitative methods — on the other hand, the numerous variations within those patterns must be adequately accounted for by using qualitative methods. The overall interpretation of the compendia thus requires the integration of qualitative and quantitative results.