

INVITED SPEAKER ABSTRACTS
CSLS LECTURE SERIES ON “LANGUAGE AND SEXUALITY”

Organizer Prof. Dr. Crispin Thurlow, English

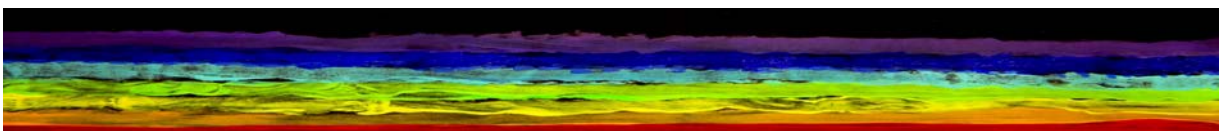
Also offered as English BA/MA Lecture
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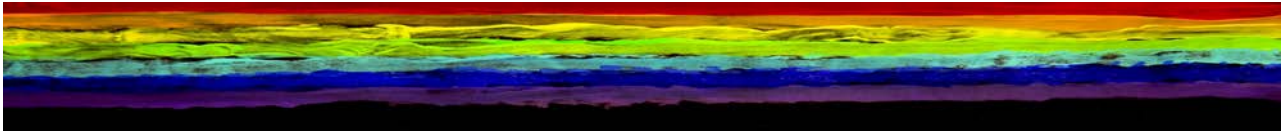
Don Kulick, Uppsala University, Sweden – Tuesday 25 September

Queer theory is fundamentally about epistemology and representation, and how individual subjects become subjectified through language and culture. The social context in which that subjectification occurs, while it is always acknowledged as a kind of general backdrop, is not, in itself, a matter of great concern to most theorists. Furthermore, queer theory's focus on language – and on agency and resistance to language and through language – means that subjects who have no language (for example, because they are physically and/or intellectually impaired) fit awkwardly with queer theory, and are only partially and unsatisfactorily dealt with in offshoots like "crip theory". How can we respectfully engage with people who will never be agents in the queer sense of being able to mount a “reverse discourse” or a “performative re-iteration”?

Lal Zimann, University of California Santa Barbara, USA – 2 October (via Skype)

This talk provides a dual perspective on the relationship between language and transgender identities. It begins with a broad view of the place of trans speakers in the study of language, gender, and sexuality. This discussion traces development across three decades of research in communities that have been variably described as transsexual, transgender, third gender, and non-binary, highlighting insights at the levels of phonetics, grammar, and discourse. At the same time, this talk also calls attention to the linguistic activism of transgender communities, in which linguists have to date played little role. Rather than focusing exclusively on what trans speakers have to offer the study of language, gender, and sexuality, I also highlight the debt that is owed to trans communities and a variety of ways in which linguists might work to repay it.



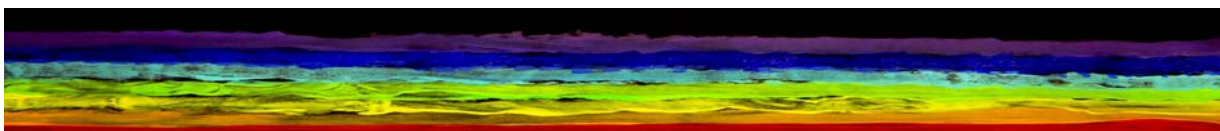


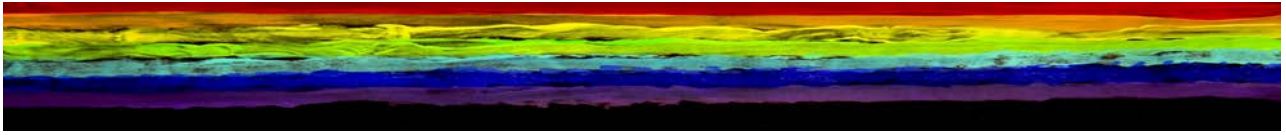
Veronika Koller, Lancaster University, England – 9 October

This lecture will comprise three parts. Firstly, I will outline key concepts from corpus linguistics, including keywords, collocation and concordance. I will then discuss the affordances and limitations of corpus linguistic approaches, giving examples of research questions which are amenable to such an analysis. A proviso in this context is that corpus linguistics can and often does involve both automated and manual, quantitative and qualitative analysis. In the second part of the talk, I will sketch areas of interest within the study of language and sexuality, including variationist studies, the construction of identity and relationships in spoken interaction, the representation of social groups in written discourse, and the expression of desire in language. I will then discuss how such interests could be and, in some cases, have been addressed with corpus linguistic methods. The final part of the lecture will zero in on corpus-assisted discourse studies, presenting a preliminary analysis of relationship-building in a small corpus of Facebook posts by social groups of gay/bi/queer women.

Mie Hiramoto, National University of Singapore, Singapore – 16 October (via Skype)

This presentation demonstrates the representations of queer speech styles through an examination of sexually and anatomically non-normative male martial artist characters, namely eunuchs and self-castrated men, in popular Chinese kung-fu films. Generally, these characters are depicted as not just sexually non-normative but also non-normative in their ways of practicing and developing their martial arts skills. Their roles are typically villainous and non-heroic; moreover, it is not rare for them to develop or possess some kind of supernatural or charismatic powers that are considered to be beyond normal human capabilities. By focusing on discursive practices employed in the films, such as the reticence and use of formulaic or philosophical speech styles, in combination with visual representations, I discuss how these mediatizations index queer masculinity in ways that mesh with the audiences' expectations for Chinese martial arts figures, as such figures have developed through mediatizations.



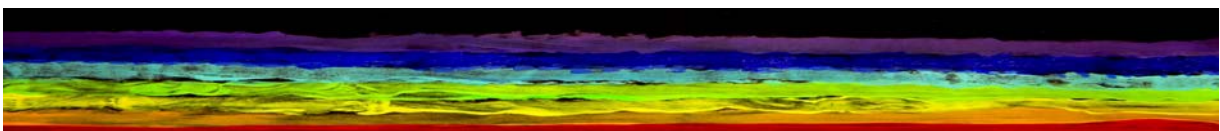


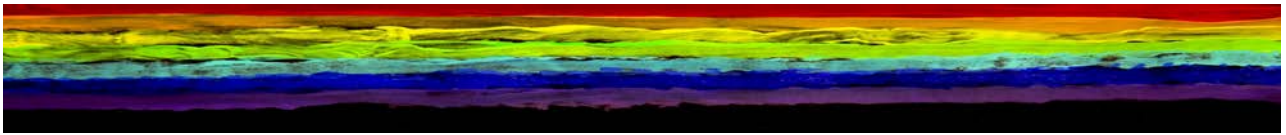
Kira Hall, University of Colorado at Boulder, USA – 23 October

The rise of India's global economy has reinforced a perception of English as a language of sexual modernity within the expanding middle classes. My presentation explores this perception in the Hindi-English joking routines of urban youth in Delhi during the first decade of the new millennium. Their jokes feature the longstanding ethnic figure of the Sardarji as circulating in modernity but lacking the English competence to understand modernity's sexual semiotics. Although the humor supports a middle class narrative of progress that temporalizes urban, English-speaking, and ethnically unmarked subjectivities as superior, the lesbian and transmasculine youth who participate in these routines—still criminalized under Section 377 when this fieldwork was conducted—shift this narrative by positioning sexual knowledge, and the queer subjects who have it, at modernity's forefront. The analysis reveals how sexual modernity, here viewed as constituted in everyday interaction through competing configurations of time, space, and personhood, relies on normativity even while defining itself against it.

William Leap, American University, Washington, USA – 30 October

Frequently, discussions of language, sexuality and history orient around linear sequences and chronologies, specifying how *earlier* became *later*, *past* became *present*, or *then* became now. Yet there are “far more possibilities for living than time as measurement would lead us to believe” (Dinshaw 2012: 1370). And to engage those “possibilities of living”, studies of language, sexuality and history must look beyond “linear narratives in which [historical] meaning succeeds in revealing itself—as itself—through time” (Edelman 2004: 4). Recent work in queer theory suggests that formations like anachronism, silence, refusal, spectral haunting, disidentification, and messiness offer entry points for such inquiry. In each case, these formations disrupt the neatness of the genealogical record. These formations are often expressed through linguistic practices, and that makes these formations of interest to projects interested in building nonconforming linguistic histories. Queer historical linguistics is one such project. Its subject matter – the intersections of language, sexuality & history – is not easily contained within conventional categories, boundaries, or chronologies (cf. Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 275-279). But as this presentation shows, its subject matter can be explored productively – and queerly – by using entry points for inquiry like those listed above “to think against the





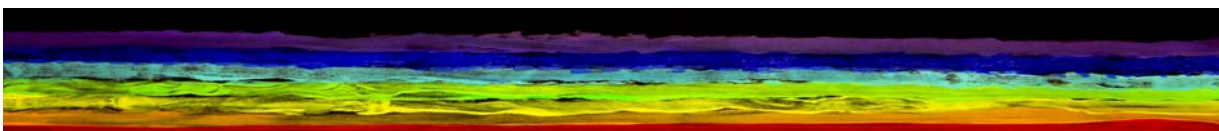
dominant arrangements of time and history...” and “to pose other possibilities for ...living historically (Freeman 2010: vi, xxii).

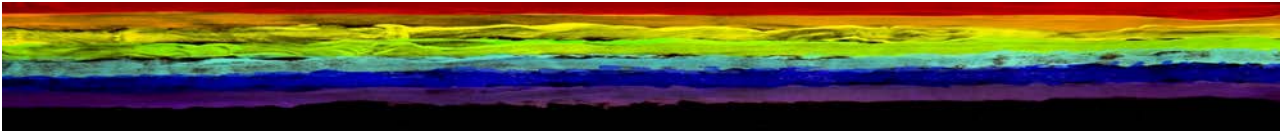
Denis Provencher, University of Arizona, USA – 6 November (via Skype)

Mixing ethnography and literary and cultural studies, this presentation investigates the lives and stories of queer Maghrebi and Maghrebi French men who moved to or grew up in contemporary France. It combines original language data from my ethnographic fieldwork in France with a wide array of recent narratives and cultural productions, including performance art and photography, films, novels, autobiographies, published letters and other first-person essays to investigate how these queer men living in France and the diaspora stake claims to time and space, construct kinship, and imagine their own future. By closely examining empirical evidence from the lived experiences of these queer Maghrebi French-speakers, this presentation showcases a variety of paths available to these men who articulate and pioneer their own sexual difference within their families of origin and contemporary French society. These sexual minorities of North African origin may explain their homosexuality in terms of a “modern coming out” narrative when living in France. Nevertheless, they are able to negotiate cultural hybridity and flexible language, temporalities, and new forms of filiation that combine elements from a variety of discourses on family, honor, face-saving, the symbolic order of gender differences, gender equality, as well as the Western and largely neoliberal constructs of individualism and sexual autonomy.

Erez Levon, Queen Mary University of London, England – 13 November

Though not a focus of the earliest work in the paradigm, sexuality has become a prominent topic of investigation in variationist sociolinguistics over the past 25 years. In this talk, I provide an overview of three approaches to the study of sexuality and variation that have emerged over this time: a correlational approach, which attempts to identify patterns of variation specific to different sexual identity groups; a constructionist approach, which examines how speakers make strategic use of variation to construct sexuality through speech; and an emergentist approach, which considers how gender- and sexuality-linked meanings emerge through the use of particular variable patterns in different interactional contexts. I discuss how these different approaches dovetail with broader developments in variationist theory, and in particular how recent work on style and stance has enhanced variationist treatments of sexuality. I also discuss





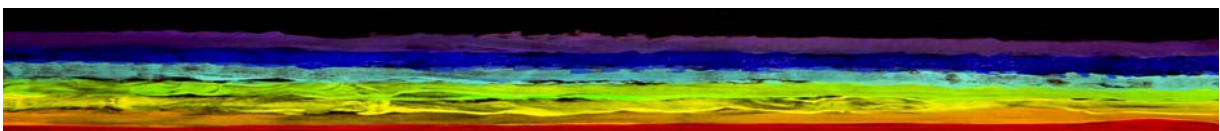
the benefits of variationist analysis to our understanding of sexuality as a social and linguistic phenomenon more generally.

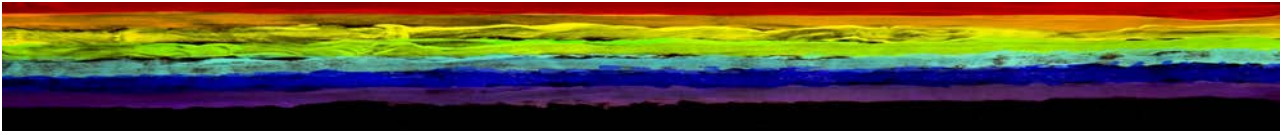
Brian King, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong – 20 November (via Skype)

Embodiment has long been of interest to scholars of language in society, and yet theoretical discussions of the inseparability of language and the body have been paradoxically minimal until quite recently. Focusing on the processes by which sexualized bodies are understood, this chapter examines two research case studies—intersex bodies and male bodies—to outline the ways that language and sexuality scholarship can contribute to knowledge of the confluence of the social and the soma during social interaction. Bodies are both subjective and social we ‘live in’ our sexualized bodies and ‘speak from’ them as part of lived experience, and in another sense our bodies are also observed from outside and ‘spoken about’ as sexual. The analysis I will present explores the relationship between physical features of bodies, language, and power, and links these insights to notions of confluence, demonstrating that bodies can be unruly, obtrusive, overdetermined, and excessive.

Tommaso Milani, University of Gothenburg, Sweden – 27 November

Over the last few years, Israel has presented itself as a modern haven for gay and lesbian constituencies – both tourists and locals – within an allegedly retrograde and oppressive Middle East. Labeled as ‘homonationalism’ and/or ‘pinkwashing’, these nation-branding strategies make Israel potentially attractive for a variety of LGBT individuals, including Israeli Palestinians. In this talk, I investigate how Israel’s affective traction operates in practice, along with the ambiguous entanglement of normativity and anti-normativity as expressed in the agency of some gay Israeli Palestinians vis-à-vis the Israeli homonationalist project. For this purpose, I analyze the documentary *ORIENTED* (2015), produced by the British director Jake Witzenfeld together with the Palestinian collective, Qambuta Productions. *ORIENTED* presents the lives of three gay Palestinians who ‘hold Israeli passports, vote in Israeli elections, speak primarily in Hebrew, and yet can’t and won’t call themselves Israeli, because they are Palestinian’ (McDonald 2015). More specifically, the aim of the talk is twofold. From a theoretical perspective, I seek to demonstrate how Foucault’s notion of heterotopia provides a useful framework for understanding the spatial component of Israeli Palestinian experience, and the push and pull of





conflicted identity projects more generally. Empirically, I illustrate how Israel is a *homotopia*, an

inherently ambivalent place that is simultaneously utopian and dystopian, and that generates what I call *vicious belonging* – a complex pattern of unresolved ‘mobilities, immobilities, and moorings’ in which ‘forms of detachment or ‘deterritorialization’... are always accompanied by rhizomic attachments and reterritorializations of various kinds’ (Hannam et al., 2006:3)

Lucy Jones, University of Nottingham, England – 4 December

In this talk, I will present data emerging from ethnographic research carried out with an LGBT youth group in the north of England (Jones 2016, 2018). I will use discourse analysis and sociocultural linguistic theory to show how this group of young people construct and make use of the notion of ‘being normal’ in their identity work. I will show that they draw on homonormative ideologies in their identity construction, but also that this happens in response to the homophobia and ‘othering’ they have experienced from those in their local community. I will also argue that their discourse must be understood via an intersectional framework; the ways that the young people talk about being LGBT reveal the relevance of their socioeconomic class, and they also draw on racist ideologies in their identity construction as LGBT people.

