

Jakob Edlinger (Vienna):

“He looks like his breath stinks” – Disparagement Humor as an Index for Political Identity

Political identity and its influence on speech behavior often do not figure into sociolinguistic inquiry (Hall-Lew & Eyndhoven, 2025: 333). However, political identity has a strong link with more established social identity labels said to account for linguistic variation, especially gender (Hall-Lew & van Eyndhoven, 2025: 346; Barnes & Cassese, 2016: 10).

Therefore, I employed stereotypical notions of language use, with a particular focus on humor and swearing based on Lakoff's (1975/2004) concept of Women's Language (WL), as a lens to investigate political identity. This project investigated two progressive female podcast hosts from Oklahoma City and their eight drag artist guests, who flaunt the norms around WL, especially the assertions that “women don't use off-color or indelicate expressions”, “women have no sense of humor” (Lakoff, 1975/2004: 80-81). A combination of Conversation Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis were employed to examine these two aspects in the form of disparagement humor, as well as the discourses created in interaction.

The findings indicate that disparagement humor is used to establish simultaneous in-group cohesion and out-group denigration, with group affiliation being politically motivated. Moreover, reappropriation is apparent not only in the subjects' use of slurs but also in the discourses they invoke during humorous interactions. While the reappropriated discourses employed to denigrate the out-group are overly simplistic and sometimes build on far-right rhetoric, they can still be viewed as resistance against a far-right conservative government.

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Anne Korfmacher (Graz):

Self-Help Myths and Resilience Thinking in the Victorian Literary Imagination

In this presentation, I will briefly outline my current project which investigates representations of resilience in novels of the long nineteenth century through the concept of the ‘elastic mind’. The presentation will offer a short overview over the historical-semantic roots of resilience and trace how some of the prominent thinkers of the nineteenth century – including Samuel Smiles and Alexander Bain – wrote about

elasticity in relation to concepts of self-improvement, mental health and the workings of the mind and body more generally. My project overall aims to contour how elasticity was conceptualised in scientific and popular discourse and to show how the term was used prior to ‘resilience’ to describe the ability of individuals to withstand and overcome stress.

I will illustrate some of my preliminary findings with the help of my case study on Elizabeth Gaskell’s Victorian industrial novel *North and South* (1854-55). Resilience is explored throughout *North and South* in a move reminiscent of the scientific and self-help rhetoric of the time, negotiating the impact of nature versus nurture and the relation between mind and body on the status, development and effectiveness of an ‘elastic mind’. The resilience of the novel’s protagonist, Margaret Hale, is presented as a natural disposition that is affected by her “whole manner of life” and whose mental and physical resources need to be actively economised (Bain 6). Contrasted with the lack of resilience demonstrated by many other characters in the novel, Margaret’s elasticity of mind highlights the novel’s negotiation of resilience as, on the one hand, implicated in liberal myths of progress about individual agency and personal strength required to adapt and cope and, on the other hand, as a quality that is deeply constrained by both natural disposition (i.e., innate physiology) and external resources that are not evenly distributed and thus not accessible to everyone.

Markus Oppolzer (Salzburg):

Between Focalization and Identification: Getting to Terms with Subjectivity in Picturebooks

Ever since Gérard Genette introduced the concept of ‘focalization’ in *Narrative Discourse* there has been substantial confusion over what he really meant. While he chose mood (modality) as a proper context, which refers to the experientiality and subjectivity of characters in contrast to the narrator’s voice, he undermined his own intentions by consistently using optical metaphors: "most of the theoretical works on this subject [...] suffer from a regrettable confusion between what I call here mood and voice, a confusion between the question who is the character whose point of view orients the narrative perspective? and the very different question who is the narrator? – or, more simply, the question who sees? and the question who speaks?" (p. 186). Ironically, by the time he corrected this mistake by changing “who sees?” to “who experiences?” in *Narrative Discourse Revisited* it was already too late. Focalization had been reduced to optical perspectivation (ocularization), which means that other aspects of a character’s consciousness, such as cognition / mentation, appraisal, imagination or emotions, fell by the wayside.

While narratology, usually in the form of transmedial narratology (Reinerth & Thon 2017; Thon 2014, 2015), and comics studies (Fischer & Hatfield 2011; Horstkotte & Pedri 2011, 2017, 2022; Mikkonen 2012, 2015, 2017) have substantially contributed to a systematic analysis of subjectivity / focalization in visual narratives, picturebook studies proper has largely struggled with it, often reverting to the more traditional terms of ‘narrative perspective’ (Nikolajeva & Scott 2006) and ‘point of view’ (Unsworth 2014) or adding to the general confusion of what these concepts mean (Nikolajeva &

Scott 2006). In the massive *Routledge Companion to Picturebooks* (Kümmerling-Meibauer 2018) a single article is dedicated to “Picturebooks and Narratology” (Kovač 2018; see also Stephens 2010), which cannot possibly explore any of the relevant theories in any meaningful detail.

Using focalization and visual grammar as starting points, an analysis of Emma Yarlett’s *Orion and the Dark* should illustrate the potential of these approaches to explore the subjectivity of characters in picturebooks. However, they also require a conceptual extension and other, complementary theories to arrive at a more holistic approach to reading that also works in classrooms (Oppolzer 2020; 2023). Notably, Horstkotte and Pedri suggest such a return to Genette’s original intentions (2022: 12), based on textual markers. While visual design, typography and colours do play an important role, ‘body codes’ (2022: 72) represent a more immediate form of communication that can be used in comics and picturebooks in creative, sometimes exaggerated ways to externalize the interiority of characters (2022: 232).

As a final piece of the puzzle, reader response theories have to be added (2022: 6; see also 30, 100, 223) to understand how readers are – literally and metaphorically – positioned in relation to characters and their environments (Stephens 2010: 55-56). This leads to a dynamic model that has to take textual markers as much as readers’ responses into account by looking at alignment, empathy and identification with characters as an ongoing process.

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Session 2 (Chair: Ute Smit)

Jayou Oh (Innsbruck):

Investigating Gender Bias at the Construction Level Diachronically and across Genres

A topic that has garnered interest since the 1970s, gender bias in language has attracted renewed scholarly attention in recent years owing to advancements in machine learning where it is understood that language models trained on human data learn and encode biases present in the texts (Bolukbasi et al. 2016: 4356) and even amplify them (Bender et al. 2021: 613). While bias probing and accompanying mitigation methods have been developed as a result, they are said to be sensitive to certain factors such as grammatical tense (Touileb 2022: 423). This raises an interesting point since much corpus-based research on gender bias in English has focused mainly on adjectival or verbal collocates of gendered (pro)nouns (e.g. Pearce 2008; Jockers & Kirilloff 2016; Norberg 2016). In contrast, there is a paucity of works dealing with similarly gendered words collocating with grammatical constructions such as tense and aspect.

This study thus examines the collocational affinities of the gendered subject pronouns *he* and *she* with select verb constructions across time and in different genres, utilising the idea of collocations from Stefanowitsch and Gries (2003) and adapting the methodology of odds ratios as a statistic as used by Ritt et al. (2022). Data are collected from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (Davies 2008-) to follow gender bias trends and to determine whether gender bias decreased in recent years, which constructions are more likely to show male or female bias, and which constructions and genres exhibit higher rates of bias than others.

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Christiane Dalton-Puffer, Sima Khezrlou (Vienna):

Training Pre-task Planning in CLIL Classrooms: Effects on Second Language Speaking Task Performance and Outcome

The present study investigated how training secondary school learners to use effective pre-task planning strategies improved speaking task performance and outcome. In the first phase of the study, one class of eighth-grade, lower-secondary content and language integrated learning (CLIL) learners performed two decision-making tasks. Analyses of learners' task performances and interviews, informed by Levelt's (1989) speech production model, identified the effective and ineffective pre-task planning strategies. The second phase focused on training learners to plan effectively for speaking tasks, measured in terms of complexity, accuracy, lexis, and fluency. One hundred and twenty-seven lower-secondary learners were assigned to three conditions: +training, -training, and control. All participants completed three counterbalanced decision-making tasks as pre-test, immediate post-test, and delayed post-test. Additionally, two similar decision-making tasks were performed as treatment tasks in two sessions by the experimental groups. In the +training group, learners received strategy instruction before they were given 10 minutes for pre-task planning. The -training group performed the same tasks with planning time but without prior training, and the control group engaged in regular CLIL classroom activities. One week after the treatment, all learners completed the immediate post-test, and two weeks later, they completed the delayed post-test. Their task outcome, a written report, was evaluated by a rating scale based on both content and language criteria. Both experimental groups also participated in semi-structured interviews. Results showed that strategy training led to significant improvements in linguistic accuracy, with both experimental groups showing measure-specific gains in complexity and fluency. Furthermore, interviews indicated that learners initially had limited familiarity with decision-making tasks and lacked effective strategies for argumentation and reasoning. The training program, however, helped learners organize and express their content-related ideas and arguments more effectively, as evidenced by their task outcomes.

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Georg Marko (Graz):

Pregiven Topics, Data, and Methods. Teaching Master Seminars in English Linguistics in the Age of AI

Sometimes it is frustrating to teach a course on discourse analysis, because students are increasingly using AI tools for various purposes (from suggestions concerning content, structure, and sources, and summaries of literature, to large-scale stylistic makeovers or even the generation of entire text segments), and because they tend to prefer 'shiny' topics that appear attractive pre-analysis (e.g. preferring dialogues from *Grey's Anatomy* over package inserts for neuroleptics, funny Trump memes over governmental green papers, or video game commentary over technical manuals). These topics are, however, often more difficult (and possibly eventually less interesting) to investigate. To address these challenges, I implemented a new approach in my master's

seminar last year. Rather than giving students free choice, I define most parameters, including research agenda (the tension between medicalization and demedicalization), approach (Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies), data (corpora I compiled), tools (WordSmith and Sketch Engine), and, to some extent, methods for technical and statistical analysis. Students' projects only differ with respect to the linguistic elements or constructions to be examined, which are not chosen either, but are assigned by lot. Participants must introduce and describe the parameters in relation to their research topics in their presentations and papers. They then conduct their studies by thoroughly describing the data and interpreting results in relation to the research agenda. This approach aims to produce several outcomes: (a.) foster deeper understanding of the subject matter, of the linguistic elements or constructions, and of technical aspects of corpus analytical methods; (b.) direct focus to detail by removing the need to decide on research objectives, data collection, and methodology; (c.) reduce dependence on external aids; and (d.) increase shared knowledge to help participants understand and appreciate each other's work.

So far, I have used this approach twice: once in a seminar on changes in the conceptualizations of patients in medical articles over the past 300 years, and once in a seminar on the discursive construction of diabetes.

This presentation is an informal report on my experiences with these two courses, focusing on student engagement and student satisfaction, research quality, presentation quality, development of methodological skills, and use of AI.

Session 4 (Chair: Julia Hoydis)

Alexandra Schurz (Vienna):

Extramural English and Classroom Well-being among Teens with and without ADHD Related Traits

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), affecting approximately 5.6% of 12- to 18-year-old students, often entails difficulties such as inattention and poor self-regulation (Salari et al., 2023). Although ADHD can influence second/foreign language (L2) learning (Kormos & Smith, 2023), students with ADHD are not inherently poor language learners (Sparks, 2024). L2 learning difficulties can for example result from mismatches between learner profiles and (traditional) instruction, such as insufficient stimulation and learner autonomy (Blume & Bündgens-Kosten, 2023). In contrast, extramural English (EE), i.e., the self-directed engagement in English-mediated recreational activities (Sundqvist, 2009), provides opportunities for interest-driven, multimodal language experiences. Such a learning environment may align well with ADHD-related traits (Schurz, 2026). However, extensive EE users often perceive classroom instruction as comparatively boring (Hannibal Jensen & Lauridsen, 2023), an effect that may be particularly pronounced among learners with ADHD and/or related traits.

Against this background, the present study examines how patterns of EE use relate to classroom well-being among 15- to 16-year-old learners with different attention-related profiles in Austrian classrooms (N = 280). We investigate (a)

differences in EE practices and classroom enjoyment and boredom among students with and without ADHD-related traits, and (b) whether the relationship between ADHD-related traits and classroom well-being is mediated by EE use. Data were collected using a self-report questionnaire assessing students' EE use, classroom well-being, diagnosed or suspected ADHD, and ADHD-related characteristics (Ustun et al., 2017). Using structural equation modeling, the findings shed light on how EE use and ADHD-related traits interact to shape learners' classroom experiences.

Roger Dale Jones (Klagenfurt):

Making Sense of Extramural English: Teachers' Interpretations of Student Exposure

Research on extramural English has shown that many young people encounter English extensively outside school through digital media, gaming, streaming, and online interaction (Grau 2009; Jones 2018; Reichl & Smit 2023; Schwarz 2020; Sundqvist & Sylvén 2016). Building on this work, the present study reports findings from a pilot questionnaire study conducted with Austrian secondary students, examining the amount and type of out-of-school English contact and its relationship to English language proficiency. Initial analyses reveal substantial variation in contact hours, media practices, and proficiency development, pointing to both opportunities and emerging tensions for formal English instruction (Jones et al. *forthcoming*). In a second, qualitative phase, the study adopts a teacher-focused perspective. Selected findings from the questionnaire study are used as stimuli in semi-structured focus interviews (Riemer 2022) designed to examine how English teachers interpret and respond to the growing role of extramural English in students' language development. Following a logic of "linking language learning" (Grau & Legutke 2015) or "bridging activities" (Thorne & Reinhardt 2008) the interviews explore teachers' awareness of students' out-of-school English practices, their reactions to the empirical data, and how these relate to their own classroom experiences. Particular attention is paid to perceived learning benefits, challenges such as redundancy, ceiling effects, and learner heterogeneity, as well as to the ways teachers connect (or struggle to connect) students' extramural English with classroom teaching under institutional constraints. The interviews also address implications for teachers' professional roles and perceived needs for support, training, and curricular or assessment development. The presentation offers initial insights into teachers' evidence-informed sense-making of extramural English and discusses implications for English language teaching in increasingly media-rich learning ecologies.

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Session 5 (Chair: Hartmut Stöckl)

Rafael Richter (Salzburg):

Constructing Moral Identity in Digital Discourse: An Analysis of User Interaction on Reddit

The proposed research is situated at the intersection of discourse analysis, most notably computer-mediated communication and social media studies, and sociolinguistics. The general target of this research is the online platform Reddit, on which the forum, or subreddit, of *r/AmITheAsshole* is taken as the analytical objective. On *r/AITA*, the objective of users is to post scenarios and stories of themselves with the intent of being judged in the comments on whether or not they were acting morally reprehensibly. Judgment is expressed ritualistically through abbreviations in the comments, such as YTA (yes the asshole) or NTA (not the asshole). The target of this research is to investigate how users collaboratively construct and negotiate moral identity through a focus on the language used by both commenters and original posters, or OPs. This analysis is achieved through quantitative, corpus-based means. This quantitative analysis, using corpus linguistic tools and LLM-based annotation, is performed to provide insights into the distribution and frequency of genre-linguistic archetypes and socio-linguistic consistencies. The linguistic analysis, or microanalysis, utilizes Hallidayan systemic functional linguistics (SFL) and Martin and White's appraisal theory. Additionally, a macro analysis, utilizing cultural historical activity theory (CHAT), of the subreddit and its types of users is done to provide insights into the users' motivations and how the specific rules, norms, and platform affordances of Reddit influence and shape their linguistic behavior. With this, predictive modeling of the reception of certain linguistic behavioral patterns within an established activity system can be achieved along with advancing the interplay between activity theory and systemic linguistics.

Ursula Lutzky (Vienna):

Riding the Cash Wave: Exploring UK Payday Lenders' Digital Communication

Financial communication is still an emerging field within the wider business communication landscape. Indeed, few studies have explored the language use of financial institutions and how they discuss lending, debt and the cost-of-living crisis through their own digital outlets. Studies in this field include, for example, Brookes and

Harvey's (2017) research on the language of pawnbroker apps and Price and McIntyre's (2018) conference presentation on the language of predatory lending, which found that the language used by payday lenders could negatively affect borrowers.

Given the central importance of debt, finance and money management to people's day-to-day lives and recent financial pressures after the Covid-19 pandemic, this paper aims to gain further understanding about the digital communication of financial institutions in the UK. To this end, it engages in a corpus linguistic analysis of the Financial Institutions and Payday Lenders (FINPAL) corpus, a 1-million-word corpus comprising website data of two types of institutions in the UK: established financial advisors, such as banks, as well as payday lenders.

The results of the corpus linguistic analysis provide new insights into the way financial institutions share information on loans and mortgages, and offer advice on facing financial challenges, such as debt and the cost-of-living crisis. They may inform future recommendations with a view to protecting the public from threats to their financial well-being. At the same time, the findings of this research can be used to improve stakeholders' financial literacy and assist them in making informed decisions regarding money.

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Gerlinde Mautner, Mathew Gillings (Vienna):

Outside the Comfort Zone: On Corpus Linguists' Forays into Management Studies

Calls for interdisciplinarity are easily made in theory, yet hard to follow up in practice. In this contribution, we will report and reflect on our attempts to convince the management studies community that linguistics in general and corpus linguistics (CL) in particular have a great deal to offer and would be a valuable addition to their methodological toolkit.

Our own enthusiasm notwithstanding, CL has proved to be a hard sell though. One issue, clearly, is the availability of several competing methods, such as topic modelling and AI-powered content analysis. Yet, perhaps even more significantly, those other methods are firmly embedded in management scholars' existing methodological canons and research routines. To wean them off their traditional fare is proving to be a mammoth task.

So far, we have attempted to tackle this task in three papers, two already published (Gillings, Learmonth and Mautner, 2024; Mautner, Whittle & Gillings 2026) and another still under review (Mautner, Gillings & Learmonth). The reviews accompanying several rounds of revision tell an interesting tale, we believe, of disciplinary silos, the battle between different epistemologies, and the difficulties one encounters when speaking to scholarly communities other than one's own. By sharing

and critically evaluating reviewers' comments, we hope to paint a realistic picture of the challenges awaiting those who venture outside their academic comfort zone. On a more upbeat note, we are still happy to argue that an interdisciplinary approach offers substantial benefits which make up for the trials and tribulations involved.

References

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