MultiLing Summer School 2022

**Communication and environmental justice: Sociocultural Linguistic Approaches**

How is sociocultural linguistics connected to environmental justice? and How is environmental justice connected to sociocultural linguistics? In asking these interwoven questions, the 2022 MultiLing Summer School focuses on how sociocultural linguistic research methods can contribute to our understanding of the intersection of environmental and social (in)justice in a time of growing ecological crisis. In this way, the course will explore not only how critical research in sociocultural linguistics can shed light on the role of language and communication in environmental (in)justice, but also how sociocultural linguists can support environmental justice struggles.

Sociolinguistic justice can be defined as the “self-determination for linguistically subordinated individuals and groups in sociopolitical struggles over language” (Bucholtz et al., 2014, p. 14), and environmental justice as “the right of all people to share equally in the benefits bestowed by a healthy environment” (Adamson, Joni et al. 2002, p. 4). From this perspective, ‘the environment’ is not just ‘wilderness areas’ often imagined as separate and distant from people’s daily life, but includes the everyday spaces people live, work and play. However, a growing body of research on the impacts of environmental crises – food and water scarcity, worsening natural disasters, sea-level rise, increasing draughts, deforestation, pollution – shows that they disproportionately impact marginalized communities. Moreover, climate change is recognized as a ‘threat/oppression multiplier,’ exacerbating already-existing inequalities in society along lines of race, class, gender, and ethnicity. Sociocultural linguists working in areas such as conversation analysis, linguistic anthropology, interactional sociolinguistics and critical discourse analysis have long investigated how dimensions of inequality get created, reproduced, or challenged through language. However, as climate change continues to worsen, it will be increasingly important for sociolinguists to consider how environmental injustice is enacted through language, and how sociolinguistic injustice is enacted through people’s unequal material experience of well-being in place and environment.

**Key questions the course explores:** 1) “What methods of data collection and analysis can we use to investigate the intersection of sociolinguistic justice and environmental justice?” and 2) “How do insights from this research apply to sociolinguistic research in different domains (e.g., translation, policy, workplace communication, pedagogy, tourism, conservation, activism, online communities)?

**Potential methods explored:**

* Conversation analysis
* Interactional sociolinguistics
* Multispecies ethnography
* Decolonial methodologies
* Posthumanist approaches
* Digital methods

**Possible Topics:**

* linguistic and communication strategies in environmental justice organizing
* environmental media
* identity and intercultural communication
* embodiment and materiality in sociocultural linguistics
* digital methods
* semiotic perspectives on human-environment interaction
* linguistic diversity, biodiversity, and discourses of endangerment
* language and environmental conservation
* multispecies ethnography
* posthumanist approaches to language and communication
* ecolinguistic perspectives
* language in animal rights and biodiversity conservation discourse
* attitudes, emotions and ideologies
* institutional discourse and power in environmental communication
* discourses of (de)commodification and ‘commoning’ of natural resources
* ecotourism and conservation contexts
* voice and democratic participation in environmental justice struggles

In sum, the course’s central focus is to develop students’ familiarity with both established and cutting-edge qualitative methods in sociocultural linguistics through a close examination of the linguistic justice/environmental justice nexus. In this way, the course aims to support PhD researchers with different data, analytic methods, and interests investigating a range of research contexts, regardless of their explicit focus on environmental issues.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

On successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

* discuss and understand current theoretical and methodological approaches to research on language and communication in environmental justice issues
* make effective use of basic aspects of sociocultural linguistic methods, including interactional, ethnographic, digital and critical discourse research methods
* be able to evaluate and critically analyze theoretical concepts and methodologies employed in research on communication in environmental justice issues
* identify elements of an ethically grounded, reflective practice for language research on social and environmental justice issues.
* apply insights, techniques and ethical concerns gained from this course to future research and teaching practice.

**Reading list**

TBD. Approx 400 pages, assigned by the lecturers

**Lecturers (TBA):**