Wednesday 15/06, 11:30-18:30, Aula Magna

METHODOLOGICAL WORKSHOP 1

In Other Words. Coming to grips with critical, creative, inter-/cross-cultural dialogue across space and time. A methodological workshop to explore the role of keywords in (re)producing or problematizing Otherness

Convenor: Paola Giorgis

Workshop Description

How is a specific keyword used in a specific context to (re)produce different forms of Otherness? What critical, intercultural and creative practices can be developed to challenge and subvert such dissemination of stigmatizing and stereotyping language?

Based on our collective and ongoing work on the online dictionary In Other Words, our Workshop will address these questions referring to the three paradoxes illustrated in the Call to demonstrate how a critical, creative and collective approach can challenge redundant monologues, enhance the plurality and diversity of perspectives, and promote inclusion - rather than reproducing exclusion - by offering alternatives to manipulative rhetoric and discriminating language against individuals and groups. Our Workshop invites participants to explore methodologically how dialogue-shared experiences of inter-/cross-linguistic and inter-/cross-cultural practices can develop across time and space by adopting a multilingual perspective and a multi-level dialogue among researchers, practitioners, activists, educators, and artists.

Theoretically, we ground our practice on discourses of exclusion and discrimination (e.g., Reisigl & Wodak, 2001; Wodak, 2015), showing how the construction of Otherness emerges as the result of several intersectional factors which are about relationalities and positionalities that are time- anchored and context-dependent (Praxmarer, 2016), as well as basically defined by different hierarchies of power – who has the power to define 'the Other' as such, from which position, for which purposes, and under which socio-cultural

and historical conditions. We thus understand the process of the political construction of Otherness as Othering (Spivak, 1985), where dominating in- groups stigmatize real or imagined differences to motivate discrimination (Staszak, 2009).

The Workshop is designed to engage participants in various activities and discussions of keywords. Before attending the Workshop, participants are invited to read four keywords of their choice from the IOW dictionary: three keywords from the main section and one from the Covid-19 section. Participants in the Workshop are also asked to bring an artefact that usually represents their region/country such as a keyring, fridge magnet or something similar for critical consideration and discussion.

The Workshop aims at involving participants in critical thinking and creative activities to problematize the issue of Otherness by proposing and discussing some keywords not yet present in the dictionary, following the format seen on the website (etymology, problematization, communication strategies, subversion, and discussion), and to promote a dialogue on how online practices, when developed through a collaborative, collective and inter-/cross-cultural perspective, have the potential to create genuine interpersonal bonds and active participation across time and space.

Facilitators: the Editorial Board of the online dictionary In Other Words (www.iowdictionary.org)

Workshop Rationale

As seen in the Workshop description, IOW dictionary does not crystallise words but rather shows how words possess a dynamic quality since, travelling across time and space, different contexts and different countries, they acquire (or are attributed) different meanings. In particular, IOW online dictionary is concerned on how words are mobilised to (re)produce different forms of Otherness, its main focus being to challenge and subvert the use of discriminating language.

Yet, besides constituting a resource to be used for free in different social and educational contexts and by different types of audiences, the critical, creative and collective analysis of the keywords has also become an innovative collaborative research process. Indeed,

IOW's characteristics, together with and its ethical and political stances, have significantly meant the development of an original method of research and practice that has been carried out by seven scholars from different countries and different formations as members of the Editorial Boards, and has involved other contributors from other countries and formations.

The choice of the keywords, the different sources and the creative materials used for the critical discussion and subversion, the actual process of writing and text production, the combination of the different methodological approaches have allowed to look at keywords from several different perspectives, and to develop a constant and fruitful exchange between the members of IOW's Editorial Board, as well as with other contributors. Critical, creative and inter-/cross-cultural practices have thus been enacted, becoming an actual innovative praxis.

We therefore invite participants to the Workshop to join the Editorial Board of IOW in walking together along the methodological path of such a praxis, analysing each different step for producing a keyword for IOW through the actual discussion of keywords that have already been analysed as well as the proposal of new ones. During the workshop, practical information of how to participate as an author will be also provided. To facilitate such a participatory activity, we hereby shortly illustrate the main methodological aspects that have been guiding the cooperative work of IOW's Editorial Board in these months.

o Andrea: Exploring IOW Dictionary through Complexity: A Research Method
o Bilyana: Etymology as a part of IOW project
o Ioanna: On the use of images and audiovisual material
o Ivanka: Rhetorical and communicative strategies in the creation and use of words
o Olena: A dialogical essence of truth
o Paola: Challenging and subverting discriminating narratives through critical and creative analysis
o Victoria: Peer review process and multilingual practices

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1.   Andrea C. Valente

Exploring IOW Dictionary through Complexity: A Research Method

A word is not simply a singular, detached, grammatical unit that holds a stable semantics to form a sentence. It is a contextual entity that interacts with other discursive elements in multimodal spaces, acquiring various meanings and functions, signalling different communicative purposes to stimulate individual and social reactions. It constitutes a "language game" in Wittgenstein's terms, in which interlocutors, writers, readers, viewers make meanings out of verbal and non-verbal elements influenced by their life experiences and worldviews. This integral, wholistic view has been already explored theoretically in applied/linguistics under complexity/adaptive theory (Dombrovan, 2018; Larsen-Freeman and Cameron, 2008; Weigand, 2010) but not as a methodological approach to understand words that frame the Other.

Thus, in this workshop participants will have the opportunity to explore a research method that is informed by complexity theory (Prigogine and Stengers, 1984; Morin, 2008), in the sense that participants will work through the words of their choices by recognizing that those words in context can: a- be dynamic as their meanings fluctuate according to communicative network that involves various social agents; b- be adaptive to multimodal platforms (e.g. physical, digital, visual and non- visual); c-   can create uncertainties while words are moved across different genres (e.g., posters, comics, photographs, literary and journalistic texts); d- can provoke rhetorical chaos (e.g., humour, satire, irony) when used subversively; e- can work in synergy with other linguistic and non-linguistic elements in order to maintain some degree of textual homeostasis.

Hence, informed by a complexity approach, participants will take away an alternative research method that enables them to collaborate comfortably with the IOW Dictionary.

Keywords: complexity theory, research methodology, dynamic rhetoric

2. Bilyana Todorova

Etymology as a part of IOW project

Etymology is a crucial part of the process of elaborating historical clarification of the analysed keywords in the IOW dictionary. It gives the researcher the necessary information about the origin of the word and its early uses. It becomes a crossroad point in which languages have come together, revealing linguistic and extra linguistic processes and transformations which the word undergoes across time.

The meaning of the keywords is highly dynamic, and even from a synchronic perspective it depends on a large number of intralinguistic and extralinguistic factors. In some cases, the metaphorical meanings of the words may become more frequent because of the particular political situations (for example, 'war' metaphors are very popular during the COVID-19 crisis). The political context may influence the frequency in use of some terms, for instance, in Bulgaria, the word 'gender' becomes unacceptable in the public sphere due to conservative political agendas.

This is the reason why etymology is a good starting point of scientific investigation as it can offer diachronic and synchronic views of a particular word, helping researchers identify the sociolinguistic changes and variations that the word undergoes as a result of its various use in different speech communities to indicate their intentions such as their needs for social changes.

Keywords: etymology, diachronic aspect, synchronic aspect, language contact

3. Ioanna Vovou

On the use of images and audiovisual material in the IOW dictionary

"One picture counts for a thousand words". True? Or is it another axiome we conveniently choose not to question? In our hyper mediated societies, the use of figurative material is so widespread that we tend to take it for granted.

During this workshop we will focus on the methodology of using visual or audiovisual material as a constitutive element of a specific key word's analysis as narratives shaping our ways of understanding otherness in different contexts.

Our goal is to stretch out the interconnections between texte/image/sound in a heuristic perspective of creating multi-modal key words that embrace in a more holistic perspective notions or discursive realities. Our approach is grounded on the tradition of visual communication and the rhetoric of image (eg. Eco, 1986; Barthes, 1964) and on contemporary insights of visual culture (eg. Jost, 1990 and 2011; Howells and Negreiros, 2012).

4.   Ivanka Mavrodieva

Rhetorical and communicative strategies in the creation and use of words

The Workshop aims to present some rhetorical and communicative strategies in the processes of creation, use and dissemination of words in different groups of society, through communicative channels and in media and communicative situations. The assumption is that words are created by formal and informal source, both on demand and spontaneously and using different channels.

Some words are created after decisions and brainstorming by spin doctors and think tanks and they are disseminated through official channels to name processes in the society and influence under groups of a society. Other words are result from creative activities of journalists, media, influencers and prosumers and they present new phenomena. A third group of words are created spontaneously during dialogues in virtual forums and social networks and they represent a different point of view.

There are parallel processes of derivation at the lexical level and diversity at the connotative and denotative levels. The results are, on the one hand, diversity at the lexical

level and, on the other hand, different durations of the functioning of words in the real, media and virtual communicative situations.

5.   Olena Semenets

A dialogical essence of truth

This dictionary is dialogical in nature. It is a dialogue between the history of a word and its modern meanings, between different communication strategies of using a word, between common practices of discursive domination and subversive contexts. There is a dialogue between linguistic, cultural, and scientific traditions, between the authors in the process of preparing dictionary entries. In such creative environment of interaction between languages and cultures, the dialogical essence of truth and its polyphony is revealed.

The philosophical theory of dialogism (Buber 1970, Bakhtin 1981, Habermas 1987) and its modern development (Phillips 2011, Etzioni 2018) serve as a basis for understanding new opportunities for international research cooperation.

«The communication explosion» on technological platforms of the XXI century has caused urgent problems that need a non-standard, innovative solution. The innovative format of the online lexicographic publication (namely its multimedia, overview of the problem and at the same time saturation with vivid examples, academic validity and the researcher's freedom of thought, diversity of cultural, political, functional-stylistic and genre contexts of word use) creates a living dialogical environment and encourages the reader to their own understanding of the problem.

Dialogic as a key value of the dictionary shows a possible way to solve one of the communication paradoxes marked in Call: the dictionary opposes the reduction of different views on complex issues to a simplified binary opposition. It presents the words

and the phenomena of reality denoted by them in the richness of functions, meanings, tinctures, understandings and interpretations.

Keywords: philosophical theory of dialogue, dialogic research environment, dialogical essence of truth

6.   Paola Giorgis

Challenging and subverting discriminating narratives through critical and creative analysis

Critical Intercultural Studies (e.g., Nakayama & Halualani 2012) have long been exposing how dialogues do not occur in neutral spaces, but rather in settings, contexts and conditions that are highly connotated by historical, cultural, political, and economic factors. Therefore, problematizing the (re)production of Otherness primarily means to be aware that such a construction involves structural issues of hierarchies of power: indeed, who is in the position to define the Other as such? A second, but not less relevant element, is that such a gaze also considers the Other as the representative of a homogeneous (minority) group with no in-group differences. The consequence is that Otherness is understood and disseminated as a static, homogenous, and unproblematic state: Otherness is 'naturalised' as a de facto condition.

The Workshop will address such issues, showing how IOW dictionary's critical and creative approach can   address   and question such hierarchical and reifying discursive constructions by analysing how they are rhetorically maneuvered. We believe that there is a strong link between a critical and a creative approach since they are both processes that foster the capability of seeing reality from a different and more comprehensive perspective able to challenge what is taken-for- granted of individual and collective representations and attributions. According to philosopher Martha Nussbaum, we need humanities and the arts to develop "the faculties of thought and imagination that make us human and make our relationships rich human relationships, rather than relationships of mere use and manipulation" (2010, p. 6).

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Therefore, combining different theoretical frameworks and engaging participants in different activities, our Workshop will stand in IOW dictionary's ethical and political stances, fostering a critical awareness of how words are used to stigmatise, but also of how they can become a resource to deconstruct discriminating narratives.

7.   Victoria Odeniyi

Peer review process and multilingual practices

The workshop engages with the In Other Words dictionary methodology and epistemology as "… the deployment of multilingual and multisemiotic communicative means is integral to contemporary forms of participatory knowledge construction and cultural [re]production" (Leppänen and Kytölä, 2017: 155).

My contribution to the methodology workshop relates to the process of peer review as an established, but also an evolving, part of the collaborative and intercultural writing project which is invested in the use of multiple languages and semiotic resources. Through focussing on the iterative process and practices of reading, review, critique and feedback, I attempt to apply the paradox of redundant monologues which inadvertently close down opportunity for dialogue and shared understanding.

Relevant questions for consideration are: What implicit judgements do we make about keywords, and each other, as we read and review work created in contexts, institutions, languages and disciplines that we may know little about? How do we respond ethically and sensitively in and across virtual spaces? What words registers and language(s) are appropriate? What is the role and status of different languages within and across key words? As someone working in an Anglophone centre what do or should I let pass? In short, how can we ensure that we are not caught up in the paradoxes we seek to challenge?

Key words: peer review, collaborative writing, ethical practices, appropriacy

The Editorial Board of In Other Words – A Contextualized Dictionary to Problematize Otherness

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