

COST Action IS1306: New Speakers in a Multilingual Europe

Working Group 10 Workshop:  
**Language and Governmentality**

Université Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris 3, Paris, 3-4 March 2016



At this workshop, members of Working Group 10 will meet to discuss and develop material to present as part of a panel on “Language and Governmentality” at COST Action IS1306’s Whole Action Conference in Hamburg (12-14 May 2016). The aim of this panel is to consider whether (and how) the Foucauldian concept of governmentality is relevant (or not) to the study of

language, legitimization and power in particular in the various contexts experienced by New Speakers. While the concept of governmentality has seen a surge of interest in some studies of language in society as a way to tackle issues of power, there does not seem to be an agreement about what is meant when scholars refer to this notion, or about what this notion helps us to say about the role of language in the distribution of resources in society. One line of thought points to the capacity of governmentality to explain changing legal and political frameworks affecting the government of society through the regimentation of language and talk. Others—focusing on the concept of biopolitics—have drawn on ‘governmentality’ to point to changing modes of power expression and societal control. Yet in other cases governmentality has been used to highlight the ways individuals express control over their own conduct, i.e. appropriate and accommodate ideological formation of language and culture to get or to organise access to specific resources. While these different modes of reading Foucault’s concept of governmentality can overlap and are often interconnected, these different lines of thought can also point to different ontologies and research interests that need to be discussed and made explicit in order to grasp the full potentiality of this concept for an extensive understanding of the challenges encountered by new speakers under current socioeconomic conditions of late capitalism. This panel thus aims to bring together different scholars that have been working with this concept to map a territory that remains largely uncharted.

Workshop location : Institut de Linguistique et Phonétique Générales et Appliquées, ILPGA, 19 rue des Bernardins, 75005 Paris

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