

## Sociolinguistics Summer School 8 – COST New Speakers Training School, Barcelona

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From the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> of July, 2017, [Sociolinguistics Summer School 8—COST New Speakers Training School](#) took place in the historical building of the Universitat de Barcelona (UB). This international event, organised by and addressed to graduate students and early career researchers, was co-hosted in its 8<sup>th</sup> edition by the COST Action IS1306 on New Speakers in a Multilingual Europe, and thus it became home to its training school for PhD students and ECRs working within the network. The training school had two local organisers, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC) and the Research Centre for Sociolinguistics and Communication at Universitat de Barcelona (CUSC-UB), and was sponsored by the Fundació 'la Caixa' and the Catalan Society of Sociolinguistics (SOCS-IEC). The local organising committee included graduate students from UOC, UB and Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB): Marina Massaguer, Avel·lí Flors-Mas, Tülay Caglitutuncigil, Júlia Llompart and Andrea Sunyol. The full list of participants included graduate students and ECRs from 20 different countries.

Each day of the training school began with a plenary lecture, by Dr Monica Heller (University of Toronto), Dr F. Xavier Vila (UB), Dr Joan Pujolar (UOC) and, finally, Dr Robert Lawson (Birmingham City University). More than 40 students were selected to present their preliminary results, both in workshops conducted by the plenary speakers and in parallel sessions. Two complementary workshops were also programmed, designed to provide students with indispensable skills for their academic careers: a workshop on the planning of academic CVs, conducted by Dr Maite Puigdevall (UOC), and a workshop on academic writing, conducted by Dr Susan Frekko. Other social and networking events were also scheduled, as the city tour around multilingual Barcelona, guided by Emili Boix-Fuster (UB), Júlia Llompart (UAB) and Tülay Caglitutuncigil (UOC). The full programme can be accessed at [training school website](#).

Monica Heller inaugurated the training school with a lecture on language and inequalities in the contemporary world. Dr Heller reflected on the role of sociolinguistics in a global setting marked by the rise of populism, xenophobia and (unequal) struggles for access to resources. The professor at the University of Toronto further examined key phenomena as the role of social differences in the construction and maintenance of inequalities, as well as the processes of creation and negotiation of *legitimizing discourses* on the social world. She also highlighted the central role of sociolinguistics as an analytical lens that allows us to see language practices as a form of social action that create and reproduce, but also transform and challenge, our internalised structures and frames of thought.

F. Xavier Vila's plenary lecture opened the second day of the training school. Dr Vila suggested an alternative and critical reading of the hegemonic narrative around the consolidation of *language policy and planning* (LPP) as a field of inquiry and intervention. According to the prevalent view, LPP as a field was established in the 60s as a method for "solving linguistic problems" derived from the decolonisation processes, anchored to a functionalist understanding of society. He claimed that the descriptions of the field need to incorporate language planning activities taking place well before the 60s (and the 20th century), and argued for a more complex view, which allows us to go beyond the simplistic dichotomy

between top-down and bottom-up approaches, and to incorporate the different *actors* which participate in language policing at different levels.

Joan Pujolar, vice-chair of COST Action IS1306, was in charge of opening the third day of the training school with a lecture on *newspeakerness* and the new forms of linguistic agency emerging in Late Modernity. Dr Pujolar presented the history and the development of the notion of *mother tongue* and the modern language ideologies that inscribe language in collective, national identities. Then, drawing on theoretical insights from Appadurai, Giddens, Harvey or Bauman, he positioned *new speakers* as profiles of speakers consistent with late modern forms of subjectivity, based on a conception of identities as *projects of the self* and on the construction of a *life-style*. However, these possibilities of becoming are still dependent on the different positions of speakers within the linguistic market and on the uneven distribution of linguistic resources within those markets.

Robert Lawson gave the last lecture of the training school, focusing on the potential but also on the complexities of conducting sociolinguistic research using *big data* and, more specifically, data from Twitter. After a brief summary of the recent and emerging strand of sociolinguistic research based on social media, Dr Lawson highlighted different possibilities and applications for conducting Twitter-based research. He also reflected on the ethical implications of the use of data published on Twitter, where the limits between private and public space blur. Finally, Lawson presented preliminary results of an on-going case study about the usage of gender-loaded terms on Twitter (e.g. manspreading or mansplaining), using corpus linguistics and discourses analysis methods.

On the other hand, students' presentations covered a wide range of the lines of inquiry in contemporary sociolinguistics, although anthropological and critical sociolinguistic perspectives were slightly prevalent. Consistently with the aims of the COST network, several papers explored issues of newspeakerness in different settings, mainly in minority language contexts but also in contexts of transnational migration and in the workplace. Other researchers covered issues of family language policy and the dynamics of language maintenance and shift in different linguistic communities; language policies and planning; language ideologies; the role of language in the construction and the negotiation of social inequalities; applied linguistics and language learning; or mediated communication, new technologies and social media. We heard about more than 15 languages, including Irish, Welsh, Scottish Gaelic or Breton, Galician, Catalan, Spanish or Italian, Flemish Sign Language, English, German or Faroese, Czech, Kichwa, Mandarin or Japanese. Records of this presentations are still available on Twitter following the hashtag #sss8barcelona.

The dialogue among participants was fruitful and the young researchers highlighted that the training school represented a good opportunity to get feed-back from other students as well as leading researchers in the field. SSS8-COST New Speakers Training School has also represented a good opportunity to socialise, discuss and enrich the new speaker agenda fostered by the COST action, with a clear aim of expanding the conversation to early career researchers working in related and clearly compatible strands of sociolinguistics.

From the standpoint of the organising committee members, it has provided us graduate students in sociolinguistics with a unique opportunity in gaining expertise in the organisation and management of academic events. We have been modestly accepting words of praise both from the participants in the summer school and the keynote speakers. We are glad that SSS8 –

COST New Speakers Training School provided such an enriching experience for all the researchers involved!

“Moltes gràcies als organitzadors de #sss8barcelona! Great convos e.g. on language, legitimacy, class and nation, past and present”, Monica Heller (University of Toronto)

“Wonderful times at #sss8barcelona. Great to see so much brilliant research and excited for the field in the years ahead”, Robert Lawson (Birmingham City University)

“Had a lovely time in Barcelona & at #sss8barcelona! Massive thanks to the organisers & all sociolinguists involved, excellent food4thoughts!”, Anna Gallo (University of Naples “Federico II” & University of Bern)

“Thank you @sss8barcelona. Met and learned from speakers of Catalan, Scottish Gaelic, Irish, Galician, Breton and many others! #sss8barcelona”, Maartje de Meulder (Université de Namur)

“It was great to meet other early career researchers and to get individualized feedback from the invited speakers. The summer school was very well-organized (thank you to the committee!) and the campus setting was beautiful. Overall, it was a great experience”, Sara Potkonjak (York University)

“It has been an extraordinary opportunity for doctoral students to meet and discuss about our major concerns/issues related to our projects. Also, it has been a pleasure to have attended those remarkable plenary sessions and sharing knowledge in the participants' presentations. All in all, the whole conference has been thoroughly organised and all the members of the committee - to whom I thank - have done their best to make us feel comfortable and make sure everything was going as expected”, Alicia Fernández Barrera (Universidad de Castilla – La Mancha)

“Fantastic experience and the importance of events such as these for PhD Students and ECRs cannot be understated. Connecting with fellow researchers from across the world who are working in diverse and varied strands of sociolinguistics can only serve to improve and enrich one's own research”, Stephen Joyce (Ollscoil na hÉireann, Gaillimh – National University of Ireland, Galway)

“I am grateful for having witnessed the latest research activities and tendencies into new speakerness, multilingualism, translanguaging, social media, and many others in a scholarly and always respectful environment. The only regrettable aspect of it would be my limited half-body splitting skills, thus enabling my attendance to all the offered parallel sessions”, anonymous participant (feedback form)

“SSS8 was totally inspiring. Listening about the ongoing research on different branches in Sociolinguistics and the audience giving feedback on your research was amazing!”, anonymous participant (feedback form)

“The SSS8 was a great experience and is perfectly adapted to the needs of junior researchers in terms of contents, format, size of the event etc. It is a great summer school for people who just start entering the research world”, anonymous participant (feedback form)

“My overall experience was a highly enjoyable one, a true learning experience that allowed me to meet interesting new people, who share similar interests to mine, but who have also

provided different viewpoints, ideas and intriguing projects to take notice of, the most appropriate word fitting these four days being 'inspiring'.”, anonymous participant (feedback form)