

Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies SYMPOSIUM WRITING VOICE AND SPEAKING TEXT

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ABSTRACTS

Molly Andrews

Hearing, representing and performing the pain of others: Tensions of ethical scholarship

This paper explores some of the inherent tensions between scholarship and ethics for researchers trying to understand stories of persons living in conditions of adversity. As someone who has long been interested in how people construct the historical moments in which they live, and how this contributes to the ways in which they participate in these upheavals, I have encountered numerous situations where I am listening to stories of acute pain and loss. We are often told that the most important skill an interviewer can have is that of listening, but little is said about the challenges that lie in such an endeavour. As academics, our ears are trained for critical analysis, highly sensitized towards ferreting out the inconsistencies in the stories offered us. Yet, as Veena Das (1997) remarks, “Even the most articulate among us face difficulties when we try to put ambiguous and jumbled thought and images into words. This is even more true of someone who has suffered traumatic loss”. Rather than attending to the variability of human emotion, staying with our speakers as they weave in and out of the experiences of their lives, we are trained to keep focused on our research agenda. Far from becoming better listeners over time, the journey for successful academics is often in the opposite direction, as we reveal the inconsistencies and vulnerabilities of others, all the while becoming ever more confident in our own ways of making sense of the world. How can we do our work responsibly, making ourselves vulnerable to hearing that which confronts our deepest sensibilities, and represent that to an outside world, all the while keeping in our hearts and minds those who have entrusted us with their stories?

Das, Veena (1997). “Language and the Body: Transactions in the Construction of Pain”, in Kleinman, A., V. Das, and M. Lock, eds. *Social Suffering*. London: University of California Press.

Shane Butler

Philomela's Complaint

A bizarre Latin poem (*Elegia de Philomela*) of uncertain date and authorship offers a catalogue of animal sounds rich in what linguists call iconicity and literary scholars, onomatopoeia: to read these verses aloud is to imitate the sounds being described. The ensemble is addressed to the nightingale, praised in the opening verses for her ability to make music by mimicking all she hears. Has the poem itself done the same? For all their playfulness, the verses strike at the heart of our own theoretical commonplaces, starting with the supposed arbitrariness of the sign, always unsettled by such examples, exceptional though they may be. So too did the writing down of nonhuman sounds preoccupy ancient linguists, who sought to segregate them from language proper. Nevertheless, it is difficult to deny that these sound-words conjure what they name, especially since, in many cases, it is only our ability to match their sounds to animals we can still hear that enables us to know what the poem is saying. What happens to our understanding of the poetic text as a transcription of human speech or song when we take it seriously as a recording of nonhuman sound? And even more dramatically, what happens to our understanding of human language when we strive (as this poem strives, albeit surreptitiously) to listen with nonhuman ears? With some help from the animal imaginings of Jakob von Uexküll, this paper attempts some preliminary answers.

Laura Ekberg

Translating spoken language in Anglophone Caribbean fiction

A large part of the literature coming from the Caribbean region today is published in European languages, especially in English. Code-switching is a commonly used technique in Caribbean Anglophone fiction, and various types of switches found in the works of Caribbean authors are emblematic of the inherent multilingualism of Caribbean language communities (see e.g. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 2005, 45). Switches can occur to other languages, such as Creoles, French or Spanish, as well as to non-standard forms of language, such as different varieties of English. The use of such geographically and culturally specific forms of language can prove challenging when these texts are translated into other languages, especially when the source and target cultures are far removed from one another, as they are in the case of translations into Finnish. In my doctoral thesis I analyse the use of code-switching and varieties of spoken language in Anglophone Caribbean novels and their Finnish translations. I analyse the strategies used by the translators in dealing with different types of code-switching.

Code-switching in these novels can be roughly divided into two distinct categories based on the way in which the authors – and thus also the translators – treat the switches. The first category is interlingual switches, in which the embedded language is treated as a foreign language, and the second category is spoken language, in which the embedded language is seen as a variety of English. This presentation will be primarily focused on this second category. Tiittula and Nuolijärvi (2013, 70) have stated that methods for creating the illusion of spoken language appear on all levels of the language, such as syntax and morphology, but there are differences between languages as to which aspects are produced using which level. They also point out that the general tendency of the translators has been to use features of Finnish spoken language that cannot be tied to a specific regional dialect, thus achieving an illusion of the spoken without anchoring the text geographically (Tiittula and Nuolijärvi 2013, 255). I argue that the varieties of spoken language used in these novels can be considered to represent Creole languages being spoken. This is achieved by introducing into the texts some elements commonly found in English-lexifier creoles spoken in the Caribbean in a way that provides an illusion or approximation of what a specific Creole would look like. I look at the different levels on which the illusion of spoken language is created in the source texts as well as the translations and compare these to some of the prototypical features of English-lexifier creoles.

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Maija Hirvonen & Mari Wiklund, University of Helsinki

What a difference the voice makes... The effects of speech prosody on information sequencing in audio description

Audio description is translation that transmits visual information in a verbal-spoken form with the aim of making visual and audiovisual communication and culture accessible to visually impaired users. Audio description thus requires both verbal and vocal skills from the person delivering the description in speech; a capacity of making meaning with voice (Snyder 2008, 196). Despite the extensive body of research into audio description and the studies of textual meaning making, such as information structural, syntactic and semantic choices (e.g. Fix 2005, Hirvonen 2012), the vocal level of audio description has been studied more recently (see Hirvonen & Tiittula 2012, Iglesias Fernández et al. 2014, Fryer 2016). Our study complements the previous research on the vocal delivery of audio description by analyzing prosodic features. We focus on one aspect of vocal meaning making, namely how speech prosody contributes to the sequencing of information. Previous studies have already shown that a sentence-initial high pitch acts as a discourse-structuring device in simultaneous interpreting and in speech-to-text interpreting (Nafá Waasaf 2007, Wiklund 2014). Our analysis of two audio describers' pitch and segmentation of information in a corpus of audio described art in Finnish indicates that the same applies to audio description. In addition, our study suggests that there is a relationship between the rise of pitch level and the topical transition in audio description. That is, for instance, when the topical transition is clear (for example, when the theme in the description shifts from one entity to another), the rise of pitch between the beginnings of two consecutive spoken sentences is large. Furthermore, the topical transitions in the spoken description can be related to visual transitions in the painting.

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Josephine Hoegaerts (University of Helsinki)

Echoes of unconventional and pathological speech in nineteenth century parliamentary reports.

In 1823, Alphonse Mahul published a brief essay entitled *Du silence considéré comme tactique parlementaire*. In it, the militant liberal argued that silence was a more useful tool for the parliamentarian than speech. The human voice would only 'muddle' one's message. Mahul was hardly alone in recognizing the dangers of one's (conspicuously human, terrifyingly corporeal) voice in the context of parliamentary debate. Throughout the nineteenth century, politicians on both sides of the Channel would worry about the clarity of their voices, and satirists ridiculed unorthodox vocal sounds. Speech therapists soon realized they could capitalize on these norms of spoken politics (and the ensuing insecurities), and targeted MPs in their advertisements for elocution methods and stammering cures.

In this paper, I draw on both (pseudo)scientific, medical literature and political documents (transcriptions of debates and reports on them in the press) to study the construction of a voice 'fit' for politics in France and the United Kingdom in the nineteenth century. Or rather, I will focus on the ways in which vocal health was considered audible, and how this audibility was rendered on the page. Although medical views on what constituted a healthy voice, fit for public speech, were generally agreed upon throughout modern Europe, the interplay between medical concerns and cultural norms within the parliamentary realm created specific national discourses and vocal practices and anxieties. These were associated with national rhetorical styles, but were also heard as corporeal, and mediated through changing modes of transcription in which notions of 'accuracy' depended on available technologies and regulations concerning their use. The material, performative nature of both speaking and writing therefore mattered to 19th century representatives, and to the historians studying them.

Research Director Matti Hyvärinen & Dr. Hanna Rautajoki University of Tampere

Positioning with text and voice – a case study

This paper discusses a case study of narrative positioning. The material consists of an autobiographical interview of a 91-year old woman. The interview turned exceptional yet analytically interesting because of the presence of the daughter who actively participated in the discussion, in particular when her father was being discussed. Originally, we received the material in transcribed form, and one of the authors (Matti) wrote a preliminary article based on the text only. Positioning analysis, drawing partly from conversation analysis and discourse analysis, emphasizes the role of the original talk as it evolves in interaction. By reviewer's suggestion, we purchased the voice recording and ordered a more exact transcription of the interview. It turned out that different transcribers heard several parts of the transcription differently. Moreover, once we went back to the audio data ourselves, there were still relevant parts we heard differently, even from the doublechecked transcription, which eventually changed several aspects of our analysis. In our presentation, we will apply autoethnographic approach and go through the trajectory of our analytic path in the aim of demonstrating the significance of the voice in interpreting positionings in storytelling. Voice entails signals of stance and affectivity that add on to the dictionary meanings of the words and contribute to the communication and interpretation of positions in conversational narration.

Zita Kóbor-Laitinen

Puolin ja toisin - Viittomakielisten keskustelijoiden strategiat viestinsä perille saattamiseksi kielellisesti epätasapainoisessa vuorovaikutustilanteessa

Helsingin yliopisto

Esitelmässä pohditaan, millaisia strategioita viittomakieliset osallistajat käyttävät viestinsä perille saattamiseen vuorovaikutustilanteessa, jossa osallistujien kesken vallitsee kielellinen epätasapaino. Havainnot perustuvat elokuvatekstitystä käsittelevään tulkattuun fokusryhmäkeskusteluun. Kuvaustilanteessa oli mukana keskustelua ohjaavan kuulevan tutkijan lisäksi seitsemän viittomakielistä, joista yksi on ryhmäkeskustelutilannetta tulkkaavien opiskelijoiden opettaja.

Aineiston mielenkiintoisimmat hetket ovat ne, joissa kuurot ryhtyvät (tulkkauksen puutteiden vuoksi) toistensa – ja myös itsensä – tulkeiksi. Aineistosta löytyy esimerkkejä siitä, mitkä tekijät vaikeuttavat kommunikation sujuvuutta ja millaisia korjaavia tai korvaavia keinoja kuuroilla on ymmärretty tulemiseen, kun opiskelijoiden tuottama tulkkaus ei ole riittävän sujuvaa ja laadukasta. Millä tavalla keskustelussa pyritään kielellisen tasapainon saavuttamiseen ja minimoidaan kommunikatiivista kitkaa.

Kuurot keskustelijat tekivät yhteistyötä, jotta saisivat kertoa kommenttinsa kuulevalle tutkijalle, joka itse ei osaa viittoa. Kuvatussa tilanteessa kuuro opettaja selvensi tarvittaessa muiden viittomakielisten puheenvuoroja opiskelijoilleen, jotta he pystyivät tulkkaamaan ne paremmin. Kuurot toistivat ja täydensivät omia puheenvuorojaan sekä esittivät toisilleen kysymyksiä tai tulkitsivat ääneen toistensa kommentteja.

Aineistoa voidaan tarkastella monenlaisilla metodeilla. Luontevimmaksi vaihtoehdoksi tarjoutuu multimodaalinen keskusteluanalyysi, vaikka se tuokin mukanaan haasteita.

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Hanna Lappalainen

Quotatives as means of combining different voices

University of Helsinki

The interview can be easily seen as an interaction between an interviewer and an interviewee. However, there are often other voices present in the interview, when an interviewee quotes real or imagined discourses. In my paper, I will discuss means used for marking these voices in the interview data. I will approach the use of quotatives from the sociolinguistic perspective.

Quotation is a phenomenon which has been studied widely in sociolinguistics during the last decades. Many studies have focused on the use of construction *be like* (e.g. Bill was like 'I am happy') and shown how it has spread quickly. Its equivalents have been recognized in several languages (Buchstaller & van Alpen 2012). In spite of intensive research, there are only few studies focusing on longitudinal corpora and changes across the life span (see Buchstaller 2015). In my paper, I will present changes in quotation practices during the last decades in the same speech community and partly among the same individuals.

My database comes from the corpus collected in Helsinki during three decades: in the 1970s, 1990s and 2010s. The corpus consists of over 200 interviews, but this case-study is based on interviews of 8 adolescents per each decade, 24 informants altogether. In addition, the study includes the panel aspect, because 16 informants have been re-interviewed later, 8 of them three times, and these interviews have also been included in the data.

In my paper, I will present changes in the use of quotatives during the last decades as well as the ways various variants are used for expressing presence of different voices in the discourse. I will show, for instance, that the use of construction *olla (niinku) et(tä)* which is equivalent of *be like* has increased remarkably from the 1970s to the 2010s (see also Lehtinen 2014).

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Panayotis Panopoulos University of the Aegean

Deaf Voices: Vocality Through and Beyond Sound and Sign

Starting from the recent development of an anthropological interest in voice and voicing, as well as a parallel debate on the reciprocal influences and feedback between sound studies and deaf studies, I will try to unravel the theoretical and methodological significance of the recent “vocal turn” in contemporary ethnography in terms of its impact on the anthropological study of sound, deafness, and the senses. The presentation will be focused on my research on the ways of the deaf with sound, through voice, touch and vibration, especially as they materialize in the work of contemporary artists that elaborate on sound and deafness. I will further refer to my research collaborations (ethnographic/ artistic experimentations with deaf and hearing artists), which focus on a systematic exploration of crossovers between artistic work and anthropological research. Voice will be approached in both its literal and metaphorical dimensions, as address and uniqueness, a powerful form of individual and collective expression and agency. Approaching voice through deafness can prove to be an extremely productive perspective concerning the multiple meanings of vocality. Deaf voices open up a whole new field of questions on the vocal, through and beyond sound. In their extreme uniqueness, deaf voices inhabit the liminal space between the inarticulate and the articulate, sonic matter and the distinctive features of language, scream and symbolic abstraction; they destabilize some of the most powerful dualisms we live by. This partly explains the strong psychological, social and philosophical upheaval they provoke. What do we learn when we turn our ears toward these voices and the sign languages of the deaf? Do we have a voice if we don't speak a language? What would the voice of a sign language sound (or look) like? How do we make out the uniqueness and address in the voice of every single deaf speaker/ signer? How can you make others listen to the voice of a silent minority?

Liisa Tiittula

Speech-to-text transfer for deaf and hard-of-hearing people

Speech-to-text transformation is needed in oral communication situations to give people with hearing impairment access to spoken language. While sign language is used only by a small minority, people who are late-deafened or hard of hearing use a spoken language as their mother tongue. This paper presents two modes of speech-to-text transfer and discusses their challenges. In speech-to-text interpreting the speech as well as relevant non-verbal audible information is transferred into a visible format. The text is typed on a laptop and displayed on a screen or monitor where it appears letter by letter or in bigger chunks.

The clients usually wish a verbatim rendering of the original speech which also conveys the speaker's style. Possibility for close rendering depends, however, on several factors, among others on the form of the original speech, speech rate, technology, interpreter's training and possibility to prepare for the task. In any case, a written text can hardly capture all features of speech. It has, for example, only limited means to substitute prosodic features. On the other hand, the written mode has to include orthographic features in order to be readable and different kind of auditive information must be added. The transformation is not a pure transcoding between two channels but interpretation by a human being mediating between interactants.

Another mode of speech-to-text transfer and accessibility service as well is intralingual subtitling. Especially the real-time subtitling of live broadcast resembles speech-to-text interpreting, although it is targeted for a more heterogenous group (among others language learners) hearing impaired people still being the main addressees. In live-subtitling, the most used method is a semi-automatic speech recognition called re-speaking. In this method a person respeaks the speech to a speech recognition software which turns the recognized utterances into subtitles. The method can also be used for speech-to-text interpreting as is the standard case in Germany.

Anne Wichmann

Reading aloud: prosodic cues to participant roles

Conversational interaction is a joint activity, and speakers use a variety of signals – linguistic and non-linguistic (vocal and gestural) – to establish or negotiate inter alia the roles in which they are participating and the degree of symmetry between them. In reading aloud, however, there are fewer opportunities for such signalling: in pre-planned, non-interactive speech the audience may not be physically present or able to see the speaker. Read aloud speech is a kind of ventriloquising, and it is not always clear who is being ‘voiced’. However, the prosodic features of a spoken utterance can provide contextual information, telling us something about the situational context, including individual speaker characteristics, but also more variable aspects of context such as the nature of the event and the capacity in which the speaker is speaking.

I hope to show that prosodic features described elsewhere as stylistic variation are used by readers as cues to their assumed participant role. I shall look at different kinds of reading aloud, including prose fiction (as in talking books), news and poetry, and consider different speaker roles such as author, mouthpiece, simulated author or character. Reading styles also imply different hearer roles, including addressed and non-addressed participants, and overhearers. Some of these cues can be accounted for by recent studies of the prosody of emotion, but there is also much to be gleaned from early handbooks (19th and 20th century) on speech and performance. Reframing prosodic style as a cue to participant role also has some explanatory power in that it allows us (using a pragmatic framework) to account for cases of misunderstanding where the cued roles are not agreed by all participants.