

FIRST CLADES CONGRESS  
SPEAKING FOR CHANGE, SPEAKING ABOUT  
CHANGE

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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

1. Marie-Louise Brunner

**Shaping public perception of sustainability efforts: A study of Instagram business accounts from the food industry**

Sustainable business models provide a competitive advantage (Bonini & Swartz 2014, Lichtenhaler & Fronapfel 2022, Preveden 2024) but companies need to successfully communicate their sustainable efforts and impact to profit from this effect. This study analyzes how companies communicate their sustainable brand identities on Instagram. Following a Positive Discourse Analysis (Macgilchrist 2007) approach, I employ Multimodal Discourse Analysis (O'Halloran 2011) to analyze best practices used in data from 10 German and 10 English Instagram business accounts from the food industry.

The analysis includes a qualitative and quantitative approach. The qualitative analysis investigates how sustainable identities are created through multimodal means. Three basic identity negotiation strategies are explored (Brunner 2021, Brunner in press):

- 1) Highlighting companies' own identities,
- 2) Differentiating from a perceived 'Other', and
- 3) Positioning within the context of a larger societal discourse.

Findings show that sustainability discourses work as an identity-negotiation strategy on Instagram business accounts. The Instagram account is used to showcase sustainable products and concepts and to demonstrate impact. Companies develop their own consistent and yet authentic sustainable image.

The quantitative analysis investigates which types of sustainability are addressed (ecological, social, economic) and whether they co-occur with sustainability labels. First findings suggest that social sustainability is generally not used by companies to contribute to (labeled) sustainability discourses even though it is frequently used to improve their public image. This points to a discrepancy between the concept of sustainability as outlined in the 17 sustainable development goals by the United Nations and as perceived by businesses shaping public perceptions.

In sum, this study provides an overview of best practices contributing to a successful sustainable brand identity that can be easily applied by companies. It also underlines the need for more awareness regarding social issues as part of sustainability.

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## 2. Michael Burke

### **Social change through public speaking: Empowering primary school children in economically and socially challenged circumstances to thrive through language**

In this talk, which is very much an ongoing, work-in-progress project, I will report on a pedagogical intervention which I designed and implemented last year. This intervention involved second-year undergraduate students being trained in rhetoric, language and public speaking and then going on to work with local primary school children from an economically and socially challenged environment. The university students worked with and trained the children in the art of language use, speaking in public and debating. This 'community engaged learning' (CEL) project ran for 15 weeks in the autumn of 2024 and it concluded with a public speaking 'event' in the local town hall in Middelburg in front of the children's teachers and parents. This CEL course will next run again in the autumn of 2025. Reflection data has already been collected from the university students who were teaching the primary school children in the autumn of 2024 and it is this data, and its suggested lines and outcomes, that I will be reporting on and discussing with the delegates during this talk.

## 3. Bernard De Clerck and Lotte Remue

### **Looks, likes and language: does beauty still boost business?**

"Beauty sells" is a powerful principle in marketing that capitalizes on the psychological and emotional responses people have to attractiveness (Yin and Pryor 2012), as showcased on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, which are flooded with influencers, many of whom leverage their physical attractiveness to build personal brands, creating trust and loyalty among their followers (Von Mettemheim et al. 2021). While this principle is effective in driving sales and brand loyalty, it also raises important questions about inclusivity, ethics, and the broader impact of beauty standards in society. Critics argue that overemphasis on beauty can lead to body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, and discrimination based on physical appearance (Grabe et al. 2008; Krawczyk & Thompson 2015; Breves et al. 2024).

Does the ‘Beauty sells’ principle still stand strong, though, in today’s current climate of body positivity and heightened awareness of bias caused by race, age, gender and - indeed-looks? This paper addresses this question in the context of young influencers and examines the impact of physical features on perceived attractiveness and intelligence, and how these correlate with the perceived credibility of their messages, consumer attitudes and purchase intentions.

The pilot study employed a 2 (attractive vs. less attractive) x 2 (glasses vs. no glasses) experimental design, the results of which indicate that social attractiveness, rather than physical attractiveness, positively influenced message credibility, consumer attitudes, and purchase intentions, while physical attractiveness did not significantly impact any of these outcomes.

These findings suggest that, while the traditional concept of beauty surely remains prominent in advertising, its influence may be less prominent (for some) in today’s more socially conscious consumer landscape. Such observations provide interesting challenges at managerial level on how to better navigate the complexities of today’s more inclusive and socially conscious marketplace, in ways that are both ethically and financially sound. At the same time, the results on looks and language and the language of looks also probe researchers into thinking about our role and the effect of our findings on money-driven business models we may actually not wish to feed in view of a more sustainable future.

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#### 4. Matt Drury

##### **Sustainability, Language, Impact!**

The polycrisis in which we are embedded is playing out at a range of spatio-temporal scales, which are often too far away or slow for us to perceive (Lawrence et al., 2024). As such, the language used to communicate about it plays an important role in shaping our understanding of it. As we as a species struggle to get to grips with these crises, much attention has been put on how we can achieve ‘sustainability’. Here, I define sustainability as the urgent need to minimise our immediate and future negative impact on people, other animals, and the planet, whilst simultaneously maximising our positive impacts on these domains (Drury et al., 2023). A key element of this definition is impact, and it is the impact of our language choices that we focus on here.

Current sustainability communication tends to focus on how we can avoid making dramatic changes to our everyday lives while somehow transitioning to ‘sustainable’ ways of doing things. I use examples from local and global communication to illustrate this point, drawing on UN speeches (Drury et al., 2022), EU agriculture policy (Zhang & Drury, 2024), and university communication on sustainability (Drury et al., forthcoming). Revealing and challenging the core discourses in these texts would go some way to reducing the negative impact that we have. However, it is also necessary to use language which helps us to more easily imagine alternative ways of doing things. I suggest that focussing on relationships and connections rather than the properties of entities would be a good way to start, for example by activating a ‘relationship’ frame when communicating about sustainability issues.

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5. Olga Abreu Fernandes

**Coaching Lab: Re-shaping stories, transforming experience, capturing change**

In a complex and uncertain world where individuals, organizations, and societies need to learn and adapt fast, the demand for coaching in the workplace is growing. Coaching can be defined as “a human development process that involves structured, focused interaction” and the use of techniques “to promote desirable and sustainable change” for the benefit of the individual and organization (Bachkirova et al., 2018). The presentation explores coaching as a type of communicative professional practice to facilitate change and adult learning.

First, I will briefly map out coaching research, highlighting a need for linguistic explorations of “the black box” of the coaching process. Conversation analysis and multimodal interaction analysis provide tools to capture coachees’ visible shifts in awareness, perspectives, affective states, and language use. In other words, we can study how transformation is facilitated moment-to-moment and becomes sustainable through language use in coaching conversations.

Second, the presentation will zoom on storytelling. On the one hand, storytelling is an important means to express oneself and enable sense-making of personal experience (Ochs & Capps, 2001). On the other hand, it is highly potent for use in coaching because problem-solving, life events, relationships, and temporality are central in narratives (Robinson, 2010). More so, coaching itself can be viewed as storytelling, a co-creative, interactive process to challenge old, unhelpful stories about one’s life and shape new, empowering ones (Stelter, 2014). As I introduce the elements of coaching as a means to explore old and new ways of seeing a challenge, the audience will be invited to engage in a short experiential activity and follow-up reflection on the power of language within a coaching context.

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6. Walter Giordano

**Communication strategies in prescription drug advertising: ethics and “sustainability”**

Promoting prescription drugs is one of the controversial turf where very complex issues regarding ethics, transparency and health information manipulation arise (Giordano 2019; Biegler 2015; Perry et al. 2013; Wilkes et al. 2000). Prescription drug advertising is regulated in the USA, and it may imply not only bias in patients’ decision-making, but also physicians unbalance of power in their role (Applequist and Ball 2018; Weinmeier 2013; Ventola 2011; Frosch et al. 2007)

The mechanisms of possible manipulation in promotion messages of prescription drugs, has been investigated here, on a sample of Merck Keytruda commercials. Keytruda serves as immunotherapy for some types of cancer. The corpus consisted of 14 commercials aired on television from 2017 to 2024. Some parameters were identified (presence of a doctor, voiceover, setting, etc.). Drawing on the Giordano-St.Amant Fold and Swap theory applied to advertising (St Amant and Giordano 2023; Giordano and Ammendola 2023), it was possible to identify several changes in settings and recontextualizations: this promotional strategy seems to shift the attention from the drug’s side effects and potential risks to the real patients' experience. This strategic move leads to hypothesize that the addresses of the message may be biased in their purchase decision. Furthermore, other considerations can be put forward in terms of sustainability: can advertising be “sustainable” in the future, in terms of transparency, ethics and truth? This study is a part of a larger research thread, aimed at identifying the promotional strategies that leverage the change in the function of use of products to create new consumption purposes and styles.

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## 7. Frank Hindriks

### **Language For and Against Social Change**

According to the 4A model of social change, four key components are raising awareness, formulating an attractive alternative, activating others, and giving them assurance. Language plays a central role in all of them. In this paper, I use the 4A model as a tool for conceptualizing the ways in which language contributes to and detracts from social change. Blaming individuals for remaining inactive often backfires. Common rationalizations, including diffusion of responsibility, also form an obstacle to collective action. In contrast, signaling or otherwise communicating willingness to engage in collective action is particularly important. It can serve to activate others as well as give them assurance that success is sufficiently likely. In this way, the 4A model can be used to provide a framework for social change and the role that language can play in it.

## 8. John Hoeks and Janette Bosma

### **The persuasive power of poetry**

#### Goal

This study revolves around a specific poem by Hans Bouma, in which the poet combines the story of the wonderful events in spring, with the story of the plight of the animals caught up in factory farming. We investigated whether the 'poeticness', also known as 'foregrounding', would have an effect on identification with the animals and on intentions to cut down on meat consumption.

#### Method

Based on the original poem, we developed four new versions that differed in the degree of foregrounding. There was a total of five versions: 1) the original poem; 2) the poem without enjambment (line breaks), 3) a prosaic text with some foregrounding, 4) a prosaic text without foregrounding, and 5) a business-like text.



Before and after reading one of these versions, respondents (N=1027; 511 identifying as male and 516 as female) answered questions, including about their intention to stop eating meat, and about the level of identification they felt with the non-human animals featured in the text.

### Results

Analysis of Variance showed the following pattern: When it comes to persuasive effects, for women it does not matter which version they have read: their intention to “not eat meat from now on” is stable; for men, foregrounding apparently does matter: their intention is significantly higher for the versions containing poetic elements.

For Identification with the animals present in the text, we see a similar pattern: women do identify anyway, regardless of the version they read; for men, identification with the animals is significantly higher when foregrounding becomes stronger.

### Conclusion

In this study, we could see that foregrounding has an effect on the persuasiveness of a poem. Especially in men, foregrounding appears to be of great importance. Using poetic elements when telling stories may thus help make the world a better place.

## 9. Aurélie Joubert and Marcela Huilcán

### **‘Indigenous’ European Languages: reflections on cultural appropriation and global minoritisation practices**

The term ‘indigenous’ has been used in colonial contexts to refer to communities that are different in a cultural, ethnic, social and economic sense from dominant societies, (‘Indigenous peoples, indigenous voices’, United Nations). They are mostly communities situated in the Americas, the Arctic, Africa and Australasia. However, this term has on occasion, and especially in language revitalisation frameworks, been used to discuss European languages (Sallabank, 2024), sometimes in combination with the term ‘minoritised languages’ to be more encompassing (Meighan 2022). Indeed, the indigeneity of some population in Europe is attested, mainly the Sami people, but for other minoritised communities which have long lived over a territory and been dominated by another sociocultural group, the use of the term leads to some friction based on claims of cultural appropriation and western recentring of a terminology, and activism, that has developed and thrived outside of Europe. Similarly, the over-use of the term ‘decolonising’ has been described as having tokenistic, metaphorising or sloganising effects in some discourses (Ndhlovu, 2022). Thus, taking into account the socio-historical and sociolinguistic elements that have shaped and led to the current use and social meaning of the term Indigenous, this paper reflects on the appropriateness of the term when referring to a broad range of minoritised language communities in Europe. It strives to answer the following questions: What are the implications of applying a terminology that has evolved in postcolonial settings to other contexts?

Focusing on South America, Australia, and Europe, different examples will be critically analysed to better understand the processes that affect language and come with a colonial-

type domination. Through a literature review of recent publications, the analysis sheds light on the discursive structures that serve to (re)legitimise languages, empower speakers and raise a critical awareness that considers the place of diversity and issues of social justice and equity in society.

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#### 10. Chloé Lybaert and Sarah Van Hoof

##### **Students’ attitudes towards university lecturers’ language use and ethnicity: A contextualised speaker evaluation experiment**

This paper reports on a contextualised speaker evaluation experiment exploring the effects of language variety (Standard vs. Colloquial Dutch), ethnic identity (Flemish vs. Maghrebi) and wearing a headscarf on students’ evaluations of a female university lecturer in Flanders. In a 2x3 between-subjects design, 311 respondents evaluated 6 conditions on several attitude measures. In the conditions, audio of a lecture in Standard (SD) or colloquial Dutch (CD) (recorded by the same speaker) was combined with a picture of the same woman with or without a headscarf and with a Flemish or Moroccan name.

A MANCOVA revealed that the lecturer was evaluated differently depending on her language use and the ethnic identity ascribed to her. We found no significant effects of condition for ‘Social attractiveness’ and ‘Authority’, and a small effect for ‘Professionalism’, where only the SD-speaking lecturer with hijab stood out as significantly more professional. We found large effects for ‘Physical attractiveness’, ‘Standardness’ and ‘Comprehensibility’. The Flemish identity was perceived as physically more attractive than the Maghrebi ones, especially the one with hijab. On ‘Standardness’, SD always scored higher than CD, and the SD-speaking Maghrebi lecturer with hijab stood out positively. For ‘Comprehensibility’ too, SD generally performed better than CD.

We thus observed no general downgrading of the ethnic minority identity and the headscarf, contrary to what the evidence on ethnic discrimination in Flanders (Baert, 2018) led us to expect. Although a social desirability bias may have been at play, this alone cannot account for the fact that only the SD-speaking veiled identity stood out

positively on 'Professionalism'. In line with Language Expectancy Theory (Burgoon et al. 2002), these findings can be interpreted as the result of a positive breach of participants' expectations, who may not have expected a veiled Maghrebi instructor to be able to communicate fluently in SD.

## 11. Nicolina Montesano Montessori

### **Critical Language Awareness, citizenship and the voice of nature**

This paper addresses the RQ: how can we strengthen education and citizenship through critical language awareness and understandings of discourse and power?

As a critical (policy)discourse analysis, I emphasize the significant role of language and therefore the need to emphasize critical language awareness (CLA) in the curricula. I briefly present some essential notes from Gramsci and his 'second domain of education' and his emphasis on language. I then make explicit for what reasons we currently need to emphasise a critical language awareness. I present some results of previous analytical research on the EU policy on Higher Education and on SDG4 (Education) of the UN 2030 Agenda, which both distantiate us from a meaningful and critical education – or even contextualized education (Montesano Montessori, 2023 a, b; Montesano Montessori & Lautensach, 2024). I present a recently designed project (Montessori & Wessels, 2024) to have landscapes 'converse' together, in this case the Utrecht Science Park and its adjacent 'Amelisweerd'. I then summarize the need to further develop and disseminate critical language awareness to allow citizens – as well as the voices of nature as the final project suggests - across the world to contribute to a socially and ecologically just world order.

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12. Nafiseh Orouji

**Tools for Change: The Multimodal Argumentative Power of Feature Films in Promoting Women’s Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights**

How can multimodal texts like films help craft a society where women’s rights are practiced as human rights and women’s health is recognised and truly valued? Finding answers to this question is not a trivial pursuit of analysis, given that promoting women’s health and rights with the commitment for health for all is one of the key sustainable goals of the United Nations (UN). Indeed, it is well-known that films, as multimodal texts, can shape people’s minds and have the potential to form and even change people’s attitudes and values regarding social justice, human rights, and gender equality (Kubrak, 2020; Behm-Morawitz & Mastro, 2008).

This study examines the multimodal argumentative structures of feature films addressing women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), with a particular focus on abortion rights. It explores how filmmakers employ multimodal affordances—visuals, dialogue, music, and narrative—to construct persuasive arguments and engage audiences with critical issues. Additionally, it evaluates the effectiveness of these arguments in influencing public opinion and advancing advocacy.

The project integrates methods from communication and media studies, narrative psychology, and behaviour change science to provide a comprehensive analysis. Findings reveal the potential of films to shape public discourse on SRHR and highlight their role as tools for fostering critical language awareness, promoting ethical communication, and advancing sustainable futures.

13. Francesca Padovani

**How Can Machines Be Taught Language More Efficiently, Mirroring the Natural Processes of Young Learners?**

Written human language underpins today’s linguistic technologies, whose generative capabilities stem from vast exposure to massive linguistic data sourced online (Touvron et al., 2023; OpenAI, 2023). This enormous volume of data (on the order of trillions of tokens) demands even greater computational power, which in turn requires significant financial resources to acquire and maintain the computing systems. Such a scenario excludes public research institutions and universities, which unfortunately lack unlimited funding, leaving the field dominated by major industries. This scalability paradigm also raises concerns about environmental sustainability, particularly due to high water and energy consumption. Additionally, the vast data and computational demands for training current LLMs starkly contrast with human cognitive processes, making these models’ learning mechanisms implausible when compared to natural language acquisition in children. How can machines be taught language more efficiently, mirroring the natural processes of young learners?

Recent studies (Huebner et al., 2020) and (Salhan et al, 2024) have demonstrated that models trained on Child-Directed Speech (CDS)—the language adults and caregivers use to communicate with children—can achieve syntactic and lexical competencies comparable to those of much larger models trained on internet-crawled data. Which intrinsic properties of CDL allow it to achieve such results? Does this type of language benefit only the early stages of learning, or does it influence the entire learning process?

Causally demonstrating which characteristics of "motherese" help language models (LMs) acquire linguistic skills with significantly less data than current models could have a dual impact:

1. Enhanced Accessibility: Universities and public institutions could advance research without relying on vast computational resources, leveling the playing field with industry leaders.
2. Democratization of Research: Low-resource and underrepresented languages could benefit from human-like data augmentation strategies, reducing the need for extensive data collection and fostering inclusivity.

My current research examines learning curves for syntactic paradigms like subject-verb and anaphor-determiner agreement, using minimal pair benchmarks in English, French, and German to assess the potential benefits of CDS.

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#### 14. Marc Pauly

##### **Speaking to nature: A dialogical philosophy perspective**

Speaking about the environmental crisis usually means speaking about issues like CO2 reductions, de-growth, veganism, ecological diversity, etc. A deeper underlying question, however, is whether what is at stake is not more fundamentally how we relate to nature. The way we use language in the context of the ecological crisis is primarily a language that speaks ABOUT nature. In order to change our relationship to nature, it may be necessary to explore ways of speaking TO nature instead.

Among the many different possible intellectual resources one might use to work out such an endeavor, I will explore the work of dialogical philosophy. This philosophical tradition of the early 20th century looks at how different grammatical relations express different forms of relationality (Rosenstock-Huussy) and how the linguistic act of speaking-to is more foundational than the act of speaking-about (Ebner). While this philosophical tradition is primarily concerned with dialogue in the human realm, it also allows us to explore the notion of a wordless dialogue with plants and animals (Buber), where the notion of personhood can be extended beyond the human realm.

In my presentation, I will present the central elements of dialogical philosophy and how they might help us argue for developing ways of speaking and listening to nature.

#### 15. Hanna Sofia Rehnberg

##### **The struggle for collaboration between researchers and practitioners – challenges and the satisfaction of knowledge exchange finally taking place. Experiences from a research project on asylum narratives**

In recent years, I have led a research project aimed at deepening our understanding of the role of language and communication in the asylum process. From the outset, a key goal of this project has been to raise awareness of the complexities of the asylum interview as a communicative situation and to disseminate our findings to practitioners – ultimately contributing to the creation of a more sustainable society.

Initially, gaining access to the Swedish Migration Agency proved to be a significant challenge. However, we eventually succeeded in observing and audio-recording eight asylum interviews, thereby collecting a unique dataset. Recently, new opportunities have emerged, and we now conduct training seminars on a somewhat regular basis for both case officers at the Migration Agency and asylum court judges.

In this lecture, I aim to share insights from our project, focusing on the challenges we faced in gaining access and our efforts to disseminate the research beyond academia. I will also offer a brief glimpse into one of the analyses that now serves as the foundation for the practice-oriented training seminars we offer to Swedish authorities.

This particular analysis examines how applicants are positioned during asylum interviews, focusing on a specific informative sequence: the mandatory moment when case officers inform applicants of their obligation to tell the truth. The findings are discussed in relation to existing guidelines and legal texts governing asylum interviews in Sweden. Our analysis demonstrates how case officers, while performing the same informative task, may position applicants in ways that are more or less respectful and empathetic. These differences, in turn, can shape the conditions not only for the interview itself but also for the construction of the asylum seeker's identity. At the same time, the analysis underscores the challenges that arise when existing guidelines point in conflicting directions.

16. Laura Robaey

**Gender-Inclusive Language in Multilingual, Gender-Sensitive Contexts**

As encounters with gender-diverse individuals and exposure to gender-sensitive contexts crosslinguistically increase, L2 learners today face growing linguistic and social demands. Building gender-sensitive competencies in their second language is therefore essential, allowing them to engage in these interactions with both precision and respect.

This study investigates how L2 learners draw on their previously acquired comprehension-based knowledge of gender-fair language during real-time oral language production, and examines the impact of an additional targeted training on this process. Focusing on interpreting students - advanced L2 learners who will frequently work in multilingual, gender-sensitive contexts - it evaluates the effectiveness of such instructional interventions. Within a specialized master's program in interpreting, students in the German-Dutch and French-Dutch language pairs were assigned a simulated dialogue interpreting task, in which they were asked to interpret for a non-binary person. Using a controlled experiment involving an experimental and a control group, the present study examines accuracy and fluency in the use of gender-neutral language during the interpreting work. A fixed script with linguistic challenges prompted students to apply gender-neutral strategies in both interpreting languages (German/French and Dutch). The task was further complicated by inherent differences between the studied language systems in terms of gender expression.

The results indicate that the experimental group, trained in the production of gender-fair language, exhibited fewer and less impactful errors compared to the control group, whose errors were predominantly related to misgendering. Although disfluencies were initially higher in the experimental group, these decreased over time, with repeated use of gender-fair strategies. These findings highlight the importance of tailored didactics in fostering awareness among students about gender diversity and equipping them with the linguistic tools needed to engage respectfully in multilingual, gender-sensitive contexts. Through targeted training, initial cognitive challenges linked to gender-fair strategies in L2 can be addressed.

17. Orrie Staschen

**Doing Critical Literacy – A case study of UCT Graduate School of Business MPhil students in Cape Town, South Africa**

The MPhil in Inclusive Innovation programme at the UCT's Graduate School of Business is aimed at helping students “learn to identify and improve multiple dimensions of social, environmental, political and entrepreneurial challenges” in South Africa (GSB, 2024). Hosting mainly mature students with significant work experience, it focuses on how best to enact social, environmental and political change through innovations in public/private sector, business and NGO's. Students must reflect on issues in their fields academically, with the aim of developing an actionable and impactful study. While this programme succeeds in scaffolding thesis writing, aligned with students' interests, there is little

consideration for or awareness of the role of literacy, language and discourse theory when framing these concerns. This aligns with Darics' argument, that "for many years the study of and knowledge about language have been relegated to foreign language classes and distinct corners of humanities departments in universities" (2022:3). Scholars like Freire (1972) and Janks (2013) define critical literacy as a social justice work methodology in education based on practices that lead students to interrogate the world around them, viewing literacy as social practice and texts as socially constructed (not neutral). Applying this rationale - this study argues that an interactive student workshop encourages the application of these theories and tools to their academic reading and writing. This will take place during the first month of the programme in March 2025, concluding with a reflective written task to assess its impact on how students view their research topics. This study aims to ascertain how critical literacy awareness can be best introduced into the MPhil programme to foster deeper critical engagement in students' reading and writing on issues of inclusivity and social justice.

## 18. Arran Stibbe

### **Towards a grammar of enchantment**

This presentation examines nature writing to reveal the linguistic and rhetorical devices used to represent and stimulate enchantment with nature. The methodology consists of a literature review to reveal some of the key characteristics of enchanted encounters such as the presence of a self and other, a feeling of expansion, transcendence of rational thought, time distortion and purposelessness. A positive discourse analysis is then carried out on nature writing to reveal linguistic devices which convey those characteristics, including activation, pronoun use, metaphor and salience. The resultant grammar of enchantment can be used by creative writers to write in ways which help people reconnect with and value the natural world.

## 19. Hanne Verhaegen

### **A thematic analysis of attitudes towards gender-neutral pronouns in Dutch**

As gender-neutral pronouns gain visibility, they fill a linguistic gap which has long existed in several languages for referring to individuals outside the traditional binary, and they constitute an alternative to masculine generics (Renström and Klysing 2024). While some embrace gender-neutral pronouns as a step toward greater inclusivity, others are critical of this language change.

This study explores attitudes towards Dutch gender-neutral pronouns by analysing participants' comments from broader survey experiments that tested the comprehensibility and appreciation of Dutch gender-neutral pronouns (N = 1,358). Although they were never explicitly asked to share their opinions on gender-inclusive language (GIL), 252 participants took the opportunity to do so. The relevant comments were subjected to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006, 2022). While the analysis was largely inductive, it was shaped by previous research on attitudes towards GIL (Blaubergs 1980; Parks and Robertson 1998; Vergoossen et al. 2020; Hekanaho 2020; 2022) and the



following research question: What reasons do people spontaneously bring up to argue for or against gender-neutral pronouns – or, more broadly, gender-inclusive language?

Thematic analysis lends itself to integration with critical perspectives by going beyond a summary of participants' shared experiences and linking these to systems of power in society and larger ideologies (Lawless and Chen 2019). I identified four main themes in the dataset, which are constituted by the search for an ideological underpinning that is shared by several of the participants' overt responses: 1) Language should reflect reality, 2) Language is separate from reality, 3) The linguistic status quo should be defended, 4) Clear communication should be prioritized.

Identifying and understanding attitudes towards gender-neutral pronouns and their underlying ideologies should be considered and addressed when implementing gender-fair language strategies, in order to foster inclusivity and social justice.

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20. Bettina van Hoven and students

**Learning from the WSÁNEĆ: Language Revival and Decolonizing Education**

Colonial histories have profoundly impacted Indigenous peoples, shaping their rights, cultures, and communities. In Canada, the Indian Act of 1876 granted the colonial government sweeping powers to restrict Indigenous rights and freedoms. It criminalized

cultural practices and ceremonies, implemented the residential school system, confined Indigenous peoples to reservations, and imposed movement restrictions. Residential schools forcibly removed children from their families, systematically erasing their languages and cultural traditions through violent assimilation, guided by the Doctrine of Discovery. These colonial policies inflicted lasting intergenerational harm on Indigenous communities, affecting their cultures, economies, and social structures.

Despite the enduring consequences of colonial violence, the WSÁNEĆ people on Vancouver Island have demonstrated remarkable resilience, actively maintaining and reviving their cultural practices and languages. This presentation explores their initiatives in cultural and linguistic revival, reframing Indigenous communities not as passive victims but as resilient, adaptable, and self-reliant agents of change.

In our presentation, we draw extensively on conversations held with WSÁNEĆ Elders SELILYE (Belinda Claxton), ČOSINIYE (Linda Elliot), J,SINTEN (John Elliot), and TYTZAUT (Adelynne Claxton) in the context of a year 2 project on ‘Decolonizing Education’ at University College Groningen (UCG) in 2024. We will provide background for the case but will highlight what learning about the role of language in light of colonial histories has meant for us as learners from different backgrounds, i.e. the group of UCG students, their teacher, and a high school student.

Through the WSÁNEĆ case study, we aim to stimulate dialogue on colonial history, cultural genocide, and human rights, underscoring the critical role of language in cultural identity and healing. Additionally, we reflect on the emotional and intellectual impact of engaging with this case, highlighting its influence on our personal and academic growth, positionality, and worldview.

21. Leonidas Zotos

**LLMs and student responses: Exploring shared behaviors in multifaceted event comprehension**

Natural language can express the same information in different ways, reflecting factors like the writer, audience, aim, and context. Different formulations of events or concepts can significantly influence how they are perceived, interpreted or recalled by readers. This is particularly relevant in the case of multi-faceted events; events where viewpoints might be observer specific (e.g., emphasising the positive or negative aspects of the Dutch Golden Age). As might be expected, the manner in which we learn about multi-faceted events during our education can have ripple effects in our society.

Recent advancements in Computational Linguistics have led to the creation of powerful generative Large Language Models (LLMs) that incorporate great amounts of knowledge as a by-product of their language modelling objective. As these models quickly become more accessible, their use for pedagogical purposes is also growing (applications ranging from functioning as study partners to field-testing examinations). At the same time, LLMs have also been shown to reproduce biases, which is problematic when they are used, for example, to generate practice materials.

As a first step to exploring how LLMs can safely be used for educational purposes, it is imperative to understand their behaviour. In this presentation, we explore whether similarities exist between LLMs' and students' behaviour. Through a series of experiments [2, 1], we find that while students and LLMs respond to exam questions differently, some similarities can be observed. In particular, we find that questions that are challenging for students are also likely to pose a challenge for LLMs, demonstrating a shared perceived difficulty. This work is foundational towards the broader goal of automatically generating educational material using LLMs. We invite the audience to think along about how we can harness the potential of LLMs in educational settings while also better understanding their biases and capabilities.