

Workshop: “Traversing Super-, Trans- and Inter-: Central and South Asia Revisited”, co-organised by Dr. Brook Bolander, English Department, University of Zürich, and Dr. Till Mostowlansky, Institute for the Science of Religion and Central Asian Studies, University of Bern

The two-day workshop “Traversing Super-, Trans- and Inter-: Central and South Asia Revisited” was held on the 26th and 27th of August 2015, with the first day taking place within the framework of the Third Triannual International Society for the Linguistics of English (ISLE) conference, “Building Bridges – inter- and intra-disciplinary research”, hosted by the University of Zurich (August 24–27, 2014), and the second day being a closed roundtable amongst workshop participants. It was made possible through financial support provided by the VAUZ (Vereinigung akademischer Mittelbau der Universität Zürich), the SNSF “International Exploratory Workshops”, and the ZUNIV (Zürcher Universitätsverein).

The theme of the workshop was to transcend the borders between Central and South Asian spaces, which are typically fixed in much contemporary scholarship and to thereby address the implications of our approach for English linguistics and studies of language use. Specifically we attempted to build bridges 1) between South and Central Asian spaces; 2) between language use and other socio-cultural practices in South and Central Asian spaces; and 3) between English and other languages in South and Central Asian spaces. With regard to disciplines, we aimed to foster discussion between a group of linguists, anthropologists, historians and geographers, who were carefully selected on the basis of a series of criteria: 1) disciplinary embedding; 2) interdisciplinary interest; 3) fieldwork in or on South and Central Asian spaces; 4) interest in theory; 5) exploration of issues of globalisation, migration and mobility. Finally, we also had a networking aim of providing opportunities for networking between scholars working within different disciplines, in different countries and research institutions, and at different levels (more established versus upcoming researchers).

Our aim was to have the scholars present a paper in the first day of the workshop, which was also open to participants of the ISLE conference. This first day consisted of a total of eight papers, listed in order of appearance below.

Name	Title
Brook Bolander and Till Mostowlansky	Introduction
Vasudha Bharadwaj	Patriotism, power, and practicality: Regionalism, linguistic conflict, and English in 1960s India
Lena Zipp	Code-switching in the media: Identity negotiations in a Gujarati diaspora radio programme
Tariq Rahman	The modernisation of names in Pakistan
Brook Bolander	English and the transnational Ismaili Muslim community in Northern Pakistan, Eastern Tajikistan and beyond
Till Mostowlansky	Building bridges across the Oxus: The (re)connection of two regions and the language of development
Hermann Kreutzmann	Language variegation across the Pamir-Hindukush-Karakorum – perceptions and mobilities.
David Britain	Discussant

In the second day of the workshop, we addressed a series of themes which had emerged during the first day. These included the importance of 1) viewing globalisation as a historical process; 2) challenging the centre/periphery divide with respect to assumptions that urban settings are global and rural settings local, and the related assumption that urban settings are heterogeneous and placed in a binary relationship with presumed homogeneous rural ones; and 3) reflecting upon different movements and types of movements which happen in different spaces, and at what are typically regarded as different “levels”: local, national, transnational and transregional.

In the course of discussions held on the second day, we also addressed the challenge of using scientific terminology in an interdisciplinary project, since the same term often means different things in the different disciplines. We all agreed on the importance of qualifying briefly (particularly in light of a special issue planned for 2016 with the international peer-reviewed *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, co-edited by Bolander and Mostowlansky) how we as scholars understand the terms we choose to employ, so as to be able to more readily avoid misunderstanding and to facilitate communication across disciplinary boundaries. This is tied to the challenge of being able to create common ground for interdisciplinary work without having to choose either to frame all contributions as “belonging” to a particular discipline or making all contributions conform to a particular discipline (e.g., linguistics by virtue of the conference setting and the publication of the proposed special issue in a linguistics journal). As we move towards publication of the special issue “Language use and globalisation in South and Central Asian spaces”, which will include contributions by our workshop participants as well as by other scholars whose papers will offer complementary insights, the themes and discussions raised during the workshop will guide us and help us work towards producing a coherent, interdisciplinary special issue. We are grateful to the VAUZ (as well as to the SNSF and the ZUNIV) for making this possible.