Call for contributions - until 12th of September 2012

Colloquium "Language and trauma – expression and representation beyond the sayable"

As part of the **Sociolinguistics Symposium 24 (July 2022 in Ghent / Belgium; https://ss24ghent.be/)** we aim to organize a colloquium around language and trauma. Tim McNamara and Brigitta Busch started a conversation about *Language and Trauma* in their special issue of *Applied Linguistics* in 2020. They focused on research employing the tools of linguistic analysis to address the question of language in the experience of, recounting of and possible recovery from psychological trauma, in personal, literary and institutional contexts. While the term trauma ('wound' in its Greek origin) was originally largely confined to medicine and psychotherapy, it has recently found its way into everyday language, where it is often used, semantically overstretched, for any form of painful or frustrating experience. Among the shared characteristics is the disruption caused by trauma that cannot initially be integrated into the self. This presents a difference to pain and sorrow that are understandable as they are linked to 'more expectable' negative experiences. On another note, experiencing trauma brings about enduring changes, as Van der Kolk (2014: 21) stresses:

> We have learned that trauma is not just an event that took place sometime in the past; it is also the imprint left by that experience on mind, brain, and body. This imprint has ongoing consequences for how the human organism manages to survive in the present. Trauma results in a fundamental reorganization of the way mind and brain manage perceptions. It changes not only how we think and what we think about, but also our very capacity to think.

The effects of traumatic experiences are thus relevant for the persons involved and they also become relevant for future generations who might socially inherit some of the imprints left by traumatic experiences (Rauwald 2020, Keilson 2005). Transmission can happen through languages but also silence can be a relevant, often threatening part of a speaker's repertoire after trauma.

In this colloquium we explore the specific social, political and historical conditions that lead to and frame traumatic experience, and we also look beyond specific cases to present methodologies and approaches applicable to trauma studies from an applied linguistics and sociolinguistic perspective. We ask what sociolinguistics and discourse studies can contribute to trauma research and in what ways applied linguistics can benefit from venturing into the field of trauma research. Trauma, like other intense experiences and feelings such as pain, grief, and rage, touches at the limits of the sayable. From the perspective of applied linguistics, situations in which language is, if at all, not readily available are so 'extreme' or 'exceptional' that they might appear marginal to the understanding of how language in 'normal' interaction functions. However, attention to the exceptional, the marginal, the disturbing can contribute to understanding better the significance of the messiness, of omissions, silences, and ambiguities in what is considered ordinary, 'normalized' every day practice.

If you are interested in presenting in our colloquium, please send your **300-word abstract until the 12th of September** to judith.purkarthofer@uni-due.de and brigitta.busch@univie.ac.at.

From the general call for papers of Sociolinguistics Symposium 24: Write your abstract in English. The title of your paper should be maximum 15 words. The total word count does not exceed 300 words. It does not include the title of the abstract, the authors, the affiliations. Papers can be in English as well as other languages (provided that slides are available in English).