

Rethinking class in sociolinguistics: Series introduction

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This issue of the *Journal of Sociolinguistics* begins a new theme series on the topic of class. Five issues of the journal in 2019–2020 will each include an article that addresses the question of how to rethink social class from local and intersectional perspectives. It is hoped that the theme series will start fresh discussions on how sociolinguistics as a field conceptualizes class, what cross-disciplinary dialogues on class it needs to enter, and what theoretical and methodological challenges it should embrace to understand class better. (For the previous theme series on the topic of interaction, please see issue 20/3.)

Class, of course, has always been a key concern for sociolinguistics. Class-based variation of speech and classed ways of speaking, for instance, have been key sites for the discipline's theoretical development since its early days. Yet, active discussion and theorization of what exactly is class was generally not on the agenda for sociolinguistics, and for this, sociolinguists have tended to rely on theories of class from adjacent disciplines such as sociology. But do insights from sociolinguistic research have something to contribute to the way class is theorized more generally, and is there a need for sociolinguists to more actively engage in conversations across disciplines to critically reflect how they study class?

The contributions to the theme series jointly present local specificity and intersectionality as prompts for considering this question. Some foreground the locally specific ways in which language figures in the context of class struggles across different societies and communities, such as non-Western, postcolonial contexts undergoing rapid transformation under global capitalism. Others address the intersection of class with other dimensions of social differentiation such as race, gender, or sexuality, where the complex involvement of language in these multiple axes of differentiation offers insights into their mutually constitutive nature. In this issue, Christian Chun sets the stage for the discussion by providing an overview of the concept of class, presenting it as an outcome of multiple interanimating processes of positioning people within historical and material relations.

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