UNIVERSITY OF BERN, SWITZERLAND

FOUR-YEAR, FULLY FUNDED PHD POSITION

Annual salary: CHF 47,000 to CHF 50,000 (rising each year), equivalent to $51,000 to $54,000.

Salary does not include social security payments and income taxes; tuition fees (see below); or private health insurance (mandatory in Switzerland).

Fees: CHF 100 for registration; then CHF 200 per semester (for local and international students).

PhD candidates are employed at 75% with most of their time protected for research, but with 10% devoted to research/admin support for their supervisor. The opportunity to teach will be available over and above the main contract.

Project funding includes travel and accommodation costs for 2 international and 2 regional conferences, as well as nine months of fieldwork.

Support is given with securing any non-EU visa and work permits.

As soon as possible, Professor Crispin Thurlow is seeking someone to undertake a doctoral sub-project as part of his Swiss National Science Foundation project, *Articulating Rubbish: A Sociolinguistic Approach to the "Crisis of Waste"* (2023 to 2027). The project comprises two other doctoral sub-projects, starting 01 May 2023.

We are looking to find a suitably qualified (see next paragraph) motivated person to join our research team. This person would be expected to work within the framework of the main project but may, within reason, tailor the preconceived framework for the sub-project to suit their own expertise, interests, and access networks. Ideally, given visa and work permit paperwork, we would like this person to start as soon as possible after 01 May 2023.

An MA or equivalent degree is mandatory. Ideally this will be in sociolinguistics, discourse studies, or linguistic anthropology. Degrees in cognate fields or fields related to discard studies will also be considered.

THE MAIN PROJECT

Arising from an SNSF-funded pilot study, the *Articulating Rubbish* project will generate a uniquely sociolinguistic approach to this "crisis of waste" by linking (or articulating) language to waste, and vice-versa. The project recognizes that language creates waste through the categorical and performative power of words; this is how words not only define what waste is and isn't, but also help produce, maintain, and regulate the everyday practices of waste-making – both small-scale and large- scale. Unlike other fields in the humanistic social sciences there has, until only very recently (see Thurlow, 2022), been no explicit, dedicated effort made by sociolinguists or other sociocultural linguists to study waste. The Articulating Rubbish project will rectify this oversight by making novel theoretical and empirical contributions to both sociolinguistics and to the interdisciplinary field of discard studies.

The project is organized around four sub-projects addressing four cultural systems or analytic frames: Mediatization (PI Thurlow); Public Space (PhD researcher Pellanda); Domestic Life (PhD researcher Wohlgemuth); and "Elsewhere" (PhD researcher NN). Each sub-project will investigate and document how language is articulated to waste following four major lines of sociolinguistic investigation: (a) the discourses of waste; (b) waste as a communicative resource; (c) the discursive production of value; and (d) the social lives of waste. The first three sub-projects focus on the Swiss context, working through English but collecting data in the major national languages (German, French, Italian); the fourth sub-project provides an essential transnational perspective by focusing on a country in the Global South at the receiving end of European waste.

The project coheres around four core research questions; each sub-project (SP) prioritizes one question but also addresses others. RQ1: How are dominant cultural discourses about waste (in Switzerland) constructed and reproduced in the news media, commerce, and government regulation? RQ2: How does waste management emerge as a geosemiotic practice in public space (in Switzerland)? RQ3: How is value discursively produced in the talk of those people who daily generate domestic waste (in Switzerland)? RQ4: How are social systems (in the Global South) constituted in and around the handling of (Swiss/European) waste; how do people in these places make meaning from their work and lives?

THE SUB-PROJECT

The stark reality of contemporary waste – its production and management – is that it is underwritten by extreme social and economic realities; these inequalities are both local and global. Rich countries in the Global North are typically those responsible for the greatest consumption and therefore the greatest waste production; this is certainly true of Switzerland (Eurostat, 2022a). While Switzerland itself incinerates the majority of its locally produced municipal and domestic waste, it nonetheless exports around 500,000 tonnes of hazardous waste every year (BAFU, Bundesamt für Umwelt, website). Waste is invariably constructed around an out-of-sight and out-of-mind discourse (Barnes, 2019; cf. also Thurlow et al., 2022 in press); as such, there is always a literal but also ideological "elsewhere" in the story of waste, one which is too often located in the Global South.

This is the important transnational perspective offered by the fourth sub-project by focusing on a country in the Global South at the receiving end of European waste. From this distinctive point of view, sub-project 4 will primarily address RQ4 (the social lives of/in waste) but will inherently also address RQ3 (the discursive production of value) by documenting how people living and working in/around waste manage the destruction (by others) of value but also their own attempts at recreating value from waste. In this way, sub-project 4 follows the lead of waste anthropologists like

Reno (2016; also, Nagle, 2014; Giles, 2015) but seeks to make a distinctively (critical) sociolinguist intervention.

Ideally, sub-project 4's main research sites will entail participant observation at landfills/dumpsites or other waste management facilities; fieldwork at the two landfill sites themselves, documenting the social lives and working practices of so-called scavengers, garbage collectors, and truck drivers who live/work there; and the linguistic practices in – and discursive organization of – the trade in retrieved/recyclable items. Fieldwork will ideally be conducted over a period of nine months: four months in Phases III and IV of the main project (May-Dec 2024), with a possible one-month follow-up in Phase VI.

The sub-project's main data points will be (a) written field notes and photographic documentation made during participant observation; (b) recorded interviews with key stakeholders and residents/workers; and (c) an archive of textual data such as websites and publicity, meeting minutes, posters, mission statements, and teaching or training resources. These ethnographic and discursive materials will possibly be analyzed following the principles and practices of critical sociolinguistics (Heller, Pietikäinen & Pujolar, 2018) and linguistic ethnography (Copland & Creese, 2015; Tusting, 2019); this can entail (critical) discourse analysis, interactional sociolinguistics, and the use of fieldnotes as evidence (see Papen, 2020).

Some of the main analytical foci will likely include: (i) the lexicalization, categorization and performative enactment of waste; (ii) modality and stancetaking in discursive processes of valuation/evaluation (cf. Du Bois, 2007; Jaffe, 2009; Jaworski & Thurlow, 2009) by charity staff and by residents/workers; (iii) by charity stakeholders, identity positioning (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) and reflexivity in talk; (iv) argumentation and narrative structures around social/technological change (Fairclough, 2003) and the role of philanthropic action; (v) legitimation and de-legitimation in talk (cf. van Leeuwen, 2007), focusing on tactics like moral evaluation, rationalization, and/or mythopoesis; (vi) rhetorics of "moral pollution" and discourses surrounding human/material waste in contemporary Filipino life; (vii) by residents/workers, self- and group- membership categorization (Schegloff, 2007) for documenting people's sense of self and community; (viii) the linguistic representation of waste management processes, and, specifically, discourses of modernization vis-à-vis waste management (e.g., shifts towards more sanitary practices); (ix) the discursive ordering and ranking of waste (e.g., national-ethnolinguistic distinctions between kinds of waste from the West and from elsewhere in Asia) (cf Reno, 2014).

APPLICATION

To apply for this position, please submit the following materials as a single PDF: a cover letter (addressed to Professor Thurlow) explaining your relevant background and interest in the sub-project; a Curriculum Vitae (aka résumé) ; the names and email addresses of two academic referees (no letters needed now); a representative writing sample (e.g., a chapter from your MA thesis or a stand-alone essay/paper). In your cover letter, please explain what your writing sample is and why you have chosen to submit it. Please also explain who your referees are and why you have chosen to ask them for a possible recommendation. Finally, please indicate your realistic/desired start-date and your citizenship. Send the application to Professor Thurlow at crispin.thurlow@unibe.ch as soon as possible. Again, we are hoping this person will start as soon after 01 May 2023 as possible.