



SOAS Linguistics Webinars

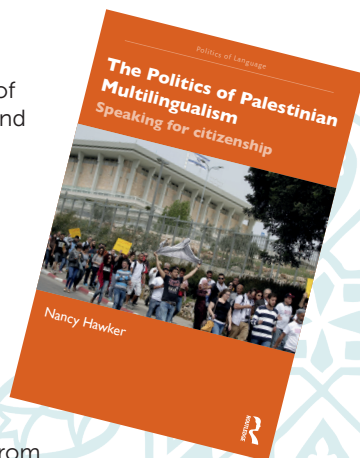
The Biased Leading the Biased: Results of a Survey on Arabic Testimonies of Violence Against Women

Speaker: Dr Nancy Hawker
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Testimonies come in the form of reported speech, presenting both authenticity and authority (Andrews 2014). The analysis of testimonies in terms of dialect and register is productive ground for testing metalinguistic reactions and attitudes within the framework of gender-based and accent-based unconscious bias. To this end, I conducted a language-ideological (or dialect-ideological) experiment in 2017-9. In this webinar I will present the yet-unpublished results.

The survey was disseminated through the Qualtrics service to an anonymous panel of 150 respondents in Kuwait, Palestine and Tunisia. The testimonies used in the experiments were drawn from the report 'Assaulted and Accused: Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Tunisia' (Amnesty International 2015). The reactions to the testimonies ranged from sympathy, solidarity, indifference, distrust and dismissal, to hostility. The reactions were influenced by the delivery of the testimonies in educated spoken Arabic or MSA, in the urban Arabic of Tunis, or in urban Palestinian Arabic. I will argue that mediatization of testimonies is unavoidable, and that there might be good reasons to promote a range of voices in line with human rights organisations' and the discipline of sociolinguistics' ethical principles. Response details will be presented, as well as a reflection on the advantages and limitations of the experimental and survey methods.



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