**Migration, Scale and language ideologies** [working title]

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This panel investigates how people and their linguistic practices get read as intelligible in the context of migration and changing social and environment climates. Work on language ideologies and linguistic differentiation (Gal and Irvine 1995), has shown that how interpretations of similarities and difference in linguistic processes serve to create differences in people, and get reproduced along multiple different scales (Lemke 1990, Wortham 2012). In turn, work on migration has shown how newly arrived populations often get interpolated into preexisting racial hierarchies, such as how new Latinx immigration in the south is often getting molded into, rather than changing, the preexisting black/non-black color line (Marrow 2011). We examine, in this panel, if and how this process unfolds through language, how people and their linguistic practices are created as similar or different, and why (Phillips 2016, Gal 2016a, 2016b).

Lo’s paper looks at how the discourse of academic preparation was applied in different ways to domestic vs. international students at an American university. Domestic students whose grades and test scores were below the average were understood  in the historical context of poverty and discrimination in the US, and their academic performance attributed to systemic patterns of disinvestment relating to colonialism and slavery. Such students benefited from a wealth of services including free tutoring, counseling, cultural support centers, and pre-college academic preparation programs. International students, however, were seen as personally responsible for their poor English. The institution provided some services (like EFL classes) but drew a hard line between “writing support” and “editing”, as tutors at the writing center would point out problematic passages but not “correct” them. Such students’ migration to the US and the differentials between their linguistic competencies and those of domestic students were not understood in relation to British colonialism or American empire, immigration policies, or practices of distinction that produced academic English as a rare and difficult to master linguistic variety. These structural vs. neoliberal explanations relied upon scalar projects that localized language competency as an individual accomplishment.

Berman’s paper looks at ideas of linguistic development, and how they get applied in education to position students as competent or incompetence, on grade level or delayed, as examples of the production of linguistic differences (Gal and Irvine 1990). She focuses on Marshallese migrant students in Arkansas, who speak a non-standard and largely undescribed form of English. Like other nonstandard speakers, their English is often seen as incorrect. It is also, however, seen as underdeveloped, as are the children themselves--teachers use the word “immature”. Such ideologies of linguistic differences thus get applied at various different scales--Marshallese versus non Marshallese, lower levels of English versus high levels, younger children (for whom the mode of speaking may be seen as appropriate) versus older children. In turn, all of these linguistic differences are also naturalized, seen as reflections of children’s inherent nature (chronological age, amount of time in the U.S., inadequate school preparation) as opposed to legitimate and valid linguistic varieties. Finally such ideologies also erase the standard forms of English that the children produce, their relative lack of Marshallese, and the colonial history that created Marshallese English in the first place.