



49. Österreichische Linguistiktagung

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Universität Klagenfurt / Celovec

Sprache und die materielle Kultur der Musik

8. Dezember 2025 | Raum 4

Sprache und die materielle Kultur der Musik

CfP für einen Themenworkshop auf der 49. ÖLT, 05.-08. Dezember 2025, Klagenfurt

Wenn Linguist*innen Musikkultur untersuchen, wird ihre Diskursivität in der Regel (vgl. exemplarisch Bär 2024; Stöckl 2011; Thim-Mabrey 2001) mittels Korpora auf journalistische Textsorten kapriziert. Durch diesen Fokus auf das fertige Musikwerk und dessen medial schriftliche Vermittlung verliert man den Blick für die Praktiken kreativen Handelns, für die Diskursivität ‚im Handgemenge‘, die mehr umfassen als symbolische Objektbezüge von Zeichen (vgl. Peirce 1998 [1894]). Demgegenüber weitet eine posthumanistische (vgl. Pennycook 2017) wie praxeologische (vgl. Spitzmüller et al. 2017) Brennweite den Blick auf Beschreibungen musikalischen Handelns aus einer Subjektposition (vgl. Foucault 1973: 75) der Künstler*in, in der auf die Verkörperung von Musik (vgl. Hiekel & Lessing 2014; Oberhaus & Stange 2017) und die material-agency (vgl. Barad 2012) musikkultureller Gegenstände reflektiert wird.

In unserem interdisziplinären Workshop wollen wir genau diese kommunikativen Praktiken musikalischen sowie musikkulturellen Handelns im Bezug auf die Materialität von Kultur untersuchen. Dabei könnten wir uns folgende Schwerpunkte für die einzelnen Beiträge vorstellen:

- Wie kann der in einer Äußerungssituation vermittelte Erfahrungszusammenhang, in der (musikkulturelle) Dinge agentiell aktiv sind, reflektiert werden?
- Welche philosophischen, soziologischen, anthropologischen Vorannahmen sind für diese Reflexion kommunikativer Praktiken im musikkulturellen Kontext relevant?
- Inwiefern beeinflussen sich Aspekte materieller Agency und konkreter Sprachgebrauch gegenseitig?
- Wie kann diese Interdependenz einer linguistischen Untersuchung zugänglich werden?
- Inwiefern sind Aspekte der materiellen (und auch leiblichen! (vgl. Gallagher 2020)) Agency konstitutiv sowohl für den Sprachgebrauch als auch für kommunikative Praktiken?
- Inwiefern können Theorien einer gebrauchsbasierten kognitiven Linguistik (vgl. zusammenfassend Zima 2021) hier innovatives Interpretationspotential entfalten?
- Und wie kann dabei die Rolle der Medien in ihrer Materialität unter medienlinguistischer Perspektive herausgearbeitet werden?

Ziele unseres Workshops sind die gemeinsame Diskussion folgender Relationen: Zunächst soll die wechselseitige Beziehung zwischen *Sprache und Nicht-Sprache* beleuchtet werden, so wie sie etwa im Posthumanismus (vgl. Braidotti 2013), in den ‚material culture studies‘ (vgl. Samida et al. 2014) und dem New Materialism (vgl. Coole/Frost 2010) reflektiert wird, um durch diese Rückbindung an außersprachliche Materialität Alternativen zum sprachlichen Konstruktivismus auszuloten. Dies wirft auch Fragen zum Verhältnis von *materieller Kultur und Immaterialität* auf, für deren Bearbeitung sich gerade meist nicht mit dem Materiellen in Verbindung gesetzte Kulturphänomene wie Sprache und Musik besonders eignen. Vor dem Hintergrund dieser zwei Humanspezifika lässt sich schließlich der *Zusammenhang zwischen Menschlichem und Nicht-Menschlichem* in Bezug auf deren agentielle Rolle im kreativen und kommunikativen Handeln neu in den Blick nehmen und die Frage stellen: Ermöglicht die Reflexion von Musikkultur unter diesen Vorzeichen einen methodologischen Einfluss auf Fragen der Diskursivität von Kultur insgesamt?

Um der interdisziplinären Bandbreite dieser Fokus und unserer Ziele gerecht zu werden, planen wir für unseren Workshop fünf Beiträge à 20 Minuten + 10 Minuten Diskussion je Vortrag sowie einen begrüßenden Eröffnungsvortrag und eine kurze Abschlussdiskussion bzw. Verabschiedung. Bei Interesse schicken Sie Ihre **150 bis 300 Wörter** langen Abstracts bitte **bis spätestens 30. September** an elschmitt@uni-koblenz.de Bitte achten Sie bei Ihren Literaturangaben auf das [Unified Style Sheet for Linguistics](#).

Language and the Material Culture of Music

Call for Papers – Thematic Workshop at the 49th Austrian Linguistics Conference (ÖLT),
December 5–8, 2025, Klagenfurt (Austria)

When linguists investigate musical culture, its discursive character is usually mostly explicated through the analysis of journalistic texts (see e.g. Bär 2024; Stöckl 2011; Thim-Mabrey 2001). This focus on finished musical works and their mediated representations, however, often obscures the creative practices and discursive dynamics ‘in the making’ beyond symbolic references – that is, language use embedded in and shaped by embodied, material interactions (cf. Peirce 1998 [1894]). In contrast, posthumanist (cf. Pennycook 2017) and praxeological (cf. Spitzmüller et al. 2017) perspectives direct attention to the ways in which musical action is described from what Foucault calls a subject position (cf. Foucault 1973: 75), acknowledging the embodied experience of music (cf. Hiekel & Lessing 2014; Oberhaus & Stange 2017) and the material agency of musical-cultural artefacts (cf. Barad 2012).

This interdisciplinary workshop seeks to explore communicative practices of musical and musico-cultural action in relation to the materiality of culture. Possible topics for contributions include:

- How can we conceptualize the experiential relations communicated in different situations where (musico-cultural) objects play an agentive role?
- Which philosophical, sociological, or anthropological assumptions are relevant for analysing such communicative practices in musical contexts?
- In what ways do material agency and concrete language use interact with one another?
- How can this interdependence be analysed from a linguistic perspective?
- To what extent are material (and bodily! cf. Gallagher 2020) forms of agency constitutive of both language use and communicative practice?
- How might usage-based cognitive linguistic theories (cf. Zima 2021) offer new interpretative frameworks here?
- And how can media, in their material dimensions, be productively addressed from a mediolinguistic perspective?

Our goal is to discuss the following interrelation: First we want to address the relationship of *language and the non-linguistic*, as theorised in posthumanism (cf. Braidotti 2013), material culture studies (cf. Samida et al. 2014), and new materialism (cf. Coole & Frost 2010). These frameworks allow us to reconsider cultural discourse beyond purely constructivist paradigms by grounding it in material and embodied realities. This raises questions about the relationship between *material culture and immaterial phenomena*, making language and

music – often assumed to be disembodied – particularly fruitful objects of study. Based on these two specifically human capacities, we aim to revisit *the interplay between the human and the non-human* in creative and communicative practice and ask: Can reflecting on musical culture in these terms provide methodological insights for understanding cultural discourse more broadly?

To reflect the interdisciplinary scope of our topic and objectives, the workshop will consist of five 20-minute presentations (each followed by 10 minutes for discussion), as well as an introductory keynote and a brief closing discussion.

Please send abstracts of 150 to 300 words by September 30, 2025, to elschmitt@uni-koblenz.de. Submissions should follow the Unified Style Sheet for Linguistics for references and citations. If possible, we prefer the speakers to be physically present, but a digital presentation is of course also possible.

Literatur

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Ablauf

NAME	TITEL	ZEIT
Schmitt & Exner	Sprache und die materielle Kultur der Musik. Eröffnung	09:30
Schmitt	Posthumanist Transformations of Dispositives: Material Agency in Music and Sound	09:35
Giannacchi	The evaluation and discourses of ELECTRIC GUITAR in American and British popular music criticism: a diachronic, corpus-based critical discourse study (1980-2022)	10:05
Exner	Music, Language, Material Culture and the Extended Process of Music-Cultural Articulation	10:35
Tommaso	Replaying the Past: Material Culture and Memory in Women's Fandom Discourse	11:05
Saner	Vulnerability as an Epistemic Mode: Songs as Agents in Arts-Based Teacher Education	11:35
Alle	Ausblick & Schluss	11:40

Posthumanistic Transformations of Dispositives: Material Agency in Music and Sound

Common linguistic approaches to musical discourse have largely focused on the textual mediation of music – reviews, critiques, and other journalistic genres – thus privileging the finished artwork over the material and discursive practices of its creation (Bär 2024; Stöckl 2011; Thim-Mabrey 2001). This presentation proposes a posthumanist reconfiguration of the aesthetic *dispositif* of genius that still seems to dominate the discourse of music and musicianship. Drawing on Foucault's concept of discourse positions – together with his concept of *dispositif* – (vgl. Foucault 1973: 75) and theories of *material agency* (Bennett 2010; Latour 2008), the study explores how human and non-human actors – musicians, instruments, amplifiers, recording technologies – co-constitute aesthetic practice in assemblages of acoustic and haptic interaction.

Through a corpus of multimodal linguistic data drawn from interviews, forums, podcasts, with a special focus on electric guitarists, the project examines how these musicians themselves describe creative processes as materially mediated. Expressions such as “LEUTE, dieser Lautsprecher hat wirklich eine STIMME!” (Manfred439 2014) or descriptions of moments “where the music was making decisions” (Lage 11.10.2024: 00:02:27-00:02:33h) reveal a decentering of human authorship in favour of distributed agency among things. Combining hermeneutic and corpus-linguistic methods, the analysis traces how these utterances transform the cis-male dominated *genius dispositif* into a posthuman assemblage of creative practice.

In this sense the methodological goal of my presentation is to argue that linguistic research on art must move beyond text-centric paradigms to include the material entanglements that shape meaning and agency in cultural production. It thereby contributes to a broader reflection on how discourse, materiality, and technology intertwine in the constitution of contemporary musico-cultural subjectivities.

Used Data

Manfred439 (2014): https://www.thomann.de/de/eminence_cannabis_rex_12_speaker.htm (07.03.2025).
Lage, Julian (25.02.2023): Julian Lage Rig Rundown Guitar Gear Tour (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gUnWYUC5p18&t=15s&ab_channel=PremierGuitar (06.03.2025))

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Gilberto Giannacchi, University of Insubria (Varese/Como, Italy)

The evaluation and discourses of ELECTRIC GUITAR in American and British popular music criticism: a diachronic, corpus-based critical discourse study (1980-2022)

The electric guitar has been a significant cultural icon for popular music in the 20th and 21st century (Dawe 2010). This instrument represented a blend between primitive simplicity and technological advancement, implicitly embodying ‘countercultural desires that hinged upon the transference of racial and sexual identity’ (Waksman 1999: 4). Since the 1960s, the electric guitar has undergone substantial changes in design and sound (see Herbst and Waksman 2024), shaping aesthetic and cultural innovations in contemporary popular music. These developments have been assessed and documented by American and British popular music critics (Lindberg 2005), who create discourses about popular music (in the press) also by evaluating sounds and instruments, including electric guitars and their broad sonic palette. In doing so, these “professional fans” (Frith 1983: 65) can confer cultural legitimacy not only to electric guitars, but also to specific social agents, influencing both the gatekeeping audience and potential consumers. This perspective strongly intersects with (corpus-based) critical discourse studies, whose interests lie in the relationship between language, culture and power, reiterated through large-scale linguistic patterns found in corpora (see Flowerdew and Richardson 2017, Baker 2023). This paper aims to shed light on the idiosyncratic evaluative strategies adopted by “pop” critics to create musical and sociocultural discourses about the electric guitar, an under-investigated topic with a high inter-disciplinary potential. The study will be conducted on a diachronic (1980-2022), specialised corpus of British and American album reviews – a prototypical text genre for pop criticism (Giannacchi 2024, see also Bhatia 2016) – published in music magazines, newspapers and webzines. The corpus will be investigated on the text analysis software AntConc (Anthony 2024) blending evaluation and metaphor studies (Hunston 2011, Fuoli et al. 2023), CADS methods (Baker 2023) and an ethnographic qualitative interpretation of specialised corpora (Flowerdew 2004), influenced by the cultural studies on the music press.

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Music, Language, Material Culture and the Extended Process of Music-Cultural Articulation

What do we do when we articulate ourselves — musically and linguistically? How do these activities intertwine? And what role does the material culture of music play in all of this? In all of this there are complex relations at play, with different practical, qualitative, indexical, and symbolic meanings, all stemming from our interactions with and production of language, music, and material things. My talk will try to provide an account of how musical expression and related cognitive processes are always already interwoven with language (and other kinds of signs) as well as with material objects. The network of music-cultural things and linguistic signs, which is always (either implicitly or explicitly) present in situations of music making, is thus not only thought of as supportive of the cognitive processes but also as constitutive.

I want to argue that the way we use language and artifacts (like instruments, recording equipment, or simply pen and paper to take notes) in music-making activities is part of an extended cognitive process. For this I draw on the work of Andy Clark and David Chalmers (Clark & Chalmers 1998, Clark 2008) but also on recent further developments that try to push this line of thinking into a more pragmatist and enactivist direction (Gallagher 2017, Hutto / Kirchhoff / Myin 2014). When it comes to theorizing the aforementioned acts of linguistic and musical expression, the philosophy of language of Charles Taylor (1985), the philosophical anthropology of Matthias Jung (2009, 2014, 2023) as well as the pragmatic semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce (1894, 1934/1973) will play a key role when it comes to understanding how something felt can develop into an articulate gestalt. With regard to the musical practices themselves, the work of the philosopher Beth Preston, who combined qualitative interviews and philosophical analysis in her 'Philosophy of Material Culture' (2013) as well as the research of ethnomusicologist Harris M. Berger (1997, 1999a, 1999b) will form the backbone of my theoretical reflections.

I hope to show that if we want to understand how we talk about musical works, how we use language in songwriting processes, and which role non-linguistic signs and things play in these

kinds of activities, we have to treat the material, the linguistic and the musical as aspects of one extended process, always already embedded in concrete social situations.

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Laura Tommaso, University of Eastern Piedmont, Italy

Replaying the Past: Material Culture and Memory in Women's Fandom Discourse

Combining corpus linguistics and discourse analysis (Baker 2023), this article examines the language used by American women of the Boomer generation to talk about their musical experiences with rock music in the late 1960s and 1970s. Drawing on their first-hand oral accounts, the analysis focuses on the material dimensions of these remembered practices. Participants regularly reference concrete artefacts—vinyl records, radios, ticket stubs, clothing—as integral to their musical lives. These objects serve not merely as contextual details but as semiotic anchors that mediate and materialise memory and identity (Bennett & Rogers 2019). Ultimately, the paper argues that musical fandom discourse is not only socially and culturally situated, but also materially grounded and shaped through language. By integrating corpus-assisted methods with insights from music-related oral history, the study offers both methodological and theoretical contributions to the analysis of popular culture, memory, and fandom (Tommaso 2025). It highlights the value of combining quantitative and qualitative approaches (Fitzgerald & Timmis 2024) to better understand how materiality and language co-construct remembered musical experience.

Keywords: Corpus-assisted discourse studies; fandom; oral history; musical memory; material culture

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Bionote: Laura Tommaso is Associate Professor of English at University of Eastern Piedmont, Italy, where she is the Coordinator of the BA in Modern Foreign Languages. Her research interests are in the fields of corpus-assisted discourse analysis and critical discourse studies, focusing particularly on the analysis of media discourse. Her recent publications include the volume *Exploring Occupational Discourses and Identities across Genres: Crisis and Well-Being* (2025 - Cambridge Scholars Publishing, co-edited with Marianna Lya Zummo) and the book *Ageing Discourse in the News: A Corpus-Assisted Study* (2023 - Aracne).

Email: laura.tommaso@uniupo.it

Vulnerability as an Epistemic Mode: Songs as Agents in Arts-Based Teacher Education

Philipp Saner

The proposed contribution builds on a line of inquiry that I have conducted over the past years into the material-discursive entanglements of music and meaning. In a recent publication (Saner 2025), experimental musical practice was approached through the theoretical lens of translanguaging, drawing on García and Ortega's (2020) nexus between languaging and musicking and Pennycook's (2017) notion of spatial repertoires. Based on interview data, the chapter explored (trans)musicking as a socio-material practice in which language, sound, gesture, and media are mobilized in relation to instruments, spaces, bodies, and institutional contexts.

Expanding on these insights, my ongoing dissertation project applies songwriting as a participatory arts-based research practice in teacher education. In this study, songs are not treated as data but as epistemic agents that shape pedagogical relations and experiences of learning. As material-discursive artefacts, songs intra-act with bodies and social spaces to perform agential cuts that open possibility spaces for thinking, feeling, and hearing differently.

Theoretically, the project connects to Erinn Gilson's (2013) concept of epistemic vulnerability, reformulated through a posthumanist lens and in dialogue with Barad's (2007) agential realism, as the *ethico-onto-epistemological* condition of transformative arts-based learning. Based on this analysis, the presentation will discuss how an embodied and situated approach of relational listening may expand understandings of musico-cultural discourse, and how this perspective might help to rethink the relationship between language, music, and materiality in posthumanist terms.

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