

# International Linguistic Association

## *Monthly Lecture Series*

**Saturday, May 7, 2022. 11 AM - 12 PM (EST)**

**Dr. Cecilia Magadán**  
*National University of San Martín, Argentina*

### **A (class)room of our own: Towards a multimodal grammar of pedagogical conversation on the WhatsApp messaging platform**

**Abstract:**

“A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction.” This claim for social justice by Virginia Woolf back in 1928 resonated two years ago when many students and teachers in Argentina (and in other parts of the world) found themselves without a physical classroom, and without means to afford digital devices or connectivity. What did they have at hand? They had WhatsApp, the most popular messaging platform that uses the Internet to send text, images, audio and video, already installed in almost all mobile devices in the country. This presentation focuses on the study of school literacy practices during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. It explores the uses of WhatsApp as an *ad-hoc* educational platform adopted by teachers in school communities with little access to technological resources. Based on digital microethnographies, this talk opens a theoretical dialogue between some already classic sociolinguistic and ethnographic studies of face-to-face classroom interaction and the analysis of online pedagogical conversations in mobile platforms, such as WhatsApp. Through a sample of selected online exchanges from different courses, I examine: (a) the dynamics of online conversational exchanges between language teachers and high school students in Argentina in light of sociolinguistic studies about classroom interaction (Cazden, 2017; Heath, 1983; Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz, 2006; van Leeuwen, 2017); and (b) the participants’ redesign of WhatsApp as a classroom setting by means of reassigning new linguistic and pedagogical functions to the feature-set made available by the app. Based on the findings and following a multiliteracies approach (Kress et al, 2021; Serafini & Gee, 2017), I address how online talking/writing (along a continuum of semiotic resources) –understood as a social and situated action– enables a dynamic negotiation of linguistic and social identities. To conclude, I review how these recreated mobile spaces (re)shape not only teacher-student interactions, but also the pedagogy of literacies. And returning to Woolf’s claims of social justice, I discuss the tensions between digital inclusion, sociolinguistic repertoires, and school trajectories, as one of the lessons that the pandemic has unmasked, demanding further review and remediation.

**Date & Time: May 7, 2022. 11:00 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)**

**ZOOM LINK:** <https://bmcc-cuny.zoom.us/j/83448944812>

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**Cecilia Magadán** obtained her Licenciatura and Profesorado (teacher certification) en Letras at the Universidad de Buenos Aires (Argentina). Under a Fulbright scholarship, she received her MS in Linguistics at Georgetown University. She completed her MEd and PhD at Teachers College, Columbia University in International and Comparative Education, with a Language, Literacy and Technology specialization.

Currently, she is a professor at Universidad Nacional de San Martín (UNSAM, Argentina), where she teaches General Linguistics, Grammar, and Multimodal Discourses. Her research projects take an ethnographic approach to multimodality and new literacy practices in educational settings. As a member of the Centro de Estudios del Lenguaje en Sociedad (CELES-UNSAM), she is principal investigator for two sponsored projects by FONCyT (Ministry of Science and Technology): “Multimodal literacies and sociolinguistic repertoires: an ethnographic approach to new reading, writing and oral practices in secondary education classrooms” (PICT-2016-1774) and “Multimodal environments and ubiquitous learning: a research project applied to the development of digital tools for hybrid courses” (PICTO 2017-0004). As a consultant for the National Teacher Training Institute (INFoD, Ministry of Education), she has coordinated the online certification in the language area for in-service teachers nationwide; she has also written and designed online courses and organized workshops for the national educational portal [educ.ar](http://educ.ar).

Professor Magadán is the author and editor of academic books, articles, and materials on the teaching of language that focus on the integration of digital resources in the Language and Literature curriculum, including the volumes *Enseñar lengua y literatura con las TIC* (Cengage, 2014) and *Las palabras y otras cosas: Claves para analizar los discursos multimodales* (forthcoming).