



Report on IGALA5 (2008)

The 5th Biennial International Gender and Language Association Conference (IGALA5) was held at Victoria University of Wellington (VUW) from 3 to 5 July 2008.

A reception hosted by the Wellington City Council on the evening of Wednesday 2 July served to close LabPhon 11 and open IGALA5. The Deputy Mayor Dr Ian McKinnon, who also fortuitously happens to be Pro-Chancellor of VUW, welcomed delegates from all over the world, and spoke with insight and warmth about linguistics and the esteem with which it is held in the University.

The next morning, following a very moving opening which included a Maori karanga, karakia, and waiata, IGALA5 got off to an exciting start with an entertaining, and thought-provoking opening Plenary from Don Kulick (New York University) entitled “Humorless Lesbians”. There followed three days of intense intellectual stimulation and discussion, covering a wide range of gender-related topics. Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard (University of Birmingham) discussed, with powerful illustrations, the topic of “Life styles, the female body and ageism”. Surinderpal Kaur (University of Malaya) passionately described issues of “Gender, Race and Religion in the Politics of Identity in Malaysia”, and the Conference ended with Anne Pauwels’ (University of Western Australia and Birmingham) account of “Men, masculinities and feminist linguistic activism”.

There was a stream of papers labelled “Beyond Binaries”(language use outside the female/male/ heterosexual/ homosexual square), opened by Mani Bruce Mitchell and supported by members of Tiwhanawhana, and another stream on sexual identities opened by Elizabeth Kerekere and Kevin Haunui (also members of Tiwhanawhana).

A wonderful session on Indigenous Languages and Gender was introduced by a moving presentation from Aroha Yates-Smith, with another invited contribution from Jeannette King and Margaret Maclagan and colleagues on Maori women’s role in sound change in te reo. Other symposia and workshops included the areas of socio-phonetics, gender and language teaching, language & gender in African contexts, Conversational Analysis, and a panel on careers for linguists to which the Race Relations Conciliator, Joris de Bres contributed. Papers and posters covered a very wide range of topics from gender stereotypes and ideologies, through gendered speech acts and naming practices to gender presentations in films and soaps. A guest appearance at the book prize reception from gay MP Tim Barnett, who provided some interesting comments on PC language, was well received

The dinner at the Brewery on the Wellington waterfront was a highlight and the winner of the poster prize, Michal Jahns, was identified between courses!. The competition was very strong and he was delighted to be selected. Finally, on Saturday night some Conference delegates went to the rugby (All Blacks vs Springboks), some to the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra



Concert, and most to the organised bus trip out to the New Dowse Art Gallery, funded by the Mayor of Lower Hutt, David Ogden, where an exhibition on inter-sexed people, *Assume Nothing*, provided a fitting close to a conference with sexuality and gender as central themes.

Overall, the IGALA5 provided a great opportunity for new and experienced researchers worldwide working in the fields of language, gender and sexuality to present their work and share ideas in a positive and intellectually exciting environment.

Photos on the website soon: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/igala5>

Janet Holmes
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