Robust and Fragile: Shaftesbury on Enthusiasm and the Question of Vulnerability and Literature

Shaftesbury’s *Letter concerning Enthusiasm*, first published in 1708, is an integral part of a primarily British debate on enthusiasm in the wake of a century of religious extremism in which the Anglican church established itself as public religion while since the Toleration Act different forms of worship were eventually accepted or tolerated in British society. I would like to suggest that this order of experience in which the fragile and the robust were aligned through the assumption that exposure of fragility to ridicule can induce stability is an essential part of the modern understanding of literature. Literariness makes invisible and protects certain aggressive speech acts and makes them accepted. I will be working on this project only next year, so my presentation will outline more questions than results.

Index Play: Address Pronouns in L2 German Classroom Discourse

The relationship between language and social context is complex, and one concept that has been used to map its details is indexicality. Address pronouns in German, for example, can index various social aspects of a given. It is not surprising that second and foreign language students take a long time to learn these intricate sociopragmatic relationships beyond a rule of thumb. This presentation reports on a small project investigating how address pronouns are constructed as indexes by students in a 6th semester German course during whole class activities.

Discourse excerpts from classroom video data show that participants’ use of address pronouns solidly reflects the rule of thumb in everyday student-teacher interaction. However, there is also evidence that in sequences of role play and reflection, students struggle with address pronouns and begin to make use of nonverbal strategies and playful experimentation. They arrive at locally shared indexical meanings which do not always reflect German (or English) usage conventions, but which represent what Claire Kramsch calls “symbolic competence”: the ability to experiment with and reflect on symbolic representation in both languages and create contextualized meaning on one’s own terms.