

**Magdalena Formanowicz** is currently an assistant professor at the Center for Research on Social Relations, SWPS University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Warsaw, she worked previously in the University of Bern in Switzerland and in the University of Surrey in the United Kingdom.

Her research focuses on social cognition and language and relies on a multimethod approach that incorporates experimental studies and analyses of large textual data to investigate language pertinent to discrimination and intergroup relations. She is also interested in dehumanization and agency.



### **Social Grammar Model – How Verbs Change the Wor(l)d**

*Yes, we can!* is the most famous political slogan of our times, a slogan that propelled many people into action in favour of then prospective president Barack Obama. Interestingly, the politician and his advisors chose the slogan implying that change can happen (with the use of verb *can*), rather than a phrase employing an adjective such as *Change is possible*. Similarly, advertising slogans such as *Just do it* often use verbs to persuade people into buying decisions or pro-health choices. In this talk, I will introduce a Social Grammar Model (SGM) that attempts to explain such triggering role of verbs. The basic assumption of SGM is that verbs (as opposed to adjectives and nouns) are a linguistic category that conveys social information above and beyond the specific semantic content and that these meta-semantic effects influence people's cognitive processes and behaviours. In particular, verbs imply dynamic properties that other grammatical categories lack, making them the preferred syntactic device to convey activity—and by extension— also social agency, a basic dimension of human perception that is related to goal achievement. I will review the results of experiments using pseudo and real words,

psycholinguistic studies, and textual analyses (of over 200 billion words corpora, Facebook posts, blogs, tweets, and crowdfunding campaigns) supporting the relationship between verbs and agency. Furthermore, I will discuss practical applications of the model in the field of communication and persuasion. Examining the role of linguistic cues in the processing, interpretation, and expression of psychological phenomena opens an important route toward understanding the subtle, yet powerful, role of linguistic cues in processing and constructing social reality. This knowledge may inform future research regarding the role of language in sustaining existing social arrangements but also in achieving social change.

Where: AULETTA DPSS 1 (via Venezia 8, ground floor), DPSS, University of Padova  
and: <https://unipd.zoom.us/j/8495537108>

When: 13/09/2022 12.00 pm