Taboo concepts and where to find them
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Sexuality is one of the most generalized taboos throughout the world. From a linguistic point of view, speaking about sexuality is subject to restrictions about what can be said and how to say it, but these restrictions vary considerably between and within social groups. Gender, age, education, ideology, religiosity, or communicative situation, among others, are factors that are worth considering when studying taboos in discourse, because they are strongly related to certain expressions rather than others. This is so because our social environment and experiences shape the way we conceptualize sexuality, so that speakers with similar social identities show patterns in how they understand and behave towards sexual taboo concepts. In order to study how different social groups express sexual concepts, what aspects of their identities are relevant for that variation and which social meanings are performed through sexual expressions, a careful sociolinguistic analysis is needed.

In this talk, we will discuss how to efficiently collect sexual concepts in spoken and written online discourse, how to analyse the semantic variation of sexual concepts, and we will exemplify our methods with several studies from Peninsular Spanish. We will defend that taboo, often relegated to the periphery of language studies, is extremely revealing for (socio)linguistics, and should therefore be promoted to a central position—a change that is progressively happening in very recent years.