

Call for papers

Identity Construction and English(es) from the Margins

28–29 May 2026

University of Lorraine (Metz, France)

“[A]mong the many symbolic resources available for the cultural production of identity, language is the most flexible and persuasive” (Bucholtz & Hall 2004: 369). From employing certain phonetic features to index alignment with a particular social group, to assembling discourse in a personal narrative that signals allegiance to a given community, via the use of specific words to set oneself apart from others (among an infinite myriad of other examples), language sits at the heart of the performance, (re)production, and contestation of our social identities, both individual and collective.

In the current configuration of the global sociolinguistic climate, English might be considered as having a special role in this cultural production of identity, used as it is in an almost infinite diversity of situations by an almost infinite diversity of speakers across the planet. Whether it be as a first language, an additional language, a component of monolingualism or multilingualism, a national language, an official language, a global lingua franca in a seemingly endless range of domains, English is a language that, for better or for worse, finds itself deeply intertwined in dynamics relating to local, national and global identities around the world today. It is both a language of domination, a tool for imposing the identities of power, and a language of resistance, a medium of expression for marginalised voices.

It is this final point that this interdisciplinary conference aims to explore: the specific role(s) of English(es) in the elaboration, expression and preservation of social identities among individuals or groups situated on what might be termed the “margins” or the “peripheries”. Drawing upon the widely-used spatial metaphor that “refers to the unequal distribution of power in economy, society and polity, stressing the domination/dependency relations between different regions of the world” (Vanolo 2010: 30), the objective of this conference is to centralise the discourses and language practices of marginalised populations. How do marginalised groups and individuals

make use of English(es) in establishing, sharing, strengthening and protecting their individual and/or collective identities? In what way do linguistic specificities within English(es) contribute to the emergence of phenomena of sameness and/or difference in these contexts? How is English used as a linguistic tool when it comes to affirming marginalised identities and/or resisting those of a dominating centre?

We take marginalisation to refer to, on one hand, the multiple processes by which groups and/or individuals are excluded from meaningful participation in social, economic, political and cultural life and, on the other hand, symbolic processes in which certain behaviour or practices come to be labelled as “marginal”, “perceived by others as deviating from what is perceived to be the ‘norm’” (Messiou 2012: 11), thus affecting behaviour towards individuals or groups partaking in such behaviour or practices. In both cases, marginalised individuals and groups find themselves doted with inferior cultural capital compared with those that constitute the “centre”, the practices and behaviours of this latter group coming to form the norms and standards against which anything else will be perceived as deviant, a potential object of marginalisation and/or discrimination. As bell hooks (1984: i) observes, most of those on the margin must align with these central norms/standards as well as engaging in so-called “peripheral” practices that allow for cultural identity production on the margins.

The objective of the *Identity Construction and English(es) from the Margins* conference is to propose a focus on the English language as a means of investigating these “peripheral” practices, the relationships and tension between these practices and “central” norms and standards, and the ways in which social actors navigate between centre and margin, core and periphery, in processes of cultural identity construction. Our approach to this objective is resolutely intersectional. Indeed, much previous research has shown how language is deeply intertwined with processes of marginalisation and identity construction in relation to gender (see Jones 2016, Motschenbacher, H., & Stegu, M. 2013), sexuality (see Angouri & Baxter 2021), race (e.g. Rosa 2019) and/or ethnicity (see Fishman & Garcia 2010), disability (e.g. Galvin 2003, Grue 2015), neurodivergence (e.g. Rebecchi 2025), social class (see Snell 2014), among many other parameters. This conference aims to add to this body of work by exploring the role(s) of English-language discourse(s) and/or specific English language practices in these different processes,

whether it be in relation to one of the above parameters, other parameters, or the ways in which different parameters intersect (e.g. Levon & Mendes 2016, Block & Corona 2016).

This intersectional approach is accompanied by an interdisciplinary ambition. While the focus of the conference remains on English language and discourse, thus appealing to (socio)linguists, discourse analysts and those working in related fields, we hope to also bring together researchers specialising in literature, gender/queer studies, cultural studies, Black studies, sociology, anthropology, history, information science, to name but a few fields. As such, we welcome propositions dealing with a wide variety of media and/or types of discourse and language practices. By way of example, these could include audio and/or video recordings, ethnographic studies, extracts from “traditional” media (film, TV, press, etc.) and/or “new” media (social networks, forums, applications, etc.), different forms of political discourse (speeches, pancarts, slogans, pamphlets, etc.), various manifestations of artistic expression (poetry, music, performance art, etc.), literature (either originally written in English or translated), educational material, semiotic analyses of non-textual media (colour, clothing, emojis, etc.) or corporal movement (sign language(s), gesture, drag performances, dance, etc.), etc. These lists of fields of study and of possible objects of study are not to be perceived as exhaustive, but rather as a small sample of the domains and media that we hope to explore during the conference.

Questions which we might hope to explore during the conference (as well as those set out above) could include, but are in no way limited to:

- How do specific recurring patterns relate to expressions of belonging to one or more communities? How might these patterns be identified? “Patterns” may be taken to include linguistic markers, phonetic features, discursive strategies, interactional or pragmatic phenomena, etc.
- How is the expression of identity realised as a political and subversive enunciative choice? What is at stake for the visibility of minorities?
- How do linguistic and/or discursive constructions of identity vary across time and space? What similarities or differences can be observed across different communities, geographical areas, generations, contexts, etc.?
- How does English’s status as a global lingua franca play into identity construction in/from the margins? How does it relate to other languages in these contexts?

- How is English implicated in the creation of labels and binaries? Or in questioning these categorisations and/or reclaiming fluidity?
- What are the roles of language and discourse when it comes to individuals and/or communities navigating between peripheries and centres?
- From a linguistic and/or discursive perspective, how do stereotypical representations of identities compare with their performances by the individuals/groups concerned?
- Can English be considered as having a special role when it comes to identity construction? How? Why?
- What is the role of English(es) in processes of marginalisation and/or in fighting these processes? How does English come to be a language of domination and/or of resistance?

Practical Details

Proposals for papers, limited to 300 words, should be submitted in an anonymous file and include:

- the research context and/or a brief overview of the current state of the art;
- the methodology used;
- the results, if applicable;
- key bibliographical references (not included in the 300 words).

Please add a short bio-bibliographical note in a separate file.

The conference languages are English and French.

Schedule

- Proposals must be submitted on the Sciencesconf platform before 18/12/25.
- Notification of acceptance: 16/02/26.

For any queries, please contact camille.ternisien@univ-lorraine.fr and/or adam.wilson@univ-lorraine.fr

Organising Committee

Camille Ternisien (Université de Lorraine, IDEA)

Adam Wilson (Université de Lorraine, IDEA)

Catherine Chauvin (Université de Lorraine, IDEA)

Marie Flesch (Université de Lorraine, ATILF)

Isabelle Gaudy-Campbell (Université de Lorraine, IDEA)

Lindsey Paek (Université de Lorraine, ATILF)

Héloïse Parent (Université de Lorraine, IDEA)

Scientific Committee

Maëlle Amand (Université de Limoges)

Célia Atzeni (Université Sorbonne Nouvelle)

Marc-Philippe Brunet (Université Savoie Mont Blanc)

Catherine Chauvin (Université de Lorraine)

Florent Chevalier (Nantes Université)

Christophe Coupé-Jamet (CY Cergy Paris Université)

Ian Cushing (Manchester Metropolitan University)

Solenn Delannoye (Université Sorbonne Nouvelle)

Sarah Feustle (Université Paris Nanterre)

Marie Flesch (Université de Lorraine)

Isabelle Gaudy-Campbell (Université de Lorraine)

Laura Goudet (IUF, Université de Rouen Normandie)

Olivier Glain (Université Jean Monnet Saint-Etienne)

Katy Highet (University of the West of Scotland)

Morana Lukač (University of Groningen)

Philippe Millot (Université Lumière Lyon 2)

Grégory Miras (Université de Lorraine)

June Misset (Université de Strasbourg)

Clara Molina Avila (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid)

Lindsey Paek (Université de Lorraine)

Héloïse Parent (Université de Lorraine)
Kevin Petit (Université Clermont Auvergne)
Linda Pillière (Aix-Marseille Université)
Jean Paul Rocchi (Université Gustave Eiffel)
Sandrine Sorlin (Université Paul Valéry Montpellier)
Camille Ternisien (Université de Lorraine)
Cécile Viollain (Université Paris Nanterre)
Adam Wilson (Université de Lorraine)
Séverine Wozniak (Université Lumière Lyon 2)

Indicative Bibliography

- Andrucki, M. J., & Dickinson, J. (2015). Rethinking centers and margins in geography: Bodies, life course, and the performance of transnational space. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 105(1), 203-218.
- Austen, J. M. (2014). *Questioning" questioning" as a sexual identity and label: An interpretive phenomenological analysis*. East Carolina University.
- Bamberg, M., De Fina, A., & Schiffrin, D. (2011). Discourse and identity construction. In *Handbook of identity theory and research* (pp. 177-199). New York, NY: Springer New York.
- Baxter, J., & Angouri, J. (2021). *The Routledge handbook of language, gender, and sexuality*. Londra: Routledge.
- Blackledge, A., & Pavlenko, A. (2001). Negotiation of identities in multilingual contexts. *International journal of bilingualism*, 5(3), 243-257.
- Block, D., & Corona, V. (2016). Intersectionality in language and identity research. In *The Routledge handbook of language and identity* (pp. 507-522). Routledge.
- Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2004). Language and identity. *A companion to linguistic anthropology*, 1, 369-394.
- Cho, S., Crenshaw, K. W., & McCall, L. (2013). Toward a field of intersectionality studies: Theory, applications, and praxis. *Signs: Journal of women in culture and society*, 38(4), 785-810.
- Colla, E. (2013). In praise of insult: Slogan genres, slogan repertoires and innovation. *Review of Middle East Studies*, 47(1), 37-48.

Conlin, S. E., & Heesacker, M. (2018). The association between feminist self-labeling and gender equality activism: Exploring the effects of scale language and identity priming. *Current Psychology*, 37(1), 334-342.

Crenshaw, K.W. (2013). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. In *Feminist legal theories* (pp. 23-51). Routledge.

Crenshaw, K. W. (2013). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. In *The public nature of private violence* (pp. 93-118). Routledge.

Dougherty, C. (2017). Drag performance and femininity: Redefining drag culture through identity performance of transgender women drag queens.

Eckert, P. (2014). The problem with binaries: Coding for gender and sexuality. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 8(11), 529-535.

Eisenberg, M., Gower, A., Brown, C., Wood, B., & Porta, C. (2017). "They want to put a label on it:" patterns and interpretations of sexual orientation and gender identity labels among adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 60(2), S27-S28.

Fishman, J. A., & García, O. (Eds.). (2010). *Handbook of language & ethnic identity* (Vol. 1). Oxford University Press.

Galvin, R. (2003). The making of the disabled identity: A linguistic analysis of marginalisation. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 23(2).

Gaudio, R. P. (1994). Sounding gay: Pitch properties in the speech of gay and straight men. *American speech*, 69(1), 30-57.

Geist, C., Reynolds, M. M., & Gaytán, M. S. (2017). Unfinished business: Disentangling sex, gender, and sexuality in sociological research on gender stratification. *Sociology Compass*, 11(4), e12470.

Greco, L. (2012). Production, circulation and deconstruction of gender norms in LGBTQ speech practices. *Discourse Studies*, 14(5), 567-585.

Grue, J. (2016). *Disability and discourse analysis*. Routledge.

Harvey, K. (2002). Camp talk and citationality: a queer take on 'authentic' and 'represented' utterance. *Journal of pragmatics*, 34(9), 1145-1165.

hooks, b. (2000). *Feminist theory: From margin to center*. Pluto press.

hooks, b. (1989). Choosing the margin as a space of radical openness. *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, (36), 15-23.

Janz, L., & Conolly, J. (2019). Margins of the centre or critical peripheries?. *World Archaeology*, 51(3), 347-354.

Jones, L. (2016). Language and gender identities. In *The Routledge handbook of language and identity* (pp. 210-224). Routledge.

Kaminski, E., & Taylor, V. (2008). 'We're not just lip-synching up here': Music and Collective Identity in Drag Performances. *Identity work in social movements*, 47-76.

Kerswill, P. (2013). Identity, ethnicity and place: the construction of youth language in London. *Space in language and linguistics: Geographical, interactional, and cognitive perspectives*, 24, 128-164.

Kiesling, S. F. (1997). From the 'margins' to the 'mainstream': gender identity and fraternity men's discourse. *Women and Language*, 20(1), 13-18.

Kroon, S., & Swanenberg, J. (2018). *Language and culture on the margins: Global/local interactions* (p. 242). Taylor & Francis.

Lanehart, S. L. (1996). The language of identity. *Journal of English Linguistics*, 24(4), 322-331.

Leap, W. L. (2013). Commentary II: Queering language and normativity. *Discourse & Society*, 24(5), 643-648.

Levon, E. (2015). Integrating intersectionality in language, gender, and sexuality research. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 9(7), 295-308.

Levon, E., & Mendes, R. B. (Eds.). (2016). *Language, sexuality, and power: Studies in intersectional sociolinguistics*. Oxford University Press.

Mangad, J. V., Gaston, R. H., & Ulla, M. B. (2024). Examining the rhetorical landscape of political campaign slogans in the Philippines: a rhetorical-semantic analysis. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 11(1), 2417510.

McConnell-Ginet, S. (2003). "What's in a name?" Social labeling and gender practices. *The handbook of language and gender*, 69-97.

Messiou, K. (2012). Collaborating with children in exploring marginalisation: An approach to inclusive education. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 16(12), 1311-1322.

Motschenbacher, H., & Stegu, M. (2013). Queer Linguistic approaches to discourse. *Discourse & Society*, 24(5), 519-535.

Mowat, J. G. (2015). Towards a new conceptualisation of marginalisation. *European Educational Research Journal*, 14(5), 454-476.

Nasrollahi Shahri, M. N. (2018). Constructing a voice in English as a foreign language: Identity and engagement. *Tesol Quarterly*, 52(1), 85-109.

Norton, B., & Toohey, K. (2011). Identity, language learning, and social change. *Language teaching*, 44(4), 412-446.

Ogbu, J. U. (1999). Beyond language: Ebonics, proper English, and identity in a Black-American speech community. *American Educational Research Journal*, 36(2), 147-184.

Olaniyan, T. (2017). African-American critical discourse and the invention of cultural identities. *African American Review*, 50(4), 877-889.

Rebecchi, K. (2025). Exploring the pragmatics of autistic language: Unique functions, neurobiological influences, power dynamics and sociolinguistic challenges. *International Review of Pragmatics*, 17(1), 153-164.

Rosa, J. (2019). *Looking like a language, sounding like a race: Raciolinguistic ideologies and the learning of Latinidad*. Oxford University Press.

Seidhofer, B. (2005). *English as a lingua franca*. Oxford.

Snell, J. (2014). Social class and language. *Handbook of pragmatics*, 18, 1-24. John Benjamins.

Vanolo, A. (2010). The border between core and periphery: Geographical representations of the world system. *Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie*, 101(1), 26-36.

Wright, M. M. (2004). *Becoming black: Creating identity in the African diaspora*. Duke University Press.

Zimman, L. (2017). Gender as stylistic bricolage: Transmasculine voices and the relationship between fundamental frequency and/s. *Language in Society*, 46(3), 339-370.