

15th GEM&L International Conference on Management & Language

**University of Passau, Germany
19-21 May 2022**

Call for Papers

The multiple facets of language in international organizations: New directions for research

As we look forward to getting back to face-to-face exchanges, GEM&L is pleased to invite the language-sensitive research community to reflect on the current state of research on language in international organizations and share new ways of moving the field forward. As language-related international business research (IB) and organizational studies (OS) have become increasingly multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and multi-paradigmatic (Mughan, 2015; Brannen et al., 2017; Horn et al., 2020), there are boundless opportunities for cross-pollination between scholars of fields as diverse as sociolinguistics, intercultural communication, translation studies, anthropology, OS and IB. Consequently, our Call for Papers this year is divided into eight interconnected tracks that reflect a panorama of language-related themes embraced by our community, rather than focusing on a particular theme. These tracks, as well as an open track, are described below.

Advancing research on language policies and practices

Track 1: Corporate language policies and power

The use of a lingua franca has been linked to power dynamics in organizations (Harzing & Pudelko, 2014; Wilmot, 2017). While corporate language policies can have a democratizing effect (Steyaert et al., 2011), they also create disparities as proficient speakers enjoy greater status and access to power (Peltokorpi & Vaara, 2017; Horn et al., 2020). To address power issues, language-sensitive scholars are exploring alternate practices such as language policies which allow for a degree of flexibility (Vulchanov, 2020). Driving this research, we find questions such as:

- How can companies avoid losing the valuable input of their less fluent employees?
- What is the link between language practices and gender?
- How is the Covid-19 crisis affecting power asymmetries between those who have a command of the discourse and those who are left “in the shadows”? (see Piekkari et al., 2020)

Track 2: Innovative translation practices

The “untranslatability” of meaning, practices and knowledge often poses a problem when people of diverse backgrounds work together (Chidlow et al., 2014). Recently, there has been a shift from a focus on problems of mutual understanding to a focus on innovative approaches that bridge the divide between groups (Barmeyer et al., 2021). Among such approaches we find translanguaging (Barner-Rasmussen & Langinier, 2020), the use of a multilingual franca (Janssens & Steyaert, 2014), hybrid language use (Gaibrois, 2018) or simultaneous interpreting (Barmeyer et al., 2021). Complex language environments such as Belgium, Switzerland, (Yanaprasart, 2015) or Italy constitute valuable research contexts in which to advance our understanding of multilinguality in organizations. Among the questions worthy of investigation, we find:

- How do organizations located in complex multilingual environments deal with multilinguality and translation?
- What role can multicultural team members play in the “translation” of practices?
- What impact do minority languages have on organizational behaviour, communication and dynamics?

Advancing research on language, identity and diversity

Track 3: Language, diversity and postcolonial issues

The interplay of language and identity is more complex than that traditionally portrayed in the cross-cultural management literature which has tended to focus on cultural differences (Kassis-Henderson et al., 2018). Emphasis on language and culture as contextually situated (Johansson & Sliwa, 2016) points to a more constructive approach where language is viewed as social practice emerging in interactions (Karhunen et al., 2018). The multiple layers of identity of self and other(s) at play in interaction (Yagi and Kleinberg, 2011) impact cross-cultural processes positively when language is considered to be a resource rather than a barrier.

English as a lingua franca, perceived through a postcolonial lens as ‘Englishization’ (Wilmot and Tietze 2020), is contested and resisted by the use of local languages (Boussebaa et al., 2014) in practices such as code-switching, which, together with translanguaging or hybrid language use among individuals with varied multilingual repertoires, are a means of emancipation and empowerment (Langinier & Ehrhart, 2020; Gaibrois & Nentwich, 2020).

Several questions emerge as important:

- If using a particular language - or languages - activates cultural cues leading to culturally appropriate behaviors, what factors enable this process?
- How do individuals understand and negotiate the multiple variety of codes, modes, genres, register and discourses that they encounter in professional life?
- How do the macro (societal) context and the meso (organizational) level contribute to the interplay between identities and corresponding attitudes toward language and its/ use?

Advancing research on language and company operations

Track 4: Language use and creativity / innovation

Inclusive language use can positively influence creativity in organizations (Lauring & Klitmøller, 2017). Dotan-Eliasz (2009) has shown the negative effect of linguistic ostracism on creative performance, for example, while Cohen and Kassis-Henderson (2012), Vigier and Spencer-Oatey (2018) and Tenzer and Pudelko (2020) have pointed to the link between language diversity, team processes and innovation. According to Piekkari et al. (2020), translators can be seen as “creative agents” who actively form and transform contents. Future research could address the following questions:

- How might inclusive language influence organizational creativity?
- What can companies learn from research on translators as “creative agents”?
- Going beyond the effects of language diversity on team processes, e.g., power, social identity, emotions, trust, and knowledge sharing, how might language diversity in teams impact innovativeness?

Track 5: Language practices and issues in SMEs

Most studies address language issues in large MNCs; however, little is known about the way language is used in small and medium-sized companies (Knowles et al., 2006; Wilmot, 2017). Due to global mobility, “localized” small companies (such as *Mittelstand*) have become increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse. Start-ups offer the occasion to observe small units that deal with other cultures and languages. Finally, born global companies provide a promising research context as they are characterized by early internationalization and often operate in different linguistic environments. Research on language practices in SMEs could pursue questions such as:

- How do SMEs deal with language in comparison to large MNEs?
- Which challenges do SMEs, start-ups and born global companies face with regard to language? What solutions are being developed?
- How is language related to organizational growth and development in SMEs?

Track 6: Language, technology and digital media

Another promising research avenue is to study the interrelationships between language, digital media and new technologies such as big data (Brannen & Mughan, 2017). Digital platforms and social networks are transforming the globalized workplace, and thus, language practices at work (Ghauri et al., 2021; Louhiala-Salminen & Rogerson-Revell, 2010). One strand of research has investigated the impact of media choice on cross-border (virtual) teamwork (Klitmøller, Schneider, & Jonsen, 2015), but the focus is rather on the exploration of barriers (Peltokorpi, 2015; Tenzer & Pudelko, 2016) than on enablers. Therefore, research may explore the following questions:

- How are new technologies influencing and transforming language use in organizations?
- What role does media choice play in the performance of cross-border (virtual) teams?
- How are digital platforms facilitating cross-border communication?

Advancing the field through innovative research methods and new avenues of exploration

Track 7: Methods in language-sensitive organizational and international business research

International and cross-cultural research requires language-sensitive approaches and methodologies (Chidlow et al., 2014; Karhunen et al., 2018). For example, experimental research designs provide alternative explanations for causal relationships compared with surveys and case studies (Fan & Harzing, 2020). Other approaches include engaging with translation in multilingual workplaces and reflexivity in qualitative studies (Horn et al., 2020; Tietze, 2021). Possible questions to address include:

- How could the use of mixed samples, mixed designs, vignettes, and naturally occurring events help break new ground in language research?
- How might researchers benefit from analyzing the translation process in written accounts?
- Using the concept of reflexivity, how might studies on language and social interactions at the micro-level better capture what is occurring in the social and linguistic ‘black box’?

Track 8: Open Track / Diverse

As language permeates every facet of organizational life and international business, language-sensitive scholars are broadening the scope of their research. Thus we welcome papers which focus not only on the themes described above, but also on issues as diverse as gender roles, strategy, sustainable development, healthcare management and employee well-being.

We hope that this multi-track approach will inspire our community of scholars, PhD students, and interested practitioners to submit their conceptual, empirical and methodological papers to GEM&L’s 15th International Conference on Management and Language. We especially look forward to seeing everyone in person again.

Review Board

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Instructions & deadlines

The short paper should indicate the key theoretical, methodological and empirical questions addressed in the paper, the conceptual field(s) informing the paper, if applicable the data set used in the paper and the major theoretical and empirical contributions of the paper. All submissions must be original and should not have been previously accepted for publication.

General instructions:

- Length of short paper: between 3000 and 4000 words, excluding references.
- Abstract (around 10 lines) to be included in the final programme, with 8 – 10 keywords.

Formatting guidelines:

- First page with author's name, affiliation, e-mail and postal address.
- Text of the proposal: in .doc(x), anonymous, justified, 2.5 cm margins throughout.
- Title: Times New Roman, bold, size 16.
- Other titles: Times New Roman, bold, size 12.
- Text: Times New Roman, size 12.

Format for references:

Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to Do Things with Words*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Steyaert, C., Ostendorp, A. & Gaibrois, C. (2011). Multilingual organizations as 'linguascapes': Negotiating the position of English through discursive practices. *Journal of World Business*, 46(3), 270-278.

Submission deadline:

Proposals in French or in English in Word format to be uploaded on the GEM&L website, www.geml.eu by **17 January 2022**

All submissions will be subjected to a double blind competitive review process on the basis of originality, rigor and relevance. No author information or other identifying information should appear anywhere in the submission.

Please note that the conference will host a doctoral session, which will offer PhD students the possibility of discussing their doctoral thesis project with research fellows and prominent senior

scholars in this field of research. The review process of PhD students' papers is subjected to the same rules as for regular papers.

All authors will be informed about the outcome of the review process no later than **26 March 2022**.

At least one author of each paper must register for the workshop and present the paper. A final paper is not required before the conference.

Awards

- Awards will be presented for the best conference paper and the best reviewer.
- Nigel Holden Prize: **We have the pleasure to announce that a Nigel Holden Prize will be awarded** for the best doctoral thesis project submitted in 2022. In addition to the criteria mentioned above (originality, rigor and relevance), the Nigel Holden prize will take into consideration the use of sources in other languages than English.

Schedule:

Short paper: 17 January 2022

Notice of acceptance: 26 March 2022

GEM&L Workshop: 19-21 May 2022

For any information concerning the conference, please contact: scientifique@geml.eu

Early bird registration deadline : 1 April 2022

For registration information go to: www.geml.eu

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