



Language : New Productions and New Perspectives from Antiquity to the Present Day

The conference will take place on October 22/24, 2025, at Université Jean Monnet, Saint-Étienne, France.

The conference will take place from October 22 to 24, 2025, at Université Jean Monnet, in Saint-Étienne. The junior laboratory GRAPHÉ (Research Group on Philological and Human Action through an Epistemological Prism) was founded at Université Jean Monnet in Saint-Étienne in 2024. It aims at conducting an incipient, interdisciplinary study of the ways in which languages influence and are influenced by human actions. After an initial symposium in October 2024 dedicated to the interpenetration of language and politics, we now wish to organize a conference focusing on language in all its newest forms, by confronting it with the latest analytical prisms and methods of study. Language, whether verbal, visual, or multimodal, has been the foundation of human interactions since Antiquity. In a context marked by rapidly transforming communication tools and the globalization of exchanges, new forms of language are emerging, redefining the ways we interpret, transmit, and manipulate meaning. Such modifications are deeply diachronic and deserve to be studied. This conference thus proposes to explore the linguistic, political, cultural and social stakes of these evolutions, especially as the last few decades have seen the emergence of unprecedented forms of expression, such as GIFs, emojis, and deepfakes. These multimedia tools, very much like comics or ancient and contemporary graffiti, push the traditional boundaries of language by combining text, image, and even movement, raising a variety of questions:

- How do these new forms of language redefine grammar and linguistic conventions?
- How do they impact social, diplomatic, and political practices, in which communication plays a crucial role?
- What new interpretative issues arise in transcultural contexts?

Linguistic evolutions have also caused the emergence of new branches of study. Pragmatics, for example, focuses on the contextual use of language and the weight of the implicit. Other disciplines, such as digital sociolinguistics, explore the impact of technologies on linguistic practices. In this regard:

- How do modern tools influence the way language is analyzed and theorized?
- What new epistemological hypotheses do these approaches create?

Suggestion, through figures of speech such as euphemisms, insinuations, or silence, also constitutes a powerful form of indirect communication, as can be observed in literary

productions all through History. In politics and diplomacy, these linguistic strategies often serve to divert attention or convey implicit messages, begging the following questions:

- How does suggestion work, especially in a context of persuasive communication?
- How subversive can these strategies be, particularly in contexts of censorship or authoritarian regimes?

Language can indeed be manipulated for various purposes, like doublespeak, crude discourse, insults, or propaganda. These practices question the ethical and functional boundaries of language, which raises new questions:

- How do these forms of diversion redefine social and linguistic norms?
- What can be the consequences on the perception of truth and authenticity?
- To what extent can language be used as a tool for alienation or liberation?

This conference aims at articulating themes related to image and language in their political and social functions. From the use of visual media in electoral campaigns to the rewriting of grammatical codes – in digital spaces, for instance – it seeks to question how language, under its multiple forms, throughout all eras, can act as an agent of action and transformation. The goal is to stimulate interdisciplinary reflection in fields like linguistics, literature, History, geography, political sciences, and sociology, in order to decipher the mutations of language and their consequences. This event calls for a diachronic perspective and contributions from specialists in Antiquity, the Middle Ages, as well as the Early Modern and Contemporary eras. Contributions may focus on theoretical analyses, empirical case studies, or prospective perspectives. Presentations may fall within the following study axes:

A - New Languages and New Forms of Communication

In the Internet age, as social networks and immediacy are growing more indispensable, we are faced with a growing globalization from which language is not exempt. English, for example, is taking an increasingly important place in daily linguistic practices, sometimes mixing with other languages (creoles, *lingua franca*, code-switching, etc.) and creating new words (neologisms, calques, etc.). This process is not new and can already be found in ancient literature (in Homer's works or in Aristophanes') in medieval chronicles, or in early modern works, such as those of Shakespeare. In the same way, bypassing language barriers gives way to new forms of communication that constantly appear and disappear: smileys, emojis, memes, and new modes of discourse that often do away with words themselves, which is reminiscent of ancient mosaics and graffiti. The value of these new languages must be questioned: do they put forth a degradation in language, or rather offer a renewal through constant invention and creation? Propositions may explore the following hypotheses:

- Globalization of language: is the hegemony of one language as a *lingua franca* (Greek and/or Latin in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, French in its time, English today) threatening other languages or redefining them through some creative hybridity? These questions are also highly political and put to the fore the national and nationalistic uses of language.

- Redefinition of social codes: the development of new forms of language begs the question of how they coexist with one another, which reflects the state of social relations. How can this redefinition impact society, politics, or diplomacy?
- Creation of restricted communities: the redefinition of social codes can also be a discriminatory process, based on abbreviations, smileys, emojis, memes, as well as acronyms (whether institutional, like UN or NASA, or discursive, like LOL or WTF), creating restricted communities that separate those who know from those who do not, just as Latin denoted the speaker's status during the Middle Ages and the early modern period. Are these generational and social barriers defining for a given linguistic community?
- New communication tools: the reinvention of tools and pathways for communication leads to altered relationships between individuals, who are now connected in a faster and more efficient way. This reinvention is not new in itself (one can think about the Republic of Letters, from the 15th century) and knows constant renewals thanks to advanced technologies, from the telegraph to instant messaging. What is the impact of this reinvention on human relationships and on the exchanges themselves?

B - New Language Productions and New Processing Tools

The rise of AI and new technologies such as deepfakes is radically transforming the way languages are produced and disseminated. These tools, which are capable of generating credible texts, speeches, and audiovisual content, raise unprecedented issues at the crossroads of linguistics, ethics, and social sciences. Such tools still coexist with more traditional ones, such as databases, even if recent years have seen new forms of corpora emerge, like diachronic corpora (Base de Français Médiéval, Penn Parsed Corpus of Historical English, etc.) – which require the creation of specific lemmatization tools –, parallel corpora (MaCoCu), specialized corpora, oral corpora or corpora derived from social networks. Textual databases have experienced significant development in the last fifteen years due to the creation of corpora borrowed from all eras. In addition to the diversification of corpus types, corpus linguistics has also benefited from advances in computing and accessed ever-larger and better-annotated corpora. Online databases are legion today, ranging from Archaic Greek to Old English or early modern French, including Medieval Latin. These corpora also constitute an unparalleled source of quantitative data that can feed computational language processing tools and allow for a quantitative perspective on classical questions. The development of these new tools, however, also raises new issues: AIs, the refinement and democratization of which grow by the day, are taking away the human monopoly on language production and now tend to take part in human interactions, whether through conversational AIs – capable of taking into consideration and recreating languages specific to any era – or through the ever-growing share of AI-generated languages in our environment. These tools present new challenges, from the ability to identify AI-generated languages to legal issues such as copyright, intellectual property, plagiarism and even self-plagiarism. These technologies are thus a gateway to linguistic, literary, sociological and ethical reflections. One of the aims of this conference is therefore to encourage critical, multidisciplinary approaches to the opportunities and threats posed by these new language productions, while exploring

their long-term effects on societies from Antiquity to the present day, through the following questions:

- New tools:
 - To what extent has the creation of corpora and databases enabled a renewal of classic approaches to language throughout History?
 - Has the quantitative data provided by these tools invalidated or confirmed earlier analyses?
- Authenticity and trust:
 - How can we distinguish authentic content from synthetic productions in a world saturated by artificially generated texts and images?
 - What new challenges do these technologies pose to the notion of truth in public discourse?
 - To what extent can AIs expand creative horizons, and to what extent are they limited to imitating or reproducing pre-existing linguistic and narrative structures?
 - Political and social consequences: how are deepfakes and AI-generated texts impacting the manipulation of public opinion, disinformation strategies, or political and diplomatic practices?
- Reinvention of linguistic codes:
 - Are these technologies redefining the rules of language and grammar, particularly in interactions between man and a machine?
 - How do these changes impact the evolution of everyday language practices?

C – New prisms to analyze languages

For a few decades now, studies on insults have been blossoming. The forthcoming conference to be held in September 2025 at Université d'Artois on “What the fuck!”, which calls for studies on the uses and misuses of crude words in their socio-linguistic, morphological and pragmatic dimensions, confirms the academic interest in “swear words”, which have already been studied in relation to Aristophanes or medieval farces. In our upcoming conference, we wish to understand the link between offensive language and political language and to pay particular attention to half-spoken insults and insinuations, in open debates, official speeches, literature or on political stage, following the example of Donald Trump's second inauguration speech. Obscenities often put forth the permeability of moral boundaries, and we propose to study how they are used and represented in politics, in order to shock audiences and denounce opponents. In the same way, doublespeak seems to us to be a relevant lead for examining new prisms of language analysis, thanks to the wide variety of phenomena it takes into account, including bad faith, demagoguery, “political correctness” and disinformation. Non-verbal, polysemous crude languages are also relevant to this study, with the use of the middle finger to insulting ends, provocative, aggressive or sarcastic purposes. Usually associated with Franco-English rivalry during the Hundred Years' War, the middle finger was in fact used as far back as Antiquity. One example can be found in Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae*, in which the

middle finger in the air symbolizes a phallus and the rest of the hand, the buttocks. In Ancient Greece, comic theater was thus a place of subversion.

Moreover, “swear words” and other interactions are not only of interest to specialists in synchronic pragmatics. Recent years have seen the development of new linguistic approaches (submorphology, evolutionary polysemy, etc.) that provide new insights to analyze languages. Among these, historical pragmatics invites us to examine the evolution of language use, either by considering a historical state of language, such as the use of insults in Plautus' plays, or by proposing a diachronic study of a phenomenon, such as the evolution of politeness in the English language. Accessing highly fragmentary and exclusively written corpora – such as those by various authors of Archaic Greece or 3rd-century B.C. Rome – proves very difficult, which, in turn, prompts researchers to develop new techniques to fill this gap, by combining micropragmatics, quantitative corpus analyses and the study of metadiscourse, for instance. Another fast-growing field of research, computational linguistics, has seen its scope progressively broadened as a result of methodological and technological advances: the development of deep learning techniques, for example, has enabled a rapid improvement in the performance of computerized language processing, making it possible to handle more data through more criteria. In recent years, computerized sentiment analysis (or opinion mining) and the computer assisted detection of sarcasm have also become objects of study, and these elements can be studied in texts from all historical eras. One could explore the following leads:

- Spaces of abusive language, whether verbal or non-verbal, in the arts all through History.
- Insulting language and political language: articulations, representations, interrelations.
- Doublespeak and all the phenomena it encompasses.
- New prisms of analysis: how do the new prisms renew our understanding of languages and texts, whether contemporary, modern, medieval or ancient?
- Computerized analysis: to what extent can technical and technological advances be employed to analyze language? How have these new methodologies renewed our understanding of how language works?

D - “Somebody's a little too sensitive !” Discriminating and resisting through language

Over the past few years, a common refrain seems to have pervaded public debates: people are too sensitive and one cannot speak freely anymore. What is presented as an observation by specific social circles has recently become, particularly since the Covid-19 pandemic, a fertile object of study. Inevitably associated with the “woke” movement, the idea that freedom of expression would be hindered or even made impossible when it comes to minorities is gaining ground in both public and private spaces. The emergence of the powerful #MeToo movement has enabled invisibilized victims to speak up and converted social networks into open spaces of denunciation, even if such a transformation needs to be qualified. The opening to feminist struggles, going beyond traditional activist circles, has

awakened a collective awareness while alienating circles deemed more conservative. The notion of intersectionality, linked to black feminism, has also impacted language.

People with disabilities are also victim of discriminatory language, through ableist social norms. Such a stance is not new: in Lysias' *On the Refusal of a Pension*, for instance, the metic Athenian uses representations of invalidity to mock disabled individuals. Finally, age discrimination, generically referred to as ageism, must not be forgotten, as quarrels between the old and the new, or the younger and the elder have been used as a comic prism throughout literature.

From an epistemological point of view, we need to consider how the growing awareness of notions of gender and intersectionality is changing research on language and language itself, both in France and abroad. Our aim is to broaden our understanding of the margins and marginalized individuals from a diachronic perspective. Papers may focus on:

- Gender and language: how do these two notions intersect, in their linguistic, historical and epistemological dimensions?
- How can comedic languages simultaneously denunciate and discriminate? This question may focus on the depreciation of women and foreigners through humor in ancient, medieval and early modern theater and poetry, as well as ancient epigrams or modern satire.
- To what extent can language be used to resist (especially in the case of language used by minorities, in the face of dominant languages)?
- Inclusive forms of language and writing (interpuncts, gender-avoiding methods) in French and other languages. For example, the use of “e” or “x” in Spanish to remain inclusive: “todxs” instead of the generic masculine “todos”. This includes languages fighting against ableism, which discriminates against people with disabilities.
- Institutional positions, following the example of the French Senate which, in 2022, adopted a bill “aiming at protecting the French language from the abuses of so-called inclusive writing, n°122” .
- What are the limits of inclusive language? What new possibilities open up?
- The language of “political correctness” and its representations in activist and political circles throughout history.

Candidates should :

- submit an **abstract** (300-400 words)
- submit a **short biography** mentioning recent publications (200 words)

Abstracts may be submitted in **English** or in **French**.

Scientific committee

Adrien Bresson, PhD in Latin language and literature at Université de Lyon–Saint-Étienne (HISOMA).

Blandine Demotz, doctoral student in English studies at CY Cergy-Paris Université (Héritages).

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Propositions should be sent no later than **May, 2, 2025** to [**graphelabojunior@gmail.com**](mailto:graphelabojunior@gmail.com)

All propositions will be answered by **May 15, 2025**.

Papers from the symposium will be considered for publication following the event.

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