



17th GEM&L International Conference on Management & Language

University of Economics and Human Sciences in Warsaw, Poland

22-24 May 2024

Call for Papers

The future of language in international business management

We extend an invitation to researchers and practitioners with a strong interest in language in international business (IB) and management to respond to this call for papers with proposals that consider the future of our research field. We welcome contributions that explore the use, management, and impact of language in various organizational settings, and in particular contributions that explore innovative, future-oriented approaches to language in IB. With this call, we encourage authors to look ahead, and reflect upon the overarching theme of “the future of language in international business management”. In line with this theme, we suggest seven tracks that can serve as a framework and catalyst for engaging dialogues during the 17th annual conference of GEM&L.

1: Language and strategy

Language strategies have long been an important theme in the domain of IB and management. These are often manifested in the form of a plan adopted by individuals, organizations, or institutions to effectively manage multilingualism to achieve specific objectives or outcomes (Aichhorn & Puck, 2017; Sanden, 2016).

The ideas advocated within this stream of research recognize the creative capacity of language that does not merely mirror organizational reality, but is applied by organizational members to co-construct it (Adoriso, 2015; Deetz, 2003). A strategic approach to language can pay off in a wide range of areas, demonstrated by, for example, the use of shared metaphors between international joint ventures (IJV) partners (Liu et al., 2015), gaining legitimacy in cross-border mergers and acquisitions (Malik et al, 2023), storytelling practices in corporate strategy-making (Küpers et al., 2013), or expatriate language practices aimed to enhance collaboration with host country nationals (Wilczewski, 2019).

Nonetheless, we acknowledge that language strategies can have effects which are paradoxical in nature, as these strategies can empower and disempower employees at the same time (Wilmot, 2022). Previous empirical studies have found corporate language-based communication avoidance both at the individual and organizational levels (Lauring & Klitmøller, 2015; Sanden & Lønsmann, 2018; Von Glinow et al., 2004). In other cases, ‘bad’ or ‘broken’ English by non-native English speakers could, in fact, facilitate rather than hamper communication across language boundaries (Cordeiro, 2018; Gaibrois, 2018).

This track welcomes contributions that examine language and multilingualism from a strategic perspective. This includes, but is not limited to, the investigation of discursive aspects of strategy (Balogun, et al., 2014; Vaara et al., 2004), the concept of strategy-as-practice (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007), and the paradoxical nature (Schad et al., 2016) of language strategies and their effects. Researchers are encouraged to explore the role of language in shaping and influencing strategic practices and outcomes within organizations and other contexts.

2: Expatriation and migration

Multilingualism is a common part of many organizations’ everyday life (Lecomte et al., 2023), and migration movements are an important source of this multilingualism (Gaibrois, 2023). However, there is still much work to be done to fully understand the human resource implications of global mobility and language in the workplace (Vulchanov, 2020). Even if recent research has shown that the key challenges which international migrants face within their host countries’ labor market is related to language (e.g., Farashah et al., 2023; Fitzsimmons et al., 2020; Tharenou & Kulik, 2020), research addressing language-related issues from the perspective of the migrants themselves is still much needed (Harrison et al., 2019).

An important area for further investigation is the question of how language shapes the work-life experiences of employees in low-paid occupations (Gaibrois et al., 2023). As in IB and management research in general (Hajro et al., 2021), migrants working in low-paid positions and refugees have received little attention, although two-thirds of the international migrants in 2020 were labor migrants (McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou, 2021).

Moreover, recent literature reviews have highlighted the crucial role of language and communication in expat-host country national (HCN) interactions (Michailova et al., 2023; Wilczewski & Sanden, 2023). However, several important issues await addressing, such as exploring how language competencies impact professional growth and opportunities for expats and HCNs (Peltokorpi & Vaara, 2012).

This track therefore welcomes contributions which address language and all forms of international mobility and migration. Relevant subjects could, for example, include the relationship between language skills and expatriation as well as migration experiences (Li et al., 2020; Selmer & Luring, 2015), different forms of migration, e.g. skilled migration and language use (Giampapa & Canagarajah, 2017), translanguaging practices in the workplace (Canagarajah, 2017), virtual communication and expatriation (Liu et al., 2023), or language practices of specific groups of globally mobile employees, such as international academics (Gimenez & Morgan, 2017).

3: Identity, language, and sense-making

The link between language and identity has given rise to a massive academic production in IB and organizational studies, approached from a variety of angles, paradigms and levels of analysis (Piekkari et al., 2022). This includes research on the relationship between shared language and social identity among subsidiaries and headquarters (Reiche et al., 2015), the understanding of language and social identity as a negotiated process (Luring, 2008), the exploration of organizational identities constructed through multiple language use (Iwashita, 2022), the construction of a “cosmopolitan” identity (Karhunen et al., 2023), or the willingness of HCNs to adopt a foreign language in multinational organizations (Bordia & Bordia, 2015).

Against this burgeoning body of work, we encourage authors to consider how we as a research community can offer novel perspectives on language and identity in future research. Contributions to this track are also encouraged to further explore the connections between language, identity and sense-making, as existing research has demonstrated strong correlations between these concepts (Cornelissen et al. 2014; Weick et al., 2005; Vaara & Whittle, 2022).

For example, in their examination of a case involving an anti-terrorist police operation resulting in the shooting of a civilian, Cornelissen et al. (2014) scrutinize how individuals engaged in this incident collaboratively construct a shared sense of understanding through a “commitment to frame”, which stabilizes and reinforces a possible understanding, while excluding alternatives.

By highlighting the connections between identity, language, and sense-making, we invite contributors to delve deeper into the intricate facets of what this research field has to offer for language-sensitive IB research.

4: Language and technology

Language is intricately connected to digital technology and artificial intelligence (AI). Empirical studies have shown the profound impact of language on technology, for example, the influence of language on media choice in virtual teams (e.g., Tenzer & Pudelko, 2016), and virtual team leaders’ communication (e.g., Newman et al., 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic has further highlighted the significance of technology in virtual global interactions (Ridgway & Langinier, 2023; Piekkari et al., 2021), leading to the emergence of “virtual global mobility” – the substitution of physical international interactions with electronic personal online interactions for work purposes (Selmer et al., 2022).

Digitalization is also transforming the communications profession (Brockhaus et al., 2022), leading to new research avenues, such as communicative disruptions in computer-mediated webchat (Darics & Lockwood, 2023). Moreover, the recent introduction of highly sophisticated public chatbots like ChatGPT has revolutionized text production, sparking new perspectives and concerns for businesses and society (Lund & Wang, 2023).

Ethical questions have since then been raised on the use, regulation, and dealing with AI, its origin, and its development in the near future. These developments underscore the critical role of language in the digital age and present exciting opportunities for further research in the field of language, digital technology, and AI.

With this track, we encourage authors to consider this particular intersection by examining the implications of digital technology on language and communication (Dale, 2021), for example in various domains, such as education (Crompton & Burke, 2023) or journalism and media content (Pavlik, 2023).

5: Language and language management pedagogies

In this track, we invite contributions from language and communication scholars and practitioners who explore practical solutions to pedagogical approaches aiming to develop the linguistic and communicative competence of business school students. Language teaching is still regarded and implemented in business schools' curricula as the acquisition of language proficiency dominated by the model of native speaker proficiency. Nevertheless, recent research has underlined the central role of language in increasingly multilingual business contexts and workplaces (Lecomte et al., 2023).

The aim of this track is to reduce the gap between the reality of contemporary IB and the classical approach of language teaching in business schools. In the last decades, language teaching has for example often been inspired and dominated by the cross-cultural approach to global business interactions. The challenge for business schools' language teaching is twofold: firstly, to prioritize language education (Horn, 2020), and, secondly, to develop language curricula which develop students' awareness of the strategic importance of foreign languages. This is the sense of Mughan's (2020) call for a Language General Competence for all managers, or Kassis-Henderson and Cohen's (2020, p. 205) attempt to view language learning as a "more general meta-cognitive skill-set". Another example is Gaibrois and Piekkari's (2020) seminar aiming at breaking up with the monolingual approach of management teaching imported from the USA.

Other contributions may explore matters of language education in business school contexts. From this perspective, we extend an invitation to consultants, trainers and managers working in multilingual contexts to contribute to this track with relevant practitioner-oriented proposals.

6: Methodological approaches in language-sensitive IB research

Methodological issues are always salient when conducting research on language, language use, and language users in various organizational settings. This track invites authors to explicitly address and reflect upon these crucial issues by exploring new innovative and novel forms of collecting or analyzing data related to language in IB. Authors are encouraged to consider the application of methodologies from various disciplines and paradigms in an attempt to develop our understanding of the role of language and communication across a range of IB contexts (Grosskopf & Barmeyer, 2021; Ridgway & Langinier, 2023; Sanchez et al., 2023).

We also welcome submissions that focus on ethical considerations related to language-sensitive IB research (Spilioti & Tagg, 2017). Submissions that tackle challenges and opportunities arising from the researcher's cultural background, such as obstacles related to multiculturalism during international field research projects, are also welcome (Zhang & Guttormsen, 2016). The track also encourages reflexivity concerning the researcher's role and discussions about positionality and involvement impacting the research outcomes and interpretations (Guttormsen & Moore, 2023; Humonen & Angouri, 2023).

Moreover, we welcome contributions that methodologically pave the way for future studies on language in IB management. For instance, future contributions could draw on Welch et al.'s (2011) suggestion to conduct case studies emphasizing "contextualized explanation". According to the authors, this method overcomes the fundamental debate on the impossibility of reconciling causal explanation and contextualization (Welch, et al., 2022; see also Knight et al., 2022 for a call for a more pluralistic view of data and methodology).

7: Open track

Researchers and practitioners in fields such as linguistics, communication and management are invited to use this open track to submit contributions that fall outside the aforementioned tracks, but still relate to language in the context of IB. We encourage authors to adopt a forward-looking perspective in their submissions, keeping in line with the topic of "The future of language in international business management". Both empirical studies and conceptual papers that address various organizational questions within business organizations, academic institutions, educational institutions, or non-governmental organizations, are all welcome.

Review process

Peer reviews play a crucial role in maintaining a high scientific standard at the GEM&L annual conferences. GEM&L has access to a large pool of esteemed reviewers who are experts in the field of language in IB. All papers undergo a rigorous double-blind review process, wherein scholars working in the same or related research area evaluate the papers without knowledge of the authors' identities. As part of the submission process for the GEM&L 2024 conference, authors are expected to review two conference papers upon request by the handling editors. This collaborative reviewing system ensures fairness, engagement, and scholarly interaction within the academic community.

Instructions and deadlines

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

General instructions:

- Length of short paper: between 3,000 and 4,000 words, excluding references.
- The paper should include a title for the paper, an abstract (around 10 lines), a list of 4-6 keywords that best represent the content of the paper, and a list of references. These elements will be included in the final program.

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.
- Abstract and keywords: Times New Roman, size 10.
- Text: Times New Roman, size 12.

Format for references:

Please use APA version 7. For instance:

Piekkari, R., Welch, D., & Welch, L. S. (2014). *Language in international business: The multilingual reality of global business expansion*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

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. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.JWB.2010.07.003>

Submission deadline:

Proposals in French or in English in Word format should be uploaded on the GEM&L website, www.geml.eu by **15 January 2024**.

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 **20 March 2024**.

It is mandatory that at least one author of a co-authored paper must register for the workshop and present the paper during the conference. This ensures that the accepted paper, which has gone through the review process, is presented and discussed at the event. Please note that there is no requirement to submit a final paper before the conference.

Awards

- Awards will be presented for the best conference paper and the best reviewer. The best paper award is sponsored by the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD).
- Nigel Holden Prize: We have the pleasure to announce that a Nigel Holden Prize will be awarded to the best doctoral paper submitted in 2024. The award criteria include originality, rigor and relevance, as well as the use of sources in other languages than English.

Special Issue *Cross Cultural and Strategic Management*

GEM&L conference participants are welcome to submit fully developed versions of their papers to a Special Issue on “The future of language in international management” in the journal [*Cross Cultural and Strategic Management*](#) (CCSM). This special issue will provide authors with a chance to further elaborate on their research and increase the visibility and impact of their research within the academic community focused on cross-cultural and strategic management. The broader dissemination of their work to a wider audience will ensure that their valuable insights and contributions reach scholars, researchers, and practitioners who are interested in language’s role in IB management. We hope that both the GEM&L conference and contribution to the special issue will allow authors to share their knowledge, ideas, and perspectives, and contribute to shaping the future of research in this important and evolving field.

Papers for the special issue should be prepared according to *CCSM* guidelines for authors: link [here](#).

The submission system for the Special Issue will be made available after the GEM&L conference.

Schedule:

Short paper submission: 15 January 2024

Notice of acceptance: 20 March 2024

Early bird registration deadline: 1 April 2024

GEM&L Conference: 22-24 May 2024

Full paper submission CCSM: 30 September 2024

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

For registration information go to: www.geml.eu

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