

Englishes on the move: Focus on digital and diasporic settings

in-person course on Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday (all day) by
Mirka Honkanen and Axel Bohmann

Short CVs:

Mirka Honkanen completed her PhD at the University of Freiburg, investigating U.S.-based Nigerians' multilingual digital language repertoires. Currently, Honkanen is working as an Assistant Professor in English Linguistics in Freiburg, teaching and doing corpus-based sociolinguistic research. Her research interests include World Englishes, digital communication, the sociolinguistics of globalization, non-standard orthography, word formation, and authenticity.



Axel Bohmann is Assistant Professor of English Linguistics at the University of Freiburg. His PhD research (The University of Texas at Austin) is an investigation of register variation in global English, including both traditional spoken and written texts and Twitter data. His current work explores the multilingual repertoires and communicative practices of West-African asylum seekers in Southwestern Germany. In addition, Bohmann has published on topics such as linguistic prescriptivism, language ideologies, stance, mechanisms of linguistic spread and attrition, and statistical methods in corpus linguistics.



Course description:

The globalized world of the twenty-first century is increasingly characterized by transnational mobility and connectivity. As a consequence, processes of language contact intensify, both between English and other languages as well as among varieties of English, linguistic ecologies become more complex, and many fundamental concepts of sociolinguistic study, such as the speech community and the notion of clearly delimited varieties, require active rethinking. This workshop explores how the study of global English can come to terms with this 'supercomplex' reality, both at the theoretical and the empirical level, drawing on the instructors' work in digital and/or diasporic settings.

The first session will focus on the notion of the speech community and alternative concepts that have emerged in recent research especially in digital contexts, such as ambient affiliation, transience, community of practice, (personalized) networks, and online affinity spaces. The discussion will include questions of group membership, norm negotiation, polycentricity, and local processes of de-/ authentication.

In the second session, we will take a closer look at the linguistic activities that can be observed in digital and diasporic settings. We will review current frameworks in the field of World Englishes that highlight the importance of cross-varietal contact and influence as well as approaches that challenge the clear boundaries between varieties. Placing the focus on individual agency, the workshop will trace the resources in language users' repertoires, with particular interest in the affordances of platforms of digital communication for the written representation and stylization of vernacular speech.

While we will be working with contextualized examples to some extent already in the first two sessions to illustrate the relevant theoretical frameworks, the third and final session of the workshop will be entirely dedicated to analysis of empirical data. For this part, students are encouraged to bring along examples from their current research, but additional material will be provided by the instructors. If you would like to bring a sample of your own data along, please contact the instructors for guidelines.

Preparatory reading (optional)

- Androutsopoulos, Jannis and Kasper Juffermans. 2014. Introduction to Special Volume "Digital language practices in superdiversity". *Discourse, Context & Media* 4/5: 1–120.
- Blommaert, Jan. 2010. *The Sociolinguistics of Globalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Heyd, Theresa. 2016. Narratives of belonging in the digital diaspora: Corpus approaches to a cultural concept. *Open Linguistics* 2: 287–29.
- Jacquemet, Marco. 2019. Beyond the speech community: On belonging to a multilingual, diasporic, and digital social network. *Language & Communication* 68: 46–56.
- Mair, Christian. 2013. The world system of Englishes: Accounting for the transnational importance of mobile and mediated vernaculars. *English World-Wide* 34(3): 253–278.
- Sergeant, Philip and Caroline Tagg. 2011. English on the internet and a 'post-varieties' approach to language. *World Englishes* 30(4): 496–514.
- Tseng, Amelia and Lars Hinrichs. 2021. Introduction to theme issue "Mobility, polylingualism, and change: Toward an updated sociolinguistics of diaspora". *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 25(5): 649–661.