

International Inter-Association Conference on the History of Language Learning and Teaching

University of Insubria, Como, Italy
5-7 June 2025

Call for Papers
1st Circular

Back to the past to understand the present.
Exploring the interplay between socio-cultural and political developments and language education

We are pleased to announce the Call for Papers for the international conference “Back to the past to understand the present. Exploring the interplay between socio-cultural and political developments and language education”. The conference will be held at the University of Insubria (Como, Italy), 5-7 June 2025, under the auspices and with the support of the international network of associations and research centres within the field of the history of foreign language learning and teaching, which first convened in Granada in 2008: CIRSIL (Interuniversity Research Centre on the History of Language Teaching), Henry Sweet Society for the History of Linguistic Ideas, SEHL (Spanish Society for Linguistic Historiography), SIHFLES (International Society for the History of French as a Foreign or Second Language), and HoLLT.Net (AILA Research Network for the History of Language Learning and Teaching).

Support is also granted by: ANILS APT (National Association of Foreign Language Teachers) and Lend (Language and New Didactics), Italian associations gathering teachers of foreign languages and Italian language; Phrasis (Italian Association of Phraseology & Paremiology), GISCEL Lombardia (Intervention and Study Group in the Field of Language Education), CRiFLi (Research Centre on Linguistic and Cultural Phenomena), AIA (Italian Association for the Study of English).

All proposals must be submitted by 15 January 2025.

The Conference will feature the following keynote speakers:

- **Carmen Castillo Peña (University of Padua)**
- **Marc Debono (University of Tours)**
- **John Gallagher (University of Leeds)**

The aim of this conference is to examine and interpret past developments and challenges in the field of language teaching and learning in order to shed light on contemporary issues and problems. In particular, the objective is to study how socio-cultural and political trends and events have influenced practices and methods in the field of language education over the centuries, as is happening today. What insights can the history of language teaching offer? Have problems similar to those faced today already been addressed in the past? If so, what solutions, tools, and methods were adopted, and with what specific intent? These are some of the research questions that the conference participants will be invited to explore.

Over the centuries, new forces, dynamics, and rapidly changing realities have been triggered by economic, political, and socio-cultural transformations that have led, for example, to migratory crises and armed conflicts, or to globalization in more recent times or to the development of new information and communication technologies (Motteram 2013). All of these have had a significant impact on language teaching and learning and on the complexities to be addressed (Doff & Smith 2022). These issues can be understood by analyzing the texts, materials, and methods developed and used in different countries and historical periods.

Migrations and contacts between peoples of different languages caused by historical reasons (colonialism, fascism, etc.) have influenced language policies and the adoption of specific educational approaches (Di Tullio 2003; Capstick 2020). During wartime conflicts (e.g., world wars), language teaching strategies tied to the military context emerged, with the use of specialized teaching materials and the presence of atypical actors (e.g., interpreters and translators working at the front who were employed as teachers).

Moreover, teachers and students are and have been a reflection of the social dynamics of their time, also implicated in ideologies determined by specific socio-cultural and political circumstances (Ricento 2000). For example, one can observe differences in education, pedagogical approaches, and teaching materials used by female teachers or directed at female learners, rather than males, in specific historical contexts; or, consider how the theme of psychological and social well-being was addressed in the past from the perspective of individual improvement through learning a new language or enhancing one's linguistic skills.

In sum, exploring the history of language teaching in light of transformations in social practices resulting from geo-political, economic, social events and trends may enhance our understanding of past educational developments and allow reflection on the challenges and opportunities of present-day education. Today schools and universities face various urgent issues that can profoundly affect student learning, teaching methodologies, and teacher training. These issues require a critical review of educational objectives, methods, and pedagogical approaches, as well as teaching materials and tools.

History provides us with a valuable perspective to critically assess current practices and inform future decisions in the field of language education (Howatt & Widdowson 2004; McLelland & Smith 2018; Castillo & San Vicente 2023; Smith & Giesler 2023). At the same time, writing the history of language learning and teaching can be seen as a political act. Papers will be welcome which relate to the issue of whether the history of language education can itself ever be apolitical or neutral.

References

- Capstick T. (2020), *The Interrelationship of Language and Migration: Current and Historical Perspectives*, Routledge: London.
- Castillo C., San Vicente F. (2023), "Proyectos de catalogación y digitalización de textos para la historia de la didáctica del español a itálofonos: Litas, EpiGrama y Revalsi", Elena Battaner Moro; Juan Alonso López Iniesta (eds.), *Humanidades digitales e historiografía lingüística hispánica proyectos de presente y retos de futuro*, Madrid, Frankfurt am Main, Iberoamericana-Vervuert, 149-174.

- Di Tullio Á. (2003), *Políticas lingüísticas e inmigración. El caso argentino*, Buenos Aires, EUDEBA.
- Doff S., Smith R. (2022), *Policies and Practice in Language Learning and Teaching: 20th-century Historical Perspectives*, Amsterdam University Press: Amsterdam.
- Howatt A.P.R., Widdowson H.G. (2004), *A History of ELT*, Second Edition, OUP: Oxford.
- McLelland N., Smith R. (2018), *The History of Language Learning and Teaching II: 19th-20th Century Europe*, Legenda: Oxford.
- Motteram G. (2013), *Innovations in Learning Technologies for English Language Teaching*, British Council: London.
- Ricento T. (ed.) (2000), *Ideology, Politics and Language Policies: Focus on English*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Smith R., Giesler T. (2023), *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching: Historical Perspectives*, John Benjamins: Amsterdam.

In light of this context, **we propose to examine**, from a historical and/or historiographical perspective, geo-socio-political events and developments including the following:

- Migrations, interactions between peoples and languages
- Armed conflicts
- Socio-political and socio-cultural events
- Socio-economic changes

Below are some of the **themes** that can arise from such issues:

- Multilingualism, multi-/inter-culture/-culturality
- Gender issues
- Equality, inclusion, diversity, discrimination
- Social sustainability
- Psycho-social well-being
- Technological developments

Illustrative research topics:

- Educational materials (dictionaries, glossaries, nomenclatures, grammars, manuals, textbooks, etc.)
- Methodological and glottodidactic approaches
- Teacher training and curricula
- Student curricula
- Institutional and statutory documents
- Testimonials
- Language policies, educational guidelines
- Editorial policies
- Technological innovations
- Schools of thought and ideologies

Open session: the conference also provides for papers not directly related to the conference theme, always from a historical/historiographical viewpoint.

Scientific committee:

- Marijana Alujević (University of Split)
- Monica Barsi (University of Milan)
- Alice Burrows (University of Paris III: Sorbonne Nouvelle)
- Marc Debono (University of Tours)
- Cosimo De Giovanni (University of Cagliari)
- Giulio Facchetti (University of Insubria)
- Maria Jose Garcia-Folgado (University of Valencia)
- Gianmarco Gaspari (University of Insubria)
- Giovanni Iamartino (University of Milan)
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- Hugo E. Lombardini (University of Bologna)
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- Despina Provata (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens)
- Gianmario Raimondi (University of Aosta Valley)
- Marcus Reinfried (Friedrich Schiller University Jena)
- Daniel Russo (University of Insubria)
- Borbala Samu (University for Foreigners of Perugia)
- Ana Clara Santos (University of Algarve)
- Félix San Vicente (University of Bologna)
- Polina Shvanyukova (University of Udine)
- Richard Smith (University of Warwick)
- Javier Suso Lopez (University of Granada)
- Alessandra Vicentini (University of Insubria)

Organizing committee:

Alessandra Vicentini, Daniel Russo, Paolo Nitti, Gilberto Giannacchi, Martina Guzzetti, Annachiara Brusa, Mario Corveddu, Loredana Parolisi, Daniela Cermesoni (University of Insubria), Polina Shvanyukova (University of Udine), Hugo E. Lombardini (University of Bologna).

Submission guidelines:

[Click here to submit your proposal.](#)

Proposals include panels, oral presentations, and posters.

1) Panels

Panels should address a common theme, content or methodological area, and will be scheduled for 90 minutes. In addition to individual proposals (no more than 300 words each excluding references), please also submit an overview description of no more than 300 words highlighting the panel's content and objectives. Provide information about the panel members and the coordinator, stating full institutional affiliations and e-mail addresses.

2) Oral presentations and Posters

These proposals (no more than 300 words each excluding references) must clearly indicate whether the authors intend to present an oral presentation or a poster. Poster presenters must attend in person to discuss their work during the dedicated sessions. Oral presentations will be allocated 30 minutes each (20 minutes for presentation + 10 minutes for discussion). Please include the name of the authors(s), their full institutional affiliation(s), and e-mail address(es).

Main deadlines:

15 January 2025	Proposal submission deadline.
10 February 2025	Notification of proposal acceptance by scientific committee.
15 February 2025	Early-bird registration.
16 March-15 May	Late registration.
5, 6, 7 June	Conference.

Registration fees:

EARLY

15 February-15 March 2025	€ 60 for Members of partner associations
	€ 30 for PhD students
	€ 90 for Others

LATE

16 March-15 May 2025	€ 70 for Members of partner associations
	€ 40 for PhD students
	€ 100 for Others

The registration fee entitles participant to attend the conference, receive the conference kit, access coffee breaks, and buffet lunches.

Publication: the papers resulting from the conference presentations will be published in one or more specialized journal(s) or in one or more volume(s), following evaluation by the scientific committee and based on double-blind peer review.

Languages: English, French, Italian, and Spanish.

Email and webpage:

Please visit the conference webpage <https://www.uninsubria.eu/ichollt/> or send an email to ichollt@uninsubria.it for further details regarding submission guidelines or for additional information about the conference.

Venue:

University of Insubria, via Sant'Abbondio 12, Como, Italy

Best wishes, and we look forward to welcoming you to Como in June 2025!

Alessandra Vicentini

On behalf of the Organizing Committee
University of Insubria