

Identity as the Purpose and Effect of Linguistic Interaction

Identifications, Negotiations, Positions

International Hybrid Student Conference

29 and 30 October 2026

Identity is a widely discussed and diversely understood concept that is linked to a broad range of theoretical frameworks, social dynamics, and interests. The ThemaTalkers invite you to engage with related questions in a linguistic and multidisciplinary exchange. We are interested in what identity can mean in the first place and how different conceptualizations of identity shape our (linguistic) actions, as well as in the general question of the stability and/or dynamism of identities in performative, interactional settings. To what extent identity can serve as a stable anchor for the individual or as a means of shaping diverse representations of the self and others—including through practices of repetition (see Butler 1988)—will also be the focus of our collective explorations.

From a linguistic perspective, identity and identity-forming actions can be related to conscious or unconscious positioning practices (see Spitzmüller 2022; Lucius-Höhne & Depermann 2004) and thus understood in the context of the construction and negotiation of identity. Situational positionings of identity(ies) are linked to the embedding of acts of identification in specific and variable contexts or framework conditions; linguistic acts influence both self-identification and identification by others. Language use must be examined particularly in relation to questions of identity and identification in connection with contextual conditions such as social inequality (see Bourdieu [1979] 2012), societal power structures (see Foucault [1976] 2010), voice (see Blommaert 2005; following Hymes 1996), media affordances (see Spieß 2024), and multilingualism (see Schwegler & Steen 2024). Various discursive spaces, including social media, for example, should also be regarded as specific contextual conditions of identification processes.

The ThemaTalkers is an open academic forum for shared interests; we invite you to discuss the outlined topic from linguistic and other perspectives. As examples of specific questions, we suggest the following:

- How are self-identifications and identifications by others negotiated linguistically?
- What role do media and communication spaces play in practices of linguistic identification?
- How are identity and practices of demarcation related?
- Which language ideologies are associated with which conceptions of identity?
- How do naming practices (re)produce options for identification?
- What roles do linguistic resources and competencies play in speakers' social identification?
- How are identity ruptures and crises, as well as multiple affiliations, constructed linguistically?
- How are categories of identity produced, legitimized, or challenged through institutional and social discourses?

The student conference is organized by the interuniversity working group ThemaTalkers (University of Bremen | Germany, and for 2026, University of Gdańsk | Poland) in cooper-

ation with the University of Bremen's collaborative research platform Worlds of Contradiction (WOC) and the European Research Network on Discourses of Marginality and Demarginalization (DeMarg).

The ThemaTalkers welcome submissions from advanced undergraduate and graduate students, as well as doctoral candidates—including those in linguistics and other disciplines—who would like to contribute to our hybrid conference by addressing the aforementioned thematic focuses and research questions. The conference languages are German and English. When submitting your proposal, please specify the desired presentation length (either 15 or 30 minutes) and indicate your planned presentation format. In addition to traditional presentations, we welcome essay-style contributions, experience-based reports with an academic perspective, short films, or other presentation formats, provided they adhere to standard academic practices.

Applications should take the form of an abstract including the applicant's name, university affiliation, title, duration, and format of the presentation, as well as a brief description (approx. 200 words), and may be submitted to thementalk@uni-bremen.de themtalk@uni-bremen.de by August 7, 2026. Notifications will be sent by early September 2026.

For more information about the ThemaTalkers and past events, visit: www.uni-bremen.de/themataalkers.

The ThemaTalkers

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