

Call for abstracts/papers

Conspiracy Theories: Defying reality in a post-truth world and digital era

Special issue of *ELAD-SILDA – Studies in Linguistics and Discourse Analysis – Études de Linguistique et d'Analyse des Discours*, edited by Alma-Pierre Bonnet.

From the death of Roman Emperor Nero to the assassination of JFK in 1963 and the 1969 moon landing, or more recently, from the Covid-19 vaccine rollout to the results of the 2020 US Presidential election, conspiracy theories seem to underpin, if not shape, a vast amount of political debates. In its “Guide to Conspiracy Theories”, EU research network COMPACT defines “conspiracy theories” as “the belief that events are secretly manipulated behind the scenes by powerful forces”. Douglas *and al.* argue that those theories are “attempts to explain the ultimate causes of significant social and political events and circumstances with claims of secret plots by two or more powerful actors” or “any group perceived as powerful and malevolent”. COMPACT notices that “over the past twenty years, their significance and popularity has been increasing steadily, especially online”, in the Western world, but not only. In terms of time and space, conspiracy theories seem to know no boundary. This is what makes them so interesting – and dangerous – and this is one of the reasons for their academic appeal.

This issue of ELAD SILDA will contribute to the growing academic literature on conspiracy theories by adopting a **multilingual, linguistic and discourse analysis approach**. In line with the three areas of research developed by the CEL, submissions can focus on **phonetic, phonological, morphological, syntactic, lexical, pragmatic and/or stylistic phenomena, from a theoretical perspective or from an applied perspective on discourse analysis**. ELAD-SILDA is corpus-oriented, and submissions should aim to establish a systematic and narrow link between **the linguistic phenomena under scrutiny and their actual usage in specific discursive contexts**. This issue is not limited to the English-speaking world and papers **on other geographical areas and in the different languages studied by the researchers at the CEL**, (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Russian and Spanish) are welcome.

As conspiracy theories are now “omnipresent among members of modern and traditional societies” (Van Prooijen and Van Vugt, 2018), papers on the following topics are particularly welcome (non-exhaustive list):

- The **terminological, discursive and linguistic dimension** of conspiracy theories and their (seemingly limitless) potential to create new terms and new concepts (“sheeples”, “chemtrails”, “9/11 truthers”, the use of the pronoun “they”, etc.)
- **The causes of this phenomenon**, by focusing on the methods and targets of conspiracy theories (multimodal analyses will be welcomed).
- **Relevant examples**, as the current context seems to encourage conspiracy theories (the rise of populism, which thrives on conspiracy theories, seems indeed to be fertile ground for this phenomenon). **Comparative approaches** will be welcomed.

- The means of **spreading conspiracy theories** (political speeches, digital platforms, etc.) and **the rhetorical devices** used by conspiracy theorists (metaphors, storytelling, etc.). Any corpus-based approach will be relevant.
- The potential **consequences and the impact** of those stories, as they are relevant to a wide variety of fields: psychology, political science, sociology, history, information sciences, and the humanities at large.

Please send your proposals to Alma-Pierre Bonnet (alma-pierre.bonnet@univ-lyon3.fr) before **31 March 2023**. The articles are due by **15 September 2023**. Submissions will be double-blind peer-reviewed by two members of the international scientific committee. Abstract submissions should include **a title in English, in French and in the language of the article, as well as a short abstract (between 200 and 350 words) in English, in French and in the language of the article (if different from French or English) and selected bibliographical references.**

Selected biography

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