

Keynote speaker abstracts

## **Maaïke Gronewege**

### **Is conversation still a useful metaphor?**

The word "conversation" does a lot of heavy lifting in AI product design. It shapes our assumptions about how people interact with machines, what they expect in return, and what good design looks like. But does it still hold up?

Generative AI has stretched the conversation metaphor to its limits. We're no longer asking chatbots simple questions: we're delegating, generating, orchestrating. The interaction looks less like a conversation and more like... something else. And our design frameworks haven't caught up.

In this talk, Maaïke draws on linguistics, her own design practice and recent shenanigans with Claude Code to ask: what do we lose by holding onto the conversation metaphor, and what do we gain by letting it go?

### **Bio**

Maaïke Groenewege designs conversational AI experiences, GenAI applications and workflow automation at her boutique agency Convocat. With a background in linguistics and a decade of hands-on conversation design practice, she brings a practitioner's eye and a linguist's skepticism to questions of human-machine interaction. She works with Dutch organizations and international companies, speaks at conferences across Europe and the US, and runs a GenAI design training course that's known for being both practical and opinionated.

**Christian Hildebrand**

**From Commands to Agents: Conversational Styles, Paralinguistic Cues, and the Future of AI-Mediated Shopping**

**Abstract:** This keynote integrates three lines of work that together reposition consumer speech as both a psychological signal and a design input for next-generation conversational AI systems, especially agentic shopping agents that can browse, evaluate, and transact on consumers' behalf. First, I examine how conversational styles (e.g., imperative commands versus interrogative requests) systematically shape consumer experiences with voice assistants. Combining large-scale field data with controlled experiments using real voice interactions, we show that style alters objective speech patterns (e.g., prosodic fluency) and subjective experiences (conversational fluency), with downstream consequences for recommendation acceptance, firm attributions, and continued device usage. Second, shifting from what consumers say to how they say it, I present evidence that paralinguistic cues can be used to infer latent decision states of consumers at accuracies that exceed human raters and that predict behaviourally and managerially meaningful outcomes (e.g., choice persistence, willingness-to-pay). Third, I connect these insights to the emerging design space of agentic shopping agents. When AI moves from recommending to acting, conversational signals become inputs for calibrating autonomy, oversight, persuasion risk, and demanding new levels of accountability in marketplace interactions. Together, these projects argue that the human voice is not merely a medium for transmitting commands, but a rich behavioural signal. As AI agents increasingly act in our place, understanding the psychology of human-AI interaction in commercial contexts becomes one of the defining research challenges of the coming decade.

**Bio**

Christian Hildebrand is Full Professor of Marketing Analytics at the University of St. Gallen (HSG) and Executive Director of the Institute of Behavioural Science and Technology (IBT-HSG). His research sits at the intersection of behavioural science and artificial intelligence, studying how AI transforms the way people think, act, decide, and collaborate with others. He also directs the AI Impact lab, which studies how consumers experience AI systems, how speech and language reveal psychological states in human-AI interaction, how to design AI technologies that are emotionally resonant, and how to build open-source tools and methods for robust behavioural AI research.

**Bettina Migge**

**Language and the AI industry: a sociolinguistic assessment of practices**

AI networks are now widely used to automatise and enhance a wide range of activities relating to language. Large Language Models such as ChatGpt and Claude are commonly used to quickly ‘look up’ a wide range of information or to help people create ideas for a wide range of projects. They are also helpful for translating text across different languages or to realise a range of activities such as booking a tickets, an appointment or make payments using a chatbot. Some of these applications ‘deliver’ in what feels like a smooth way, resembling interacting with another person. This rises the questions under what conditions and to what extent can be AI-integrated applications successfully replace human activities. In this talk I will explore this issue through the lens of language. I will examine how the AI industry deals with language practices and interaction using language. For example, I will look at how AI networks function, that is, how they process language input, and how this and the input data shape outputs. The aims to raise awareness about the limits of AI applications and to show how a critical sociolinguistics perspective can help industry change the way language is conceptualised.

**Bio**

Bettina Migge is Full Professor of Linguistics in the School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics of University College London. Her research focuses on language contact in multilingual spaces and the role of language and language ideologies in AI technology, as well as the role of machine learning in linguistics research. Between 2021 and 2024, she co-chaired Working Group 6 of the Cost-Action LITHME (Language in the Human Machine Era).