ETHER
Ethics & Aesthetics of Encountering the Other:
New Frameworks for Engaging with Difference

This research network asks: *'How do people of conflicting worldviews, memories and future visions encounter each other?'* Cultural, civic and educational organisations are expected to create a platform for such encounters and their public value is increasingly assessed on how well they reflect societal diversity in their core activity, outreach and governance. Efforts to improve diversity measures, such as gender, age, ethnicity or disability, are evident within these sectors. But less is known on what meaningful engagement across and within these categories looks like, why and how it matters and what it takes to foster it. This is an especially urgent question in the face of disconcerting societal trends around the Globe: the coarsening of public discourse in increasingly polarised societies, the rise of political, military and social activism fuelled by open hostility and violence towards "the Other", or the fast-spreading loneliness, alienation and mental illness across and within generations and social strata. The public realm is seeing a gradual dismantling of spaces in which human encounters with difference are possible and the global Covid-19 pandemic has significantly exacerbated this trend. *ETHER is based on the recognition that meaningful engagement with difference of any kind (e.g. demographic, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, ideological, perceptual) is necessary for building peaceful, sustainable and healthy communities. It also acknowledges, however, that such engagement requires conscious effort, can be difficult to bring about, and that sharing the same space is a necessary but insufficient condition for it to occur.*

Digital Provocation Series: Invitation to participate

What does it mean to engage with difference in the context of your research?

We are inviting linguists working in areas including but not restricted to: linguistic anthropology, educational linguistics, sociology, multilingualism, multimodality, communication studies, language education, intercultural communication etc. to contribute to ETHER's Digital Provocations Series. A digital provocation is a specific data-based example of linguistic inquiry which illustrates how ETHER's core question speaks to your own research agenda, specifically responding to the theme of *Seminar 1: The Art of Seeing and Hearing the Other*. There are two ways to contribute:

1) A short (7-10 minutes) pre-recorded video presentation (e.g. in Zoom/Teams or a similar digital platform with which you are familiar) focusing on a relevant aspect of your research. The presentation should be aimed at a non-specialised interdisciplinary audience of international academics as well as users of academic research.
2) An original blog entry written specifically for ETHER which introduces your research in an accessible format to the above audiences. The blog should contain relevant examples of data.

Some guiding questions that may inform your data-based Provocation:
*   What does 'difference' mean in the context of your research?
*   How do you conceptualise and research 'engagement with difference'?
*   What questions are you asking and/or what challenges (theoretical, methodological, practical) do you meet?

Your contribution will be shared publicly on ETHER website, which is intended for wide dissemination among members from academic, creative and public sectors.

To be considered for inclusion in ETHER, please send an expression of interest containing the following:
1) a brief description of how/why ETHER questions matter in your work and a brief outline of your planned Digital Provocation contribution (up to 300 words),
2) a link to your related work (if relevant), and
3) a short biographical detail.

Preference will be given to researchers willing to engage with the network activity more generally (e.g. through active participation in additional seminars, the details of which can be found on our website **ether.leeds.ac.uk**), so please indicate your intention in your expression of interest.

KEY DATES
Expression of interest submission: **8ᵗʰ January 2021**
Notification of acceptance: **22ⁿᵈ January 2021**
Digital provocation submission: **1ˢᵗ March 2021**
Seminar 1 (ONLINE): **20-21 April 2021**

Please send your submission to Louise Williams, ETHER administrator, at **ether@leeds.ac.uk,** quoting **Seminar 1-Linguistics Call** in the subject line.