

## Keynote Speakers

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### Nico Carpentier, PhD

Professor, Culture and Communication Research Centre  
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Charles University (Prague, CZ)

#### Humanist ethics as resistance: An analysis of three mediated interventions that counter dehumanisation and disempowerment

In a Foucauldian framework, resistance becomes an omnipresent technical component of power, with its generative, restrictive and productive components. As a consequence, resistance becomes contextualised through the nature of contemporary power dynamics and contemporary struggles for hegemony, which also allows avoiding its romantization. These struggles also incorporate different (what Laclau calls) normative frameworks, as currently, we can witness the crumbling of the taken-for-grantedness of humanist ethics, with its empathy for the other, resistance to exclusion, and search for respectful co-habitations. The presentation will discuss three case studies, which, each in their own ways, resist more authoritarian and exclusionary rearticulations of Western ethics. A first case study analyses a Dutch documentary entitled *Along the Borders of Turkey*, and how it resists the othering of migrants. A second case study focusses on the Cyprus problem, and analyses how the *Mirror of Conflict* exhibition bridges enemy identities. Finally, the analysis of the Czech citizen parliament demonstrates the ability of ordinary people to have their voices heard, and perform participation, empowerment and situated knowledge. Together, these case studies show the capacity of documentary filmmakers, academics and ordinary people to combine truth-speaking with a resistance against the ever more prevalent logics of dehumanisation and disempowerment.

Professor Nico Carpentier is a highly regarded European scholar in media and communication studies, formerly serving as President of the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) and Vice President of the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA). He is currently an Extraordinary Professor at Charles University in Prague and a Visiting Professor at the Academy of Film and Creative Technology, Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University.

In addition, he has held honorary professorships at leading institutions in Sweden, Belgium, Israel, and beyond. Professor Carpentier has an extensive body of academic work, having published more than 40 authored and edited volumes and over 200 articles, including 30 contributions featured in curated catalogues and art journals. His research combines theoretical depth with practical engagement, focusing on media studies informed by artistic practice, visual communication, documentary studies, and cultural and discourse analysis. His recent work includes the 2025 film *AGON* which explores meanings of democracy in different cultures.



### Erika Darics, PhD

Academic and Consultant  
Faculty of Arts, Department of Linguistics  
University of Groningen (Groningen, NL)

#### You say 'resistance', I say 'awareness': From awareness to agency and activism: Critical Language Awareness (CLA) as key civic competence

We live in a time of ecological breakdown, epistemic instability, and unprecedented discursive overload. Public debate is saturated with competing and often harmful narratives - a stroll through the streets of the beautiful city of Budapest offers a painful reminder of this. Strategic yet ideologically laden framings shape how problems are understood and what futures appear possible. Communication scholars have long scrutinised these processes. But what now?

Resistance is often celebrated as the engine of social change - rightly so. But resistance must begin with a deep understanding of what we resist: a critical awareness of the constructed nature of our social realities, and the role language plays in legitimising power, shaping what can be said, thought, and imagined. This keynote argues that Critical Language Awareness (CLA) should be understood as a fundamental future-oriented metacognitive competence that enables people not only to analyse discourse but to act through it.

The talk proposes a shift from what might be called aboutness thinking - studying communication as an object - to witness thinking, recognising communication as something we think, relate to, and act with. From this perspective, CLA offers a framework for transformative change that moves from awareness to agency and ultimately to activism.

Through examples from educational and professional contexts, I will show why cultivating language awareness is so important. At a moment when the stories organising our societies are increasingly contested, our task is no longer only to explain or resist language, but to equip people - and ourselves - to reshape it.

Dr. Erika Darics is an academic and advocate for transformative education. As a transdisciplinary scholar in applied linguistics, discourse and organizational studies, she explores how language creates and shapes social structures. She is a recognised author, podcaster, educational innovator and academic leader: deeply committed to advancing knowledge and promoting sustainable futures through education and scholarship.

Her teaching and research intersect around fostering inner development, self-awareness, and critical thinking — which she sees as foundations for meaningful change. She conducts empirical linguistic-discourse analytical research, to theorise and educate about language awareness and discourse consciousness. Erika is an experienced and passionate researcher-educator with a strong sense of responsibility to nurture a future generation of critical text consumers who are also ethical, responsible and empowered communicators.

In addition, she consults with education institutions on transformative change (both internal and in their curricula), promotes the Inner Development Goals (IDGs), and designs courses based on discourse analysis, often with a business/professional communication slant. Darics co-hosts the *Words and Actions* podcasts and is the proud co-author of the textbook *Language in Business, Language at Work* (current 2nd edition in press).