

SEM39. Specialized knowledge dissemination and international communication in the digital age

12 September h. 16:30-19:00, PN 13

Convenors

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Abstract

The dissemination of specialized knowledge in the digital age plays a crucial role in shaping international communication, particularly within the Anglosphere (Incelli et al., 2022; Salvi & Turnbull, 2017). It is well recognized that digital platforms have transformed the ways in which specialized knowledge is transferred, raising both opportunities and challenges for communicators across disciplines (Bondi & Cacchiani, 2021). This seminar explores how digitalization affects specialized discourse in professional and academic domains (Gotti, 2011).

One key aspect is the increasing role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in facilitating cross-border communication. Additionally, the dominance of English as the lingua franca of international communication influences the way specialized knowledge is disseminated, often marginalizing local and minority languages in digital spaces (Crystal, 2019). Social media, webinars, and digital repositories serve as spaces for knowledge dissemination, but they also challenge traditional notions of authorship and credibility (Hyland, 2021). However, they have influenced international communication, creating hybrid discourse styles that blend formal and informal registers. This affects knowledge dissemination, particularly in fields like medicine, law, and business, where accuracy and clarity are critical (Garzone, 2020).

This seminar aims to address these developments by bringing together scholars to discuss the evolving landscape of digital specialized discourse. It will explore strategies for effective communication, the impact of emerging technologies, e.g. AI-powered tools, and the role of discourse analysis in understanding digital communication practices. By examining these dynamics, we can better navigate the complexities of international communication in an increasingly digital world (Bhatia, 2017).

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SEM39. Papers

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- *From the label to the artefact and back again: Exploring visual-verbal relations in multilingual museum communication* (Cecilia Lazzeretti, Libera Università di Bolzano / Noemi Eleonora Maria Grasso, Libera Università di Bolzano)
- *Reshaping early tourism promotion into digital museum narratives: Strategies for specialised knowledge dissemination* (Viviana Mauro, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia)
- *It's a summary... It's a translation... It's a podcast... What is it really? Characterizing cross-language AI-based text generation* (Giuseppe Palumbo, Università degli Studi di Trieste)

- *GenAI and genuine writing. Assessing metadiscourse and originality in student vs. AI-generated essays* (Marco Bagni, Università degli Studi di Modena e Reggio Emilia)
- *Mutations in the DNA of knowledge dissemination: Communicative innovation, strategies and social implications in the discourse of defence and security podcasts* (Chiara Prosperi Porta, Università degli Studi Roma Tre)

SEM39. Abstracts

GenAI and genuine writing. Assessing metadiscourse and originality in student vs. AI-generated essays.

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Recent years have witnessed growing interest in the affordances and challenges of integrating GenAI in English as foreign language (EFL) education (Cogo et al., 2024; Crompton et al., 2024). Concerns have been voiced about academic integrity (Creely, 2023), as students potentially risk becoming overly dependent on Generative AI (GenAI), and GenAI's capability to create human-like text raises questions about the authenticity of students' work. Some studies assessed the ability of humans and machines to detect AI-generated output (e.g., De Wilde, 2024). Others looked at the characteristics of AI-generated texts (Alexander et al. 2024). However, research on GenAI in EFL education is still in its infancy and more studies are needed that contribute to improving critical literacy of GenAI.

This paper reports on a small-scale exploratory study that analyzed and compared two small corpora of essays. One corpus included the essays written by a group of first-year students of the BA in Communication Sciences at University of Modena and Reggio, as part of the English language course final examination. The other corpus collected the essays with the same titles generated by ChatGPT and DeepSeek.

The analysis carried out by manual annotation and computer assisted text analysis helped identify distinguishing characteristics of AI-generated essays and those genuinely written by students, at the level of both content and language. Also, it aimed to suggest criteria which may assist students in the process of creating coherent and original writing content, and practical suggestions to teachers who aim to harness the potential of GenAI in EFL practice. The comparison between the essays genuinely written by students and those generated by AI revealed points of contrast at the metadiscursive level. Regardless of the morpho-syntactic errors found in genuine student output, the learners' use of interactive and interpersonal devices (Hyland, 2005) offered suggestions as to how they understood the task of essay composition, bringing to the fore the notions of creativity and originality. As they tried to demonstrate knowledge of course-related content, students also aimed to create an appropriate persona and engage their audience.

Given the small size of the sample and the exploratory nature of the analysis, the study did not provide any conclusive evidence. Also, it calls for more systematic, in-depth and large-scale future research on GenAI and writing in academic EFL learning contexts.

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From the label to the artefact and back again: Exploring visual-verbal relations in multilingual museum communication

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This study examines museum communication as a form of specialized knowledge dissemination, focusing on exhibition guides as key interpretive tools. Museums serve as sites where expert knowledge is transferred to the public, requiring

careful mediation of specialized discourse (Ravelli, 2024). In multilingual contexts, this process is further complicated by the need to adapt content across languages while maintaining accuracy and engagement. This research investigates museum practice in South Tyrol, a trilingual region in northern Italy, where texts are provided in German, Italian, and English (Lazzeretti & Gatti, 2023; Lazzeretti & Pastore, 2024).

While traditionally limited to their printed version, exhibition guides are increasingly digitized, appearing on museum websites and via QR codes, expanding their role in digital knowledge dissemination. This study analyses the exhibition guide (both in the regular and in the easy-language version) of a contemporary art museum in Bolzano, South Tyrol, using Blunden's (2020) analytical framework to explore visual-verbal relations between text and artefacts. Particular attention is paid to textual features that facilitate engagement, such as reader/viewer addresses (e.g., directives, second-person pronouns, direct questions), markers of spatial deixis, and the use of perception verbs such as see to guide visitors' interpretation.

By examining intermodal relations across languages, this research sheds light on how museums translate specialized discourse for diverse audiences in both physical and digital spaces. In doing so, it contributes to the study of digital museum communication and offers insights into how digital tools, such as QR codes and online repositories, extend the reach of exhibitions themselves and shape the way specialized knowledge is shared in an increasingly digitalized cultural landscape.

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Reshaping early tourism promotion into digital museum narratives: Strategies for specialised knowledge dissemination

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This paper explores how digital museum content can serve as an effective and inclusive medium for disseminating specialised knowledge on tourism to international audiences. It draws on findings from the DIETALY (Destination Italy in English Translation and Language over the Years) project, which investigates the role of institutional tourism communication in shaping representations of Italy for foreign visitors. Focusing on the period 1919–1959, the DIETALY project analyses Anglophone promotional tourism texts such as brochures, magazines, and guidebooks. The present study examines how the research results derived from these materials can be adapted to develop modern, research-based museum narratives, with the aim of communicating the findings to a broader and diverse audience.

This study explores how academic research derived from these sources can be recontextualised into digital exhibits designed to communicate specialised content to non-specialist users across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Building on existing popularisation frameworks (Calsamiglia and Van Dijk, 2004; Gotti, 2014; Sterck & van Goch, 2023), as well as on multimodal discourse theory (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006), this research views translation not merely as a linguistic process but as an epistemological act to adapt scholarly knowledge for broader public engagement (Neather, 2024).

The paper foregrounds dissemination as a dynamic, multimodal process that involves selecting, interpreting and reshaping academic content to meet the needs of a non-specialist audience. It discusses how digital tools, including visualisation techniques, layout design, and AI-assisted writing, facilitate hybrid forms of communication, blending academic rigour with accessible storytelling (Hyland, 2010). In doing so, it contributes to the dissemination of specialised knowledge that is inclusive, digitally mediated and culturally grounded. The study demonstrates how multimodal dissemination strategies can enhance the reception of specialised discourse in the digital age, offering a practical approach to adapting academic research into accessible and engaging museum exhibits.

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It's a summary... It's a translation... It's a podcast... What is it *really*? Characterizing cross-language AI-based text generation

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AI platforms based on large language models (LLMs) are offering innovative modes of text generation that defy traditional classifications of textual content. In specialized communication, classifications of texts have traditionally been proposed according to dimensions of variation ('vertical' vs 'horizontal'), genres or modes of text production. 'Horizontal' variation refers to the lexico-grammatical traits distinguishing one given specialized domain from the others. 'Vertical' variation concerns the degree of specialization or technicality within each single domain, with variation occurring in the levels of specialized competence of both senders and receivers (Garzone, 2020: 19-23). Genres are clusters of texts primarily characterized by shared communicative purposes (Swales, 1990; Bhatia, 2004) and crystallized in text types such research articles, monographs, textbooks, reports, popularizing texts of different kinds, and so on (Gotti, 2005: 112-117). Modes of text production include original drafting, summarization and translation. They cut across the previous categories and even before the spread of LLMs could rely on the use of computerized tools assisting text generation, such as translation memory systems and terminology management platforms.

Text generation by, or with the help of, LLMs has given rise to new text types. Thanks to the capabilities offered by AI platforms, text generation can also include multimodal elements, either as preparatory resources or as components of a final product. Two new features from the Google environment can be taken as representative of this. (Other AI platforms offer similar products.) One is the "AI Overview", an AI-generated textual summary of search results presented at the top of the results page. The sources of these summaries may be multilingual, and machine translation is used in generating the overview. The other feature is available in Google's NotebookLM, an AI-powered research assistant. Called "Audio Overview", it turns a set of documents provided by the user into an audio discussion led by two artificially created "AI hosts" who "summarize your material, make connections between topics, and banter back and forth" (Wang, 2024). Again, if the input documents are multilingual machine translation will be used for generating the audio summary. The proposed paper will attempt an overview of the new text types and modes of text production linked to the use of LLMs and AI-based platforms. Building on a few case studies, it will first explore ways of adapting and integrating existing classifications and typologies and then discuss the ways in which AI-based text generation is having an impact on notions such as authorship, trust, accuracy and quality evaluation.

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Mutations in the DNA of knowledge dissemination: communicative innovation, strategies and social implications in the discourse of defence and security podcasts

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Digital communication has become hugely popular in recent years as an innovative medium to disseminate specialized knowledge to a wide and diversified audience in a plurality of discourse domains.

The fluidity of some new media genres is continuously adapting to the evolution of professional discursive needs and practices, where AI plays a great influence in terms of production, delivery and customer experience (Mercy 2025). To this end, both professional and academic attention to the use of podcasts has emerged in our media landscape (Cox et al., 2023), as a new format enabling the dissemination of specialised knowledge and the formation of public opinion. In its digital essence, a podcast is audio content available to audiences for listening or downloading. In the continuous attempt to meet technological innovation, podcasts are also designed to communicatively capture and distribute information in a reasonable timeframe and in single or serialised episodes (Rime et al., 2022); so, podcasting can be a versatile tool enjoyed by many professional organisations (Drew, 2017).

In the specific context of security discourse, podcasts constitute a form of communication that is quite unexplored, although this genre has recently proved to be an innovative and ingenious resource for professionals in the field of intelligence, while they disseminate expert knowledge. Therefore, this study qualitatively and quantitatively considers a corpus of recent podcasts designed by Europol, the EU organisation for intelligence operations. These podcasts transfer security knowledge and practice, addressing professional or expert audiences but also citizens. The corpus has been selected for the wide range of themes that can be accessed by the community and for the size, purpose and style of audio files. Genre classification and types were also considered, as essential in the interplay between discourse, the role of AI in adjusting audience-based content strategies and their appeal and effect on listeners.

The relationship between discursive production, professional motivation and divulcation of confidential information will show how these podcasts turn to engagement and narrative strategies (Hyland and Feng, 2016) for an interactive, personalised and immersive communicative experience. Findings will also unveil other language strategies that are complemented by digital enhancement uses in an innovative transfer of specialised knowledge on security, according to the specific circumstances and communicative objectives of the organisation.

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