SEM49. English Linguistics for Academicians and Professionals (ELAP): New paths and updated trends in specialized discourse and communication

11 September h. 11:00-13:00, Gorr 6

Convenors
Giulia Adriana Pennisi (Università degli Studi di Palermo) giuliaadriana.pennisi@unipa.it
Laura Pinnavaia (Università degli Studi di Milano) laura.pinnavaia@unimi.it
Annalisa Zanola (Università degli Studi di Brescia) annalisa.zanola@unibs.it

Abstract
This seminar will provide a forum for discussion on a new and innovative area, identified with the acronym ELAP, which is conceived as a place between Higher Education and the professions. For many decades, English has been the primary medium for the dissemination of specialized and non-specialized knowledge as well as a prerequisite for personal and professional fulfillment in all non-English speaking countries, including Italy (see, for instance, Boggio & Molino, 2018). Notwithstanding the extensive emphasis on the significance of English in both academic and professional domains, there persists a notable absence of scientifically validated resources that empower trainers and learners in academia and the workplace to access linguistic study with confidence. This seminar will therefore focus on collecting the theoretical and applied aspects of studies and best practices, thus facilitating a multifaceted examination of the fundamental principles of specific disciplines and providing a comprehensive analysis of English language communication in academic and professional contexts worldwide. The aim will be to embrace a broad spectrum of exemplars of ESPP (*English for Scientific and Professional Purposes*, Zanola, 2023), and not only. The overarching goal of this interdisciplinary approach will be to provide a nuanced and holistic understanding of the context(s), the users, the objectives and the techniques associated with domains such as medicine, economics, engineering, and law (see, among others, Huhta et al., 2013; Pennisi, 2024). Proposals should be clearly and constructively designed, either in terms of theoretical and methodological discussion or in terms of experience and professional genres and contexts.

References
Boggio, C., & Molino, A. (2018). *English in Italy. Linguistic, educational and professional challenges.* Franco Angeli.
Huhta, M., Vogt, K., Johnson, E., & Tulkki H. (2013). *Needs analysis for language course design. A holistic approach to ESP*. Cambridge University Press.
Pennisi, G. A. (2024). *A linguistic insight into legislative drafting. Tradition and change in the UK legislation*. Peter Lang.
Zanola, A. (2023). *La lingua inglese per la comunicazione scientifica e professionale*. Carocci.

SEM49. Papers

11 September h. 11:00-13:00, Gorr 6
- *Strategies for conversation as the new frontier of linguistics in professional and academic oral communication* (Roxanne Barbara Doerr, Università degli Studi di Brescia)
- *Reframing revision: ChatGPT's role in shaping academic writing practices* (Maria Cristina Gatti, Libera Università di Bolzano / Francesca Vitali, Libera Università di Bolzano)
- *Revisiting popularization in the age of AI: A comparative analysis of Wikipedia and Encyclopaedia Britannica entries* (Ornella Guarino, Università degli Studi di Milano / Università degli Studi di Palermo / Gaia Giaccone, Università degli Studi di Palermo)
- *Beyond the disciplines: Embedding equity, diversity and inclusion and empathy in English for medicine* (Maria Freddi, UniSR - Università Vita-Salute San Raffaele)
- *Managing medical terminology in ELAP: Corpus-based guidelines for ESPP practice* (Nicola Pelizzari, Università degli Studi di Brescia)

Strategies for conversation as the new frontier of linguistics in professional and academic oral communication
Roxanne Barbara Doerr (Università degli Studi di Brescia) roxanne.doerr@unibs.it

Academic and professional communities have come to understand the importance of cultivating spoken communication to accomplish implicit and explicit goals (Zanola, 2023). This had led them to integrate specific oral rituals (e.g. presentations, small talk, briefings) and expand the necessary skillsets (e.g. critical thinking, active listening (Younger, 2023), problem solving) within their specialised language and communication courses. These topics aim at preparing students and employees for more extensive interactions where their personal and professional reputations are involved, such as self-introductions, job interviews, or Q&As at meetings or conferences. Nevertheless, they still do not tackle the dynamics of productive and meaningful conversation, although it encompasses almost all spontaneous oral exchanges, regardless of culture, language and situation, and fills in the spaces left by and between all drilled oral contexts. However, it is assumed to be already familiar from everyday practice and considered a natural talent that is either possessed, making courses teaching it redundant, or lacking and therefore unattainable even through study. Like small talk (Di Ferrante, 2024), good conversation skills strengthen trust and relationship building and can be the object of strategizing, a "continuously guiding practice rather than a discrete formalized decision process" (Spender and Strong, 2014) that can prepare and improve oral production in all contexts. In view of such reflections, the present study presents the examples of master degree seminars and academic workshops held by the author and stemming from Brook's (2025) TALK maxims with the integration of semantics, stylistics, and discourse analysis in its activities. Courses dealing with strategies of conversation and the related analysis of linguistic and discursive patterns could enable students to go beyond "ice breaking" and circumscribed exchanges, and alleviate the stress of facing unknown prospective encounters and interactions. This in turn should enhance negotiation, persuasion, and team building skills, and repair previous mistakes through "responsive listening" (Reis and Gable, 2015). Introducing strategy and readiness into conversation could thus provide learners and scholars with a holistic understanding of the contexts, objectives and techniques/strategies that raise awareness of one's own communicative patterns, and therefore the underlying strengths and areas of improvement that could work in all disciplines and professions.

References
Brooks, A. W. (2025). *TALK: The science of conversation and the art of being ourselves*. Penguin Random House.
Di Ferrante, L. (2024). *Small talk in the workplace: A corpus-based study*. Aracne.
Reis, H. T. and Gable, S. L. (2015). Responsiveness. *Current Opinion in Psychology, 1*, 67-71.
Spender, J. C. & Strong, B. A. (2014). *Strategic conversations: Creating and directing the entrepreneurial workforce*. Cambridge University Press.
Younger, H. (2023). *The art of active listening: How people at work feel heard, valued, and understood*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.
Zanola, A. (2023). *La lingua inglese per la comunicazione scientifica e professionale.* Carocci.

*

Beyond the disciplines: Embedding equity, diversity and inclusion and empathy in English for medicine
Maria Freddi (UniSR - Università Vita-Salute San Raffaele) freddi.maria@hsr.it

Nursing and medical education have been incorporating humanistic values of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI), and, more generally, empathy, for some time (Moorley & West, 2022; Heidari et al., 2024; Shah et al., 2024) providing inspiration for research into ways of including empathy in other disciplinary and professional fields like engineering, where awareness of empathetic education is growing (Afroogh et al., 2021). I argue that linguistic study and language education aimed at developing specialized communication in English in academic and professional contexts should also take on a systematic reflection on EDI in specialized and professional domains and explore ways of integrating these elements into English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses, without leaving the burden exclusively to the disciplines. To this purpose, a survey was designed to test medical doctors' attitudes toward empathy, inclusivity, and diversity, in particular, their knowledge and awareness of key concepts, e.g., inclusion, their experience in medical education and clinical practice, their attitude towards relationship-driven healthcare, and understanding of professionalism in relation to these concepts. The proposed paper reports on the results of the survey targeting 359 medical and surgical residents from 29 different specialties and years at a medical school in Milan and compares them with findings from previous research

(e.g. Heidari et al., 2024). It is hoped that the discussion of the survey results can help translate EDI to the ESP classroom (e.g. English for Medicine) and ultimately to specific language and communication training. The survey also poses the basis for interprofessional research and collaborative teaching cutting across disciplinary and professional boundaries.

References

Afroogh, S., Esmalian, A., & Donaldson, P. (2021). Empathic design in engineering education and practice. *Sustainability, 13*(7), 4060.

Heidari, A., Joshi, S., Ahmed, M. H., Mahmoud, I., O'Dowd, J., Selway, J., Phillips, O., & Taha, M. H. (2024). Student perspectives of equity, diversity, and inclusion in the curriculum of a UK medical school: A mixed-methods study. *Journal of Education and Health Promotion, 28*(13), 484.

Moorley, C., & West, R. (2022). Inclusivity in nurse education. *Evidence-Based Nursing, 25*(3), 75-76.

Shah, D., Behravan, N., Al-Jabouri, N., & Sibbald, M. (2024). Incorporating equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) into the education and assessment of professionalism for healthcare professionals and trainees: A scoping review. *BMC Medical Education, 24*, 991.

*

Reframing revision: ChatGPT's role in shaping academic writing practices

Maria Cristina Gatti (Libera Università di Bolzano) mariacristina.gatti@unibz.it
Francesca Vitali (Libera Università di Bolzano) francesca.vitali2@student.unibz.it

For decades, English has served as the primary language for communication and knowledge dissemination, posing continuous challenges for non-native speakers (Ventola & Mauranen, 1991). The recent widespread adoption of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) for tasks such as automated drafting, personalized learning support, and summarizing textual and data content marks an unprecedented technological advancement in both professional and academic contexts for its dialogic affordances and accessible nature. Much of the current discourse on GenAI has centered around ChatGPT, arguably the most popular GenAI tool as of now. While scholars and institutions increasingly acknowledge the potential benefits of such tools, they also voice concerns about the ethical challenges they pose, particularly regarding accuracy, originality, and academic integrity (Mizumoto et al., 2024; Misra & Chandwar, 2023; Castellanos-Gomez, 2023). This paper—part of a broader research project on the use of GenAI in academic settings— explores the application of ChatGPT as a support tool for academic writing. Specifically, we report on a pilot study that explores the impact of ChatGPT on student writing during the revision phase. Employing corpus linguistics and text analysis methodologies, we examine text samples produced by BA, MA, and PhD students at a university in northern Italy. The analysis focuses on how texts evolve as students revise their English writing with the support of ChatGPT, with particular attention to shifts in register, argumentative structure, and lexical choices. Our research intends to contribute to a growing forum for discussion on the evolving relationship between English language use and emerging technologies in academic and professional settings. By framing our study within this innovative conceptual framework, we aim to support further inquiry into how GenAI tools are reshaping language practices in global knowledge production and dissemination.

References

Castellanos-Gomez, A. (2023). Good practices for scientific article writing with ChatGPT and other artificial intelligence language models. *Nanomanufacturing*, *3*(2), 135–138.

Misra, D. P., & Chandwar, K. (2023). ChatGPT, artificial intelligence and scientific writing: What authors, peer reviewers and editors should know. *Journal of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh*, *53*(2), 90-93.

Mizumoto, A., Yasuda, S. & Tamura, Y. (2024). Identifying ChatGPT-generated texts in EFL students' writing: Through comparative analysis of linguistic fingerprints. *Applied Corpus Linguistics, 4*, Article 100106.

Ventola, E. & Mauranen, A. (1991). Non-native writing and native revising of scientific articles. In E. Ventola (Ed.), *Functional and systemic linguistics: Approaches and uses* (pp. 457-492). De Gruyter Mouton.

*

Revisiting popularization in the age of AI: A comparative analysis of Wikipedia and Encyclopaedia Britannica entries

Ornella Guarino (Università degli Studi di Milano / Università degli Studi di Palermo) ornella.guarino@unimi.it / ornella.guarino01@unipa.it
Gaia Giaccone (Università degli Studi di Palermo) gaia.giaccone@unipa.it

This study applies Garzone's (2020) approach on specialized communication to Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page) and the Encyclopaedia Britannica (https://www.britannica.com/) and extends it to a contemporary and ethically sensitive domain: Artificial Intelligence (AI). The analysis is anchored in a diachronic perspective, beginning in 2001 – the year AI first appeared as an entry on Wikipedia. This time frame allows for an exploration of how discourse and AI has evolved over more than two decades in two distinct knowledge dissemination models. The aim is to examine how these two platforms mediate specialized knowledge for a general audience (Pennisi, 2015), and how specialized language is employed – particularly the techno-scientific discourse of AI, which blends terminology from computer science, mathematics, ethics, and cognitive science. While both sources aim to popularize complex concepts, their linguistic strategies, rhetorical choices, and epistemological underpinnings differ significantly. Wikipedia operates through a model of democratic knowledge building, where content is continually revised by a diverse community of contributors (Emigh and Herring, 2005). In contrast, the Encyclopaedia Britannica relies on expert gatekeeping and editorial stability, offering a more authoritative and controlled form of knowledge dissemination (Fallis, 2008). Unlike Wikipedia, the Encyclopaedia Britannica does not offer public access to its full edit history. To compensate for this, the study treats Britannica's entries as fixed representations of curated expert knowledge at specific points in time, using archived versions when available. The analysis focuses on a selected set of AI-related concepts that are central to public debate and scientific research. Through a comparative discourse analysis method/framework (Hartmann, 1980; Monsees, 2023), the study investigates: the use of specialized and lay vocabulary; explanatory strategies; the level of detail and depth of coverage; modal and evaluative language; and the framing of ethical concerns, such as bias, transparency, and human agency in AI systems. By situating this comparison within the ELAP framework (Zanola, 2023), the study reflects on how English functions as a medium for knowledge dissemination across boundaries. The findings will shed light on the affordances and limitations of both platforms in fostering public understanding of emerging technologies and their societal impact.

References

Emigh, W. And Herring, S.C. (2005). Collaborative authoring on the web: A genre analysis of online encyclopaedias. In *Proceedings of the thirty-eighth Hawaii International Conference on system sciences (HICSS-38)* (pp. 1-11). IEEE Press.
Fallis, D. (2008). Toward an epistemology of Wikipedia. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology, 59*(10), 1662-1674.
Garzone, G.E. (2020). *Specialized communication and popularization in English*. Carocci.
Hartmann, R. R. (1980). Contrastive textology: Comparative discourse analysis in applied linguistics. Heinle & Heinle Publishers.
Monsees, L. (2023). Same, same but different? A comparative discourse-theoretical content analysis of the constructions of football talent in German and Swedish newspapers. *Sport in Society, 27*(7), 1139-1161.
Pennisi, G. A. (2015). White Paper on Governance: EU attempt to popularize legal discourse? In V. K. Bhatia, E. Chiavetta, S. Sciarrino (Eds.), *Variations in specialized genres: Standardization and popularization* (pp. 213-228). Narr Francke Attempto.
Zanola, A. (2023). *La lingua inglese per la comunicazione scientifica e professionale*. Carocci.

<div align="center">✳</div>

Managing medical terminology in ELAP: corpus-based guidelines for ESPP practice

Nicola Pelizzari (Università degli Studi di Brescia) nicola.pelizzari@unibs.it

This contribution to the English Linguistics for Academicians and Professionals (ELAP) framework presents a case study drawn from a corpus-based analysis (McEnery & Hardie, 2012) of British patient information leaflets (Pelizzari, 2024; 2025). The study focuses on the use of specialised terminology in medical discourse and the discursive strategies employed to mediate its meaning for lay readers. Rather than reiterating the widely acknowledged need to improve terminological accessibility in healthcare settings (cf. Brookes & Collins, 2023; Gotti, 2008), this research foregrounds

empirical evidence of a fragmented, unsystematic management of technical terminology within medical texts addressed to patients. Corpus findings reveal recurring issues such as the absence of explicit definitions for potentially complex terms, the use of vague or partial reformulations that fail to support patient understanding, and the lack of consistent criteria for introducing and referring to specialised terms within the same document. These patterns indicate a discourse practice that is often incoherent and poorly controlled, ultimately affecting the clarity and effectiveness of communication with patients. Building on these results, the contribution proposes a set of linguistically oriented guidelines aimed at fostering a more systematic, consistent, and conscious management of specialised terminology in medical writing. These guidelines are specifically designed to inform written health communication within English for Scientific and Professional Purposes (ESPP), supporting the development of terminological competence among healthcare professionals. The proposed model is intended as a pedagogical tool within ESPP training paths, enhancing professionals' ability to handle technical terminology effectively in patient-oriented communication. The study, grounded in statistically significant corpus-based evidence and informed by broader theoretical concerns in ESPP (cf. Demjén, 2020; Pennisi, 2024; Zanola, 2023), contributes to ELAP's overarching goal of promoting data-driven, practice-oriented models for specialised discourse instruction in healthcare contexts. It highlights the value of applied linguistic methodologies in refining both the production and instruction of medical discourse across professional and institutional settings.

References

Brookes, G., & Collins, L. C. (2023). *Corpus linguistics for health communication: A guide for research* (1st ed.). Routledge.

Demjén, Z. (Ed.). (2020). *Applying linguistics in illness and healthcare contexts*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Gotti, M. (2008). *Investigating specialized discourse*. Peter Lang.

McEnery, T., & Hardie, A. (2012). *Corpus linguistics: Method, theory and practice*. Cambridge University Press.

Pelizzari, N. (2024). *A corpus-based comparative study of British and Italian patient information leaflets* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Portsmouth.

Pelizzari, N. (2025). Changing roles of patient information leaflets in the UK: A corpus-assisted discourse analysis. *Applied Corpus Linguistics, 5*, Article 100129.

Pennisi, G. A. (2024). *A linguistic insight into legislative drafting. Tradition and change in the UK legislation*. Peter Lang.

Zanola, A. (2023). *La lingua inglese per la comunicazione scientifica e professionale*. Carocci.