INTRODUCTION

If you were asked to identify the single most important area of growth in language teaching and research in the last decade or so you would probably find it hard to look further than LSP. Languages for Specific Purposes is an approach to language education based on identifying the specific language features, discourse practices, and communicative skills of target groups, while recognizing the subject-matter needs and expertise of learners (Hyland, 2018). It is an area of endeavour which sees itself as sensitive to contexts of discourse and action, and which uses this to develop research-based pedagogies to assist academic study, occupational interaction and professional communication skills. It is this distinctive focus on the ways language is used in particular settings and specific groups which is its strength, and which has led us to collate this special issue of *STUDIA UNIVERSITATIS BABEŞ-BOLYAI. Series PHILOLOGIA.*

LSP, whether focusing on academic or professional contexts of communication, attempts to discover the key rhetorical structures, language relationships and lexical patterns of target texts by exploring how language is used in specific contexts. It then seeks to make these salient to students, encouraging them to engage analytically with target discourses to develop a critical understanding of group communication. While important in itself, this pedagogically driven project is even more crucial today with growing numbers of second language (L2) students seeking to cope with new and unfamiliar disciplines, genres and topics at university and in the workplace.

It is also a blessing for teachers. They now have concrete and relevant texts and items to teach, offering a motivating and effective alternative to the often-wayward intuitions of general English textbooks, to the repetitive monotony of grammar focused exercises or to the ineffectual 'learner-centeredness' of process approaches. Most importantly, many teachers now find themselves facing more culturally, socially and linguistically diverse groups of students in their classes than ever before. Moreover, with the rapid rise in refugee populations around the world, the increase in migration, and the desire of universities to subsidise their incomes with fee paying international students, it is common for teachers to find non-native users of English in their classrooms for whom the concept of 'academic language' is an unfamiliar one.

In other words, students bring different identities, understandings and habits of meaning-making to their learning, which means that teachers can no longer assume that their students' previous learning experiences will provide appropriate schemata and skills to meet the demands of their subject courses. A focus on the specific language that students will encounter at school, university and in the workplace, and which they will need to control for academic and career success, has become crucial.

In addition to the challenges posed by a more complex academic world, students now have a confusing range of course options and qualifications to chose from. Modular degrees and 'practice-based' courses such as chiropractic, veterinary medicine, and social work now compete with traditional single-subject or joint-honours academic degrees. These courses are more discursively demanding as students must become familiar with a range of different conventions as they shift across genres, faculties and disciplines, often engaging in a variety of assessment types as they do so. Students are also asked to make use of a wider range of modalities and presentational forms than in the past, adding digital presentational, search and retrieval skills to assumed existing competencies in academic writing, seminar talks, and lecture comprehension abilities. They are challenged to navigate a web of disciplinary specific text-types, assessment tasks and vocabularies, as well as to gain control of a number of face-to-face and online communication media in order to graduate and then succeed in their future workplaces. This expanding diversity of student learning needs thus results from increasingly specific disciplinary study, new modes of distance and electronic teaching and learning, as well as a changing academic context and job market.

LSP has emerged and grown to address these changes, creating a strong research base which both recognises and celebrates the diversity of texts, contexts and practices in which students now find themselves. It is founded on an ability to identify accurately the language features and communication practices of particular fields of study so they may be taught to students and to academics seeking to publish in English. To do this, discourse analysis, and particularly text-based forms of genre analysis, has established itself as the most widely used and effective means of revealing the structures and conventions of academic texts. But LSP is characterised by a range of theories and methods beyond genre analysis, probing the meanings and characteristic of spoken, written, visual, and electronic texts and what pressures different communicative contexts place on students. In addition to analysing texts and contexts, LSP seeks to offer assistance to teacher by showing how the understandings gathered from these various analyses can be effectively brought to the classroom for pedagogic purposes. As the papers in this volume

show, discourse analysis is a central pillar of this research agenda and the contribution LSP has made to both applied linguistics and language education.

To try and pin down LSP in a few words, however, is not an easy task and something of the diversity of the field is captured in the selection of papers in this Special Issue. These offer a taste of some of the key concepts, research approaches, teaching practices and innovative directions of the field. They include discussions of how texts are studied and then taught, how courses can be designed, vocabulary presented, and technology employed. They cover contexts as diverse as biology and geology, sport management, law, military English, French for Health Sciences and Portuguese for Academic Purposes. They cover work in Canada, Italy, Portugal, and Romania, and discuss the results of their applied research conducted with undergraduate, Masters and PhD students. Together they suggest something of the variety, breadth and dynamism of the field of LSP and both its considerable contribution to how we understand and teach languages and its potential to develop these further in the future.

The first section tackles theoretical and conceptual aspects as well as technology and innovative tools in teaching Languages for Specific and Academic Purposes, among the latter a particular emphasis being laid on the emerging AI tools and turning this into an opportunity for LSP instruction rather than an academic challenge. Thus, Adina Mezei-s paper, *Technology-Assisted Teaching Activities in an ESAP Context: An Ecological Perspective,* focuses on the design of technology-assisted teaching activities as part of a English for Specific Academic Purposes course for undergraduate students of Biology and Geology. The course seeks to familiarise students with specific vocabulary from these areas by drawing on various digital tools such as search engines, language teaching programmes, and ChatGPT 3.5. The author goes on to evaluate the practicalities of using these digital learning tools. Olivia Chirobocea goes on to explore ChatGPT in more detail in the next paper, reflecting on its value in generating ESP materials. The article begins by examining the pros and cons of ChatGPT for language teaching found by previous researchers and goes on to discuss her use of the bot to create useful and interesting materials using specialised terminology from horticulture. Her results are mixed, but offer promise for the future.

Equally interested in the impact AI can potentially have by changing the paradigm and challenging the educational landscape, Oana Chirobocea´s study, *Friend or Foe? Using ChatGTP to Generate ESP Materials,* departs from the professional controversies around the emergence of AI tools, being interested in exploring the phenomenon at a theoretical level, based on the research on the phenomenon conducted over the past year, since the launch of the chatbot,

and their conclusions regarding the impact of AI on education. The article goes a step further, exploring the impact on ESP instruction, namely whether the tool is able to generate relevant support for instructors and specialists engaged in the design of educational resources, especially for niche fields. Chirobocea concludes that the tool can indeed provide a range of options and closely tailored teaching materials, as these are generated according to the teachers' parameters and their students' needs.

The next study in this theoretical section of the volume, G*ame-Mode Activated: Building Communities of Practice through Digital Escape Rooms As ESP Teaching and Learning Tools* by Ioana Mudure, tackles the potential for instruction and the practical use of digital escape rooms as innovative and multimodal tools for building of communities of practice within English for Specific Purposes classes. Mudure argues that if designed and customised for ESP courses, digital educational escape rooms can present a valuable opportunity to engage learners in an immersive, interactive, and collaborative experience meant to enhance the development of language and creative thinking, but also digital, and communication competences for undergraduates during the process of instruction of language. The study also explores how the incorporation of escape rooms as ESP formative assessment may facilitate learning by allowing students to develop communities of practice based on experiential learning, by shedding light on the challenges and opportunities raised by this educational approach. The paper outlines the design process, the targeted learning paths, the multimodal storyline, as well as the ESP-specific content organised as puzzles, tasks, and activities embedded in the escape room, also discussing how the design and use of escape rooms as an endeavour to employ digital pedagogical competence can boost motivation among language learners while also creating a socio-emotional learning environment.

Dealing with another challenge posed recently on the educational environment, i.e. the impact on students' mobilities during the pandemic, Raluca Pop explores the *Post-Pandemic Reconnections and Developing Intercultural Communicative Competence in Academic Exchange Programmes,* inquiring on the students´ coping mechanisms faced with a post-pandemic changes in instruction when mobilities have been eventually resumed. The article is also interested in the cross-cultural communication and cultural awareness associated with language instruction in this unprecedented post-critical situation.

As we anticipated above, this special issue was designed especially as an environment for discussions on applied research on LSP and EAP instruction, focusing primarily on the students' and instructors' needs within the actual educational process, and therefore the main corpus of the articles selected for our special issue are dedicated to case studies regarding the teaching of

languages for specific and academic purposes. Thus, in his article, *Adapting the Contents of French for Health. A Needs-Based Approach to Course Content,* Ariel-Sebastián Mercado takes genre into the classroom and seeks to apply a genre-based model in a course for L2 students using French to study Health Science in a Canadian university. The author set out to determine the most important written and oral genres in French for healthcare students at McGill University through an analysis of relevant textbooks and interviews with health care professionals.

In her study, *A Comparative Genre-Based Study of Research Article Abstracts in Veterinary Medicine Science,* Simona Avarvarei takes what is perhaps the approach which almost defines text analytical work in LSP: genre analysis. She explores the rhetorical move-step structure of 90 abstracts from six high-impact journals in veterinary medicine, finding a common Introduction - Purpose -Method -Results structure, with some also containing an optional significance statement or Conclusion/ Discussion move. She points out that the familiarity of this pattern helps readers to locate information clearly and quickly.

Bianca Doris Bretan explores the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to first-year Law students in a Legal English ESAP course. Her case study employs questionnaires, an interview and a class observation protocol to explore how AI can be integrated into an ESP class to increase student engagement with learning. The research highlights the benefits offered by AI to Legal English instruction.

Micaela Aguiar and Sílvia Araújo collaborate in a paper focused on *Designing a Phrase Bank for Academic Learning and Teaching: A European Portuguese Case Study,* discussing the development and application of an academic resource intended for European Portuguese. The authors discuss the characteristics of this resource, explore its potential replication in other languages as well as its application in the classroom in language instruction. Describing the results of this corpora-based research and the practical implementations of the phrase bank in educational settings, the paper presents the process of constructing the phrase bank, providing insights into the selection and classification, into its accessibility options, including a web version and integration with a search engine powered by a Large Language Model.

Oana Macari's paper, *Responding to Reviewers – The Case of a Genre-Based Academic Writing Task for Doctoral Students,* is a case study related to the instruction of writing tasks for doctoral students seeking to publish their papers in international journals. Exploring three cohorts of PhD students over three years with data collected from their written responses to reviewers' journal article comments, the author found that explicit instruction in genre awareness and linguistic features, together with practice tasks, enhanced the

students' proficiency in this genre. The study underscores the importance of integrating genre pedagogy into writing instruction for advanced learners, offering insights for designing effective in-class activities and resources.

In her paper, *Science Fiction and Military English. A Case Study in Italy and Romania,* Adela Catana seeks to evaluate the possibility of using the science fiction genre as a means of teaching Military English to first-year cadets from Italy and Romania. Developing a lesson plan based on the novel "Rome, Sweet Rome," a 2011 SF short story by military historian James Erwin, she demonstrates that military science fiction can be an alternative to traditional textbooks. The genre provided students with a formal, but comfortable environment which facilitated their acquisition of military terminology and specific knowledge.

In the next paper, Vlad-Georgian Mezei discusses an English-Taught Course in Communication for MA students in Management of Sports Organizations and Activities. The author reflects on the development of the course focusing on course design, the syllabus, selecting materials, delivering instruction, conducting assessment and collecting student feedback. The sixth paper in this special issue also addresses LSP course design, but moves away from genre to describe in some detail the development of an academic phrase bank for L2 students of European Portuguese. Micaela Aguiar and Silvia Araujo outline how the phrase bank was constructed using corpora-based research into formulaic academic phrases and explore how students are able to access it using a search engine powered by a Large Language Model. They then present practical implementations of the phrase bank in educational settings.

The case studies in the final three papers enrich the LSP and EAP range of subjects covered, by adding English for Tourism, Maritime English teaching as well as courses of Romanian for Humanities and Arts, taught to non-native students. Roxana Mihele and Ibolya Török investigate the necessity of enhanced intercultural communication skills for tourism students, focusing on learners' perspective and needs, discussing the context of hospitality industry as one of the most relevant sites of international and intercultural interaction for university graduates on the labour market. The paper explores the students' perspective by processing data collected from a quantitative survey using K-means clustering. The results of this analysis confirms the authors' initial assumption on the awareness of this student category on their need to acquire good ICC competences.

In her text on *ICT-Enhanced Maritime English Teaching and Learning at Tertiary Level. A Contrastive Analysis*, Mariana Boeru aims to investigate the academic impact of employing ICT means and approaches in the context of teaching ESP to Marine Electrical Engineering students, with an applied research on the instruction at "Mircea cel Batran" Naval Academy, Romania. The article

reports on and discusses the findings of quantitative and qualitative research conducted by the author on two groups of second-year Naval Academy students. The author focuses on the exposed levels of specialized lexical content retention and its subsequent, successful communicative contextualization. Moreover, the research cohorts were administered an end-of-semester questionnaire that sought to identify how students related to the course materials in terms of their level of interest and motivation and the perceived relevance and efficiency of the course content and format, etc. In addition to the contrastive evaluation of the course methodology employed in both cases under investigation, the research study also looked at the students' perceptions of the added value of several other factors, such as access to course materials and the possibility and ease of self-study, which correlate with the development of students' learning autonomy and the acquisition of transversal skills for life-long learning. Ultimately, this article seeks to bring into discussion some key aspects of integrating ICT means into the teaching of ESP at the tertiary level, as technology-informed ESP has become an indisputable and inevitable evolution within 21st century language teaching practices.

Finally, in the last paper in the applied studies section, Dina Vîlcu discusses *The Degree of Specificity in Teaching LSAP Vocabulary,* focusing on an area of major significance in the field of LSP and LSAP, i.e. vocabulary. The study classifies vocabulary as general (high and mid-frequency), general academic, border technical and technical. The category of border technical vocabulary proposed here includes words normally considered as belonging to general language levels B1 and B2, which are used frequently in a domain of study and only incidentally in others. Border technical and general academic vocabulary are proposed to be the focus of teaching and the object of assessment in the courses of specialised language, with technical language not excluded from the teaching process. This study analyses these vocabulary related issues as applied to a course of specialised language for Humanities and Arts in Romanian at "Babeş-Bolyai" University.

We believe that, both through the theoretical approaches on the most recent educational tools, based on the state-of-the-art AI and gamification innovations and through a range of complex case studies, our special issue aimed to take the pulse of the ongoing changes in the field of instruction, in methodologies and instruments in the fields of LSP and EAP. The range of case studies contribute through their diversity and contextualised inquiries to illustrate the specificity of the fields of LSP and EAP that represent the scope of our special issue. While it is impossible to cover the range and diversity of the field, we hope it provides a taste of this and suggests both the value and potential of the field to increase our understanding of language use and how

specific varieties might be taught. What should be clear, however, is that context is always a crucial variable in any situation when language is used. It reminds us of the fact that we never communicate with the world at large using a one-size-fits-all variety, but tailor our language to interact effectively in particular social groups and to demonstrate our competence in those groups.

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