

STUDIA UNIVERSITATIS Babeş-Bolyai



LANGUAGES FOR SPECIFIC AND ACADEMIC PURPOSES

PHILOLOGIA

4/2024

STUDIA UNIVERSITATIS BABEŞ-BOLYAI
PHILOGIA

Volume 69 (LXIX), 4/2024, December 2024

ISSN (print): 1220-0484; ISSN (online): 2065-9652; ISSN-L: 2065-9652
© STUDIA UBB PHILOGIA. Published by Babeş-Bolyai University

STUDIA UNIVERSITATIS BABEŞ-BOLYAI PHILOLOGIA

EDITORIAL OFFICE: 31 Horea St, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, Phone: +40 264 405300

ADVISORY BOARD:

Professor Rosalind Margaret Ballaster, University of Oxford, UK
Professor Bruno Blanckeman, Sorbonne Nouvelle University, France
Professor Emerita Maria Helena Araújo Carreira, University of Paris 8, France
Professor Cora Dietl, Justus Liebig University, Germany
Professor Isabel Margarida Duarte, University of Porto, Portugal
Professor Thomas Johnen, University of Zwickau, Germany
Professor Emeritus Declan Kiberd, University Notre Dame, USA
Professor Katalin É. Kiss, Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Hungary
Professor Emerita Judith Yaross Lee, Ohio University, USA
Professor Patrick McGuinness, University of Oxford, UK
Professor Christian Moraru, University of North Carolina, Greensboro, USA
Professor Eve Patten, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland
Professor Kerstin Schoor, Europa University Viadrina, Germany
Professor Silvia-Maria Chireac, University of Valencia, Spain
Associate Professor Jorge Figueroa Dorrego, University of Vigo, Spain
Associate Professor Elisabet Arnó Macià, Polytechnic University of Catalunya, Spain
Associate Professor Keith B. Mitchell, The University of Massachusetts Lowell, USA
Associate Professor John Style, Rovira i Virgili University, Spain
Associate Professor David Vichnar, Caroline University of Prague, Czech Republic
Associate Professor Annalisa Volpone, University of Perugia, Italy
Associate Professor Serenella Zanotti, University Roma Tre, Italy
Assistant Professor Margarida Vale de Gato, University of Lisbon, Portugal
Lecturer Emilia David, University of Pisa, Italy
Lecturer Ilaria Natali, University of Florence, Italy
Assistant Professor Nikolina Dobрева, Middlebury College, USA

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:

Associate Professor Rareş Moldovan, Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania

EXECUTIVE EDITOR:

Associate Professor Carmen Borbely, Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania

EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBERS:

Professor Anna Branach-Kallas, Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń, Poland
Associate Professor Fiorenzo Fantaccini, University of Florence, Italy
Associate Professor Ágnes Zsófia Kovács, University of Szeged, Hungary
Associate Professor Daniela Vladu, Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania
Lecturer Andrei Lazar, Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania
Lecturer Veronica Manole, Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania
Lecturer Boglárka-Noémi Németh, Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania
Lecturer Elena Păcurar, Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania
Lecturer Anamaria Curea, Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania
Lecturer Petronia Popa Petrar, Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania
Lecturer Alexandru-Ioan Ciorogar, Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania
Assistant Professor Ema Vyroubalova, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland

ASSISTANT EDITORS:

PhD student Mihaela Buzec, Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania
PhD student Paul Mihai Paraschiv, Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania
BA student Robert-Giulian Andreescu, Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania

Studia UBB Philologia is a Category A scientific journal in the rating provided by Romania's National Council for Scientific Research.

As of 2017 *Studia UBB Philologia* has been selected for indexing in Clarivate Analytics' Emerging Sources Citation Index for the Arts and Humanities.

YEAR
MONTH
ISSUE

Volume 69 (LXIX) 2024
DECEMBER
4

PUBLISHED ONLINE: 2024-12-10
PUBLISHED PRINT: 2024-12-30
ISSUE DOI:10.24193/subbphilol.2024.4

S T U D I A
UNIVERSITATIS BABEȘ-BOLYAI
PHILOLOGIA
4

SUMAR – CONTENTS – INDICE – INHALT

SPECIAL ISSUE: LANGUAGES FOR SPECIFIC AND ACADEMIC PURPOSES

*Guest editors: Ken Hyland, Octavia Raluca Zglobiu-Sandu and
Andrada Fătu-Tutoveanu*

Introduction
Introducere

KEN HYLAND, OCTAVIA RALUCA ZGLOBIU-SANDU, ANDRADA FĂTU-
TUTOVEANU 9

STUDIES

Technology-Assisted Teaching Activities in an ESAP Context: An Ecological
Perspective
*Activități de predare asistate de tehnologie într-un context de învățare a
englezei pentru scopuri academice și specifice: O abordare ecologică*

ADINA MARIA MEZEI

17

Reflections on Using ChatGPT to Generate ESP materials. A Case Study <i>Reflecții asupra folosirii ChatGPT pentru generarea de materiale didactice pentru engleza pentru scopuri specifice. Studiu de caz</i>	45
OLIVIA CHIROBOCEA-TUDOR	
Game-Mode Activated: Building Communities of Practice through Digital Escape Rooms as ESP Teaching and Learning Tools <i>Modul de joc activat: construirea comunităților de practică prin jocuri digitale de tip „escape rooms” ca instrumente de învățare și predare a limbajelor specializate</i>	75
IOANA MUDURE-IACOB	
Intercultural Communicative Competence: A Case Study on Academic Exchange Programmes <i>Competența comunicativă interculturală: Studiu de caz pentru programele de mobilitate academică</i>	97
RALUCA POP	
Optimizing French for Health Sciences: A Needs-Based Approach to Course Content <i>Optimizarea limbii franceze pentru științele sănătății: O abordare bazată pe nevoi pentru conținutul cursului</i>	117
ARIEL-SEBASTIÁN MERCADO	
A Genre-Focused Analysis of Scientific Abstracts in the Field of Veterinary Medicine <i>O analiză de gen a rezumatelor articolelor științifice din domeniul științelor medicale veterinare</i>	137
SIMONA CATRINEL AVARVAREI	
Teaching and Learning Legal English with AI: A Case Study on Student Engagement in an ESAP Course <i>Predarea și învățarea limbii engleze pentru domeniul juridic cu ajutorul inteligenței artificiale: studiu de caz asupra gradului de implicare al studenților care urmează un curs de engleză specializată la nivel universitar</i>	153
BIANCA DORIS BRETAN	
Designing a Phrase Bank for Academic Learning and Teaching: A European Portuguese Case Study <i>Proiectarea unei bănci de fraze pentru învățarea și predarea academică: un studiu de caz portughez european</i>	169
MICAELA AGUIAR, SÍLVIA ARAÚJO	
Responding to Reviewers – The Case of a Genre-Based Academic Writing Task for Doctoral Students <i>Răspunsul către recenzenți - Cazul unei activități de scriere academică bazate pe genul funcțional pentru studenții doctoranzi</i>	193
ILEANA OANA MACARI	
Science Fiction and Military English. A Case Study in Italy and Romania <i>Literatura științifico-fantastică și engleza militară: un studiu de caz în Italia și România</i>	211
ADELA CATANĂ	

Pedagogical Reflections on an English-Taught Course in Communication Addressed to Non-philologist MA Students <i>Reflecții pedagogice asupra unui curs de comunicare cu predare în limba engleză adresat unor masteranzi nefilologi</i>	237
VLAD-GEORGIAN MEZEI	
Investigating the Necessity of Enhanced Intercultural Communication Skills for Tourism Students. Learners' Perspective and Needs <i>Investigarea Necesității Dezvoltării Abilităților de Comunicare Interculturală pentru Studenții din Turism. Perspectiva și Nevoile Cursanților</i>	257
ROXANA MIHELE, IBOLYA TÖRÖK	
ICT-Enhanced Maritime English Teaching and Learning at Tertiary Level. A Contrastive Analysis <i>Predarea și învățarea limbii engleze maritime prin intermediul mijloacelor TIC la nivel universitar. O analiză contrastivă</i>	285
MARIANA BOERU	
The Degree of Specificity in Teaching LSAP Vocabulary <i>Gradul de specificitate în predarea vocabularului în cursurile de limbaj pentru scopuri academice specifice</i>	307
DINA VÎLCU	

MISCELLANEA

Language Proficiency and Cultural Awareness: Impact of Black Lives Matter in EFL Instruction <i>Competența lingvistică și conștientizarea culturală: Impactul unității didactice Black Lives Matter în contextul EFL</i>	329
ANDREA ROXANA BELLOT, ANCA DANIELA FRUMUSELU	
The Identity Repertoires of Romanian Microcelebrities. A Digital Ethnography Approach to Telling a Life Story on Social Media <i>Repertoriile identitare ale microcelebrităților românești. O abordare etnografică digitală a construirii unor autobiografii pe platformele online de socializare</i>	349
ALEXANDRA COTOC, ANAMARIA RADU	
Possible Worlds for Fiction. A Reconstructive Approach, With a Practical Outlook into Ian McEwan's <i>Atonement</i> , <i>On Chesil Beach</i> and <i>The Child in Time</i> <i>Lumile posibile și domeniul ficțional. O abordare reconstructivă cu aplicații practice în romanele lui Ian McEwan Ispășire, Pe plaja Chesil și Copilul furat</i>	373
ADRIANA DIANA URIAN	

REVIEWS

Coralie Cabu, *La (re)construction d'Henry Bauchau, De Gengis Khan à Œdipe sur la route*, Liège, Presses Universitaires de Liège, 2023, 118 p.

CORINA DÂMBEAN BOZEDEAN

393

Sophie Beaulé et Simona Jișa (dir.) « Lorsque vient le soir de la vie ». *Représentations de la vieillesse dans les littératures d'expression française du XXI^e siècle, Dalhousie French Studies. Revue d'études littéraires du Canada atlantique*, vol. 123, 2023, 113 p.

EMANUELA MARIA GRIGORESCU

396

Marius Popa, Andreea Bugiac (coord.), *L'animal en littérature, entre fantaisie et fantastique. Actes du colloque de célébration du quatrième centenaire de la naissance de Jean de La Fontaine (1621-2021)*, Cluj-Napoca, Casa Cărții de Știință, 2022, 313 p.

ELISABETA MARIA MÂRZA

399

Cyrus Masroori, Whitney Mannies, John Christian Laursen (eds.), *Persia and the Enlightenment*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2021, 273 p.

AMELIA PRECUP

402

Răzvan Bran, *Las oraciones subordinadas y las construcciones sintácticas complejas en español. Consideraciones teóricas y ejercicios prácticos*, Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2023, 274 p.

SIMONA-LUIZA ȚIGRIȘ

405

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 choose 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, *Game-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 Vilcu 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.

Ken HYLAND ,

University of East Anglia
k.hyland@uea.ac.uk

Octavia-Raluca ZGLOBIU-SANDU ,

Faculty of Letters, Babeş-Bolyai University
Department of Foreign Specialised Languages
octavia.zglobiu@ubbcluj.ro

Andrada FĂTU-TUTOVEANU ,

Babeş-Bolyai University
andrada.pintilescu@ubbcluj.ro

TECHNOLOGY-ASSISTED TEACHING ACTIVITIES IN AN ESAP CONTEXT: AN ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Adina-Maria MEZEI¹

Article history: Received 15 February 2024; Revised 24 June 2024; Accepted 15 October 2024; Available online 10 December 2024; Available print 30 December 2024.

©2024 Studia UBB Philologia. Published by Babeş-Bolyai University.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License

ABSTRACT. *Technology-Assisted Teaching Activities in an ESAP Context: An Ecological Perspective.* The present article focuses on the design of various technology-assisted teaching activities as part of a practical English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) course addressed to undergraduate students in Biology and Geology, Babeş-Bolyai University. As more and more AI-assisted tools – ‘traditional’ or generative AI (GenAI) – are becoming readily available to the general public, there is a growing pressure on educators to employ such tools in the classroom in order to foster technology-enhanced learning. I start from the idea that the ESAP teaching-learning process can benefit from the usage of such tools, even though some precautionary measures may be needed at this point. The perspective adopted draws on an ecological approach in the sense that theory and practice are viewed as intermingling in the research process (Van Lier 2010). Additionally, pedagogic decisions are taken in relation to “local realities” (Tudor 2003), such as, the targeted students’ general knowledge of English, attitudes to language learning, preferred modes of learning, relevant background knowledge and also with respect to the functionality of the digital tools examined. The central point of the envisaged activities is the bringing into play of relevant specific-subject and/or academic vocabulary. In other words, the underlying objective of these activities is to depict some contextualised vocabulary appropriate for the students in Biology (as suggested by Hyland 2007). First, I present some definitions regarding various types of vocabulary linked to the specific academic learning context, then I discuss some of the students’ expectations. Next, I illustrate several teaching activities in which digital

¹ **Adina-Maria MEZEI** is a Junior Lecturer PhD at the Faculty of Letters, Babeş-Bolyai University. She teaches academic and specialised English to undergraduate students in Biology and Geology. Her current research interests revolve around the field of Applied Linguistics. Email: adina.mezei@ubbcluj.ro.

tools are involved, evaluating some of their benefits and/or disadvantages. The tools discussed are the following: two search engines, *SkELL*, *Sentence Stack*, four instruments provided by the *EAPFoundation.com* website, i.e. the *Vocabulary profiler & Academic word profiler* (online corpus-based tools), *The AWL highlighter & Gapfill maker*, and ChatGPT 3.5 (gen-AI, the current freely-available version). Finally, I outline some considerations regarding the practicality of some digital learning tools.

Keywords: *English for Specific Academic Purposes, teaching activities, digital learning tools, AI-assisted tools, ecological approach*

REZUMAT. Activități de predare asistate de tehnologie într-un context de învățare a englezei pentru scopuri academice și specifice: O abordare ecologică. Acest articol se ocupă de elaborarea unor activități de predare cu sprijinul tehnologiei în cadrul unui curs practic de engleză pentru scopuri academice și specifice adresat studenților din ciclul licență ai Facultății de Biologie și Geologie, din Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai. Pe măsură ce devin disponibile tot mai multe instrumente asistate de tehnologie – „tradiționale” sau IA generative (GenAI) – crește presiunea asupra educatorilor de a întrebuința astfel de instrumente în clasă, având ca obiectiv progresul în domeniul educației asistate de tehnologie. Pornesc de la ideea că activitatea de predare-învățare de acest tip poate beneficia de pe urma întrebuințării tehnologiei, deși anumite măsuri de precauție pot fi necesare în această etapă. Perspectiva adoptată aici este de natură ecologică în sensul că teoria și practica sunt văzute ca fiind complementare în procesul de cercetare (Van Lier 2010). Pe deasupra, deciziile pedagogice sunt rezultatul „realităților locale” (Tudor 2003), cum ar fi, cunoștințele generale de limbă engleză ale studenților, atitudini privind învățarea limbilor străine, cunoștințe specifice relevante sau funcționalitatea instrumentelor digitale evaluate. Punctul central al activităților dezvoltate este scoaterea în evidență a vocabularului de specialitate și/sau academic. Cu alte cuvinte, obiectivul de bază al acestora este conturarea unui vocabular contextualizat potrivit studenților vizați (cf. Hyland 2007). Prima dată, se prezintă niște definiții ale diverselor tipuri de vocabular din contextul specific academic, apoi așteptările studenților sunt discutate. După aceea, se ilustrează câteva activități didactice în care sunt implicate instrumente digitale, evaluând unele din beneficiile și/sau dezavantajele lor. Instrumentele digitale discutate sunt următoarele: două motoare de căutare, *SkELL*, *Sentence Stack*, patru aplicații oferite de website-ul *EAPFoundation.com*, i.e. *Vocabulary profiler & Academic word profiler* (instrumente online bazate pe corpus), *AWL highlighter & Gapfill maker*, și ChatGPT 3.5 (gen-AI, versiunea curentă disponibilă în mod gratuit). În cele din urmă, se schițează câteva concluzii privind aplicabilitatea unora din instrumentele digitale considerate.

Cuvinte-cheie: *Engleza pentru scopuri specifice și academice, activități de predare, instrumente digitale de învățare, instrumente asistate de IA, abordare ecologică*

Introduction

The educational field has been constantly pressured to adapt to various types of changes occurring in society. The integration of technology in the educational process has been an imperative requirement in second language learning ever since the 1960s, starting with the inclusion of video, computers, or multimedia in class (Tudor 2003), followed by further digital applications (mobile phones, robots, virtual reality) used in various formats, such as e-learning, blended or in-person learning (Tulinayo, Ssentume and Najjuma 2018). During the Covid-2019 period, when emergency remote teaching emerged, a new peak in technology-assisted learning was attained (Sum and Oancea 2022). The pace of progress has been speeding up even more recently as the world has again been taken by storm by the advent of the open generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) (Atlas 2023; Crompton and Burke 2023).

Besides being an academic field having had to continually justify its relevance among other disciplines (Hyland 2018), English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is also an area in which world transformations have quickly reverberated, possibly because it is one of the most needs-focused disciplines. This is illustrated by its continuous efforts in trying to find ways to best serve speakers' communicative or real-life needs (Dudley-Evans and St John 2012; Hyland 2018; Council of Europe 2020). As the urge for technologically-enhanced learning is gaining even more ground, I posit that classroom usage of digital tools must be a conscious, trimming-down process, reflecting the needs of learners at issue.

The aim of the current article is to analyse how some digital tools can be employed to identify or put into practice relevant specialised vocabulary in the context of Biology-related studies, more specifically, as part of an English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) course. As the starting point relates to vocabulary, I begin by presenting the main categories defined within the literature. Then, I discuss some findings linked to the target students' expectations, since I also argue for the importance of classroom ecology (Tudor 2003). The methodological view adopted here is termed *ecological* also in the sense that theory and practice are intertwined (Van Lier 2010) when discussing technological applications in activity design.

Vocabulary Types in ES(A)P. An Overview

ESAP is part of the *English for Specific Purposes* (ESP) movement, which emerged in the 1960s (Dudley-Evans and St John 2012, 2). ESP can be split into two branches, namely *English for Academic Purposes* and *English for Occupational Purposes* (7). One of the major driving factors in this field has been the necessity

of having language teaching and learning answer the needs of specific learners, who are mainly interested in using a language in definite, goal-oriented contexts. These needs are dependent on the type of tasks learners need to perform (4), since the 'English' medical students need (for academic purposes) is different from the one doctors require (for occupational purposes). This distinction may not be so much in terms of language (i.e. special vocabulary, grammar, registers, genres - Dudley-Evans and St John 2012, 4), but the methodology teachers use in class may involve different procedures appropriate to their students.

Most researchers concur in that an ES(A)P programme of study entails the fact that its content is centred around specific-subject language, meaning specialised topics and particular language items. First and foremost, the focus has been on the subject-specific vocabulary which must first be identified and then acquired, sometimes at the detriment of grammar (Dudley-Evans and St John 2012). Put differently, what ES(A)P mostly presupposes is some kind of *specialised vocabulary*, which can be defined as the set resulting from various systematic restrictions on the language matter under consideration (Nation 2013, 30). *Specialised vocabulary* is an all-encompassing term which consists of several types of vocabulary distinguished in the field.

Nation (2013), whose work relies on the results of corpus linguistics, discusses vocabulary first in terms of frequency, dividing it into three main categories: *high-, mid-, and low-frequency words*. The first category contains words which ensure the understanding of a text to a large extent. This would involve knowing somewhere between 3,000-to-4,000-word families to obtain 98% text coverage (14) or 80% of most texts (Hyland, 2007). According to Nation (2013), the go-to list of high-frequency (mainly) general words is Michael West's (1953) *A General Service List of English Words* (GSL) (18), containing 2,000-word families. It contains the totality of function words, though the great majority is made up of content words (Nation 2001: 13-16 *apud* Chung and Nation 2003). Mid-frequency words are still general English ones, the knowledge of which means understanding English without assistance, whereas low-frequency words include technical terms and the ones that are seldom met (Nation 2013, 14-19). The GSL list has been updated within a project developed on the 60th anniversary of West's publication of the GSL (Laughran 2018, para. 3). After applying various computer-based corpus tools to the *Cambridge English Corpus* (CEC) previously referred to as the *Cambridge International Corpus* and using Nation's expertise, *The New General Service List* (NGSL) was obtained².

Nation (2013) explains that several types of specialised vocabulary can be established, depending on their purpose or scope. For example, there can be

² See Charlie Browne Company Inc. (2023).

special vocabularies connected with either of the four skills (Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening), vocabularies showing frequency counts applied to a set of relevant texts, or consisting of word lists put up by specialists in a certain field. Not least, academic and technical vocabularies are also discussed. Academic vocabulary is viewed as that which is common to several disciplines, having a higher frequency in academic texts than in non-academic ones. It mainly includes formal language (30, 291), while technical vocabulary is made up of words specific to a certain subject area (303, 304). The most prominent research on academic vocabulary is Coxhead's *Academic Word List*, containing "570 word families that account for approximately 10.0% of the total words (tokens) in academic texts but only 1.4% of the total words in a fiction collection of the same size. This difference in coverage provides evidence that the list contains predominantly academic words." (Coxhead 2000, 213).

Academic vocabulary is equated with the linguistic aspect that should be the main content of an ESP language class, some writers going so far as to suggest that technical words are not to be *taught* by the English teacher (Barber 1962; Higgins 1966; Cowan 1974 *apud* Nation 2013, 305), since humanities-trained teachers are not sufficiently prepared to teach subject-specific language (Nation 2013, 293; Dudley-Evans and St John 2012, 194). Nevertheless, a grasp of the specific subject content is still believed to be of service when teaching (Nation 2013, 305; Nation 2003, 114).

Several terms have been assimilated to specialised vocabulary, the meaning of which may overlap or not, such as: "special purpose, specialized, technical, sub-technical, and semi-technical vocabulary." (Coxhead 2013, 116). One important difference is the one between technical and semi-technical vocabulary, though a consensus among researchers has not been achieved regarding how to discriminate between the two. Semi-technical vocabulary may be defined as general vocabulary which takes on an additional meaning in a subject-specific text (Coxhead 2013).

One of the methods for the determination of a word's technicality is the usage of a scale (Coxhead 2013). For instance, Chung and Nation (2003) devised a four-level scale for finding technical words in an anatomy text. Their steps 3 and 4 were defined as technical words by them, yet, seemingly, these overlap the categories of *semi-technical* and *technical*, respectively. Step 3 includes words that are also used in general language, but which have certain specific "restrictions of usage" in the subject area, such as *chest*, *trunk*, *cage*. These words may be part of the *high-frequency* category or even of the AWL. Step 4 consists of words having a meaning specific to the field considered and which are most probably unknown in general usages (*periosteum*, *viscera*, *intervertebral*). They are often Greek or Latin-based forms (105, 108, 112). The second method

that can be used is the corpus-based one, which is useful in the development of word lists, and which may make use of keywords or be based on frequency (Coxhead 2013, 118).

Besides discerning between the various types of words, growing attention has been given to other lexical aspects, such as multiword units (compounds/two-word phrases), lexical bundles (corpus repetitive occurrences of three or more words), frequent collocations, euphemisms, or metaphors (Coxhead 2013), and to academic-oriented grammatical aspects, such as hedging, nominalisation, acronyms etc. (Hyland 1995, 2021). It can be specified that there has been a shift from the earlier ideas suggesting that grammar should be put in the background in the ESP classroom to the evolution of specifically-designed academic grammar books (e.g. Paterson and Wedge' *Oxford Grammar for EAP* (2013))³.

Dudley-Evans and St John (2012)'s approach distinguishes between the *carrier content* and the *real content*. The former is the subject matter of a text, for instance the *life cycle* of a plant, whereas the latter represents the language or skill content, which would be the main aim of an ESAP activity, e.g. the description of a process, including the idea of stages in a process, the usage of sequencers etc. (XIV, 11). I find the distinction between these two very useful in mirroring the two main content segments that compose an ESAP course.

Context-Specificity in Teaching. An Ecological Approach

Identifying and classifying vocabulary into the above-mentioned categories has been expected to provide the common database for a large category of ESAP university classes. First-year undergraduates, the targeted learners, face a manifold challenge: they are expected to use *technical vocabulary*, talk about *specific-content knowledge*, and employ *academic language*. Corpus-based research has focused on delimiting the academic common core, often equated with the AWL (or its new, updated version (NAWL; Charlie Browne Company Inc. 2023)). Coxhead (2013) focuses not only on academic lists, but also on some specialised ones, providing some guidelines for assessing word list relevance for a specific class at the same time (129).

In his turn, Hyland (2007) questions the extent to which an academic vocabulary list can cater for any type of course. He goes on to show that seeking to point out and then teach a common-core academic vocabulary is somewhat deceiving as words tend to illustrate different meanings in distinct subject areas. More importantly, he suggests that teachers should seek to teach the most beneficial vocabulary to their students, in view of their unique context.

³ See Paterson's (2024) website at <https://www.kenpatersonwriter.com/academic-grammar/>.

Additionally, relevant texts need to be analysed with the help of corpus-based tools, if possible.

Currently, ESP teachers not only deal with specialised language, which is already regarded as an intrinsic part of their job, but also with the avalanche of digital tools, from more 'traditional' ones to the newly-developed GenAI technology. As a response to the continuously-expanding technologies, my proposal is to adopt an ecological perspective as explained in Tudor (2003). He contrasts an *ecological* approach aiming at "local meaningfulness" to a *technological* one, in which "mainstream methodology" is taken to cater for all specific situations in a direct, unproblematic manner (8). He argues that teaching should be envisaged as a complex, subjective and mutable endeavour that cannot be simply captured by a 'mathematical equation' with technology at its core. By extrapolating, I have considered that the ESAP practical course could benefit from relating to the particularities of the specific student group, determined first by conducting a needs analysis, and then by continuously assessing their particular needs or preferences. On a more general note, the course content may be the same throughout time, but the means through which it is conveyed may vary. Care needs to be taken not to make technology usage the main focus, but rather it should be included only when it fits the main objective of an activity and the students' profile and needs.

As an example, the programme discussed here is addressed to first-year students at the Faculty of Biology and Geology, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. Several Biology-related specialisations are included: Biology, Biochemistry, Environmental Biology, Industrial Biotechnology, Ecology and Environmental Protection. The course spans over two semesters and is an ESAP practical language course. Its content includes several common-core topics in the targeted discipline. Here I present some technologically-assisted activities, some of which have been implemented during the first semester of the 2023-2024 academic year, while others are analysed for the future. The time of writing this article being the end of the first semester, my presentation combines a teacher's reflection process with a researcher's observations.

At the beginning of the first semester, during the first class, a pre-course survey was administered to students by means of a questionnaire created in Google Forms. The students were informed that the survey objective was to help the teacher better understand their background and expectations. There were 110 answers validated. The questionnaire comprised 10 questions, of which 8 were closed-format questions (5 multiple-choices/3 Likert statements, one of which was a 5-scale Likert statement with 6 subpoints) and two were open-ended.

The first question required students to self-assess their proficiency level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). As shown by the answers, the great majority of students rate their initial level of English knowledge at the B2 level (43%), 19% of them ranging higher than the B2 level (15 students –C1 level;7 students – C2 level). 11% of the students' level is lower than B1, which means that the specific purpose content might pose difficulties for them. Almost three quarters (79 students) stated that they did not hold an internationally-recognized certificate (second question).

The third statement was meant to ascertain the perceptions students had regarding their English skills and their knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, rating each from 1 (the lowest) to 5 (the highest). The receptive skills (Reading and Listening) rank high in terms of perceived ability, the largest proportion of students evaluating theirs at level 4 on the Likert scale: 38% in the case of Reading (42 students) and 40% in the case of Listening (44 students). Regarding the productive skills (Speaking and Writing), the largest proportion of respondents rate their abilities as being in the middle of the scale (level 3: 37% and 41%, respectively). Grammar and Vocabulary have similar results in what concerns the largest proportion, with 42% students considering that their Grammar knowledge is acceptable (level 3) and 38% reporting the same for Vocabulary. The lowest percentage of students that opted for level 5 was in the case of Grammar with 5% and Writing with 9%, which signals their weakest points and consequently, the aspects that need most improvement.

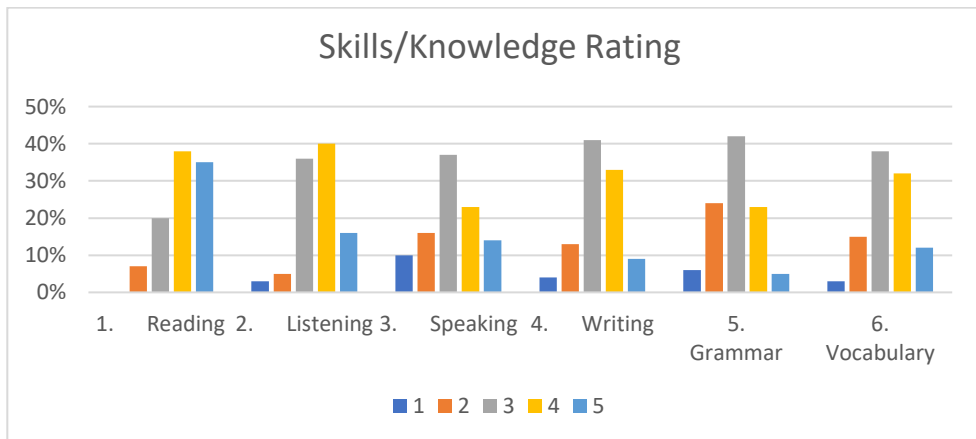


Figure 1. Skills and knowledge rating

When asked about their preferred grouping mode, what stood out was that students could be divided into two main categories, the ones who prefer to

work in small groups of 3-4 people (44%) and those who would rather work individually (31%). The other variants were pair work (15%), larger groups of 5-8 (6%) or "I do not enjoy practical courses" (4%). This led to the conclusion that the first two grouping possibilities were to be used, if possible, to the highest degree in the classroom environment.

Another aspect referred to the amount of time students were willing to spend on homework. 49% of the respondents chose the 30 minute-interval, which was followed by 18% who opted for 45 minutes and 15% for 15 minutes. There were also 4% of the respondents who preferred not to work at all at home. Bearing the numbers in mind, I decided to group the homework tasks in two types, 'obligatory' ones (with an estimated time of 30 minutes) and optional ones (10/20/30-minute extra activities). Because the groups are multi-level, at times homework tasks were devised differently.

Statement 6 in the pre-course survey was aimed at grasping students' study strategies of taking notes when exposed to (visual-)auditory or reading texts. The answers show that students would either put down brief notes (39%) or not take notes at all (24%), which points to a higher reliance on the auditory learning style. This is also an indication that spelling might be an area needing attention. Furthermore, the results indicate that one type of skill-based language activities could focus on the *Cornell Note-Taking System*⁴, which promotes reflection on input data, and thus could enhance high-order thinking skills.

Positive attitudes towards playing language learning games during the English language course were reflected by the answers to statement 7. 49% of the respondents agreed with the statement, while 23% expressed strong agreement. A small minority of students (4%) disagreed with playing games. Consequently, games were included in the content of the first-semester course, most of which were designed with the help of *Wordwall* (<https://wordwall.net/>) (e.g. Anagrams, Crosswords, Unjumble (sentences), Hangman etc.) as warm-up activities, spelling-targeted exercises, practice/revision activities.

Statement 8 was a 5-point Likert statement devised similarly to statement 7. It was directed at evaluating students' attitudes to prospective technology-assisted activities. Figure 2 reveals that the great majority of students did not oppose the idea of using online/digital/AI tools during the English language course, since almost half of those surveyed (49%) expressed agreement to the proposal (4-point score) and 32% declared themselves neutral.

⁴ See, for example, <https://lsc.cornell.edu/how-to-study/taking-notes/cornell-note-taking-system/>. Accessed on 03.02.2023.

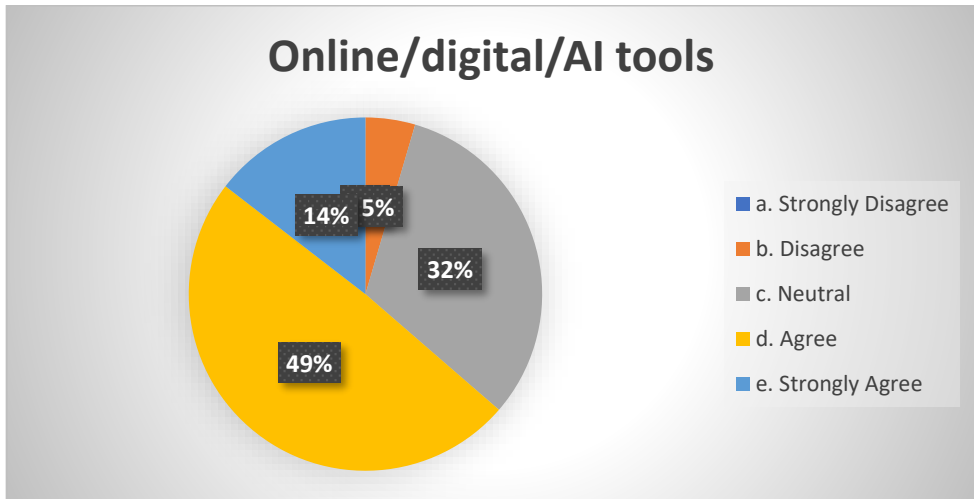


Figure 2. Attitudes to technology-assisted tool usage

Because the degree to which students are familiar with such tools was uncertain, statement 9 (open-ended) was included. Students had to name some of the online/digital/AI tools they are familiar with. The answers provided referred to the following: Kahoot (25 mentions), Not familiar/No answer (25), Chat GPT (11), Duolingo (9), Online dictionaries (7), Google Translate (6), Phones/Laptop (6), Zoom (5), YouTube (4), Google Meet (3), PowerPoint Presentations (3), Microsoft Office (3), Google classroom (2), Grammarly (2), Online games (for improving English) (2), Wordle (1), Notion (1), Quizlet (1), Prezi (1), Adobe Illustrator (1), and a few other examples. It can be concluded that students possess a general knowledge of technology-assisted tools/platforms. It might be assumed that students who reported not being familiar with such tools (25) focused principally on the AI part of the question, as some were not certain what exactly it means.

Finally, the last statement was an open-ended one, aimed at providing students with the opportunity to freely express any other suggestions they might have regarding the ESAP course. Two main suggestions were given, one adverting to working in level-based groups and the other one expressing preference to receive more, smaller assignments rather than a larger (project-like) one.

Technology-Assisted Tools. Applications

One of the four strands that make up a well-proportioned language course relies on activities created starting from listening or writing texts, which represent the source of *meaning-focused input* (Nation 2013). Adequate texts need to be relevant in terms of topic choice, should be authentic (Coxhead and

Byrd 2007, 138; Hyland 2006, 78, 83; Dudley-Evans and St John 2012, 97, 105) and academic (Coxhead and Byrd 2007, 138), if possible. In our case, the students' content-knowledge of their discipline consists of what they were taught during high school. Working on specialised abstracts or science articles could prove burdensome, therefore the texts selected belong to the popularised science category. In what follows next, I will present some aspects linked to already-tried or possible applications of digital tools on such texts.

a. Search engines

Since one of my purposes was to introduce students to some available technological solutions, first, I aimed at drawing students' attention to ways of using online dictionaries and search engines. I started from a text titled *Diversity of Life*, retrieved from <https://opentextbc.ca/biology/chapter/1-1-themes-and-concepts-of-biology/>. The carrier content of the text is related to the topic expressed in the title *Diversity of Life*, while the real content is classification in (evolutionary) biology. The reading comprehension served as input to teaching specific terms (*genus, species, bacteria*) and typical expressions used in connection with classification (*grouped within, collected together into (groups)*).

In one task the students had to rephrase the sentence "The science of biology is very *broad in scope* because there is a *tremendous diversity of life* on Earth," focusing on providing synonyms for the italicised expressions. The main aim was to draw their attention to *collocations* with the help of an online dictionary. Another task introduced a search engine (*see* (1) below), SkELL (*Search Engine for Language Learning*), which consists of collocations and synonyms automatically identified. SkELL is a case-insensitive, sentence-based corpus query and management system. If the base form is looked up, results will also provide derived forms. It includes all parts of speech of the searched item (Lexical Computing CZ s.r.o. 2014–2021)⁵.

(1) In a Word Document the expression *collected together into (groups)* is underlined. The suggestion of Spell Check is to correct it with *collected*. So, the question arises: Is the expression correct? How can you check? Go to <https://skell.sketchengine.eu/#home?lang=en> and check ... in Examples

After checking and seeing that there are some results shown by SkELL, students are asked to reach a conclusion regarding its acceptability (critical thinking). As an extension task, students can compare the search results for *collected together into* to *grouped within* by drawing their attention to the number of hits in each

⁵ See Baisa and Suchomel (2014).

case: 0.01 hits per million and 0.03 hits per million, respectively (frequency; Coxhead 2007, 132).

Another activity required students to compare SkELL to *Sentence Stack*, a linguistic search engine containing more than 300 million sentence examples. Besides an integrated dictionary, it also contains a thesaurus, idiom detector, spelling and grammar checker, and a fill-in-the-blank search of the type *what will come ** (Sentence Stack 2023). Additionally, it provides the link to the text source of the sentence, useful if one wants to assess the source reliability.

(2) Check the spelling of *chlorophyl*: <https://sentencestack.com/> vs. <https://skell.sketchengine.eu/#home?lang=en>

Students are divided into two groups; each will check the spelling of '*chlorophyl*' in one of the two engines. Sentence Stack suggests the correct spelling of the word, i.e. *chlorophyll*, while SkELL will provide some (odd) examples. Students are asked to draw some conclusions regarding the two search engines. One could be not to over rely on search engines, or, when it comes to spelling, to consult online (trusted) dictionaries.

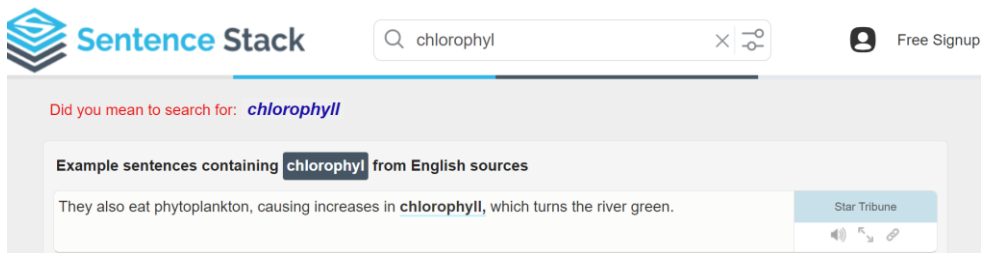


Figure 3. Sentence Stack – results regarding “chlorophyl” search⁶

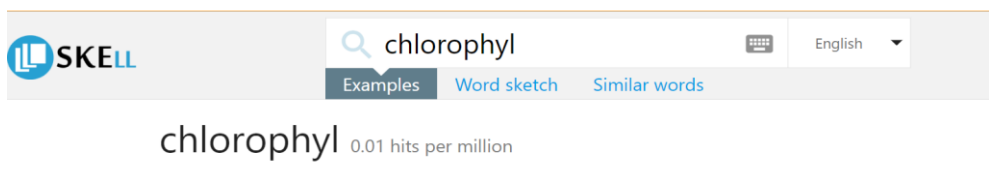


Figure 4. SkELL – results regarding “chlorophyl” search⁷

⁶ Retrieved from <https://sentencestack.com/q/chlorophyl>. Accessed on 7.02.2024.

⁷ Retrieved from <https://skell.sketchengine.eu/#result?f=concordance&lang=en&query=chlorophyl>. Accessed on 7.02.2024.

b. Vocabulary profiler & Academic word profiler

Having access to some readily-available, corpus-based tools online can help in evaluating what a sentence/text consists of, which leads to making pedagogical informed decisions.

(3) “When a cell is ready to divide, DNA condenses into structures known as chromosomes.”

(Example used in an audio-visual activity on the topic *Biology. Cell Structure.*)⁸

When analysing the sentence in (3) with the help of the *Vocabulary profiler* tool, AWL, (<https://www.eapfoundation.com/vocab/profiler/singleword/>), which can be found on the *EAPFoundation.com* website (Sheldon 2013-present), we see that there are three academic words used in the sentence: *structures* (among the 0-250 most frequent words), *known* (751-1000 words) and *condenses* (2001-2250 words). Running the same sentence through the Secondary School Vocabulary Lists corpus (SVL)⁹, there are results in the Biology word list (*cell, chromosomes, DNA, structures*) and in the Chemistry one (*condenses, ready, structures*). Interestingly enough, this time *condenses* occurs as a Chemistry rather than Biology word, while *structures* is categorised as both a Biology and a Chemistry word. A possible interpretation of the results might be that the word *condenses* can be regarded as a semi-technical word (thus part of the academic category), which acquires specific meanings in different subject fields.

Another tool is the *Academic word profiler* (<https://www.eapfoundation.com/vocab/profiler/singleword/index.php?word=&freqc=on&wfc=on&sync=on&wlc=on&collc=on#profile>), which profiles single words in the Baby BNC (British National Corpus) corpus, more specifically in its fiction, spoken, academic, and news sub-corpora. Running the word *condense* will again appear in several word lists. A synonym is provided (*concentrate*), but it is not appropriate in our context (Fig. 5 below).

The following table shows possible academic synonyms for **condense** in the Wordnet database. Synonyms are only shown if they meet the following three criteria: (1) frequency of at least 10 words per million; (2) range of at least 8 texts; (3) ratio of at least 1.5 (i.e. occurring at least 50% more often in academic than fiction texts).

Synonym	pos	Freq	Range	Ratio	Definition + examples
concentrate	verb	41.62	16	2.93	make more concise. E.g. condense the contents of a book into a summary
concentrate	verb	41.62	16	2.93	compress or concentrate. E.g. Congress condensed the three-year plan into a six-month plan

Figure 5. Academic word profiler. Synonym for “condense.”¹⁰

⁸ The activity was based on the video available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=URUJD5NEXC8&t=64s>. Accessed on 22.10.2023.

⁹ It is a specific-subject corpus based on a series of lists for eight secondary school subjects.

¹⁰ Retrieved from <https://www.eapfoundation.com/vocab/profiler/singleword/index.php?word=condense&freqc=on&wfc=on&sync=on&wlc=on&collc=on#profile>. Accessed on 6.02.2024.

After carrying out a Listening activity of the *Fill in the blanks* type, a follow-up activity in which students use the *Vocabulary profiler* can be emplaced:

- (4) Step 1: Extract a word list of specific terms from the audio script:
 (i) Go to <https://www.eapfoundation.com/vocab/profiler/> (ii) Enter the text in the box. (iii) Choose the Technical-SVL list from the options. (iv) Click Submit.
 Step 2: Go through the list obtained and find the words which complete the gaps below¹¹:

singular	plural
mi_-----n (= "a semi-autonomous organelle where cellular respiration occurs") ¹²	...
...	f_-----a ("A long, whiplike cellular structure used for locomotion or feeding") ¹³

Step 3: Complete the table with the other word form.

The word list obtained consists of 81 useful words, but, notably, relevant terms (such as *endoplasmic, reticulum, cytoskeleton*) are missing from it. However, this task gives learners the opportunity to familiarise themselves with a corpus-based tool. From a linguistic perspective, the task focuses on irregular foreign plurals and spelling (*form-focused* instruction; Nation 2013). If used after having introduced the irregular plurals for these subject-specific terms, it means that the activity applies both a noticing strategy (step 1) and a retrieval strategy (step 3), the latter being useful in reinforcing the link between a cue and the retrieved knowledge (Nation 2013, 331).

c. AWL highlighter & Gapfill maker

Still on the site EAPFoundation.com we can find an academic word highlighter (<https://www.eapfoundation.com/vocab/academic/highlighter/>), which identifies the academic words according to the AWL list and a *Gapfill maker*, which has three variants: *a simple gapfill* (i), with blanks in which the words extracted need to be inserted, *a headword gapfill*, in which the head word will replace the identified academic words and *a word family gapfill* (ii) of the same academic words.

¹¹ The answers for step 2 in (4) above are *mitochondrion, flagella*.

¹² Definition retrieved from [<https://www.biologyonline.com/dictionary/mitochondrion>]. Accessed on 7.02.2024.

¹³ Definition retrieved from [<https://www.biologyonline.com/dictionary/flagellum>]. Accessed on 7.02.2024.

The Gapfill proves to be useful, but the results it provides may need the teacher's intervention. In the first case, if the words are not provided, the context does not offer sufficient clues to allow students to retrieve the targeted words. Additionally, the gaps can be too close (in a standard cloze, a fixed ratio would be somewhere around every seventh word; Read 2000). If the words are provided (see (5, *i*) below, same gaps as in (ii)), the task may be too simple. In the third case, the suggested forms are not always the most practical (and typical) choices, e.g. *colleague* which is offered as a variant for *colleagues* could be left out altogether; *requiring* instead of *required* may be too easy, so, *requisite* could be inserted instead.

(5) (i) Fill in the blanks with the appropriate word: *evolution*, *expert*, *appropriately*, *response*, *required*, *investigating*, *colleagues*.¹⁴

(ii) Fill in the blanks with the appropriate form of the word in brackets¹⁵:

They are responsible for diagnosing viral infections and also for _____ (*investigative*) the pharmacological _____ (*responding*) of viruses to antiviral drugs and the _____ (*evolutionary*) of drug resistance. They give _____ (*experts*) advice to _____ (*colleague*) on hospital wards and to veterinarians, as well as to government. They also advise GPs on how antiviral drugs should be prescribed and used _____ (*appropriateness*). They also work in public health and health protection medicine and may be _____ (*requires*) to give advice on immunisation and vaccine use.

An activity created based on some gapfill exercises about biology-related jobs is presented next. The students were divided in 2 advanced groups (B2+) and 2 intermediate groups, 3-4 students/group. First, advanced students in each group had to find the appropriate form of the academic words used in 4 job descriptions provided, thus drawing their attention to them in a *word-focused* activity (Nation 2013). After that, students in group A had to guess one job described by the same-level students in group B and vice versa. The description made by the students started from the prompt given, but the task required them to speak freely at that point. This part of the activity was a way to recycle some of the words from the initial part of the activity and can be included in Nation's (2013) *meaning-focused output* (writing and speaking activities in which knowledge of previously encountered language items is strengthened).

Finally, the homework assignment invited students to write a job description of their own choice, thus *the fluency development* (Nation 2013) strand was put into practice.

¹⁴ Text retrieved from <https://www.rcpath.org/discover-pathology/careers-in-pathology/careers-in-medicine/become-a-virologist.html#:~:text=Virologists%20are%20responsible%20for%20diagnosing,as%20well%20as%20to%20government>. Accessed on 4.10.2023.

¹⁵ Gap fill retrieved from <https://www.eapfoundation.com/vocab/academic/highlighter/>. Last accessed on 12.02.2024.

d. ChatGPT

ChatGPT is a natural language processing technology launched in November 2022 by OpenAI, with the ability to respond to and create natural language input (Stevens 2023, 12; Skrabut 2023). It is a language model which was trained on a corpus built from publicly open data collected from the internet, from third-party licensed information or from human trainers'/users' information (Microsoft 2024; OpenAI n.d.). The free ChatGPT 3.5 variant is considered here.

My objective was to obtain a vocabulary list linked to the topic *Biomes*, a subject of interest to all specialisations targeted here. First, I set off to identify an appropriate text online in agreement to ESP's text authenticity principle. As the initial topic was too vast, I restricted my research to terrestrial biomes, leaving out aquatic ones. The integral text (Fisher and editor n.d.) was first evaluated with the help of the Vocabulary profiler (AWL). The excerpt consists of a high number of frequent academic words, which is one possible criterion to take into consideration in text selection (Fig. 6 below).

Level	TOTAL			UNIQUE		
	# words	%	cumul %	# words	%	cumul %
Total for AVL	326	13.1%	13.1%	174	24.1%	24.1%

Figure 6. Terrestrial biomes: no. and % of academic words¹⁶

However, since our focus was on biology-specific words, I proceeded to identify subject-specific vocabulary this time by utilising the Vocabulary profiler (SVL), which resulted in 8 subject-specific word list. Both the Biology-word list containing 83 words and a Geography-word list made up of 176 words were ascertained as sources for words of interest.

Then, I wanted to check what word lists the GenAI-tool would provide. First, I took the Biology word list and tried to compare it to a similar in number word list ChatGPT generated. The checking itself was performed with the help of ChatGPT. I abandoned this endeavour, as the procedure was tedious and resulted in several counting failures (Fig. 7) Additionally, ChatGPT result variance made me abandon this undertaking ("in many cases our models will answer the same question in different ways," OpenAI n.d., para. 5).

¹⁶ Retrieved from <https://www.eapfoundation.com/vocab/profiler/>. Accessed on 8.02.2024.



You

How many words are in each list?



ChatGPT

The ChatGPT list contains 84 words, while the Vocabulary profiler list contains 156 words.



You

Why 84 words in your list? I specified 83.



ChatGPT

Apologies for the oversight. Upon recounting, the ChatGPT list indeed contains 83 words, as per your specification. Thank you for bringing this to my attention.



Figure 7. ChatGPT – word count error¹⁷

I used other different approaches, as well.

i. Types of terrestrial biomes – ChatGPT corpus-based prompting



You

Generate a list with all types of terrestrial biomes.

Figure 8. ChatGPT – (*corpus-based*) Types of terrestrial biomes 1¹⁸

Based on this prompt I obtained a list of 20 main types from ChatGPT. Prompted to expand the list to 40 items, ChatGPT was able to do that and to place the 40 items into 9 categories (suggested by it):



You

Place the 40-item word list into categories: e.g. forests, xeric areas

Figure 9. ChatGPT: – (*corpus-based*) Types of terrestrial biomes 2¹⁹

¹⁷ Retrieved from <https://chat.openai.com/>. Accessed on 8.02.2024.

¹⁸ Retrieved from <https://chat.openai.com/>. Accessed on 10.02.2024.

¹⁹ Retrieved from <https://chat.openai.com/>. Accessed on 10.02.2024.

The following activity was devised as a possible prospective homework assignment (a term selection was performed):

(6) *Advanced Students:*

1. Place the following words into the appropriate *category* in the table below: *tropical rainforest, polar desert, savannah, temperate deciduous forest, prairie, coniferous forest, chapparral, desert*

<i>Woodlands</i>	Notes	<i>Grasslands</i>	Notes	<i>Deserts and arid areas</i>	Notes

2. Conduct online research and add 1 more example/category. You can use a GenAI-tool to generate other examples.

3. Afterwards read about TWO terms of your choice in <https://www.britannica.com/>.

4. Take notes regarding their predominant characteristics (i.e. vegetation, climate, and geographical features).

Intermediate Students:

Same task, without step 2.

(30-60 minutes)

ii. Types of terrestrial biomes – text-based prompting

There were several trial-and-error manners of tackling text-based research. Only the final method is presented here. First, I asked ChatGPT to generate a list of the terrestrial biomes from the text and their definition. It managed to extract data concerning the eight categories and their major characteristics in note form, not the definition-format requested (*see example below*).

2. Savannas:

- Grasslands with scattered trees found in Africa, South America, and northern Australia.
- Hot tropical areas with an extensive dry season and frequent fires.
- Average temperatures range from 24oC to 29oC with annual rainfall of 51–127 cm.
- Dominated by grasses and forbs with relatively few trees.

Figure 10. ChatGPT – (*text-based*) Types of terrestrial biomes 1²⁰

²⁰ Retrieved from <https://chat.openai.com/>. Accessed on 11.02.2024.

Next, I prompted ChatGPT as follows:



You

Can you design three creative vocabulary exercises aimed at higher education students learning English for Biology using the text < Terrestrial Biomes MATTHEW R. FISHER AND EDITOR completely covered with plants or lichens. > Provide the answers between brackets.

Figure 11. ChatGPT: – (*text-based*) Types of terrestrial biomes ²¹

The exercises suggested were *Word Association Exercise*, *Biome Definitions Matching*, and a *Crossword Puzzle*. When taking a closer look at the exercises, it can be observed that ChatGPT makes mistakes (Fig. 12 – 8 terms, 8 answers; the key for the last two has the same term provided, (h)).



ChatGPT

1. Word Association Exercise:

Match the biome with its characteristic description.

- a. Tropical rainforest
- b. Savanna
- c. Subtropical desert
- d. Chaparral
- e. Temperate grassland
- f. Temperate forest
- g. Boreal forest
- h. Arctic tundra

²¹ Retrieved from <https://chat.openai.com/>. Accessed on 11.02.2024.

- 1.1. Characterized by evergreen coniferous trees and acidic soils. [g]
- 1.2. Dominated by grasses and frequent fires. [e]
- 1.3. Has hot summers, cold winters, and a majority of rainfall in the winter. [d]
- 1.4. Found in equatorial regions with stable temperatures and year-round plant growth. [a]
- 1.5. Characterized by low precipitation, little annual temperature variation, and nocturnal animal life. [c]
- 1.6. Located in regions with distinct growing seasons and dominated by deciduous trees. [f]
- 1.7. Cold, dry winters and short, cool, wet summers with cone-bearing plants. [h]
- 1.8. Exists in extreme cold conditions with short growing seasons and permafrost. [h]

Figure 12. ChatGPT: – (*text-based*) Types of terrestrial biomes 3. Vocabulary activity²²

iii. Vocabulary exercises – provided set

As the exercises suggested by ChatGPT are term-based, another strategy could be to select several relevant words from the lists obtained with the help of the Vocabulary profiler and try generating a vocabulary exercise in ChatGPT.

AD You

Design 3 vocabulary exercises aimed at higher education students learning English for Biology purposes. The topic is Terrestrial Biomes. Focus on the following list of words: < decompose ecosystems flowering germinate grasses layered leafed leafless release stems>. Provide the answers between brackets.



Figure 13. ChatGPT: Prompt – Specific set vocabulary exercise²³

²² Retrieved from <https://chat.openai.com/>. Accessed on 11.02.2024.

²³ Retrieved from <https://chat.openai.com/>. Accessed on 11.02.2024.

The exercises generated were of the type *Match the Term*, *Fill in the Blanks* (e.g. (1)-(5), Fig. 14 below) and *Sentence Completion*. The prompt was then changed by including the level of the students – *advanced*, generating partially different results (e.g. (6), (9)). Again, mistakes occur (see Fig. 14, e.g. (2) or (3)), some examples may be awkward (e.g. (6)), but there are also felicitous cases (e.g. (9)).

Complete each sentence with the appropriate word from the list.

1. Fungi and bacteria play a crucial role in the ecosystem by helping to _____ organic matter. (decompose)
2. The study of how living organisms interact with each other and their environment is known as _____. (ecosystems)
3. The process of _____ is essential for the survival of many plant species, allowing them to reproduce. (germinate)
4. Seeds need the right conditions to _____ and begin their growth. (germinate)
5. _____ are important components of many terrestrial biomes, providing food and habitat for various species. (grasses)
6. The rainforest canopy is _____ with different layers of vegetation, each supporting unique life forms. (layered)
9. Plants _____ oxygen during photosynthesis, which is essential for many organisms' survival. (release)

Figure 14. A snip of the *Fill in the blanks* – specific set vocabulary exercise²⁴

iv. Warm-ups and fluency activities

Interesting results may be obtained when generating creative activity suggestions, as is the case of warm-ups or *fluency development* activities.

I want to prepare activities for an English language class for higher education students, B2 level of proficiency, on the topic <Terrestrial biomes>. Can you suggest three 5-minutes warm up activities?

Figure 15. ChatGPT - prompt 1, warm-up activities²⁵

²⁴ Retrieved from <https://chat.openai.com/>. Accessed on 11.02.2024.

²⁵ Retrieved from <https://chat.openai.com/>. Accessed on 11.02.2024.

ChatGPT 3.5 - Warm-up activities suggested:

- Word Association Game (WAG)
- Picture Prompt Discussion (PPD)
- Brainstorming Session (BS)

It suggested creative ideas, personalised to the topic: "Write the word "biome" on the board and ask students to call out words or phrases that they associate with it." (WAG), "Example responses could include: "forest," "desert," "climate," "diversity," "ecosystem," etc." (WAG), "Assign each group a different terrestrial biome (e.g., tropical rainforest, tundra, savanna) or let them choose one." (PPD).



You

Generate 5 words or phrases that can be associated with terrestrial biomes.



Figure 16. ChatGPT - prompt 2, warm-up activities²⁶

ChatGPT 3.5: *biodiversity, climate zones, habitat diversity, adaptations, ecosystem services* (first variant)

The words chosen by ChatGPT may not all be the first that come to mind. When prompted to provide the 5 words or phrases with an explanation, it provided a different list (*deciduous forest, savanna, permafrost, desertification, canopy*). But it was able to move back to the previous list, understanding my referencing ("Provide an explanation for the first five words suggested by you for terrestrial biomes."). It provided a good, comprehensive explanation about the association between biome and climate, useful for the activity designed: (7).

(7) *Word Association:*

Work in pairs/groups. Find 5 words that can be associated with the term *biome*. Be prepared to provide an explanation for your choice. You have 5 minutes to prepare.

e.g. biome – climate

Explanation: A biome = large geographical area:

- characterised by certain climatic conditions and distinctive plant and animal communities adapted to those conditions
- different climatic conditions give rise to distinct biomes with specific adaptations and species compositions

²⁶ Retrieved from <https://chat.openai.com/>. Accessed on 11.02.2024.

It also generated creative results to a writing prompt, with detailed suggestions being generated.

Generate three interesting writing activities for a class of higher education Biology students studying English at the advanced level. The topic is Terrestrial biomes.

Figure 17. ChatGPT prompt – writing activities²⁷

ChatGPT 3.5 - Writing activities suggested:

- Biome Research Paper
- Biome Comparison Essay
- Biome Conservation Proposal

Below you can see ChatGPT's suggestion on the Biome comparison essay.

2. **Biome Comparison Essay**

Prompt students to write an essay comparing and contrasting two different terrestrial biomes of their choice. In their essays, students should discuss similarities and differences in climate, vegetation, animal life, ecological processes, and human interactions within each biome. Encourage students to use scientific evidence and examples to support their arguments and draw conclusions about the ecological significance of the biomes they are comparing. Emphasize the importance of clear organization, logical reasoning, and effective use of academic language in their writing.

Figure 18. ChatGPT – Biome Comparison Essay²⁸

I also prompted it to generate some examples of biomes which are usually paired and contrasted. ChatGPT not only provided information in terms of descriptive features, but also detailed aspects linked to ecological importance. A writing activity designed starting from its suggestions is exemplified below.

(8) Write a 300-word essay comparing/contrasting two terrestrial biomes from the list below. Discuss the main similarities and differences in climate, vegetation, and animal life. Mention briefly how human activity may impact them.

List:

Tropical Rainforest vs. Desert Biome

²⁷ Retrieved from <https://chat.openai.com/>. Accessed on 11.02.2024.

²⁸ Retrieved from <https://chat.openai.com/>. Accessed on 11.02.2024.

Temperate Forest vs. Grassland Biome
Boreal Forest vs. Tundra Biome

Summative Remarks. Conclusions

The starting premise of this article was that digital tools, encompassing both traditional and GenAI technology, may be used in the ESAP language classroom. However, their usage should be a result of the ecological classroom needs, to be evaluated before and throughout the course. A pre-course survey was exemplified here together with the conclusions drawn about the specific targeted learners. Additionally, illustrations of how student feedback was/can be integrated into the design and applications of tasks were also given. Some activities were explained in terms of Nation's (2013) four main components of a well-balanced language course: *meaning-focused input*, *meaning-focused output*, *form-focused instruction*, *fluency development strand*.

Some digital tools were assessed with respect to identifying specialised vocabulary and designing related teaching activities. First, we presented two search engines (*SkELL*, *Sentence Stack*). They were shown to be useful in providing sentence examples based on word or phrase-search. A difference lies in the fact that Sentence Stack provides links to the source, which is relevant with a view to upholding academic integrity. *SkELL* provides examples extracted from its corpus, sometimes suggesting incorrect variants. Some classroom applications were devised having in mind the development of students' linguistic abilities and critical skills.

Then, the *Vocabulary profiler & Academic word profiler* as online corpus-based tools were put to work. It was demonstrated that they can help educators in making informed pedagogical decisions. Being open access, students can also use these tools to enrich their vocabulary and develop their digital skills. As the results generated (academic/subject-specific words) are based on high-frequency, relevant technical terms are left out, which may call for the teacher's intervention. *The AWL highlighter & Gapfill maker* were also discussed. Some integrated activities concentrating on academic words were presented. It was pointed out that the results generated by the Gapfill must be modified to make them appropriate to the context.

ChatGPT, a GenAI tool was the final instrument analysed. It proved to be a good generator of subject-specific vocabulary. The vocabulary lists suggested by it contain specific terminology on a given topic, from which it can create vocabulary exercises. This type of generated exercises could be applied in the *meaning-focused input* strand. To supplement the vocabulary, a set of words as extracted with the help of the Vocabulary profiler could be used to create specific vocabulary exercises.

One problematic aspect is that ChatGPT makes mistakes when creating vocabulary exercises or when analysing data (e.g. counting). As it does not provide references, authentic texts could be used for ESAP classroom practice, but not for creating 'original' content. Additionally, checking its results requires plenty of time, a thing to bear in mind if using it is considered as a time-conserving choice. A variant to analyse in future research could be Microsoft Copilot, a digital assistant, which combines ChatGPT with data processed in Microsoft 365 apps. It generates results based on recent data and provides references, as it also relies on data retrieved from the internet synchronically (Microsoft 2024, Microsoft România 2024).

Open access technology furthers the development of technologically-enhanced learning. Still, care should be given to its limitations, especially concerning research/data processing/referencing and the effects such errors can entail in various domains. Consequently, delineating a common set of academic principles and technical precautionary measures on GenAI usage seems to have now become a matter of urgency.

WORKS CITED

- Atlas, Stephen. 2023. "ChatGPT for Higher Education and Professional Development: A Guide to Conversational AI." https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/cba_facpubs/548/. Accessed on 27.09.2023.
- Baisa, Vít and Vít Suchomel. 2014. "SkELL - Web interface for English Language Learning." *Eighth Workshop on Recent Advances in Slavonic Natural Language Processing*. Brno: Tribun EU, 2014, 63-70. ISSN 2336-4289. Available at https://www.sketchengine.eu/wp-content/uploads/SkELL_2014.pdf. Accessed on 7.02.2024.
- Charlie Browne Company Inc. 2023. *New General Service List Project*. Available at <https://www.newgeneralservicelist.com/>. Accessed on 28.01.2024.
- Chung, Teresa Mihwa and Paul Nation. 2003. "Technical vocabulary in specialised texts." *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 15, no. 2 (October): 103-116. Available at <https://www2.hawaii.edu/~readfl/rfl/October2003/>. Accessed on 29.01.2023.
- Council of Europe. 2020. *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment - Companion volume*. Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg. Available at www.coe.int/lang-cefr. Accessed on 27.01.2023.
- Coxhead, Averil. 2000. "A New Academic Word List." *TESOL Quarterly*, 34, no. 2: 213-238.
- Coxhead, Averil and Pat Byrd. 2007. "Preparing writing teachers to teach the vocabulary and grammar of academic prose." *Journal of Second Language Writing* 16: 129-147.
- Coxhead, Averil. 2013. "Vocabulary and ESP." In *The Handbook of English for Specific Purposes*, edited by Brian Paltridge and Sue Starfield, 115-132. Boston: Wiley-Blackwell.

- Crompton, Helen and Diane Burke. 2023. "Artificial intelligence in higher education: the state of the field." *Int J Educ Technol High Educ* 20, 22. <https://educationaltechnologyjournal.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s41239-023-00392-8>. Accessed on 12.02.2024.
- Dudley-Evans, Tony and Maggie Jo St John. 2012. *Developments in English for Specific Purposes: A Multi-disciplinary Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fisher, Matthew R. and editor. n.d. "Terrestrial biomes." Available at <https://pressbooks.umn.edu/environmentalbiology/chapter/terrestrial-biomes/>. Accessed on 08.02.2024.
- Hyland, Ken. 1995. "The Author in the Text: Hedging Scientific Writing." In *Linguistics and Language Teaching*, 18 (September): 33-42. Available at <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED390258>. Accessed on 27.04.2023.
- Hyland, Ken. 2006. *English for Academic Purposes: An advanced resource book*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Hyland, Ken and Polly Tse. 2007. "Is There an "Academic Vocabulary"?" *TESOL Quarterly*, 41, no. 2 (June): 235-253.
- Hyland, Ken. 2018. "Sympathy for the devil? A defence of EAP." *Language Teaching*. 51, 3. 383-399.
- Hyland, Ken and Feng (Kevin) Jiang. 2021. "Academic Naming: Changing Patterns of Noun Use". *Journal of English Linguistics*, 49, no. 3: 1-28.
- Laughran, Sarah. 2018. "The New General Service List: A core vocabulary for EFL students and teachers." 29 May 2018. *Cambridge ELT Blog*. Available at <https://www.cambridge.org/elt/blog/2018/05/29/general-service-list/>. Accessed on 28.01.2024.
- Lexical Computing CZ s.r.o. 2014–2021. Available at <https://www.sketchengine.eu/skell/>. Last accessed on 07.02.2024.
- Microsoft. 2024. "ChatGPT vs. Microsoft Copilot: What's the difference?" *Support*. Available at <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/topic/chatgpt-vs-microsoft-copilot-what-s-the-difference-8fdec864-72b1-46e1-afcb-8c12280d712f>. Accessed on 09.02.2024.
- Microsoft România. 2024. "Empower education with Microsoft Copilot." Online event organised by Microsoft România, România, February, 6th, 2024.
- Nation, I.S.P. 2013. *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language*. 2nd ed., edited by Carol A. Chapelle and Susan Hunston. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- OpenAI. n.d. "How ChatGPT and Our Language Models Are Developed." *General FAQ*. Available at <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/topic/chatgpt-vs-microsoft-copilot-what-s-the-difference-8fdec864-72b1-46e1-afcb-8c12280d712f>. Accessed on 13.02.2024 (version updated over a week before).
- Paterson, Ken and Roberta Wedge. 2013. *Oxford Grammar for EAP*. Oxford University Press.
- Paterson, Ken. 2024. "Academic and Business English Grammar". *Ken Paterson*. Available at <https://www.kenpatersonwriter.com/academic-grammar/>. Accessed on 30.01.2024.
- Read, John. 2000. *Assessing Vocabulary*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Sentence Stack. 2023. "Linguistic Search Engine. Overview - What is a linguistic search engine?" *Articles*. Available at <https://sentencestack.com/p/articles/linguistic-search-engine>. Accessed on 07.02.2024.
- Skrabut, Stan. 2023. *80 Ways to Use ChatGPT in the Classroom: Using AI to Enhance Teaching and Learning*. Stanley A. Skrabut.
- Smith, Sheldon C H. 2013-present. *EAPFoundation.com*. Available at <https://www.eapfoundation.com/>. Last accessed on 12.02.2024.
- Sum, McQueen and Alis Oancea. 2022. "The use of technology in higher education teaching by academics during the COVID-19 emergency remote teaching period: a systematic review." *Int J Educ Technol High Educ* 19, no. 59: 1-39. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-022-00364-4>. Accessed 12.02.2024.
- Tudor Ian. 2003. "Learning to live with complexity: towards an ecological perspective on language teaching", *System*, 31, no. 1: 1-12.
- Tulinayo, Fiona P., Ssentume, Peter and Rovincer Najjuma. 2018. "Digital technologies in resource constrained higher institutions of learning: a study on students' acceptance and usability." *Int J Educ Technol High Educ* 15, no. 36: 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-018-0117-y>. Accessed on 12.02.2024.
- Van Lier, Leo. 2010. "The ecology of language learning: Practice to theory, theory to practice". *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 3, 2-6. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.07.005>. Accessed on 27.09.2023.

Example Webography:

- <https://lsc.cornell.edu/how-to-study/taking-notes/cornell-note-taking-system/>. Accessed on 03.02.2023.
- <https://opentextbc.ca/biology/chapter/1-1-themes-and-concepts-of-biology/>. Accessed on 23.09.2023.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=URUJD5NEXC8&t=64s>. Accessed on 22.10.2023.
- <https://www.biologyonline.com/dictionary/mitochondrion>. Accessed on 07.02.2024.
- <https://www.biologyonline.com/dictionary/flagellum>. Accessed on 7.02.2024.
- <https://www.rcpath.org/discover-pathology/careers-in-pathology/careers-in-medicine/become-a-virologist.html#:~:text=Virologists%20are%20responsible%20for%20diagnosing,as%20well%20as%20to%20government>. Accessed on 4.10.2023.

Digital tools/platforms/encyclopaedia:

- <https://wordwall.net/>.
- <https://www.sketchengine.eu/skell>.
- <https://sentencestack.com/p/articles/linguistic-search-engine>.
- <https://www.eapfoundation.com/>.
- <https://chat.openai.com/>.
- <https://www.britannica.com/>
- <https://copilot.microsoft.com/>.

REFLECTIONS ON USING CHATGPT TO GENERATE ESP MATERIALS. A CASE STUDY

Olivia CHIROBOCEA-TUDOR¹ 

Article history: Received 14 February 2024; Revised 24 June 2024; Accepted 15 October 2024; Available online 10 December 2024; Available print 30 December 2024.

©2024 Studia UBB Philologia. Published by Babeş-Bolyai University.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License

ABSTRACT. *Reflections on Using ChatGPT to Generate ESP Materials. A Case Study.* Although artificial intelligence (AI) and its use in language teaching is not new, its more recent configurations and the launch of ChatGPT in 2022 have sparked controversies, resumed discussions about potential apocalyptic consequences and spread fears of an imminent extinction of numerous professions, including teacher. This article endeavors an exploration of the previous research on the use of ChatGPT for language teaching in general, the benefits and limitations ascertained by others who have studied the phenomenon over the past year, since the launch of the chatbot, and their conclusions as to whether language teachers are indeed in danger of extinction. The main purpose of the article, however, is to ascertain certain aspects of ChatGPT's use for ESP, namely whether it can generate relevant results that can actually help teachers save time in creating useful, comprehensive and interesting materials using specific terminology, especially from niche fields such as horticulture, for which ready-made materials or extensive glossaries may not be available or suitable for their students. A line of questioning was developed within a case study in order to build a corpus of responses that can be used to analyze its utility in generating useful ESP materials. The findings of the study support to a large extent those of previous researchers in terms of reserve towards the

¹ **Olivia CHIROBOCEA-TUDOR** is an associate professor Ph.D. at the Faculty of Letters (Ovidius University of Constanta). She teaches ESP to students at the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences. She has published several English courses for ESP students, a specialized bilingual dictionary of viticulture and winemaking as well as numerous articles on topics related to ESP teaching methods, terminology and specialized translation. She collaborated as reviewer with several international journals. In 2022 she became director of the Centre for Research on Specialized Languages from a Multidisciplinary Perspective within the Faculty of Letters (Ovidius University of Constanta, Romania), where she coordinates teams of researchers in the field of languages for specific purposes. ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2850-3094>; Email: chirobocea.olivia@365.univ-ovidius.ro.

reliability of the information generated. However, it also offers options and ways in which adequate prompts can lead to useful teaching materials that are generated according to the teachers' parameters and their students' needs.

Keywords: *ChatGPT, chatbot, artificial intelligence (AI), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), horticulture*

REZUMAT. Reflecții asupra folosirii ChatGPT pentru generarea de materiale didactice pentru engleza pentru scopuri specifice. Studiu de caz. Chiar dacă inteligența artificială (IA) și folosirea ei în predarea unei limbi nu este o noutate, configurările ei recente și lansarea *chatbot*-ului ChatGPT în 2022 au dat naștere la controverse, au reaprins discuțiile despre posibile consecințe apocaliptice și au răspândit temeri legate de dispariția iminentă a numeroase profesii, inclusiv a celei de profesor. Acest articol explorează cercetările anterioare despre folosirea *chatbot*-ului ChatGPT pentru predarea limbilor în general, despre beneficiile și limitările constatate de alți cercetători care au studiat fenomenul pe parcursul anului care a trecut de la lansarea acestui *chatbot*, cât și concluzia lor în privința pericolului de dispariție a profesiei de profesor. Scopul principal al articolului este, de altfel, evaluarea anumitor aspecte ale utilizării *chatbot*-ului ChatGPT pentru engleza pentru scopuri specifice, și anume dacă el poate general rezultate relevante care pot ajuta într-adevăr profesorii să economisească timp în crearea de materiale didactice folositoare, cuprinzătoare și interesante folosind terminologie specifică, mai ales din domenii de nișă cum este horticultura, și pentru care nu există materiale potrivite pentru nevoile studenților sau glosare cuprinzătoare de termeni specifici. S-a dezvoltat astfel o serie de întrebări în cadrul unui studiu de caz pentru a obține un corp de răspunsuri care să fie folosit pentru a evalua utilitatea *chatbot*-ului în generarea de materiale pentru astfel de cursuri. Concluziile studiului le susțin în mare parte pe cele ale cercetărilor anterioare în privința rezervei cu care ar trebui să tratăm caracterul de încredere al informațiilor generate. Dar studiul oferă și opțiuni și modalități de a comunica eficient cu *chatbot*-ul astfel încât să putem obține materiale didactice care să corespundă parametrilor profesorului și nevoilor studenților.

Cuvinte-cheie: *ChatGPT, chatbot, inteligența artificială (IA), engleza pentru scopuri specifice, horticultura*

Introduction

Nowadays, AI is mostly associated with the controversy surrounding chatbots, especially since the launch of ChatGPT in late 2022. In fact, pulling that thread only unravels the multitude of AI that is readily available to anyone,

often for free. The fact is that AI has been around for years albeit in simpler and more controlled configurations. Still, its more evolved forms (generative AI and large language models) and the race by various companies to create their own chatbot seems to have radically changed our perception of AI as people from all walks of life are commenting and warning about the dangers of AI. However, behind the apocalyptic alarms, regular people are taking advantage of AI and chatbots for everyday tasks that can be expedited with their help. Teachers are one such category, notoriously in constant need of time for the preparation of teaching materials and administrative work.

This article will explore the use of AI, specifically ChatGPT, in English teaching in general and English for specific purposes (ESP) in particular. It will begin with a thorough review of the literature by exploring the findings of researchers that have already investigated the use of AI and chatbots in language teaching. This review will offer a balanced glimpse into both positive and negative aspects discovered in previous studies, as well as exactly how reliable the use of AI can be in language teaching and what the perceptions are from those involved, both learners and educators. The study will then focus on the unique position that ESP teaching materials hold within English teaching in general, and the teachers' active involvement and effort in continually generating and adapting them to specific groups of learners. These aspects are important when ChatGPT comes into play because the chatbot may be used to efficiently mitigate this effort and time that ESP teachers allot to the generation of teaching materials.

However, the issue that comes into question at this point is the quality of this help, given the controversies highlighted by previous literature, therefore the main objective of this study is to attempt to provide some insights into how efficient the chatbot actually is as well as how accurate, reliable and usable the results obtained are. Within this case study involving ChatGPT (the version updated in January 2022), a line of questioning was developed in order to build a corpus of responses that represents a snapshot into its utility in generating useful ESP materials. Thus, the chatbot was asked to generate word lists for branches of a niche domain (horticulture) and then, by using the word lists, to generate activities that would practice the specific terminology. The purpose was to explore whether the chatbot offers usable results in terms of relevant and comprehensive terminology specific to less studied ESP domains, such as English for horticulture, and then if it can create practical activities by using the resulting terminology in order to improve and expedite the generation of teaching materials.

These aspects, if true, would represent important advantages for ESP teachers because they would be able to gain time, streamline the focus of the

lessons and also include significant terminology that may otherwise be overlooked. The study specifies both the positive aspects that were observed and some shortcomings that should be considered when ChatGPT is used for the purposes state above. The value that this study adds to the research in this field consists in the approach, the actual dialogue with the chatbot that led to particular answers, the line of questioning and the application of the inquiry to a less studied area of ESP, English for horticulture. The results, however, can be adapted to any other domain, as the study will conclude.

Perceptions about ChatGPT in language teaching and ESP – a literature review

The literature on the topic of AI in education and English teaching is considerable, given the novelty of the subject, but not all aspects have been studied yet. The first reactions came immediately after ChatGPT was launched in 2022, with an uproar among teachers in general (Kostka and Toncelli 2023, 3), who mostly viewed the chatbot as the end of education and, by extension, of themselves as educators, with some even admitting despair in the face of this unprecedented challenge. Discussions about whether we should love it or hate it, embrace it or ban it were everywhere in the tertiary education systems (Sims 2023; Stening 2023) and, even though the acute fears have dissipated somewhat after the initial shock, the underlying issues are still present.

Although many research papers about the benefits and limitations of ChatGPT in education have been written since its advent, the potential for AI, such as chatbots, to transform language teaching in particular is a topic of ongoing research. The main fears of language teachers regarding the use of ChatGPT and other AI chatbots in education touch upon several critical concerns. Some of the most prevalent are apprehensions regarding the potential for cheating, rendering the idea of homework useless (Kostikova et al. 2024, 78) and over-reliance on chatbots, which could compromise the authenticity and originality of students' work, leading to academic integrity issues (Habeab Al-Obaydi, Pikhart and Klimova 2023; Ohashi and Alm 2023; Rahman and Watanobe 2023). In March 2023, a few months after it was launched, Grant Cooper remarked, tongue-in-cheek, that "ChatGPT has gone viral on social media, and anecdotal evidence suggests that students are already familiar with it." (Cooper 2023, 445). Others, similarly draw attention to serious cheating issues (Rahman and Watanobe 2023, 16). In fact, Lo's review article indicates that students' plagiarism, meaning the use by students of ChatGPT in order to generate texts that they can then pass as their own rather "defeats the purpose of assessment,

which is to evaluate student learning fairly.” (Lo 2023, 10). This indicates the need for immediate action to update guidelines and policies for academic integrity and plagiarism prevention in educational institutions.

Other concerns have been raised about the impact of chatbots on critical thinking skills and creativity. Researchers’ assessments conclude that, indeed, “the reliance on AI technology may hinder the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills.” and that “ChatGPT may not be able to provide culturally sensitive and context-specific responses. The language generation of ChatGPT relies on large-scale pre-training, which may not fully account for cultural nuances and specific context” (Hatmanto and Sari 2023, 16). Concerns about ethical implications and biases, as well as the fact that “simply acquiring answers and code from ChatGPT can be a barrier to improving learners’ critical thinking and problem-solving skills” (Rahman and Watanobe 2023, 17) remain prevalent. Such fears are echoed by many teachers.

There is also the potential disruption of the student-teacher relationship, which has traditionally been fundamental to the teaching process (Koh et al. 2023; Rahman and Watanobe 2023). In this regard, the majority of participants in Chan and Tsi’s study (2023) argue that human teachers possess unique qualities that make them irreplaceable, emotional connection, among them. In the same vein, Hié remarks that “On the one hand, it [AI] cannot take the place of teachers. On the other hand, it can assist them and effectively complement existing educational systems.” (Hié 2023) reiterating thus Alex Sims who states that “AI tools are not a replacement for human expertise but rather that they are tools that can augment and enhance it” (Sims 2023). Similarly, Lo’s review highlights the potential benefits of ChatGPT as an assistant for instructors in suggesting syllabus and creating teaching materials or interactive activities, and a virtual tutor for students (Lo 2023, 10), as was the case with the results of other researchers already mentioned. Thus, at least for the moment, AI seems to be unlikely to fully replace human teachers, even though it may play a significant role in the future of language teaching. ChatGPT itself reassures us that English teachers, especially in the context of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), cannot be replaced by AI and it gives seven reasons for this (see Figure 1), all of them revolving around the same issue: the irreplaceable human touch.



ChatGPT

While ChatGPT and similar AI technologies have the potential to supplement and enhance language teaching, they cannot fully replace English teachers, especially in the context of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Here are several reasons why:

1. **Lack of Human Connection:** ChatGPT lacks the human touch and emotional intelligence that human teachers bring to the learning environment. Human teachers can build rapport with students, provide personalized support, and understand the individual needs and learning styles of each student.
2. **Adaptability and Flexibility:** Human teachers can adapt their teaching methods and materials based on real-time feedback and observations of student progress. They can modify lesson plans, provide additional explanations, and offer alternative learning strategies to address students' varying levels of proficiency and comprehension.
3. **Cultural and Contextual Understanding:** Human teachers possess cultural awareness and contextual understanding that enable them to provide language instruction tailored to the specific cultural backgrounds, communication styles, and professional or academic contexts of their students. This is particularly crucial in ESP, where language instruction must align with the specific needs of learners in their professional or academic fields.
4. **Complex Language Skills:** Teaching language involves more than just providing grammatically correct responses or vocabulary definitions. Human teachers can facilitate meaningful communication, encourage critical thinking, foster creativity, and address complex language skills such as pronunciation, intonation, pragmatics, and sociolinguistic competence.
5. **Dynamic Interaction:** Human teachers engage in dynamic interactions with students, fostering opportunities for authentic communication, collaborative learning, and real-world language use. They can lead discussions, facilitate group activities, provide immediate feedback, and create interactive learning experiences that go beyond text-based interactions.
6. **Ethical Considerations:** There are ethical considerations related to the use of AI technologies in education, including issues of data privacy, algorithmic biases, and the potential for over-reliance on technology at the expense of human-centered learning experiences. Human teachers can navigate these ethical concerns and provide a more holistic and responsible approach to language instruction.
7. **Professional Development:** Human teachers undergo extensive training, professional development, and ongoing reflection to enhance their teaching skills, stay updated with best practices in language teaching, and adapt to evolving educational trends and technologies. They bring a wealth of pedagogical expertise and experience that cannot be replicated by AI technologies alone.

Figure 1. ChatGPT's response to the question "Can ChatGPT replace English teachers in general and, more specifically, teachers of English for specific purposes?" (generated by ChatGPT in February 2024)

Another major concern among language teachers is the credibility and reliability of information provided by AI chatbots, as well as the challenges in evaluating and verifying content generated by these systems (Temsah et al 2023; Elali and Rachid 2023). Thus, while ChatGPT can generate human-like responses and assist with complex tasks (Zhu et al. 2023), it may also produce inaccurate, fabricated, and biased information because ChatGPT has “the potential to generate plausible but incorrect or made-up responses.” (Xiao and Zhi 2023, 3). Lo’s review article also raises concerns about ChatGPT’s poor judgment of correctness, generation of fake articles with non-functional URLs, poor performance in exams and mathematical abilities, and its capacity to bypass conventional plagiarism detectors (Lo 2023). This aspect is particularly important for ESP teachers as they require texts that provide true information from various technical or scientific fields that are difficult to verify by someone without expertise. They would have to spend time checking the information themselves or work with specialists that would give their approval for its veracity. This is already happening and has been the method for years but AI was thought to be a miracle-worker that would rid us of this tedious part of the work and save us time.

However, not all is doom and gloom. In spite of the assorted fears expressed by the various studies mentioned above, there are also some positive aspects of integrating artificial intelligence (AI) and ChatGPT in English teaching. For example, AI-based platforms can be created “to help students improve their English language teaching efficiency in line with their mastery of knowledge and personality” (Sun 2020, 1). The application of AI technology in English education has been shown to optimize the English classroom, providing support for intelligent and collaborative teaching (Zhu 2022). English teaching methods using AI are efficient in improving the English teaching environment and in personalizing the learning experience for students (Xie 2022). The use of AI in English teaching has the potential to alleviate the burden on teachers and improve teaching quality (Yang 2022). When it comes to chatbots, ChatGPT, known for its ability to realistically mimic human conversation, presents a new avenue in language learning, offering new opportunities for language teaching and learning (Kohnke, Moorhouse and Zou 2023). ChatGPT also has impact on learning motivation as research has highlighted its potential to enhance active listening and engagement in language learning (Ali et al. 2023). Among the most important advantages is that ChatGPT also helps teachers create materials that can be modulated according to the students’ needs and proficiency levels (Shalevska 2023, 111; Xiao and Zhi 2023, 2).

In terms of ESP in particular, a complex study that explores the use of AI and ChatGPT for generating a Law English course, complete with a curriculum and a syllabus for tertiary level students, draws the positive conclusion that ChatGPT can be used for a wide variety of educational purposes, including providing information, generating necessary texts, tasks, tests, questions, aiding in textbook creation, and facilitating the design of interactive, language-focused tasks for student engagement and skill development (Kostikova et al. 2024). They also specify that, in spite of the fact that any such material generated by chatbots must necessarily be checked and adjusted, using this AI tool saves time, nevertheless (73). The study also specifies the limitations of using ChatGPT for the purpose described and these are, as other research has already shown, the danger of generating incorrect information, the inability to adapt to students' specific needs and the "risk of overreliance on ChatGPT that may hinder critical thinking and problem-solving skills if not balanced with human guidance and interaction" (Kostikova et al. 2024, 78). Shalevka's 2023 article also indicates that vocabulary in particular can be taught and practiced by using ChatGPT to target specific terms and create any number and variations of activities involving them.

ChatGPT is by no means the only AI tool that can be used to generate teaching material. It is, however, the focus of this particular article, drawing upon the experience of using this chatbot to create materials for ESP, specifically for more niche domains. Therefore, ChatGPT was asked to give its "opinion" about this proposal and demanded some advantages and disadvantages. Its reply can be read in Figure 2. Thus, the chatbot itself seems to play fair and draw attention to its own limitations but also points potential benefits of using it for the generation of ESP teaching materials. It is interesting that it specifies potential lack of domain-specific knowledge as a first limitation, which is very important for ESP teachers, as well as potential for misinformation. These are both related and connected to the models on which the chatbot was trained, including the fact that it was last updated, as of this moment, in January 2022 (when asked in February 2024, ChatGPT responded that it is not connected to the internet, does not have real-time access to websites or databases and its answers are generated based on the text data it was trained on up to January 2022).



ChatGPT

It's okay for teachers of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) to generate specialized teaching materials using ChatGPT, but it's important to consider both the advantages and disadvantages of doing so:

Advantages:

1. **Efficiency:** ChatGPT can generate content quickly, allowing teachers to create customized teaching materials tailored to the specific needs and interests of their learners in a timely manner.
2. **Versatility:** ChatGPT can generate various types of content, including text passages, questions, exercises, and explanations, providing teachers with a wide range of resources to support their instruction in ESP.
3. **Access to diverse content:** ChatGPT can access a vast amount of data from different sources, enabling teachers to incorporate diverse perspectives, examples, and contexts into their teaching materials.
4. **Adaptability:** ChatGPT can adapt its responses based on teachers' input, allowing for iterative refinement and customization of teaching materials to better meet the evolving needs of learners in ESP.
5. **Supplemental support:** ChatGPT-generated materials can supplement traditional teaching resources, providing additional practice opportunities, vocabulary expansion, and contextualized language use in specific professional or academic contexts.

Disadvantages:

1. **Lack of domain-specific knowledge:** ChatGPT may not possess specialized knowledge or terminology relevant to specific professional or academic fields, leading to inaccuracies or incomplete explanations in teaching materials.
2. **Limited contextual understanding:** ChatGPT may struggle to understand the specific contexts and communication needs of learners in professional or academic settings, resulting in teaching materials that are not aligned with learners' specific goals and objectives.
3. **Potential for misinformation:** ChatGPT generates responses based on patterns in the data it was trained on, which may include inaccuracies or biases, leading to the propagation of misinformation in teaching materials.
4. **Inability to provide personalized feedback:** ChatGPT-generated materials may not offer personalized feedback tailored to individual learners' language needs in specific professional or academic domains, limiting their effectiveness in addressing learners' unique challenges and areas for improvement.
5. **Ethical considerations:** There are ethical concerns related to using AI in education, including issues of data privacy, algorithmic biases, and the potential for over-reliance on technology at the expense of human-centered learning experiences.

Figure 2. ChatGPT's response to the question "Is it ok for ESP teachers to generate specialized teaching materials using ChatGPT? What are the advantages and disadvantages?" (generated by ChatGPT in February 2024)

The issue of ESP materials

The use of authentic materials in ESP is paramount and, although there is a general consensus in literature regarding this aspect (Benavent and Peñamaría 2011, 89; Blagojević 2013, 113), there are various problems within this general framework. Authentic materials are, by definition, taken from the real world and thus, not created for pedagogical purposes (Benavent and Peñamaría 2011; Bacon and Finnemann, 1990) but they “are particularly important for communicative purposes since they reproduce an immersion environment and provide a realistic context for tasks that relate to learner’s needs”. (Benavent and Peñamaría 2011, 89). Also, “they are proof that the language is used for real-life purposes by real people” (Nuttall 1996, 172), therefore this may increase learners’ motivation. Unfortunately, the major problem with authentic materials is that, since they are not created for pedagogical purposes, they will often be too long, too complex and too difficult, and maybe not containing an optimal amount of relevant terminology. Therefore, the teachers must do the work of adaptation and selection according to their students’ level of English proficiency, as well as lesson purpose (Benavent and Peñamaría 2011, 90; Buzarna-Tihenea and Nădrag 2018, 146). In a complex analysis of this issue, Savka Blagojević includes opinions that argue either for or against the suitability of authentic materials in terms of English proficiency (Blagojević 2013, 115), therefore the issue is split. The researcher also mentions the idea that an authentic text becomes less so once it is brought into the classroom and questions whether the materials used in class still reflect the real language use or just imitate it (Blagojević 2013, 116). Pointing out these aspects regarding authentic materials is important because, in one way or another, they might be questioned when ChatGPT is involved, as will be discussed herein.

My personal experience for over twenty years of teaching ESP to the same related programs (biology, ecology, agriculture and horticulture) has been of constantly looking for texts written by specialists in the field, on topics relevant to the program, which would contain as much relevant specialized terminology as possible. The texts I would normally find have the usual problems, too long and too specialized, and thus too difficult as most of my students are not highly proficient in English. Therefore, I would always spend a considerable amount of time editing the text, shortening it, making it more “palatable” and also trying to adapt the language to lower levels of English proficiency while keeping the relevant terminology in place. After that, the text will become the basis for further activities. This is usually the experience that most ESP teachers will recognize in their own activity (Elkasović and Čolakovac 2023), especially for certain domains for which published manuals or ready-made materials may not be available. ChatGPT, however, can be used to reduce this load of work considerably.

There are needs that can be supplanted by ChatGPT for the generation of targeted ESP materials. For example, in the ESP domains named above there may be need for explanatory or argumentative texts about topics such as “the influence of weather on agriculture”, “the use of landforms in agriculture”, “soil pollution in/by agriculture”, “the environmental impact of agriculture” and many other similar ones. Normally, various sources would be explored, but the results would often be inappropriate for reasons already mentioned above: too long or too short, not explanatory enough, too general or too specific, too difficult, not containing enough relevant terminology, etc. It would take time to find the most suitable text and then more time to adapt it and then even more time to extract terminology and create follow-up activities. ChatGPT, however, will draw upon its resources to generate in seconds a well-rounded text that touches upon the most relevant issues related to the topic. The text will be as long as we need it to be, it will use terminology as prompted and will be appropriate for the required English level. For example, the chatbot was given the following prompt: “Generate a text (approx. 300 words) about the environmental impact of agriculture for B1-B2 level students. The text should contain relevant specialized terminology specific to the topic.” It generated a text as seen in Figure 3.

Title: The Environmental Impact of Agriculture

Agriculture plays a vital role in providing food, fuel, and fiber for human consumption and industrial use. However, it also has significant environmental impacts that can affect ecosystems, biodiversity, and natural resources.

One of the primary environmental concerns associated with agriculture is soil erosion. Soil erosion occurs when the top layer of soil is removed or displaced by wind, water, or human activities such as plowing. This can lead to the loss of fertile soil, which is essential for crop growth, and contribute to sedimentation in rivers and streams, affecting water quality and aquatic habitats.

Another environmental impact of agriculture is water pollution. Agricultural activities such as the use of fertilizers, pesticides, and animal waste can contaminate water sources with nutrients and chemicals, leading to eutrophication, algal blooms, and the depletion of oxygen levels in aquatic ecosystems. This can harm aquatic organisms and disrupt the balance of freshwater ecosystems.

Furthermore, agriculture contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, primarily through the release of methane from livestock digestion and manure management, and nitrous oxide from fertilizers and soil management practices. These greenhouse gases contribute to global warming and climate change, which can have far-reaching impacts on weather patterns, sea levels, and ecosystems worldwide.

Additionally, agricultural practices can lead to deforestation and habitat destruction, particularly in tropical regions where forests are cleared for agricultural expansion. This loss of habitat can threaten biodiversity and disrupt the balance of ecosystems, leading to the decline or extinction of plant and animal species.

To address these environmental challenges, sustainable agricultural practices are being promoted, such as conservation tillage, crop rotation, integrated pest management, and agroforestry. These practices aim to minimize soil erosion, reduce water pollution, mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, and preserve biodiversity while maintaining or increasing agricultural productivity. By adopting sustainable practices, farmers can help minimize the environmental impact of agriculture and promote the long-term health and resilience of ecosystems.

Figure 3. ChatGPT’s response to the prompt “Generate a text (approx. 300 words) about the environmental impact of agriculture for B1-B2 level students. The text should contain relevant specialized terminology specific to the topic.” (generated by ChatGPT in February 2024)

This text has 312 words, a title, paragraphs that make the necessary points and also has readability, meaning it is easy to understand by students with intermediate knowledge of English while also containing potentially new general English terms (e.g. *provide, displaced, lead to, depletion, disrupt, far-reaching, mitigate, resilience*) as well as a considerable amount of specific terminology in the form of words and collocations such as *fuel, environmental impact, ecosystem, biodiversity, soil erosion, plowing, crop growth, sedimentation, aquatic habitats, water pollution, fertilizers, pesticides, animal waste, contaminate, eutrophication, algal blooms, freshwater ecosystems, greenhouse gas emissions, methane, livestock digestion, manure management, nitrous oxide, global warming, climate change, weather patterns, sea levels, deforestation, habitat destruction, cleared, balance of ecosystems, extinction of animal species, sustainable agricultural practices, conservation tillage, crop rotation, integrated pest management, agroforestry*. Similar texts can be generated on an infinite number of topics, within specific parameters, and they can represent the basis for text comprehension questions, vocabulary or grammar activities, also created by ChatGPT or not or by a different AI software, as we choose.

ChatGPT snapshot – generating word lists and ESP materials

Apart from the option of asking the chatbot to generate a text using the relevant terminology it sees fit, there is also the reverse solution, where we provide the chatbot with the exact terminology we need and it will then generate a suitable text for this purpose. In my teaching activity, as I mentioned previously, published materials with an adequate amount of terminology and authentic texts are nonexistent, scarce or unsuitable for my students enrolled in programs such as agriculture or horticulture. Horticulture, in particular, is especially difficult in this regard. I am very interested in my students acquiring an adequate amount of specialized terminology in their field in English, therefore, for optimal efficiency (as time limitations are a major problem), it would be very helpful to start from terminology and go towards activities.

Word lists play an important role in ESP teaching materials, particularly in the academic context (Paquot 2007, 127). The General Service List (GSL) generated by Michael West in 1953 and updated in 2013 by Brezina & Gablasova (Brezina & Gablasova, 2015) and Browne, Culligan and Phillips (Browne, 2013) has been a foundational resource in this area (Kwary and Jurianto 2017, 60), and the creation of frequency-based word lists is a key consideration in vocabulary course design (Nation, 2016, 3). In a comprehensive book called *Vocabulary and English for Specific Purposes Research*, Averil Coxhead analyzes in great detail the way in which teachers, researchers and course designers can

determine what and how much specialized vocabulary is to be selected for teaching in ESP by naming in the first chapter certain avenues for the identification of such vocabulary such as comparing corpus and analyzing keywords by means of software and statistical analysis, by using technical dictionaries, consulting experts or by employing surveys, interviews and questionnaires (Coxhead 2018, 16-30), while in the second chapter the scholar details the importance of word lists for course design as well as methods of generating them using a corpus of authentic texts from the respective domain (Coxhead 2018, 31-60).


Word lists are a very important starting point for course design, but they are not easy to generate. Certain fields like business, law or medicine have established glossaries that are readily available in many resources. Other less common areas of ESP do not benefit from the same attention and their available glossaries are hard to find and not comprehensive. However, regardless of field, generating such word lists is time-consuming and requires access to a large corpus of texts from various subcategories of the larger domain in order to analyze it using software, statistical analysis and other methods.

Over the years, I have compiled a glossary of important terms in horticulture, but it took time and it still does not include an adequate number of, arguably, the most frequent terms. It would be even more helpful to have a comprehensive list of terms from each of the branches of horticulture, such as viticulture, pomiculture, olericulture, floriculture etc. This way, I would ensure a good cover of the entire domain for my students in a more efficient manner. Apart from the specialized and highly specialized words, there are also many high-frequency words that can often be found in compounds or collocations that have specific meaning for that respective field (Coxhead 2018, 53) and these combinations are also important to understand in regards to both meaning and use: "It is therefore particularly important that new words be introduced together with information on how to use them, especially their collocational and colligational environment" (Paquot 2007, 127).

This is where ChatGPT can come in handy. After exploring the chatbot by means of various inquiries related to the generation of ESP materials, a line of questioning was developed in order to build a corpus of responses that can be used to analyze its utility in generating useful ESP materials. However, since the chatbot is a conversational AI, there was a dialogue that we engaged in and, therefore, the questions were also adapted as the chatbot provided answers. What follows is an example of how ESP teachers could work with ChatGPT in order to obtain the most useful results for their needs and what they can expect from the chatbot, both the positive aspects and some issues that require caution.

Before asking it to generate word lists, the chatbot was first asked for its opinion on the most efficient use of word lists in ESP and its answer can be seen in Figure 4. The uses it proposes are comparable to those discovered in my

extensive experience, therefore, there is nothing new in its suggestions, but rather confirmation.

 ChatGPT

Word lists can be used efficiently by teachers who teach English for specific purposes in several ways:

1. **Vocabulary Building:** Word lists provide a structured way to introduce and reinforce vocabulary related to a specific field or topic. Teachers can use word lists to systematically teach and review key terms, ensuring that students develop a strong foundation in the specialized vocabulary relevant to their field of study.
2. **Customized Learning Materials:** Teachers can use word lists as a basis for creating customized learning materials tailored to the needs and proficiency levels of their students. These materials can include vocabulary worksheets, flashcards, quizzes, and exercises designed to help students practice and internalize the specialized terminology.
3. **Content-Based Instruction:** Word lists serve as a valuable resource for content-based instruction, allowing teachers to design lessons and activities that integrate language learning with subject matter content. By incorporating specialized vocabulary from the word list into reading passages, discussions, and writing tasks, teachers can facilitate language acquisition while simultaneously engaging students with relevant subject material.
4. **Contextual Learning:** Word lists provide context for vocabulary acquisition by presenting terms within the context of a specific field or topic. Teachers can use real-world examples, images, and multimedia resources to illustrate the meaning and usage of words from the list, helping students understand how the vocabulary is applied in practical situations.
5. **Assessment and Progress Monitoring:** Word lists can be used as a basis for assessing students' vocabulary knowledge and tracking their progress over time. Teachers can administer vocabulary quizzes, assignments, and assessments based on the word list to evaluate students' mastery of the specialized terminology and identify areas for further instruction and reinforcement.
6. **Self-Study and Review:** Word lists can also be shared with students for self-study and review purposes. Students can use the word list as a reference tool to independently review vocabulary, create their own study aids, and practice using the terms in context through reading, writing, and speaking activities.

Overall, word lists serve as a valuable tool for teachers of English for specific purposes, enabling them to effectively teach and reinforce specialized vocabulary in a targeted and systematic manner, ultimately supporting students' language learning and academic success in their chosen field of study.

Figure 4. ChatGPT's response to the question "How can word lists be used efficiently by ESP teachers?" (generated by ChatGPT in February 2024)

When asked to create a specific word list of 1000 specialized terms in horticulture, its reply was a refusal, as illustrated in Figure 5, followed by an alternative as it proceeded instead to provide a list of 100 terms with definitions.

 **ChatGPT**

Creating a comprehensive list of 1000 specialized terms in horticulture would be quite extensive. Instead, I'll provide a condensed list of specialized terms commonly used in horticulture. This list includes terms related to plant anatomy, cultivation practices, gardening techniques, and plant diseases. Here are 100 specialized terms in horticulture:

1. Abiotic: Non-living factors that affect plant growth, such as temperature, light, and soil.
2. Acclimatization: The process of plants adjusting to new environmental conditions.
3. Acidic soil: Soil with a pH below 7, suitable for acid-loving plants.
4. Adventitious roots: Roots that form from non-root tissues, such as stems or leaves.
5. Aeroponics: A method of growing plants without soil, using a nutrient-rich mist to deliver nutrients directly to plant roots.
6. Allelopathy: The ability of some plants to release chemicals that inhibit the growth of other plants.
7. Anthesis: The period during which a flower is fully open and functional.
8. Annual: A plant that completes its life cycle within one year.
9. Anthocyanin: Pigments responsible for red, purple, and blue colors in plants.
94. Thigmotropism: The response of plants to touch or physical contact, often leading to changes in growth or orientation.
95. Topiary: The art of trimming and shaping plants into decorative or ornamental forms.
96. Transpiration: The loss of water vapor from plant leaves through small openings called stomata.
97. Tuber: A thickened, underground stem used for storage and vegetative reproduction, such as in potatoes.
98. Variegated: Having leaves or other plant parts with contrasting colors or markings.
99. Vascular bundle: A strand of tissue in plants that transports water, nutrients, and sugars throughout the plant.
100. Xeriscaping: Landscaping or gardening practices designed to conserve water and minimize water use, particularly in arid or drought-prone regions.

This list provides a snapshot of specialized terminology in horticulture, covering a range of topics relevant to plant biology, cultivation practices, and gardening techniques. Keep in mind that horticulture is a diverse field with many sub-disciplines and specialized areas of study, so this list is not exhaustive but rather a starting point for further exploration.

Figure 5. ChatGPT's response to the prompt "Create a list of 1000 specialized terms used in horticulture" (generated by ChatGPT in February 2024)

Given that horticulture is a rather vast field, with several important branches, the decision was to refine this list for better results and the chatbot was asked to provide a list of 500 specialized terms from floriculture, for a start, without definitions. This list contained a mixture of terms, in alphabetical order, therefore a separation of the 500 terms into certain major categories was demanded and the chatbot decided on the following three: plant biology and physiology, cultivation and agricultural practices and plant names. Given that each category was rather large and still mixed, a further grouping was required and ChatGPT decided on the following subcategories for each of the larger categories named above, as presented in Table 1 (selection):

Table 1. Subcategories of terms generated within the larger word list of terms from floriculture (generated by ChatGPT in February 2024).


Cultivation and Agricultural Practices	
Plant Propagation and Growth	<i>aerial root, cotyledon, cutting, germination, grafting, mulch, rootstock, scion, seed dispersal, seedling, sucker</i>
Soil and Water Management	<i>carbonic maceration, cold soak, cold stabilization, compost, container, cover crop, drip irrigation, fertilization, hydroponics, irrigation, soil erosion, soil PH, tillage, watering</i>
Pest and Disease Management	<i>antibiosis, bacterial wilt, biocontrol, fungicide, fumigation, insectivorous, pest control, weedkiller</i>
Harvest and Post-Harvest Practices	<i>crop rotation, harvest, pruning, thinning</i>
Specialized Techniques and Practices	<i>aeroponics, arboriculture, bonsai, forestry, grafting, greenhouse, incubate, permaculture, rootstock, scion</i>
Plant Names	
Flowering Plants	<i>amaryllis, daffodil, daisy, cauliflower, bellflower, carnation, dianthus, morning glory</i>
Herbs and Spices	<i>cilantro, dill, mint, sage, bay laurel, clove</i>
Fruits and Vegetables	<i>cucumber, pumpkin, apple, pear, pepper, potato, grape</i>
Trees and Shrubs	<i>cypress, oak, pine, hawthorn</i>
Ornamental Plants	<i>amaryllis, azalea, rhododendron, orchid, rose, snapdragon</i>
Miscellaneous	<i>pineapple, soybean, asparagus</i>
Plant Biology and Physiology	
Plant Anatomy	<i>aerial root, basal rosette, cambium, cotyledon, corm, internode, lenticel, rootstock, scion, sucker</i>
Plant Growth And Development	<i>acrotonic, apical dominance, dormancy, germination, flowering, photosynthesis, pruning, thinning</i>
Plant Reproduction	<i>apothecium, capsicum, cross pollination, pollination, seed dispersal, seedling, self-pollination</i>
Plant Physiology	<i>abiotic stress, abscission, chlorophyll, fatty acid, immunity, infection, lipid, longevity, measurement</i>
Plant Adaptations	<i>symbiosis</i>

This is just an example, but the lists can be either refined more or limited to certain specific subcategories within larger ones. This way, more specific terms can be discovered and used to generate further materials. For example, the chatbot was asked to generate a list of 100 terms (shorter, since it is a subcategory of a subcategory) from floriculture referring to flower arrangement and floristry. Then, it was required to group the terms into a few relevant categories (Table 2).

Table 2. Subcategories of terms generated within the larger word list of terms related to flower arrangements and floristry (generated by ChatGPT in February 2024).

Techniques and Styles	e.g. <i>armature, cascade bouquet, cluster arrangement, collar arrangement, French bouquet</i>
Arrangement Types	e.g. <i>boutonniere, bridal bouquet, centerpiece, corsage, foliage arrangement, garlands</i>
Tools and Materials	e.g. <i>floral foam, floral tape, floral wire, floral wire cutter, floristry knife, flower preservative, flower stand, flower vase</i>
Flower Types and Characteristics	e.g. <i>cut flowers, filler flowers, line flowers, seasonal flowers, summer bouquet, tropical flowers</i>
Design Principles and Concepts	e.g. <i>balance, color harmony, design mechanics, grid arrangement, knotting technique</i>
Special Occasions and Events	e.g. <i>garden-style arrangement, spring bouquet, wedding bouquet</i>
Miscellaneous	e.g. <i>ribboning technique, staging, unity, pillar arrangement, traditional arrangement</i>

Using this list of terms, ChatGPT can generate various types of vocabulary activities such as matching term with description, fill in the blanks, sentence building, multiple choice and others. In fact, the chatbot itself made a few suggestions (Figure 6). All that is left for us is to simply choose and it should be able to generate any type of activity for us.

 ChatGPT

You can create various exercises and activities using a word list from floriculture to help students enhance their vocabulary, comprehension, and application of terms related to flower cultivation, arrangement, and floristry. Here are some types of exercises you can consider:

1. **Matching Exercises:**

- Match each term with its definition or description.
- Match each term with its corresponding image or illustration.

2. **Multiple Choice Exercises:**

- Provide multiple-choice questions where students choose the correct definition or synonym for each term.
- Present sentences with blanks and ask students to select the correct term to fill in the blank.

3. **Vocabulary Quizzes:**

- Create quizzes where students must define each term from the word list.
- Include fill-in-the-blank questions with terms from the word list.

4. **Word Association:**

- Ask students to brainstorm related words or concepts for each term from the word list.
- Provide a word from the list and ask students to generate a list of synonyms or antonyms.

5. **Sentence Writing:**

- Have students write sentences using each term from the word list to demonstrate their understanding of how the terms are used in context.
- Assign creative writing tasks where students incorporate as many terms from the word list as possible into a story or essay.



6. **Word Sorts:**

- Provide categories or themes related to floriculture (e.g., flower types, arrangement styles, tools and materials) and ask students to categorize each term accordingly.
- Have students group terms based on their similarities or associations.

7. **Crossword Puzzles or Word Searches:**

- Create crossword puzzles or word searches using terms from the word list and clues or descriptions related to each term.

8. **Discussion Questions:**

- Pose discussion questions or prompts related to floriculture topics and ask students to incorporate terms from the word list in their responses.
- Encourage students to discuss their experiences or knowledge related to specific terms from the word list.

9. **Practical Application Tasks:**

- Assign tasks where students must apply their knowledge of floriculture terms, such as designing a flower arrangement using terms from the word list or identifying different flower types based on their characteristics.

10. **Interactive Games:**

- Develop interactive games or activities, such as online quizzes, flashcards, or matching games, using terms from the word list to engage students in a fun and interactive way.

These exercises cater to various learning styles and help reinforce students' understanding and retention of floriculture vocabulary in an engaging manner.

Figure 6. ChatGPT's response to the question "What type of exercises can I create using a word list from floriculture?" (generated by ChatGPT in February 2024)

As an example, ChatGPT was asked to “Use 20 terms from the previous list to create 3 vocabulary exercises for students (B1 level of English): one multiple-choice fill in the blanks exercise (Figure 7), one matching exercise (Figure 8) and one vocabulary quiz (Figure 9)”. The choice of terms was: *boutonniere, wrist corsage, cascade bouquet, hand-tied bouquet, floristry knife, mechanics, floral foam, armature, French bouquet, floral tape, garland, centerpiece, topiary arrangement, formal linear arrangement, nosegay, ribboning technique, vintage arrangement, Zen arrangement, cascade arrangement, unity.*

Exercise 1: Multiple-Choice Fill in the Blanks

Instructions: Choose the correct term from the list to complete each sentence.

1. The _____ is a handheld tool used to cut flower stems.
 - A) floral foam
 - B) floristry knife
 - C) flower frog
 - D) bouquet holder
2. A _____ is a decorative ring of flowers worn around the wrist.
 - A) boutonniere
 - B) wrist corsage
 - C) centerpieces
 - D) garlands
3. _____ is a technique where flowers are arranged in a cascading, waterfall-like design.
 - A) Symmetrical arrangement
 - B) Cascade bouquet
 - C) Nosegay
 - D) Table centerpiece
4. _____ are flowers that are evenly distributed and often tied together at the stems in a rounded arrangement.
 - A) Toss bouquet
 - B) Formal linear arrangement
 - C) Hand-tied bouquet
 - D) Topiary arrangement
5. Floral _____ is used to hold flower stems in place in floral arrangements.
 - A) mechanics
 - B) wire cutter
 - C) vase
 - D) ribboning technique



Figure 7. Multiple-choice exercise (generated by ChatGPT in February 2024)

Exercise 2: Matching Exercise

Instructions: Match the term on the left with its corresponding description on the right.

1. Boutonniere a) A handheld tool used for cutting flower stems.
2. Wrist corsage b) A decorative ring of flowers worn around the wrist.
3. Cascade bouquet c) A technique where flowers are arranged in a cascading, waterfall-like design.
4. Hand-tied bouquet d) Flowers that are evenly distributed and often tied together at the stems in a rounded arrangement.
5. Floristry knife e) A small, decorative floral arrangement worn on the lapel of a jacket or suit.

Figure 8. Matching exercise (generated by ChatGPT in February 2024)

Exercise 3: Vocabulary Quiz

Instructions: Write the correct term from the list to match each definition or description.

1. A technique where flowers are arranged in a loose, unstructured manner using unconventional materials like wire frames or found objects.
•

2. A style of arranging flowers that focuses on using a single color or shades of the same color for a unified look.
•

3. A classic, rounded arrangement where flowers are evenly distributed and often tied together at the stems.
•

4. A technique where flowers are arranged in a sweeping, curved shape resembling a crescent moon.
•

5. A free-form style of arranging flowers that mimics the natural landscape, often incorporating elements like rocks, branches, and grasses.
•



REFLECTIONS ON USING CHATGPT TO GENERATE ESP MATERIALS. A CASE STUDY

6. A handheld tool used to cut flower stems.

•

7. Floral foam is used to hold flower stems in place in floral arrangements.

•

8. A decorative ring of flowers worn around the wrist.

•

9. A technique where flowers are arranged in a tight, compact cluster, often using a variety of flower types and colors.

•

10. A small, decorative floral arrangement worn on the lapel of a jacket or suit.

•

Figure 9. Vocabulary quiz (generated by ChatGPT in February 2024)

Similarly, a list of specific terms can be used to generate a text that will be the basis of various activities including vocabulary recognition exercises or text comprehension exercises that will further practice the terminology. For example, ChatGPT created the following text and related activity (Figure 10):

Vocabulary Recognition Exercise: Floriculture

Read the following text about floriculture and identify the specialized terms from the word list provided. Circle or highlight each term as you encounter it in the passage.

Floriculture is the art and science of cultivating and arranging flowers and ornamental plants. It encompasses various techniques and practices aimed at growing, harvesting, and arranging flowers for decorative purposes, ceremonies, and celebrations.

One of the key aspects of floriculture is the cultivation of flowers, which involves selecting appropriate plant species, preparing the soil, and providing optimal growing conditions such as adequate sunlight, water, and nutrients. Flowers are cultivated in a variety of settings, including gardens, greenhouses, and nurseries, to ensure their healthy growth and vibrant blooms.

Once flowers are grown and harvested, they are often used in floral arrangements and designs. Floral arrangements can range from simple bouquets to elaborate centerpieces and garlands, each showcasing the beauty and diversity of flowers. Techniques such as hand-tied bouquets, cascade arrangements, and topiary designs are used to create visually stunning compositions that capture the essence of floriculture.

Floriculture also involves the use of specialized tools and materials to aid in the arrangement of flowers. Tools like floristry knives, floral tape, and wire cutters are essential for cutting and shaping flower stems, while materials like floral foam and armatures provide support and structure for floral designs. Additionally, techniques such as ribboning and ribboning technique add decorative accents to floral arrangements, enhancing their visual appeal.

Beyond aesthetics, floriculture plays a significant role in cultural and social events. Flowers are often used to adorn special occasions such as weddings, birthdays, and holidays, symbolizing love, joy, and celebration. Wrist corsages and boutonnieres are popular accessories worn by individuals attending formal events, while centerpieces and garlands adorn tables and venues, creating a festive atmosphere.

In conclusion, floriculture is a multifaceted discipline that combines horticulture, artistry, and cultural significance. It involves the cultivation, arrangement, and use of flowers for decorative purposes, bringing beauty and joy to various occasions and celebrations. With its rich history and diverse techniques, floriculture continues to be a cherished tradition that delights and inspires people around the world.

Figure 10. Text and activity created by ChatGPT for B1-B2 level students. The terms that they are meant to recognize are underlined. (generated by ChatGPT in February 2024)

An important issue that should be mentioned here is the aspect of grammatical category because it is very important for students to understand the difference between and the correct usage of nouns, verbs and adjectives, which pose problems to those with lower levels of language proficiency. The chatbot is very useful in quickly generating word families for specific terms and further vocabulary activities in order to practice the correct usage (Figures 11 and 12).



ChatGPT

The word "pruning" belongs to the following word family:

1. Prune (verb) - to trim or cut away unnecessary or excess parts.
2. Pruned (adjective) - having been subjected to pruning.
3. Pruner (noun) - a person or tool that prunes.
4. Prunings (noun) - the parts that have been pruned away.

REFLECTIONS ON USING CHATGPT TO GENERATE ESP MATERIALS. A CASE STUDY

ChatGPT

Certainly! Here's a vocabulary exercise to practice using different forms within the word family of "pruning":

Exercise: Fill in the blanks with the correct form of the word "pruning" (prune, pruned, pruner, prunings).

1. The gardener used a sharp _____ to trim the overgrown branches.
2. Have you ever _____ your fruit trees to encourage better fruit production?
3. After the _____ process, the shrubs looked more neat and well-maintained.
4. Proper _____ techniques can help shape plants and promote healthy growth.
5. She is an expert _____ and knows exactly which branches to remove for optimal plant health.
6. The _____ from the trees were collected and disposed of in the compost bin.
7. It's essential to use clean and sterilized _____ to prevent the spread of diseases between plants.
8. The rose bushes were carefully _____ to remove any dead or diseased stems.
9. The _____ of the hedges allows more sunlight to reach the garden beds below.
10. The annual _____ of the grapevines is necessary to maintain a manageable size and encourage fruit production.

Figure 11. Family word and vocabulary activity for "pruning". (generated by ChatGPT in February 2024)

ChatGPT

The word "fertilize" belongs to the following word family:

1. Fertilize (verb) - to enrich soil or a medium with nutrients to promote plant growth.
2. Fertilization (noun) - the process or act of fertilizing.
3. Fertilizer (noun) - a substance added to soil or plants to increase its fertility.
4. Fertilized (adjective) - having been subjected to fertilization.

ChatGPT

Sure, here's a vocabulary exercise to practice using different forms within the word family of "fertilize":

Exercise: Fill in the blanks with the correct form of the word "fertilize" (fertilize, fertilization, fertilizer, fertilized).

1. Farmers often use _____ to enrich the soil and promote healthy crop growth.
2. After the _____ process, the soil became more nutrient-rich and conducive to plant growth.
3. It is important to choose the right type of _____ for your plants to ensure they receive adequate nutrients.
4. The fields were _____ in preparation for the upcoming planting season.
5. Proper _____ techniques can significantly improve agricultural productivity.
6. The use of organic _____ has become increasingly popular among environmentally-conscious farmers.
7. The _____ of the soil helped the plants thrive in the harsh climate.
8. Have you ever _____ your garden to enhance the growth of your flowers and vegetables?
9. The garden center offers a wide range of _____ options to suit different types of plants and soil conditions.
10. The _____ process is essential for maintaining soil fertility and ensuring successful crop yields.



Figure 12. Family word and vocabulary activity for "fertilize". (generated by ChatGPT in February 2024)

There are certain problems that should be mentioned among the limitations observed during this study. One of them is about the list of 500 terms from floriculture. As illustrated in Figure 13, the list contained indeed 500 terms, in alphabetical order, but it stopped at letter M, which was strange. Therefore, ChatGPT was asked about the other letters of the alphabet: “The previous 500-word list of terms from floriculture stops at letter M. Can you list more important terms from floriculture between letters N-Z?” and it obliged with an additional 77 terms covering the rest of the letters (Figure 14). Thus, the initial list was incomplete and not sufficiently randomized among the letters of the alphabet, and therefore not a guarantee of comprehensiveness or accuracy, even in this limited scope. When prompted again, more specifically this time, in the light of this observation, to regenerate the list of terms from A to Z, its response again stopped at the letter M, the 500th term being the same as before, *measurement* (Figure 15) even though it gave assurance that it would generate a list of 500 terms from floriculture from A to Z, as seen in Figure 15.

477. Longshore
478. Loquat
479. Luffa
480. Lumber
481. Lupine
482. Lysine
483. Macro
484. Magnolia
485. Mallow
486. Management
487. Mandarin
488. Mangrove
489. Manifold
490. Manure
491. Maple
492. Marigold
493. Marjoram
494. Masking
495. Mass
496. Mast
497. Matchstick
498. Maturation
499. Mayapple
500. Measurement



This list covers a variety of terms relevant to floriculture, including those related to plant biology,

Figure 13. ChatGPT’s list of 500 terms from floriculture stopping at letter M (generated by ChatGPT in February 2024)

REFLECTIONS ON USING CHATGPT TO GENERATE ESP MATERIALS. A CASE STUDY

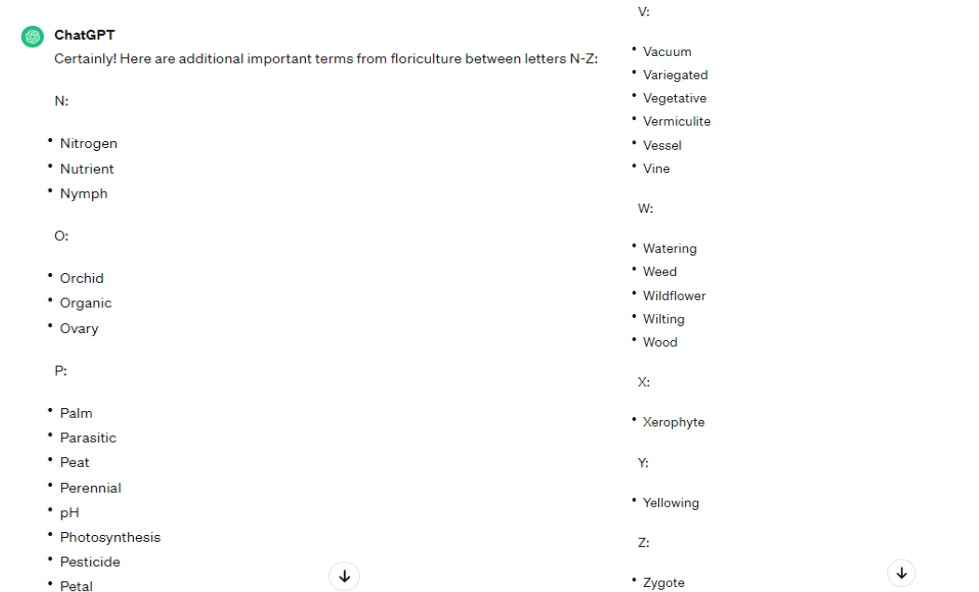


Figure 14. ChatGPT’s addition to the list of 500 terms from floriculture that initially stopped at letter M (selection from response generated by ChatGPT in February 2024)

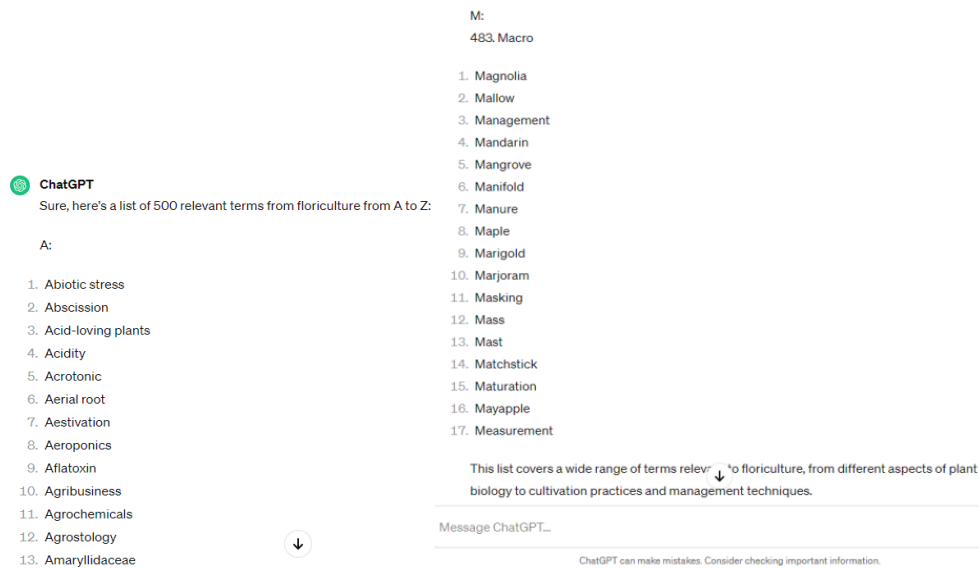


Figure 15. ChatGPT’s regeneration of the list, again stopping at the letter M (selection, beginning and end, from response generated by ChatGPT in February 2024)

Another problematic issue is related to the grammatical categories mentioned earlier. At a first glance, these lists of terms generated by ChatGPT are biased towards nouns, which is not uncommon, therefore, the chatbot was asked to analyze the initial list of 500 terms from floriculture and determine how many nouns, verbs and adjectives it contains. The result was: Nouns: 419; Verbs: 19; Adjectives: 62. Given this result, the chatbot was further asked to list the actual verbs and adjectives, since they are so few, compared to the nouns. Unfortunately, certain problems were noticed again. The verbs, although correct, were lacking. Some very common verbs in this field were not suggested by ChatGPT. However, they might be inferred as part of the word family from the large amount of nouns present in the list. Also, another solution would be to simply ask the chatbot to list specifically one grammatical category, only verbs, for example. More problematic still was the list of adjectives as only those from A to D were extracted. The second problem was that it included nouns although the request was specifically for adjectives only. After it was pointed out the following: "Armillaria, Bedrock, Biomass, Botrytis, Chamomile, Chrysanthemum, Cilantro, Corolla, Cowslip and others are not adjectives. They are nouns! You are wrong...", the chatbot apologized and regenerated the list, without nouns, but again incomplete, only from E to H this time. There is no perceived reason or understanding why this happens but it is clearly an issue and we must be careful of the information it generates in view of our request as well as how complete it is for our purposes.

Conclusion

This experience with ChatGPT and the study conducted specifically for this article largely matched the experience of other researchers discussed in literature review in terms of using the AI chatbot for language teaching in general, and more specifically for generating ESP teaching materials. These AI-generated materials must still go through a verification, but the advantages remain in that the adaptation stage is largely eliminated, the texts are well structured and the chatbot can further create follow-up activities. The texts are generated within the teacher's specific parameters (length and language proficiency level), on a particular topic and using specific terminology, which is likely the most important advantage for an ESP teacher. When the level of specialization is not too high the reliance problem, which is a concern for researchers discussed in previous sections, is considerably reduced. This happens when the students have a lower level of language proficiency. We cannot use too highly specialized texts when the students cannot properly understand general English. Therefore, the specialized terminology will be

introduced through general topics related to their particular program. This also ensures the reliability to a large degree of the information provided by the chatbot. Texts generated about general topics within a specialization will basically present a summary of the issue, will not use complicated sentences or terminology, but will offer the basics in terms of both information and specialized vocabulary which will help the students acquire a reasonable amount of fundamental terminology without being daunted by its difficulty. Targeted and detailed prompts, as well as providing the chatbot with specific terms to be used will ensure the best results in reference to our expectations.

Another important advantage for ESP teachers is that ChatGPT can assist in creating specialized word lists tailored to specific ESP domains, thus overcoming the limitations of available glossaries. The chatbot can further organize word lists into categories and subcategories, as we require, enabling structured vocabulary activities that cover different aspects of the domain. It can create such glossaries, complete with definitions, as well as subsequent activities to practice that particular terminology, and texts using a selection of terms we require. Within the word lists created by the chatbot, we can also ask it to distinguish between grammatical categories and create specific activities for a better understanding of their usage, especially by students with intermediate or lower level of English proficiency.

There are, however, certain shortcomings noticed specifically from this experience of generating ESP teaching materials in the form of texts and word lists. The most important one is unreliability. As already discussed in detail in previous sections, the comprehensiveness and organization of the word lists generated by ChatGPT are problematic. Also, there are issues with the distinction between grammatical categories because even when specifically requested, the chatbot struggled to provide a balanced distribution of grammatical categories, often including nouns in the list of adjectives. Common verbs in the field were sometimes missing from the suggestions, reducing the accuracy and usefulness of the generated materials. These limitations highlight the need for caution and verification when relying on ChatGPT to ensure the accuracy and completeness of ESP teaching materials.

Further studies should continue to analyze how future updated versions of the chatbot will improve its usefulness in generating better ESP materials, especially for less studied areas of ESP where there is a dire need for relevant and efficient teaching materials. The conclusion is to take advantage of these technologies and use ChatGPT because it can save time and produce a wide variety of good teaching materials for general ESP topics using specialized terminologies, but treat with caution, verify and formulate precise prompts because, at this point in time, the chatbot still has limitations, and there can be

misinformation and errors hidden in the information it provides. However, like any AI model, ChatGPT is an ever-evolving “organism”, it continually improves, it is periodically updated and the reliability factor will most likely increase in time.

WORKS CITED

- Ali, Jamal Kaid Mohammed et al. 2023. "Impact of ChatGPT on learning motivation:", *Journal of English Studies in Arabia Felix* (1), 2:41-49. <https://doi.org/10.56540/jesaf.v2i1.51>
- Bacon, Susan M. and Michael D. Finneman. 1990. "A study of attitudes, motives, and strategies of university foreign language students and their disposition to authentic oral and written input." *Modern Language Journal*, 74(4), 459-73. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.1990.tb05338.x>
- Benavent, Gabriela Torregrosa and Sonsoles Sánchez-Reyes Peñarúa. 2011. "Use of authentic materials in the ESP classroom." *Encuentro* 20, [11]: 89-94 <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED530013.pdf>
- Blagojević, Savka. 2013. "Original Texts as Authentic ESP Teaching Material – the Case of Philosophy." *ESP Today*, Vol. 1(1): 113-126.
- Brezina, Vaclav and Dana Gablasova. 2015. "Is There a Core General Vocabulary? Introducing the *New General Service List*." *Applied Linguistics*, 36/1, 1-22, <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amt018>
- Browne, Charles. 2013. "The New General Service List: Celebrating 60 years of Vocabulary Learning." *The Language Teacher*, 37(4), 13-16.
- Buzarna-Tihenea (Gâlbează) Alina and Nădrag, Lavinia. 2018. "The Advantages of Authentic Materials in the ESP/ EFL Classroom: Newspapers." *"Ovidius" University Annals, Economic Sciences Series*. Vol. XVIII (1):145-151.
- Chan, Cecilia Ka Yuk and Louisa H.Y. Tsi. 2023. "The AI Revolution in Education: Will AI Replace or Assist Teachers in Higher Education?" arXiv 2023, arXiv:2305.01185, <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2305.01185>
- Cooper, Grant. 2023. "Examining Science Education in ChatGPT: An Exploratory Study of Generative Artificial Intelligence." *Journal of Science Education and Technology*, 32:444-452. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10956-023-10039-y>
- Coxhead, Averil. 2018. *Vocabulary and English for Specific Purposes Research*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Elali, Faisal R. and Leena N. Rachid. 2023. "AI-generated research paper fabrication and plagiarism in the scientific community", *Patterns* (3), 4:100706. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.patter.2023.100706>
- Elkasović, Selma and Jasmina Jelčić Čolakovac, 2023. "The teaching of ESP lexis revisited: the effect of authentic text adaptation on vocabulary retention", *ESP Today* (1), 11:75-95. <https://doi.org/10.18485/esptoday.2023.11.1.4>

- Habeb Al-Obaydi, Liqaa, Marcel Pikhart, and Blanka Klimova, 2023. "ChatGPT and the general concepts of education: can artificial intelligence-driven chatbots support the process of language learning?." *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning (iJET)* (21), 18:39-50. <https://doi.org/10.3991/ijet.v18i21.42593>
- Hatmanto, Endro Dwi and Mariska Intan Sari. 2023. "Aligning Theory and Practice: Leveraging Chat GPT for Effective English Language Teaching and Learning." *E3S Web of Conferences*, 440, 05001: 1-18 <https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202344005001>
- Hié, Anthony. 2023. "ChatGPT in higher education... or the fear of a revolution in the making." *Governance Now*. April 6, 2023. <https://www.governancenow.com/views/columns/chatgpt-in-higher-education-or-the-fear-of-a-revolution-in-the-making>
- Koh, Josiah et al. 2023. "The human teacher, the AI teacher and the Aled-teacher relationship", *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice* (17), 23:199-211. <https://doi.org/10.33423/jhetp.v23i17.6543>
- Kohnke, Lucas, Benjamin Luke Moorhouse and Di Zou. 2023. "ChatGPT for language teaching and learning", *RELC Journal* (2), 54:537-550. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00336882231162868>
- Kostikova, Ilona et al. 2024. "ChatGPT for Professional English Course Development", *International Journal of Interactive Mobile Technologies (IJIM)*(02), 18:68-81. <https://doi.org/10.3991/ijim.v18i02.46623>
- Kostka, Ilka, and Rachel Toncelli. 2023. "Exploring Applications of ChatGPT to English Language Teaching: Opportunities, Challenges, and Recommendations." *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language* 27, 3:1-29 <https://doi.org/10.55593/ej.27107int>
- Kwary, Deny A. and Jurianto. 2017. "Selecting and Creating a Word List for English Language Teaching." *Teaching English with Technology*, 17(1):60-72.
- Lo, Chung Kwan, 2023. "What is the impact of ChatGPT on education? a rapid review of the literature", *Education Sciences* (4), 13:410. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13040410>
- Nation, Paul I.S. 2016. *Making and Using Word Lists for Language Learning and Testing*. Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Nuttall, Christine. 1996. *Teaching Reading Skills in a foreign language*. Oxford: Heinemann.
- Ohashi, Louise and Antonie Alm, 2023. "ChatGPT and language learning: university educators' initial response", *EuroCALL 2023. CALL for All Languages - Short Papers*, 31-36. <https://doi.org/10.4995/eurocall2023.2023.16917>
- OpenAI. ChatGPT. OpenAI. Accessed February, 2024. <https://chat.openai.com/>
- Paquot, Magali. 2007. "Towards a productively-oriented academic word list." In *Practical Applications in Language and Computers 2005*, edited by Walinski J.; Kredens K.; Gozdz-Roszkowski S., 127-140, Frankfurt and Main: Peter Lang. <http://hdl.handle.net/2078.1/76045>

- Rahman, Md. Mostafizer and Yutaka Watanobe. 2023. "ChatGPT for Education and Research: Opportunities, Threats, and Strategies." *Applied Sciences* 13, no. 9: 5783: 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.3390/app13095783>
- Shalevska, Elena, 2023. "English teaching just got an upgrade: how AI is revolutionizing TESOL", *Teacher* (25): 109-113. <https://doi.org/10.20544/teacher.25.11>
- Sims, Alex. 2023. "ChatGPT and the future of university assessment." *Times Higher Education*. March 9, 2023. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/chatgpt-and-future-university-assessment>)
- Stening, Tanner. 2023. "'We are a center of experimentation and innovation.' President Joseph E. Aoun addresses buzz around generative AI." *Northeastern Global News*. April 25, 2023. <https://news.northeastern.edu/2023/04/25/artificial-intelligence-development-innovation-safety/>
- Sun, Zhuomin, M. Anbarasan, and Deepak Kumar. 2020. "Design of online intelligent english teaching platform based on artificial intelligence techniques", *Computational Intelligence* (3), 37:1166-1180. <https://doi.org/10.1111/coin.12351>
- Temsah, Mohamad-Hani et al. 2023. "ChatGPT and the future of digital health: a study on healthcare workers' perceptions and expectations", *Healthcare* (13), 11:1812. <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare11131812>
- Xiao, Yangyu and Yuying Zhi. 2023. "An Exploratory Study of EFL Learners' Use of ChatGPT for Language Learning Tasks: Experience and Perceptions" *Languages* 8, no. 3: 212, 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.3390/languages8030212>
- Xie, Caihong. 2022. "Effectiveness of computer-aided technology for teaching English courses in the internet era", *Scientific Programming*, 2022:1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2022/2133028>
- Yang, Jiliang. 2022. "The influence of intelligent visual sensing technology on online english teaching in wireless network environment", *Wireless Communications and Mobile Computing*, 2022:1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2022/8282411>
- Zhu, Chenjia et al. 2023. "How to harness the potential of ChatGPT in education? *Knowledge Management & ELearning*, 15 (2), 133-152. <https://doi.org/10.34105/j.kmel.2023.15.008>
- Zhu, Mengqing. 2022. "Factors influencing analysis for level of engineering English education based on artificial intelligence technology", *Mathematical Problems in Engineering*, 2022:1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2022/4447209>

GAME-MODE ACTIVATED: BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE THROUGH DIGITAL ESCAPE ROOMS AS ESP TEACHING AND LEARNING TOOLS

Ioana MUDURE-IACOB¹ 

Article history: Received 14 March 2024; Revised 24 June 2024; Accepted 15 October 2024; Available online 10 December 2024; Available print 30 December 2024.

©2024 Studia UBB Philologia. Published by Babeş-Bolyai University.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License

ABSTRACT. *Game-Mode Activated: Building Communities of Practice through Digital Escape Rooms as ESP Teaching and Learning Tools.* The paper aims to explore the creative potential and practical use of digital escape rooms as innovative and multimodal tools for the building of communities of practice within English for Specific Purposes education. 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 skills. The study 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. It also analyses how the design and use of escape rooms as an effort to employ digital pedagogical competence can boost motivation among language learners while also creating a socio-emotional learning environment. In order to investigate the pedagogical

¹ **Ioana MUDURE-IACOB** is a lecturer in the Department of Foreign Languages for Specific Purposes at the Faculty of Letters and has been teaching EAP and ESP since 2009 to undergraduates majoring in Business Management, Tourism, Political Sciences, Sports and Psychology. She studied English and French Philology, Economics, American studies and Intercultural Business communication, and she holds a PhD in American literature with a thesis on Walt Whitman's Polymorphous Aesthetics. She worked in the DIAL4U Erasmus+ project - *Digital pedagogy to develop Autonomy, mediate and certify Lifewide and Lifelong Language Learning for (European) Universities*, focusing on developing digital technologies and pedagogy in language learning and teaching processes and is on the organising board for the Digital Humanities Culture and Technology Summer University. Her scientific fields of interest include Blended Learning, Assessment using digital tools, Gamification in Language Teaching and Assessment, Digital Escape Rooms in Formative Assessment, incorporating ICT tools in teaching and evaluation. Email: ioana.mudure@ubbcluj.ro.

value of escape rooms, this 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. A digital escape room meant to teach and assess language, digital, and communication competences for undergraduates majoring in the Pedagogy of Preschool and Primary Education is exemplified, the study sharing results obtained from a questionnaire administered to undergraduate students based on their experience of completing digital escape room sessions. Digital escape rooms can provide impactful learning environments for a social-emotional framework of teaching ESP, while also allowing participants to bond into communities in practice where they interact by putting to test their 21st century skills.

Keywords: *multimodality, digital escape rooms, experiential learning, gamified formative assessment*

REZUMAT. Modul de joc activat: construirea comunităților de practică prin jocuri digitale de tip „escape rooms” ca instrumente de învățare și predare a limbajelor specializate. Articolul își propune să exploreze potențialul creativ și utilizarea practică a activităților escape rooms ca instrumente inovatoare și multimodale pentru construirea comunităților de practică în cadrul predării și învățării limbii engleze specializate. Proiectate și personalizate pentru cursurile ESP, escape rooms educaționale pot oferi o oportunitate valoroasă de implicare a cursanților într-o experiență interactivă și colaborativă menită să îmbunătățească dezvoltarea abilităților lingvistice și de gândire creativă. Studiul explorează modul în care integrarea camerelor de evadare ca evaluare formativă ESP poate facilita învățarea, permițând studenților să dezvolte comunități de practică bazate pe învățarea experiențială, arătând și provocările și oportunitățile ridicate de această abordare educațională. De asemenea, analizează modul în care proiectarea și utilizarea escape rooms pe baza competențelor pedagogice digitale poate stimula motivația între cursanții de limbi străine, creând totodată un mediu de învățare socio-emoțional. Pentru a investiga valoarea pedagogică a escape room-urilor, lucrarea prezintă procesul de proiectare a activităților de învățare, multimodalitatea și conținutul specific ESP organizat sub formă de puzzle-uri și sarcini de lucru. Studiul exemplifică structura și impactul unui escape room pentru studenții de licență la Pedagogia Învățământului Primar și Preșcolar, împărtășind rezultate obținute dintr-un chestionar administrat studenților bazat pe experiența lor de completare a sesiunilor de escape room. Acest tip de învățare prin escape room poate oferi medii de învățare de impact, configurând învățarea socio-emoțională pentru cursurile de engleză pentru limbaje specializate, permițând totodată participanților să interacționeze în cadrul comunităților de practică.

Cuvinte-cheie: *multimodalitate, escape rooms, învățare experiențială, gamificarea evaluării formative*

Introduction

The plethora of innovative and interactive tools that have recently impacted language teaching approaches pave the way for teaching methodology exploration. Given that the affordances of multimodality and gamification in the English for Specific Purposes class shape a resourceful and engaging learning environment, students are more motivated to test their multiliteracy skills while advancing in their language acquisition itinerary. The language class can thus become a playing field for both instructors and learners, in which multiliteracy skills are put to the test, creativity is stimulated, and collaborative work builds communities of practice.

With the potential of immersing learners in specialised language content and motivating them to make use of language mediation, gamification is one prerequisite in designing digital educational escape rooms as learning scenarios for an ESP class. The gamified learning experience that a language instructor may facilitate enables students to pursue a customised learning itinerary while also enhancing life skills, from critical thinking to problem solving and teamwork. With a digital educational escape room as a framework for game-mode learning scenarios, language students are introduced to a holistic learning environment while also being exposed to various communication, information, and practice modes, thus mirroring their particular trends in online interactions.

More than learning in a playful manner, mutual support in learning is shaped by the micro communities of practice that are sketched within ESP classes, particularly via a gamified learning scenario. Digital educational escape rooms blend, in this respect, the thread of storytelling with multiple saplings: know-how, language mediation, collaboration, language mediation, digital skills, and communicative skills. Seeing that such a learning context needs to be designed within a digital pedagogical framework, the immersion of learners in a digital educational escape room can provide an endless and resourceful array of possibilities to practise specialised language.

It is the purpose of the current paper to explore the potential of digital educational escape rooms (DEER) in the context of teaching and learning ESP and to analyse the impact such a DEER may have on building a micro community of language practice. Using experiential learning to complete a challenge-based sequence of tasks, learners are actually immersed in a gamified formative assessment scenario. Moreover, the social-emotional learning framework that shapes the digital escape room also reconstitutes elements of the digital natives' communication trends by infusing the storyline with Netspeak, social media, and online features of language.

The aim of the paper is to exemplify and illustrate how a digital educational escape room can be structured and, more significantly, how it can tailor experiential learning for ESP learners by stimulating them to employ life skills and collaboration. The correlation between customised learning paths and learning outcomes is also analysed in an attempt to discuss the potential that DEERs, as digital pedagogical tools, have.

The theoretical framework is focused on presenting aspects related to gamified and experiential learning, social-emotional learning, communities of practice, and how digital educational escape rooms can facilitate a holistic learning framework. It is followed by a methodology section that covers the description of the DEER, the analysis procedure brief, and the research questions. To test the validity of hypotheses, the final section focuses on the analysis of a selection of responses that DEER participants (undergraduate students majoring in Pedagogy of Preschool and Primary School) provided as part of their ESP learning experience in the first semester of study. Preliminary conclusions and future directions of research are indicated in the last section, delving into how digital educational escape rooms can support micro-communities of practice in a gamified learning experience.

Theoretical Framework

The affordances that digital tools and apps provide within the context of content integration in the English for Specific Purposes class are immense. Students enjoy gamified learning environments, actively participating in content creation by using language mediation as a tool while also going through complex formative assessment processes. In this line of thought, digital educational escape rooms, as the online alternative to recreational and thematic escape rooms that have gained immense popularity during the last decade, have reached a wider audience among language instructors keen on gamifying their classes.

Escape rooms are fundamentally collaborative experiences, designed with puzzles created using a variety of apps that require active participation and contribution from each team member. Nicholson defines educational escape rooms as “a live-action team-based game where players discover clues, solve puzzles, and accomplish tasks in one or more rooms in order to accomplish a specific goal in a limited amount of time” (2015,1).

Research has indicated the manifold impact that digital escape rooms may have upon learning, stemming from an increase in motivation among learners (Fotaris & Mastoras, 2019; Huang, Kuo, Chen 2020), enhancing student engagement and collaborative learning (Kapp 2012), and fostering learning outcomes in the context of online learning (Makri, Vlachopoulos, and Martina

2021). “Based on social constructivism, according to which learners are interactively involved in team-based and collaborative activities to construct knowledge” (Makri, Vlachopoulos, & Martina 2021,3), DEERs can support resourceful learning experiences for students, immersing and engaging participants in a quest for cognitive activation.

Educational content is paired with the gaming environment via a storytelling mechanism intertwined in task-based puzzles with the purpose of facilitating learning and practice through scaffolded learning outcomes. More than using language mediation to complete the problem-solving process, participants are immersed in a challenging process of collaboration supported by the use of soft skills, digital skills, and communicative exchanges among diverse groups of learners.

“The rules of digital escape rooms share the same criteria: participants need to break out of virtual rooms by seeking digital keys, which can be traced after solving language-based tasks, vocabulary quizzes, crosswords, puzzles, interactive listening, and reading activities. Along with these virtual keys, learners obtain clues or hints that allow them to progress from one set of challenges to the ones in the next virtual room.” (Mudure-Iacob 2021,80)

Puzzles consist of any task that requires a form of decoding and problem-solving. In the context of ESP learning, these puzzles are language-based digital tasks designed to enable practice of all language skills and enhance language mediation.

Used in the educational context, DEERs can represent valid digital pedagogy tools as “problem-solving games that could provide a simulation of the real world in which students practise and develop skills and perceptions” (Li et. al. 2017,1007). A significant advantage of using DEER as formative assessment scenarios is that it activates know-how both on behalf of language instructors and learners. On the one hand, language instructors, as designers of such learning environments, need to activate their pedagogical digital competence, “as a new dimension in teachers’ pedagogical skills and competences” (From 2017, 43). On the other hand, learners are stimulated to activate cognition by operating with concepts and terminology specific to the ESP course and by racing through a sequence of task-based challenges in which the communicative currency is language mediation. “By customising learning contexts and embedding formative assessment in gamified frameworks, teachers can fully expand the advantages of digital learning and create competitive study environments” (Mudure-Iacob 2020, 106).

Despite the impact that DEERs have on students' motivation, creativity, and transversal skill use, research on the pedagogical foundation is still scarce (Veldkamp et al., 2020), particularly in the fields of language instruction and ESP course gamification. Stemming from the implementation of game design elements in non-game environments (Werbach and Hunter, 2012), gamification can be a piece of the puzzle generated by the digital pedagogical framework, thus customising the educational environment by "enhancing services with (motivational) affordances in order to invoke gameful experiences and further behavioural outcomes" (Koivisto et al. 2014, 3027). Digital Educational Escape Rooms are examples "of how gamification can be embedded in language instruction sequences, with the added value of introducing content and topic-based narratives along different tasks that require the use of integrated micro- and macro-skills" (Mudure-Iacob 2023, 76).

Occurring through a repetitive cycle of experience, reflection, and abstraction, experiential learning (Morris 2020) stands as an inclusive framework of gamified language learning, particularly in the context of ESP acquisition and practice. Experience occurs as students are immersed in a story that challenges them to solve puzzles by using critical thinking and language mediation, whereas "the process of reflection and abstraction occurs as students work together to make sense of the experience, develop new insights and understanding, and apply their knowledge and skills in real-world contexts" (Sidekerskienė 2023).

The experience of a gamified learning environment carried out as formative assessment can bring learners numerous benefits that expand the practice horizon beyond the use of language as an instrument of problem-solving. Sidekerskiene analyses the potential of DEERs in the the framework of out-of-the-box learning, "a novel learning approach that emphasises the importance of engaging students in unconventional, creative, and experiential learning activities that challenge them to think critically, solve problems, and collaborate with their peers" (2023). The quest for solving puzzles and decoding clues constitutes a phase of active exploration, allowing learners to discover in a sequential order specific scenarios in which they can practise their transversal skills and specific language content.

Experiential learning is also enhanced by teamwork, which is a prerequisite for completing the tasks in a DEER and triggers the use of a whole set of additional skills: critical thinking, communication skills, negotiation, digital skills, and mediation. By instilling engagement along the DEER, language instructors manage to facilitate learning environments in which students enjoy the opportunity for formative assessment in a jocular manner without resenting the standardised approach of in-class practice. Moreover, engagement is paired with motivation, which will enable participants to experience flow, a state of

optimal experience for learning (Csikszentmihalyi 1990). Flow becomes an ongoing motivation booster that supports engagement, which is, in its own turn, knitted into the narrative through storytelling. Likewise, storytelling adds to the potential of DEERs as gamified pedagogical tools by immersing learners in a multimodal exploration of digital settings with various challenges.

Multimodality occurs both via the tools and apps that are used in the design of DEER (from vocabulary-based apps that allow language instructors to create interactive tasks to platforms that enhance the practice of listening and speaking skills) and via the imaginary feedback that is embedded along the narrative. Experiential learning is also based on the incorporation of feedback mechanisms, which, in the context of digital escape rooms, can be delivered as clues, hints, and supportive messages, all of which are designed to support, motivate, and engage participants in task completion. Such clues and supportive messages can be inserted as multimodal representations (videos, gifs, emoji-coded clues, recordings, memes), which cater both to the Netizen identity of students and to tailoring the DEER challenge as an out-of-class experience.

The impact of teamwork on students' experiential learning process can be expanded into conceptualising a DEER as a micro-community of practice. Lave and Wenger's definitions of communities of practice (1991) have suffered considerable transformation based on the evolution of pedagogical and methodological approaches, but three core elements have been proliferated as definitory: "mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire" (Wenger 1998, 73). The ESP learning framework can generate "legitimate peripheral participation" (Lave, Wenger 1991, 25) according to which students construct and maintain identities based on their belonging to specific communities of practice, thus dwelling on socialisation as a mechanism of partaking in these communities. Nonetheless, such legitimate peripheral participation occurs in the context of assessment-based and instructor-guided scenarios, whereas the role of instructors shifts towards a secondary one in the case of DEER as a form of assessment.

The trend to use DEERs as formative assessment scenarios brings forth the idea that learners can be provided with collaboration opportunities, in which a resourceful exchange and influence approach takes place, as advanced students transfer their know-how and skills in light of collaboration, thus facilitating learning for lower-level students (Haneda, 1997). The same feature that a community of practice may enhance was identified by Murphey (1997), whose concept of *near peer role model* emphasises the idea that more experienced learners can influence their peers by sharing both know-how and inducing a certain learning behaviour. In the context of a digital escape room, such collaboration mechanisms can determine more engagement as well as substitute

the instructor's feedback in a standard class with encouragement and motivation coming from the near peer role model.

A more suitable approach that can characterise the potential of digital escape rooms in the context of formative assessment and collaboration is the *community of inquiry* (Garrison, Akyol 2013). A DEER community of inquiry fosters collaborative learning, resourceful interactions that require language mediation and transversal skills, while also creating an engaging and productive online learning environment. Having the idea of community building, participatory culture, interaction, and engagement as core pillars, social-emotional learning is definitely essential for a digital escape room experience.

Research and Procedure

Entitled "Trapped inside the school", the digital educational escape room (DEER) analysed in the present paper was designed by the author in view of conducting a complex digital formative assessment for undergraduate students majoring in the Pedagogy of Primary and Preschool Education. The DEER gamified assessment session was designed using OneNote Microsoft software and it was administered online to students, who grouped in fours, had the opportunity to review the content taught along the first semester in a jocular mode, while also practising their transversal skills. The narrative thread was sketched on the principle of creating a storytelling realm in which players would mimic the behaviour of teachers in order to solve various tasks and puzzles and prove their know-how in order to escape.

The scenario of the DEER follows a hypothetical future situation, namely, that players will have to avoid being infected by a virus that makes them lose all acquired language skills (see Figure 1 below).

To escape and complete the activity, students had to use their language skills, communication, time management skills and practice to solve puzzles along the seven rooms that are topic-based: gender equality, family institution, education, addictions, therapy and treatment, conformity and obedience, and respectively storytelling. All the topics that the escape rooms are focused on have been discussed along the semestrial language courses and students have been immersed into game-based learning during each course, by solving a variety of tasks and practising their language skills via different apps and tools. Many of these apps (Flipgrid, Wordwall, EdPuzzle, Padlet, LiveWorksheets, Emoji Rebus) were also used in the design of puzzles meant to be solved by participants in order to escape the DEER, along with a set of new tools, with the purpose of triggering digital skill use.

It's the year 2030.
A 🦠 virus appeared that infects people and makes them lose all language skills.
Lucky for you that when the government declared a general lockdown, you-*the teachers*- were inside your school.
But now you're locked in there and you need to break out and save your students from losing all their English language skills.

To do that you will have to

- ☑ Make sure that there's gender equality among your students 👤
- ☑ Understand the importance of families 👨👩👧
- ☑ Can use teaching/learning as a tool to breakout 🧑🎓🔑
- ☑ Fight addictions and provide therapy 📖
- ☑ Understand what conformity does in a school 🏫
- ☑ Tell a good story 📖

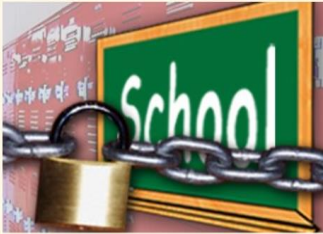


Figure 1. How it all happened. Introductory description of the DEER task.
Personal archive

The aim of the DEER is to provide a formative assessment framework in which learning outcomes are reached and in which students are required to use a medley of cognitive skills, language skills, knowledge sharing, language mediation skills, to demonstrate understanding of concepts, and ability to negotiate meaning and work in groups. One of the scopes of DEER is to face participants with puzzle-like challenges that test their capacity to use language in the analysis and interpretation of multimodal content. In doing so, critical thinking is activated to handle real-life scenarios, while language becomes the tool for communication and problem-solving.

The structure of the DEER analysed in the present paper is a sequential path-design, with participants being required to solve one puzzle which unlocks the next one until the final meta-puzzle can be solved with information gathered from all the previous sequences. The *Trapped inside the school* DEER comprises eight different rooms, each consisting of sets of tasks that generate passwords meant to unlock the next room, and clues, which will be required upon the completion of the meta-puzzle in the final room. Passwords are therefore the outcome of solving the cognitive puzzles, which “include the players’ thinking skills and logic” (Wiemker, Elumir 2015, 58) and which are designed as interactive vocabulary/reading/listening tasks, crosswords, matching tasks using digital tools, whereas clues vary from emoji rebuses, anagrams, cryptograms and hidden words. The password to the meta-puzzle, whose

solving represents the completion of the DEER, consists of all clues discovered in chronological order.

The puzzles were created with a set of digital tools and apps, which meant that participants would have to combine their language mediation skills and language skills in order to solve the tasks. The tools, target language skills, topics and types of puzzles and clues in each room are exemplified in the table below.

Table 1. Distribution of target language skills and types of puzzles and clues.
Personal archive

Topic-based room	Target language skills	Digital platforms, tools and apps	Type of puzzle	Type of clue
<i>Boys and girls</i>	Reading skills Listening skills Vocabulary skills	YouTube	Hidden letters in the text; Matching	Open answer based on listening skills
<i>It runs in the family</i>	Topic-based vocabulary skills	Liveworksheets Rebusclub Geogreeting	Matching vocabulary task; Decoding of idioms using emoji	Hidden text
<i>Can you still spell and count?</i>	Topic-based vocabulary skills	Wordwall Google slides	Word order; Fill in the blanks	Magnifying glass to reveal the missing word
<i>Addicted or hooked?</i>	Listening skills Vocabulary skills	EdPuzzle Fastory	Gapped text interactive task; Visual decoding of emoji rebus	Anagram
<i>Seek therapy</i>	Topic-based vocabulary	Liveworksheets Rebusclub	Fill in the blanks Visual decoding of emoji rebus	Anagram
<i>Conformity</i>	Reading skills Vocabulary skills Writing skills	Padlet Fastory	True/false task Numerical code	Visual decoding of emoji rebus
<i>Stories are great</i>	Speaking skills Reading skills	Google Earth Voyag Flipgrid	Recording an audio-video answer to a video-based task	Numerical code

In addition to the topic-based rooms that make the *Trapped inside the school* DEER, each sequence was linked to the previous one using a storytelling thread, represented by introductory fake social media posts as imaginary conversations between participants (who played the role of teachers) and other educational actors (students, principal, peers). Such posts, illustrated as Whatsapp printscreens (see Fig. 2 below), fake tweets, Facebook posts were intended to simulate a communicative exchange between the players and the outer world generated within the DEER. This section in each room served as a linking device as well as a preview of the topic to be covered in the room puzzles.

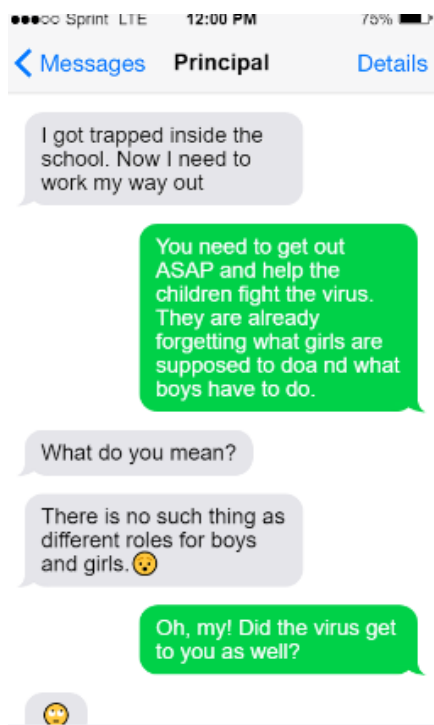


Figure 2. Fake Whatsapp post sample as introductory section in the DEER

A special emphasis was granted to tasks that required students to decode emoji rebuses (see Figure 3) both as an entertaining approach and as a means of testing vocabulary skills by asking them to find the idioms based on a code-switching conversion. Such types of tasks have been tested throughout the semester, with students growing fond of them and being competitive in decoding the idioms. More than vocabulary skills and communicative skills, learners were expected to use their creativity in finding the missing parts of the idioms and putting together the puzzles and clues.

PART 2: Crack this emoji-based idioms.

You need to identify the two idioms and write the last word from each of them. Now count the letters in these two words and you have the 2nd part of your password.

Figure 3. Fake Emoji rebus decoding puzzle. Personal archive.

The study involved 85 undergraduate students and consisted of two steps: students' collaboration in completing a digital educational escape room and filling in a questionnaire based on their playing experience.

All students were in the Pedagogy of Preschool and Primary Education, 1st year of study and completed the activity as part of the requirements in the English for Specific Purposes course they were enrolled in during the first semester of study in the academic year 2023-2024. Regarding their language proficiency level, 26% were advanced (C1-C2), 68% were B1-B2 independent users and the remaining 4% of the students were beginners (A2). Digital skill levels were rated as advanced by 65% of respondents, and intermediate by 35%.

The research procedure consisted in administering a questionnaire to students using Google Forms, in order to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Submitting the survey was voluntary; personal data was kept confidential and the participants granted their informed consent. The questionnaire has 13 questions in total, distributed as follows: 6 Multiple-choice questions, 2 Checkboxes, 2 Linear scale questions, and 3 Open questions.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: DEER can foster learning outcomes as experiential learning to which students respond better than traditional formative assessment scenarios.

Hypothesis 2: Motivation via storytelling engagement influences learners' determination to complete assigned tasks in a DEER formative assessment scenario.

Hypothesis 3: Teamwork supports the building of SEL micro-communities of practice within DEERs

Results and Discussion of Results

To analyse the **relevance of DEER task content as formative assessment scenarios** and to verify whether students managed to contextualise content that had been previously introduced, respondents were asked to indicate which of the options indicated in the table below (see Figure 4) best summarised the impact that the DEER task content had related to the previously taught content. More than reviewing content learned along the semester, the DEER stimulated learners to achieve more information on the covered topics and, more importantly, to practise their knowledge in more situation-based and problem-solving tasks. The majority of respondents (68.3%) indicated that the most relevant purpose for them was that they identified the core topics and concepts and solved the DEER tasks thus allowing them to review content. Numerous respondents (48.8%) also claimed that they acquired new knowledge after completing the DEER, which indicates that, more than being a formative assessment tool, the DEER can also be designed to introduce and expand know-how. None of the respondents chose the last option in the survey, which confirms that all learners grasped the potential of such an activity to generate knowledge and produce input.

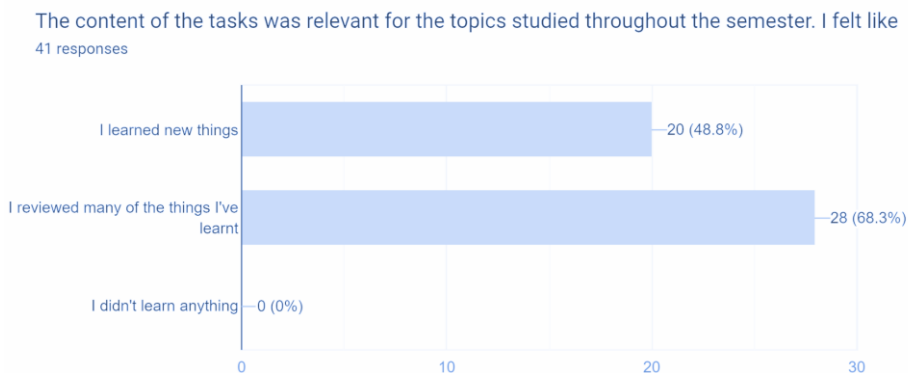


Figure 4. Relevance of DEER content as formative assessment

Moreover, in order to understand how participants in the DEER perceived the *acquisition of specific practical skills and learning outcomes as a result of completing this sequence of tasks*, respondents were asked to indicate whether using emoji-rebus helps them remember idioms better or not. Emphasis had been placed on teaching collocations and idioms via various tasks

and digital tools throughout the entire semester during the ESP course. Moreover, having explored the feature of emoji coded rebuses (using the platforms The Rebus Creator Club and Fastory), students were familiarised with the process of decoding these rebuses. The fact that the striking majority of respondents (92.9%) indicated that the use of emoji-rebuses helped them better remember idioms confirms that using a non-traditional formative assessment framework such as the pictorial-based rebuses in the current DEER does have a solid impact upon the learning outcome. By completing the tasks that required them to decode idioms from emoji codes in order to retrieve passwords and clues, students showed competence both in terms of using different language registers and in use of language in the socio-emotional learning context. Moreover, based on participants' testimonies after completing the escape room challenge, negotiation of meaning was frequently used while solving these tasks, given that emoji can be interpreted with multiple connotations and finding the correct idioms required them to properly contextualise sets of words.

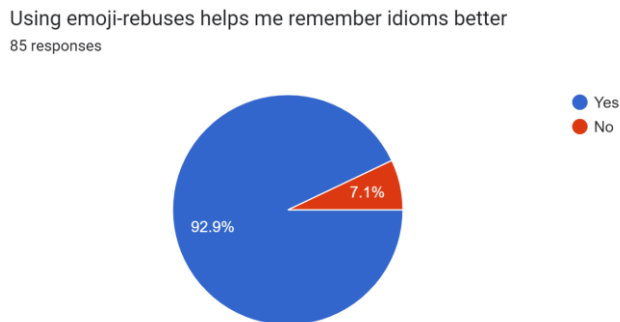


Figure 5. Respondents' perception regarding the impact of emoji rebuses on vocabulary practice of idioms

A mirroring or test question was also addressed to verify the potential of emoji rebuses as code-switching triggers validated as Netspeak features that digital native learners use when they have to switch between language registers and blend in their written communicative exchanges pictorial cues such as emoji. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they feel they know more idioms as a result of solving emoji rebuses (the question was intended to cover all previous cases where emoji rebuses had been used, but also correlate within the DEER framework, where multiple tasks and clue-based challenges consisted in such types of puzzles).

I know significantly more idioms now because I am using emoji-based rebuses
85 responses

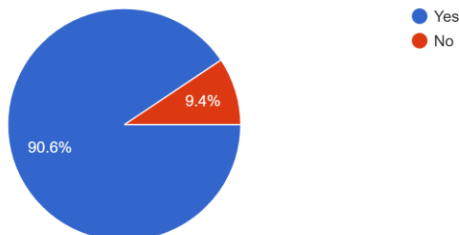


Figure 6. Respondents' perception regarding their vocabulary acquisition of idioms

With the majority of respondents (90.6%) indicating that they sense a significant increase in their acquisition and processing of idioms as a result of this game-based approach, the premise that using such a DEER framework formative assessment scenarios relying on gamified experiential learning can foster positive learning outcomes that are identifiable by both learners and instructors.

The current research has validated the fact that *DEERs are resourceful experiential learning models, which facilitate the enhancement of learning outcomes in a gamified environment that engages learners more than in a traditional learning setting.* Focussing on the manner in which language acquisition can be supported within this framework of formative assessment, participants have confirmed an increased practice of idioms throughout the DEER tasks, while also acknowledging that code-switching and language mediation were relevant tools of reaching their learning outcomes.

Another core aim of the current analysis was to investigate the *manner in which motivation can influence learners' determination in completing the tasks* embedded in the DEER. In order to do so we identified various elements related to motivation in terms of students' reaction to particular cues that would constitute motivational factors. When asked if they felt engaged in the story and the overall challenge represented by the digital escape room 92.7% of respondents gave an affirmative answer, thus confirming that engagement as a motivational trigger was perceived by participants.

In standardised gamification contexts, motivation elements occur as badges, leaderboard ranking, allocation of points and different interactive and in Netspeak- infused feedback formats (memes, social media acronyms, emoji). Considering that the current DEER bears gamification features and is rooted in

multimodality as a core design framework, some of the embedded motivational cues were various cheering messages envisaged as *pretend social media posts* which would also constitute features related to storytelling, or as *displays of avatars* representing the language instructor. Likewise, other motivational features included *specific content created* by the designer of the digital Escape room in the form of *memes* or as *audio video recordings* meant to encourage students to continue their tasks and show appreciation but also to provide relevant cues and hints throughout the puzzle solving tasks.

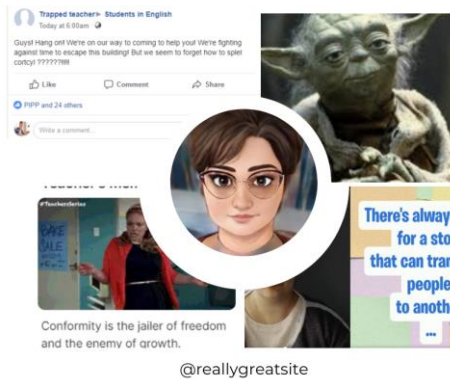


Figure 7. Collage of storytelling cues embedded in the DEER (clockwise representation: fake social media posts, memes to encourage students upon puzzle solving, gifts to introduce the topic, audio-video content, DEER's designer avatar in the centre)

Furthermore, storytelling conveyed as a multimodal mechanism of motivating DEER participants was designed as a thread that would provide both a preview of the topics covered in each room and a motivational booster in the simulated environment, thus sketching the participatory culture environment.

When asked how they perceived the fake social media posts that they could find at the beginning of each room, students replied that they consider these storytelling elements to be *funny and ironic* (61% of participants having chosen this option), whereas the remaining 39% claimed that this storytelling thread had the *purpose of introducing them to the specific topic of the room*. Their answers indicate that storytelling in the specific multimodal framework chosen for this DEER has the potential of reactivating cognition, in the sense that students found it easier to properly identify the topic under review due to storytelling cues, but they also identified the humorous side intended as a marker of the participatory culture previously mentioned. Equally important, the fact that the purpose of these storytelling cues was properly identified to

(also) bear a humorous mark confirms that the gamified assessment scenario generates a genuine socio-emotional learning context.

To identify the elements that students particularly liked about the DEER and thus determine which were the *core motivational triggers*, one of the open-ended questions in the survey was *What did you like most about this digital Escape room?* A selection of answers are illustrated below in Figure 8 and are structured according to the common features for proper representation.



Figure 9. Perceived engagement elements. Personal archive

Many answers indicated similar features that students identified as “elements they liked in the DEER” hence the figure above shows a selection of answers grouped according to common characteristics that account for engagement elements. The first category identified as an engagement element is marked by *competition*, which is a basic gamification and motivation feature. Mirroring the experience of a competition, the DEER challenge was perceived by participants as “difficult” but fueled by curiosity, it mimicked a “thrill seeking adventure”, it was “brain challenging” and forced players to leave their “comfort zone”, but it also triggered them to be the first who finish the challenge. The competitive feature was also suggested by storytelling cues such as cheering posts and memes displayed within several escape rooms, intended to instil a feeling of race among participants.

Game experience, as an additional category that marked students engagement along the DEER was frequently indicated by respondents, who wrote that they were motivated by “the prize” (indicator of reward as gamified experience marker) and by “appraisal in the form of memes and social media

posts" (synonym with badges in a gamified environment). Moreover, "curiosity" and "challenging, but fun" were recurrent items among learners' answers, as labels of a successful gamified learning experience, just as the sensed "interaction with the teacher" through the social media posts were confirmed storytelling elements that participants appreciated.

Students also identified a series of *content-related elements* and mentioned that they "got to practise vocabulary in writing, speaking and negotiations", could do a "good review of all the topics studied along the semester" and managed to practise their idioms knowledge by solving the emoji rebuses. Another appreciated element was the type of tasks that required participants to create their own content-memes, Flip recordings- and which was perceived as an authentic challenge that allowed learners to express their Netizen identity.

Motivation stands as a core feature of gamified learning and the current research has aimed to show how motivation can be built in a DEER, stemming from engagement triggers. Storytelling becomes the knitting thread that binds the interactive tasks, creates expectations in a multimodal network, binds together engagement triggers such as game experience, content-based elements and teamwork, and maintains an imaginary connection to the language instructor as DEER designer, through the social media posts, as cues of Netizen identity building in a micro community of practice. *The hypothesis that motivation via storytelling engagement influences learners' determination to complete the DEER formative assessment scenarios has been validated in light of participants' responses, who identified core features of the gamified environment as triggers for their competitive approach towards completing the escape room.*

A socio-emotional learning environment accounts for self-regulation of emotions, accurate assessment of one's strengths and weaknesses, proper negotiation of meaning within a multicultural and diverse group, as well as the ability to manage social interactions across various contexts. In the framework of the DEER competition, *the most complex instrument of facilitating a socio-emotional framework was teamwork.* Before the start of the DEER, students were given the opportunity to form groups of three or fours and collaborate in order to solve puzzles and clues towards the final challenge of breaking out of the escape room. Some teams were created in advance, based on social affinity among students, whereas the majority of groups were formed on the spot. To investigate what triggered participants to be motivated and complete the DEER, students were asked to indicate what impact the collaboration within the team had upon their motivation to finish the escape room challenge.

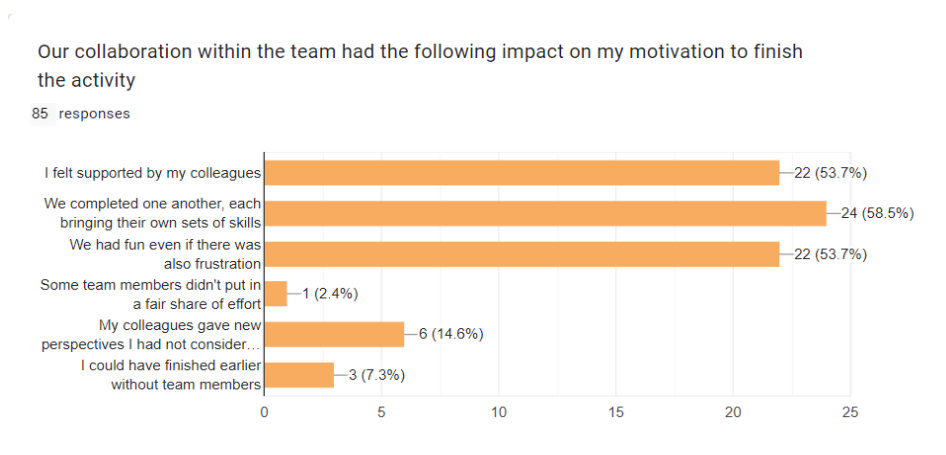


Figure 9. Impact of collaboration upon motivation to complete the DEER

As the question was a checkbox type, students could select multiple answers. The majority (58.5%) reckoned that they “completed one another, each bringing their own sets of skills”, which confirms the premise that in a socio-emotional learning environment *negotiation of meaning* is paired with *management of social interactions* in contexts that might not be known to participants, as with the case of the DEER. More than half of respondents (53.7%) identified *support from their peers* as a motivational trigger, as well as having had a *fun playing experience*, despite the frustration that occurred at times. By *self-regulating their emotions and frustration*, students were able to better perform in the virtual learning context, based on mutual support. In the same line of thought, stating that some participants “gave new perspectives they had not considered” confirms that *plurality of perspectives* and the inherent *need to negotiate meaning* is enhanced by a socio-emotional learning scenario. All these elements indicate that the *near peer role model* can be a productive tool for motivational learning and practice.

On the other hand, some students (9.7% of respondents) also mentioned two negative aspects that teamwork had upon the gaming experience, namely that “some team members didn’t put in a fair share of work” and respectively that “they could have finished earlier without certain team members”. These less positive experiences that students encounter are recurrent situations that learners sometimes face when working in groups/teams for different projects, with some members failing to equally contribute to the content input or to the problem-solving tasks. Though perceived as frustrating, such scenarios allow learners to better practise their negotiation and conflict management skills, which teaches them valuable lessons in terms of working within a diverse group.

The same premise can be validated based on the open answers provided by participants in the question illustrated above where *teamwork was identified as a core engagement element, capitalising both as motivation booster and as transactional tool in a social-emotional environment.*

Conclusions

The socio-emotional learning framework in the English for Specific Purposes context is supported by the wide variety of multimodal tools and engaging teaching approaches. Gamification can sketch experiential learning scenarios, by facilitating interactional practices in order to discover the impact of learning on real-life situations, while at the same time negotiating meaning through language mediation.

Designed as interactive gamified learning scenarios, digital educational escape rooms contextualise formative assessment by customising learning outcomes in a jocular manner and in a collaborative representation. By embedding multiple skill-based tasks that learners need to solve, by juxtaposing a playful approach to specific vocabulary acquisition (as with the case of idioms in the current study) and by supporting relational engagement in task completion, DEERs become resourceful micro communities of practice. Language learning becomes an experiential quest on behalf of learners, who are challenged to pair language mediation with their use of transversal skills, thus mimicking real-life situations in which problem-solving and critical thinking become core keys of interpretation.

In addition to facilitating an experiential learning microcommunity, DEERs also delve into the influence of the *near peer role model* upon students with different language levels, stimulating and motivating them to acquire know-how and collaborate by learning. Motivation lies at the heart of the escape experience, as a trigger to engage learners in a competitive task-completion race. Learners are thus encouraged by customised storytelling cues (Netspeak infused social media fake posts to mimic communication with the teacher, mock recordings of DEER designers, memes and emoji coded messages or meaningful passwords and clues). The storytelling thread frames the micro community of practice and instil a sense of identity that can be negotiated via language mediation, but that can also serve as a motivational cue bringing a humorous twist to the storyline.

The current study aimed to analyse how DEER have a potential for drafting experiential learning through gamified formative assessment, while emphasising how language acquisition and the tailoring of learning outcomes can be supported by a gamified learning structure. Data has been collected

based on undergraduate students' impressions as a result of participating in a Digital Educational Escape Room as a formative assessment framework at the end of a semester of studying English for Pedagogy. Offering a qualitative and quantitative analysis of how DEER tasks can impact the language learning experience, the study validates the initial hypotheses and confirms the practical implications for using DEER as a specific language learning scenario.

The particular contribution of the current research to the topic of pedagogical and SEL implications of digital educational escape rooms in language instruction can be categorised into the following sections:

1. Multimodality of storytelling can amplify the engagement features of DEER and motivate language learners to fully immerse in language mediation, language acquisition in a collaborative learning scenario;

2. Experiential learning is a resourceful mechanism of structuring formative assessment for students, who acknowledge the content-based input and better understand the practical implications of their learning outcomes;

3. Gamified foreign language instruction via DEERs sketches a socio-emotional learning environment in which teamwork is a core instrument for tech savvy learners, who, more than the juxtaposing language acquisition, transversal skills, learn how to mediate content in order to build on a micro community of practice.

WORKS CITED

- Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. 1990. *Flow: the psychology of optimal experience*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Fotaris, Panagiotis, and Theodore Mastoras. 2019. "Escape rooms for learning: A systematic review." In *Proceedings of the European Conference on Games Based Learning*, pp. 235-243.
- From, Jorgen. 2017. "Pedagogical Digital Competence—Between Values, Knowledge and Skills". *Higher Education Studies*; Vol. 7, No. 2. ISSN 1925-4741 E-ISSN 1925-475X Published by Canadian Center of Science and Education .
- Garrison DR, Akyol Z. 2013. "The community of inquiry theoretical framework". In: *Handbook of distance education*. Routledge; p. 122–38.
- Haneda, Mari. 1997. "Second language learning in a "community of practice": A case study of adult Japanese learners". In *Canadian Modern Language Review/ La Revue canadienne des langues vivantes*, 54(1), 11-27.
- Lin, F.-J.; Wang, C.-P.; Zhung, H.-C.; Wang, H.-Y.; Wang, S.-M.; Li, C.-T.; Li, M.-C.; Hou, H.-T. 2017. "An Educational Simulation Game for Learning Papermaking with Contextual Scaffoldings for Elementary Students: The Evaluation of Learning Performance and Flow State". In *Proceedings of the Advanced Applied Informatics (IIAI-AAI)*, 2017 6th IIAI International Congress, Hamamatsu, Japan, pp. 1007–1008.

- Lave, Jean and Etienne Wenger. 1991. *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511815355>.
- Kapp, Karl. 2012. *The gamification of learning and instruction: Game-based methods and strategies for training and education*. San Francisco, CA: Pfeiffer.
- Koivisto, Jonna, Hamari, Juho, & Sarsa Harri. 2014. "Does gamification work? A literature review of empirical studies on gamification". In *Proceedings of the 47th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*. pp.3025-3034. Hawaii: USA.
- Makri, Agoritsa, Dimitrios Vlachopoulos, and Richard A. Martina. 2021. "Digital Escape Rooms as Innovative Pedagogical Tools in Education: A Systematic Literature Review" *Sustainability* 13, no. 8: 4587. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13084587>
- Morris, Thomas Howard. 2020. "Experiential learning—a systematic review and revision of Kolb’s model." *Interact. Learn. Environ.* 28, pp. 1064–1077. [CrossRef]
- Mudure-Iacob, Ioana. 2021. "Gamified Assessment of Business English: Learning and Testing Business Idioms and Collocations via Digital Escape Rooms". *Lingua. Language and Culture* 1:76-90. <https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=1016785>
- Mudure-Iacob, Ioana, Cotoc, Alexandra, Miclea, Veronica, Hopartean, Anamaria, Andronache, Daniel, Pop, Raluca. 2023. "Digital Skills through the Lens of Gamified Activities in Language Mediation. The DIAL4U Erasmus+Project". In *Educatia 21 Journal*, (24) 2023, Art. 08 doi: 10.24193/ed21.2023.24.08
- Mudure-Iacob, Ioana. 2020. "Assessment of ESP Language Acquisition through the Lens of Gamification." In C. Teglas, & R. Nistor (Eds), *Limbaje Specializate în Contextul Noilor Medii de Învățare: Provocări și Oportunități*. pp. 94-108. Cluj-Napoca, Romania: Presa Universitară Clujeană.
- Murphey, Tim. 1996. "Near peer role models". In *Teachers talking to teachers* 4 (3): 21-22.
- Nicholson, Scott. 2015. *Peeking behind the locked door: A survey of escape room facilities*. White Paper available at <http://scottnicholson.com/pubs/erfacwhite.pdf>
- Sidekerskienė T, Damaševičius R. 2023. "Out-of-the-Box Learning: Digital Escape Rooms as a Metaphor for Breaking Down Barriers in STEM Education". In *Sustainability*. 15(9):7393. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15097393>
- Shih-Yuan Huang, Yi-Han Kuo, Hsueh-Chih Chen. 2020. "Applying digital escape rooms infused with science teaching in elementary school: Learning performance, learning motivation, and problem-solving ability". In *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 37:100681, ISSN 1871-1871, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2020.100681>.
- Veldkamp, Alice & Grint, Liesbeth & Knippels, Marie-Christine & van Joolingen, Wouter. 2020. "Escape Education: A Systematic Review on Escape Rooms in Education". In *Educational Research Review*, 3110.20944/preprints202003.0182.v1.
- Werbach, Kevin, and Dan Hunter. 2012. *For the Win: How game thinking can revolutionise your business*. Wharton Digital.
- Wenger, Etienne. 1998. *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE: A CASE STUDY ON ACADEMIC EXCHANGE PROGRAMMES

Raluca POP¹ 

Article history: Received 15 February 2024; Revised 24 June 2024; Accepted 15 October 2024;
Available online 10 December 2024; Available print 30 December 2024.

©2024 Studia UBB Philologia. Published by Babeş-Bolyai University.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License

ABSTRACT. *Intercultural Communicative Competence: A Case Study on Academic Exchange Programmes.* The paper intends to identify the challenges experienced by students during their study abroad in a post-pandemic context. In addition, emphasis is placed on respondents' self-perceived level of intercultural communicative competence. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought considerable changes in the educational field and many academic exchange programmes have been ceased. While numerous studies have identified linguistic competence and cultural awareness as outcomes of academic exchange programmes before the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a gap in research in this area in a post-pandemic context when people were reluctant to engage with each other. Students exposed to potentially stressful situations in their academic lives might experience negative outcomes in their achievement. Thus, respondents' coping mechanisms when faced with culture shock abroad are also referred to. The study included 15 participants. A survey was used as a research method. The data obtained were analysed qualitatively and quantitatively through descriptive statistics using Google Forms' built-in tools or Voyant Tools for content analysis. Findings indicate that 93.3% of the participants self-evaluate themselves as having developed intercultural communicative competence and that 40% have experienced culture shock. Nevertheless, respondents perceived the academic exchange programme as a valuable experience for engaging in reflective practice even if they faced various challenges related to weather, the school system and contact with a new society.

¹ **Raluca POP** is Senior Lecturer PhD, at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca. She has a PhD in Sciences of Education from the same institution (2014) and published several books among which *An Intercultural Perspective in Teaching the Didactics of the English Language*, e-book (2019) or *30 Years of Norwegian Language and Literature in Romania at Babeş-Bolyai University* (2021), in collaboration. Research areas: intercultural communicative competence, digital humanities and AI, English didactics, Norwegian didactics. Email: raluca.petrus@ubbcluj.ro.

Keywords: *post-pandemic context, academic exchange programme, intercultural communicative competence, culture shock, culture, language*

REZUMAT. Competența comunicativă interculturală: Studiu de caz pentru programele de mobilitate academică. Studiul de față își propune să identifice provocările cu care s-au confruntat studenții în timpul programelor de mobilitate academică în străinătate în context post-pandemic. Este adusă de asemenea în prim plan evaluarea respondenților cu privire la nivelul propriu de dezvoltare a competenței comunicative interculturale. Pandemia COVID-19 a adus schimbări considerabile în domeniul educațional și multe programe de schimb academic au fost sistate. Numeroase studii au identificat competența lingvistică și conștientizarea culturală ca rezultate ale programelor de schimb academic înainte de pandemia COVID-19. Totuși, există un vid de cercetare în acest domeniu într-un context post-pandemic, când persoanele au fost mai reticente în a socializa. Studenții expuși la situații potențial stresante în viața lor academică ar putea avea rezultate negative în performanța lor. De aceea menționăm în studiul de față și mecanismele de adaptare ale respondenților atunci când se confruntă cu șoc cultural în străinătate. Studiul a inclus 15 participanți. Metoda de cercetare folosită a fost ancheta pe bază de chestionar. Datele obținute au fost analizate calitativ și cantitativ prin statistici descriptive folosind instrumentele Google Forms sau Voyant Tools pentru analiza conținutului. Rezultatele indică faptul că 93,3% dintre participanți se autoevaluează ca având competență de comunicare interculturală și că 40% au experimentat șocul cultural. Cu toate acestea, respondenții au perceput programul de schimb academic ca o experiență valoroasă pentru angajarea în practică reflexivă, chiar dacă s-au confruntat cu diverse provocări legate de vreme, sistemul școlar și contactul cu o nouă societate.

Cuvinte-cheie: *context post-pandemic, programul de mobilitate academică, competență comunicativă interculturală, șoc cultural, cultură, limbă*

1. Introduction

The internalisation of education and the increased global mobility are factors that encourage tertiary-level students to spend a period studying abroad and improve their academic performance, language learning in an immersive native-speaking environment, intercultural competence, personal growth (i.e. independence, adaptability, networking and social skills), and career prospects. Academic exchange programmes can be interchangeably named student exchange, student travel exchange or international student exchange (Mathiesen and Lager 2007). For reasons of consistency, this paper uses the term academic exchange programmes. The time spent abroad enables students to become more capable of living in a globalised world and developing their cross-cultural learning and

global awareness (DeLong et al. 2011). These constitute prerequisites for the professional requirements of the 21st century.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought considerable changes in the educational field and teaching had to be adapted to online platforms. Communication practices in many universities worldwide have become entirely digital. For safety measures linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, academic exchange programmes have been reduced or completely ceased. Erasmus students who engaged in virtual exchange programmes reported “deficient intercultural socialisation as a result of missed experiences” (Schueller and Şahin 2022, 96) indicating that face-to-face interaction is paramount for such type of study abroad. In the spring of 2021, many universities returned to in-person instruction and virtual exchange programmes were replaced with on-site ones (Levine-West et al. 2023).

The educational value of academic exchange programmes has been widely dealt with in the literature and numerous studies have explored the development of language knowledge and intercultural communicative competence as outcomes of participating in academic exchange programmes (Behrnd and Porzelt 2012; Bohman and Borglin 2014; Cleak, Anand, and Das 2016; Crossman and Clarke 2010). Living abroad can negatively impact students’ lives as they face challenges of adapting to a new culture, overcoming language barriers, understanding socio-cultural differences or engaging in intercultural adaptation (Andrade 2006; Meier and Daniels 2011, Levine-West et al. 2023). Even if before COVID-19, these challenges were regarded as a common part of the study-abroad experience, students’ anxieties worsened during the pandemic (Levine-West et al. 2023, 47) as they were faced with much more pressure linked to various safety measures. Nevertheless, the students who enrolled in on-site academic exchange programmes in the spring of 2020 have indicated positive experiences related to “increased mindfulness, self-reflection, and personal growth [...] learning to be flexible, resourceful, and adaptable in new situations” (Pedersen 2021, 81).

This paper widens the discussion on the educational value of academic exchange programmes beyond the development of language knowledge and intercultural communicative competence because it reflects on a post-pandemic context which has challenged people’s ways of engaging with each other. This discussion represents an opportunity to reflect on the challenges experienced by students in an academic exchange programme and the coping mechanisms they have employed to overcome culture shock. These two paths for inquiry pave the way for the research questions addressed in the study: the types of challenges and coping mechanisms employed by students in their study abroad and their self-perceived level of ICC. The paper explores educational implications and directions for further research. The concepts of intercultural communicative

competence (ICC), culture shock and coping mechanisms are central to the discussions in the paper.

The following section consists of a brief review of theoretical aspects of intercultural communicative competence and the coping mechanisms undertaken when faced with culture shock abroad.

2. Theoretical framework

Acknowledging that all learning is social and that all learning environments are culturally embedded has favoured an integrated manner of teaching a foreign language. This perspective that favours a mix of language and culture learning has been covered in the literature by many language educators (Byram 1997; Risager 2007; Kramsch 1993). In the field of foreign language learning it is salient to address the fact that “students have both a linguistic and a cultural gap to bridge” (Collie and Slater 1997, 6). Considering that language is “part of and bears our identity” (Skjekkeland 2012, 69) communication in a foreign language should imply an effective communication across cultures and languages. In today’s multicultural educational and professional contexts, in addition to acquiring linguistic proficiency in a foreign language, students should be encouraged to develop their ICC.

The theoretical underpinnings of this present research are linked to the development of ICC understood as a set of skills, knowledge and attitudes developed in intercultural situations which enable the use of language in socially and culturally appropriate ways (Deardorff 2009). In the past thirty years, the development of ICC has been a topic of interest in many fields ranging from politics to education, linguistics and economy. In the literature, various concepts are connected to ICC and, to some extent, terms overlap: cross-cultural competence; global competence; intercultural sensitivity; intercultural intelligence; multicultural competence or intercultural awareness. For reasons of consistency and because the paper focuses equally on intercultural skills, knowledge and attitudes as in the intercultural competence models proposed by Byram (1997) and Deardorff (2009), this paper uses the term intercultural communicative competence. According to Deardorff (2009), ICC comprises three components:

- Intercultural attitudes: respect, openness, curiosity, interest, willingness to discover a new culture;
- Intercultural skills: observation, listening, evaluating, analysing, interpreting, relating;
- Intercultural knowledge: cultural self-awareness, deep cultural knowledge, sociolinguistic awareness.

It is relevant to acknowledge that the development of ICC is underpinned by various variables: the individuals’ opinions about culture, their age, cultural

background, socio-cultural and socio-economic context, and level of motivation just to name a few.

ICC develops gradually in formal, informal and non-formal learning contexts. A study abroad academic experience provides various formal, informal and non-formal learning opportunities that support the development of ICC. In the same line of thought, students who study abroad become aware that “communication in a foreign language is inevitably cross-cultural” (Pop 2019, 17) and are likely to reflect more on their own identity, on the encounter of new cultural representations and on the changes that are brought by this encounter because such experiences engage the “individual to interpret *self* (intra-culturality) and *other* (inter-culturality) in diverse contexts of social and cultural exchange” (Pop and Răduț 2019, 36).

Another central topic in the present research targets the challenges that students experience in the host country. Even if empirical research concluded that academic exchange mobilities enable students to acquire a more refined understanding of cultural differences (Coleman 2013; Kinginger 2009), language barriers and a lack of experience in multicultural groups can negatively impact students’ learning experiences and social contact (Schartner and Cho 2017). This paper has addressed the issue of social contact in the host country as it is “a contributing factor to international students’ cross-cultural adaptation” (Szabo, Papp, and Luu 2020, 82). Starting from the premise that individuals who live in unfamiliar environments tend to be more susceptible and sensitive to social comparison (Lockwood et al. 2012), the paper aimed to identify the challenges experienced by students during their stay abroad.

A different social and cultural environment, food, weather and living habits can trigger students’ culture shock understood as “the process of initial adjustment to an unfamiliar environment” (Pedersen 1995, 1). According to Oberg (1960) there are four stages of culture shock: *the honeymoon stage* when individuals are very excited about their stay abroad; *the crisis stage* during which individuals experience loneliness, confusion and a sense of failure; *the adaptation stage* during which individuals have found a kind of survival mode and they embrace cultural differences; *the adjustment stage* when individuals accept the host culture. The participants in this research were required to evaluate their level of culture shock.

University students face various academic and non-academic demands during their studies. Erschens et al. (2018) and Webber et al. (2019) indicate such examples of academic demands: adaptation to a new learning context, overwork, preparation for exams, and the pressure to perform. Non-academic demands refer to conflicts with family and friends, financial distress, concerns related to moving to new places and bonding with new acquaintances (Beiter et al., 2015). It should not be overlooked that students’ academic performance can be diminished due to stress and demands that cannot be met (Turner et al.,

2015). In this respect, the present paper intends to point out participants' stress factors in an academic exchange programme.

3. Methodology

3.1. Purpose of the study

The current study intends to identify the challenges and stress factors experienced by students during their study abroad. In addition, the paper aims to shed light on the students' level of intercultural communicative competence as an outcome of their academic exchange programme.

3.2. Participants and Procedure

A total of 15 respondents provided answers to the survey based on convenience sampling. Responses were anonymous. Table 1 indicates participants' profile:

Table 1. Participant's profile

Participants	N	%
Age		
20	5	33.3
21	1	6.7
22	3	20
23	3	20
24	1	6.7
25-30	2	13.3
Total	15	100
Gender		
Female	12	80
Male	3	20
Total	15	100
Type of academic exchange mobility		
Incoming student	7	46.7
Outgoing student	8	53.3
Total	15	100
Mother tongue		
Romanian	9	60
Bengali	3	20
French	2	13.3
Hungarian	1	6.7
Total	15	100

All respondents are multilingual and can speak various languages such as English, German, Norwegian, Swedish, Italian, Spanish, French, Hindi, Urdu, and Bengali.

The Google Forms questionnaire was sent via email or MS Teams to students who have participated in an academic exchange programme after the COVID-19 pandemic. The targeted time frame was January 2024. Given the low number of respondents, the findings cannot be generalised. However, in qualitative studies, the sample size is not that relevant (Cohen et al. 2011) and we consider that our research is valuable in respect to the qualitative analysis of the respondents' views about their stay abroad. In terms of representativity, the respondents have travelled to different countries allowing for a broader perspective for discussing intercultural encounters.

3.3. Research instruments

The questionnaire comprised 22 items with a mix of close-ended (multiple choice, checkboxes or Likert scale) and open-ended questions organized into five main sections: Section 1 - Demographic information (age, gender, mother tongue, linguistic competence in other languages); Section 2 - Location and duration of the study abroad (host country, duration of studies); Section 3 - Challenges related to living abroad (aspects difficult to handle, making new friends, cultural aspects, language difficulties, learning outcomes) Section 4 - Development of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ability to identify tangible and intangible elements of culture, development of ICC); Section 5 - Culture shock (experiencing culture shock, stages of culture shock, coping mechanisms).

The quantitative data obtained were analysed through descriptive statistics using Google Forms' built-in tools, while the qualitative data were processed using content analysis provided by Voyant Tools (www.voyant.org). The questionnaire was formulated in English.

3.4 Research questions

The research aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What types of challenges were faced by respondents, in a post-pandemic context, during their academic exchange programme?
2. Did they experience culture shock and what were the coping mechanisms they employed?
3. Did respondents develop their intercultural communicative competence as a result of participating in an academic exchange programme?

4. Results and Discussion of Results

To provide a perspective regarding the respondents' cultural encounters abroad, it is relevant to mention that 26.7% have travelled to Norway, 20% to Germany, 19.1% to Romania, 13.4% to Italy, 6.7% to Ireland, 6.7% to Sweden and 6.7% to Turkey. The students spent an entire semester abroad (80%) or a whole academic year (20%).

The investigation of the challenges experienced by respondents was performed through a close-ended item (with checkboxes) and various open-ended questions. Data were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. Figure 1 indicates that weather (40%), the encounter with a new society (33.3%) and the school system (33.3%) were leading factors that they perceived as most difficult to handle. The location (26.7%), language (26%) and culture (20%) have also posed difficulties to them. One respondent did not experience any challenges while being abroad.

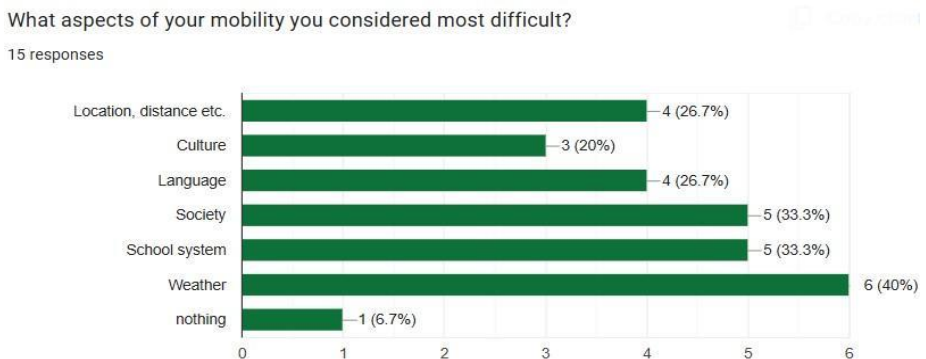


Figure 1. Aspects considered difficult during the exchange programme

The open-ended questions underwent content analysis via Voyant Tools. The corpus created contained 279 total words. The most relevant frequent words in the corpus were: weather (4 instances); language (4 instances); friends (4 instances). The data collected indicate results similar to the findings in the close-ended item above, i.e. the weather has played a considerable role during their mobility abroad. It is common knowledge that some people can suffer from weather sensitivity which impacts their physical or mental health.

The use of the target language is also perceived by respondents as challenging. There is general agreement in contemporary literature that international language students enhance their language skills and intercultural competence in contact with native speakers in the host country (Wang, Crawford, and Liu 2019). However, many international students found it difficult "to engage in meaningful contact with locals and some consider the lack of it as a personal

failure” (Maier and Daniels 2011, 212). One’s development of language competence abroad can be underpinned by various individual variables (motivation, language ability, age, time spent abroad, etc.) as well as by definite cultural differences as indicated in Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions Theory (Hofstede 1984) which can act as barriers to communication. In addition, the fact that the host country has various dialects or official languages (as is the case of Norway or Spain) makes the practice of language and communication even more challenging. Therefore, either in the context of academic language use or in the sphere of language used for socialisation, respondents in this study had first-hand experience with the complex endeavour of communicating effectively in a foreign language.

According to the data gathered, it is difficult to socialize and make new friends abroad. This might be subject to various individual variables and unrealistic expectations of how natives establish relations with international students. Norwegians for example “are generally distant and reserved in interpersonal relationships” (Sener 2024, 1) and value privacy. Students should have handled interactions with Norwegians with this knowledge in mind.

To showcase the challenges faced by respondents during their exchange programme, we include below five answers taken from the open-ended questions:

[Leaving home/living by myself for the first time was challenging and also trying to make Norwegian friends.]

[The most difficult part for me was to not to feel constantly that I am a foreigner and to distance myself from people based on this fact]

[The school system, the language of teaching and the exam session]

[The most challenging was to adapt to the way of life of the country]

[Parking regulations]

Coping with various adaptation demands connected to socio-personal issues or academic constraints is not easy to accomplish for an international student. The answers indicate that it was challenging for respondents to make new friends, to get accustomed to new educational requirements and to effectively use the target language in diverse socio-cultural contexts. In addition, they found it difficult to handle elements connected to the new society (e.g. parking rules, and adapting to a new way of life).

Most respondents (93.3%) answered that by the end of their exchange programme, they had new friends and only one respondent (6.7%) stated that he/she made no new friends. Still, the answers to the open-ended questions indicate that making friends was a difficult endeavour. The health regulations in the post-pandemic context might have also played a considerable role. Meier

and Daniels (2011, 212) address the issue of social interaction during exchange programmes abroad and indicate that many of the students are not able to make new friends. Possible solutions refer to the need to reconceptualise their identity as foreign language learners (Meier and Daniels 2011, 212). One important aspect to consider in this context is that social comparison with native speakers can threaten one's self-confidence (Lou and Noels 2024, 1) and one respondent mentions this aspect: *I [feel constantly that I am a foreigner].*

In line with previous empirical research showcasing the beneficial outcomes of exchange programmes (Coleman 2013; Kinginger 2009; Phipps and Gonzalez, 2004), we focused our attention on the respondents' positive experience abroad. The answers were analysed with Voyant Tools. The corpus that was created contained 225 total words. The most relevant frequent words in the corpus were: new (9 instances); experience (5 instances); people (3 instances); language (3 instances); and friends (3 instances). More than half of the respondents acknowledged the positive aspects of the academic exchange programme. They had to handle different situations, meet people from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds, speak the language of the host country, and make new friends. To showcase the positive outcomes, we include below four examples of answers taken from the open-ended questions:

[The experience as a whole, but especially meeting new people and practising the language]

[Every experience where you have to fight with your struggles is positive as it offers the possibility to get to know yourself better. Erasmus offers plenty of space for reflection as it places you in a completely new environment and makes you face some challenges]

[Making friends, learning about a new culture and language]

[For a foreign student, one of the most positive aspects of this experience language barriers, understanding cultural nuances, and navigating academic challenges]

The answers emphasise that exchange programmes are a positive, worthwhile experience that allows students to be acquainted with new people, improve their language competence, value the encounter of a new culture and navigate academic challenges that arise from being faced with different educational systems. The findings are similar to research conducted by Coleman (2013), Kinginger (2009), Phipps and Gonzalez (2004), Szabo, Papp, and Luu (2020), and Holmes and O'Neill (2010).

In light of the selected questionnaire responses, we focus on two salient directions that emerge from undertaking an exchange programme. On the one hand, it is the reflection process that occurs when students are out of their

comfort zone and experience novel situations that make them attain self-knowledge and develop their problem-solving skills to handle various challenging contexts. As one responder exemplified, the exchange programme [*offers the possibility to get to know yourself better*] and [*offers plenty of space for reflection*]. Reflection on one's experiences, reactions and emotions can be investigated through an ethnographic approach (interviews, diaries, discussions etc.) which targets the development of cognitive and affective dimensions (Roberts et al. 2001, 239). According to the Theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner 1983), a person who demonstrates intrapersonal intelligence can reflect and question oneself, understand his/her strengths and limitations, plan and set personal goals or think of ways to improve one's life. Having in mind the fact that "knowing the self is an awareness that comes about through knowing others" (Holmes and O'Neill 2010, 169) an exchange programme offers this window of opportunity towards engaging in personal reflection.

The genuine exposure students get by being immersed in an authentic socio-cultural environment is valuable for the development of their intercultural communicative competence. If a foreign language is best acquired in a setting that fosters naturalistic language acquisition with plenty of meaningful exposure similar to how one learns one's mother tongue (Krashen and Terrell 1998), culture also has to be an experience gained first-hand. By travelling abroad students can broaden their cultural knowledge (cultural artefacts, architecture, gastronomy, values, norms etc.), their cultural skills (awareness of communicating effectively in diverse cultural situations) and their attitudes towards culture (being open and respectful towards other people belonging to different cultures, be curious to find out a new culture etc.). In addition, "interaction with people of another language and society makes them conscious of and reflexive about cross-cultural relationships" (Roberts et al. 2001, 242) in diverse intercultural encounters.

Respondents were asked if they would be interested in repeating this experience. The majority (73.3%) responded affirmatively, 20% would probably do so and 6.7% responded negatively. The findings confirm that respondents have identified, on a personal level, more benefits than drawbacks in connection to the exchange programme.

Respondents were engaged in another reflection process when asked about the outcomes of their study abroad (*What did you learn due to this mobility?*). Answers were analysed using Voyant Tools. The corpus contained 211 total words. The most frequent words in the corpus were: language (4); culture (4); people (2); open (2); and adaptation (2). Thus, the development of linguistic competence and cultural awareness were the most frequent outcomes of the exchange programme. To showcase the learning outcomes of the academic exchange programme, we include below four examples of answers taken from the open-ended questions:

[Be more open to people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds]
 [I have strengthened in my identity (national, religious)]
 [I learned a lot about me and my capacity of adaptation]
 [How to survive without family and friends]

The answers confirm that when travelling across borders new encounters enhance the “experiential learning about self and other” (Jordan 2002, 96). One respondent is confident that he/she has learned a lot about himself/herself and his/her capacity for adaptation. Another respondent has strengthened his/her identity by participating in intercultural dialogue which puts new knowledge about the *other* in relation “to one’s own self-knowledge and values” (Byram et al. 2009, 23). For another respondent, the exchange programme has been an eye-opening experience to survive in a new context without family or friends.

The development of ICC is a personal and life-long learning process. The awareness of the *other* builds on the willingness to engage in this process of discovery. We intended to find out what were the first steps undertaken by students towards engaging in intercultural dialogue. We selected several answers:

[Discussions about the different ways universities are functioning in our countries, the differences in teaching]
 [I told them about my language and how it’s formed from a semantic perspective]
 [I tried explaining some cultural references, such as different Romanian dishes or Romanian slang].
 [history (how multiculturally rich our country is), Hungarian folksongs, Romanian and Hungarian language basics]

The answers indicate that respondents communicated about their language, educational system, gastronomy, multiculturalism in their country, history, and music. Thus, they mainly tackled the tangible parts of culture.

Asked to indicate if the host country has risen to their expectations, respondents provided several perspectives which indicate their openness towards engaging with *the other*:

[Yes, it is not a destination that people think at first thought, so I think it opened my view of old communist countries. I also learned a new language]
 [Yes, it offered the perfect place to practise the language that I’m learning]
 [Yes, especially due to my personal interests in Nordic languages and culture. The country helped me have the authentic traditional and cultural experiences]
 [Yes, Sweden is a beautiful country, people are very polite and I have understood that they value their private life. I went with some views on life and relationships between people and after the mobility I returned with a different view]

Individuals who exhibit intercultural attitudes such as openness and respect for the *other* have according to Byram (2008, 69) the “willingness to suspend those deeper values, at least temporarily, to be able to understand and empathise with the values of others that are incompatible with one’s own”. Immersion in a different culture is a transformative experience as it allows one to see the world from an alternative perspective. As indicated in the selected answers, respondents reflected on their intercultural experience and stated that the exchange programme had helped them to master the foreign language better, engage in authentic cultural situations and get to know the country’s history and the society’s norms and values.

The tangible and intangible elements of culture can be explained through the iceberg model of culture proposed by the American anthropologist Edward Hall (1959). The metaphor of the iceberg makes a distinction between the ‘visible’ and ‘invisible’ elements of a culture. Thus, elements of culture that can be easily seen when meeting a new culture refer to art, food, traditions, language or clothing and are complementary to elements that are not so obvious and easy to understand or accept: beliefs, values, behaviour, cultural expectations etc. Respondents were required to state if the tangible and intangible cultural elements facilitated or hindered their experience abroad. Answers were analysed using Voyant Tools. The corpus for the tangible elements of culture contained 244 total words. The most frequent words in the corpus were: *traditions/traditional* (8 instances); *food/spices* (4 instances), *cultural events* (2 instances); *humour* (1 instance); and *public transport* (1 instance). Findings suggest that respondents can indicate several tangible elements of culture that they have observed in the host country.

Asked to consider if invisible cultural aspects have facilitated their experience abroad, respondents concluded that given the short time frame, they did not have many opportunities to fully experience these. The corpus for the intangible elements of culture contained 298 total words and the most frequent words in the corpus were: *experience* (6 instances); *difficult* (5 instances); *values* (3 instances); *help* (3 instances); and *culture* (3 instances). We selected several answers:

[Such cultural aspects were most certainly difficult to comprehend at times, but I believe that they helped me take note of other perspectives as well, and adjust to a more carefree way of living]

[I don’t think our experience allowed us (or at least me) to really interact with a country’s beliefs about life or values. It’s a pretty short period after all, and doesn’t imply such a wide field of experiences after all].

[German personality: fellow students were kind and open to help, but it was culture shock that they were in general more rigorous with themselves]

The answers indicate that respondents had difficulties comprehending some invisible aspects of culture (beliefs, mentality etc.). The short period spent abroad did not provide such a diverse array of experiences. Still, their answers suggest that they can reflect on their cultural experiences and engage in critical thinking in connection to the two directions proposed by the iceberg model of culture.

Respondents were required to self-evaluate their level of ICC as an outcome of the academic exchange programme. The quantitative analysis concluded that 58.3% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement, 33.3% agreed and 8.3% responded neutrally. The findings are also rendered in Figure 2:

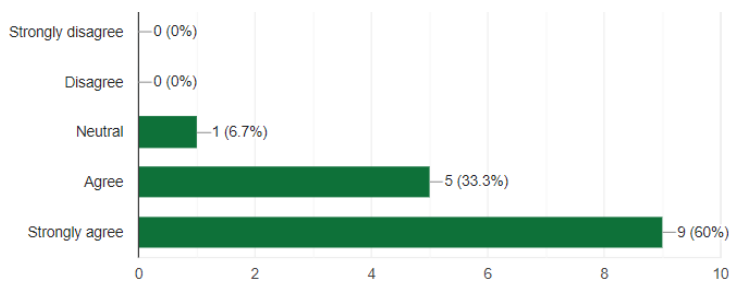


Figure 2. Self-evaluation of respondents' intercultural communicative competence

Respondents have travelled to various European countries and encountered unique tangible and intangible cultural representations. Unquestionably, the time spent abroad and the direct contact with the host culture are definitive for enriching one's ICC. Findings indicate that 93.3% of the respondents agree and strongly agree that they have developed their level of ICC.

The responder who indicated a neutral answer has not provided conclusive answers to most of the questions addressed in the survey indicating for the majority of the open-questions 'no comment', 'none', 'I never noticed'. Readiness to be open to the *other* and preparedness to change are achievable if the person is willing to do so and if the context is appropriate. In the same line of thought, Meier and Daniels (2011) argue that spending a period abroad does not necessarily result in intercultural learning and that without some pedagogical interventions meant to develop students' cognitive, affective and behavioural intercultural dimensions, students might even return home with a slightly negative attitude towards the host culture.

Contrasting cultural aspects might also be conducive to culture shock. In this respect, we asked students if they had experienced culture shock during their academic exchange programme. Figure 3 provides visual support:

The academic exchange mobility made me experience cultural shock.

15 responses

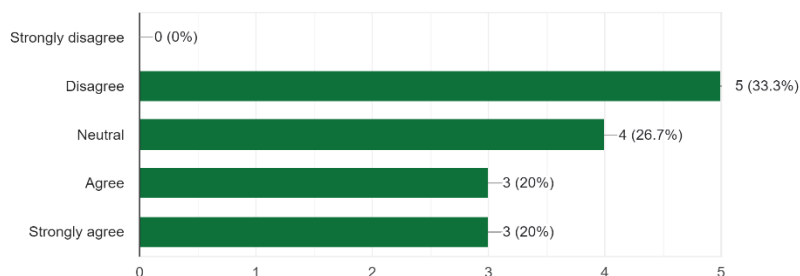


Figure 3. Self-evaluation of respondents' level of culture shock

The findings indicate that 33.3% of the respondents consider that they did not experience culture shock, 26.7% are uncertain, 20% agree and 20% strongly agree with the statement. Consequently, 40% of the respondents have experienced culture shock when getting acquainted with new people and learning the ways of a new country. The shock of accommodating to a new environment, managing language difficulties or getting accustomed to different academic requirements has caused respondents to feel uneasiness and stress. Respondents reported the following coping mechanisms: making new friends (6 instances), finding a common ground to balance differences (2 instances), adapting one's behaviour (1 instance) or keeping calm (1 instance). Because it was not compulsory to answer this item, not all respondents indicated examples of coping mechanisms. As the four stages of culture shock are concerned, 80 % of the respondents indicated they have experienced all the stages, 10 % have experienced the adjustment stage and 10% the crisis stage.

The first research question intended to investigate the types of challenges that were encountered by respondents during their incoming or outgoing exchange programme. Several items in the questionnaire (open-ended and closed items) addressed this issue. The findings indicate that 26.7% of the respondents have experienced difficulties in communicating in the language of the host country. This can be connected to students' language competence or their ability to interact and make themselves understood either in academic environments or in socialising contexts. The fact that some students have travelled to countries where there are many spoken dialects and language is not so homogenous and easy to comprehend compared to the standard language encountered in the foreign language classroom, adds to the communication problems experienced by respondents. Additionally, respondents considered that it was difficult to make new friends during the exchange programme. This can be related to a great extent to personal variables (social skills, age, personal expectations, level of confidence, etc.), but can also be explained according to

Hofstede (1984) by the norms of behaviour and the cultural expectations of a certain culture. Still, 93.3% of the respondents managed to make new friends.

Other challenges refer to living abroad, managing daily tasks and assuming new responsibilities. For many of the respondents (66.7%), this was their first academic exchange programme. Therefore, they had difficulties in accommodating to a new context where they had to rely much on themselves. We consider that this is the reason why 26.7% of the respondents mentioned that 'location' was challenging to handle.

Respondents provided three main reasons why their exchange programme was difficult to handle. These three factors gained the highest percentages. The first one referred to weather and 40% of the respondents agreed that it had a decisive role in their life spent abroad. Because some respondents have travelled to Ireland and Scandinavia, rainy days and northern winters with few hours of natural light have influenced their stay abroad especially if they were weather-sensitive people. The other two factors regarded the encounter of a new society (33.3%) and a school system (33.3%). Respondents indicated as challenging the contact with a new society characterised by new social norms, laws, hierarchies, institutions or patterns of social behaviour. Likewise, adapting to a new way of life in the host country or even to parking regulations as one respondent indicated, put students out of their comfort zone. Respondents confirmed they found the exam session difficult due to the new educational environment.

The second research question addressed respondents' culture shock and the diversity of coping mechanisms employed. Findings indicate that 40% of the respondents have experienced culture shock and that 80% have experienced all four stages indicated by Oberg (1960). The coping mechanisms they have employed refer to socialization techniques, accepting and understanding differences and keeping a calm approach to the stress generated by having to get accustomed to different academic and non-academic requirements.

The third research question aimed to engage respondents in self-reflection and investigate their level of ICC. Several items in the questionnaire (open-ended and a closed item with a 5-point Likert scale item) addressed this issue. Findings indicate that 60% of the respondents *strongly agree* and *agree* (33.3%) that the academic exchange programme has helped them to develop their ICC level. Only one respondent (8.3%) positioned himself/herself in a neutral zone. An academic exchange programme for one or two semesters is a transformative experience as it allows one to see the world from an alternative perspective, and to become a mediator across languages and cultures. Findings suggest that respondents were able to reflect on their intercultural experience and stated that it has helped them to master the foreign language better, engage in authentic cultural situations, and get to know the country's history and the society's norms and values.

ICC has a behavioural, cognitive and attitudinal dimension linked to it. Respondents developed intercultural knowledge and indicated several tangible and intangible parts of the host culture. The intangible parts were more difficult to grasp as they did not have many opportunities to fully experience these. Still, to further enhance their level of ICC they need to continue their culture-specific and culture-general learning. Asked what they have learnt from the experience of living abroad, respondents provided answers that can be linked to their attitudinal dimension: open (2 instances); and adaptation (2 instances). These examples reflect respondents' intercultural attitudes: openness towards other cultures and willingness to suspend disbelief to adapt and accept the *other*. Respondents have had many opportunities to develop their intercultural behaviour. The answers collected from the open-ended items indicate that respondents understood cultural nuances, interacted with new people and spoke the target language in diverse socio-cultural contexts.

5. Limitations and further considerations

Even if 93.3% of the respondents agree and strongly agree that they have developed their level of ICC, the answers to the open-ended items reveal that their self-reflections regard only some of the cognitive, affective and behavioural intercultural dimensions and not all of them are present, at once, for each participant. Moreover, their self-reflections indicate that the development of ICC is an ongoing, lifelong learning process and that practice is the key to improving ICC over time. Consequently, literature in the field of foreign language learning indicates that there is no one-size-fits-all development of ICC as much is underpinned by individual variation. The small targeted population in this research makes findings unsuitable for generalisation.

This research could gain more depth if ethnographic research was undertaken in addition to the survey. Ethnographic investigations which involve a variety of data collection techniques such as self-reporting, diaries, interviews or participant observation can develop students' intercultural communicative competence (Jordan 2002; Roberts et al. 2001; Luken 2012).

6. Conclusions

Our research adds to similar studies investigating how academic exchange programmes considerably contribute to students' development of intercultural communicative competence. Findings indicate that respondents have faced various challenges during their exchange programme and that weather, the school system and the contact with a new society were leading factors. Still, students have found various positive aspects linked to exchange programmes and they managed to socialize and make new friends. Respondents experienced

culture shock but were confident in developing their intercultural communicative competence. They engaged in reflective practice and became empowered by the experience of living abroad alone and navigating diverse difficulties.

WORKS CITED

- Andrade, Maureen. 2006. "International students in English-speaking universities: Adjustment factors". *Journal of Research in International Education*, 5(2): 131-54. Doi: 10.1177/1475240906065589.
- Behrnd, Verena, and Porzelt Susanne. 2012. "Intercultural Competence and Training Outcomes of Students with Experiences Abroad". *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 36 (2): 213-223, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2011.04.005>.
- Beiter, Rebecca, Nash, R., McCrady, M., Rhoades, D., Linscomb, M., Clarahan, M., et al. 2015. The prevalence and correlates of depression, anxiety, and stress in a sample of college students. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 173, 90-96. Doi: 10.1016/j.jad.2014.10.054
- Bohman, Doris, and Gunilla Borglin. 2014. "Student Exchange for Nursing Students: Does It Raise Cultural Awareness? A Descriptive, Qualitative Study." *Nurse Education in Practice* 14: 259-64. Doi: 10.1016/j.nepr.2013.11.006.
- Byram, M., Barrett, Martin, Ipgrave, Julia, Jackson, Robert, and Mendez Garcia, Maria del Carmen. 2009. *Autobiography of intercultural encounters*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Byram, Michael. 2008. *From foreign language education to education for intercultural citizenship: Essays and reflections*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Byram, Michael, and Genevieve Zarate. 1997. "Defining and assessing intercultural competence: Some principles and proposals for the European context". *Language Teaching*, 29: 14-18.
- Cleak, Helen, Janet Anand, and Chaitali Das. 2016. "Asking the Critical Questions: An Evaluation of Social Work Students' Experiences in an International Placement." *British Journal of Social Work* 46: 389-408. Doi: 10.1093/bjsw/bcu126.
- Cohen, Louis, Manion, Lawrence, and Morrison Keith. 2011. *Research methods in education* (7th ed.). London: Routledge.
- Coleman, James. 2013. "Researching whole people and whole lives". In *Social and cultural aspects of language learning in study abroad*, edited by Celeste Kinginger, 17-44. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Collie, Joanne, and Slater, Stephen. 1997. *Literature in the Language Classroom. A resource book for ideas and activities*. UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Crossman, Joanna Elizabeth, and Marilyn Clarke. 2010. "International Experience and Graduate Employability: Stakeholder Perceptions on the Connection". *Higher Education: The International Journal of Higher Education and Educational Planning*, 59: 599-613. Doi: 10.1007/s10734-009-9268-z.
- Deardorff, Darla. 2009. "Synthesizing conceptualizations of intercultural competence: A summary and emerging themes". In *The Sage handbook of intercultural competence*, edited by Darla Deardorff, 264-270. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- DeLong, Marilyn et al. 2011. Cultural exchange: Evaluating an alternative model in higher education. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 15 (1), 41 –56. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315309334619>
- Erschens, Rebecca, Herrmann–Werner Anne, Keifenheim Katharina Eva, Loda Teresa, Johannes Bugaj Till, Nikendei Christoph, Lammerding–Koppel Maria, Zipfel Stephan, Junne Florian. 2018. Differential determination of perceived stress in medical students and high-school graduates due to private and training-related stressors. *PLoS One* 13:e0191831, pp. 1-16. Doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0191831
- Gardner, Howard. 1983. *Frames of Mind: A Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. New York: Basic Books.
- Hall, Edward. 1959. *The Silent Language*. Garden City: Doubleday.
- Hofstede, Geert. 1984. *Culture's Consequences. International Differences in Work-Related Values*. California, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Holmes Prue and O'Neill, Gillian. 2010. Autoethnography and Self-Reflection: Tools for Self-Assessing Intercultural Competence. In *Becoming Intercultural: Inside and Outside the Classroom*, edited by Yau Tsai and Stephanie Houghton, 167-193. UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Kinginger, Celeste. 2009. *Language learning and study abroad: A critical reading of research*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kramsch, Claire. 1993. *Context and culture in language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Krashen, Steven, and Terell Tracy Dell. 1998. *The Natural Approach. Language Acquisition in the Classroom*. Cornwall: Prentice Hall Europe.
- Jordan, Shirley, Ann. 2002. "Ethnographic encounters: The processes of cultural translation". *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 2(2): 96–110. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14708470208668079>
- Levine-West, Glenn, Lam, Yeana and Schaeffer, Gordon. 2023. Study Abroad in a (Post-) Pandemic World: Our New Normal and Some Reasons for Optimism. *L2 Journal*, Volume 15 Issue 2, pp. 29-53. <https://doi.org/10.5070/L215260146>
- Lockwood, Penelope et al. 2012. "Social comparisons in novel situations: Finding inspiration during life transitions". *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 38(8): 985–996. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167212447234>.
- Lou Nigel Mantou and Noels Kimberly A. 2024. "Striving to reach the "native speaker standard": A growth belief may mitigate some deleterious effects of social comparison in migrants". *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Volume 101: 1-13, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2024.101990>.
- Luken, Paul. 2012. "Ethnography". In *International Encyclopedia of Housing and Home*, edited by Susan J. Smith, pp. 124-128. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Mathiesen, Sally and Lager, Patricia. 2007. "A model for developing international student exchanges". *Social Work Education*, 26(3): 280–291. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02615470601049867>
- Meier, Gabriela, and Daniels Harry. 2011. "Just not being able to make friends': social interaction during the year abroad in modern foreign language degrees". *Research Papers in Education*, 28(2): 212–238. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2011.629734>.

- Pedersen, E., Fitzke, R., Bouskill, K., & Sedano, A. 2021. A qualitative look at the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on American college students studying abroad. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 33(3), 70–100
- Pedersen, Paul. 1995. *The five stages of culture shock: Critical incidents around the world*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press
- Phipps, Alison and Gonzalez, Mike. 2004. *Modern languages: Learning & teaching in an intercultural field*. London: Sage Publications.
- Pop, Raluca and Radut, Raluca Daniela. 2019. “Developing Multilingual and Multicultural Competence in the Context of Learning Norwegian at Bachelor Level”. *Dialogos*, 20 (36): 32-47.
- Pop, Raluca. 2019. *An Intercultural Perspective in Teaching the Didactics of the English Language*. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană.
- Risager, Karen. 2007. *Language and Culture Pedagogy: From a National to a Transnational Paradigm*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Roberts, Celia, Byram, Michael, Barro, Ann, Jordan, Shirley, and Street Brian. 2001. *Language learners as ethnographers*. Multilingual Matters: Clevedon, England.
- Schartner, Alina, and Cho, Yoonjoo. 2017. “Empty signifiers’ and ‘dreamy ideals’: perceptions of the ‘international university among higher education students and staff at a British university”. *Higher Education*, 74(3), 455-472.
- Schueller, J., & Şahin, B. B. 2022. Considering the complexities of virtual student mobility as an approach to inclusive internationalisation in the post-pandemic period. *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, 27(3), 96–104. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603108.2022.2116123>
- Sener, Meltem, Yilmaz. 2024. Privacy versus intimacy: Social interactions in Norway. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Vol. 100: 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2024.101985>.
- Skjekkeland, Martin. 2012. *Språk og Kultur. Vegar inn i det norske språksamfunnet*. Kristiansand: Portal Forlag.
- Szabo Ágnes, Papp Zsuzsanna Z, and Nguyen Luu Lan Anh. 2020. “Social contact configurations of international students at school and outside of school: Implications for acculturation orientations and psychological adjustment”. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 77: 69-82. Doi: 10.1016/j.ijintrel.2020.05.001
- Turner, J., Bartlett, D., Andiappan, M., and Cabot, L. 2015. Students’ perceived stress and perception of barriers to effective study: impact on academic performance in examinations. *British Dental Journal*, 219, 453–458. <https://doi.org/10.1038/sj.bdj.2015.850>
- Wang, Zhiqi, Crawford, Ian, and Liu Lu. 2019. “Higher achievers? Mobility programmes, generic skills, and academic learning: a UK case study”. *Intercultural Education* 31(3):1-19. Doi: 10.1080/14675986.2019.1666246.
- Webber, Jeanette, Skodda, Stefanie, Muth, Thomas, Angerer, Peter, and Loerbroks, Adrian. 2019. Stressors and resources related to academic studies and improvements suggested by medical students: a qualitative study. *BMC Medical Education* 19:312, 1-14. Doi: 10.1186/s12909-019-1747-z

OPTIMIZING FRENCH FOR HEALTH SCIENCES: A NEEDS-BASED APPROACH TO COURSE CONTENT

Ariel-Sebastián MERCADO¹ 

Article history: Received 14 February 2024; Revised 5 July 2024; Accepted 15 October 2024; Available online 10 December 2024; Available print 30 December 2024.

©2024 Studia UBB Philologia. Published by Babeş-Bolyai University.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License

ABSTRACT. *Optimizing French for Health Sciences: A Needs-Based Approach to Course Content.* Since the release of John Swales' seminal work, *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings* (1990), the notions of genre and genre analysis have significantly influenced teaching methodologies in language for specific purposes (LSP). Through genre analysis, LSP professors can determine the structure of genres and what the most important oral and written genres in a specific professional field are. In 2006, McGill University started offering elective French courses to students from different areas of the Faculty of Health Sciences. Many McGill students are native English speakers from various regions of Canada and the United States, as well as international students whose first language is not necessarily English. In Quebec, students who did not complete their secondary education in French are required to pass an exam demonstrating a minimum B2 proficiency level in French, according to the CEFR, to be eligible to work in the province. Keeping this reality in mind, the question that arises is which genres should be taught in French for healthcare. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to determine the most important written and oral genres in French for healthcare and which ones are the most relevant for McGill University learners. To accomplish this objective, a review of the literature was conducted, followed by an analysis of relevant

¹ **Ariel-Sebastián MERCADO** has been the coordinator and professor of the French for health sciences and social work courses at the French Language Centre of McGill University, in Montreal, Canada since 2020. From 1999 to 2019, he taught at Universidad Alfonso X el Sabio (UAX) in Madrid, Spain, where he actively collaborated in the implementation and coordination of different ESP courses, such as English for Medicine, Nursing, Dentistry and Physiotherapy. He also collaborated in the Master of Teaching Spanish as a second language at Pontificia Universidad Javeriana in Bogota, Colombia, where he was responsible for the online module on medical Spanish between 2018 and 2021. His research interests include teaching languages for specific purposes, discourse analysis, and genre analysis. His PhD dissertation deals with the analysis of medical research articles in Spanish. Email: ariel.mercado@mcgill.ca.

textbooks. Finally, a group of healthcare professionals was interviewed. At the conclusion of this paper, recommendations are made for the most important written and oral genres in health sciences that should be incorporated into the syllabus of our B2 level French for health sciences courses.

Keywords: *French for health sciences, French for Social Work, French for Specific Purposes, Genres in French for health sciences*

REZUMAT. Optimizarea limbii franceze pentru științele sănătății: O abordare bazată pe nevoi pentru conținutul cursului. De la publicarea lucrării revoluționare a lui John Swales, *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings* (Swales 1990), conceptele de gen și analiza genului au condus la schimbări în metodologia de predare a limbajului pentru scopuri specifice (LSP). Prin analiza genului, profesorii de LSP pot determina structura genurilor și care sunt cele mai importante genuri orale și scrise într-un domeniu profesional specific. În 2006, Universitatea McGill a început să ofere cursuri opționale de limba franceză studenților din diferite domenii ale Facultății de Științe ale Sănătății. Mulți dintre studenții McGill sunt vorbitori nativi de limba engleză din diferite părți ale Canadei și Statelor Unite sau studenți internaționali a căror limbă maternă nu este neapărat engleza. În provincia Quebec, este obligatoriu ca studenții care nu și-au finalizat studiile secundare în limba franceză să treacă un examen care să ateste un nivel minim de B2 conform CEFR pentru a putea lucra în această provincie. Ținând cont de această realitate, întrebarea care se ridică este: care genuri ar trebui predate în limba franceză pentru domeniul sănătății? Prin urmare, obiectivul acestui studiu este de a determina cele mai importante genuri scrise și orale în limba franceză pentru domeniul sănătății și care dintre acestea sunt cele mai relevante pentru studenții de la Universitatea McGill. Pentru a atinge acest obiectiv, s-a realizat o revizuire a literaturii, urmată de o analiză a manualelor relevante. În final, a fost interviuat un grup de profesioniști din domeniul sănătății. La finalul acestui articol, sunt făcute recomandări cu privire la cele mai importante genuri scrise și orale din domeniul științelor sănătății care ar trebui incluse în programa cursurilor de franceză pentru științele sănătății la nivel B2.

Cuvinte-cheie: *limba franceză pentru științele sănătății, franceza pentru asistență socială, franceza pentru scopuri specifice, genuri în franceza pentru științele sănătății*

Introduction

The concept of genre has consistently played a pivotal role in language studies and education. This is largely due to the valuable descriptive and interpretive frameworks that genre provides, enabling LSP researchers and

educators to comprehend the underlying reasons for a text's particular construction before guiding learners in its creation. A genre can be understood as a communicative event, encompassing both oral and written forms. This event takes place within a specific discourse community, which, in the context of this study, is the medical or health sciences community. Each communicative event is directed toward a particular audience, which may vary depending on whether the event is oral or written—ranging from healthcare professionals to patients or caregivers. Importantly, every communicative event serves a specific purpose or objective and adheres to a common macrostructure. This macrostructure refers to an overarching framework that is consistently shared among all oral and written texts categorized within the same genre. Moreover, genres share common linguistic, content and style patterns (Swales 1990; Bhatia 1993; Nwogu 1997; Montolío 2000, Bawarshi and Reiff 2010; Bhatia 2012).

Barwarshi and Reiff (2010) assert that John Swales' seminal work, *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings* (1990), marked a pivotal shift in language teaching methodologies, particularly within the context of LSP, by introducing and advancing the concepts of genre and genre analysis (Bawarshi and Reiff 2010, 40). Swales developed the empirical analysis of genres and their application to teaching English for specific purposes (ESP). He studied the research article, although not necessarily in medicine, and proposed a model of structure which he called Creating a Research Space (CARS). This model divides the *macrostructure* of each genre into *moves* and *steps*, as in a symphony. Each movement has a communicative objective, and each step or *sub-move* has a communicative sub-function (Swales 1990, 140-143).

Bhatia (2012) carries out some critical reflections on genre analysis. The author divides his reflections on genres into three main areas: genre analysis, critical genre analysis and interdiscursivity (Bhatia 2012, 17-18). Regarding genre analysis, which is the area of interest in this paper, Bhatia points out that genre analysis attempts, among other things, to develop pedagogical solutions for the language classroom for specific purposes. For more than thirty years it has been considered the most useful tool for analyzing and studying academic and professional genres. Genre analysis seeks to understand the complex and dynamic real world of written and spoken discourse and focuses on the world of professions (Bhatia 2004).

Bawarshi and Reiff (2010) further highlight that research on genre learning has equipped instructors with effective teaching strategies that bridge new knowledge with previously acquired skills. Moreover, studies on genre knowledge have informed pedagogical practices designed to facilitate the transfer of genre competence and writing abilities across different contexts. Examples include the transition from first-year composition courses to discipline-specific

coursework, as well as from academic writing to professional writing. According to these authors, genre analysis has become so integral that, over the past 20 years, it is often considered synonymous with ESP (Bawarshi and Reiff 2010, 41). This comment by the authors can be interpreted to apply also to LSP in general.

In terms of pedagogical applications, Bawarshi and Reiff (2010) argue that research on genre acquisition and learning has equipped language instructors with the tools and strategies to link new knowledge with learners' prior knowledge. Additionally, research related to learner genre knowledge has inspired the development of pedagogical approaches aimed at facilitating the transfer of genre knowledge and writing skills across different writing contexts. This includes text production by students in the first years of university to writing in more specific texts in career subjects later in their degree (Bawarshi and Reiff 2010, 175).

Johns (2002, 7-9) categorizes three distinct pedagogical approaches to genres, each influenced by different theoretical traditions. First, the School of Sydney approach, which was developed for primary and secondary school students in Australia and stems from functional systemic linguistics. Second, the ESP approach for which Swales and his movement theory is central. This theory analyzes the characteristics of texts and relates them to the rhetorical intentions and values of discourse communities. Third, The New Rethoric, an approach by which students are taught to study genres, their social intention and ideology in a critical way. The New Rethoric theorists see genres as dynamic and evolving and prefer to discuss the rhetorical status of the genre rather than its lexico-grammatical elements.

Building on these three approaches, Bawarshi and Reiff (2010) introduce a fourth approach: the Brazilian didactic approach, which has played a significant role in shaping genre pedagogy in Brazil. This approach is distinguished by studying the social history in which the genre develops, characterising the context of production, studying the thematic content, and analyzing the construction of the genre (Bawarshi and Reiff 2010, 177).

Given the complexity and dynamism of real-world written and spoken discourse, genre analysis is inherently complex and dynamic as well. Although genres are identified based on conventional characteristics (Berkenkotter & Huckin 1995), they are continually evolving, necessitating ongoing innovation and adaptation. As human society constantly changes, genres evolve in parallel. For instance, with contemporary society becoming increasingly technology-driven, it is highly likely that the practice of genre analysis is being influenced by this trend (Xia 2020). More and more researchers are becoming interested in the use of emerging online or digital genres (Belcher 2023) within scientific discourse communities (Luzón and Pérez-Llantada 2022). Additionally, genre

scholars have published works on contemporary topics, such as how research teams utilize Twitter (Luzón 2023), video talks aimed at explaining science to nonspecialist audiences (Luzón 2019; Xia 2023), and misinformation during the Covid-19 pandemic (Mehlenbacher & Mehlenbacher, 2024). These examples illustrate the recent developments in the field of genre analysis.

Despite these advancements in genre analysis, this study is grounded in Swales' genre approach, specifically applied to French for specific purposes. This approach is considered the most suitable for addressing our students' needs, as it focuses on professional genres that will be valuable to them after completing their university degrees. It is important to note that genre analysis extends beyond written texts to include oral genres as well. Accordingly, this study will encompass both oral and written genres within the field of health sciences.

In summary, the importance of genre analysis in LSP teaching is that it goes beyond studying lexis and grammar. Genre analysis tries to determine the objectives and the characteristics of a genre, and how the contents of a particular genre are part of the socio-cultural and linguistic conventions of a group of professionals in different communicative events in their daily professional lives, i. e. in a company, a hospital, or a university (Alcaraz 2000). Once a genre has been defined, it is up to instructors to choose which genres are the most relevant to teach in an LSP class according to the needs of the learners.

The aim of this work is to determine which oral and written genres are more relevant and therefore should prevail when choosing the contents to be taught in French for health sciences groups at B2 level in our university. To achieve this objective, two research questions were raised:

1. What are the most relevant written genres in French that non-francophone Quebec health sciences and psychosocial services students need to produce for success in their clinical placements and future professional careers?
2. Which oral genres should non-francophone Quebec students in health sciences and psychosocial services master in French to excel in their clinical placements and future professional careers?

This paper is organized as follows: The subsequent section will outline the current context at our university, and some of the contents included in the French for healthcare courses before 2020. This will be followed by a presentation of the methodology employed in this study. The results pertaining to both research questions will then be examined. Finally, the paper will address both questions and propose a list of genres deemed essential for inclusion in a French for health sciences syllabus.

The Context of McGill University

Located in Canada, McGill University is the oldest English-language university in the French-speaking city of Montreal. In 2006, the French Language Centre at McGill University, with funding from Dialogue McGill Project, began offering French for health sciences courses from levels A2 to B2. Initially, these were not stand-alone subjects in which students could enroll, but subgroups within general French subjects. For example, within a subject aimed at improving the grammar and writing skills of general French students, a group with a separate timetable and instructor was created in which only students from the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences could enroll. Since the objectives of the main subject included the improvement of grammar and writing skills in French, the objectives of the French for health sciences group had to be very similar. For the healthcare groups, different manuals were created, but their objectives remained faithful to those of the main subject. For this reason, all kinds of grammatical explanations and exercises, always adapted and including examples from the field of health sciences, were to be found in the course packs of these health groups. Some examples of written texts studied in the B2 groups included writing a memorandum, writing a letter of complaint to the director of a hospital or the minister of health, or writing a text in which the learner describes his or her professional future. On the other hand, the practice of oral interaction was limited to A2 and B1 levels only, not being present at all in the B2 groups. Examples of oral interaction activities in A2/B1 were giving directions in a hospital (how a person should go from one hospital ward to another), giving recommendations to a patient or explaining why the students chose their profession.

There are currently seven French for health sciences elective courses offered, all of which do not depend on any other subject. The courses are offered in the autumn and winter semesters, although they are not the same courses. Also, two intensive courses are offered in May, one in conversation and the other in grammar and writing. The following table summarizes the courses and teaching level offered each semester. Courses starting with the code FIGF are non-credit courses and will not be part of the objectives of this paper, as they are considered seminars by the FLC.

Table 1. Courses in French for healthcare and psychosocial services currently offered by the FLC.

Course code	Semester	Level
FRSL 209	Autumn	A2.2
FRSL 210	Winter	B1
FRSL 219	Autumn	B1 (only for Dietetics students)

Course code	Semester	Level
FRSL 329	Autumn	B2.1
FRSL 330	Winter	B2.2
FIGF PMCO (conversation)	Winter and May intensive	B2/C1
FIGF PMCE (writing)	May intensive	B2

These courses are offered to students of the following degree programs:

Medicine	Occupational Therapy	Social Work
Nursing	Dentistry	Psychology
Physiotherapy	Dietetics and Nutrition	Speech Language Pathology

Students whose first language is French are not permitted to enroll in these courses. Consequently, students may be native speakers of English or any other language. Given McGill University's high proportion of international students and Canada's multicultural environment, many students are native speakers of languages other than English but use English as their language of instruction or have mastered it as if it were their mother tongue. Precise data on the various native languages of our students are not yet available and will be addressed in a future study.

In recent years, some departments within the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences have required students to demonstrate proficiency at the B2 level in French as a prerequisite for admission. This has affected lower-level courses leading to fewer and fewer student enrollments. For example, FRSL 219 was not offered in autumn 2023 because it did not reach the minimum number of students enrolled. To compensate, a second group of FRSL 329 was created for nutrition and dietetics students only. This resulted in the adaptation of the contents to meet the needs of students in this profession. At present, it is not known whether this will be the case for the other two groups at A2 and B1 level, but for the time being they are still being offered.

In the French-speaking province of Quebec, on the other hand, the body governing the French language is known as the *Office québécois de la langue française* (OQLF). The OQLF requires students whose mother tongue is not French and who have not completed their secondary school, college (pre-university) or undergraduate studies at a French-language institution must pass a B2 examination prepared by the OQLF and adapted to the profession to be registered and practice in Quebec.

For this reason, the French Language Centre, in collaboration with Dialogue McGill, also offers free workshops to prepare students for the OQLF exams. The workshops are organized by groups of professions to simulate the real exam situation, accommodating four to eight students per group. The OQLF

exams and workshops have four parts, the first of which is a reading exercise of a case study. After this, the students carry out an oral activity in which they exchange information about the case in a meeting with other students of the same profession (information gap activity). As a result of this activity, participants must summarize the case study and provide an action plan with recommendations for the patient. The third part consists of a written activity related to the second part. Usually, an essay is requested in which the summary of the case and the recommendations made by the group are included. The fourth and final part consists of an oral interview with the patient studied in the clinical case or with the caregiver. This particular context of the OQLF French exam in Quebec will also play an important role in the contents chosen for the French courses mentioned above. It should be noted that if a student has a B2 level, they can participate in the workshops without having enrolled in any of the courses. It is also possible to take the courses and never participate in the workshops.

Since 2013, these courses have been taught, with all French for healthcare groups conducted entirely separately from the general French groups focused on grammar and writing. However, it was surprising to discover that the B2 level French for health sciences courses lacked any oral interaction activities, and the written genres differed from those typically taught in English for health sciences. Additionally, from 2020 onwards, the same instructor of all the courses also organized workshops to prepare students for the OQLF exams. The professor reported that none of the manuals specifically created for the B2 courses (FRSL 329 and FRSL 330) included exercises aimed at preparing students for these exams.

Following these observations, the relevance and usefulness of the B2 level courses content, which had been taught since 2006, for learners in medicine and health sciences within a real professional context came into question. This situation presented a challenge in determining which written and oral genres should be included in the curriculum. Additionally, as is often the case in teaching LSP, the instructor was not a medical practitioner and had no prior experience as a healthcare professional.

To address the challenge of selecting appropriate content, a three-pronged approach was adopted. First, a review of existing literature on the key genres in medicine and health sciences was conducted. Second, existing materials, manuals, and textbooks for language teaching in health sciences were analyzed in both French and English, recognizing that there is likely more published material available in the latter. Finally, consultations were held with a group of professors from various fields within the health sciences and social work at the university, some of whom had collaborated with Dialogue McGill. The insights provided by these professors were invaluable in identifying the

most urgent needs of the students, particularly as many are required to complete their clinical placements in French-speaking hospitals and clinics. Additionally, these professors were later asked to assist in providing authentic, non-confidential materials for instructional use.

Methodology

To achieve the objectives of this study, the following approach was taken. Initially, a comprehensive review of the literature related to various genres within medicine and health sciences was conducted, with a particular focus on the written and oral genres frequently used by health professionals in their daily practice. The emphasis on frequent use is critical, as our goal is to equip students with the skills needed to effectively communicate in French with both patients and other healthcare professionals. The literature review extended beyond literature related to teaching LSP to include works from the field of Communication Skills in Medicine (CSM).

Following the literature review, a brief analysis of textbooks in both French and English for medicine and health sciences was undertaken. The purpose of this analysis was to identify the oral and written genres most featured in these textbooks, specifically those intended for B2 level French learners.

Finally, interviews were conducted with four professors from distinct fields within health sciences: one each from occupational therapy, physiotherapy, nursing, and social work. Additionally, a family doctor with experience working with students in a clinical setting was interviewed. The four professors were interviewed via Zoom during a meeting in June 2021, while the family doctor was interviewed by phone using the same set of questions. They had to answer the following two questions:

1. Are there particular types of written texts that your students are expected to produce in French during their clinical placements or in their future professional careers?
2. What specific French oral skills and tasks do you believe your students need to master to excel during their clinical placements?

Written Genres

The literature review shows various insights into the main written genres in health sciences. Most of the studies found were in English or Spanish for health sciences. Based on what was found, the research article is one of the most important written genres in health sciences (Salager-Meyer et al. 1989; Nowgu 1997; Fortanet 2002; Mari 2003; Hernández et al. 2010; Milosavljević

and Antić 2015; Jiménez et al. 2015; Mercado 2017). They are written according to the IMRD (Introduction, Materials and Methods, Results, Discussion) form. Nwogu (1997) analyzed this structure and applied Swales' CARS model to medicine journal articles in English. A similar analysis was done, and Swales' CARS model was applied to Spanish and Latin American medicine journal articles (Mercado 2017). This structure was adopted to present the content in a systematic and precise manner, aiming to enhance communication (Milosavljević and Antić 2015). The main purpose of the research article is to communicate research results, ideas and debates, to report on results obtained, to describe methods, techniques or apparatus, or to present new ideas (Fortanet 2002; Mari 2003; Hernández et al. 2010; Jiménez et al. 2015; Mercado 2023). In terms of sections, the Introduction should explain the objectives of the research and what the research aims to find. On the other hand, Materials and Methods is the section of the article which describes the material, equipment and methods used in the study. All the information related to the findings of the study is found in the Results part. Finally, the authors write their interpretation and evaluation of the research findings in the Discussion section (Fortanet 2002; Mercado 2004, 2017; Hernández et al. 2010; Milosavljević and Antić 2015).

As discussed above, the research article has an IMRD structure. Before the research article itself begins, there is another genre that serves as a "heading" for the article. This is the abstract, which is a summary of the introduction, objectives, materials and results of the research article. Its communicative function is to make the reader consider whether it is useful to continue reading the article (Vázquez 2006). There are two types of abstracts: the informative abstract, which is used in primary journals, and the descriptive abstract, which indicates the subject of the article, allowing potential readers to decide whether they wish to continue reading. Although the primary function of the abstract is to present the reader with the information broken down in the research article in a precise and summarized form, some authors make the mistake of including unnecessary informative elements in these writings (Vázquez 2006, 70), although the author does not provide examples of this.

Case reports are another important written genre in medicine and health sciences. Their main communicative purpose is to inform of a pathological condition of a patient, including its onset, development, and treatment; and case reports also recount the clinical evolution of a patient, covering exposures, symptoms, signs, interventions and results (Helán 2011; Mijomanović, Aleksić-Hajduković and Sinadinović 2021). Furthermore, case reports provide an excellent means of analyzing comorbidities, patients' histories, and the rationale behind physicians' decision-making processes. When compared to the research article,

case reports are considered less prestigious because they have poor scientific evidence and because they are narrow in scope (Helán 2011; Mijomanović, Aleksić-Hajduković and Sinadinović 2021). To sum up, Jenicek (2001) proposes the following definition:

A case report is a form of verbal or written communication with its own specific rules, which is produced for professional and scientific purposes. It usually focuses on an unusual single event (patient or clinical situation) to provide a better understanding of the case and its effects on improved clinical decision-making (Jenicek 2001, 13).

The patient information sheet constitutes another written genre in medicine and health sciences. Medication sold in some countries is marketed with a written document which includes different types of information, depending on the national legislation (Mercado 2003a, 2003b, 2004). There could be two versions of this document, one more complete for health care practitioners and another simplified type for clients (Grabar and Carbon 2018). In English, these documents are called patient information sheets, medical package inserts or drug leaflets, and in French, *la notice*, and can be found in prescribed and over-the-counter medication. The communicative purpose of the patient information sheet is to inform the patient about the composition of the medication, instructions of usage, contraindications, possible side effects, and precautions (Mercado 2003a, 2004; Grabar and Carbon 2018).

Another important written genre in health care is the case history, called *chart* in English Canada and *histoire de cas*, *anamnèse* or *observation clinique* in French. It should not be confused with the *étude de cas* (case study), which is mostly used for pedagogical and research purposes. The case history is probably the most produced health care written genre, given professionals must write them every time they meet a patient (Mercado 2021). The case history gathers all the information gained by the professional during the patient interview and it is based on the SOAP notes. The SOAP note is a type of narrative charting form, which typically begins with the subjective portion (S), followed by the objective portion (O), then by the assessment portion (A), and finally by the plan portion (P) (Kenzie and McCall 2017). *The American Heritage Medical Dictionary* (2007) defines a case history as a comprehensive account of the factors influencing the development or condition of an individual or group under treatment or study, particularly in the fields of medicine, psychiatry, or psychology. Similarly, the *Medical Dictionary for the Health Professions and Nursing* (2012) describes it as a detailed written record of a patient's familial, medical, and social history in relation to a specific condition or disease process. It is important to differentiate the case history from the case report. The former is primarily used to inform diagnosis and treatment planning and is shared

among the healthcare professionals involved in the patient's care. In contrast, the case report is a formal publication in scientific journals, intended for dissemination within the broader scientific community (Iles 1997; Salvador 2016; Mercado 2021).

After the LSP and CSM literature review, a study of textbooks and manuals was carried out in both, French and English. At the time of this study, we found no textbooks in either English or French for health sciences and psychosocial services that had been published in the last ten years and were available for sale in Canada, except for the manuals produced by McGill University before this study and which were mentioned in the context section of this paper. For this reason, the textbooks analyzed are from the 2000s. A total of eight B2 textbooks were reviewed: six in English and two in French. In terms of written genres, the genre that appears most frequently is the case history (*observation clinique*), which is found in five of the textbooks consulted (Glendinning and Holmström 2005; Milner 2006; Glendinning and Howard 2007; Fassier and Talavera-Goy 2008; McCarter 2009). The writing of a case history usually follows a patient interview activity. However, what caught our attention is that none of the manuals elaborate on the teaching of the case history. The exercises are limited to filling in gaps with information from a listening comprehension exercise or reading a short case history. We did not find any lesson or unit in which exercises were carried out to reinforce the linguistic aspects that may be needed to write a case history, nor learners were asked to write a case history, even a partial one.

Apart from the case history, note-taking exercises in an interview were found in four manuals (Glendinning and Holmström 2005; Milner 2006; Glendinning and Howard 2007; McCarter 2009). This type of exercise emphasizes the use of medical abbreviations and the use of telegraphic language to save time, but it is not an actual writing exercise.

The following table summarizes other written genres studied in different textbooks and not mentioned above. As will be observed, these genres are not always worked on as written production exercises, but as reading or even listening comprehension activities.

Table 2. Other written genres found in some of the textbooks analyzed.

Written genre	Textbook	Comments	Language of the manual
Professional e-mails	McCarter 2009	Different sorts of e-mails are studied.	English
Job application letter	McCarter 2010	Writing activity without a model	English
Medical package insert	Glendinning and Holmström 2005	Reading activity to familiarize students with vocabulary	English

Written genre	Textbook	Comments	Language of the manual
Referral letter	Glendinning and Holmström 2005; Milner 2006; McCarter 2009	Reading and listening activity in Glendinning and Holmström 2002 Reading activity in McCarter 2009	English
Research article	Glendinning and Holmström 2005	Reading activity	English

Having completed the analysis of the textbooks, we present here the results of the interviews with four health sciences professors and the family doctor. The written genre that all pointed out as the most important and the one that students most urgently needed to work on is the case history or chart. All of them mentioned that many of their students do clinical placements in French-speaking hospitals or clinics, or even in English-speaking hospitals, but receive French-speaking patients. The professors mentioned that during the internship, many non-francophone students have serious problems in writing a case history properly in French. The answer to the second question will be discussed in the next section on oral genres.

As a second option, all four professors mentioned that their students needed to practice their writing skills to successfully pass the OQLF exams. They were referring to the third part of the exam, which consists of writing a case summary (*résumé de cas*) with recommendations for the patient. To avoid plagiarism, in French for healthcare courses, students are not allowed to use a computer or any other type of technology, including AI, in their exams. All texts must be handwritten, as is the case for OQLF exams.

Oral Genres

Among oral genres, the professional-patient interview has received the most attention in scholarly discourse. This interview is a critical component of the daily routine for healthcare professionals and is widely regarded as one of the most significant oral genres in medical and health language teaching (Mishler 1984). Numerous studies have explored its role in both the medical field and in the context of language teaching for specific purposes (Mishler 1984; Maher 1990; Basturkmen 2010; Aguirre-Beltrán 2012; Barlea 2012; Silverman, Kurtz, and Draper 2013; Richard and Lussier 2016). Healthcare professionals must understand the reason for the patient's visit, possess the necessary skills to gather comprehensive information about the patient's health issue, and, when needed, conduct a physical examination, explaining the procedure and providing instructions to the patient. They are also expected to

offer a diagnosis, even if it is provisional, and, depending on the case, explain the treatment plan (Rey-Bellet et al. 2008; Silverman, Kurtz, and Draper 2013; Richard and Lussier 2016). Furthermore, depending on the situation, healthcare practitioners may need to engage in negotiation with the patient to establish a course of action (Silverman, Kurtz, and Draper 2013: 18-25; Richard and Lussier 2016: 181-196).

Another genre that was found in the literature is the explanation of action plans, treatments, or the use of medication to patients. Some authors point out the importance of what they call the "second part" of the patient interview. They point out that many professionals concentrate on obtaining information about the patient, but then have problems in making explanations (Silverman, Kurtz and Draper 2013, 149-151). Other authors focus mainly on the importance of the patient understanding the explanation of a prescription or treatment (Richard and Lussier 2016, 281-283).

The last oral genre that has been found in the literature review is that of announcing bad news. Most doctors find giving bad news very difficult and even problematic (Silverman, Kurtz and Draper 2013, 224). On the other hand, a study conducted in Australia to analyze the announcement of bad news to relatives of patients who have died suddenly indicates that even small differences in the way bad news is announced can play an important role (Shaw et al. 2012). In their study, Shaw, Dunn, and Heinrich (2012, 186) identify three approaches to delivering bad news: *bluntness*, which involves presenting the bad news directly without any preamble; *forecasting*, which entails preparing the recipient for the impending bad news; and *stalling*, which avoids the immediate delivery of bad news. Other authors insist that the announcement of bad news should always be forecasting and provide a series of steps to follow in order to make it as unpleasant as possible for the recipient (Richard and Lussier 2016, 450).

Once the literature in LSP and CSM was consulted, the study of which oral genres appear in the textbooks was carried out. Firstly, the professional-patient interview appears in six of the eight textbooks studied (Glendinning and Holmström 2006; Milner 2006; Fassier and Talavera-Goy 2008; McCarter 2009; McCarter 2010; Talavera-Goy, Gardette-Tria and Perez 2016), which corroborates our idea that this is the most important oral genre for all the reasons mentioned in the analysis of the literature above. The following table shows the other oral genres found in the textbooks, including author and language.

Table 3. Other oral genres found in some of the textbooks studied.

Oral genre	Textbook	Comments	Language of the manual
Caregiver interview	Milner 2006	Similar to patient interview, but in situations when the patient cannot speak due to age or unconsciousness.	English
	Fassier and Talavera-Goy 2008	Informing a relative of the state of the patient	French
Announcing bad news	Milner 2006	Informing the patient about a degenerative illness	English
	McCarter 2009	Informing the patient and a relative	English
Patient examination (giving instructions)	Glendinning and Holmström 2005	When examining a patient	English
	Milner 2006	When examining a patient	English
Explaining	Glendinning and Holmström 2005	Explaining physiotherapy exercises Explaining a diagnosis	English
	Milner 2006	Explaining procedures	English
	Fassier and Talavera-Goy 2008	Explaining a diagnosis	French
	McCarter 2009	Explaining procedures	English
	Talavera-Goy, Gardette-Tria and Perez 2016	Explaining treatments, procedures and techniques.	French
Reassuring	Talavera-Goy, Gardette-Tria and Perez 2016	Reassuring a patient before an operation	French

During the interview with the four professors mentioned above and with the family doctor outside the university setting, they all agreed that the most important oral genre was the patient interview. They also added that everything to do with communication both with the patient and with other health professionals was paramount for the clinical placements in which the students were involved. In many cases, the professionals supervising the trainees are French-speaking and prefer to communicate in French. In addition, as it was mentioned above, one of the parts of the OQLF exam contains oral activity which consists of a meeting with other professionals.

Once all this analysis was done, it was time to decide which written and oral genres to include in the contents of the B2 courses. It must be accepted that the information provided by the professors and the family doctor had the most influence on the decision, as they know well the reality and the needs of the learners. A good part of the professors' suggestions coincided with what was

found in textbooks on teaching English or French for healthcare. However, it is surprising that there is not an abundance of LSP literature on the written genres that our students should produce daily, specifically the case history.

Below, Table 4 shows the written genres which were chosen for the contents of the B2 courses and Table 5 summarizes the oral genres which were included in the same courses.

Table 4. Written genres included in the syllabus of the B2 level courses.

Genre	Rationale
Case history (<i>observation clinique</i>)	Students will have to produce these texts in their placements and on a daily basis in their professional life. Strongly recommended by professors.
Case summary (<i>résumé de cas</i>)	Students will need to know how to produce this genre to succeed in the OQLF exam.
Case notes	Students should know how to take efficient notes in a quick manner. They should also know the most common abbreviations used in health care.
Referral letter	Learners will have to produce these texts on a very regular basis in their professional life.

Table 5. Oral genres included in the syllabus of the B2 courses.

Genre	Rationale
Patient interview	It is the most important oral genre, according to some authors and the professors consulted. It is included in most of the textbooks studied. Students will have to interview patients and clients on a daily basis during their clinical placements, in the OQLF exam and in their professional future.
The multidisciplinary meeting	Students will have to participate in these kinds of meetings. It is part of the OQLF exam.
Oral case summary	This is the oral counterpart of the written genre. Students will need to summarize cases orally in hospital settings as well as in one of the activities of the OQLF exam.
Giving instructions	All the health care and psychosocial services professionals need to give different types of instructions. It is also included in some of the textbooks.
Announcing bad news	Most health care and psychosocial services professionals may need to break bad news at some point. It is also included in Milner 2006 and in McCarter 2009.

Conclusion

As demonstrated, genre analysis has proven to be an effective tool for determining which written and oral genres should be included in the B2 level

French for health sciences courses at our university. This process involved reviewing literature on written and oral genres in health sciences and medicine from both LSP and CSM perspectives. Additionally, an examination of genres present in existing textbooks was conducted. Finally, consultations with a group of health professional educators provided valuable insights into the most pressing needs of our students. As a result, a proposal for the inclusion of specific written and oral genres in the B2 level French for health sciences courses has been developed, tailored to the needs of our students in Montreal.

Of the written genres, the one that seems to be most important is the case history, although others such as the case summary and the referral letter have also been chosen. As for the oral genres, the patient interview and everything that has to do with oral interaction with the patient or caregiver should be included. It should not be forgotten that health professionals, even when they are still in training, must write case histories and interview patients on a daily basis. Therefore, we are of the opinion that it is essential to include these two genres as a minimum in a B2 curriculum.

Finally, the implementation of these new contents has brought other challenges. For instance, which type of activities should be created to make our students learn these genres. Furthermore, it is very difficult to find authentic material in health sciences and medicine, especially for confidentiality reasons. We believe that these challenges may form part of future research which could be helpful to other researchers and instructors of French for health sciences and medicine.

WORKS CITED

- Barlea, Roxana. 2012. "Français de spécialité et français sur objectifs spécifiques, Approche de l'oral". *Diversitate si Identitate Culturala in Europa*, 9/1, 118-132.
- Basturkmen, Helen. 2010. *Developing Courses in English for Specific Purposes*. London: Palgrave-Macmillan.
- Bawarshi, Anis and Reiff, Mary Jo. 2010. *Genre: An Introduction to History, Theory, Research, and Pedagogy*. West Lafayette: Parlor Press.
- Belcher, Diane. 2023. "Digital genres: What they are, what they do, and why we need to better understand them". *English for Specific Purposes*, 70, 33-43. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2023.03.001>
- Berkenkotter, Carol and Huckin, Thomas. 1995. *Genre knowledge in disciplinary communication: cognition/culture/power*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Bhatia, Vijay. 1993. *Analysing genre: language use in professional settings*. Essex: Longman.

- . 2004. *Worlds of Written Discourse: A Genre-Based View*. London: Continuum
- . 2012. Critical reflections on genre analysis. *Ibérica* 24: 17-28.
- Fassier, Thomas and Talavera-Goy, Solange. 2008. *Le français des médecins*. Grenoble: Presses Université de Grenoble.
- Fortanet, Inmaculada 2002. *Cómo escribir un artículo de investigación en inglés*. Madrid: Alianza.
- Glendinning, Eric and Holmström, Beverly. 1998. *English in Medicine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Glendinning, Eric and Howard, Ron. 2007. *Professional English in Use. Medicine*. Cambridge: CUP
- Grabar, Natalia and Cardon, Rémi. 2018. "CLEAR-Simple Corpus for Medical French". Paper presented at ATA. Tilburg, Netherlands. November 2018.
- Helán, Robert. 2011. "Helping medical students write: Genre analysis of medical case reports". *Cudzie jazyky v akademickom prostredí* [FORLANG Foreign languages in an academic environment]. Edited by Eva Kaščáková and Henrieta Kožaríková, 75-85. Košice: Technical University of Košice.
- Hernández, Gonzalo et al. 2010. *Tratado de medicina farmacéutica*. Madrid: Editorial Médica Panamericana.
- Iles, Robert. 1997. *Guidebook to better medical writing*. Olathe: Island Press.
- Jenicek, Milos. 2001. *Clinical case reporting in evidence-based medicine*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Jiménez, Josep. 2015. *Publicación científica biomédica: cómo escribir y publicar un artículo de investigación*. Madrid: Elsevier.
- Johns, Ann. 2002. *Genre in the Classroom: Multiple Perspectives*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Kenzie, Daniel and Mary McCall. 2017. "Teaching Writing for the Health Professions: Disciplinary Intersections and Pedagogical Practice." *Technical Communication Quarterly* 27 (1): 64-79. doi:10.1080/10572252.2017.1402573.
- Luzón, María José. 2019. "Bridging the gap between experts and publics". *Ibérica*, 37, 167-192.
- 2023. "Multimodal practices of research groups in twitter: An analysis of stance and engagement". *English for Specific Purposes*, 70, 17-32. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2023.01.001>
- Luzón, María José and Pérez-Llantada, Carmen. 2022. *Digital genres in academic knowledge production and communication: Perspectives and practices*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Maher, John. 1990. *International medical communication in English*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Mari, José. 2003. *Manual de Redacción Científica*. Alcalá: Ediciones Universidad de Alcalá.
- McCarter, Sam. 2009. *Medicine 1. Oxford English for Careers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 2010. *Medicine 2. Oxford English for Careers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Medical Dictionary for the Health Professions and Nursing*. 2012. Accessed December 12, 2023. <https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/case+history>

- Mehlenbacher, Ashley Rose and Brad Mehlenbacher. 2024. "Misinformation as Genre Function: Insights on the Infodemic from a Genre-Theoretical Perspective." *Technical Communication Quarterly*, June, 1-15. doi:10.1080/10572252.2024.2367779.
- Mercado, Ariel-Sebastián. 2003a. "¿Constituyen un género los prospectos de medicamentos?". *Las lenguas en un mundo global*. Jaén: Oficina de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Jaén.
- 2003b. "Estructura y relación de poder en los prospectos de medicamentos vendidos en España". *Estudios Filológicos* no. 38: 93-109.
- 2004. "Propuesta de un modelo de estructura para las introducciones de artículos de ciencias médicas en español peninsular". *Lenguas y Sociedad: Lingüística aplicada en la era global y multicultural*. Servizo de Publicacións da Universidade de Santiago de Compostela.
- 2017. "La macroestructura del artículo de investigación en ciencias médicas en español". PhD diss. Universidad Alfonso X el Sabio.
- 2021. "Teaching Spanish Medical Students How to Write a Case History". In *Mediating Specialized Knowledge and L2 Abilities New Research in Spanish/English Bilingual Models and Beyond*, edited by Linda Escobar and Ana Ibáñez, 191-208. Cham: Palgrave-McMillan.
- 2023. "La macroestructura del artículo de investigación de ciencias médicas en español". Paper presented at the joint 21st annual conference of the European Association of Languages for Specific Purposes (AELFE) and the 7th Conference of the Asia-Pacific Languages for Specific Purposes & Professional Communication Association (LSPPC). Saragossa, Spain. June 2023.
- Mijomanović, Stevan, Aleksić-Hajduković, Irena and Sinadinović, Danka. 2021. Case reports in dental medicine: a genre analysis. *ESP Today*, 9 (1): 129-149.
- Milner, Martin. 2006. *English for Health Sciences*. Boston: Heinle-Cengage Learning.
- Mishler, Elliot. 1984. *The Discourse of Medicine*. Norwood: Ablex Publishing.
- Montolío, Estrella. 2000. *Manual práctico de escritura académica*. Barcelona: Ariel Practicum.
- Nwogu, Kevin. 1997. "The medical research paper: structure and functions". *English for Specific Purposes* no. 16: 119-138.
- Rey-Bellet, Sarah et al. 2008. "Comment commencer l'entretien médical ? Réflexions sur la phase sociale à partir d'enregistrements video", *Revue Médicale Suisse* 4: 418-421.
- Richard, Claude and Lussier, Marie-Thérèse. 2016. *La communication professionnelle en santé* 2^e édition. Montreal: Pearson ERPI.
- Salager-Meyer, Françoise et al. 1989. "Principal component analysis and medical English discourse: An investigation into genre analysis". *System*. Volume 17, Issue 1: 21-34.
- Salvador, Vicent. 2016. "The Clinical Case Report as a Discourse Genre in the Context of Professional Training". In *Medical Discourse in Professional, Academic and Popular Settings*. Edited by Pilar Ordóñez and Nuria Edó, 41-64. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Shaw, Joanne, Dunn, Stewart and Paul Heinrich. 2012. "Managing the delivery of bad news: An in-depth analysis of doctors' delivery". *Patient Education and Counselling* no. 87, 186-192.

- Silverman, Jonathan, Kurtz, Susanne and Draper, Juliet. 2013. *Skills for communicating with patients*, Third edition, New York: CRC Press.
- Swales, John. 1990. *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Talavera, Solange, Gardette-Tria, Nathalie and Perez, Chrystel. 2016. *Le français des infirmières*. Grenoble: Presses Université de Grenoble.
- The American Heritage® Medical Dictionary*. 2007. Accessed December 12, 2023. <https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/case+history>
- Vázquez, Esther. 2006. *La redacción y traducción biomédica (inglés-español). Un estudio basado en 200 textos*. Granada: Editorial Universidad de Granada.
- Xia, Sichen Ada. 2020. "Genre Analysis in the Digital Era: Developments and Challenges". *ESP Today*, 8(1), 141-159. <https://doi.org/10.18485/esptoday.2020.8.1.7>
- 2023. Explaining science to the non-specialist online audience: A multimodal genre analysis of TED talk videos. *English for Specific Purposes*, 70, 70–85.

A GENRE-FOCUSED ANALYSIS OF SCIENTIFIC ABSTRACTS IN THE FIELD OF VETERINARY MEDICINE

Simona Catrinel AVARVAREI¹ 

Article history: Received 16 February 2024; Revised 25 June 2024; Accepted 15 October 2024; Available online 10 December 2024; Available print 30 December 2024.

©2024 Studia UBB Philologia. Published by Babeş-Bolyai University.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License

ABSTRACT. *A Genre-Focused Analysis of Scientific Abstracts in the Field of Veterinary Medicine.* This paper explores genre analysis and its reflection on the discourse surrounding ESP texts while identifying prevalent rhetorical structures in scientific abstracts. Objectivity, formality, and precision remain the key features of academic writing, accounting for it being a reliable source for learning and understanding. In the world of research and scientific communication, paper abstracts represent the quintessential excerpts that guide readers through the debated topic, its relevance, and main findings, arousing (or not) professional interest and curiosity. Hence, researchers must understand the structure of the rhetorical moves and organisation regarding this first text frontier. The present study explored the move-step framework in a corpus comprising 90 scientific paper abstracts from six prestigious journals indexed by Clarivate Analytics in the field of veterinary medicine, focusing on the most common patterns employed. The results revealed that the most commonly used rhetoric pattern, almost canonical for the texture of scientific writing, follows Hyland's five-move pattern - Introduction [I]-Purpose [P]-Method [M]-Results [R], followed by Conclusions/Discussions [C], which complements some of the abstracts. Although the study identified nuances, most research article abstracts pay tribute to the I-P-M-R move-step structure, scientific rigor, and a constant

¹ **Simona Catrinel AVARVAREI** is currently associate professor at the Ion Ionescu de la Brad University of Life Sciences from Iasi, Romania, where she teaches English for Specific Purposes and Spanish as a Second Language. She holds a PhD in Philology granted by Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi. She later pursued a postdoctoral project focusing on early literary authorship figures in 19th-century Britain and America. In addition to translating books on political theory and literature, she has published articles on a range of topics, with a special focus on British literature and cultural studies. Her primary research interests are the Victorian era, literary authorship, translation studies, language for specific purposes/specialized communication. Email: catrinel.avarvarei@iuls.ro.

search for highlighting the most relevant data. Furthermore, an enduring, almost predictable concern for the importance of Results [R] detaches itself as one of this paper's findings. Limitations and possible avenues for future research are highlighted to ensure that the selected abstract structure effectively enhances the study's visibility.

Keywords: *scientific abstract, contrastive analysis, five-move model, genre analysis, veterinary medicine science*

REZUMAT. O analiză de gen a rezumatelor articolelor științifice din domeniul științelor medicale veterinare. Lucrarea de față explorează analiza de gen și modul în care aceasta se reflectă asupra analizei discursului și a textului în ESP, cu un accent deosebit pe modelele retorice frecvent întâlnite în rezumatele articolelor științifice. Obiectivitatea, caracterul formal, acuratețea rămân trăsăturile cheie ale stilului academic, ceea ce explică faptul că acesta este o sursă autentică de învățare și cunoaștere. În lumea cercetării și a comunicării științifice, rezumatele studiilor științifice sunt acele fragmente care îi călăuzesc pe cititori prin tema dezbătută, vorbind despre relevanța și principalele rezultate ale acesteia, stârnind, astfel, (sau nu) interes și curiozitate profesională. Prin urmare, este extrem de important ca cercetătorii să aibă o bună înțelegere a structurii și organizării acestei prime frontiere a textului științific. Prezentul studiu a analizat structura unităților retorice în cadrul unui corpus alcătuit din 90 de rezumate preluate din articole academice din șase publicații indexate în baza de date Clarivate-Analytics, cu factor ridicat de impact din domeniul medicinei veterinare, punând accentul pe cele mai frecvente modele utilizate. Rezultatele au arătat că cel mai des folosit model, aproape canonic pentru textura scrierii științifice se construiește pe matrița Introducere [I]- Scop [S]-Metodă [M]-Rezultat [R], urmat și completat, în unele dintre rezumate, de Concluzii/Discuții [C]. Cu toate acestea, deși studiul identifică nuanțe, majoritatea rezumatelor articolelor științifice vor respecta tiparul Introducere-Scop-Metodă-Rezultat; rigoarea științifică și căutarea constantă a evidențierii celor mai relevante date explică modul în care cea mai mare parte a membrilor comunității academice folosesc limbajul, gândindu-și structura lucrărilor și a rezumatelor. Mai mult, o preocupare constantă, aproape previzibilă, pentru importanța rezultatelor [R] se detașează ca una dintre constatările acestei lucrări. Sunt prezentate limitări, precum și câteva sugestii pentru cercetări viitoare.

Cuvinte-cheie: *rezumat articol științific, analiza contrastivă, modelul celor cinci pași, analiza de gen, domeniul științific al medicinei veterinare*

1. Introduction

If the story of veterinary medicine began unfolding its narrative in the region of Mesopotamia with Urukagina, the man regarded as the “father of veterinarians”, nowadays it is the voice of so many gifted professionals that continues to write its epos; like all arts and crafts, the science of animal healing has amply evolved since 3000 BC, as have its chronicles. We intend to approach some specific textual patterns of the expert-to-expert communicative matrix from a gender-based perspective within the current context of international scientific communication, where “over 3 million research articles are published annually” (Glasman-Deal 2021, 265). The linguistic code represents the fabric of academic writing, as well as the extensive use of English as a global communication tool in recent decades underlines the fact that scholars from all over the world have acknowledged it as the language of information dissemination. In the Tower of Babel of the XXI century, English has managed to silence the quarrels of the wise, focusing not so much on what language to use in order to write their stories as on how to best write them down. It is well known that English, the dominant communication tool in a global world, when circumscribed to scientific rigour and academic epic, has developed its own specific rhetoric. Scholars have to master a set of rules that operate as symbolic keys that unlock the truths behind scientific experiments and encode the story that travels with them, offering both authors and readers a clear understanding of the implicit code. Expert-to-expert communication patterns imply the use of highly specialized textual patterns whose hermeneutics must be perfectly mastered by all those who approach them with a curious mind and a keen inquisitive eye. Embarking upon such a special voyage requires a sound knowledge of the map and its symbols, especially when it comes to scientists and researchers who are non-native English speakers; knowing and understanding the linguistic patterns circumscribed to academic communication is essential for all those who decide to journey through its labyrinthine construct. Robinson (1991, 25) argues that the “author’s purpose is explained with reference to the wider professional culture to which the author belongs.” Hence, texts are not limited to being codes of scholarly idioms but also large webbings that bring readers and authors together within a shared professional culture.

Nevertheless, when using the term labyrinthine, we are not referring to how the information is organised and cemented but to its density of meaning and contextual synergy. The same rigour that applies to any process of critical thinking reflects itself in the way in which writers build the scaffolding of scientific communicative matrixes, paying special attention to the information distribution; this allows readers to identify relevant details and scan through

the text smoothly in search of clues and innovative data. In this sense, the architecture of any textual pattern that approaches scientific topics has to offer an almost canonical blueprint of its structure, thus fostering its readability and enhancing its visibility. In other words, in an expert-to-expert communicative pattern, deciphering the message depends not only on the hermeneutics of the text but also on its rhetorical features and structure. Following Swales (1990, 9), our analysis describes the structure of expert-to-expert genres in a corpus of ninety veterinary medicine research article abstracts from six high-impact Clarivate-Analytics-indexed journals in the field of veterinary medicine, with a focus on identifying the matrix of the most common patterns employed. Within the economy of any research paper, abstracts are high-stake texts that offer a clear radiography of the entire paper as a cohesive rhetorical unit valued for its synthetic nature not only by other fellow experts that approach it but even by a non-specialised audience that visits it.

Regardless of their addressees, research paper abstracts offer information on the purpose of the academic pursuit, the methodology used to investigate it, the final and most relevant results, and an optional view of the possible implications. If, from a structural perspective, abstracts may be regarded as peripheral, they function as pivotal elements in the overall communication context, being, in more cases than one, the only open-access fragment of the paper offered in most online repositories, offering an invaluable insight into the alchemy of the study. This may also account for the academic interest in the topic (Basturkmen 2012; Bhatia 1993; Dudley-Evans 1986, 1993; Kanoksilapatham 2005; Santos 1996; Swales 1981, 1990, 2004), as abstracts are the first textual gate that provide readers with an overall account related to the paper as a logical narrative structure.

As Swales indicated, abstracts have to develop some textual patterns and forms in order to outline the context of research and guide readers along its paths, marked by distinct moves and steps. According to professor Swales the move is “a discursal or rhetorical unit that performs a coherent communicative function in a written or spoken discourse” (2004, 228), whereas steps build these larger units into an articulate discourse template, defining themselves as sub-structures derivative of each and every move. Pho (2009, 17) argues that “each move has its own communicative purpose, which, together with other moves, contributes to the general communicative purpose of the text,” and Dos Santos describes the move “as a genre stage that has a particular, minor communicative purpose to fulfil, which in turn serves the major communicative purpose of the genre” (1996, 485) and considers that individual steps are “lower level text units that provide a detailed perspective on the options open to the writer in setting out the moves” (Dudley-Evans & St John

1998, 89). Hence, following the webbing of moves and steps, starting from Swales' pioneering work (1981,1990) on the structure of academic articles and adopting the five-move pattern of Ken Hyland (2004), we intend to build the outline of a rhetorical move structure analysis of scientific abstracts in the field of veterinary medicine. It was our intent to first identify and later acquaint readers, potential future paper writers themselves, with the most commonly employed communicative patterns as far as the architecture of scientific abstracts is concerned. Contrasting the outline of the communicative patterns of foreign academic journals with the only Romanian publication indexed in the Web of Science and dedicated to veterinary professionals revealed the fact that the latter did not follow the canonical five-move pattern, I-P-M-R-C. The majority of the abstracts built themselves upon an abridged three-move pattern, with (Move 1) - Introduction, (Move 2) - Purpose, and (Move 3) - Method as supporting pillars; (Move 4) - Results and (Move 5) - Conclusions came as optional choices in less than 50% of the analysed abstracts. However, the five-move pattern was used by Romanian authors when they published their research studies in foreign academic journals with strict editorial policy rules that follow a mandatory structure, namely (Move 1) - Introduction; (Move 2) - Purpose; (Move 3) - Method; (Move 4) - Result; and (Move 5) - Conclusion. Hence the importance and practical relevance of genre analysis that highlights, when correctly applied, the "crucial importance of rhetorical text structure" by establishing "common rhetorical patterns... in academic writing" (Hyland 1992, 23).

2. Concept of Genre

In recent decades many scholars have been seduced by the topic of genre analysis which they have all tried to define either as "the study of how language is used within a particular context. Genres differ in that each has a different goal and they are structured differently to achieve these goals" (Hyland 1992, 15), or as the:

"analytical framework which reveals not only the utilizable form-function correlations but also contributes significantly to our understanding of the cognitive structuring of information in specific areas of language use, which may help the ESP practitioners to devise appropriate activities potentially significant for the achievement of desired communicative outcomes in specialised academic or occupation areas" Bhatia (1991, 154),

or, as "one individual's attempt to come to terms with a professional environment" (Swales 1990, 232).

Prior to all these interpretations, Fowler highlighted the importance of genre to any writer:

“Far from inhibiting the author, genres are a positive support. They offer room, one might say, for him to write in - a habitation of mediated definiteness; a proportional neutral space; a literary matrix by which to order his experience during composition . . . Instead of a daunting void, they extend a provocatively definite invitation. The writer is invited to match experience and form in a specific yet undetermined way. ... Genre also offers a challenge by provoking a free spirit to transcend the limitations of previous examples” (Fowler 1982, 31).

and some years later it was Swales (1990, 1) who integrated it within a more complex pattern, recommending genre analysis “as a means of studying spoken and written discourse for applied ends.” Professor Swales was the first linguist to author such an analysis, following his in-depth investigation of 48 scientific article introductions selected from various branches of science. The main outcome of this academic enterprise was the birth of “a genre-centred approach [that] offers a workable way of making sense of the myriad communicative events that occur in the contemporary English-speaking academy” (Swales 1990, 1). In expert-to-expert communication genre analysis, according to Swales (1990, 9), the main criterion that turns communicative events into textual patterns (genres) is the existence of a series of communicative purposes, since “discourse communities are socio-rhetorical networks that form in order to work towards sets of common goals” (1990, 9). Flowerdew (2011, 140) weaves the question of genre into the wider pattern of discourse communities when he states that “genres are staged, structured, communicative events, motivated by various communicative purposes, and performed by members of specific discourse communities”. It is individuals who perform such communicative patterns, but it is discourse communities that genres ultimately belong to, as Swales clearly argued when he wrote that “genres belong to discourse communities, not to individuals, other kinds of grouping, or to wider speech communities” (1990, 9).

3. Methods and Procedures

3.1 Corpora

This paper uses Hyland’s (2000) five-move pattern for scientific abstracts as the framework for analysing the moves in selected abstracts. The corpus used in the current study comprised 90 abstracts randomly compiled from six English-medium journals of Veterinary Medicine, namely Veterinary

Quarterly, United Kingdom (VQ), *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*, Switzerland (FVS), *International Journal of Veterinary Science and Medicine* (IJVSM), *Australian Veterinary Journal* (AVJ), *Journal of Veterinary Medical Science Japan* (JVM), and *Bulletin of University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, Cluj Napoca – Veterinary Medicine*, Romania (BUASVM), i.e. 15 abstracts from each six high-impact factor journals (except the *Bulletin of University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine*) as listed in the *Journal Citation Reports* published in 2022 by Clarivate Analytics. A total of 90 scientific abstracts (19,335 words) published within a time span of two years (2022-2024) were selected. All original scientific articles were written by veterinary professionals, including native and non-native English speakers. The word count of the scientific abstracts ranged from 91 to 485 words.

Table 1. Hyland's (2000) five-move model

Move	Function	Example
M1: Introduction	Sets the context for the paper and provides a rationale for the research or discussion.	"The Australian ruminant livestock industries are faced with the need to control parasitic infectious diseases that can seriously impact the health of animals." (AVJ)
M2: Purpose	Indicates purpose, thesis or hypothesis, outlines the intention behind the paper.	"The purpose of this study is to investigate whether adding alpha-lipoic acid (ALA) to ram semen can reduce oxidative stress and enhance spermatozoa quality during the liquid storage at 4°C. ..." (FVS)
M3: Method	Provides information on design, procedures, assumptions, approach, data, etc.	"The genomic detection and its serotyping were done by RT-PCR and multiplex-PCR, respectively. Necropsy examination in all cases showed myocardial lesions resembling 'tigroid heart appearance'." (VQ)
M4: Results (Product)	Presents the key findings, the argument, or the outcomes achieved.	"The results suggest that the development of MUO in Chihuahuas may be associated with DLA class II genes." (JVMS)
M5: Conclusion	Interprets or expands the results beyond the paper's scope, draws conclusions, and highlights potential applications or broader implications.	"Both the reference product (Arnica gel) and the tested mixture showed anti-inflammatory action, but following the measurements, it could be concluded that the mixture was more effective in reducing oedema." (BUASVM)

Table 2. Summary of Key Features

Journal	Impact factor	Nº. of RAs	Word count
1. Veterinary Quarterly, UK	6.4 (2022)	15	3,659
2. Frontiers in Veterinary Science, Switzerland	3.2 (2022)	15	4,178
3. International Journal of Veterinary Science and Medicine	2.2 (2022)	15	3,179
4. Australian Veterinary Journal	1.1 (2022)	15	2,727
5. Journal of Veterinary Medical Science, Japan	1.105 (2021)	15	2,563
6. Bulletin of University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, Cluj Napoca - Veterinary Medicine	-	15	3,028
Total		90	19,335

Note. RA = research article.

3.2. Analytical Procedure

As illustrated in Table 1, the selected five-move structure articulates itself around the Introduction move which sets the context for the paper and fosters further research directions or discussion; the Purpose move emphasizes the purpose, hypothesis, providing a summary of the scope of the study; the Method move offers detail on paper structure and procedures; the Result presents the key findings and results; and finally the Conclusion (C) move analyses or extends the results to highlight broader implications. Thus, following Hyland's pattern, this paper aimed at identifying the moves within each of the analysed abstracts with a view to discovering the way in which, unless otherwise stated by editorial policies, veterinary professionals from different discourse communities chose to articulate the structure of their abstracts. The number of moves was computed manually based on the purpose of communication behind each move, with a view to identifying the pattern of relevance hidden behind the 'occurrence rate'. The study acquires a quantitative dimension, as the frequency rate of each move within the general outline of the selected scientific abstracts acts as litmus paper indicating whether a particular move is 'essential' or not. The reference point is the frequency of occurrence representation introduced by Kanoksilapatham (2005), who divides moves into three types: central, conventional, and optional. According to Kanoksilapatham (2005, 272), a move will be recognized as conventional if it occurs in "60% of the appropriate sections in the corpus," whereas if the frequency of a move is

below 60%, it is considered optional; a central move, on the other hand, occurs in 100% of the corpus. Considering the fact that the selected corpus of this study belongs to the field of hard sciences, a particular move is considered mandatory, or central, as Kanoksilapatham (2205, 272) refers to it when its presence in the text goes well beyond 70%.

4. Results and discussion

The results of this study showed that the Introduction move, the Purpose move, the Method move, and the Result move were the four units that appeared in more than 70% of the selected abstracts, which means that the only optional move is the Conclusion move. Furthermore, according to the analysed corpus, the frequency of the Introduction move is only five percentage points below the Method move, which entitles us to consider it a central move within the structure of papers on veterinary medicine-related topics. Hence, the most commonly used move structures in scientific abstracts in the field of veterinary medicine are Introduction (75%), Purpose (97%), Method (96%) and Result (98%). These findings, as shown in Table 3, are only in partial accordance with Hyland (2000) and Santos (1996), with Introduction being the fourth central element in scientific abstracts in the field of veterinary medicine. The former claimed that the top three most frequent moves in scientific abstracts are Purpose, Method, and Result, although he himself mentioned that there is a growing tendency to position the Introduction move in the webbing of this discourse microstructural unit. Just as Hyland suggested, the least used move is the Implications/Suggestions step, optional by means of frequency, as it only appeared in 24 out of the 90 surveyed research article abstracts, accounting for 26%.

Table 3. Frequency of Move-Step Structure

	Move 1	Move 2	Move 3	Move 4	Move 5	Step 1
Move	Introduction	Purpose	Method	Results	Conclusion	Implications/ Suggestions (optional)
Nº	68	84	87	89	46	24
Move to total abstracts ratio	75.55%	93.33%	96.66%	98.88%	51.00%	26.66%

Introduction move is, according to our findings, a central move as its frequency surpassed 70% of the analysed scientific abstracts.

1. "Meerkats (*Suricata suricatta*) are endemic carnivores of southern Africa and, although currently listed as 'least concern' by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) red list, there is evidence of a significant decrease in wild populations mainly attributed to effects of climate change. Little is known about diseases associated with mortality in captive meerkats" (*Veterinary Quarterly*, 2023).
2. "Ram spermatozoa inevitably produce a large number of reactive oxygen species (ROS) during liquid storage, leading to oxidative stress and a decline of spermatozoa quality. Therefore, it is particularly important to add exogenous antioxidants during the process of semen liquid preservation" (*Frontiers in Veterinary Science*, 2024).

This underscores the importance of this move in the field of veterinary medicine, where background information helps readers put things into perspective, allowing them to gain a better understanding of the paper topic. Although central, as the Introduction prepares for the final significance of the research endeavour, this move is not compulsory, provided the editorial policy of the academic journal does not specify otherwise. One interesting detail was to discover that when Romanian authors publish their studies in foreign journals, they tend to open their abstracts with an introductory line, which will no longer be a central unit in the structure of abstracts published in national academic journals, though they are also written in English.

Purpose move 2 is the third of the three most important moves identified by Hyland as being the landmarks of any abstract structure, since it was employed by 84 out of the total 90 articles.

3. "In this study, we aimed to develop a method based on high-throughput sequencing of *S. cruzi* genome and transcriptome that specifically and quantitatively detects the *S. cruzi* acetyl-CoA synthetase gene (*ScACS*)" (*Journal of Veterinary Medical Science*, 2023).
4. "The main aim of this study was to describe the hair cortisol concentration (HCC) variability between individuals within a batch, between farms and between batches within a farm. The secondary aim was to determine how the number of sampled pigs influences the characterization of HCC within a batch" (*Frontiers in Veterinary Science*, 2024).

The results of this study align with Professor Hyland's research, which states that the Purpose move ranks among the top three most frequent moves in scientific abstracts, alongside the Method and Result moves.

Method move 3 is the second most important of Professor Hyland's triad (P-M-R), as its occurrence was 96.66% of the analysed research article abstracts. This is to be expected as scholars in the field of hard-sciences place a

significant emphasis on the Methods move that reflects itself upon the Results move as the accommodating research matrix. There are instances in which authors combined the Method move with the Result move in a single sentence, as demonstrated in the following example: “Phylogenetic analysis showed that the sequenced novel BFDV genomes clustered in a distinct subclade with other BFDVs isolated from Australian cockatoos” (*Australian Veterinary Journal*, 2023).

5. “Traditional methods for testing cCPR, including enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA), have some drawbacks, such as a long time for diagnosis and the requirement of well-equipped laboratories. Therefore, there is a need for a rapid and precise diagnostic test for cCRP at point-of-care” (*International Journal of Veterinary Science and Medicine*, 2023).

6. “Blood and faecal samples were collected simultaneously from sheep from a private farm. Faecal samples were examined by the successive washings method for evidence of trematode eggs, and serum samples were evaluated with the RxDaytona+ automatic multiparametric analyser for evidence of alkaline phosphatase (AP), aspartate aminotransferase (AST), gamma-glutamyl transferase (GGT), total protein and albumin” (*Bulletin of University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, Cluj Napoca – Veterinary Medicine*, 2023).

The findings of this study have not only identified that the Method move recommends itself as a pillar of any academic paper in the field of veterinary medicine, but they have also signalled its significant quantitative quota, as most authors would write at least two sentences on the topic, as the standard basic unit for the Method move.

In close connection with the previous move comes the Result move, the top most commonly used move in the 90 veterinary medicine scientific abstracts, as it was employed by 89 of the total 90 studied authors/articles (98.88%, Table 3). The predominant occurrence of the Result move in the rhetorical structure of veterinary medicine scientific abstracts is consistent with the very nature of scientific research, which is committed to identifying solutions and valid strategies to problems and challenges.

7. “From the results, left atrial (LA) strain and strain rate from 2D-STE were significantly decreased in cats with cardiogenic ATE ($P < 0.001$), but there was no significant difference in non-cardiogenic ATE compared with normal cats. From the correlation test, the use of left atrial strain during the reservoir phase (LASr) could represent the overall LA deformation. The intra- and inter-observer coefficient of variation of LASr was less than 15%. The logistic regression revealed that the LASr value of less than 11% was a significant factor for the occurrence of ATE (odds ratio = 189.0, $P < 0.001$)” (*International Journal of Veterinary Science and Medicine*, 2023).

8. "Results showed absence of coinfection in Australian samples from Greater Sydney region belonging either to *A. caninum* or *Uncinaria stenocephala*, while New Zealand samples were a mixture of *A. caninum* and *U. stenocephala*. The amplified isotype-1 β -tubulin sequences exhibited susceptibility to benzimidazole drugs. Rare mutations were identified in *A. caninum* and *U. stenocephala* sequences, representing a small percentage of reads" (*Australian Veterinary Journal*, 2023).

The findings also underlined that the move is either integrated within the preceding move (Methods) – "FhKT1.1 showed the most promising diagnostic indicators, exhibiting high precision and low cross-reactivity, and thus potential for standardized production. The results of our study demonstrated that the application of FhKT1.1 is a valuable tool for early-stage diagnosis of *F. hepatica* in sheep" (*International Journal of Veterinary Science and Medicine*, 2023) or with the forthcoming one (Conclusion) in some research article abstracts – "The results suggest that use of these criteria for the simplified ADD method may lead to appropriate antimicrobial choice and consequently the appropriate use of antimicrobials in clinical practice" (*Journal of Veterinary Medical Science*, 2023).

Conclusion move 5, even in the field of hard sciences, does not seem to be a central move, and the frequency rate identified in this study proves that only half of the analysed research article abstracts accommodated some final thoughts regarding the overall academic construct. Thus, the fifth move turns out to be the only optional one in the field of veterinary medical sciences, as its occurrence fell below 70%.

9. "In conclusion, the results of this study confirm that the combination of endometrial cytology with the microbiological examination of uterine discharges seems to be a good method for the diagnosis of subclinical endometritis, and provides an update of information about the microbiota present in the uterus of dairy cows after parturition, the state of its resistance to antibiotics and the effect on reproductive performance" (*Bulletin of University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, Cluj Napoca – Veterinary Medicine*, 2023).

10. "In conclusion, 300 mg/kg dietary EGCG showed protection effects on the laying ducks reared in high temperature by improving the immune and antioxidant capacities, which contributed to the increase of laying performance of ducks. The potential mechanism could be that EGCG modulate the synthesis of key metabolites and associated metabolic pathways" (*Veterinary Quarterly*, 2023).

The Conclusion move sometimes includes an extra optional final step that talks about possible suggestions, foreseeing future implications of research; it has, as expected, the lowest frequency rate of all five moves, with only 24 out of the total 90 abstracts including it.

11. "To the best of our knowledge, this is the first report of a detailed analysis of the genomic information of a *V. vulnificus* isolated from the Indian subcontinent and provides evidence that raises public health concerns about the safety of seafood" (*Veterinary Quarterly*, 2023).

12. "Thus, this assay will be useful for future studies of *S. cruzi* pathogenesis in cattle and for the surveillance of infected animals, thereby easing public health concerns" (*Journal of Veterinary Medical Science*, 2023).

By deciding to close their research presentation by offering a series of possible suggestions for future lines of inquiry, authors bridge their own research endeavour to the wider webbing of the entire academic community, in a symbolic common quest for answers and new ideas.

Table 4 shows the distribution of move patterns in six academic journals in the field of veterinary medicine that were analysed in this paper. The hard core of the analysis reveals the constant concern of authors to focus on data about some background information; the purpose, method, and results of research; and their distribution within the texture of the abstract varies among journals. I-P-M-R-C is the most frequently used move pattern in two of the analysed publications, *Frontiers in Veterinary Science* and *Veterinary Quarterly*, with 80% and 85%, respectively, with the lowest value of merely 5% in the *Journal of Veterinary Medical Science*; the *International Journal of Veterinary Science and Medicine* keeps a balanced ratio (45%) in between the I-P-M-R and the I-P-M-R-C move patterns, whilst the highest ratio (60%) of the I-P-M-R move pattern is displayed by the abstracts cropped from the *Australian Veterinary Journal*. Surprisingly, when Romanian authors publish their studies in national journals, they tend to refer less frequently to both the Introduction, and the Conclusion move within one single move pattern (15%). It seems that the triad that is used by most Romanian veterinary professionals when drafting their research article abstracts is the one indicated by Hyland (2000), namely Purpose-Method-Result, which means that they seem to prefer to present the purpose of the research, followed by the method and results of their essays.

Table 4. Distribution of move patterns across corpora

Move patterns	VQ	FVS	IJVSM	AVJ	JVMS	BUASVM
P-M-R	0	0	5%	5%	35%	45%
I-P-M-R	10%	10%	45%	60%	45%	35%
P-M-R-C	5%	10%	5%	5%	15%	5%
I-P-M-R-C	85%	80%	45%	30%	5%	15%
I-M-P-R	0	0	0	0	0	0
I-P-M	0	0	0	0	0	0
I-M-R	0	0	0	0	0	0

Note. Veterinary Quarterly (VQ); Frontiers in Veterinary Science (FVS); International Journal of Veterinary Science and Medicine (IJVSM); Australian Veterinary Journal (AVJ); Journal of Veterinary Medical Science Japan (JVMS); Bulletin of University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, Cluj Napoca – Veterinary Medicine, Romania (BUASVM).

P-M-R = Purpose-Method-Result; I-P-M-R = Introduction-Purpose-Method-Result;

P-M-R-C = Purpose-Method-Result-Conclusion; I-P-M-R-C = Introduction-Purpose-Method-Result-Conclusion; I-M-P-R = Introduction-Method-Purpose-Result; I-P-M = Introduction-Purpose-Method; I-M-R = Introduction-Method-Result.

5. Conclusion

The current paper was designed to look into the move-step structure of 90 veterinary medicine research article abstracts from six high-impact Clarivate-Analytics-indexed journals in the field of veterinary medicine, with a focus on the most common patterns employed. The study employed Hyland's (2000) five-move pattern for scientific abstracts as the move analysis framework for analysing the selected abstracts. Abstracts, as high-stakes text units, are by far the most visible parts of any research paper, responsible for its future visibility, and hence authors have to pay particular attention when writing them, especially since “writing guidelines are sometimes inconsistent or confusing” (Glasman-Deal 2021, 265).

Results from this research could be highly beneficial, particularly for authors who are non-native English speakers, as they have to write their academic papers in English and submit them to publications with a global readership. The results indicated the presence of the I-P-M-R move pattern in the majority of the analysed texts, a situation consistent with the hard-science nature of the topic approached, indebted to clarity, precision, and attention to details. Although the present study acknowledges its limitations rooted in the random, somewhat limited selection of texts, it was written with the intention of raising the awareness of future writers, non-native English-speaking scholars,

of the move-up structure, which, once mastered and applied, could increase the acceptance rate of prestigious journals for future publication. The identified move structure guide for scientific abstracts in veterinary medicine may serve as virtual radiography for neophyte science authors. Future studies can extend the research as well as the academic writing assistance implicitly by investigating the move patterns length with a view to offering a comprehensive understanding of the way in which abstracts can enhance the visibility of scientific papers.

WORKS CITED

- Basturkmen, Helen. 2012. "A genre-based investigation of discussion sections of research articles in dentistry and disciplinary variation." *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 11, 134-144.
- Bhatia, Vijay Kumar. 1991. "A genre-based approach to ESP materials". *World Englishes* 10/2, 153-166.
- Bhatia, Vijay Kumar. 1993. *Analysing genre: Language use in professional settings*. London, UK: Longman.
- Dos Santos, Mauro Bittencourt. 1996. "The textual organization of research paper abstracts in applied linguistics." *Text*, 16, 481-499.
- Dudley-Evans, Tony. 1986. "Genre analysis: An investigation of the introduction and discussion sections of MSc dissertations." In M. Coulthard (ed.), *Talking about text*, 128-145. Birmingham, UK: English Language Research, University of Birmingham.
- Dudley-Evans, Tony. 1993. "Variation in communication patterns between discourse communities: The case of highway engineering and plant biology." In G. M. Blue (Ed.), *Language, Learning and Success: Studying through English*, 141-147. London, UK: Macmillan.
- Dudley-Evans, Tony, & St John, Maggie Jo. 1998. *Developments in English for specific purposes. A multi-disciplinary approach*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Fowler, Alastair. 1982. *Kinds of literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Flowerdew, John. 2016. "Some dichotomies in genre analysis for languages for specific purposes." In Ken Hyland and Philip Shaw (eds). 2016. *The Routledge Handbook of English for Academic Purposes*. London and New York: Routledge, 243-256.
- Glasman-Deal, Hilary. 2021. *Science research writing: for native and non-native speakers of English*. Second edition. New Jersey: World Scientific.
- Hyland, Ken. 1992. "Genre analysis: just another fad?". *Forum* 30/2, 1-17.
- Hyland, Ken. 2000. *Disciplinary Discourses: Social Interactions in Academic Writing*. New York: Longman.
- Kanoksilapatham, Budsaba. 2005. "Rhetorical structure of biochemistry research articles." *English for Specific Purposes*, 24, 269-292.

- Kanoksilapatham, Budsaba. 2013. "Generic characterization of civil engineering research article abstracts." *3L: Language, Linguistics, Literature*, 19(3), 1-10.
- Pho, Phuong Dzung. 2008. "Research article abstracts in applied linguistics and educational technology: A study of linguistic realizations of rhetorical structure and authorial stance." *Discourse Studies* 10(2), 231-250.
- Robinson, Pauline. 1991. *ESP Today: A Practitioner's Guide*. Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall.
- Swales, John. 1981. *Aspects of Article Introductions*. Aston ESP Research Report No. 1. Language Studies Unit, University of Aston in Birmingham.
- Swales, John. 1990. *Genre Analysis. English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Swales, John. 2004. *Research genres: Explorations and applications*. Cambridge University Press.

TEACHING AND LEARNING LEGAL ENGLISH WITH AI: A CASE STUDY ON STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN AN ESAP COURSE

Bianca Doris BRETAN¹ 

Article history: Received 24 February 2024; Revised 5 July 2024; Accepted 15 October 2024; Available online 10 December 2024; Available print 30 December 2024.

©2024 Studia UBB Philologia. Published by Babeş-Bolyai University.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License

ABSTRACT. *Teaching and Learning Legal English with AI: A Case Study on Student Engagement in an ESAP Course.* Educators recognize that 2020 was a pivotal year for the advancement of digital teaching methods. A significant aspect of this development is the emergence of generative artificial intelligence (AI) platforms grounded in large language models (LLMs), which are viewed by many as potentially transformative for education. Concerns have arisen regarding how these tools could affect academic integrity and the originality of student writing. Many people question the assumption that such technologies could support student learning. This study aims to explore this topic further by investigating the following question: How can the incorporation of AI improve student engagement in English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) classes? The answer is provided through small-scale research conducted on a group of first-year Law students who took part in a Legal English ESAP course. Quantitative and qualitative data provided by two questionnaires, an interview and a class observation protocol are analyzed to show students' learning engagement with AI tools. The research highlights the benefits offered by AI to Legal English instruction.

Keywords: *ESAP, AI, Legal English, higher education, student engagement, digitalization*

¹ **Bianca Doris BRETAN** serves as a Lecturer at Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. Ms. Bretan has authored numerous articles and research studies focused on teaching English as a foreign language. Throughout her career, she has been involved in various training initiatives aimed at enhancing both preservice and in-service teacher education. Additionally, her interests encompass English for Specific Purposes. Currently, she is instructing a Legal English course tailored to the needs of undergraduate students at the Faculty of Law, as well as an introductory ESP course for graduate students at the Faculty of Letters. Email: bianca.bretan@ubbcluj.ro.

REZUMAT. Predarea și învățarea limbii engleze pentru domeniul juridic cu ajutorul inteligenței artificiale: studiu de caz asupra gradului de implicare al studenților care urmează un curs de engleză specializată la nivel universitar. Specialiștii în educație admit că anul 2020 a marcat o cotitură în învățământ datorită adoptării pedagogiei digitale. Un subiect la fel de recent și actual este cel al folosirii platformelor dedicate inteligenței artificiale bazată pe modele lingvistice pre-definite în educație. Acest fapt a fost perceput ca îngrijorător mai ales din punct de vedere al integrității academice în ceea ce privește autenticitatea produsului final. S-a pus chiar problema utilității acestui tip de instrument în predare-învățare. Studiul de față dorește să discute acest din urmă aspect răspunzând la următoarea întrebare: cum ar putea fi utilizată inteligența artificială pentru a impulsiona implicarea studenților în cadrul unui curs de limbaj de specialitate? Articolul de față își propune să răspundă întrebării instrumentând un studiu de caz de mici dimensiuni, bazat pe un eșantion format din studenți din anul întâi de la Facultatea de Drept. Colectarea de date s-a făcut prin utilizarea de chestionare, interviuri și un protocol de observare la clasă. Studiul dorește să evidențieze avantajele oferite de utilizarea inteligenței artificiale.

Cuvinte-cheie: ESAP, AI, engleză juridică, învățământ superior, motivare, digitalizare

Introduction

The year 2020 was a pivotal year for the advancement of digital teaching. The sudden shift to online education provided the essential environment and, arguably, the ideal opportunity to evaluate and implement the pedagogy of online teaching and learning.

The employment of e-learning, digital technology, and online courses in further and higher education had been an area of focus for many years before the pandemic. Studies conducted in that period researched the potential and the outcome of using digitalization in teaching.

Among the fields that were under scrutiny, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) had a place of its own. ESP is the product of the economic boom that marked the 1950s. English has begun to be used in various professional contexts to connect people from different countries in an expanding global market. The aim of ESP courses is “to teach the language and communication skills that specific groups of language learners need or will need to function effectively in their disciplines of study, professions, or workplaces” (Basturkmen 2010, 17). The typical audience for this kind of course consists of adults who have an

interest in a particular field of specialized language and who work in similar professional environments. No matter their specialized language focus, all ESP courses share some essential elements: professional goals of learners, use of needs analysis, and a learning-centered approach. As teaching ESP is concerned with a functionalist approach to education it must emphasize the acquisition of soft skills. Soft skills are the “ability to go beyond the subject specialism and be able to communicate well in professional (and by extension ESP) contexts” (Day and Krzanowski 2011, 23). From this perspective, the situation is quite different from a decade ago. At that time digital technology was an optional tool in many occupational sectors and the acquisition of this type of skill was regarded as a kind of specialism. The 2020 pandemic changed the paradigm and placed digital competency among the most valued requirements in any job application process.

Therefore, teaching, especially when connected to the field of specific purposes, needs to pursue this trend, and offer a fair level of knowledge necessary in students’ future careers.

The two years of pandemic were effervescent in finding adequate solutions to the challenges faced by teachers and learners and researching about the future steps to take. Very soon, the rapidly evolving landscape of education acknowledged the presence of AI based on large language models (LLMs). The most popular example is the ChatGPT tool created by the company OpenAI which released its most recent version in 2023.

This new arrival posed new questions related to the ethics of using artificial intelligence and opened a general debate on using AI tools in the field of education.

The purpose of the current article is to share with other researchers interested in the topic the results of a small-scale study that investigates the advantages of using AI tools in English for Specific Academic Purposes conducted at Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca.

Literature review

The pre-pandemic research on integration of technology in ESP instruction focused on the digital tools, other than AI, that could have enhanced the learning of specialized languages. In 2022, the European Commission published a reflection document on digital learning in higher education. “Future of Digital and Online Learning in Higher Education handbook 362” offers a systematic overview of the current debate on how the impact of the pandemic has been valued for digital and online learning practices and adaptations” (Humpl and Andersen 2022, 5).

In parallel, the launching of ChatGPT turned the interest towards the possible use of this type of tool in learning. The E.U. founded an Erasmus+ Forward Looking project called AI Pioneers aiming “at promoting the use and teaching of artificial intelligence (AI) in adult education and vocational training VET (Vocational Education and Training).”² The interface with the targeted community of teachers, stakeholders, educational planners, and policymakers is provided by a site that gives relevant information on the topic serving as a hub in promoting teaching with AI.

An event that is worth mentioning in this context took place shortly after the launch of ChatGPT. Scholars from Open AI, Khan Academy, the Berkman Klein Centre for Internet & Society at Harvard University, along with various specialists, convened at a workshop to explore the effects of generative AI on the future of education and learning. Two key themes were discussed then: possible disruptive effects of AI on teaching and the need for policy interventions “to enable safe uses of the technology and mitigate harms, the allocation of duties and responsibilities across stakeholders, and mechanisms for cross-sectorial tech policymaking.”³ The workshop is relevant as it gives a larger picture of how the use of AI in teaching should be approached by educators, teachers, university professors, policy makers and experts in computer science.

Given the novelty of the topic, literature is limited to some of the uses of current existing AI tools in reference to ESP. A particular challenge faced by researchers is related to the rapid pace of AI evolution: newer tools replace old ones within a matter of months. Therefore, the articles referenced in this section may become outdated within a year. As technology develops amazingly fast, the criterion applied in the choice of articles was the year of publication. To rely on sources as updated as possible, references include articles written after ChatGPT 3.5 model was launched (November 2022).

Michel-Villareal et al. interviewed ChatGPT to describe the challenges and opportunities of generative AI in Higher Education. The passage in which the chatbot describes how language and communication skills can be assisted by AI is relevant for us: “ChatGPT can stimulate conversational exchanges, provide language correction, and offer vocabulary and grammar assistance.” (Michel-Villareal et al. 2023, 5).

Qasem et al. (2023) examined the effect of using a chatbot in learning ESP vocabulary. The participants were students on an ESP course at a university in Saudi Arabia. The dialog chatbot was designed to engage students in conversations

² <https://aipioneers.org/about-us/>

³ Exploring the Impacts of Generative AI on the Future of Teaching and Learning | Berkman Klein Center (harvard.edu)

about different topics relevant to their studies. The research was conducted using an experimental design with a control group and an experimental group. The control group received traditional vocabulary instruction, while the experimental group used the chatbot in addition to traditional instruction. The study results show that the dialog chatbot significantly improved students' vocabulary learning outcomes. The findings suggest that dialog chatbots can be effective tools for enhancing vocabulary learning in ESP contexts.

Kovacic and Bubas (2023) conducted research on the potential of using conversational artificial intelligence (Bing Chat) for online learning in ESP. According to the results, most students positively evaluated the use of Bing Chat in conversations and had an open attitude towards the use of this types of AI tools in their learning and practice of English.

Mezei (2023) described how paraphrasing activities in a biology ESAP class could be performed by employing AI-assisted paraphrasing tools.

Kovacevic (2023, 42) studied the use of ChatGPT in teaching ESP and came to the conclusion that it could be used as an "effective and timesaving tool for various aspects of preparation and implementation of teaching units and evaluation of students' written assignments."

Shestakova (2023) noticed three teaching outcomes of using ChatGPT in writing tasks: higher student engagement, more student and subject oriented learning and increased text-student interaction. Her study focused on the practice of formal letter writing which is a topic related to the present research project; what differs is the practiced genre.

Ningsih (2023) experimented with Classtime.com, an AI-based online testing platform, in teaching ESP to Economic Sharia Law. Classtime.com was created from the necessity to have a reliable and user-friendly assessment tool. According to the results of the study, students' feedback was very encouraging, showing that this type of platform had educational potential.

What the corpus of literature described above illustrates is the interest and openness that teachers have for the idea of employing AI in education and making clever use of what it currently offers: technology combined with use of language models.

Research method

The current article is based on the results of small-scale research conducted as a case study. The following is a description of its method and design.

1. Research question: How can the integration of AI enhance student engagement in ESAP classes?

2. Case choice: The focus of the case is a group of first-year students in the Faculty of Law at Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. In the year 2020, the University displayed a pro-active attitude towards digitalization by adopting a strategy that aimed to make a step-by-step transition to a digital future.⁴ In October 2022, BBU obtained funding from the EU as part of the Recovery and Resilience Facility program aimed at enhancing broadband and high-speed internet connectivity for educational institutions across EU Member States. The project is going to be implemented between September 2022 and December 2025. Additionally, a special interest has been given to an industry-oriented project that focuses on AI, *Artificial Intelligence for Connected Industries (AI4CI)*.

3. Type of case study: It is designed as an exploratory case study, trying to investigate the influence of AI on student engagement in ESAP classes. The employment of AI in education is a yet-uncharted territory that triggers many uncertainties: Can it foster collaboration? How can teachers be sure that it is not affecting authentic learning experiences and language production? What are the limits of using AI in teaching? There is no classical approach to the use of this new tool in education and the current case study aims to understand and describe its implications.

4. Scope and boundaries: The scope is to focus on approaches to implement AI in a specific ESAP class. More precisely, it researches if some activities and language skills will benefit from its use. The boundaries are related to the size of the group, the specific course they take, and the time span.

5. Data collection methods: there are three methods employed, an interview with students to gather their opinion on the topic, two questionnaires that aimed to gather quantitative data on student engagement metrics before and after AI implementation and classroom observations to understand the impact of AI tools.

6. Data collection plan: The case study covered two months from the first semester of the 2023-2024 academic year (from October 16 to December 15). The teacher conducted classroom observations regularly. The first questionnaire was given in the first week of the study in a pen-and-paper format and the second one on the last day of the study using the same format. The interview took place in the first two weeks of October 2023. All students that took part in the study agreed to do so voluntarily.

⁴ Strategie de transformare digitală a UBB 2020-2027, aprobată prin Hotărârea Senatului UBB nr. 9469/13.07.2020

7. Rigor of the study is achieved by triangulation, i.e., using multiple data sources (survey, interview, classroom observation)

8. Data analysis approach combines qualitative analysis of the interview with quantitative analysis of surveys and classroom observations.

The research involved a total of thirty-seven participants, all of whom were first-year undergraduate students enrolled in the Faculty of Law at Babeş-Bolyai University. Among these participants, 25 were female and 12 were male. The study has two main limitations related to the characteristics of the sample population. Firstly, all respondents were pursuing a major in Law, which may influence their perspectives. Secondly, the relatively small size of the respondent group—thirty-seven students—compared to the overall population of undergraduate Law students limits the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, the results cannot be applied broadly.

The AI apps that were used to enhance students' engagement in learning were ChatGPT 3.5 (free version), Slides AI.io, and GPT for Docs™, Sheets™, Forms™, and Slides™.

ChatGPT 3.5 was used to find information on specific topics. Students were asked to explain phrases (e.g. *stare decisis*), legal concepts (e.g. delegated legislation) or find general information on legal facts (e.g. what is conveyancing?). They reported the findings to the class.

Slides AI.io can be used as an extension to Google Docs to create topic-based presentations (e.g. The history of Common Law). Students were asked to work in pairs and agree on both the layout and the content provided by the app.

GPT for Docs™ was used as an extension to Google Docs to perform a writing activity in which they had to focus on a specific legal genre (e.g. letter threatening legal action). Legal letters are highly formal and have a pre-defined pattern that leaves little space for creativity. Taking this into account, GPT for Docs™ provides unexpected help for legal professionals by offering a diversity of templates.

The two surveys administered at the start and conclusion of the research were composed in Romanian, respecting the respondents' native language to prevent any potential issues with limited English proficiency. Participation was anonymous, allowing each student to submit their responses only once. Prior to filling out the surveys, students received comprehensive information regarding the study's purpose and consented to participate willingly. All questions were required, and no criteria for exclusion were established.

The design of the two questionnaires is the following: the first one (given in the first week of the research) is made up of five questions requiring yes or no/multiple choice answers while the second one (given in the last day of the study) needed yes or no answers to two questions.

Classroom observation was performed by the teacher throughout the research and was based on a protocol designed to have two components: an observation sheet for teacher usage and a Likert scale form for student use. The aim for designing this research instrument was to assess the influence of AI on student engagement. The initial section concentrated on evaluating the usability of AI tools, on student collaboration and interaction while using AI tools, and on the relevance of using AI tools in Legal English (Figure 1).

Date:

1. Lesson information:
class topic
duration of observation
lesson aims
aims of AI integration
AI tools introduced
2. Observation
Student Engagement: level of student interaction with AI
Types of tasks/activities utilizing AI
Collaboration and communication: student-to-student interaction
student-to-teacher interaction
Content integration: alignment of AI activities/tasks with Legal English syllabus objectives and lesson aims
relevance of AI tools to Legal English learning
Technical competence: technical competence in operating AI tools
technical challenges faced and overcome
3. Reflection
Effectiveness of AI Integration in Achieving Learning Objectives
Student Engagement and Participation Levels
Areas for Improvement

Figure 1. The structure of the class observation protocol

The teacher collected the data provided by the observation sheet. Throughout the period of the study there were three types of activities performed in the classroom that were observed by the teacher using the protocol:

a) Presentation. Students were asked to work in pairs and use an AI app (Slides AI.io) to create presentations on different Legal English topics (the history of Common Law, the Court system in the U.K, the journey of a Bill into law in the British Parliament). Some of the results were then shared with the class.

b) Vocabulary task. Students were asked to do individual research using ChatGPT and look up some Legal English words, phrases or concepts that had been used in the lesson (e.g. to construe, constructive dismissal, tribunal). To check the reliability of the results the students were asked to look up the same words from a different source (an online Legal English dictionary⁵, and a paperback Oxford Dictionary of Law⁶ provided by the teacher). Their answers were then reported to the class.

c) Legal writing task. Students were asked to work in pairs and use GPT for Docs™ as an extension to Google Docs to perform a writing activity in which they had to focus on a specific legal genre (e.g. solicitor seeking to avoid constructive dismissal of client). They were given a model letter and a scenario that describes a particular situation related to employment law and asked to act on behalf of a hypothetical client by writing a letter. They collaborated on writing the letter, used GPT for Docs™ to correct and reformulate phrases and agreed on the definitive version. Some students shared their work with the class.

The teacher offered feedback on task achievement at the end of each activity. As part of the feedback, students were asked to fill in a short form with one question (Figure 2). The third stage of the lesson observation protocol is the teacher's reflection on the effectiveness of AI integration in achieving learning aims and enhancing student participation.

<p>Please evaluate your level of satisfaction with the use of AI tools for completing the task by rating it on a scale from 1 to 3.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Very satisfied2. Quite satisfied3. Not satisfied

Figure 2. Respondents' level of satisfaction in using AI tools for task completion

⁵ <https://dictionary.law.com/>

⁶ The same dictionary was used throughout the study: Martin, E.A., ed. 1997. *A Dictionary of Law*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

The interview conducted in the first two weeks of October 2023 consisted of asking all the subjects in the study the same three questions and recording their answers. As in the case of the questionnaires the language of communication was Romanian. All the students were informed that their answers were recorded, and they agreed beforehand.

Research results

This section describes the results provided by the research tools beforementioned.

The initial questionnaire consists of five questions that can be categorized based on their intended purpose as follows:

- One group includes three questions designed to assess the respondents' familiarity with AI, to find out their opinion on using AI in education, and to reveal their experience (if any) in using AI for learning (Tables 1, 2, and 3);
 - One question aimed to reveal respondents' source of gathering general information on AI (Table 4);
 - One multiple-choice question aimed to provide a short inventory of the best-known AI apps respondents have heard of or used (Table 5).

The pre-coded answers (yes or no, multiple choice) were examined quantitatively using Google Forms functions.

Table 1. Rating of respondents' familiarity with the concept of AI as an educational tool

Are you familiar with the concept of using AI in education?	n (%)
Yes	23 (62%)
No	14 (38%)

Table 2. Rating of respondents' approval of using AI in education

How would you rate the idea of employing AI in education?	n (%)
Particularly good	3 (8%)
Quite good	20 (54%)
Not good at all	14 (38%)

Table 3. The rating of respondents' experience with using AI in learning

Have you used AI for learning?	n (%)
Yes	22 (59%)
No	15 (41%)

The results from this set of questions show that 23 participants, corresponding to a majority of 62%, were already familiarized with the use of AI in education whereas 14 (38%) of them were not. These figures are logically correlated with the results in Table 2. The number of participants in the study that consider AI as *not good at all* for learning is the same as the number of participants that are not accustomed to the concept itself. Consequently, the number of respondents that consider the employment of AI in education as *particularly good* and *quite good* reflects the number of respondents that are familiarized with AI. The results in Table 3 go a step forward by providing an indication of the number of subjects in the study that employed AI in their learning: twenty-two (59%) is the rate of AI users vs. 15 (41%) of non-users. Again, the figures in Tables 1, 2 and 3 are aligned.

One question was aimed to indicate respondents' source of general information on AI (Table 4). As the results show, most respondents (57%) used social media as the main source of information. Next, 19% surfed the Internet to find out about this topic, 17% got the information from teachers and 7% from peers.

Table 4. Indication of respondents' source of information about AI

What sources have you used to find out information about AI?	n (%)
Internet	8 (19%)
Social media	24 (57%)
Teachers	7 (17%)
Peers	3 (7%)

One question aimed to reveal respondents' knowledge (if any) of apps that could be used for learning (Table 5). Participants were required to select the apps they know from a list with the most popular ones. The large majority (92%) ticked ChatGPT whereas some of them (8%) also included Bing Copilot.

Table 5. Indication of respondents' awareness of different AI apps

What apps from the following list do you know?	n (%)
ChatGPT	34 (92%)
Beautiful AI	-
GPT for Docs™, Sheets™, Forms™, and Slides™	-
Bing Copilot associated with Edge browsers	3 (8%)

The second questionnaire was designed as a short and summative tool meant to measure a change in respondents' perception of using AI in education after a series of classes where they employed it in doing different tasks. The two questions aimed to find out if there was a difference in respondents' attitude towards the use of AI for learning and if they were willing to use it further on (Table 6 and 7).

Table 6. Respondents' current opinion towards learning with AI

Define your current opinion towards learning with AI	n (%)
Positive	34 (92%)
Negative	3 (8%)

Table 7. Respondents' willingness to use AI tools for learning ELP

Would you consider AI assisted ELP learning in the future?	n (%)
Yes	33 (89%)
No	4 (11%)

The results clearly show that the number of students who felt positive towards using AI in learning increased from 23 in Table 2 to 34 in Table 6. Moreover, 89% of the subjects were willing to further employ AI in their learning (see Table 7).

The purpose of the interview was to collect additional information about the results revealed in the first questionnaire. Each interviewee answered three open-ended questions in Romanian in a ten-minute session. One question was intended to find respondents' doubts about the use of AI in education as resulted from the first questionnaire. The second question was related to respondents' opinion on the type of influence that using AI for educational purposes could have on learning. The third question was aimed at finding out the learning outcome of using AI. The most common concern was that AI may limit students' ability to develop critical thinking, research skills and creativity. The fact that the result of a chatbot inquiry is presented in one answer (in contrast with, for example, a Google search which offers multiple options) was perceived as a limitation resulting in a diminished need to compare, contrast, and decide on a result. They also questioned the reliability of the results given by AI and the fact that the information provided by this source has not been updated since 2021. Therefore, all students that displayed doubts about the use of AI in learning shared the opinion that this tool had a negative influence on learning. The other group of interviewees that had a more positive attitude towards AI expressed their trust that AI offered a range of opportunities, from timesaving to organizing information and simplifying texts.

The classroom observation protocol was designed to record valuable information on students' ease of use of AI tools while doing different tasks, on student collaboration and interaction while using AI tools, and on the relevance of using AI tools in teaching and learning Legal English. The information provided by the teacher's observation sheet throughout the study points towards a gradual familiarization and ease in employing AI tools in performing different tasks. Pair work encouraged collaboration offering support for those

students who were hesitant or unsure about how to use it. The feedback stage at the end of a task helped the students to understand better the way an AI tool works, its limitations but also its benefits. The short feedback forms filled in at the end of every activity that embedded AI offered the ranking of the three types of tasks included in the study: preparing a presentation in pairs came as the first choice, vocabulary search the second, and letter writing took the last place in their preferences.

Discussion of results

Study Aim and Context

The purpose of this research is to address the following question: In what ways can the incorporation of AI improve student involvement in ESAP classes? To fulfil this objective, the study examines a particular case at the Faculty of Law at Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca. As outlined in the university's language policy, students enrolled in legal studies are required to participate in an ESAP course, specifically English for Legal Purposes, to facilitate their research in their specialized fields and to effectively communicate with international peers in the same professional community.⁷ To achieve this, the course focuses on both carrier content and real content by providing law-related context to equip students with relevant knowledge and understanding of the law in the English legal system and, at the same time, developing language skills. Therefore, in this case legal English is the carrier content whereas the four language skills are the real content.

The information for the study was gathered from three sources that completed one another to offer a reliable picture. The discussion of the results should begin with revealing the strategy behind data collection. The first questionnaire and the interview provided information on the students' initial perceptions and opinions on using AI in learning in general. The results of the questionnaires show that most respondents were familiarized with the use of AI tools in education (62%). Their sources of information included social media at the top of the list, followed by the Internet. A few of them discussed the topic in an educational setting with teachers (17%) or peers (7%). The next step was to link their familiarity with the topic and the type of information they possessed about AI with the degree of trust they invested in it. The percentage of the respondents that would not employ AI in learning is 38%. The reason for their

⁷ <https://senat.ubbcluj.ro/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Politica-lingvistica-UBB.pdf>

attitude is explained by the answers to one of the questions in the interview: lack of reliability, a negative impact on the use of critical thinking skills and lack of authenticity of student-written productions. By contrast, 62% of the students were open to the idea of using AI in learning. From their point of view AI helped them to save time in solving tasks, to find basic information on a topic, to look for images that could be integrated in texts they wrote.

Another point of interest for the study was to find out the kind of AI apps they knew/used in learning and the types of tasks they did with their help. The answers (from the questionnaire combined with the interview) show that most students (92%) used Chat GPT to research information or to help them with their writing tasks. Summarizing these results, one might conclude that most students had an idea of using AI in education and some of them had tried it. The novelty for all the students was the use of AI tools in an organized way during a lesson, having in mind specific objectives for each stage.

The second questionnaire was designed to elicit information on the respondents' attitude towards AI use in learning ESP after two months experience of working with it. The shift in focus was from learning with AI to learning ELP (English for Legal Purposes) with AI. There was no reference to learning ELP in the first questionnaire because first-year students had no previous experience of the kind. The results showed an encouraging rise in their attitude pro employing AI in education, 92% being open towards it.

The information from the class observation protocol helped to understand how effective AI integration was in achieving learning objectives. It also revealed the level of student participation and engagement in performing class tasks using AI tools. The observation sheets recorded the gradual progress students made in using different apps and cooperating on different tasks. Collaboration and AI tools helped students to finish the task in time, talk in the target language while working and apply peer correction where necessary.

To sum up, the answer to the initial research question is the following: teaching ELP could be enhanced by incorporating AI tools if the activity aim is matched with the proper app and the students are instructed how to use it. If this is the case, AI works as a language booster for students to speak in the target language and do the task, while negotiating the content and practicing problem-solving. The benefits include:

1. AI provides immediate access to information and resources. Students nowadays belong to a generation that is immersed in technology use every day. Linking their usual information gathering routine with learning in an institutional environment is something natural for them. The outcome is that students become more interested and motivated to learn.

2. AI can act as an additional learning tool that complements traditional teaching resources. Educators should encourage students to delve deeper into subjects for enhanced understanding, encouraging them to become autonomous learners.

3. AI enhances student participation in classroom activities. The use of AI apps can stimulate conversation and can increase student confidence during writing activities by offering vocabulary and grammar assistance.

Conclusion

The use of AI in learning in general and in ESAP in particular is a new and uncharted territory. Despite its reduced scale the current research attempts to add a piece of information to this broad topic by providing relevant data for the local student population at the Faculty of Law, Babeş-Bolyai University. Its limitations are the size of the group and its homogeneity.

Nevertheless, the study gives some pertinent answers to the question: *How can the integration of AI enhance student engagement in ESAP classes?* We can say that AI tools are not a recipe for success *per se* if not accompanied by stimulating and motivational tasks that are logically integrated in the larger ESP lesson design. The aim of each activity that incorporates AI should be matched with a specific ESP aim. Consider a lesson focused on contract law. The primary aim is to instruct and practice the writing sub-skill of composing contracts. Chat GPT serves as the initial reference, offering a template. Then, students engage in drafting their own contracts using Google Docs™ for assistance. In this case, students are encouraged to interact and collaborate for solving the tasks and help each other to use the required digital tool. The result is students taking responsibility for their own learning: they ask questions on Chat GPT, look up words, write and rewrite paragraphs, discuss to agree on the best result. The goal of the ESP teacher should be to make the most of the potential of AI apps and guide students to complement classical instruction with the digital one. In this respect, we can speak about teacher AI literacy that could be defined as the teacher's ability to use the right AI tools to achieve the learning objectives of an ESAP lesson and of the ESAP syllabus in general.

The information revealed by the study mentioned here shows that students are ready to accept education that incorporates artificial intelligence if they are trained by the teacher and by doing so, they are encouraged to use it as a resourceful learning partner.

WORKS CITED

- Arnó-Macia, E. 2012. "The role of technology in teaching languages for specific purposes." *Modern Language Journal*, 96 (Focus Issue).
- Basturkmen, Helen. 2010. *Developing Courses in English for Specific Purposes*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bloch J. 2013. *Technology and ESP*. In: B. Paltridge and S. Staffeld, *The Handbook of English for Specific Purposes*, Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Day, Jeremy & Krzanowski, Mark. 2013. *Teaching English for Specific Purposes: an introduction*. Cambridge University Press.
- Gaebel, Michael, Thérèse Zhang, Henriette Stoeber, and Alison Morrisroe. 2021. *Digitally enhanced learning and teaching in European HEIs*. European University Association. Accessed June 15, 2022.
- Humpl, Stefan & Andersen, Tine. 2022. *The Future of Digital and Online Learning in Higher Education*, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Kovačević, D. 2023. "Use of ChatGPT in ESP Teaching Process," 22nd *International Symposium, East Sarajevo, Bosnia, and Herzegovina*, pp. 1-5. Accessed February 2, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1109/INFOTEH57020.2023.10094133>
- Kovačić, Andreja, and Goran Bubaš. 2023. "Using Conversational Artificial Intelligence for Online Learning Activities in English for Specific Purposes: A Pilot Study of Students' Experiences with Bing Chat." *Innovation in Language Learning 16th Edition 2023*. Florence. Accessed February 17, 2024. <https://conference.pixel-online.net/files/ict4ll/ed0016/FP/6113-BLL6196-FP-ICT4LL16.pdf>
- Mezei, Adina-Maria. "Paraphrasing in ESAP: Teacher-guided, AI-assisted or communicative activities," *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai. Philologia 4* (2023): 241-266.
- Michel-Villarreal, Rosario et al. 2023. "Challenges and Opportunities of Generative AI for Higher Education as Explained by ChatGPT" *Education Sciences* 13, no. 9: 856. Accessed February 2, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13090856>
- Ningsih, Fitria. "Classtime.Com as an AI-Based Testing Platform: Analyzing ESP Students' Performances and Feedback." *Journal of Languages and Language Teaching* 11, no. 3 (July 2023): 390-404. Accessed February 14, 2024. <https://e-journal.undikma.ac.id/index.php/jollt/article/view/8286>.
- Shestakova, Elizaveta. "Using Generative AI in ESP Classes to Teach Formal Style" (April 17, 2023). Accessed February 19, 2024. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4469507>
- Qasem, F., Ghaleb, M., Mahdi, H.S., Al Khateeb, A. and Al Fadda, H. (2023), "Dialog chatbot as an interactive online tool in enhancing ESP vocabulary learning", *Saudi Journal of Language Studies*, Vol. 3 No. 2, pp. 76-86. Accessed February 9, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SJLS-10-2022-0072>

DESIGNING A PHRASE BANK FOR ACADEMIC LEARNING AND TEACHING: A EUROPEAN PORTUGUESE CASE STUDY

Micaela AGUIAR¹ , Sílvia ARAÚJO² 

Article history: Received 30 January 2024; Revised 4 July 2024; Accepted 15 October 2024; Available online 10 December 2024; Available print 30 December 2024.

©2024 Studia UBB Philologia. Published by Babeş-Bolyai University.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License

ABSTRACT. *Designing a Phrase Bank for Academic Learning and Teaching: A European Portuguese Case Study.* This work focuses on the development and application of an academic phrase bank for European Portuguese. Our goal is to present an overview of this resource, discuss its potential replication in other languages, and explore its application in the classroom for teaching academic language. As the first of its kind resulting from corpora-based research, our phrase bank represents a contribution to the emerging field study of academic discourse in Portugal and a useful resource for students, teachers, and researchers. The paper begins by outlining the process of constructing the

-
- ¹ **Micaela AGUIAR** is a researcher at the Centre for Humanistic Studies at the University of Minho. She earned her PhD in Language Sciences with a specialization in Discourse Analysis in 2021 from the same institution. Her doctoral research explored the construction of “Presidential images in inauguration speeches over 100 years of the Portuguese Republic.” After completing her PhD, she contributed to the PortLinguE project at the University of Minho as a contracted researcher. This initiative focused on developing a Multilingual Portal for Specialized Languages, leveraging open data for cross-linguistic information retrieval. Email: maguiar60@gmail.com.
- ² **Sílvia ARAÚJO** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Romance Studies at the University of Minho, with expertise in Language Sciences and Digital Humanities. She has spearheaded major FCT-funded projects, including “Per-Fide: Portuguese with Six Different Languages” and “PortLinguE: Multilingual Portal for Specialized Languages.” A prolific scholar, she has numerous indexed publications and supervises master’s and PhD research in areas such as corpus linguistics, natural language processing, and AI in education. She also plays a key role in academic activities, (co)organizing conferences, (co)editing journals and books, and serving as a reviewer for various academic platforms. She directs the Master’s Degree in Digital Humanities and leads the Digital Humanities Research Group at the Center for Humanistic Studies. Additionally, she offers accredited training on integrating technology into education through the University of Minho’s Center for Innovation and Development of Teaching and Learning. Email: saraujo@elach.uminho.pt.

phrase bank, providing insights into the selection and categorization of formulaic academic phrases. We explore its accessibility options, including a web version and integration with a search engine powered by a Large Language Model. The paper then focuses on the findings and presents practical implementations of the phrase bank in educational settings. Outlined are two classroom activities incorporating the phrase bank, undertaken by master's students. The first activity entailed the revision of a group portfolio's introduction, employing the phrase bank to heighten awareness of communicative functions and expressions within introductions. The second activity involved peer assessment, where students evaluated their peers' literature reviews. This involved identifying communicative functions, analyzing, and rephrasing expressions related to authors and studies using the phrase bank. To facilitate the assessment, students utilized a choice board to offer constructive and considerate feedback to their classmates.

Keywords: *academic writing, academic phrase bank, academic writing assistant, teaching strategies, improving classroom teaching*

REZUMAT. Proiectarea unei bănci de fraze pentru învățarea și predarea academică: un studiu de caz portughez european. Acest articol prezintă o înțelegere cuprinzătoare a dezvoltării și aplicării unei bănci de expresii academice concepută special pentru limba portugheză europeană. Scopul nostru este să oferim o prezentare generală a acestei resurse, să discutăm posibilitatea replicării sale în alte limbi și să explorăm aplicarea sa în sala de clasă pentru predarea limbajului academic. Ca primul de acest fel, rezultat al unei cercetări extinse, banca noastră de expresii reprezintă o contribuție la domeniul emergent al studiului discursului academic din Portugalia și o resursă utilă pentru studenți, profesori și cercetători. Articolul începe prin conturarea procesului de construire a băncii de expresii, oferind perspective asupra selecției și categorizării expresiilor academice standardizate. Explorăm opțiunile sale de accesibilitate, inclusiv o versiune web și integrarea cu un motor de căutare alimentat de un Model de Limbaj Extins. Apoi, articolul își îndreaptă atenția către implementarea practică a băncii de expresii în mediile educaționale. Sunt descrise două activități de clasă care integrează banca de expresii, realizate de studenți de master. Prima activitate a implicat revizuirea introducerii unui portofoliu de grup, utilizând banca de expresii pentru a accentua conștientizarea funcțiilor de comunicare și a expresiilor din introduceri. A doua activitate a implicat evaluarea colegilor prin intermediul unui proces de evaluare reciprocă, în care studenții au analizat revizuirile literare ale colegilor. Acest proces a inclus identificarea funcțiilor de comunicare, analizarea și reformularea expresiilor legate de autori și studii cu ajutorul băncii de expresii. Pentru a facilita evaluarea, studenții au folosit o placă de opțiuni pentru a oferi feedback constructiv și considerat colegilor lor.

Cuvinte-cheie: *scriere academică, banca de fraze academice, asistent de scriere academică, strategii de predare, îmbunătățirea predării la clasă*

Contextualization

Many students in higher education struggle with academic writing. While the issue is widely recognized worldwide (Defazio et al. 2010), the situation takes on a specific context in Portugal. Access to higher education in Portugal became more widely available only after the dictatorship ended on April 25, 1974. During the 1960s, Portugal grappled with a substantial illiteracy rate, reaching 33.1% among the population, being particularly higher among women, where only 1 in 4 possessed reading and writing skills (Pordata). Despite substantial investments in literacy programs, Portugal still lagged other European countries in 2020, ranking last among the 23 OECD nations (Barros and Volta e Pinto 2022). In 2023, Portugal recorded its highest-ever enrollment in higher education, boasting a total of 446,000 students (Observador 2023). The substantial rise in student enrollment has presented a challenge for higher education institutions and teachers (Ferrão Tavares and Pereira 2012), who find themselves unprepared to foster the development of both disciplinary and transdisciplinary academic language skills among students.

Several researchers point out that one of the main drivers of the lack of academic skills among students is the deficiencies in language education at earlier levels (Gouveia 2019). Language curricula frequently prioritize literary texts over academic writing (Carvalho 2014), which can result in inadequate preparation for the challenges of higher education. By introducing academic writing skills and practices at the primary and secondary levels, students can be better equipped to fulfill the requirements of higher education. However, implementing such changes can be difficult as it requires significant governmental educational reforms.

Some higher education institutions have sought to tackle this challenge by providing courses in academic writing. Nevertheless, not all institutions extend such offerings, and those that do may impose fees, leading to a disparity in access to academic literacy skills (Preto-Bay 2004). The use of language is a critical factor in determining whether students can participate fully in academic communities. In fact, as Hyland (2018) points out, gaining competence in specialized discourses is the means through which newcomers and outsiders attain entry into these communities. Those who lack the necessary academic literacy skills may find it difficult to understand and engage with the academic discourse, which can limit their opportunities for academic and professional advancement (Short and Fitzsimmons-Doolan 2007). Ensuring equitable access to academic literacy skills instruction is imperative for all students, regardless of background or financial means, to succeed in higher education and beyond.

Given this backdrop, it is understandable that academic discourse studies in Portugal are at an early stage of development, with significant strides being made only in recent years, as highlighted by the organization of the first National Meeting on Academic Discourse (ENDA) in 2019. Just like the field it is grounded in — English for Academic Purposes (EPA) — academic discourse researchers in Portugal come predominantly from applied linguistics, but also include researchers from the spheres of academic literacy and cultural studies, delving into discourses spanning from higher education and teacher training to earlier levels of education (Gouveia 2019).

Still, given English's dominance as the primary language of science, the question arises: why study and create resources for academic language in Portuguese? Upon consulting national repositories, with exceptions for fields like medicine and computer science, it becomes apparent that the predominant language for most master's dissertations and doctoral theses continues to be Portuguese. Moreover, a noteworthy trend emerges as the enrollment of foreign students in higher education has seen a substantial twofold increase over the past six years (Leiria 2023). Firstly, the discourse on the crucial affirmation of Portuguese as a language of science has never been more pronounced, particularly in an international (and even national) scientific environment markedly influenced by English (Assunção 2019, 190). Secondly, a definitive stride in advancing Portuguese as a language of science involves dedicating efforts to construct resources that enhance scientific, academic, and technical literacy. This investment is essential for higher education students destined to become future researchers and contributors to scientific knowledge.

With the goal of being replicated in various languages, this paper seeks to outline the process of construction, development, and pedagogical implementations of an academic phrase bank in European Portuguese. As mentioned above, given the emerging nature of the field in academic discourse studies, there is a lack of resources focused on academic language in European Portuguese. This recourse stands as a valuable contribution to the field, supporting educators in teaching academic writing while also functioning as a standalone reference for native Portuguese speakers and those learning Portuguese as a second or foreign language. This is one element of the wider PortLinguE research project (PTDC/LLT-LIG/31113/2017), which is backed by European funding. The project focuses on developing a range of tools for specialised languages, including academic language, with the aim of using open research data from national institutional repositories to create free and accessible educational resources for the academic community.

The paper is structured in the following way. The background section presents an introduction to the central concepts discussed, specifically academic formulaic language and transdisciplinary scientific lexicon. The subsequent section outlines the various phases involved in constructing the phrase bank. Following that, we delve into the efforts to make the resource accessible, both in web format and as an academic writing assistant, driven by Large Language Models. Moving on, we explore the practical applications of this resource in the classroom, detailing two activities implemented with MA students. Finally, we conclude the paper by summarizing the study's findings and outlining potential areas for future research.

Why focus on academic formulaic language?

Wray (2002) suggests that native speakers are inclined to use formulaic language, asserting that these expressions are essential for communication to be effective. In academic communication, a large part of language is formulaic. Indeed, Hyland (2008) highlights that approximately 21% of the 5.3 million words in the academic section of the Longman Spoken and Written English corpus consist of formulaic language.

When it comes to academic language learning, Li and Schmitt (2009), among others, note that the absence of these expressions could be a sign of a lack of experience in using the language in academic contexts. The problem is that using academic formulas is not a natural skill for native speakers (Pérez-Llantada 2014). For L2 speakers, overcoming this can significantly impede achieving native-like proficiency.

Speakers' inclination toward using formulaic language is evident and widespread, yet studying and pinpointing it proves to be a complex task. Wray (2009) suggests that embracing a "fuzzy" definition of formulaic language allows for greater inclusivity. Consequently, our goal is not to delve into theoretical debates regarding the definition of formulaic language, but rather to adopt a definition that guides our extraction and categorization efforts.

We opted to identify academic language that extends beyond disciplinary borders, aiming to construct a phrase bank, that can be valuable to a diverse audience within the academic and scientific community. For that purpose, the concept of a transdisciplinary scientific lexicon (Drouin 2012) stands out for its interest, referring to the non-terminological lexicon widely used across diverse scientific disciplines and the scientific community. According to Drouin (2012), this concept includes diverse types of expressions, ranging from simple, referential polylexical sequences (like collocations and fixed expressions) to discourse polylexical sequences (which involve recurrent

expressions employed to organize speech) and interpersonal polylexical sequence (expressions used for conveying pragmatic or modal functions). It also includes semantic-rhetorical routines, described by Toutin and Jacques (2018) as typical scientific writing utterances that serve specific rhetorical functions.

Semantic-rhetorical routines showcase a higher degree of semantic, syntactic, and lexical complexity and diversity in comparison to other types of expressions. These units frequently take the form of complete utterances centred around a predicate. Unlike, for instance, lexical bundles (Biber and Barbieri 2007; Hyland 2008; and Hyland and Jiang 2018) these units are not easily identified using corpus analysis software. It's tough to extract these expressions (semi-) automatically because of their complexity and diverse forms; however, we have already made efforts in this direction (Aguiar et al. 2023). For these reasons, we opted to gather these types of expressions along with the functions they serve within a corpus of scientific papers. This corpus laid the foundation for creating the academic phrase bank, the construction process of which will be detailed in the next section.

Creating the phrase bank

For those looking to boost the quality of their academic writing, an academic phrase bank could be a helpful resource for students, researchers, and scholars. These linguistic resources are organised into large categories that are typically linked to the IMRAD structure (Introduction, Methodology, Results, and Discussion). The phrases in the bank are commonly used in academic discourse to serve various purposes, such as reporting the results of a study, describing the sample of an experiment, introducing a topic, or summarising findings.

Students can find various online academic phrase banks to improve their writing skills. For instance, the Ref-N-Write Academic Phrasebank helps with English academic writing, while the Dictionnaire des expressions from Base ARTES provides a multilingual phrase bank catering to several languages. Portuguese writers can find a multilingual Portuguese phrase bank at Bab.la.

Our phrase bank is unique as it is, to our knowledge, the first-ever European Portuguese phrase bank that has been developed based on corpora-driven scientific research work. This means that our phrase bank is a result of an analysis of authentic academic texts and offers a comprehensive and reliable resource for writers to enhance the quality of their academic discourse in European Portuguese.

Background

Our phrase bank was modeled after the University of Manchester's Academic Phrasebank, which was also established through research efforts. Developed by John Morley in 2004, the Manchester Phrasebank remains one of the most widely used resources for academic English.

What began as a collection of 100 postgraduate dissertations from the University of Manchester, the Academic Phrasebank corpus now includes academic materials from various other sources. Swales' (1990) genre analysis, which highlights rhetorical patterns in research article introductions, plays a significant role in shaping the Academic Phrasebank. His concept of a "move" — a section of text that serves a distinct communicative function — is a fundamental organizing principle within the Phrasebank's framework. Morley gathered the phrases used to make these rhetorical moves and subsequently simplified them by removing their specific contextual content.

In line with Morley's methodology, we have developed a three-step approach, which includes compiling a corpus of authentic academic texts, identifying, categorising, and extracting the rhetorical moves and expressions, and then simplifying them for ease of use.

Corpus

We began by compiling a corpus of 40 research papers from four scientific areas. This included 10 articles each from Life and Health Sciences, Exact and Engineering Sciences, Natural and Environmental Sciences, and Social Sciences and Humanities. The corpus was restricted to 10 samples from each area due to the time constraints of the research project. The objective of this work was to organize the phrase bank in a way that would facilitate future expansion with additional scientific articles and other academic-scientific genres. These papers were randomly collected from RepositóriUM, the repository of the University of Minho, and from Repositório Aberto, the repository of the University of Porto. Our selection criteria required the articles to be available on an open access basis, classified as scientific papers in the repositories, and written in European Portuguese.

To align with the pedagogical purpose of the phrase bank, we used scientific articles as our corpus, as they are a widely recognized genre in academic research and can serve as an example for up-and-coming researchers and undergraduate students. While the current corpus of scientific articles provides a useful foundation for our work, we recognize that academic writing

encompasses a much broader range of genres. We intend to enhance the corpus in the future by incorporating various academic genres, such as dissertations, theses, research projects, and defences. Different academic genres present distinct linguistic and discursive patterns, each with its own conventions. By incorporating these into the corpus, we help users build a stronger grasp of effective communication and writing within diverse academic contexts.

Categorization

We adapted Morley's typology, which was originally designed for theses and dissertations, to develop our methodology, since as Toutin and Jacques (2018) suggest, the scientific lexicon found in academic communication is genre dependent. We grouped the phrase into six main categories: introduction, literature review, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusions. Rastier's (2001) concept of included genres informs these categories, where included genres refer to text sections, like introductions or conclusions, commonly found in academic works such as scientific papers, doctoral theses, or master's dissertations. We chose these categories because we aim to create a pedagogical tool that not only presents academic phrases but also teaches students about the most common functions of each category.

Annotation of the corpus was carried out by the authors using MAXQDA, a tool that supports both mixed methods and quantitative analysis. We referred to Morley's proposed questions to determine whether the phrases should be included: (1) Does it serve a communicative purpose in the academic text? (2) Does it contain formulaic expressions or collocations? (3) Are the content words generic, and does the combination sound natural to a native speaker? (Morley 2004) The analysis of the corpus allowed us to identify the key rhetorical moves used in each of the six main categories. In total, we found 51 rhetorical moves that were used to achieve specific communicative purposes across the six categories: introduction (8 moves), literature review (8 moves), methodology (13 moves), results (10 moves), discussion (7 moves), and conclusion (5 moves). From there, we extracted the phrases used to accomplish each move, resulting in a dataset of 939 phrases.

The Introduction section (Table 1) is used to explain the importance of the topic in general, identify gaps in knowledge or scarcity of previous studies, point out controversies, state the objective and object of the work, indicate research questions, explain the importance of the study, and outline the structure of the work.

Table 1. Introduction's Moves with Examples

Introduction's Moves	Example
Explain the topic's importance (in general)	A preocupação com a problemática de x é cada vez mais crescente... [The concern with the issue of x is growing increasingly...]
Explain the lack of previous studies or gaps in knowledge	Uma das razões que pode explicar a falta de tratamento que x tem recebido na literatura é o facto de y... [One of the reasons that may explain the lack of attention x has received in the literature is the fact that y...]
Identify controversies or lack of consensus in the field of study	Embora exista consenso quanto a x, é ainda polémica a definição de y... [Although there is consensus regarding x, the definition of y remains controversial...]
Identify the aim of the work	Foi objetivo deste trabalho proceder a x... [The objective of this work was to carry out x...]
State the object of study	É sobre este objeto que nos debruçaremos de forma particular... [It is on this subject that we will focus in detail...]
Indicate the research questions	Colocámos como hipóteses de trabalho que... [We proposed as working hypotheses that...]
Explain the importance of the study	Este estudo poderá ter uma contribuição importante para x... [This study could make a significant contribution to x...]
Indicate the structure of the work	Este artigo está estruturado da seguinte forma... [This article is structured as follows...]

In the Literature Review (Table 2), writers provide general comments on the literature, identify consensus/disagreement, mention studies in chronological order or with particular focus, reference methods and methodologies, designate objects or topics previously studied, refer to ideas of specific authors, and indicate the position of specific authors.

Table 2. Literature Review's Moves with Examples

Literature Review's Moves	Example
Make general comments on the literature	A investigação neste campo também tem apontado para a existência de x... [Research in this field has also pointed to the existence of x...]
Identify consensus/disagreement in the literature	De forma semelhante, Smith et al. (2000) descreveram que... [Similarly, Smith et al. (2000) described that...]
Refer to studies focusing on chronology	Estudos realizados na última década relevam que... [Studies conducted in the last decade reveal that...]
Mention specific studies	Estudos anteriores demonstraram que x... [Previous studies have demonstrated that x...]
Refer to previously proposed methods and methodologies	Existem descritos na literatura inúmeros métodos para x... [Numerous methods for x are described in the literature...]
Mention objects or topics previously studied	Estudos demonstraram que a frequência de x é relativamente baixa... [Studies have shown that the frequency of x is relatively low...]
Refer to the ideas of specific authors	Smith (1984) e Jones (2010) descrevem as várias etapas de x... [Smith (1984) and Jones (2010) describe the various stages of x...]
Indicate the positions of specific authors	É esta a posição assumida por Smith (2008) ... [This is the position taken by Smith (2008) ...]

The Methodology section (Table 3) is used to identify the type of study, indicate the use of methods established by specific authors, use standards and recommendations, indicate methodological limitations, point out inclusion/exclusion criteria, characterise the sample, describe procedures for data collection and questionnaires, indicate the purpose of a procedure, describe instruments used, describe actions performed, and describe statistical procedures.

Table 3. Methodology's Moves with Examples

Methodology's Moves	Example
Identify the type of study conducted	O estudo que realizámos é observacional... [The study we conducted is observational...]
Indicate the use of methods established by specific authors	O sistema de pontuação utilizado foi uma adaptação do método de XYZ utilizado por Smith e Jones (2000) ... [The scoring system used was an adaptation of the XYZ method employed by Smith and Jones (2000) ...]
Indicate the use of standards and recommendations	Os autores adotaram as normas XYZ para a redação do presente estudo... [The authors adopted XYZ standards for the writing of this study...]
Indicate the methodological limitations of the study	Uma das suas principais limitações prende-se com... [One of its main limitations relates to...]
Outline the inclusion/exclusion criteria of the study	Como critérios de exclusão para o estudo considerámos... [As exclusion criteria for the study, we considered...]
Characterize the sample	A amostra deste estudo descritivo foi de conveniência... [The sample for this descriptive study was convenience-based...]
Describe procedures related to data collection	A recolha de dados decorreu durante x, no período do mês y a mês z... [Data collection took place during x, from month y to month z...]
Describe procedures related to questionnaires	É um instrumento composto por 26 itens que tem como objetivo medir y... [It is an instrument consisting of 26 items designed to measure y...]
Indicate the purpose of a procedure	Para medir este efeito, calculou-se a métrica x para cada um dos atributos... [To measure this effect, the metric x was calculated for each of the attributes...]
Describe the instruments used	Realizou-se um teste piloto através da simulação de uma entrevista... [A pilot test was conducted through the simulation of an interview...]
Describe the actions taken	Os procedimentos foram previamente uniformizados... [The procedures were standardized in advance...]
Describe sequences of actions	Numa primeira fase, os ensaios foram realizados... [In the initial phase, the trials were conducted...]
Describe statistical procedures	Efetúámos a análise estatística com recurso ao software... [We performed the statistical analysis using the software...]

In the Results section (Table 4), the authors carefully present the study's findings, highlighting both positive and negative outcomes, indicate trends in results, report survey results, refer to percentages, emphasise aspects, give examples or excerpts of analysis, and present data in tables, charts, or figures.

Table 4. Results' Moves with Examples

Results' Moves	Example
Indicate study results	Estes resultados mostram que... [These results show that...]
Present results with caution	Os resultados obtidos sugerem que... [The results obtained suggest that...]
Indicate negative results	Conclui-se que não existiu diferença estatisticamente significativa em x... [It is concluded that there was no statistically significant difference in x...]
Indicate positive results	Verifica-se uma correlação positiva entre x e y... [A positive correlation between x and y is observed...]
Point out trends in the results	Os resultados demonstraram uma tendência decrescente... [The results demonstrated a decreasing trend...]
Report questionnaire/survey results	Os participantes foram unânimes em considerar que... [The participants were unanimous in considering that...]
Refer to percentages in the results	Verificou-se que em x % da amostra considera... [It was found that x% of the sample considers...]
Highlight an aspect	Um outro aspeto importante a ter em conta é... [Another important aspect to consider is...]
Provide examples/excerpts of analysis	Os seguintes excertos são exemplificativos... [The following excerpts are illustrative...]
Present data in tables/figures/graphs	A Figura 1 apresenta os resultados de... [Figure 1 presents the results of...]

The Discussion section (Table 5) is used to compare results obtained with results from other studies, comment on results, summarise research questions, indicate unexpected results, provide possible explanations, state hypotheses, and make recommendations for new practices or policies.

Table 5. Discussion's Moves with Examples

Discussion's Moves	Example
Compare the results obtained with results from other studies	Estes resultados estão de acordo com alguns estudos realizados... [These results are consistent with some studies conducted...]
Comment on the results obtained	Esta observação é interessante à luz de... [This observation is interesting in light of...]
Revisit research questions	Foram estas as perguntas às quais se pretendeu dar resposta... [These were the questions we aimed to answer...]
Indicate unexpected results	Esperavam-se correlações mais significativas... [More significant correlations were expected...]
Provide possible explanations for the obtained results	Estes resultados podem ser explicados por... [These results may be explained by...]
Present hypotheses	Coloca-se a hipótese de... [The hypothesis is raised that...]
Make recommendations for new practices or policies	Os resultados obtidos devem incentivar a implementação de... [The results obtained should encourage the implementation of...]

Finally, the Conclusions section (Table 6) is used to emphasise the importance of the study, reaffirm objectives, summarise main conclusions, acknowledge limitations, and make recommendations for future work.

Table 6. Conclusions' Moves with Examples

Conclusions' Moves	Example
Emphasize the importance of the study	Este estudo surge como "inovador" ao centrar-se em... [This study is considered "innovative" as it focuses on...]
Reaffirm the study's objectives	O presente estudo teve como principal objetivo... [The main objective of this study was to...]
Summarize the main conclusions of the study	Em conclusão, os aspetos mais prementes identificados neste estudo foram... [In conclusion, the most pressing aspects identified in this study were...]
Acknowledge the study's limitations	As principais limitações do presente estudo são o facto de... [The main limitations of this study are that...]
Make recommendations for future work	Futuramente, serão de grande utilidade estudos que incidam sobre... [In the future, studies focusing on... will be highly valuable]

Sifting

Once the phrases were extracted, they were simplified by removing specific content or replacing it with more general terms. This revision helped make the phrases more accessible for students, ensuring they could easily incorporate them into their writing. The main goal of this process was to emphasise the phraseology element and facilitate its use by students in their writing, while simultaneously discouraging plagiarism. Therefore, where necessary, the phrases were carefully sifted from their original academic context and, in some cases, content words were replaced with substitutes for exemplification purposes. Here, we can observe the distinction between the original sentence in 1 and the simplified version provided in 2.

1. *Uma das razões que pode explicar a falta de tratamento que os róticos têm recebido na literatura do Português Europeu é o facto de, efetivamente, serem sons problemáticos.*
[*One of the reasons that may explain the lack of treatment that rhotic sounds have received in European Portuguese literature is that they are, in fact, problematic sounds.*]
2. *Uma das razões que pode explicar a falta de tratamento que x tem recebido na literatura é o facto de y*
[*One of the reasons that may explain the lack of treatment that x has received in the literature is the fact that y*]

As the examples that follow highlight, we used placeholder names for proper nouns (3) and substituted content words with unknowns (4), such as x, y, and z, whenever necessary.

3. *Smith e Jones (2015) sublinham que...*
[*Smith and Jones (2015) point out that...*]
4. *x foi avaliado com base na especificação europeia...*
[*x was assessed using the European specification...*]

Accessing the phrase bank

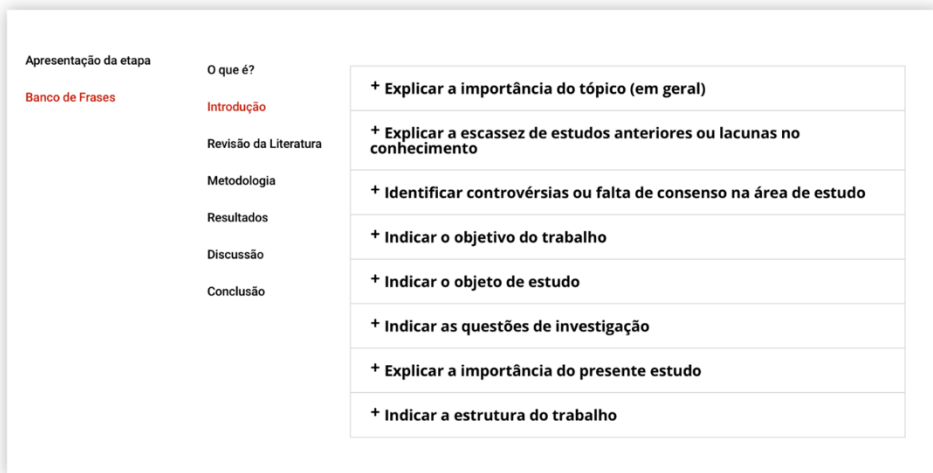
The online platform Lang2Science provides access to the phrase bank. Our project is dedicated to creating various resources to improve academic and specialized language skills and we aim to make these resources widely available. The phrase bank is available in two formats: a web format for browsing and a searchable format for quick and easy retrieval of specific phrases.

Web format

The web format of the phrase bank on the Lang2Science online platform is designed to provide users with an easy and user-friendly way to access and browse the database of academic phraseologies. The web format includes a well-organised and structured interface, featuring an intuitive navigation system that will allow users to browse through the various categories and subcategories of the phrase bank. The categories are organised in a hierarchical manner, with the main categories such as introduction, methodology, and conclusion being easily accessible from the main page.

Users can find the relevant rhetorical moves and their corresponding phrases within each category. The phrases are displayed in an intuitive format, ensuring users can quickly identify the one that works best for them.

With this format, users can dive into the phrase bank and discover not only the different phrases and their usage but also gain insights into the macro-structure of scientific articles and the types of rhetorical moves typical to each section of this genre.



Apresentação da etapa	O que é?	
Banco de Frases	Introdução	+ Explicar a importância do tópico (em geral)
	Revisão da Literatura	+ Explicar a escassez de estudos anteriores ou lacunas no conhecimento
	Metodologia	+ Identificar controvérsias ou falta de consenso na área de estudo
	Resultados	+ Indicar o objetivo do trabalho
	Discussão	+ Indicar o objeto de estudo
	Conclusão	+ Indicar as questões de investigação
		+ Explicar a importância do presente estudo
		+ Indicar a estrutura do trabalho

Figure 1. Web-format of the Academic Phrase Bank

Academic Writing Assistant

The searchable format of our phrase bank is available through our Academic Writing Assistant, which simplifies the process of searching through our phrase bank. The Writing Assistant is the name we've given to one of the

functions of a search engine we developed within our research project (Araújo et al. 2023). At the heart of our Academic Writing Assistant, is the BERT (Devlin 2019) deep learning language model. BERT, short for Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers, is a widely used pre-trained model in Natural Language Processing, created by Google’s AI team. It handles tasks like question answering, summarization, and sentence prediction. BERT’s ability to understand context, trained through masked language modeling and next sentence prediction (Lutkevich 2020), makes it effective for semantic search, which interprets user intent.

Keyword-based searches dominate most phrase banks, which restrict results to content with the exact words provided by the user. For example, if a user searches for the phrase “the authors highlight that,” the results will only show instances of the word “authors” in its singular or plural form. However, by utilizing the BERT model, the Writing Assistant understands the context of the user’s query and can provide the most relevant phrases, even if they don't match the exact words used. This helps users with limited academic vocabulary by offering a wider range of academic language options, ultimately improving their writing. Figure 2 depicts the engine’s interface and organisation, which are user-friendly.

autor	REVISÃO DE LITERATURA ▾	TUDO ▾
<p>Defende o autor que... Categoria: Revisão da Literatura Sub-Categoria: Referir ideias de autores em específico Área: Ciências Sociais e Humanidades Tipo: Artigo</p>	<p>Defende o autor que, no contexto europeu, as oportunidades e os constrangimentos das políticas nacionais e dos mercados regionais de habitação ajudam a explicar as estratégias adotadas localmente (Van Gen, 2010).</p>	
<p>Argumenta o autor que...</p>	<p>Argumenta, por isso, o autor que a compreensão dos tipos dos envolvidos no arrendamento privado.</p>	
<p>Smith transforma o conceito...</p>	<p>Marx transforma o conceito, discernindo aí dois aspectos fundamentais:</p>	
<p>Smith insiste em x...</p>	<p>[...] se a teoria marxista tradicional considerava sobretudo o lado do “repressivo”, Althusser insiste na dimensão ideológica:</p>	
<p>Smith descreve x como...</p>	<p>Cruz-Ferreira descreve os fonemas róticos do PE como /s/ e /ʃ/, tendo como base a norma de uma falante lisboeta de meia idade.</p>	
<p>À semelhança de Smith, também Jones considera...</p>	<p>À semelhança de Tinto, também considera o envolvimento académico, traduzido na dedicação e empenho nas atividades académicas, e o envolvimento institucional.</p>	

Figure 2. Writing Assistant interface (displaying the findings of a query)

Searching for an expression is as easy as using the search bar, which causes the screen to split into two sections. Expressions on the left are shown in a generic form, making it easier for users to integrate them into their own writing without plagiarizing. The right side provides these expressions in their full, original context. Clicking on a search result reveals the specific part of the text (e.g., introduction, literature review, methods, discussion, results, or conclusion) where the phrase is located. Users can also apply filters to target specific sections, such as the introduction or results, making it easier to find the most relevant academic expressions. The Writing Assistant also explains the communicative role of the expression in the text, helping users understand how it is used in academic contexts and its proper application. Finally, the Writing Assistant provides extra context, such as the academic genre (limited to scientific papers) and the related subject area. This helps clarify the expression's meaning and ensures it is used correctly within specific academic fields.

Bringing the phrase bank to the classroom

The phrase bank was developed as a self-directed tool for students and researchers, designed to empower autonomous use and learning. However, we understand the crucial role of teachers in academic language instruction. That is why we emphasise the importance of developing learning scenarios where educators can actively employ the phrase bank in their teaching strategies. The phrase bank holds immense potential as an enriching pedagogical resource, catering to both native students and those who are learning Portuguese as a foreign language. Maximising the potential of the phrase bank in pedagogical settings requires diverse approaches. To illustrate its practical use in the classroom, we will outline two classroom activities conducted in MA classes utilising the phrase bank.

Classroom activity 1: Rewriting the Introduction of a Group Portfolio

In the first-class activity, students practised using academic phrases to improve their writing skills and better express specific ideas in the introduction of their group's portfolio.

This classroom activity was conducted with MA students enrolled in the Corpus Linguistics course of the MA in Multilingual Communication and Translation programme at University of Minho. The task began with students being instructed to write a preliminary draft of the introduction for their subject portfolio. They relied solely on their existing genre knowledge of introductions to complete this initial task. The students were divided into six groups and given 45 minutes of in-class time to work on their drafts. In the

subsequent phase, students were provided with a statement for the rewriting activity. The statement included a brief informative paragraph about introductions and detailed instructions for the exercise. The exercise prompted students to select relevant sentences from the phrase bank to rewrite their portfolio introductions, focusing on four specific functions: explaining the importance of the topic/theme, indicating the purpose of the work, indicating the object of study, and indicating the structure of the work. The students then completed the rewriting task at home and submitted their revised introductions in the following class session.

To implement this activity in-class, here are the steps to follow:

1. Instruct the students to write the first draft of their assignment, using only their existing genre knowledge of that type of text. Divide the students into groups and allocate 45 minutes of in-class time for this task.
2. Provide the students with a statement outlining the rewriting activity. This statement should include a concise paragraph providing the genre-specific information, along with clear instructions for the exercise. Provide students with genre-appropriate phrases and expressions from the phrase bank to rewrite their work.
3. Allow the students to complete the rewriting task at home and request that they submit their revised introductions during the subsequent class session.
4. Provide feedback to the students based on the analysis of the two versions of the introductions. Highlight areas of improvement and offer guidance on effective language use in academic writing.

We conducted an analysis of the two versions of the introductions, focusing on the presence of communicative functions and the use of formulaic language. In the initial version of the introductions, all six groups successfully included the functions of indicating the object of study and indicating the structure. Five groups incorporated the function of indicating the objective, and merely two groups addressed the importance of the theme. In terms of formulaic language, the groups demonstrated systematic use of formulaic language to express the function of indicating the structure of the work, but none of the groups utilised formulaic language to convey the function of indicating the object of study. During the initial stage of the experiment, the groups utilised formulaic language in approximately 66.67% of their expressions. After completing the rewriting task, there was a noticeable surge in formulaic language usage, accounting for 87.5% of all expressions employed. Additionally, it was observed that most groups successfully integrated the typical communicative functions of

the introduction. It should be highlighted that the groups employed various formulaic expressions for different functions, leading to greater diversity in the expressions used across the groups. The rewriting activity also had an impact on the length of the introductions. On average, the number of words in the groups' texts increased by 47.21% following the rewriting task.

Classroom activity 2: Peer Assessment of a Research Proposal's Literature Review

The second classroom activity involved a guided peer assessment activity aimed at acquainting students with the typical communicative functions and corresponding expressions found in literature reviews, by using the phrase bank. Peer assessment empowers students to assume accountability and control over their own learning, fosters the development of their evaluative skills, and promotes the exchange of constructive feedback among peers (Emam et al., 2019). Yu (2020) observes that peer feedback in academic writing helps students enhance their self-evaluation skills and plays a crucial role in a dialogic process, cultivating an understanding of and proficiency in good academic writing.

This classroom activity was conducted with MA students enrolled in the Project Management course of the MA in Digital Humanities programme at University of Minho. The duration of this activity was approximately 60 minutes, allowing sufficient time for the exchange of feedback and meaningful discussions among students. As part of their research proposal writing process, students composed literature reviews. They engaged in the peer assessment activity by following the specific tasks outlined below.

To implement this activity in class, here are the steps to follow:

1. Divide the class into pairs or small groups.
2. Instruct each student to bring their literature review to the session.
3. Provide students with a statement outlining the peer assessment activity.
4. Have students refer to the phrase bank to acquaint themselves with the common communicative functions within literature reviews and to explore exemplars of expressions conveying these functions.
5. Instruct students to identify these communicative functions in their peer's work, highlighting and recording specific examples.
6. Prompt students to observe and interrogate the richness and variety of expressions used by their classmates when referring to authors and studies (e.g., "according to the author," "as noted by Smith (2000)," "most studies indicate").

7. After this reflection, direct students to propose alternative formulations for at least five of these expressions. Our students used the phrase bank in the format of the Writing Assistant, although a static version of a phrase bank would work equally well.
8. Next, task students with evaluating their peer's literature review (in a minimum of 100 words), guided by a choice board. Creating a supportive and respectful atmosphere where students feel comfortable sharing their feedback and insights is essential. To achieve this, teachers can use a choice board that offers a range of prompts and options to guide feedback, encompassing both meaningful praise and constructive improvement recommendations. The choice board operates by directing students to choose two prompts from the peer feedback choice board, enabling them to offer their classmates specific, meaningful, and considerate feedback. Below, we have adapted Tucker's (2021) model to suggest a choice board that can be used in this activity.
 - Greatest Strength: Identify the strongest aspect of this work. In particular, what is strong about it? Why do you think that aspect is particularly good or well done? How did this aspect positively affect the overall quality of the work?
 - Tiny Tweaks: Identify one aspect of this work that would benefit from a small adjustment, modification or improvement. How would reworking this aspect of the work affect the overall quality of the work? Do you have specific recommendations on how your colleague could improve that aspect of their work?
 - Celebrate Surprises: What surprised you about your colleague's work? Was there any aspect of this work that was original, creative or captivating? Describe what you liked most about it.
 - Hungry for More: Identify one aspect of this work that needs to be developed further. What would you have liked more information on? In what way would more development and detail have strengthened this work?
 - Mind Blown: Identify an aspect of this work that you loved and didn't consider in your own work. Were there any ideas or approaches that your colleague used that you would like to incorporate into your work? How could you incorporate these ideas into your own work?
 - Clarifying Confusion: When reviewing your colleague's work, was there anything unclear, confusing or raised doubts? Can you identify specific elements of the project that would benefit from clearer language and/or more explanation? (see Tucker 2021)
9. Finally, guide students to read their peer's assessment of their work and participate in discussions with their classmates, elucidating the rationale behind their recommendations.

Through the exchange and assessment of their literature reviews, students engaged in a process of peer review and recommendation, focusing on the integration of relevant academic phrases and expressions from the phrase bank to improve clarity, coherence, and academic rigor in their peers' texts.

When questioned, most students found their peers' feedback helpful and indicated their intention to integrate it into their work. One student remarked, "Getting feedback from my colleagues gives me a different view of my work and helps me improve." Regarding the Writing Assistant, most students thought it was easy to use, with one stating, "I think the Writing Assistant is a valuable tool for academic writing, as it assists in eliminating redundancies and provides guidance during moments of discursive confusion."

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has offered an exploration of the creation, design, accessibility, and practical use of the European Portuguese Academic Phrase Bank in the classroom, with the aim of facilitating its replication in other languages. Moving forward, there are several avenues for future work and research. To begin with, there is potential for ongoing expansion and refinement of the phrase bank to encompass a wider array of academic genres, including but not limited to theses, dissertations, and research proposals. Furthermore, our intention is to persist in the development and testing of pedagogical activities incorporating the phrase bank, following the principles of active learning. We will seek collaboration of fellow educators interested in implementing this resource in their classes. Considering the significant demand for specialized instruction in academic Portuguese among foreign students, specifically, we aim to collaborate with instructors of Portuguese as a Second/Foreign Language. This stems from our belief that the phrase bank holds great promise as a resource for classes with both native and non-native language learners.

Funding Statement

This work was carried out within the scope of the PortLinguE (PTDC/LLT-LIG/31113/2017) project, financed by FEDER under Portugal 2020 and by national funds through Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P. (FCT, I.P.).

WORKS CITED

- Aguiar, Micaela, José Monteiro, and Sílvia Araújo. 2023. "Semi-automatic Extraction of Academic Transdisciplinary Phraseology: Expanding a Corpus of Categorized Academic Phraseology Using BERT Machine Learning Models (Short Paper)." *Proceedings*. <http://ceur-ws.org> ISSN, 1613, 0073.
- Araújo, Sílvia, Aguiar, Micaela and Monteiro, José. 2023. "aBERTUM: A Portuguese Search Engine for Scientific and Academic Language." *International Conference on Advanced Research in Technologies, Information, Innovation and Sustainability*, 88-102. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.
- Assunção, Carlos. 2019. "Internacionalização da Língua Portuguesa como Língua de Ciência: do Passado para o Futuro." In *Políticas da Língua, da Comunicação e da Cultura no Espaço Lusófono*, edited by Moses. L. Martins & Isabel Macedo, 185-197. Húmus/CECS.
- Barros, Rui and Volta e Pinto, José. "Ditadura Democracia Portugal." *Público*. March 24, 2022. <https://www.publico.pt/interactivo/ditadura-democracia-portugal>
- Biber, Douglas, and Barbieri, Federica. 2007. "Lexical Bundles in University Spoken and Written Registers." *English for Specific Purposes* 26: 263-286.
- Carvalho, José António Brandão. 2014. "Literacia académica: da escola básica ao ensino superior-uma visão integradora." *Letras & Letras* 29, no 2.
- Defazio, Joseph., Jones, Josette, Tennant, Felisa, and Hook, Sara Anne. 2010. "Academic Literacy: The Importance and Impact of Writing across the Curriculum – a Case Study." *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* 10, no 2: 34-47.
- Drouin, Patrick. 2007. "Identification Automatique du Lexique Scientifique Transdisciplinaire." *Revue française de linguistique appliquée*, 2, no XII: 45-64. <https://doi.org/10.3917/rfla.122.0045>
- Emam, Maii, Taha, Dina, & ElSayad, Zeyad. 2019. "Collaborative Pedagogy in Architectural Design Studio: A Case Study in Applying Collaborative Design." *Alexandria Engineering Journal* 58, no 1: 163-170. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aej.2018.03.005>
- Estrela, Antónia & Sousa, Otlia. 2011. "Competência Textual à Entrada no Ensino Superior." *Revista de Estudos da Linguagem* 19, no 1: 247-267. <https://doi.org/10.17851/2237-2083.19.1.247-267>
- Ferrão Tavares, Clara, & Pereira, Álvares Luísa (2012). "Apresentação: Literacias Académicas Multimodais." *Intercompreensão* 16: 5-10.
- Gouveia, Carlos. M. (2019). "Como se faz uma Disciplina: Mapas de Conhecimento e Distinções Operacionais sobre o que é o Discurso Académico enquanto Objeto de Estudo." In *Discurso Académico: Uma Área Disciplinar em Construção*, edited by Fausto Caels, Luís Filipe Barbeiro e Joana Vieira Santos, 19-43. CELGA-ILTEC: Universidade de Coimbra/Escola Superior de Educação e Ciências Sociais, Politécnico de Coimbra.
- Hyland, Ken. 2008. "As Can Be Seen: Lexical Bundles and Disciplinary Variation." *English for Specific Purposes* 27, no 1: 4-21. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2007.06.001>

- Hyland, Ken. 2018 "Sympathy for the Devil? A Defence of EAP." *Language Teaching* 51, no. 3. 383-99. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444818000101>
- Hyland, Ken and Jiang, Feng. 2018. "Academic Lexical Bundles: How Are They Changing?" *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*, 23, no 4: 383-407. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ijcl.17080.hyl>
- Jonsmoen, Kari Mari, & Greek, Marit. 2017. "Lecturers' Text Competencies and Guidance towards Academic Literacy." *Educational Action Research* 25, no 3: 354-369. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2016.1178156>
- Leiria, Isabel. 2023. "Ensino Superior: o Número de Estudantes Estrangeiros mais do que Duplicou em apenas Seis Anos." *Expresso*. May 7, 2023. <https://expresso.pt/sociedade/2023-05-07-Ensino-Superior-o-numero-de-estudantes-estrangeiros-mais-do-que-duplicou-em-apenas-seis-anos-45c34e67>
- Li, Jie, & Schmitt, Nobert. 2009. "The Acquisition of Lexical Phrases in Academic Writing: a Longitudinal Case Study." *Journal of Second Language Writing* 18, no 2: 85-10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2009.02.001>
- Lutkevich, Ben. 2020. "BERT Language Model." *TechTarget*. January, 2020. <https://www.techtarget.com/searchenterpriseai/definition/BERT-language-model>
- Morley, John. 2004. "Academic Phrasebank". <https://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/about-academic-phrasebank/>
- Observador. 2023. "Portugal com o maior Número de sempre de Alunos do Ensino Superior". October 2, 2023. <https://observador.pt/2023/10/02/portugal-com-o-maior-numero-de-sempre-de-alunos-do-ensino-superior/>
- Pérez-Llantada, Carmen. 2014. "Formulaic Language in L1 and L2 Expert Academic Writing: Convergent and Divergent Usage." *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* 14: 84-94. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2014.01.002>
- Pintrich, Paul R. 2002. "The Role of Metacognitive Knowledge in Learning, Teaching, and Assessing." *Theory into Practice* 41, no 4: 219-225. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4104_3
- Pordata. (n.d.). "Taxa de Analfabetismo segundo os Censos Total e por Sexo." <https://www.pordata.pt/Portugal/Taxa+de+analfabetismo+segundo+os+Censos+total+e+por+sexo-2517>
- Preto-Bay, Ana Maria. 2004. "The Social-Cultural Dimension of Academic Literacy Development and the Explicit Teaching of Genres as Community Heuristics." *The Reading Matrix* 4, no 3: 86-117.
- Rastier, François. 2001. *Arts et Sciences du Texte*. PUF: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Short, Deborah J. and Shannon Fitzsimmons-Doolan. 2007. "Double the Work: Challenges and Solutions to Acquiring Language and Academic Literacy for Adolescent English Language Learner." *A Report to Carnegie Corporation of New York*. Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.
- Swales, John. 1990. *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings*. Cambridge University Press.

- Tardy, Christine, Buck, Rachel Hall, Jacobson, Brad, LaMance, Rachel, Pawlowski, Madelyn, Slinkard, Jennifer and Vogel, Stefan. 2022. "It's Complicated and Nuanced': Teaching Genre Awareness in English for General Academic Purposes." *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* 57, no 100966.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2022.101117>
- Tucker, Catlin. 2021. "Peer Feedback: Making It Meaningful."
<https://catlintucker.com/2021/04/peer-feedback/>
- Tutin, Agnès and Jacques, Marie-Paule. 2018. Le Lexique Scientifique Transdisciplinaire: une Introduction. In *Lexique Transversal et Formules Discursives des Sciences Humaines* edited by Tutin, Agnès & Jacques, Marie-Paule, 1-26. ISTE Editions.
- Wray, Alison. 2002. *Formulaic Language and the Lexicon*. Cambridge University Press.
- Wray, Alison. 2009. "Identifying Formulaic Language. Persistent Challenges and New Opportunities." In *Formulaic Language. (Vol. 1: Distribution and historical change)* edited by Corrigan, Roberta L., Moravcsik, Edith A., Oulali, Hamid and Wheatley, Kathleen M., 27-51. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Yu, Shulin. 2021. "Giving Genre-based Peer Feedback in Academic Writing: Sources of Knowledge and Skills, Difficulties and Challenges." *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 46, no 1: 36-53.

RESPONDING TO REVIEWERS – THE CASE OF A GENRE-BASED ACADEMIC WRITING TASK FOR DOCTORAL STUDENTS

Ileana Oana MACARI¹ 

Article history: Received 28 March 2024; Revised 24 June 2024; Accepted 15 October 2024; Available online 10 December 2024; Available print 30 December 2024.

©2024 Studia UBB Philologia. Published by Babeş-Bolyai University.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License

ABSTRACT. *Responding to Reviewers – The Case of a Genre-Based Academic Writing Task for Doctoral Students.* This paper explores the application of genre pedagogy in teaching academic writing to doctoral students, specifically focusing on the genre of responding to reviewers' comments. Drawing on Yasuda's (2011) and Hyland's (2020) perspectives on genre analysis, as well as on insights from Shaw (2020) and Kindenberg (2021), the study aims to address two research questions: (1) Based on the task students were set, what can count as indicators of genre-awareness? and (2) Should L1 novice writers be expected to be context-aware naturally and consequently do well when they engage in this particular genre-based task? The research involved three cohorts of PhD students over three academic years, with data collected from students' written responses to reviewers' comments. The analysis focused on students' ability to recognize and utilize genre conventions, linguistic choices, and organizational strategies appropriate to the task. Results indicate that while some students demonstrated a good understanding of genre conventions and effectively addressed reviewers' comments, others struggled to adopt the appropriate tone and format, often resorting to familiar models that did not align with academic writing norms. Findings suggest that explicit instruction in genre awareness and linguistic features, coupled with practice tasks, can enhance students' proficiency in academic writing genres. The study underscores the importance of integrating genre pedagogy into writing instruction for advanced learners, offering insights for designing effective in-class activities

¹ **Ileana Oana MACARI** is Associate Professor of English at the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures of the Faculty of Letters of the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași. Her research and publications address English linguistics, Applied linguistics, and Romanian studies. Dr. Macari is currently working on a series of papers addressing linguistic mediation, second language acquisition, academic writing, ESP and EFL. Email: oanam@uaic.ro.

and resources. Overall, the research contributes to our understanding of genre-based approaches in teaching academic writing and provides valuable implications for L1 academic writing instruction at the university level.

Keywords: *Language for specific purposes (LSP), genre pedagogy; genre-based writing task; genre awareness; L1 academic writing*

REZUMAT. Răspunsul către recenzenți - Cazul unei activități de scriere academică bazate pe genul funcțional pentru studenții doctoranzi. Articolul explorează aplicarea pedagogiei genului funcțional în predarea scrierii academice studenților doctoranzi, concentrându-se în mod specific pe răspunsul către recenzenți. Bazându-se pe perspectivele lui Yasuda (2011) și Hyland (2020) cu privire la analiza genului, precum și pe ale lui Shaw (2020) și Kindenberg (2021), studiul își propune să răspundă la două întrebări: (1) Care sunt indicatorii de conștientizare a genului pe baza răspunsurilor studenților la comentariile recenzentilor? și (2) Cercetătorii tineri care scriu în L1 se vor descurca în mod natural bine la activitățile de scriere academică bazate pe genul funcțional? Cercetarea a implicat trei cohorte de studenți doctoranzi din trei ani academici, cu date colectate din răspunsurile la comentariile recenzentilor. Analiza s-a concentrat pe capacitatea studenților de a recunoaște și utiliza convențiile genului, alegerile lingvistice și strategiile potrivite activității. Rezultatele indică faptul că, în timp ce unii au demonstrat o bună înțelegere a convențiilor genului și au reacționat corespunzător, alții au avut dificultăți în adoptarea tonului și formatului adecvat, recurgând adesea la modele familiare care nu țin de normele scrierii academice. Concluziile sugerează că instruirea explicită în conștientizarea genului funcțional și a caracteristicilor lingvistice, împreună cu activități practice, pot îmbunătăți competența studenților. Studiul subliniază importanța integrării pedagogiei genului funcțional în instruirea cursanților avansați, oferind idei pentru proiectarea de activități și resurse eficiente. În ansamblu, cercetarea contribuie la înțelegerea abordărilor bazate pe gen în predarea scrierii academice și oferă implicații valoroase pentru predarea scrierii academice în L1 la nivelul universitar.

Cuvinte-cheie: *Limbaje specializate (LS), pedagogia genului funcțional; activitate de scriere bazată pe genul funcțional; conștientizarea genului funcțional; scriere academică în L1*

Introduction

Academic language manifested as both spoken and written texts is one of the varieties under the umbrella term *language for specific purposes* (LSP). In Hyland's view (2020, 507), the focus of the language-education component of

LSP is on its linguistic features, discourse practices, and communicative skills employed by target groups, and its subsequent success can be ensured by genre² analysis used to correctly identify the first two so they can be taught to learners. While noting that genre analysis is widely recognized as a valuable framework for studying specialized communication in academic, professional, and institutional context, Hyland additionally maintains that genre analysis involves describing texts within their textual and social contexts and rejects the notion of treating individual texts in isolation from their use or other texts. Pasquarelli cited by Yasuda (2011, 112) made a comparable observation in 2006 when she wrote that, “texts are shaped for different types of readers in response to particular social situations and to fulfill certain social goals”.

In genre pedagogy, the interrelation between two important variables - the purpose and the audience of a text - is, according to Yasuda (2011, 112), what a writer must consider to perform social actions, because they impact the “socially recognized features of the whole text” by encompassing “the larger structures of form and style and the linguistic features at the sentence and word levels”. Consequently, she claims, it is generally difficult for novice L2 writers to manage the relationship of the variables simultaneously. But it is not for novice L2 writers only, I would add³, since Haas’s (1994) description of FL academic discourse in texts, tests and textbooks⁴ partly aligns with the way L1 composition classes are taught in Romanian schools at pre-university level, where the most representative examples are the famous ‘literary commentaries/analyses’⁵. For that reason, when I designed the genre-based task investigated in the present study, I started from the assumption that even if students were going to be satisfactorily aware of the grammatical issues, they might be less aware of the pragmatic ones when producing the required piece of writing. I also anticipated them to share with FL writers the belief mentioned by Yasuda (2011, 112), that such texts are autonomous and context free, a belief that could make writers

² Genre in LSP refers to the different types of texts that are used within a specific field or discipline. In LSP, understanding and writing texts within various genres is essential for effective communication within professional or academic contexts.

³ Yasuda (2011, 112) convincingly distinguishes between the writing experiences of foreign language (FL) writers (that “occur within the confines of the classroom, in which writing is often simply a medium for grammar practice or vocabulary exercises”) and those of second language (SL) writers. She expects FL writers to be “more aware of grammatical issues than pragmatic issues”.

⁴ “tests that ask students to recall and reiterate informational content only and textbooks that always seem to be written by nobody and everybody, as if the information embodied in them was beyond human composition”. (Haas cited by Yasuda 2011, 112)

⁵ They are a twisted variety of reaction pieces that secondary and high school students are expected to master in national exams especially.

unable to see writing “as a social action that is performed through interactions of purpose, audience, and linguistic choice.” Given the analogy of FL writers with the L1 ones in the particular context of the current task, I decided to adapt Yasuda’s proposed approach and to teach a genre-based pattern as “explicit instruction” presented to the students in the form of a template they were asked to ‘customize’.

Two of the significant features that characterize LSP are relevant for the present discussion: on the one hand, the formality and accuracy of its (more often than not, specialized) vocabulary and grammar and, on the other, the contribution of genres that shape texts in accordance with their specific purposes and audiences. Even a brief look at research articles, conference papers, reviewers’ comments to authors and author responses, abstracts, grant proposals (as examples of categories of research genres), at essays, exam answers, reaction pieces, presentations (as learner genres) or at textbooks, websites, lab instructions (as educational genres) will validate the observation Shaw (2020, 514) makes about how LSP discourses use the grammar of the general language with altered frequency and functions of some features that partly depend on the genre. Within the framework of genre analysis, the observation of the grammatical features of the language of research articles and related texts, especially author responses to reviewers’ comments, will definitely need to additionally consider hedging defined as “[t]he interplay of functional, semantic, and grammatical-lexical categories” by Shaw (2020, 518). He argues the importance of the category of hedging by pointing to one of the main difficulties in academic writing, i.e., “to adjust the strength of the claim, to make it as strong as possible while maintaining credibility and approval in the eyes of the peers who are reading it” (2020, 519).

In line with Kindenberg (2021, 1) who mentions the role of genre-based approaches in making visible “the discourse patterns that can otherwise be opaque to learners”, as well as in achieving academic literacy, I find it important to add that command of the categories Shaw lists above does not come naturally even to educated native users of language who – through extensive reading or through formalized practice - still have to be exposed to models they can learn and subsequently apply more or less creatively. One of the main claims of the present investigation is that L1 novice writers can also benefit from a genre-based approach by getting to realize the causal connection text – reader - context - goal, even when they read or write texts in their native language. As I will show further on, by situating some of the activities of the course *Academic ethics and integrity* under the umbrella of LSP and resorting to techniques from the genre pedagogy approach I actually aimed at using its framework and resources to make PhD students do better in fulfilling a specific task.

The article describes an application of genre pedagogy in the form of a writing task carried out in students' and instructor's L1, Romanian, although other languages (mainly English, but also French) were used in instructor's presentations and in class discussions and references, starting from the idea that most related skills are transferable from one language into another. Because all participants were native speakers of Romanian, linguistic knowledge was not an issue, so that the concept of genre was broadly understood as a 'guiding framework' rather than as a sequence of 'recurring linguistic structures'⁶. However, the investigation of students' genre awareness was at the core of this study; in it I analyze a corpus of 63 responses, mainly relying on Martin's 1992 definition⁷ that highlights the central objectives of genre pedagogy: "Genres are defined as context-embedded, staged, goal-oriented social processes, enabling meaning to be realized through various, socially expected, configurations of linguistic resources".

Research

Research subject and research setting

The focus of the instructional approach recognized as *genre pedagogy* is, in broad lines, the development of students' command of a range of text types by guiding them into understanding their organization, conventions and communicative purposes. For the task investigated in this paper, the instructor first introduced one of the genres commonly found in academic interactions at graduate and postgraduate level - responding to reviewers' comments - by showing the doctoral students two presentations followed by class discussions. Students were then asked to respond to specific comments proving they were aware of and able to use the appropriate language, organization, and communicative purposes of this genre of academic writing. As I will show further on, the task has the right potential for helping students achieve command of this genre that although commonly used in their academic discipline is still quasi- or even completely unfamiliar to them. The goal was to develop students' ability to produce and understand this type of text within its specific communicative context.

⁶ This is a distinction mentioned by Hyland in a discussion of the pedagogical potential of genres. (2006, 48)

⁷ Quoted in Kindenberg (2021, 3).

This study covers three successive cohorts of doctoral students (fall semesters 2021, 2022, and 2023) who were asked to respond to five revisions suggested by two reviewers for the improvement of a manuscript⁸. Students' responses were submitted in Turnitin in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the course *Academic ethics and integrity* included in the curriculum of the Doctoral School for Philological Studies⁹.

Research aims

In Romania, although several authors have researched issues related to Romanian for Academic purposes¹⁰, most of them intended as a guide for students' research papers (Barborică, Onu & Teodorescu 1967, Funeriu 1995, Andronescu 1997, Rădulescu 2006, Andrei et al 2007, Burcea et al 2017, Ristea, Ioan-Franc & Popescu 2017, Dincă 2018, Chelcea 2021, Boc 2022), even the most recent fail to deal with genre. This is not necessarily surprising since all the Romanian works are mainly theoretical and none describe actual procedures or assess learners as writers of academic papers. In my view, doctoral students are generally past the stage where they need to be taught the basics of writing a paper, so that their training should focus on some finer tuning that can effectively benefit from the results offered by LSP and genre pedagogy.

In the present study I started from the informed assumption that PhD students used to being very successful academically were going to have difficulty in taking criticism well¹¹, especially when it was directed at their first important research papers (i.e., their BA or MA theses) and that was going to blur their perception of the communication context, audience and goals. It was

⁸ The (imaginary) reviewers' comments were actually created by this instructor and were formulated in a way that made them be applicable to any research paper regardless of their subject and topic. Students were instructed to respond to the comments as if the reviewers specifically referred to a particular manuscript of theirs.

⁹ http://media.lit.uaic.ro/scoala_doctorala/program.htm

¹⁰ In *Cum se scrie un text științific: disciplinele umaniste* (2008, 28), Ilie Rad proposes a more detailed list of the Romanian authors and their works on academic writing in Romanian research and updates it in the review of Oana Boc's *Scrierea academică în domeniul științelor umaniste* (<https://ilierad.ro/oana-boc-scrierea-academica-in-domeniul-stiintelor-umaniste/>).

¹¹ Carnovale (2019) mentions new researchers' need for practice in receiving criticism and defending their work, especially because "[s]upervisors are often so busy that the process of submission and revision is something of a mystery when starting out". She recommends the "CALM" approach - C: *Comprehend* (keep your cool!), A: *Answer* (amend or advocate!), L: *List* (make a list...check it twice!), M: *Mindful* (make it easy for the editor - they will appreciate it!) - that I include in one of my presentations in the course *Academic ethics and integrity*. I will return to the CALM approach in the Results and discussion section.

also safe to undertake that their experience with consistent formal reviewing and peer reviewing was at best limited, because only few, if any, classes at BA and MA level include in-class or follow-up feedback from instructors and peers¹².

Research questions

The main aim of this research is to see if the same results are true about L1 students and, in particular, if L1 students face similar issues when learning a genre and if exposing them to models of exchanges between reviewers and reviewees can impact the quality of their responses. Subsequently, I formulated the following research questions:

1. Based on the task students were set, what can count as indicators of genre-awareness?
2. Should L1 novice writers be expected to be context-aware naturally and consequently do well when they engage in this particular genre-based task?

Description of activity and methodology

The study is part of an ongoing project I set up in October 2021 and carried out in the fall semesters of 2021, 2022 and 2023 within the *Academic ethics and integrity* course for doctoral students in which it is a 4-hour module that accounts for 30% of the total number of class hours and 50% of the final assessment. This module focuses on one of the academic genres closely connected with academic integrity understood as honest, fair, respectful and responsible conduct in studies and academic work. It aims to familiarize students with a genre used in the process of preparing a research paper for publication and to have them understand and produce appropriate discourse. The topic of the module is *Applying the principles of ethics and integrity in academic writing. Responding to reviewers*, and, because of the potentially varied exposure of students to this genre¹³, the instructor initiates in-class discussions to elicit students' opinions and to guide them in problematizing the concepts related to it. Discussions are followed by two PowerPoint presentations ("Revising your paper" and "How to prepare the revision of a journal paper") meant to illustrate

¹² In the Faculty of Letters of UAIC, depending on specialization (at BA level) and program (at MA level), students' participation in assessment varies from (rarely) none at all to a significant 40%. However, in many cases, the only written feedback resembling reviewing comes from students' advisors concerning their research papers.

¹³ I had reasons to believe that some, but not all students had had some experience with editors and publishers during their graduate years.

the main strategies and techniques used in these processes and to have students acknowledge and reflect on their own practices, as well as corroborate them with their personal experience as writers.

Because students' responses to reviewers' comments was one of the two components in their final portfolios, I chose to put particular emphasis on the variables recognized as significant in genre pedagogy - the purpose, the context and the audience of a text. My presentation¹⁴ included the following points: editor's decision, how to write a "Summary of changes" to answer reviewers, how to answer a reviewer's comment. All slides either contained examples or were followed by others with examples, and the last slide contained links to sites that provided further resources. All the slides were in English, but they were presented in Romanian by the instructor who led the follow-up discussion in the same language.

As students learned at the beginning of the semester, the portfolio was going to be based on one of their completed, presented, or published papers¹⁵ and specifically on their *Introduction* and the *Conclusion*. They received a document containing the comments of two reviewers¹⁶ and were expected to respond in Romanian or English, or, by exception, in French or Spanish. The comments were very general so that they could apply to any research papers students might choose, at the same time allowing them to 'customize' their responses. The submission deadline (mid-November to mid-January) was generous enough to let students search for other examples and models than those discussed in class and to experience for themselves how they could use them. The whole pre-writing process was meant to maximize students' exposure to genre-specific terminology and text organization.

The models shown in the presentation displayed typical comment - response exchanges and the slides included bulleted lists of basic prompts (*first say thank you to the reviewers for the useful comments...; explain how you have*

¹⁴ Based on Philippe Fournier-Viger's "How to Answer Reviewers for a Journal Paper Revision?", <https://data-mining.philippe-fournier-viger.com/answer-reviewers-journal-paper-revision/>

¹⁵ Students could choose their dissertation or bachelor's thesis or an article they had published in a journal or conference proceeding.

¹⁶ I created two imagined reviewers' comments so that students could practice this particular type of exchange. They are as follows (in my translation from Romanian): **Reviewer 1 (R1)** 1. *You need to highlight the objectives of the paper.* 2. *The first sentence in the conclusions section is not useful and should be removed.* 3. *The overview of the obtained results needs to be reorganized to highlight the confirmation of the research hypothesis/hypotheses.* **Reviewer 2 (R2)** 1. *The introduction is well-written, but it is not clear from it what motivated the choice of the topic and what were the most significant problems or difficulties that had to be overcome in its realization. Please clarify.* 2. *From the conclusions section, the paragraph dedicated to "personal contribution" does not clearly outline the most relevant aspects that constituted your contribution to the topic.*

answered each reviewer comment ...) followed by some tips for organizing the document (*create a section for each reviewer; in each section copy the comments; cite each comment as a quote; explain how you have addressed the comment*). During the presentation, I highlighted the specific language aspects that shaped the text for the current type of reader (i.e., the reviewer) in response to the particular context (i.e., responding to suggestions) with a specific goal (i.e., getting author's paper published), as well as some organizational characteristics such as the absence of a salutation and a closing *per se* used in other formal written exchanges. We briefly discussed the role of peer-reviewing in the publication process. At this point, following the experience with the first cohort, whose answers lacked to some extent the expected understanding of the aspects above, I asked both the 2022 and 2023 cohorts to imagine the reviewers as their doctoral supervisors. I believed that putting a face to the imaginary reviewer would help students choose a more appropriate style, tone, and format, since it is easier to respond adequately to criticism from an authority figure than from a generic person. However, this approach only partially succeeded, as evidenced by the data in the 'Results and Discussion' section.

In summary, the task undertaken as an out-of-class assignment designed to provide training for this specific genre aimed at genre acquisition and awareness is to have students respond to R1 and R2's comments in a document subsequently uploaded in Turnitin. Responses were assessed in terms of students' genre and context awareness and linguistic knowledge as shown in their writing competence.

Material and data collection

Data collection involved gathering 1st year doctoral students' written responses to the same reviewers' comments and was carried out at the end of the fall semesters of three academic years: 2021-2022, 2022-2023, and 2023-2024. To address the research questions, I collected and investigated one of the components in the PhD students' portfolios¹⁷ over the said semesters.

For the purpose of this research, students' submissions in each cohort were printed and numbered, so that, for instance, the document numbered as 1 in the 2021 cohort will be identified as S1-21, and the one numbered as 11 in the same cohort will be S11-21.

¹⁷ Students were instructed to submit their portfolios in Turnitin. The portfolios had two components, both written in Romanian: a final revision document and another one – a response to two reviewers' comments. The present research uses only the latter for the analysis.

Data collection, analysis and communication ensured compliance with the GDPR. I am grateful to Mr. Bogdan Constantinovici, head administrator of the Faculty of Letters, for his help in providing data for this study.

Participants

All 63 participants were 1st year students of the Doctoral School for Philological Studies¹⁸ in three consecutive fall semesters: 2021 (n = 24), 2022 (n = 21), and 2023 (n = 18). For 62 of them, Romanian is their L1 and for one, Romanian is their L2. N = 57 majored/minored in Romanian language and literature (n = 45), in English language and literature/American studies/ Applied modern languages – English (n = 30), in French language and literature/ Applied modern languages – French (n = 22), in German language and literature/ Applied modern languages – German (n = 16), in Spanish language and literature (n = 7), in Italian language and literature (n = 1), in Russian language and literature (n = 1), in Classical languages (n = 2), in World and Comparative Literature (n = 2), or in Theology (n = 1). For 6 of them I do not have information.

At the time they took the course, students were aged 24-55 and had graduated one or even two of a wide range of MA programs¹⁹. Of the 63 participants, 55 were female (2021, n = 19, 2022, n = 19, 2023, n = 16) and 8, male (2021, n = 4, 2022, n = 2, 2-23, n = 2). In keeping with the direction of their research, PhD students were enrolled in the literary module (n = 32) or in the language module (n = 31), but in this course they are not grouped by discipline. Their level of competence in the language of study is native or near native.

Results and discussion

When writing in Romanian, their L1, postgraduates are normally expected to experience few difficulties with identifying the right strategies that address the requirements regarding the linguistic and organizational problems of genre-based tasks. At this stage, they have been previously exposed to a wide range of genres over their school years and especially during studies in a university, and that should have equipped them with advanced academic writing

¹⁸ <https://litere.uaic.ro/prezentare-2/>

¹⁹ The MA programs are: German Culture in a European Context; Didactics of French as a Foreign Language and Intercultural Education; Christian Orthodox Doctrine and Hermeneutics; Foreign Languages, Literatures and Civilizations (Classical languages); Foreign Languages, Literatures and Civilizations (Spanish); General and Romanian Linguistics; Romanian Literature and Literary Hermeneutics; Comparative and World Literature; Education Policies and Management; American Studies; Francophone Studies; European Interlinguistic and Intercultural Studies; Theory and Practice of Translation - French Language; Translation and Interpretation; Translation and Terminology.

skills like properly searching, reading and citing the literature, summarizing information effectively, convincingly organizing arguments, and selecting and utilizing the appropriate genre and register. Moreover, because most PhD students are commonly high achievers, their writings (essays, term-papers, BA and MA theses, etc.) have typically met the learning outcomes in terms of structure, organization, and linguistic choices, even when they wrote in a foreign language. This may be particularly true especially when writing in a foreign language, not only due to the extensive resources available in the English, French, Spanish, Italian or German academic writing bibliographies, but also because some of the students had actually had no previous formal instruction in the subject through a specific course. That is the case of the postgraduates who had not majored or minored in a foreign language and literature and who had studied in programs whose language of study was Romanian. They were surprisingly less exposed to models and genres of the Romanian academic language, possibly because as native speakers they were supposed to do well naturally in their L1 and to manifest an innate ability to perceive genre and contextual information²⁰.

The students' ability to identify the indicators of genre-awareness while completing the task was the main focus of the first research question of the study. To that end, I examined their responses and assessed how writers had performed in recognizing and utilizing the specific conventions that apply to the genre involved. By *conventions* I understand the norms that regulate the said genre (and that are popularized in various forms by countless printed and online materials), the appropriate style (including structures, sentence stems and formulaic expressions), and the format (where I mainly looked at the introduction and the arrangement of the adjacency pairs reviewer's comment – reviewee response) participants were to use. The tips included in Carnovale's previously mentioned CALM approach were also used during the assessment, and it was interesting to note that C (Comprehend - *keep your cool!*) and A (Answer - *amend or advocate!*) posed the greatest difficulties to students, L (List - *make a list...check it twice!*) the smallest and M (Mindful - *make it easy for the editor – they will appreciate it!*) somewhere in between.

In terms of style and format, a few participants omitted any form of introduction where they thanked the editor and/or the reviewers for their feedback²¹ (2021 - n = 5; 2022 - n = 9; 2023 - n=7). S12-23, one of the 3 participants who answered in English unexpectedly started directly with her

²⁰ In a way, because genres are not consistently taught in Romanian universities to students whose language of study is Romanian, it is as if novice writers were expected to acquire academic Romanian rather than to learn it.

²¹ See S14-22's response to R1's first comment, in my translation from Romanian: *The objectives of the paper are clearly highlighted in the introduction through the use of expressions such as "je me suis proposée" and "Ce que je me propose," etc.*

response to R1's first suggestion, and instead placed her thanks at the end. Surprisingly, factors like BA and/or MA specializations, field of study/doctoral domain and age do not seem to have consistently influenced the participants' decision to omit introductory expressions of gratitude as well as any hedging strategies. There is, however, a much higher proportion of male students who skipped the introduction: half of the male participants in 2021 (2 in 4) and both (all!) in 2022 and 2023, respectively, went straight to business.

Although the students' academic vocabulary size and linguistic knowledge of their L1 should have enabled them to control the degree of formality in their responses and to make the appropriate linguistic choices to achieve the specific goals of the given task, some actually struggled to produce the right format in the right style and involuntarily resorted to more familiar models that nevertheless do not align with current academic Romanian. The introductory sections written by three participants, S13-21, S5-23, and S9-23, all female and aged 26, 24, 32, respectively, are rather suggestive of corporate and workplace communication, a genre that is widely available not only in business places but also online. One linguistic particularity of this type of text in Romanian is the use of anglicisms and mistranslations. In S13-21's introduction, for instance, the English noun *concerns* is imperfectly equated with *preocupări*²², and the Romanian verb *a (se) adresa* is used with the meaning 'to deal with, treat' that only exists in English: "***mă voi adresa cu mare drag și comentariilor ce vor veni.***" The same sentence is additionally illustrative of a stylistic characteristic of workplace and corporate communication, as shown by the use (marked in bold in the quotes in the footnotes) of a (too) readily friendly, if polite tone that becomes effusive at places²³, as well as of pretentious phrases²⁴ that appear out

²² In fact, this whole sentence seems to be imperfectly translated from English: "*Sper ca în cele ce urmează să fi răspuns tuturor **preocupărilor** dumneavoastră și sper că acum textul este unul mult mai inteligibil.*" A similar situation can be noticed in S5-23's "*Vă rugăm respectuos să observați în rândurile de mai jos*", which brings to mind the English 'we kindly ask you to'.

²³ "***M-am bucurat la fiece comentariu în parte***" (S13-21); "***mă voi adresa cu mare drag și comentariilor ce vor veni***" (S13-21); "***Mii de mulțumiri pentru că***" (S5-23); "***Am adoptat cu bucurie majoritatea sugestiilor făcute de recenzori, acestea fiind extrem de pertinente.***" (S5-23); "***Cu drag am răspuns comentariilor dumneavoastră***" (S9-23).

²⁴ "***țin să vă mărturisesc că acestea au contribuit considerabil la îmbunătățirea lucrării mele***" (S13-21); "***va da naștere unui nou val de controverse***" (S13-21); "***ne-ați oferit șansa de a avea o versiune complet revizuită a lucrării [...] și pentru că ați avut amabilitatea de a ne-o trimite în forma cea mai corectă [sic!], atât din punct de vedere gramatical, cât și estetic, spre a servi cu succes la susținerea publică în cadrul comisiei stabilite la nivelul Universității Alexandru Ioan Cuza din Iași, în vederea primirii titlului de licențiat în Studiul Francofonie.***" (S5-23); "***Apreciam timpul și efortul pe care dumneavoastră și recenzorii implicați în acest proces le-ați dedicat pentru a oferi cele mai bune gânduri, păreri și opinii despre lucrarea noastră și suntem veșnic recunoscători pentru comentariile pertinente și punctuale, dar și pentru rectificările însemnate aduse lucrării noastre.***" (S5-23); "***în speranța că acestea au fost benefice lucrării***" (S9-23);

of place in this communication context. Similar, but less extreme issues with the introduction are present in around 20% of the papers, especially where this section tended to be longer than 4-5 lines²⁵.

In several papers, the introduction was preceded by an opening of the kind used in e-mail messages. Thus, in the 2021 cohort, students' introductions started *Stimate doamne, stimați domni* (n = 1), *Stimate (domnule) recenzor/Stimați recenzori*²⁶ (n = 3), *Bună ziua* (n = 1), *Stimate domnule + name* (n = 1), *Dear editor* (n = 1); in 2022, *Stimate (domnule) recenzor/editor/Stimați recenzori* (n = 5); in 2023, *Stimată doamnă profesor*²⁷ (n = 1); *Stimate domnule profesor* (n = 2); *Stimate domn* (n = 1); *Stimate (domnule) recenzor/editor/Stimați recenzori* (n = 3). The fact that 6 participants omitted the appellative *domnule* (the equivalent of 'sir'/'mister') is probably the result of the influence of the English models, where such appellatives do not combine with job titles and/or names.

A total of 32 of the students in the three cohorts used the authorial *we* in their responses and that demonstrates their adherence to the rule (promoted in most Romanian guides to academic writing) stating that in the introduction and the conclusions of an academic paper (where the use of 1st person is allowed) the singular should preferably be avoided and replaced with the plural. This guideline inadvertently made students resort to the authorial *we*²⁸ when they answered the reviewers' comments, their responses thus acquiring a professorial tone that eventually indicates their inability to correctly identify their reader. In association with the use (and abuse!) of verbs like *a considera* ('consider')²⁹ and *a crede* ('think', 'believe')³⁰, the authorial 1st person plural may furthermore indicate that participants unpredictably have underdeveloped

²⁵ S1-22's introduction is an example of best practice: "*În primul rând, țin să le mulțumesc recenzorilor pentru observațiile utile în vederea îmbunătățirii lucrării. Am luat în considerare sugestiile primite și am făcut modificările necesare, iar în cele ce urmează puteți găsi răspunsul la fiecare observație în parte*".

²⁶ The automatic choice of the masculine gender would make an interesting topic for discussion, but it is outside the scope of this investigation.

²⁷ S9-23 selected this opening probably influenced by the suggestion I made for the students to envision themselves addressing their doctoral supervisor, hers indeed being a female professor.

²⁸ *Royal, Editorial, or Otherwise: The Vague "We"* (<https://tweedediting.com/2010/11/royal-editorial-or-otherwise-the-vague-we/>) is a great read on the topic.

²⁹ S1-22 used variations of *a considera*, *a lua în considerare*, *după părerea mea* 7 times in her entire response and S20-22 used the verb *a considera* in the authorial plural 4 times in only one paragraph of 168 words and 9 times total.

³⁰ S14-22 actually starts 4 of her 5 responses with the verb *crede*: "*Cred că prima frază din secțiune [sic!] concluzii nu trebuie eliminată*", "*Cred că partea de sinteză a rezultatelor obținute...*", "*Cred că introducerea acestei lucrări este bine scrisă și motivația alegerii temei este evidentă*", "*Cred că secțiunea [sic!] concluzii paragraful...*". She is one of the two participants who rejected all five suggestions made by the reviewers. Similarly, S17-22 starts all her responses to R1's comments with "*Nu sunt de acord cu această observație, întrucât...*".

competence in their L1 that prevents them from selecting the register appropriate for the task. When novice writers do not effectively control (all the) variables that are relevant in genre pedagogy – the purpose, the context and the reader – their texts will miss their communicative goals, as happens with S20-22's puzzling answer to R2's 2nd suggestion, in which he announces his decision to avoid personal contribution lest he should exaggerate the importance of his own work³¹. The same student, in breach of the common conventions of this genre, addresses R2 directly and even teaches them a lesson about the named personal contribution³². Such attitudes suggest that a few participants (probably 5 at most) struggled to see the main goal of peer reviewing. If novice writers understand that the goal of their text is to convince the reviewers that they have appropriately addressed all the suggestions so that their manuscript is more suitable for publishing, that even in peer-reviewing one party has the upper hand and that is the reader, not the author, they will get a better grasp of the task and achieve better results with the same resources.

It is true that a genre like *responding to reviewers* is not generally taught at undergraduate and graduate levels, as it involves a type of interaction typically beyond the scope of BA and MA students. Based on this, it was anticipated that some issues might arise concerning how specifically the younger participants³³ would respond to criticism. One finding was that a large proportion of the answers, over 65%, validate the idea that at pre-university level the practice of expressing opinions is more widespread than critical writing, which negatively impacts students' ability to organize a convincing argumentation. Consequently, especially (but not only) when disagreeing with the reviewers' suggestions, writers project an image of self-sufficiency and a curt tone that does not really become young researchers, as in "*Apreciez sugestia, dar sunt de părere că*" (S23-21) or "*Nu sunt de acord cu recenzie primită*" (S14-21) or "*Nu sunt de acord cu această modificare, întrucât cred că obiectivele lucrării sunt bine conturate*" (S15-23).

However, because most related skills are transferable inter-linguistically, those students who had a good command of language functions like expressing agreement and disagreement, most probably from their FL classes, did quite well and stayed more focused (for example, S16-23³⁴: "*Am citit observația*

³¹ "*Contribuția personală alegem să o evităm deoarece considerăm că doar am exagera importanța propriei noastre lucrări*"

³² "*Contribuția trebuie dedusă fie de cititor, fie de dumneavoastră domnule recenzor; în cazul în care ea nu poate fi dedusă, înseamnă că ea nu există, deci prin urmare orice încercare de motivare ar fi inutilă*".

³³ S1-22 was 24, S14-22 was 27, S17-22 and S20-22 were 25 at the time of the study.

³⁴ For whatever reasons, S16-23 replaced R1's 2nd comment with "*Există probleme de tehnoredactare*" and responded to that instead of the original one. The source seems to be the presentation in class and even the model answer in it is mirrored in her response.

dumneavoastră și, într-adevăr, la o relectură mult mai atentă am remarcat și eu faptul că obiectivele nu sunt suficient de bine evidențiate. Am extins primul paragraf al lucrării, punctând mult mai clar obiectivele urmărite pe parcursul lucrării, după cum urmează...”). As I had anticipated, almost all students came up with more constructive responses to R2’s first suggestion because it opens with a positive comment (“The introduction is well-written, but...”). In fact, even those who had previously used no hedging strategies and no expressions of gratitude for the reviewers³⁵ were quite cooperative in this case.

A good proportion of the participants, n=56, attempted to make it easy for the editor (the M in the CALM approach) and either filled in the tables provided in the original blank document or arranged the reviewers’ comments in a row, each followed by the respective answer, sometimes using alternating colors. Only 4 students (S9-21, S10-21, S8-23, S11-23) chose a less reader-friendly arrangement placing their responses in the right-side panel (like when using track changes).

The results suggest that students who did not favor critical writing skills like reflecting, researching and analyzing over the more familiar ones used in opinion writing had probably acquired only a basic understanding of the genre practiced in the task and subsequently struggled with the appropriate language choices and organizational strategies in their responses. They took less clear positions and supported their arguments less convincingly, often in the wrong tone, which translates into limited success in the current writing task.

Conclusion

I designed and developed this genre-based activity aimed at providing doctoral students with an example of a specific situation in which academic Romanian is required. It was meant to have students work on it in a L1 context that mimicked a real-life situation so that they were encouraged to identify the purpose of the response to reviewer’s comments, the appropriate information that needs to be included, and the proper form. During the presentation and the follow-up discussions, students’ attention was also drawn to the relationships between them (as writers) and the reviewers (as readers), by pointing to the roles and statuses of the parties involved in the peer reviewing process and to how they shaped the texts produced in terms of form, structure and content. Engaging both receptively and participatively with the task enabled novice writers to raise their awareness of a new genre and the use of its particular functions. The pedagogic phase that included teacher’s presentation of models

³⁵ These participants were also the least willing to accept suggestions and to express disagreement based on other arguments than personal opinions and beliefs.

and explicit explanations played a crucial role by preparing students to show what they have learned through the task they were to submit.

Mastery of academic language can be difficult even for native speakers³⁶, because it requires knowledge of linguistic norms and awareness of contextual language besides syntactic rules. Some formulaic, genre-specific expressions and sentence stems were introduced explicitly in the presentation, then other examples were provided and discussed with the class so that students could also understand the suitable degree of formality and the appropriateness of linguistic choices in the given context. Most of these expressions, phrases, and examples were translated into Romanian from English by the instructor, who based this decision on three assumptions: the Romanian literature does not consistently provide such models, novice writers do not necessarily have an innate command of the genres and conventions of their L1 academic language, related knowledge and skills are largely transferable between languages. These assumptions underpin the belief that the current genre-based task can be useful beyond this specific class. Students, for instance, can revisit the proposed model whenever necessary and use it as a template to write responses in any language required, thus transforming an exam requirement into a convenient reference.

To acquire genre awareness students were guided to explore the conventions of this academic genre starting from the idea that the rapport between the writer and the reader is established through the text that needs to be shaped in accordance with the goals, audience and context of communication. In terms of practice and pedagogy in L1 academic writing, this investigation proposes a model task that can be replicated, recreated and adapted when designing in-class activities for L1 and/or L2 writing classes for advanced university-level learners.

WORKS CITED

- Carnovale, Catherine. 2019. "How to respond to reviewer comments – the CALM way." April 3. Accessed March 2024. <https://www.elsevier.com/connect/how-to-respond-to-reviewer-comments-the-calm-way>.
- Cheng, Angelia Poon Mui. 2006. "Understanding learners and learning in ESP genre-based writing instruction." *English for Specific Purposes* 25: 76-89.
- Ennis, Michael Joseph, and Jemma Prior. 2020. *Approaches to English for Specific and Academic Purposes: Perspectives on Teaching and Assessing in Tertiary and Adult Education*. bu, Press.

³⁶ Yearly, mass media offer counterexamples from secondary and high school students' production in the national exams.

- Gnutzmann, C. 2009. "19. Language for specific purposes vs. general language." In *Handbook of Foreign Language Communication and Learning.*, edited by K. Knapp and B Seidlhofer, 517-544. Berlin, New York: De Gruyter Mouton. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110214>.
- Hyland, Ken. 2006. *English for academic purposes: an advanced resource book*. Routledge.
- Hyland, Ken. 2020. "Genre and Discourse Analysis in Language for Specific Purposes." In *The Concise Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*, edited by Carol A. Chapelle, 507-513. Singapore: Wiley Blackwell.
- Hyon, Sunny. 2018. *Introducing Genre and English for Specific Purposes (Routledge Introductions to English for Specific Purposes)*. 1st. Routledge.
- Kindenberg, Björn. 2021. "Fixed and flexible, correct and wise: A case of genre-based content-area writing." *Linguistics and Education* 64: 1-12.
- Martin, Jeannett. 1992. "Genre and Literacy-Modeling Context in Educational Linguistics." *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 13: 141 - 172.
- Ötügen, R., M. Takkaç, and O. Yağız. 2021. "Genre analysis in ESP: A review of move analysis models and metadiscourse taxonomies." *e- Kafkas Eğitim Araştırmaları Dergisi* 8: 67-85.
- Shaw, Philip M. 2020. "Grammar in Academic Writing." In *The concise encyclopedia of applied linguistics*, edited by Carol A. Chapelle, 514-521. Singapore: Wiley Blackwell.
- Tao, Hongyin, and Howard Hao-Jan Chen. 2019. "Chinese for Specific/Professional Purposes: An Introduction." In *Chinese for Specific and Professional Purposes. Theory, Pedagogical Applications, and Practices*, edited by Hongyin Tao and Howard Hao-Jan Chen, vi- xiii. Springer.
- Tardy, Christine M. 2020. "Genre-Based Language Teaching." In *The Concise Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*, edited by Carol A. Chapelle, 503-506. Singapore: Wiley Blackwell.
- Wang, Haidan. 2019. "From Construction of Meanings to Meaning Design: A Literacy and Genre-Focused Approach to Academic Chinese." In *Chinese for Specific and Professional Purposes. Theory, Pedagogical Applications, and Practices*, edited by Hongyin Tao and Howard Hao-Jan Chen, 3-24. Springer
- Williams, Erica J. 2018. "Teaching and Assessment of Presentation Skills." In *English for Specific Purposes: A Multidimensional Challenge, 9th UAS Language Instructors Conference Proceedings, 25 – 26 May 2018*, 171-174. University of Applied Sciences, FH Technikum Wien.
- Yasuda, Sachiko. 2011. "Genre-based tasks in foreign language writing: Developing writers' genre awareness, linguistic knowledge, and writing competence." *Journal of Second Language Writing* 20: 111-133.

SCIENCE FICTION AND MILITARY ENGLISH: A CASE STUDY IN ITALY AND ROMANIA

Adela CATANĂ¹ 

Article history: Received 10 February 2024; Revised 5 July 2024; Accepted 15 October 2024; Available online 10 December 2024; Available print 30 December 2024.

©2024 Studia UBB Philologia. Published by Babeş-Bolyai University.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License

ABSTRACT. *Science Fiction and Military English: A Case Study in Italy and Romania.* Starting from the premise that science fiction arouses the interest of both young adult readers and members of the armed forces, the current paper aims to evaluate the possibility of using this genre as a means of teaching Military English to first-year cadets. Additionally, this is an attempt to fill a gap left by specialized literature at national and international levels. The paper combines an eclectic theoretical framework, a synthesized lesson plan used to design and deliver experimental seminars involving forty cadets from two countries (Italy and Romania) and a survey accompanied by charts and explanations. The lesson plan is largely based on “Rome, Sweet Rome,” a 2011 SF short story by military historian James Erwin, and demonstrates that science fiction – particularly military science fiction—can be an alternative solution to traditional textbooks. The collected data prove that SF sources can help teachers conceive instructive and entertaining language classes, while also providing students with a formal, but comfortable environment, meant to facilitate their acquisition of military terminology and specific knowledge according to the STANAG 6001 requirements. The conclusion emphasises the

¹ **Adela CATANĂ** received a PhD in Philology from the University of Bucharest and is currently working as a Lecturer at the Ferdinand I Military Technical Academy, Romania. In the past, she conducted research at the University of Glasgow in the UK, the Free University in Germany, the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium, and The Romanian Academy in Rome, Italy. Her research experience spans a wide range of disciplines, including language and pedagogical studies, North-American literature, Utopian studies, science fiction, and military culture. Besides delivering papers at various conferences and having them published in collective volumes and internationally indexed journals, she is also the author of a monograph titled *Social Concepts in Contemporary Utopian Discourse* (ArsDocendi, 2018). Email: adela.catana@mta.ro.

great potential of the proposed method, but also signals that its successful implementation is heavily dependent on the teacher's training, commitment and creativity as well as on the students' receptivity.

Keywords: *Italian and Romanian cadets, lesson plan, Military English, science fiction, survey*

REZUMAT. *Literatura științifico-fantastică și engleza militară: un studiu de caz în Italia și România.* Pornind de la premisa că literatura științifico-fantastică suscită deopotrivă interesul tinerilor cititori și al membrilor forțelor armate, lucrarea de față își propune să evalueze posibilitatea utilizării acestui gen literar ca mijloc de predare a limbii engleze militare cadeților din anul I. Se încearcă astfel umplerea unui gol lăsat de literatura de specialitate la nivel național și internațional. Lucrarea combină un cadru teoretic eclectic, un plan de lecție sintetizat, utilizat pentru a proiecta și susține seminarii experimentale cu implicarea a patruzeci de cadeți din două țări (România și Italia) și un sondaj însoțit de grafice și explicații. Planul de lecție se bazează în mare parte pe „Rome, Sweet Rome” (“Roma, dulce Roma”), o nuvelă SF din 2011 scrisă de istoricul militar James Erwin, și demonstrează că textele SF – în special cele cu tematică militară – pot fi o soluție alternativă la manualele tradiționale. Datele colectate demonstrează că sursele SF îi pot ajuta atât pe profesori, să conceapă seminarii instructive și distractive, cât și pe studenți, să învețe într-un mediu formal, dar confortabil, care să le faciliteze însușirea terminologiei militare și a informațiilor specifice, conform cerințelor STANAG 6001. Acest articol se încheie prin a sublinia marele potențial al metodei propuse, semnalând totodată că succesul implementării acesteia depinde în mod semnificativ de pregătirea, angajamentul și creativitatea profesorului precum și de receptivitatea studenților.

Cuvinte-cheie: *cadeți italieni și români, engleza militară, literatura științifico-fantastică, plan de lecție, sondaj de opinie*

Introduction

The “increasing use of English as a second language” and “the increased requirements for second language learning” are – according to the U.S. Army researcher Michael Drillings and CRESST professor Harold F. O’Neil Jr. – among the trends that “will continue well into the 21st century for both the military and civilian sectors” (Drillings and O’Neil 1994, 1). Therefore, despite the emergence and considerable development of applications such as Google Translate or Voice Translator, a good knowledge of English remains a *sine qua non* condition for

cadets who want to improve their academic results and pursue a successful military career in NATO state members such as Italy or Romania. At the same time, professors, teachers or language trainers working in the military institutions of education bear the major responsibility of elaborating instructional strategies and captivating learning activities that can increase students' motivation and proficiency level. Familiarising, however, first year cadets with English for Military Purposes is by far more challenging than focusing on general English. How can classes become educational and entertaining without being reduced to the memorisation of endless lists of technical terms and dry definitions? Likewise, how can teachers of English approach certain military-specific topics without trespassing into areas reserved for colleagues specialised in subjects such as history, sociology, psychology or engineering?

Inspired by well-established Italian Professor Liliana Landofi, who claims that: "Change, particularly at university level, [...] is a process that needs experimentation and try-out with real experiments in formal acquisitional contexts" (Landofi 2017, 137), This paper proposes and tests a solution that can be used to teach English for military purposes while also enhancing general language skills. It introduces science fiction as a pedagogical tool in the design of instructive and entertaining English language classes, while promoting James Erwin's 2011 narrative "Rome, Sweet Rome" as an example of primary source. The abundance of statistics and articles indicate that this genre is highly successful among both young adult readers and members of the armed forces. Therefore, SF primary sources may represent a refreshing solution to overused and often limitative traditional textbooks, when it comes to working with first year cadets. The assessment of this hypothesis is based on a binational survey that summarizes the viewpoints of Italian and Romanian military students. The reasons underlying the association of Romanian and Italian cadets are complex and can be found in other studies that have already been published: "Attitudes of Romanian and Italian Military Students regarding English Second Language Acquisition" (2023) and "The Role of Gender in English Second Language Acquisition: A Comparative Study of Romanian and Italian Military Students" (2022).

In terms of originality, this article does not pretend to 'reinvent the wheel'. It only tries to roll 'that wheel' in a new direction. Literary texts have been employed in the language teaching – learning process since the Middle Ages and perhaps even longer than that. Nonetheless, scholars did not acknowledge this didactic technique prior to the 1980s. Despite its pulp fiction roots and academic dismissal, science fiction may have been utilised by teachers to entertain their students during classes. However, scientific articles exploring this phenomenon have not sprang until recent years. At international level,

research uncovers only a short list of authors who approach this subject: Anson Yang (2001), Peter Stockwell (2001), Muraveva and Agudo (2017) and Marie Th evenon (2018). Romania and Italy seem to be completely devoid of such studies, or if they do exist, they lack public exposure, making them doomed to oblivion. Therefore, this paper marks a significant milestone for both countries.

Structurally, this paper is divided into three parts. The first one offers a theoretical framework, which connects critical studies, language and pedagogy studies, statistics and studies of collective phenomena and processes. In this case, the applied methodology is a qualitative one, as it involves the collection and analysis of extensive studies. The second part outlines a lesson plan based on "Rome, Sweet Rome", a 2011 military science fiction short story written by American historian James Erwin. The design of this plan takes into account the international standards established by the Common European Framework of Reference for Language and the STANAG 6001 Edition 5, as well as a combination of modern and traditional teaching methods. The lesson plan was implemented in April and May 2022 and involved forty Romanian and Italian military students from Bucharest and Viterbo. The last part of this article consists of a survey meant to certify the effectiveness of science fiction as a pedagogical tool. The same students were given the opportunity to answer twelve multiple-choice questions written in English. Seven of them preceded the lesson, highlighting students' general perception of the given subject. The remaining questions were asked at the end of the class in order to provide feedback. It should be noted that the participants in this survey were between the ages of 18-20 and were equally distributed by nationality and gender. The methodology applied here is a mixt one as it relies on a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The collected data are accompanied by explicit charts and expose the similarities and differences that unite, but also separate the interviewees.

1. Theoretical Framework

1.1. Science fiction and Military Implications

When discussing science fiction, most people tend to associate it with various clich es such as imaginative plots, futuristic societies, highly sophisticated technologies, extreme scientific experiments, extra-terrestrial creatures, superheroes and apocalypses (Catană 2016, 167). This genre, however, must not be reduced to superficial views. Science fiction works are incredibly potent as they encompass the social, political, technological and ideological changes

of the time in which they are produced. Likewise, they anticipate the possible outcome of contemporary issues, simultaneously cautioning and educating the audience. Defining science fiction has proven to be particularly difficult as it is in a continuous process of reinvention and hybridization. Adam Roberts explains the resistance of science fiction to encapsulation by emphasising its nature: “[it] is a wide-ranging, multivalent and endlessly cross-fertilising cultural idiom” (Roberts 2006, 2).

Professor Darko Suvin managed to conceive a definition of science fiction in 1979 that has been widely cited ever since. In his view, this genre should be regarded as: “the verbal construct whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of *estrangement* and *cognition*, and whose main device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author’s empirical environment” (Suvin 1979, 37).

The phrase *verbal construction* refers to the materialisation - usually through words, though it can also be through images, sounds and movement - of an imaginative plot. Endowed with *estrangement* and *cognition*, such constructions gradually alienate readers, taking them out of their real world and integrating them into a fictional one, which is accepted as being real. Borrowed from Bertolt Brecht, the term *estrangement* (in German, *Verfremdungseffekt*) is used to underline the magnitude of the cognitive alienation suffered by readers. This process happens gradually, strongly relying on reasoning. It involves - as Adam Roberts claims- “logic implications” and the “constraints of science” (Roberts 2000, 8). Accurate descriptions, achievable scientific events, and pertinent cause-effect relations must be convincingly orchestrated, even if they are not related to reality directly. Despite numerous hybrid texts, traditional science fiction works do not involve the intervention of supernatural or magical elements. A series of key elements fuels the difference between the reality of the SF text and that of the reader. Among these are sophisticated technologies, space or time travel, genetically engineered or extraterrestrial creatures, and environmental disasters. All of these elements are part of the author’s proposed fictional mechanism, which the reader accepts without reluctance. Suvin refers to them using the term *novum* (Latin: *new* or *new thing*). According to him, “SF is distinguished by the narrative dominance or hegemony of a fictional *novum* ... validated by cognitive logic” (Suvin 1979, 63). The concept of hegemony is derived from Karl Marx and emphasizes the importance of maintaining power through persuasion rather than direct force. The author must reassure the reader of the veracity of the *novum* in a subtle rather than conspicuous way.

Military science fiction (MILSF) identifies as a subgenre of science fiction, which is primarily concerned with military organizations or individual members of a chain of command, futuristic weaponry and vehicles (for instance, lasers and space battleships), the mechanics of an armed conflict occurring in outer space, on another planet or in another time dimension and belligerents that may involve extraterrestrials. In addition, MSF texts commonly promote important values such as bravery, sense of duty, discipline, integrity, loyalty, selfless commitment and camaraderie. Given the traditional traits of this genre, it should come as no surprise that a high percentage of MSF authors are active members of the armed forces, veterans or military historians.

Following this line of thought, a good example is the text proposed to the Romanian and Italian military students involved in this project. "Rome, Sweet Rome" is an alternative military history written by Prufrock451, the pen name of American historian James Erwin. It was posted on Reddit, an American social network, on August 21, 2011, triggering a sudden and unexpected frenzy among fans of the genre. This is an account of what might happen if modern-day U.S. Marines encountered the legions led by Augustus Caesar. For unexplained reasons, the 35th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) is relocated from its original base in Kabul, Afghanistan, to the Roman Empire near the Tiber River in 23 BC. The unit consists of 2,200 Marines, 150 Air Force maintenance and repair specialists, 60 Afghan Army soldiers (mostly interpreters and liaisons) as well as 15 U.S. civilian contractors (Prufrock451 2011, 1). Moreover, it is fully equipped with M1 Abrams battle tanks, bulletproof vests, M249 SAW light machine guns, M16A4 rifles, and grenades. Colonel Miles Nelson must weigh his actions carefully because there is no means to replenish fuel or ammunition when they are depleted. Likewise, the Marines are left disadvantaged as they lack the intelligence and combat experience of the Roman legions. Readers are provided with the opportunity to uncover the subtleties of the battle between modern military and ancient legions, by examining the logistical challenges, strategic dilemmas, and the ultimate fate that befall these time-displaced warriors.

1.2. Genre Popularity among Young Adults and Service Members

Throughout its evolution, science fiction has been embraced, but also strongly resented particularly because of its connection with pulp fiction. Detractors frequently asserted that the general interest in science fiction did not reflect its quality, being crude and immature (Landon 2002, 3). The value of any text is subjective and Theodore Sturgeon's 1958 "Law" or "Revelation" is definitive in this regard. The American SF writer and critic highlights that: "The existence of immense quantities of trash in science fiction is admitted and

it is regrettable; but it is no more unnatural than the existence of trash anywhere [therefore] the best science fiction is as good as the best fiction in any field" (qtd in Ibid).

Since 2000, and especially in the last decade, science fiction has dominated both the book and the movie industries. Noah Pflueger-Peters wrote for "The California Aggie" that: "11 of the 20 top domestic grossing movies of the 2010s were science fiction, with a sci-fi movie being the top grossing film for out of the last five years" (Pflueger-Peters 2017). He further stresses that: "in the past two decades, there have been 21 top-grossing sci-fi movies, compared with 24 from every other decade combined" (Ibid). Despite non-traditional publishers being less transparent, Adam Rowe, Forbes columnist, has announced that print and digital book sales in science fiction and fantasy have doubled during this period (Rowe 2018). In reference to the readers' gender, Menadue and Jacups's survey lowers the balance in favour of female respondents, who represent 54.5% of the total readership (Menadue and Jacups 2018, 4). Science fiction has traditionally been viewed as a male-dominated genre. SF books have usually been written by male authors for male readers. According to Darren Beyer, women's interest in science fiction began to increase as their role in society changed significantly (Beyer 2018). The percentage of female readership went from 5-15% in the 1950s, to 25-35% in the 1970s and to around 50% in recent years (Ibid).

Based on the data provided by the Italian National Institute of Statistics, Andrea Didato confirmed that survey respondents aged 18 - 24 read the most, as they had "more available time and a greater desire for knowledge" (Didato 2000). According to the same author, "science fiction" was the second preference of 12.6% of the interviewees, being surpassed only by the book category titled "Thrillers and detective stories" which occupied the top position, scoring 27% (Ibid). He also observed that while "Thrillers and detective stories" were popular with all ages and with both genders, "science fiction" belonged to young adults and mostly men (Ibid). In 2020, the Italian National Institute of Statistics, revealed that despite the constantly decreasing number of readers, most of them were 18-19 years old and that women outranked men by 70% (Bologna and Caramis 2022).

The Romanian National Institute of Statistics showed in 2023 that the majority of readers (70.6%) were aged 16-24 and that women were more inclined to read than men (34.4% vs. 24.1%), (Pisică and Rădoi 2023, 43). However, nothing is said regarding their reading preferences. Marius Chivu revealed in his 2013 article "Cît, cum și ce citesc românii" ("How much, how and why do Romanians read?") that according to a survey conducted by www.iVox.ro, 15.5% of the participants favoured fiction books in the detriment of general education books (14%) and specialty books (11%) (Chivu 2013).

The reasons why science fiction is so popular among young people of both genders are quite numerous. To begin with, there is - what John Huntington calls - "the genuine intellectual pleasure to be driven from imagination in the fullest detail possible of a previously unknown or unthought-of machine, society, race or environment" (Huntington 1975, 345). Secondly, as shown in Menadue and Susan Jacups's survey, SF works play an "important influence on the perception and acceptance of science by the public" (Menadue and Jacups 2018, 1). Many of the technologies and scientific experiments that were imagined by SF authors have come to fruition. Flying by plane, crossing the oceans on board of a submarine, or travelling to the Moon and other planets were all actions dismissed as pure fiction, when Jules Verne first described them in his novels. Nowadays, they are only common facts that many of us take for granted. However, for this to occur, Verne and other science fiction authors have consistently prepared their audience. Thirdly, science fiction has the potential to "engage a particular set of problems to which science itself gives rise and which belong, not to the future, but to the present" (Huntington 1975, 345). Young readers of science fiction become more sensitive to issues related to rights and freedoms, ecology, scientific experiments, terrorist attacks, religious fanaticism, war, pandemic, etc.

The interest of the military in science fiction has not been statistically measured so far. Nonetheless, there are numerous service members or veterans, who claim an increased preoccupation for this genre. In this context, Australian Brigadier Mick Ryan claims that Science fiction "should be part of the reading program, and the professional library of military officers" (Ryan 2016). His statement is supported by several reasons, including the fact that this genre reminds [service members] of the enduring nature of [their] profession" (Ibid). Likewise, numerous military professionals offer advice to military science fiction writers on how to improve their stories and make them more accurate in a similar manner. For example, William S. Frisbee Jr., a former US Marine, gives important information on this topic in his guide book, *Writing Military Science Fiction: Infantry* (2018).

To summarise, science fiction dominates both book and movie ranks in the English-speaking countries around the world, but also in Italy and Romania. Despite traditional perceptions, this genre is equally enjoyed by both men and women. However, it does not often cross age boundaries, remaining mostly the preferred choice of teenagers and young adults. Due to its topics (technology, war, chain of command, etc.), the military represents a professional category that is prone to consume, promote, and even produce science fiction.

Based on the data presented above, this section launches the hypothesis that both male and female cadets, aged 18-20, from Romania and Italy, may present an increased interest in science fiction. This fact may enhance their learning of Military English and practice of language skills.

1.3. Science Fiction and Military English

The pedagogical potential of science fiction is undeniable. Apart from the fact that it is in essence “an intellectually stimulating and provocative form of popular literature” (Sawyer and Wright 2011, 5), science fiction can become a tool for teaching and learning new subjects. For instance, back in 1990, Professor Hilary M. Lips published an article on “Using Science Fiction to Teach the Psychology of Sex and Gender”. Aiming to help her students “appreciate the impact of gender on social relationships and social structure”, she introduced them to “science fiction about worlds in which gender is constructed very differently” (Lips 1990, 197). Several years later, in 2011 and 2015, American authors Stephanie N. Putt and respectively Carisa Ketchen published their works on the use of science fiction to teach science. Putt claims that the “information learned through narratives [such as science fiction texts] can be retained for a longer period of time than information learned through textbooks” (Putt 2011, 1). Carisa Ketchen provides evidence on how science fiction stimulates students’ engagement with scientific facts, increases their science literacy skills, and even determines their interest in science related careers (Ketchen 2014, vi). The approach of both authors is strengthened by the fact that many science fiction writers have a scientific background. Think of Isaac Asimov who was a biochemistry professor, Arthur C. Clarke, who had a degree in mathematics and physics or Robert Anson Heinlein, who was an aeronautical engineer and naval officer, and the list may continue.

The association of science fiction and second language acquisition or language for specific purposes has not gained popularity until recent years. The controversial nature of this genre made its use during classes an unconventional choice. In short, it was not something every teacher would dare to use in a formal learning environment. However, there have also been exceptions. Canadian author, Margaret Atwood, admitted that in her youth, she employed science fiction texts in order to teach English to foreign engineers working in her country. As part of this process, she invited her students “to write imitations of Kafka, which [...] might help them in their chosen profession” (qtd. in Rogers 1999, 419).

Teachers have traditionally used literary texts to teach various languages, including English, to pupils and students. This practice has captured the interest of many researchers around the world, particularly since the 1980s. Sandra McKay, for instance, explored the advantages and disadvantages of using literature in her 1982 article titled “Literature in the ESL Classroom”. She argued that “if literary texts are to be used successfully in the classroom, they must be carefully selected and approached in a manner which promotes an

aesthetic interaction between the reader and the text" (Mckay 1982, 529). William T. Littlewood's 1986 study titled "Literature in the Second Foreign Language Course" defined "five levels or perspectives for literary works and their place in language instruction" and provided some "criteria for the selection of appropriate texts" (Littlewood 1986, 180). In her 1988 thesis "The effectiveness of fiction versus nonfiction in teaching reading to ESL students", Becky Kay Appley stated that unlike non-fiction, "fiction is more enjoyable" and "seems to be better for teaching direct statements" (Appley 1988, 5). At the beginning of the 1990s, Gillian Lazar published a guide for teachers and trainers, meant to help them "develop a thoughtful and principled approach to using literature in the language classroom" (Lazar 1990, xii). Many more recent studies such as M Enamul's "The Use of Literature in Teaching English as a Foreign Language" (2007), Parlindungan Pardede Christian's "Using Short Stories to Teach Language Skills" (2011) and Supaporn Yimwilail's "An Integrated Approach to Teaching Literature in an EFL Classroom" (2015) demonstrate that literature is crucial in teaching English language, and that there is an increasing variety of approaches.

Researchers only started promoting the inclusion of science fiction in English second language classes after 2000, possibly due to its rising popularity. Anson Yang wrote in his 2001 article "A Journey into the Future: Using Sci-Fi Stories with EFL Learners" about the use of both film and text versions of science fiction stories in helping students participate confidently in reading classes as well as other "successful methods in eliciting EFL students' discussion" (Yang 2001, 63). Similarly, Peter Stockwell proposed in his 2001 article "Teaching the Future: On the Use of Science Fiction in English Language Learning", some "science fiction texts that explicitly address language issues" and some "practical techniques of using science fiction in the language classroom" (Stockwell 2001, 3). In 2007, authors Muravevaa and Agudo presented their attempt to teach English to Technical degree students while using science fiction materials, especially dystopian narratives. They argued that this way students could improve their "understanding of lexical and grammatical formulas, syntactic relations, discursive particulars and extralinguistic concepts" (Muravevaa and Agudo 2007, 303). One year later, Marie Thévenon stated that certain passages from science fiction novels and films suitable for teaching English to students majoring in biotechnology or astrophysics (Thévenon 2018, 6). These methods can help them improve language skills, while indulging in ethical debates based on scientific facts.

The research conducted so far has not been able to identify any connection between science fiction and English for Military Purposes. Therefore, the present article makes a first step by launching the idea that this genre can be successfully employed in this particular teaching and learning process.

In *Military English: From Theory to Practice* (2015), Valentina Georgieva provides a self-contained definition:

“Military language as one of languages for special purposes comprises all linguistic means – terms, military slang and military symbols as semiotic signs – for designating military organisations, personnel, military ranks and hierarchy, armament and military equipment, military systems, types of military activities, tasks and operations, which are defined in doctrines, strategies, manuals, guides, orders and similar specialised military/defence national and international documents and collections of informal military slang” (Georgieva 2015, 8).

Just like any other language for specific purposes, Military English “tends to be generally more abstract and less dependent on the immediate setting for its coherence than everyday language use” (Hyland and Jiang 2021, 13). The setting that Hyland and Jiang are talking about, does not necessarily have to be a realistic one reconstructed based on students’ books, newspaper articles or military documents. It can very well be a fictional one, as depicted by military science fiction (MSF) texts. Military science fiction does not only include the specific terminology, but also contextualizes it in a dynamic manner, which arouses the interest of both service members and the general public.

Considering the documented attempts to incorporate science fiction into the teaching process of subjects such as psychology, science as well as foreign languages, it becomes no surprise that this genre can also be employed to familiarise cadets with Military English.

2. Lesson Plan: Science Fiction and Military English

This section outlines a lesson plan that illustrates how science fiction can aid cadets in practicing military English in an instructive and entertaining manner. It should be mentioned that this plan has been significantly synthesised for length reasons and works only for orientation purposes. The original plan was implemented with first-year military students enrolled in Bucharest and Viterbo academies, in April and May 2022. As previously stated, the forty participants in this experimental class were between the ages of 18 and 20, and were equally divided by their nationality and gender. Based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Language Skills (CEFR), the participants’ scores in English were B2 (upper intermediate) and B1 (intermediate). This means that most of them could “understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar” (CEFR 2024). The rest of them can at least “understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in

work, school, leisure, etc” (Ibid). In addition, the cadets had already gained knowledge of basic military vocabulary and related topics. The lesson plan consists of ten main activities, which are preceded by a warm-up questionnaire and followed by feedback.

The estimated time for completing all tasks is 1 hour and 50 minutes. The learning objectives of this experimental lesson are divided into two categories in accordance to their specificity. 1. General objectives: a. to consolidate newly and previously acquired vocabulary related to military branches, ranks, uniforms, equipment, weaponry, vehicles, logistics, combat tactics and strategies; b. to compare modern and ancient military means, and c. to raise cadets’ awareness regarding the multidimensional impact of military forces into a foreign territory. 2. Specific objectives: a. to identify essential information related to aspects of the military profession, based on images, written texts and video recordings; b. to use the identified information in conversations and written texts. Performing this lesson in good conditions requires the use of a variety of modern materials, such as Linguaphone system, smart board, projector, headphones, video, photos, copies of military dictionaries, text.pdf, handouts. The types of classroom interaction include: learner-instructor interaction, learner-content interaction, and learner-learner interaction, whereas the applied teaching techniques involve: eliciting, conversation, communication, explanation, exercises, brainstorming and cooperative learning. One of the expected language issues is that the cadets may not be familiar with all the military terminology used in the lesson. In the event that this happens, the teacher can either provide the necessary explanations or request the cadets to identify the necessary information by themselves using military dictionaries or the Internet. A brief presentation of the activities included in the lesson plan is provided below.

Warm-up Activity: Seven introductory questions are asked by the teacher to assess cadets’ knowledge of science fiction and the possibility of using it as a tool for Military English practice. The analysis of questions and their answers is completed in the final part of this article.

Activity 1: The teacher displays five photos and invites cadets to describe them. As with all speaking tasks, their responses should be well developed and coherent. They should demonstrate effective use of grammar and military vocabulary (U.S. service branches, ranks, insignia, uniforms, equipment, weaponry etc). Example: The student asked to describe *Image 1*. is expected to indicate what military branch those men belong to, their rank, name their uniform type and distinctive camouflage, talk about their headwear and eyepro (eye protection) as well as boots. Nonetheless, the student should also be able to identify the type of rifle and the additional equipment used by the two men, and describe their posture and the actions.

Activity 2: Listening comprehension. The teacher invites students to watch a video excerpt selected from "Rome, Sweet Rome" (Kelly 2012). After listening to it, students are asked to complete ten sentences that have been extracted from the video by filling in the gaps with the correct military terminology. Example: Nelson's men will soon (1) report that all communication, including GPS and (2) satellite radio, has been completely lost. Nelson is now convinced that something more dreadful has happened - (3) a nuclear war or (4) an EMP. (qtd Kelley 2012)

Activity 3: Based on the previous activity, the teacher asks students five questions and expects them to provide the answers. Example: 1. What would happen if cutting-edge military powers clashed with ancient battle strategies?

Activity 4: The teacher instructs students to take turns and read Parts Two and Three of "Rome, Sweet Rome". They are tasked with identifying 10 military terms and defining them. 1. Humvees - (High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle) a range of high-mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicles that are lightweight, four-wheel drive, military trucks and utility vehicles.

Activity 5: The teacher asks five questions based on the previous text and the students are required to respond to them. 1. Why were all fixed-wing aircraft and fight helicopters rendered inoperable?

Activity 6: The teacher shows a picture of a Boeing Vertol CH-46 Sea Knight, a helicopter mentioned in "Rome, Sweet Rome", and students are encouraged to participate in this activity. Ten components need to be identified and defined.

Example: 10. Rotor blades - the four long, flat, thin pieces of metal on top of a helicopter, which go round and lift it off the ground. CH-46 features fiberglass rotor blades.

Activity 7: Students are invited by the teacher to explore sections Four and Five of "Rome, Sweet Rome". There have been seven paragraphs removed from the extract. Students are required to choose from paragraphs A-H the one that best matches each gap. There is an extra paragraph that they do not need to use.

Activity 8: Multiple choice exercise. For sentences 1-10, students have to read sections Six and Seven of "Rome, Sweet Rome" and select which answer (A, B, C, or D) is the most appropriate for each gap. Example: 1. "The Marine negotiating team heads east in an (1.) D. armed convoy: three Humvees with two helicopters riding shotgun" (Prufrock451 2011). A. naval convoy; B. convoy control; C. humanitarian convoy; D. armed convoy

Activity 9: Students are required to write a short essay (250-300 words) that summarizes and evaluates the main ideas from section Eight of "Rome, Sweet Rome". The teacher displays their essays on the smart board, encourages students to read them and engage in discussion.

Activity 10: Teamwork. Students are invited to form groups of five members each, and do brainstorming in order to identify a possible ending to James Erwin’s “Rome, Sweet Rome”. Their ideas should be presented in a brief essay (350-500 words). The text should be read by a team leader. The teacher projects the essays on the smart board. Arguments for and against the presented endings should be provided by each group.

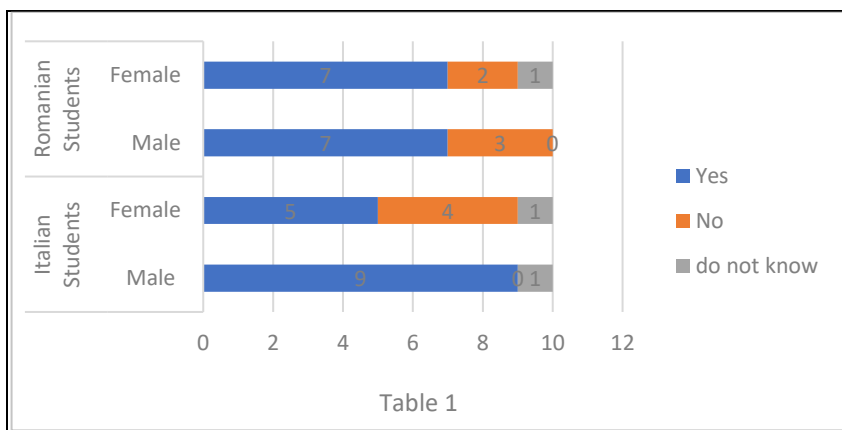
Feedback: Five final questions are asked by the teacher, and students are encouraged to provide their answers. The survey below includes the questions and their answers.

3.The Results of the Student Survey

3.1. Before the lesson:

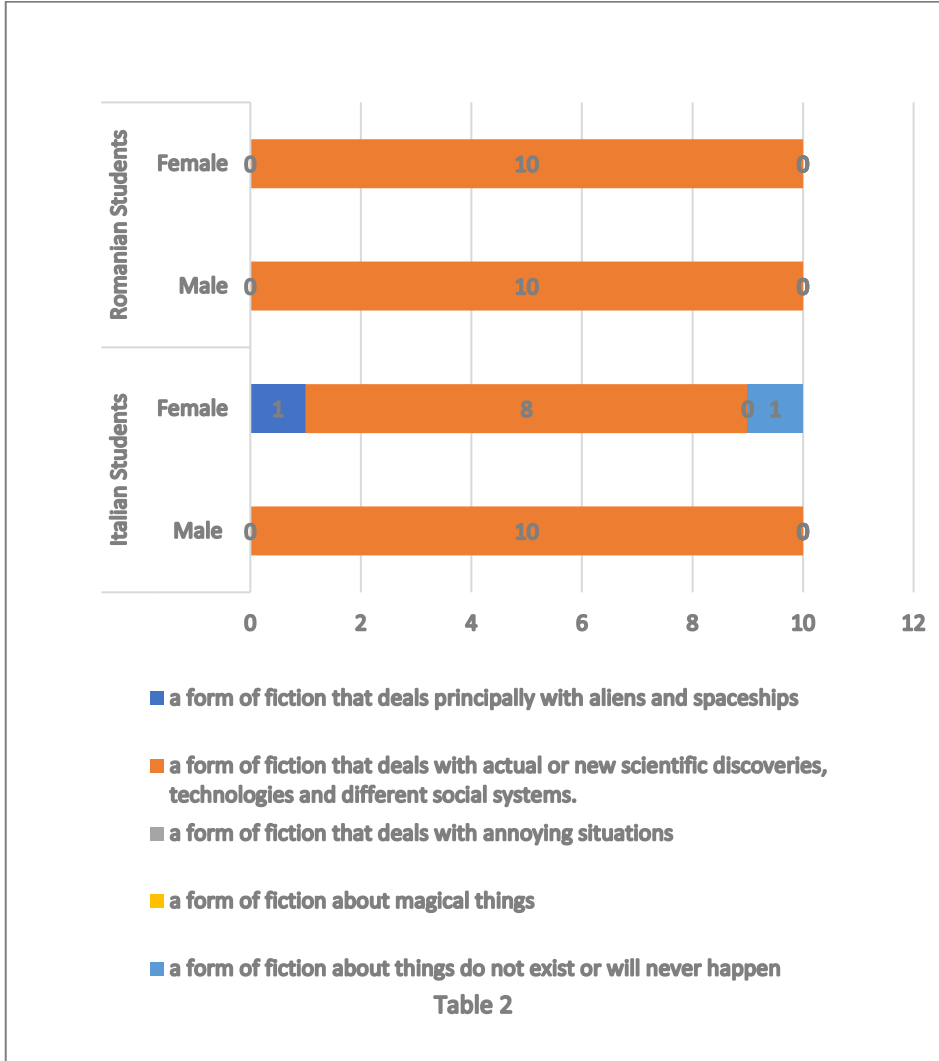
Question 1: Do you like science fiction?

Most students (70%) are enthusiastic about science fiction, whether it is in the form of movies or books. Despite the constant decrease in the number of readers, young adults still read and prefer science fiction, as evidenced by their responses. In this particular case, Italian male students like this genre the most, although they would rather watch movies more than read books. It is also evident that, contrary to their female colleagues, male students have a higher preference for science fiction. During the warm up activity, one of the Italian girls confessed that: “Personally, I do not like science fiction very much because, even if I believe in science and its progress, I think it is a genre too far away from concrete reality and, therefore, it shows us a view that can hardly come true in our present”. Nonetheless, she claimed that science fiction could be used to teach English.



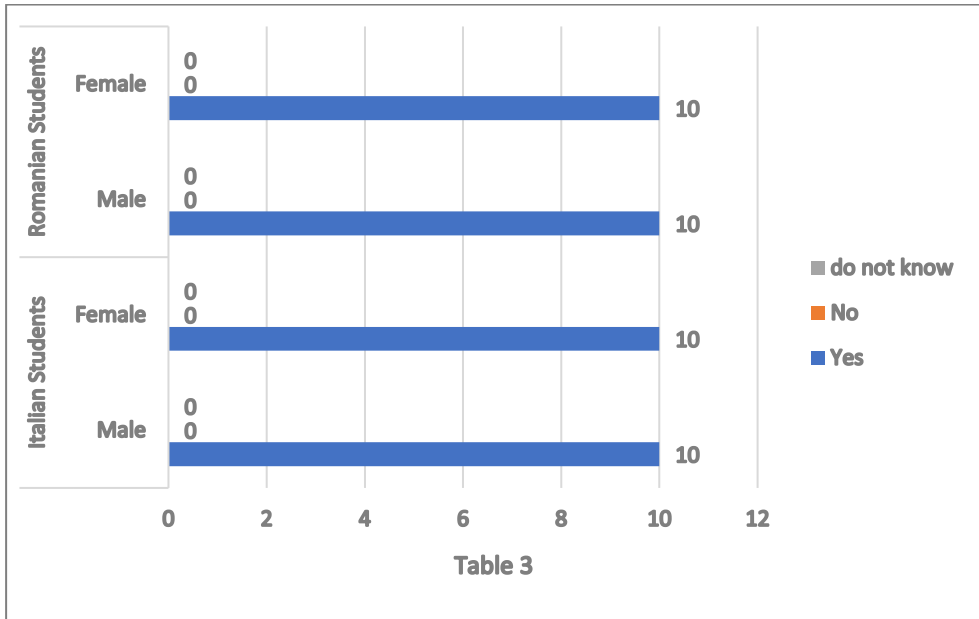
Question 2: In your opinion, which statement defines best science fiction?

Almost all students comprehend the thematic complexity of science fiction. They are able to identify the best description from the several options provided to them, demonstrating their knowledge in the field.



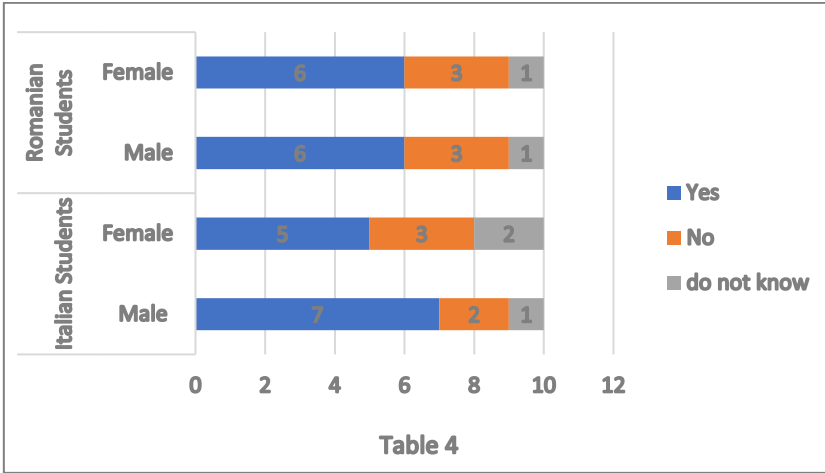
Question 3: Can science fiction include military vocabulary and topics?

All students agree that science fiction may include military terminology while depicting military activities, such as armed conflicts, weaponry, heroic officers or non-coms, and various other aspects of military life.



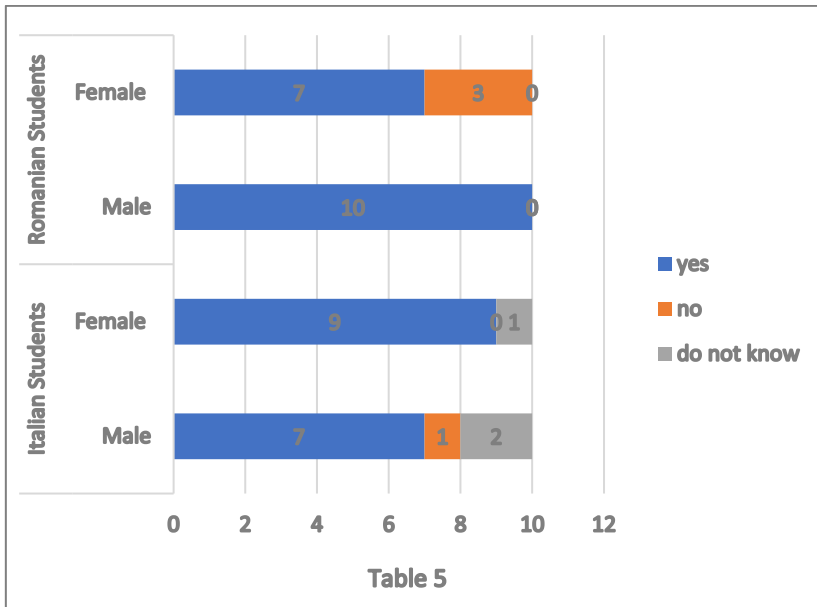
Question 4: Do you watch SF movies or read SF books?

Science fiction is consumed by 60% of students, whether they read books, graphic novels, comics, or watch movies. Obviously, movies are their first option. In the discussion that followed this interview many male students provided examples of sci-fi war movies they already watched on Netflix such as *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker* (2017), *War of the Worlds* (2005), *Battleship* (2012) or *World Invasion* (2011).



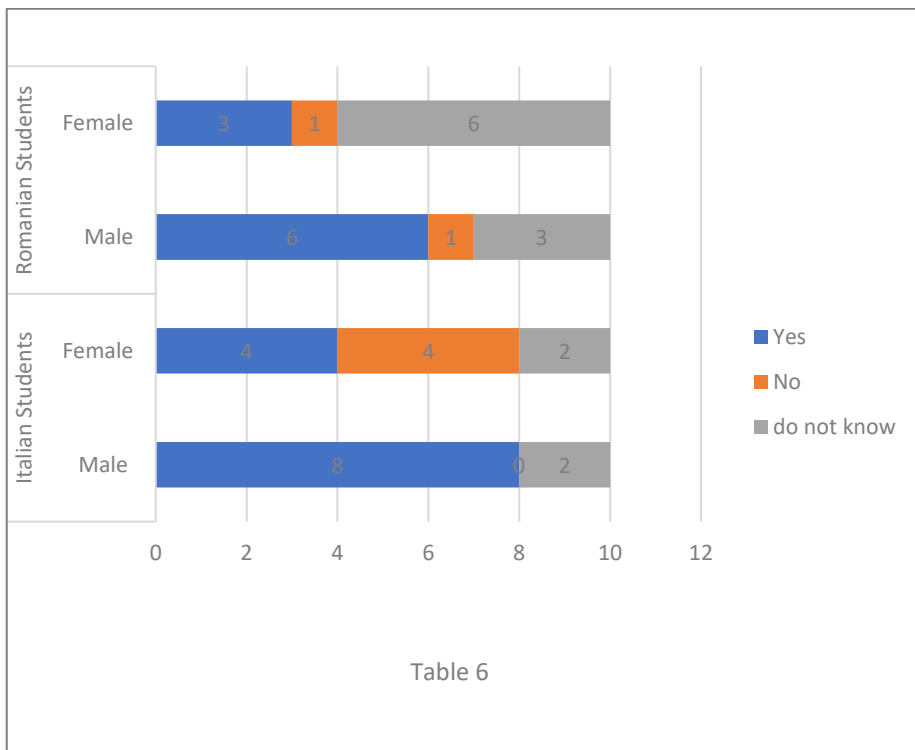
Question 5: Could your level of English improve based on SF books or movies?

Most students are open to the idea of improving their level of English based on reading SF books or watching movies. The only downside in this process is related to reading. Reading books, especially as homework, is a real challenge.



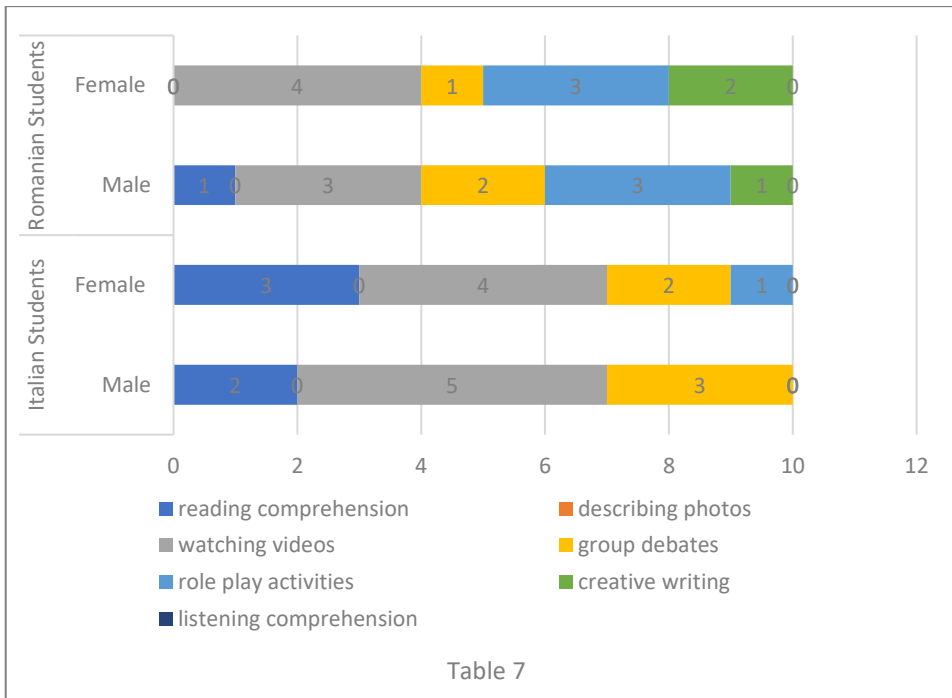
Question 6: Do you think science fiction texts / videos could make English seminars more entertaining?

According to 52.5% of the total number of students, science fiction texts and videos can improve their English skills in a more pleasant way. Although the students who support this attempt come from both genders, men seem to be more confident. Likewise, Italians are more interested in such a project than Romanians. During the discussions that followed this question, two girls qualified the use of science fiction as “interesting” and “entertaining” and manifested their desire to fulfil various language tasks based on SF materials. The same Italian girl who provided a negative answer to question 1, added in this case: “I believe that analysing science fiction should improve our language skills by learning more technical and specific words and this should be useful to expand our vocabulary”.



Question 7: What sort of English activities could be developed using science fiction sources?

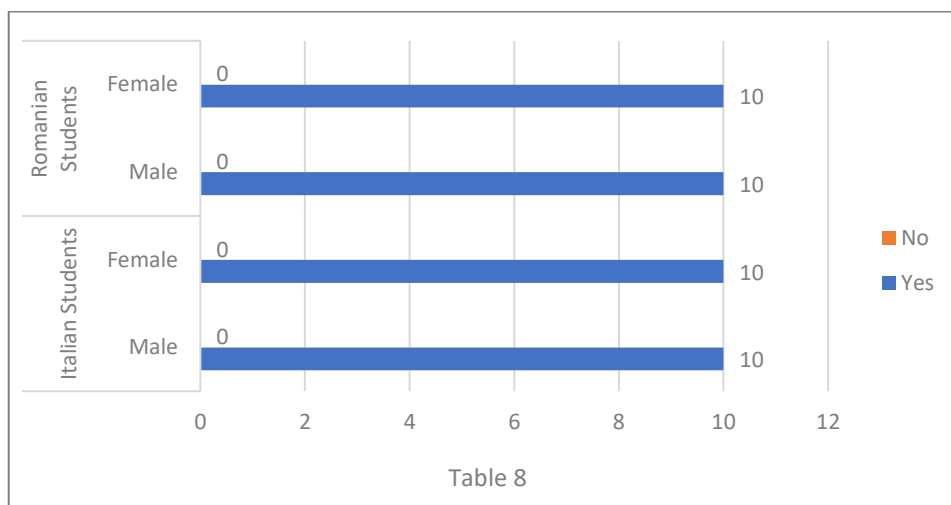
Students are able to identify various language activities based on SF sources. This proves the fact that science fiction can have great pedagogical potential in helping students improve their English skills. The majority of interviewees believe that science fiction may involve activities that require *reading or listening comprehension*. 37.5% imagine more complex activities such as *role play* and *group debates*, which could help them improve their conversation skills and vocabulary. A small share of students (7.5%) venture to choose *writing* as a creative activity, which would help them improve their essays.



3.2. After the lesson

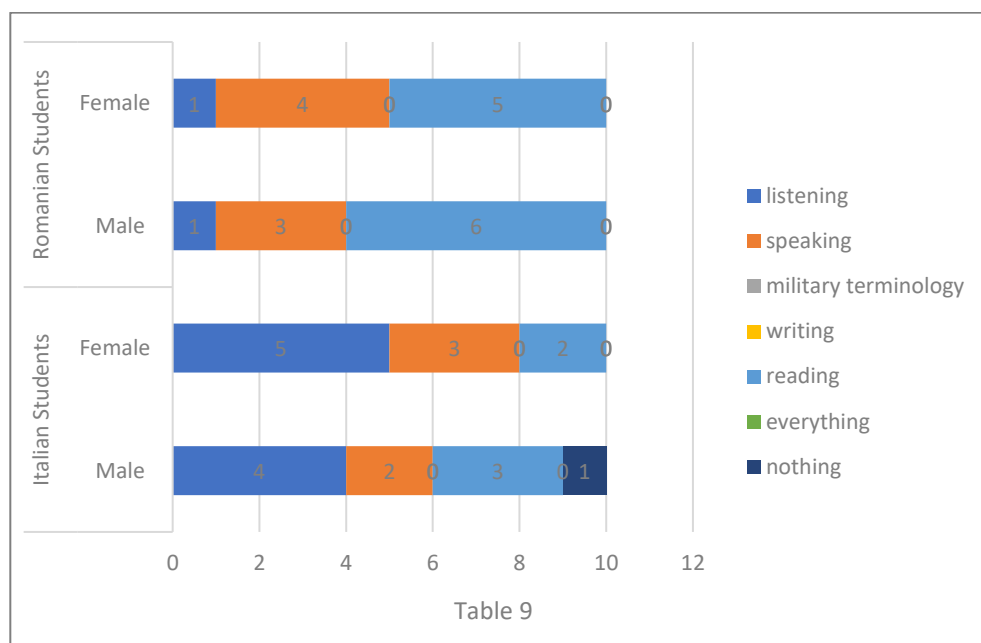
Question 8: Do you qualify this English class as being instructive and entertaining?

This English class is considered both instructive and entertaining by all students, regardless of their nationality or gender. Using a genre that appealed to their interests and age category, they improved military vocabulary and practiced language skills within a formal but comfortable context.



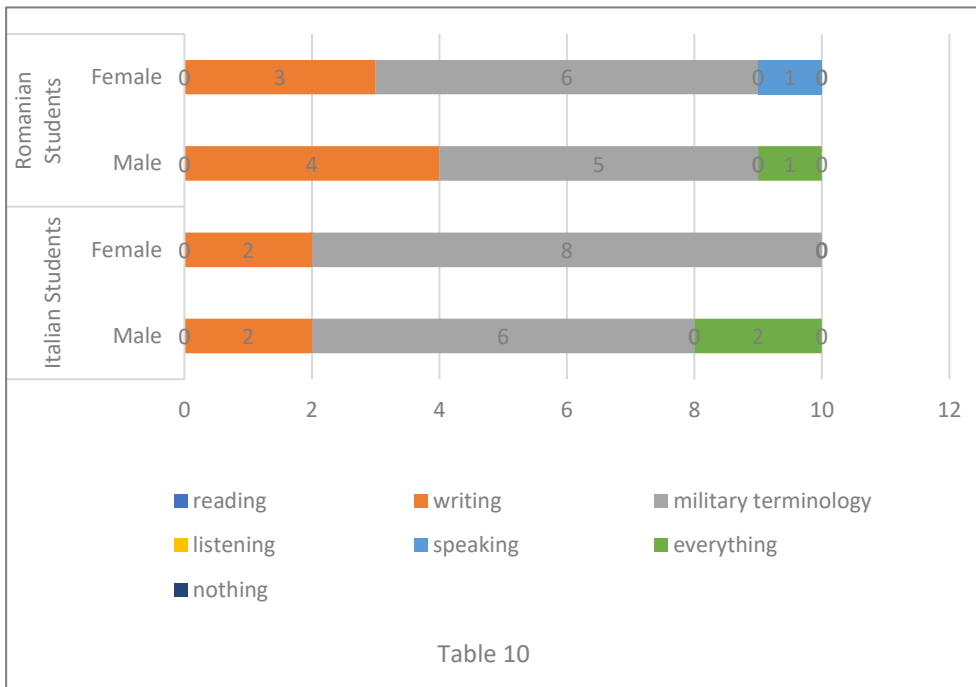
Question 9: What was the easiest class activity that you attended to?

Italian students found *listening* to be the easiest activity, while their Romanian peers chose *reading*. Female students in both countries tend to favour speaking more than their male colleagues; a fact that confirms their holistic approach on learning a language.



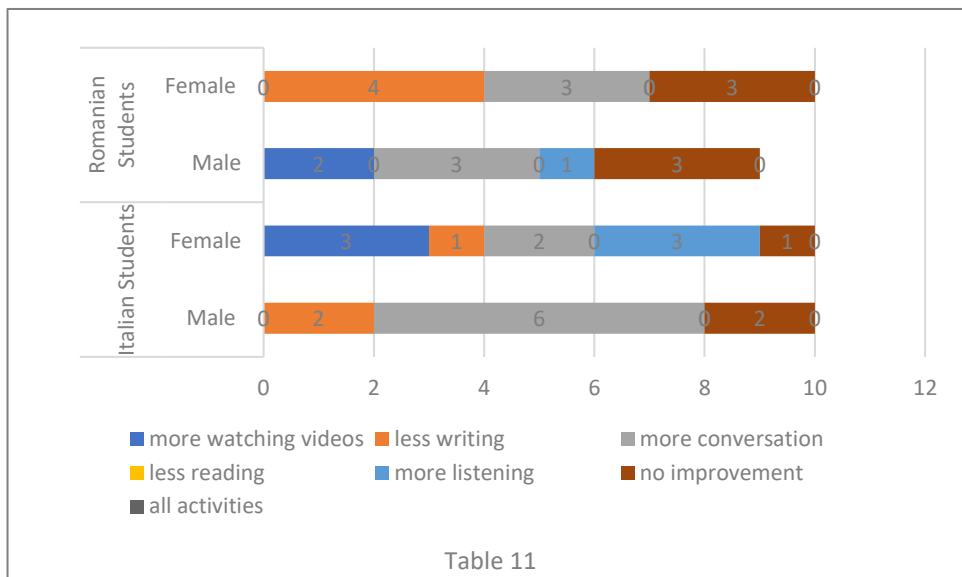
Question 10: What was the most difficult class activity?

Most students (60%) regard *military vocabulary* as being the most difficult feature of the class. Acquiring military vocabulary requires additional preparation and research. However, this is the main task that cadets have to fulfil in order to pass the STANAG 6001 exams that are waiting for them at the end of their Bachelor studies. *Writing* an essay on a military topic is not an easy task either. Not only that students have to employ the specific terminology, but they also have to apply certain writing strategies. A few students also claimed that *all activities* had presented a significant degree of difficulty.



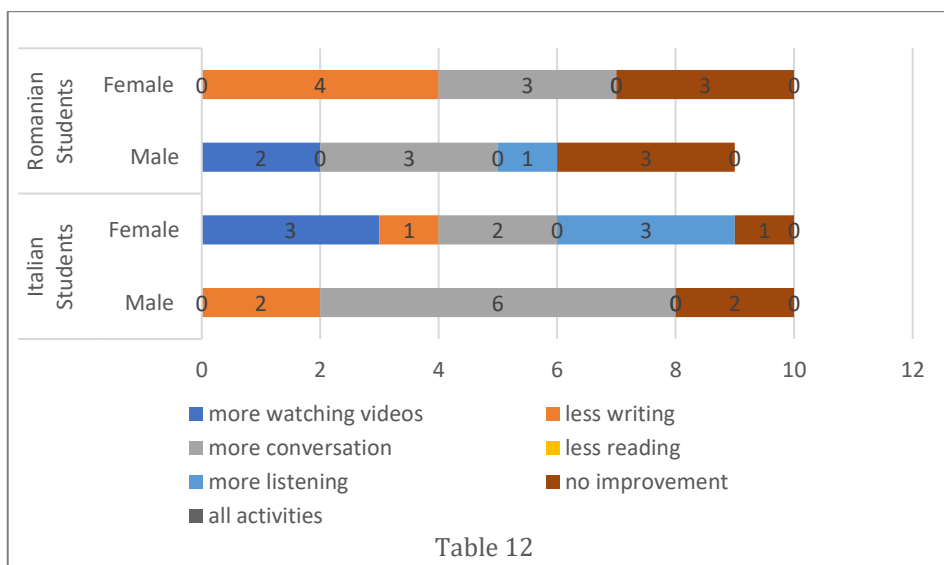
Question 11: Identify the activity that is most beneficial for learning Military English.

The activity that most students consider the best for studying Military English is *conversation*. However, they seem to consider *all activities* extremely important. While female colleagues recognize the importance of all activities in learning Military English, most male students prefer to use military vocabulary when talking.



Question 12: What enhancements would you make to the class activities?

The class they attended seems to have satisfied most students. The majority stated that there were no improvements needed for its activities. To enhance something, they would prefer *more conversation* and *less writing*. However, it is impossible to avoid writing activities because STANAG 6001 evaluates both oral and written performance of candidates.



Conclusion

By combining an eclectic theoretical framework, a synthesised lesson plan and a survey, this article has introduced and assessed the prospect of utilizing science fiction as an approach to teaching Military English.

The theoretical section has highlighted the fact that science fiction is a complex genre, whose definition goes beyond traditional clichés. Likewise, it has revealed that this genre offers a rich background for exploring military topics and vocabulary implicitly. In terms of popularity, science fiction dominates international reading surveys being preferred especially by young adult readers and presumably by both males and females. Due to their military themes, science fiction works also appeal to members of the armed forces. Active service members and veterans' interest in science fiction has been revealed on numerous websites.

Research has brought to the fore the use of science fiction in the teaching of subjects such as psychology, science, and foreign languages. However, it identified a gap regarding the use of this genre in the teaching of Military English and established its fulfilment as a goal of this article.

The lesson plan that was implemented with forty Italian and Romanian cadets demonstrates that science fiction can provide the opportunity to design a significant number of activities. All of them can facilitate the acquisition of Military English in a formal, but comfortable environment.

The survey has indicated that all participants comprehend the thematic complexity of science fiction and recognize that SF texts can contain military terminology and topics. This genre is enjoyed by more than half of the cadets, who are enthusiastic consumers of both SF books and movies. It seems that Italian male students have a fondness for this genre, even though they prefer watching movies over reading books. Contrary to Menadue and Jacups' 2018 study which states that female respondents (54.5%) enjoy science fiction more than their counterparts (Menadue and Jacups 2018, 4), this survey shows that science fiction is still a male favourite genre.

The idea that science fiction could improve their military knowledge and English skills is widely accepted by students. In this respect, they are able to identify various language activities based on science fiction sources, their main options being *reading* and *listening comprehension*, but also *role play* and *group debates*. The experimental English class was deemed beneficial for acquiring military vocabulary and practicing language skills by all participants. The easiest activities for Italian and Romanian male students are *listening* and *reading*, while their female colleagues opt for *speaking*, which reveals their holistic approach to language learning. *Learning military vocabulary* is the most challenging activity students were asked to complete. This is followed by *writing*, a task that

students are conditioned to cope with, because of the STANAG 6001 exams. The study of Military English is – according to the cadets – best enhanced by *conversation*. The majority of students, 70%, have concluded that there are no improvements needed for the class activities.

To conclude, science fiction has the potential to be an effective teaching and learning tool for Military English. Nonetheless, its implementation is heavily reliant on the teacher's training, commitment, and creativity, as well as the students' receptiveness.

WORK CITED

- Appley, Becky Kay. 1988. "The Effectiveness of Fiction Versus Nonfiction in Teaching Reading to ESL Students". Master's thesis, Portland State University. https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/open_access_etds/3754/.
- Beyer, Darren. 2018. "Out of This World – Where Are the Woman in Sci-Fi?" *Grit Daily*, October 22, 2018. <https://gritdaily.com/darren-beyer-women-sci-fi/>.
- Bologna, Emanuela and Alessandro Caramis. 2022. "Produzione e Lettura di Libri in Italia: Anno 2020. Lieve Flessione Della Produzione Libreria, in Aumento Il Numero Di Lettori". *Istat.it*. Istituto Nazionale di Statistica. https://www.istat.it/it/files//2022/02/REPORT_PRODUZIONE_E_LETTURA_LIBRI_2020.pdf
- Catană, Adela Livia. 2016. "Something of a Grail Quest: Defining and Tracing Science Fiction" in *Multicultural Representations. Literature and Discourse as Forms of Dialogue. Section: Literature*, edited by Iulian Boldea and Cornel Sigmirean, 167–175. Tîrgu Mureş: Arhipelag XXI Press.
- Catană, Adela. 2022. "The Role of Gender in English Second Language Acquisition: A Comparative Study of Romanian and Italian Military Students" in *Proceedings of the 10th International Conference Synergies in Communication* ISSN (online), 217–230. https://sic.ase.ro/wp-content/uploads/21.-SiC_2022_Catana-Adela.pdf.
- Catană, Adela. 2023. "Attitudes of Romanian and Italian Military Students regarding English Second Language Acquisition" in *Philologica Jassyensia*, no. 2 (38): 289–310.
- Chivu, Marius. 2013. "Cît, Cum Şi Ce Citesc Românii." *Dilemaveche.ro*, March 14, 2013. <https://dilemaveche.ro/sectiune/la-zi-in-cultura/carte/cit-cum-si-ce-citesc-romanii-600515.html>.
- Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). 2024. "Self-Assessment Grid - Table 2 (CEFR 3.3): Common Reference Levels." <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/table-2-cefr-3.3-common-reference-levels-self-assessment-grid>.
- Didato, Andrea. 2000. "In Italia si legge così". *Libero*. <https://users.libero.it/popote/leg.htm>.

- Georgieva, Valentina. 2015. *Military English: From Theory to Practice*. Sofia: Georgi Stoikov Rakovski Military Academy.
- Huntington, John. 1975. "Science Fiction and the Future." *College English* 37, no. 4 (December): 345–352. <https://doi.org/10.2307/376232>.
- Hyland, K. & Jiang, KF. 2021. "Delivering relevance: the emergence of ESP as a discipline." *English for Specific Purposes*, 64 (October): 13–25. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S088949062100034X?via%3Dihub>.
- Kelly, Roy. 2012. "Rome Sweet Rome" Filmed January 24, 2012. YouTube video, 17:12. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=46gZuEYRCS4&t=27s>.
- Ketchen, Carisa. 2014. *Teaching Science with Science Fiction*. Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Landofi, Liliana. 2017. *E-factor: English Education, Empowerment and Emotivation*. Napoli: Liguari.
- Landon, Brooks. 2002. *Science Fiction after 1900: From the Steam Man to the Stars*. New York: Routledge.
- Lazar, Gillian. 2013. *Literature and Language Teaching: A Guide for Teachers and Trainers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lips, Hilary M. 1990. "Using Science Fiction to Teach the Psychology of Sex and Gender." *Teaching of Psychology* 17, no. 3 (October): 197–98. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1207/s15328023top1703_17.
- Littlewood, William T. 1986. "Literature in the School Foreign Language Course." In *Literature and Language Teaching*, edited by Christopher Brumfit and Ronald Carter, 177–184. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- McKay, Sandra. 1982. "Literature in the ESL Classroom". *Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc* 16, no. 4 (December): 529–536. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3586470>.
- Menadue, Christopher Benjamin and Susan Jacups. 2018. "Who Reads Science Fiction and Fantasy, and How Do They Feel about Science? Preliminary Findings from an Online Survey." *SAGE Open* 8, no. 2 (April): 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244018780946>.
- Muraveva E.V., Elices Agudo J.F. 2017. "Dystopian science fiction as a means of teaching English to technical degree students". *Integratsiya obrazovaniya* (Integration of Education), no. 2 (21): 303–321. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317370364_Dystopian_science_fiction_as_a_means_of_teaching_English_to_technical_degree_students.
- O'Neil Harold F. Jr and Michael Drillings. 1994. "Introduction to Motivation: Theory and Research." In *Motivation: Theory and Research*, edited by Harold F. O'Neil Jr. and Michael Drillings, 1–9. New York and London: Routledge Taylor & Francis.
- Pflueger-Peters, Noah. 2017. "Why Science Fiction Is the Genre of the 21st Century." *The California Aggie*, April 25, 2017. <https://theaggie.org/2017/04/25/why-science-fiction-is-the-genre-of-the-21st-century/#:~:text=One%20thing%20is%20clear%2C%20however.>

- Pisică, Silvia, and Steluța Rădoi, eds. 2023. *Review of Condițiile de Viață Ale Populației Din România În Anul 2022*. București: Institutul Național de Statistică.
- Prufrock451. 2011. *Rome Sweet Rome*. Reddit.
https://docs.google.com/file/d/0Bx_wEpbf68sZNjY1OWI2ZTItNjAxMS00MT EwLWI5ZTgtYjk2MzdmNTU5NzJh/edit?hl=en_US&resourcekey=0-70e78E94Qui4HojBaL2GEG
- Putt, Stephanie. 2011. "Cornerstone: A Collection of Scholarly and Creative Works for Using Science Fiction to Teach Science Facts." PhD diss., Minnesota State University – Mankato.
- Roberts, Adam. 2006. *The History of Science Fiction*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rogers, Douglas B. 1999. *Write of Way: Essay Strategies and Readings*. Ontario: Pearson Education Canada.
- Rowe, Adam. 2018. "Science Fiction and Fantasy Book Sales Have Doubled since 2010." *Forbes*, Accessed June 21, 2022.
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/adamrowe1/2018/06/19/science-fiction-and-fantasy-book-sales-have-doubled-since-2010/?sh=4d0b04a52ed>
- Ryan, Mick. 2016. "Why Reading Science Fiction Is Good for Military Officers". *Grounded Curiosity*. March 23, 2016. <https://groundedcuriosity.com/why-reading-science-fiction-is-good-for-military-officers/>.
- Sawyer, Andy and Peter Wright. 2011. *Teaching Science Fiction*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Stockwell, Peter. 2001. "Teaching the Future: On the Use of Science Fiction in English Language Learning". *English Teacher: An International Journal* 5, no. 1 (November): 3–17. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ649012>.
- Suvin, Darko. 1979. *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Thévenon, Marie. 2018. "Using Science Fiction as a Teaching Tool in ESP Classes for Science Students", *ILCEA*, 1–18. Accessed on 27 January 2024.
<http://journals.openedition.org/ilcea/4688>;
 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/ilcea.4688>.
- Yang, Anson. 2001. "A Journey into the Future: Using Sci-Fi Stories with EFL Learners." *English Teacher: An International Journal* 5, no.1 (November): 63–72. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ649017>.

PEDAGOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON AN ENGLISH-TAUGHT COURSE IN COMMUNICATION ADDRESSED TO NON- PHILOLOGIST MA STUDENTS

Vlad-Georgian MEZEI¹

Article history: Received 10 January 2024; Revised 25 June 2024; Accepted 15 October 2024; Available online 10 December 2024; Available print 30 December 2024.

©2024 Studia UBB Philologia. Published by Babeş-Bolyai University.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License

ABSTRACT. *Pedagogical Reflections on an English-Taught Course in Communication Addressed to Non-philologist MA Students.* Supporting cross-border didactic and research cooperation, increasing visibility in international rankings, promoting multicultural academic environments, facilitating student exchange, attracting international students, encouraging staff mobility and improving graduate employability are some of the driving forces behind the efforts of most universities towards internationalisation. Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania, as a multicultural international higher education institution, actively supports academic training and communication in international languages. According to one of the stipulations included in the language policy of the University, each master's programme must comprise at least two courses taught in an international language in compliance with CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) methodological principles. The present paper draws on the author's experience as a tutor of such an English-taught course in techniques and methods of negotiation and communication addressed to students enrolled in a master's programme called *Management of Sports Organizations and Activities* at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport of Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. The article discusses the development of a coherent pedagogical strategy for this particular course focusing mainly on

¹ **Vlad-Georgian MEZEI** works as a lecturer at the Faculty of Letters, Babeş-Bolyai University. His teaching responsibilities include an undergraduate ESAP practical course and a master's degree course in negotiation and communication. As a teacher and researcher, he is chiefly concerned with developing students' ability to use English in academic and professional contexts. He takes a particular interest in syllabus and instructional material design, specialist vocabulary acquisition, grammar teaching in ESP and technology as a pedagogical tool. Email: vlad.mezei@ubbcluj.ro.

aspects such as designing the course syllabus, selecting compulsory bibliography, preparing teaching scenarios, creating instructional materials, delivering in-class instruction, conducting assessment and collecting feedback from students.

Keywords: *English as a Medium of Instruction, Content and Language Integrated Learning, higher education, MA students, pedagogical approach*

REZUMAT. Reflecții pedagogice asupra unui curs de comunicare cu predare în limba engleză adresat unor masteranzi nefilologi. Sprijinirea cooperării transfrontaliere în domeniile didactic și științific, creșterea vizibilității în clasamentele internaționale, promovarea unui mediu academic multicultural, facilitarea schimburilor de studenți, atragerea de studenți internaționali, încurajarea mobilității cadrelor didactice și îmbunătățirea șanselor pe piața muncii a absolvenților sunt câteva dintre motivele pentru care universitățile depun eforturi pentru internaționalizare. Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai din Cluj-Napoca, România în calitate de instituție de învățământ superior multiculturală și multilingvă sprijină în mod activ instruirea academică și comunicarea în limbi de circulație internațională. Conform uneia dintre stipulările politicii lingvistice a Universității, orice program masteral trebuie să conțină cel puțin două cursuri predate într-o limbă de circulație internațională în concordanță cu principiile metodologiei CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning). Această lucrare are ca punct de pornire experiența autorului ca titular al unui asemenea curs de tehnici și metode de negociere și comunicare adresat unor masteranzi în cadrul programului *Managementul Organizațiilor și Activităților Sportive* organizat la Facultatea de Educație Fizică și Sport a Universității Babeș-Bolyai, Cluj-Napoca. Articolul prezintă dezvoltarea unei strategii pedagogice coerente pentru acest curs concentrându-se îndeosebi pe aspecte precum elaborarea fișei disciplinei, selectarea bibliografiei obligatorii, alcătuirea unor scenarii didactice, crearea materialelor didactice, predarea la clasă, asigurarea examinării și colectarea feedback-ului de la studenți.

Cuvinte-cheie: *Engleza ca mijloc de predare, Învățarea Integrată a Conținutului și a Limbii, învățământ superior, studenți masteranzi, abordare didactică*

This article considers the multifaceted process of developing a pedagogical approach to an English-taught course in communication and negotiation methodology² addressed to non-native³ English-speaking MA students specializing

² The name of the course is “Tehnici și metode de negociere și comunicare”. In this article it is referred to as “Techniques and Methods of Negotiation and Communication” (TMNC).

³ The term “non-native speaker” has been subject of controversy, its legitimacy being challenged. The dichotomy “native” versus “non-native” has been criticised for being founded on the assumption that native speakers are deemed superior while non-native speakers are presumed inferior

in the management of sports organizations and activities at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport of Babes-Bolyai University. The reflections presented here emerged and evolved throughout the author's experience as the tutor of this course. They are exposed in a gradual progression from the general to the particular. First, the contextual integration of the course is carried out by outlining the international status of English as a medium of instruction in higher education, sketching the terminological and methodological aspects pertaining to the use of English in tertiary education, inserting the course in the institutional framework it belongs to and presenting its major stakeholders. Then, the focus switches to more specific aspects such as pedagogical principles underpinning the approach to the course, syllabus design, bibliography selection, teaching scenario building, classroom instruction delivery, seminar session management, assessment methodology and student feedback collection.

English as a medium of instruction in tertiary education

Globalization and marketization have had an important contribution to the international spread of English. Economic, political, scientific, technological and cultural factors have favoured an increasingly wider use of English all over the world. Furthermore, the internationalization of professions and individual pursuits, mass media, multinational organizations, and enhanced communications have played an important part in this linguistic expansion (Coleman 2006, 2). The market value of English has risen due to transnational economic dependencies. As the main medium of economic transactions, English is favoured by international organizations and transnational corporations. In this context, learning English

(Dewaele 2018, 239). Furthermore, as an antonym of "native", "non-native" is disapproved of for defining speakers in terms of what they are not (Dewaele 2018, 236). Another criticism directed at the term "non-native" is that, as a place-based definition, it implies that individuals born in specific regions of the world —the native speakers— speak exemplary English, while people born elsewhere —the non-native speakers— will never become as proficient in English as the native speakers (Wicaksono 2020, 81). In this article, the phrase "non-native speaker of English" names a user of English whose native language is other than English. The author's understanding of the term excludes any pejorative connotation. On the other hand, the author acknowledges the necessity of a special pedagogical approach suited to the specific needs of students who learn English as an additional language. As a blanket term, "non-native speaker" can be utilised to refer to the ability of TMNC course attendees to use foreign languages whether they are bilingual (e.g. L1 speaker of Romanian and L2 speaker of English) or multilingual (e.g. L1 speaker of Hungarian, L2 speaker of Romanian and L3 speaker of English or L1 speaker of Romanian, L2 speaker of French/German/Italian/Spanish/Russian and L3 speaker of English). The author of the article is aware of the fact that the term "LX user" has been suggested as an alternative to "non-native speaker" (Dewaele 2018, 238). However, due to the fact that the syntagm "non-native speaker" occurs rather frequently in the specialist literature consulted, it will be used in the article for reasons of terminological coherence.

is encouraged by the assumption that a high level of linguistic proficiency is beneficial to corporations and individuals alike (Gabriëls and Wilkinson 2021, 22-23).

These factors have facilitated a huge growth in the number of second-language speakers who use English to pursue academic education worldwide (Hyland 2006, 25). Higher education —which has itself become a marketized and globalized commodity (Coleman 2006, 10)— capitalized on the hegemony of English worldwide and adopted it as the main language of instruction and research. Nowadays the global supremacy of English in tertiary education is undeniable. A good command of English is a *sine qua non* of success in academic education and research. In certain scientific areas, journal literature and the most renowned journals are published predominantly in English. Furthermore, being acquainted with the norms of English-language academic discourses is essential to understanding subject content knowledge, building careers and developing a successful learning experience (Hyland 2006, 24).

It is noteworthy that language learning in itself is not the driver behind choosing English as a language of instruction in tertiary education (Coleman 2006, 4). Thus, in countries where students are non-native speakers of English, policies supporting instruction through English are driven by top-down forces and not by the bottom-up needs and interests of teachers and students (Patel, Solly, and Copeland 2023, 193). Having commodified education and research, the present-day entrepreneurial university operates as an agent of Englishization. Higher education institutions act as competitors in a global academic market and, since internationalization is a factor that carries significant weight in rankings, universities strive to appeal to as many international students and scholars as possible by providing an increasingly wide array of English-taught programmes (Gabriëls and Wilkinson 2021, 23).

However, despite the criticism against the political and economic forces behind the Englishization of universities to the detriment of other languages, one cannot deny that the prevalence of English in higher education teaching and research has real benefits, the foremost of which being enablement of global communication. The variety of ELF (English as a *Lingua franca*) used in the academic environment does not involve conformity to all anglo communication conventions but it aims mainly at obtaining clarity and comprehensibility. This characteristic puts non-native speakers on par with native speakers in the context of academic communication (Hyland 2006, 29).

Furthermore, in addition to increased international student revenue and improved rankings, English as a medium of instruction in universities is thought to have multiple institutional and individual positive effects such as strengthening global competitiveness, boosting student and lecturer mobility,

enabling access to intercultural learning and instructional materials, increasing students' proficiency in English, enhancing employability of graduates and acquiring international competencies (Patel, Solly, and Copeland 2023, 194; Galloway, Kriukow and Numajiri 2017, 4). Other benefits of instruction in a foreign language include plurilingualism, academic, research and professional networking as well as international economic and cultural collaboration (LANQUA, n.d.).

Terminological and methodological framework

There exists an abundant terminology describing various methodologies of approaching the phenomenon of English as a medium of instruction. Generally speaking, the difference between these terms lies in the status/role English is assigned within the methodological framework underlying the course or programme: on the one hand, English is treated simply as a medium for conveying content knowledge without explicit focus on language learning, on the other hand, English language teaching and acquisition are just as important as content knowledge transfer through English.

The most generic term in use is English as a medium of instruction (EMI) which designates "the use of English to teach subjects in countries where English is not the official language" (Galloway, Kriukow and Numajiri 2017, 3). Another name used is EME (English-medium education) which is the variant preferred by the British Council to EMI on the grounds that the term "education" reflects a more holistic approach while the term "instruction" suggests a narrow perspective centred on the teacher, which makes it unsuitable for rendering the dynamism of the teaching-learning process (Patel, Solly, and Copeland 2023, 186).

In addition to being an umbrella term, EMI is also employed in a narrower sense to describe a pedagogical approach in which English is used as a medium of instruction and whose learning objective is primarily the acquisition of content knowledge. Language learning is considered merely as an implicit aim. Lectures, courses and seminars are taught in English by means of instructional methods specific to a particular discipline without any explicit language focus. In contrast, Integrating Content and Language in Higher Education (ICLHE) pays equal attention to language learning and content acquisition. In this approach, all the lessons include explicit language teaching in combination with subject content instruction (Schmidt-Unterberger 2018, 534). ICLHE is the tertiary level analogue of the much more encompassing term Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) (Costa and Coleman 2013, 5). Initially CLIL was defined as a "pedagogical approach with a dual focus, involving the integration of (second/foreign/target) language study with the study of a subject domain instructed in that language" (LANQUA, n.d.) but subsequently it became an

“umbrella term for all those HE approaches in which some form of specific and academic language support is offered to students in order to facilitate their learning of the content through that language” (LANQUA, n.d.).

Additional terms are used to describe various degrees of focus on content or/and language. Thus, the continuum of EMI in practice includes seven diverse pedagogical approaches progressing gradually from primary focus on content to primary focus on language as follows: EME/EMI, Immersion (Immersion in Target Language Context), CLIL, CBI (Content-Based Instruction), ESP/EAP (English for Specific/Academic Purposes) and EFL/ESOL (English as a Foreign Language/ English for Speakers of Other Languages) (Patel, Solly, and Copeland 2023, 188). Furthermore, different varieties of CLIL can be identified in higher education according to the extent of importance given to language mastery and subject mastery: Partial CLIL LSP/Discipline Based LT, Partial CLIL (language – LAP focus), Partial CLIL (content – focus in L2), Adjunct CLIL and (Dual-Focus) CLIL (LANQUA, n.d.).

A last acronym worth mentioning in connection with the EMI-related terminology is EMEMUS (English-Medium Education in Multilingual University Settings). Conceived as an alternative to the multiple labels currently employed to describe contemporary multilingual tertiary education, EMEMUS does not refer to any specific pedagogical approach or research agenda. This feature makes EMEMUS a more encompassing term from a semantic point of view and as such more suitable to refer to diverse higher education environments (Dafouz and Smit 2016, 398-399). The framework within which EMEMUS operates is called ROAD-MAPPING (Dafouz and Smit 2016, 403). It is concerned with aspects of tertiary education such as communicative functions fulfilled by languages in higher education institutions, academic literacies, academic disciplinary culture, language policy statements, social players involved in the phenomenon of English as a medium of education, administrative, research and educational activities pertaining to EMEMUS and relationships between transnational tendencies and local and national interests (Dafouz and Smit 2020, 60).

Contextual integration of Techniques and Methods of Negotiation and Communication (TMNC)

The previous two sections were dedicated to outlining the global status of English in universities and to sketching various terminological and methodological aspects pertaining to the use of English in tertiary education. This section continues the contextual integration of the course TMNC by inserting it in the institutional framework it belongs to and by presenting its major stakeholders.

According to the stipulations of its language policy (Babeş-Bolyai University 2021), Babeş-Bolyai University, as a multicultural international institution of

higher education, has set plurilingualism and multilingualism among its chief objectives. This is reflected in the opportunities created for undergraduate and master's students to use international foreign languages in their academic activity. Students' exposure to foreign languages takes several forms and is organized according to different pedagogical principles and objectives. For example, there are entire academic programmes taught completely in a foreign international language both at bachelor's and master's levels. There are also the compulsory practical language courses all students at the university must attend for at least two semesters. These courses are aimed at enabling students to use international languages competently, at a B2 level, in their academic and professional activity. In addition, remedial practical language courses are offered to students with low levels of linguistic proficiency. Furthermore, the language policy of Babeş-Bolyai University stipulates that the curriculum plan of each master's programme must include a minimum of two courses taught in an international language according to CLIL principles. The policy defines CLIL as a pedagogical approach according to which the teaching and learning of content knowledge happens in a foreign/non-native language and it has a double objective: content acquisition and improvement of language proficiency. This is the definition of CLIL endorsed in the present article.

TMNC is one of the two courses taught in English included in the curriculum plan of the master's programme named *Management of Sports Organizations and Activities* organized by the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport of Babeş-Bolyai University. It was introduced in the 2017-2018 academic year as an elective course and in the 2019-2020 it was transformed into a mandatory course. The course is spread over 14 weeks and includes a 2-hour lecture and a 1-hour seminar per week.

The beneficiaries of this course are mostly former undergraduates of Babeş-Bolyai University, with the majority having graduated from the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport. They are non-philologist, non-native speakers of English specialising in various aspects of managing sports organizations and activities. As an exception, during the academic year 2023-2024, in addition to the Romanian attendees, the course was attended by two Erasmus students from Université Rennes 2, France. The master's programme curriculum plan includes disciplines as diverse as Management and Marketing for Sports Organisations, Human Resources in Sports Organisations, Management of Sports Events, Accounting and Financial Management for Sports Organisations, Development and Management of Sports Facilities, Project Management and Conflict Management.

General pedagogical principles

The author of the present paper, as the tutor of this course, is responsible for designing the course syllabus, selecting compulsory bibliography, writing the course packet, establishing assessment methods, drawing up lesson plans, creating teaching materials, delivering in class instruction and conducting assessment. All these aspects have been gradually incorporated in a comprehensive pedagogical strategy aimed at allowing students to acquire theoretical knowledge and to develop practical skills necessary to communicating in managerial occupations and in the academic context.

This pedagogical approach is underpinned by three principles. One of them results naturally from the specificity of CLIL: subject knowledge delivery and focus on language use are equally important objectives. The second principle stems from a requisite of pursuing studies in higher education: constant attention is given to developing a good command of academic communication and to honing study skills.

The third principle, student centeredness, places students at the hub of the teaching-learning process. This approach relies on certain tenets of learner-centred pedagogy such as teaching meaningful and relevant content, developing 21st Century skills (creativity, critical thinking, analysis, and lifelong learning), involving students actively in learning, favouring student-teacher and student-student interaction, enabling students to become autonomous learners, valuing students' opinions as well as those of the teacher, combining formative and summative assessment and taking into consideration learners' prior knowledge, skills, experiences and their emotional needs (Bremner, Sakata, and Cameron 2022).

In accordance with the above-mentioned tenets, throughout the entire duration of TMNC (lectures, seminars and final examination) the individuality of each learner is highly valued: students are seen as individuals with unique learning profiles and histories and their attitudes towards studying a discipline in English are taken into account. As shown in the first section of the paper, the Englishization phenomenon was brought about by political and economic globalizing interests and the decisions to include English-taught courses in academic programmes are top-down initiatives driven by the efforts made by universities towards internationalization rather than by the wants of individual learners. Therefore, some of these students who are non-native, non-philologist speakers of English might feel reluctant to replace their mother tongue with a foreign language at school. Furthermore, students who have studied other foreign languages throughout their academic trajectory prior to enrolling in this master's programme might perceive English as a barrier to knowledge.

Various means of dealing with such situations are used by the teacher: showing students that they matter as individuals, creating and maintaining a

student-friendly environment during lessons, encouraging teacher-student and student-student interaction, rewarding active participation to in-class activities, promoting a sense of belonging to a supportive community even outside the classroom by maintaining communications open via Microsoft Teams (the Learning Management System of the Course), promoting teamwork, focusing feedback on achievements rather than failures and providing additional support in the form of linguistic instruction when needed.

Course Syllabus Design

The following section is dedicated to presenting the course syllabus and the reasons behind the choices that were involved in its design. Attention is paid to the learning objectives and the contents of the lectures and seminars. In designing the course syllabus, a number of learning objectives were established in accordance with the specificity of the study programme and the conventions of academic communication. They are as follows (the first one is the general objective of the course and the rest represent specific objectives):

1. Using English effectively in the academic field of study and in future professional activity.
2. Communicating effectively in English in business contexts.
3. Developing communication skills for social inclusion.
4. Managing work groups.
5. Developing teamwork and staff motivation abilities.
6. Using English to carry out managerial duties at different organizational levels.
7. Becoming able to approach and resolve issues autonomously and creatively, appraise critical situations in an objective and constructive manner and use English to describe findings.
8. Gaining theoretical and practical knowledge of communication and negotiation in order to develop leadership skills.
9. Acquiring the ability to adjust to dynamic competitive business landscapes through effective use of English in diverse cultural environments.

The contents of the lectures and seminars were established so that they enable students to achieve the above-mentioned learning objectives. Some lectures tackle matters pertaining to human communication in general while others are dedicated to communicative aspects specific to organizations, managerial functions and negotiations. The distribution of the contents between the lectures and seminars was operated based on the degree of difficulty involved in explaining/understanding certain topics. Since the teacher is responsible

for instruction delivery during the lectures, the contents of these lessons were selected based on the fact that they involve concepts and principles with a higher degree of complexity, abstraction or novelty, which might take a larger extent of teaching experience to explain. On the other hand, since the seminars are dedicated to oral presentations delivered by students, their contents, while related to the topics dealt with by the teacher during the lectures, are more accessible to students. For example, while the teacher, as a philologist, is better equipped to tackle issues pertaining to verbal messages such as “bypassing”, “connotative and denotative messages”, “the maxims of quality, quantity, relation and manner” in communication, students will find it easier to approach aspects of non-verbal messages.

The lecture contents are as follows:

1. Oral presentations (roles of oral presentations in management, planning and preparation for oral presentations, structure of presentation, designing visual aids —PowerPoint/Canva slideshows—, using language effectively in oral presentations),
2. The process of communication (defining communication, models of communication, elements of communication, barriers to communication),
3. Verbal messages (principles, effective use),
4. Telephone communication (making/changing arrangements on the telephone, preparing for making telephone calls, receiving calls, taking and leaving messages, cross-cultural telephone communication, effective language use in telephone communication),
5. Conversation (stages and principles),
6. Small groups communication (characteristics of small groups, group member roles, principles of successful communication in teams, the groupthink phenomenon),
7. Meetings (types of meetings, stages of meetings, the problem-solving sequence, effective language use in meetings),
8. Negotiations (the role of communication in negotiations, preconditions for negotiations, stages of the negotiation process, effective language use in negotiations).

The seminars are focused on the following contents:

1. Oral presentations (anxiety management, analysing the audience, adapting to the audience during presentation),
2. Principles of human communication,
3. The role of communication in management,

4. The role of listening in human communication,
5. Non-verbal communication,
6. Organizational communication,
7. Norms of telephone behaviour and differences between telephone and face-to-face interaction,
8. Meetings (organizing effective meetings, the role of the chairperson),
9. Negotiations (planning and preparation, bargaining and reaching settlement, strategies, and skills).

The compulsory lecture and seminar bibliography covers completely the above-mentioned contents and it includes three books. *Human Communication: The Basic Course* (DeVito 2012) provides information on the fundamental aspects of communication in general contexts as well as on organizational communication and public speaking. *Communication Skills for Effective Management* (Hargie, Dickson and Tourish 2004) deals with issues pertaining to communication specific to managerial functions and negotiations. *English for Business Communication* (Sweeney 2015) is a rich source of practical activities aimed at improving language proficiency and communication skills in management.

Designing and delivering the lectures

Planning for the lectures involves identifying learning outcomes, creating didactic scenarios for an optimal approach to teaching language and content, selecting classroom activities, creating instructional materials, and anticipating the cognitive skills students are supposed to utilize as well as the behaviours they are expected to display.

As mentioned in the section dedicated to the general principles underpinning the pedagogical strategy developed for TMNC, the learning outcomes of each lesson are divided between content knowledge delivery and focus on language instruction. Similarly, some activities are dedicated to the presentation and discussion of theoretical aspects such as concepts, terms, elements, processes and principles while others are dedicated to reflection on language uses in general and specific contexts as well as to language practice.

The sequences of the lessons are organized based on a few simple elements of CLIL methodology: promoting teacher-student and student-student interaction in the classroom, fostering collaboration between students in the form of pair or group work, using scaffolding to allow students to learn progressively by getting acquainted with knowledge in several stages, encouraging students to use metacognitive skills and to think creatively (Harmer 2012, 226-27).

The lectures are based largely on teacher-student and student-student interaction. They alternate teacher-led theoretical sections and practical activities.

Students are expected to have an active participation in both of them. From the very first moments of the lessons, students are involved actively in the process of learning by means of inductive teaching. Usually, introductory activities start by inviting students to reflect on certain images included in the lesson's PowerPoint slideshow and to express their opinions on what they see. Then, as the discussion unfolds, various elements —text or diagrams— are added to the slide in order to guide the students' reasoning towards the desired result.

An example of such an activity is used to introduce the first lesson dedicated to negotiations. Instead of defining negotiations for the students, the teacher starts the PowerPoint slideshow of the lesson by displaying an image showing a man and a woman in a wine shop holding the same bottle of wine. Students take turns guessing what is happening between the two persons. This initial stage focuses the students' attention on the content by stirring their curiosity and giving them the opportunity to speak English. All the ideas are welcome at this point without being criticized. If necessary, the teacher directs the discussion towards the topic of negotiations but generally students infer on their own that the two persons must be negotiating for the bottle of wine. Then the picture moves from the foreground of the students' attention and vision to the background as text is gradually superimposed over the image to reveal the events as they really happened between the two persons. Basically, this story highlights the gist of successful negotiations. The protagonists start from apparently conflicting positions: they both want the same bottle of wine. After their initial attempts at bargaining fail since none of them is willing to renounce the bottle or to accept an alternative offer, they move on to exploring each other's reasons for buying the bottle of wine. Finally, they discover that while the man needs the wine for sentimental reasons, the woman does not want the wine per se, but, as a collector, she is interested only in the bottle itself. They end up sharing the price and getting what they wanted from the negotiation. The story is extracted from *Communication Skills for Effective Management* (Hargie, Dickson and Tourish 2004, 177-78).

The lessons also include successions of activities that combine content knowledge acquisition with language practice. For example, the lesson dedicated to telephone communication contains a section focused on making arrangements on the telephone. The first step is a listening comprehension activity. The students listen to a conversation between two persons who make arrangements on the telephone and solve a gap-fill based on the tapescript of the conversation. This activity has a double objective: familiarising the students with the content of the discussion and focusing their attention on language used to make arrangements: "Could we meet ...?", "How/what about ...?", "When would suit you ...?", etc. At the end of the exercise answers are checked and the students are invited to infer the function of the words/phrases in question. In the second

phase, the conversation is analysed in order to identify the following steps of making arrangements: initial general propositions/suggestions, discussing possible meeting opportunities (adjusting to each other's availability), reaching agreement and settling the final details. In addition, the teacher makes sure that the students understand the importance of some basic techniques of conducting successful telephone conversations such as using polite language, suggesting alternatives, practising active listening and repeating or checking the accuracy of information when necessary. The final stage of this succession of activities is a dialog building exercise. The students are provided with a situation and a flow chart representing the framework of a dialog and are invited to work in pairs to create a conversation aimed at making arrangements on the telephone.

Similar activities which allow students to acquire and practice communication techniques and to use language meaningfully can be constructed starting from watching short video clips followed by behaviour and language analysis. They are particularly efficient in lessons dealing with topics such as the functions of the chairperson in meetings, the roles of group members in communication, the principles of conversation, effective methods of giving feedback to subordinates as a manager and techniques of identifying and avoiding the "groupthink" phenomenon.

Microsoft PowerPoint is an instrument that performs a crucial function in the design of instructional activities and works as a framework for the entire teaching scenario. As shown by the author in a previous article (Mezei 2023), PowerPoint is a piece of presentation software that allows a multimodal approach to teaching. The teaching-learning experience can be diversified and enhanced by combining several media such as text, pictures, charts, audio tracks and videos, which ensures student engagement in the classroom activities. Furthermore, PowerPoint slideshows can be used to structure the information, which facilitates understanding and acquisition. Moreover, PowerPoint slideshows can be uploaded to Microsoft Teams to enable students to remain apprised of the content covered in class and facilitate their preparation for the final examination.

Organizing the seminars

The seminars are built around oral presentations delivered by students. These are conceived as opportunities to involve them to a greater extent in the learning process by stimulating them to engage more extensively with the content. Furthermore, public speaking is an integral part of the students' future occupation given that making oral presentations is a form of managerial communication essential to presenting reports, giving briefings, energizing staff moral and coordinating teams. What is more, this is an opportunity for students to practice and improve their academic communication and study

skills since student-delivered presentations are a genre specific to EAP (Hyland 2006, 50). Furthermore, skimming, scanning, note-making, summarising, paraphrasing, synthesising and collating information are study skills specific to academic activity (Jordan 1997, 7) which are essential to preparing for the oral presentation. Finally, taking part in seminar discussions is another skill that all the participants can exercise during the Q and A sessions following the presentations.

Given the complexity of the task and the considerable amount of effort required to complete it, the seminar oral presentation is considered as a significant component of the assessment representing 40% of the students' final grade. The remaining 60% is distributed as follows: the written exam counts as 50% and class participation as 10%.

The regulations concerning the presentation are explained in a tutorial delivered by the teacher during the first course of the semester. Students are told to form teams of two persons and choose a topic from a list to work on. Each presentation is scheduled for a specific date. Students are also informed which section of the bibliography they are expected to process and present.

Two components are assessed in the presentation: the relevance of the content knowledge selected from the bibliography and the presentation itself. The evaluation of the presentation focuses on two aspects: the quality of the PowerPoint/Canva slideshow and the performance of the students during the delivery of the presentation. The assessment grid comprises the following elements: structure of presentation (introduction, main body and conclusion, bibliographical list of the sources consulted), delivery (clarity, pronunciation, sentence construction, pace of delivery, verbal fluency, relationship with the audience), visual aids (quantity of information per slides, visibility, quality and relevance of pictures, charts, graphs and videos inserted in the presentation, use of visuals during the presentation) and language (grammar, vocabulary and signposting). Special emphasis is placed on the relationship with the audience. In addition to the Q and A sessions that follow the delivery, students are instructed to include activities specially designed to involve the participants actively in presentations such as quizzes or other kind of exercises that can be included in the slides or created on Internet platforms such as Wordwall, Mentimeter or Kahoot!.

The PowerPoint/Canva slideshows must be sent via email 24 hours prior to the presentations to the teacher who analyses them and gives the students constructive feedback in order to allow them to improve their work. Thus, the variant presented during the seminar is superior to the first draft. Furthermore, knowing in advance the teacher's opinion on the PowerPoint slideshow increases the presenters' confidence and helps them overcome anxiety. The oral presentation

is delivered in the classroom by both students and at the end of the Q and A session the teacher provides descriptive feedback and scores the presenters on a 1-4 scale.

Students' feedback

During the academic year 2023-2024, the effectiveness of the pedagogical strategy described above was evaluated by means of a survey aimed at measuring students' level of satisfaction with their learning experience throughout the course of TMNC. The data collection instrument used was a questionnaire distributed in February 2024 at the end of the evaluation period and after the final grades were communicated to students. 14 (70%) of the 20 course attendees completed this anonymous survey.

The questionnaire included thirteen Likert scale statements and two opened-ended questions. The function of the Likert scale statements was to measure the degree of attainment of the main objectives underpinning the pedagogical approach developed for this course. Each value of the scale was correlated to a degree of agreement with a statement as follows: 1 designated strong disagreement, 2 meant disagreement, 3 indicated a neutral position, 4 signified agreement, and 5 represented strong agreement.

The results obtained are presented in Table 1. The columns 2-5 show the number of respondents who chose one of the five scores to describe the extent of agreement or disagreement with each of the thirteen statements. Column 6 contains the average rating of the statement. Row 15 shows the overall count of each score given.

Tabel 1. Responses to the statements

STATEMENTS	SCORES					Average rating
	1	2	3	4	5	
1. The course allowed me to acquire knowledge on organizational/managerial communication and negotiations.				3	11	4.79
2. The course allowed me to understand how English language can be used effectively in organizational/managerial communication and negotiations.				2	12	4.86
3. The explanations provided by the teacher during the lessons facilitated the understanding of the content knowledge conveyed.				3	11	4.79
4. The PowerPoint slideshows used by the teacher during the lessons facilitated the understanding of the content knowledge conveyed.				6	8	4.57

STATEMENTS	SCORES					Average rating
	1	2	3	4	5	
5. The classroom activities facilitated the understanding of content knowledge.				1	13	4.93
6. The practical language-focused activities included in the lessons exposed me to authentic use of English language in organizational/managerial communication and negotiation.				4	10	4.71
7. The PowerPoint slideshows uploaded to Microsoft Teams enabled me to remain apprised of the content covered in class and facilitated my preparation for the final examination.			2	2	10	4.57
8. Preparing for the oral presentation I delivered during the seminar was an opportunity to use academic study skills.			1	4	9	4.57
9. Preparing for the oral presentation I delivered during the seminar was an opportunity to improve my PowerPoint/Canva presentation designing skills.			2	3	9	4.5
10. Preparing for the oral presentation I delivered during the seminar helped me to better understand the course content knowledge.			1	4	9	4.57
11. Preparing for the oral presentation and delivering it in the classroom was an opportunity to exercise my spoken English and my public speaking skills.				3	11	4.79
12. The feedback provided by the teacher after I sent him the first version of my PowerPoint/Canva presentation was useful for improving the final version of the presentation.			1	2	11	4.71
13. The assessment methods including the seminar oral presentation, the written examination and class participation were adequate for the course.				2	12	4.86
Overall count of each score given			7	39	136	

What immediately stands out is the high degree of agreement with the statements. This is indicated by the average ratings that range between 4.5 and 4.93, which positions them at the upper end of the satisfaction scale. What is more, the fact that the highest score (5) was assigned overall 136 times out of a total of 182 possible times is a further indicator of students' approval of the instructional and assessment methodology utilized. Moreover, the lowest score (3) students opted for was assigned only 7 times. Judging by the overall count of each score given, it can be concluded that on the whole, the students who agreed or strongly agreed with the statements were significantly more numerous

than those who reported being neutral, which shows a high level of satisfaction with the learning experience.

Item 14 (“What did you like most about the course?”) was an opportunity for the respondents to confirm and explain some of the ratings assigned in the previous section of the questionnaire but also to point out information that had not been covered by the Likert scale statements. One of the most frequently mentioned likes was the fact that the explanations offered by the teacher facilitated the understanding of the content knowledge. Another reason for satisfaction was the relevance of the topics approached to fulfilling managerial functions as well as to participating in human communication in general. Furthermore, being able to express themselves freely in the classroom and to communicate in English were two additional strengths mentioned by the students. Other strong points reported included: improvement of English speaking skills, personal development, boost of self-esteem, engaging classroom activities, benign interaction with the colleagues and the teacher, positive classroom environment, useful feedback offered by the teacher and appropriate assessment methods.

Item 15 (“What did you like least about the course?”) was conceived as a means of identifying weaknesses and aspects to improve. However, it yielded little information since the majority of students declared not having any objection worth mentioning. The only weak point reported was the excessive duration of certain lessons, which caused boredom and exhaustion.

Conclusions

The pedagogical reflections included in this paper revealed the multitude of factors to be considered by the tutor of an English-taught course addressed to non-philologist, non-native speakers in higher education. The main point to take into account is the ambivalent implications of the prevalence of English in higher education worldwide. On the one hand, one must be aware of the fact that the ever-increasing use of English as a language of instruction in tertiary education has significantly been favoured by political and economic globalizing drivers. This implies that courses taught in English are often included in academic programmes as part of internationalization efforts generated by top-down decisions rather than by the wants of individual learners who might feel reluctant to conduct their studies in a foreign language. On the other hand, one must bear in mind that the use of English as a *Lingua franca* in tertiary education teaching and research is essential to the communication in the academic environment across the globe. Therefore, acquainting students with the norms of English-language academic discourses must be included among the teaching objectives.

Furthermore, designing a pedagogical strategy should take into account several additional factors such as current methodological approaches to teaching English in tertiary education, the language policy of the university offering the course, the status of the course in the curriculum plan of the academic programme and the specific professional and academic communication needs of the students involved. Paying close attention to all these aspects is essential to designing the course syllabus, choosing the lecture and seminar contents, devising teaching scenarios, preparing classroom activities, delivering in class instruction and selecting appropriate assessment methods.

Finally, collecting feedback from students is crucial to gauging the effectiveness of a teaching and assessment system. What is more, the questionnaire may become much more than a data collection instrument; the activity of conceiving the questionnaire itself is an exercise in pedagogical reflection on various methodological aspects. The data collected in the academic year 2023-2024 was useful in that it generally confirmed the tutor's expectations in terms of learning outcomes, lecture and seminar content selection, instructional material design as well as teaching and assessment methodology. However, the high degree of satisfaction expressed by the majority of students yielded little information in terms of possible areas of improvement. Therefore, repeating the survey several years in succession is essential to fine tuning a pedagogical strategy and keeping it up to date.

WORKS CITED

- Babeş-Bolyai University. 2021. "Politica lingvistică a Universităţii Babeş-Bolyai." Accessed on 11.02.2024.
<https://senat.ubbcluj.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Anexa-la-HS-nr.-103-privind-Politica-lingvistic%C4%83-a-UBB.pdf>.
- Bremner, Nicholas, Nozomi Sakata, and Leanne Cameron. 2022. "The outcomes of learner-centred pedagogy: A systematic review." *International Journal of Educational Development* 94, October.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2022.102649>. Available at:
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0738059322000992>.
 Accessed on 05.07.2024.
- Coleman, James A. 2006. "English-Medium Teaching in European Higher Education." *Language Teaching* 39, no. 1: 1-14.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S026144480600320X>.
- Costa, Francesca, and James A. Coleman. 2013. "A survey of English-medium instruction in Italian higher education." *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 16, no. 1: 3-19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2012.676621>.

- Dafouz, Emma, and Ute Smit. 2016. "Towards a Dynamic Conceptual Framework for English-Medium Education in Multilingual University Settings." *Applied Linguistics* 37, no. 3: 397-415. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amu034>.
- Dafouz, Emma, and Ute Smit. 2020. *ROAD-MAPPING English Medium Education in the Internationalised University*. Cham: Palgrave Pivot. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-23463-8>.
- DeVito, Joseph A. 2012. *Human Communication: The Basic Course*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon (Pearson Education).
- Dewaele, Jean-Marc. 2018. "Why the Dichotomy 'L1 Versus L2 User' is Better than 'Native Versus Non-native Speaker'." *Applied Linguistics* 39, no. 2: 236-240. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amw055>.
- Gabriëls, René, and Robert Wilkinson. 2021. "Introduction: The tension between monolingualism and multilingualism." In *The Englishization of Higher Education in Europe*, edited by Robert Wilkinson and René Gabriëls, 11-36. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press. Available at <https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/51121/9789048553914.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>. Accessed on 4.02.2024.
- Galloway, Nicola, Jaroslaw Kriukow, and Takuya Numajiri. 2017. *Internationalisation, higher education and the growing demand for English: an investigation into the English medium of instruction (EMI) movement in China and Japan*. London: British Council. Available at: https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/H035%20ELTRA%20Internationalisation_HE_and%20the%20growing%20demand%20for%20English%20A4_FINAL_WEB.pdf. Accessed on 5.02.2024
- Hargie, Owen, David Dickson, and Dennis Tourish. 2004. *Communication Skills for Effective Management*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Harmer, Jeremy. 2012. *Essential Teacher Knowledge: Core Concepts in English Language Teaching*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.
- Hyland, Ken. 2006. *English for Academic Purposes: An advanced resource book*. New York: Routledge.
- Jordan, R. R. 1997. *English for Academic Purposes: A Guide and Resource Book for Teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- LANQUA. n.d. "Content and language integrated learning (CLIL)." Accessed on 06.02.2024. <https://www.lanqua.eu/theme/content-language-integrated-learning-clil/>.
- Mezei, Vlad-Georgian. 2023. "Instructional Applications of PowerPoint: From a Visual Aid to a Multimodal Approach to Teaching." In *Limbaje specializate în contextul literației multimodale: Abordări metodologice, provocări curente și perspective de dezvoltare* edited by Roxana Mihele, Ioana Mudure-Iacob and Anamaria Lupan, 65-79. Cluj Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană.
- Patel, Mina, Mike Solly, and Steve Copeland. 2023. *The Future of English: Global Perspectives*. Edited by Barry O'Sullivan and Yan Jin. London: British Council.
- Schmidt-Unterberger, Barbara. 2018. "The English-medium paradigm: a conceptualisation of English-medium teaching in higher education." *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 21, no. 5: 527-39. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2018.1491949>.

- Sweeney, Simon. 2015. *English for Business Communication*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wicaksono, Rachel. 2020. "Native and Non-native Speakers of English in TESOL." In *Ontologies of English: Conceptualising the Language for Learning, Teaching, and Assessment* edited by Christopher J. Hall and Rachel Wicaksono, 80-98. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amw055>.

INVESTIGATING THE NECESSITY OF ENHANCED INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR TOURISM STUDENTS. LEARNERS' PERSPECTIVE AND NEEDS

Roxana MIHELE¹, Ibolya TÖRÖK²

Article history: Received 17 February 2024; Revised 27 August 2024; Accepted 30 September 2024;
Available online 10 December 2024; Available print 30 December 2024.

©2024 Studia UBB Philologia. Published by Babeş-Bolyai University.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License

ABSTRACT. *Investigating the Necessity of Enhanced Intercultural Communication Skills for Tourism Students. Learners' Perspective and Needs.* The hospitality industry today is, by many accounts, the site of the most cosmopolitan interaction university graduates can possibly find themselves immersed in when it comes to their professional milieu. Preparing future tourism specialists to effectively communicate and mediate with industry stakeholders that come from various corners of the world, having a multitude of cultural, social and economic backgrounds, seems to be one of the most important tasks ESP (English for Specialized Purposes) tutors need to tackle. Encouraged by guidelines promoted by international institutions, language teachers are aware that they need to pay an undivided attention to the development of intercultural communication (ICC) and mediation skills, to fostering the awareness that the business world today is a pluricultural one. What has been less investigated is the perception students themselves have over their need to acquire such competencies and the best way teachers could help them achieve this. The purpose of this article is to investigate the students'

-
- ¹ **Roxana MIHELE** is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Specialized Foreign Languages, Faculty of Letters, "Babeş-Bolyai" University from Cluj-Napoca, Romania, where she teaches two ESP courses (Tourism English & Legal English) and British Culture and Civilization. Her academic interest areas also include American Literature, the American Multiculturalism and Ethnic Studies. Email: mihaela.mihele@ubbcluj.ro.
- ² **Ibolya TÖRÖK** is an Associate Professor at the Department of Geography of the Hungarian Line of Study, Faculty of Geography, "Babeş-Bolyai" University from Cluj-Napoca, Romania, where she teaches Quantitative Methods in Planning, Techniques of Social Investigation, General Regional Geography, Organization of Geographical Space, Research Methodology in Human Geography. She is currently serving as a Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Geography and her academic interest areas include Regional Inequality, Social Vulnerability, Economic Complexity and Sustainable Development. Email: ibolya.torok@ubbcluj.ro.

perspective by processing data collected from a quantitative survey using K means clustering. The results of the analysis support our assumption that for an optimal future professional development tourism students (are aware of the) need to have good ICC competences, although their specific types and the means to achieve this sometimes differs from what teachers usually consider emphasizing in the classroom.

Keywords: *intercultural communication, mediating communication, stereotypes, facilitating pluricultural space, soft skills*

REZUMAT. *Investigarea Necesității Dezvoltării Abilităților de Comunicare Interculturală pentru Studenții din Turism. Perspectiva și Nevoile Cursanților.*

Industria ospitalității este astăzi, conform multor păreri, locul unde absolvenții de universitate se pot găsi în probabil cel mai cosmopolitan mediu profesional. Pregătirea viitorilor specialiști în turism pentru comunicarea și medierea eficientă cu părțile interesate din domeniu care provin din colțuri diferite ale lumii, având la bază o multitudine de medii culturale, sociale și economice, pare a fi una din cele mai importante sarcini ale profesorilor de engleză de specialitate. Încurajați de ghiduri elaborate de instituții internaționale, profesorii de limbă străină sunt conștienți de necesitatea acordării unei atenții deosebite dezvoltării abilităților de comunicare și mediere interculturală, clădirii conștientizării că lumea profesională contemporană este una pluriculturală. Ceea ce s-a investigat mai puțin este percepția pe care o au studenții despre necesitatea achiziționării acestor abilități și modalitatea cea mai potrivită pe care profesorii să o folosească pentru a-i ajuta în acest sens. Scopul articolului de față este investigarea percepțiilor studenților prin procesarea rezultatelor unui chestionar cantitativ folosind algoritmul de grupare K means. Rezultatul analizei noastre susține presupunerea că pentru o viitoare dezvoltare optimă profesională, studenții din turism sunt conștienți că au nevoie de bune competențe de comunicare interculturală, deși tipurile lor specifice și mijloacele prin care acestea pot fi obținute diferă câteodată de ceea ce profesorii consideră necesar să sublinieze în clasă.

Cuvinte-cheie: *comunicare interculturală, medierea comunicării, stereotipuri, facilitarea spațiului pluricultural, abilități soft*

Introduction and Theoretical Background

Tourism today is a sector of the economy where globalization is at home and, where interacting with foreigners is almost unavoidable both for tourists and hosts alike. Considering the amazing number of international tourists in 2023 – an estimated 975 million between January 2023 to September 2023

(UNWTO, 2023) – tourism students are in dire need of enhanced intercultural communication skills. Although not yet considered core skills in academia, these have become essential skills tourism graduates need to find a promising job in such a cosmopolitan domain and dynamic labour market.

The interconnectivity of our contemporary world brought about by the accessibility to electronic devices, the internet, the social media and the aviation industry, irreversibly changed the way we encounter outsiders, the way we relate to foreign cultures. An overwhelming number of young people can nowadays travel abroad for holidays, studying or working, thus giving rise to a new necessity of knowing how to interact with sojourners that visit their own country or with foreigners whom they meet abroad. Teaching students about various aspects of foreign cultures has long been on the “to do” list of academia (foreign language) professors; yet teaching students about intercultural communication and interaction has entered the higher education syllabi in former communist countries like Romania only during the last two decades. In most cases, such a task has been quietly passed on or assumed by the foreign language teacher, rendering the ESP course the place where intercultural competence is discussed and even practiced. In view of these changes, several researchers (Byram 2021), (Egli & Cavalli 2023), have discussed the new role language teachers face when it comes to incorporating into their language courses, substantial ICC knowledge and skills. Are ELT teachers really prepared to teach ICC skills? Do they have the necessary training, and more poignantly, do they have the necessary time to squeeze in an already fully packed and time-limited language course the extra competences students need today? For Michael Byram “teaching for linguistic competence cannot be separated from teaching for intercultural competence, any attempt to do so turns another language into an encoding of the learner’s language” (Byram 2021, 28) According to these studies, language teachers cannot avoid today improving their own knowledge and skills in intercultural training. They also need to reconsider the scopes of their curriculum planning. To do so, they should be part of a team that develops new language policies, they should also turn the classroom into a safe space for students to voice and accept differences, a place where “highlighting similarities is the basis, then, for valuing differences as opportunities for enrichment for the whole class” (Egli & Cavalli 2023, 144). If most teachers are already aware of the need for these changes, we also should focus on how students perceive them, since they are the main beneficiaries of these curricular changes. Tourism students are the ones who probably need such training the most considering that the hospitality industry is the domain where there is inevitable exposure to outsiders, new cultures, new habits, new ways of thinking and behaving. The students’ perception of their need for ICC

competences has been less investigated, and the goal of the present study is to enquire the specific way the beneficiaries of the teaching process consider they could benefit from mastering such skills in their future profession.

In determining how we define intercultural communication competence, we have looked at the guidelines established by the Council of Europe's milestone 2018 document *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture*, especially at Volume 1- *Context, concept and model* and also at another earlier work from 2014, inspired by the European directives, *Developing Intercultural Competence through Education* edited by Joseph Huber and Christopher Reynolds. For the purpose of the present study we follow on the footsteps of Huber & Reynolds (2014) in understanding through competence a conglomerate of *attitudes, knowledge, skills and actions* that can lead students to respond successfully to situations or tasks that involve interactions with members of other ethnicities and cultures (especially those that live in a foreign country).

When we say that our students should master intercultural competences, we aim to help them develop *attitudes* like valuing cultural diversity, respecting people with different cultural backgrounds, being curious and willing to learn about other cultures and people with different worldviews, being willing to tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty when travelling abroad or when meeting tourists at home. Each English teacher focuses at least temporarily on developing *skills* such as multiperspectivity, empathy, cognitive flexibility, skills in discovering and interpreting information about different cultural perspectives, practices, skills in adapting one's behaviour to new cultural environments. Language tutors also instinctively focus on transmitting *knowledge* about a new culture in their course, so naturally, teaching about the internal diversity of all cultural groups, raising the students' communicative awareness that languages may express the same ideas in diverse ways, giving them information about new beliefs, values, traditions, practices should be a natural part of an ESP course. Last but not least, all these attitudes, skills and knowledge should push students to appropriate *actions* for an effective intercultural communication competence. For example, they should seek opportunities to engage with diverse people, interacting and communicating in order to solve problems, to offer help. Students should also actively challenge stereotypes and prejudices when meeting them and they should try to mediate conflictual interactions.³

A very similar, quadruple understanding of intercultural competence is also provided by the Council of Europe's *Reference Framework of Competences*

³ For more details about the components of the intercultural competence see Chapter 2 – “The Components of Intercultural Competence” from Huber, Joseph; Reynolds, Christopher. (Eds.) (2014) *Developing Intercultural Competence through Education*. Council of Europe Pestalozzi Series, No3., Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, pp. 19-22.

for *Democratic Culture* (2018), as one can notice in *Figure 1*. Considering that democracy and intercultural dialogue are complementary since they require respect for one's interlocutors, both aforementioned documents underline the fact that intercultural competence provides the background for the development of global citizens who have a solid professional training as well as a lasting education for democracy and tolerance.

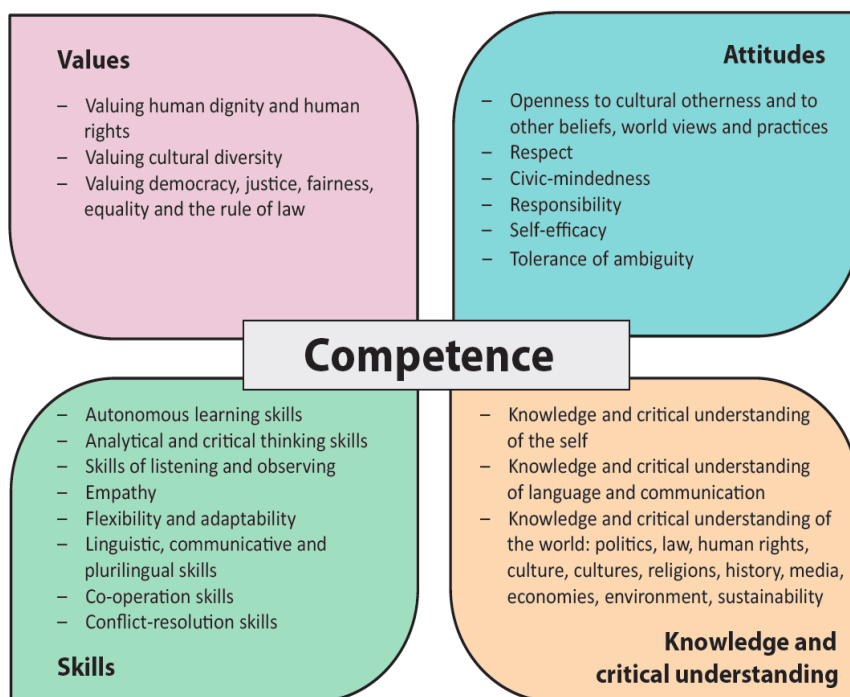


Figure 1. The 20 components of the model of competence required for democratic culture and intercultural dialogue. © Council of Europe (2018). *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture*. Volume 1- "Context, concept and model", p. 38.

Intercultural competence teaching and training can have many facets – from making students aware of the stereotypes and prejudices they (may) have on foreign people, passing by teaching them about the values, culture, and lifestyle of sojourners, to teaching them sartorial and communication etiquette, i.e. how to dress, how to greet, how to offer information and help if tourists need them. It can even tackle taboo topics that must be avoided or knowing how to refrain from behaviour that may be considered normal in one's country but criminalized in others. Intercultural communication is more than a means of assuring satisfactory business results in international ventures or relaxing,

problem-free foreign journeys. It can also help students better understand and appreciate their own culture by comparison. It can also aid with the acquisition of foreign language skills, making the target culture more accessible.

However, as indicated by Gobert (2015) and Wilkinson (2012), the key is finding the right balance between openness to the new culture and people without denying or downplaying the importance of the home culture: “The path is one of delicate balance, teaching students about the target culture for effective intercultural communication, without inadvertently encouraging them to adopt the cultural norms of the target culture, [...] forsaking their own culture.” (Gobert 2015, 111) Learning about the intricacies of a new culture, becoming aware of the sensitivities of cultural difference to avoid blunders and hurt feelings does not entail that intercultural explorers “go native” and fully immerse themselves in the new environment. Maintaining a critical distance helps future tourism specialists, for example, gain a comparative perspective for better understanding their own culture and appreciate the novelty and even quirkiness of the newly discovered realms. As Alvino E. Fantini noticed, self-awareness, introspection or reflection about one’s own culture are boosted by dealing with people from another culture: “As one learns about others, one learns about oneself”. (Fantini, 2012, 392)

One of the first dangers that teachers must point out to students is the necessity of avoiding stereotypical thinking that is so common among the general population regarding various outlanders and foreign cultures. Ron Scollon and Suzanne Wong Scollon (2001) highlight the polarization that accompanies such stereotypes when people assume that two cultures or societies must necessarily be polar opposites. How many people, less exposed to diversity and travelling, assume from hearsay that Southern Europeans like the Spanish people, all Spanish people, must be warm, friendly and talkative while Northern Europeans like the Norwegians, all Norwegians, must be distant, cold and taciturn? Internal differences within a group or exceptions from a rule are simply swept away by the ideological power of stereotypes; that why intercultural communication tutors must point out that each person is simultaneously a member of multiple groups (cultural, religious, gender-based, professional, social, etc.) which creates differences. Furthermore, cultures have multiple facets that various in-group members may embrace, ignore or reject. Such an awareness for diversity when it comes to interacting with members of new cultures can help avoid prejudice, racism, xenophobia and discrimination.

Stereotyping is another word for overgeneralization. The difference, however, is that stereotyping carries with it an ideological position. Characteristics of the group are not only overgeneralized to apply to each member of the group, but

they are also taken to have some exaggerated negative or positive value. These values are also taken as arguments to support social or political relationships in regard to members of those groups. [...] Ideologies are based on stereotypical thinking, or to put it the other way round, stereotypes are largely ideological. [...] Stereotypes limit our understanding of human behavior and intercultural discourse because they limit our view of human activity [...]. Furthermore, they go on ideologically to use that limited view of individuals and groups to justify preferential or discriminatory treatment by others who hold greater political power. (Scollon & Wong Scollon, 2001, 168, 169)

The above-mentioned authors point out that both positive and negative stereotyping is harmful, therefore hindering communication – the first one seeing members of different groups as identical and the latter seeing them as complete opposites. They also distinguish between a *solidarity fallacy*, i.e. falsely grouping characteristics of one group with those of another, and a *lumping fallacy* which happens when such assimilation is done in reference to two other groups. (Scollon & Wong Scollon, 2001, 173, 174). Avoiding these pitfalls is the first step Tourism students must take in creating a positive intercultural interaction. But what makes an ordinary speaker of a foreign language a proficient intercultural communicator? Brian Spitzberg defines intercultural communication competence as “an impression that behaviour is appropriate and effective in a given context” (Spitzberg, 2015, 343), because after all, “cultures do not interact, people do” (Spitzberg, 2015, 343) thus considering that both guest and host cultures need to adapt to each other. It is not a unidirectional flow of actions. The same idea is emphasized by John Corbett (2022) who mentions that both learners (of foreign languages, students of out-group cultures) and the outsiders they meet need to co-construct the meaning of their interaction:

All models of ICC share the conception of the learner as an explorer and mediator. [...] The encounter between the learner and other cultures affords learners to enter into hybrid ‘third spaces’ from which the home culture and the target culture can be viewed, challenged, and re-evaluated. [...] Neither learners nor their interlocutors alone are responsible for making meaning in any interaction, and so, rather than intercultural competence, we might focus on ‘intercultural dynamics’, thus acknowledging that the making of meaning is collaborative. (Corbett, 2022, 42, 63)

Not only does mastering ICC competence help students identify and avoid cultural stereotypes and prejudice, but as noted by Louise Tranekjær (2023), plurilingual/ pluricultural and intercultural communication competences can be used to negotiate and mediate inequalities and power asymmetries between international interactants. That can prove to be particularly helpful in tourism

where quite often there is an economic power imbalance between rich tourists from developed countries and poorer hosts adding to the challenges of cultural differences. So how do we, as ESP teachers, prepare our Tourism students to interact with strangers in a world that has become a global village? Teaching about a foreign culture is a corollary to teaching a foreign language, therefore learning a new language is a suitable vehicle for acquiring intercultural communicative competencies. As noted by Kostyrya et al. (2022), there is a double correlation between English language communicative competences and intercultural communication skills, each of them being a tool used to enhance the other. Nonetheless, it goes beyond that, it is more than learning about the linguistic intricacies of a new idiom, it is about learning how to transgress boundaries and establish cognitive and emotional connections beyond the limitations of one's own culture or even that of the target culture. It involves more than near native linguistic proficiency levels, it also involves the ability to negotiate, to mediate differences and interpret language and actions that escape simple translation.

The intercultural speaker is not bound to specific cultures or languages but is competent in mediating across multiple borders. It is for this reason that intercultural competence is increasingly defined as a global competence: the ability to be 'at home in the world' [...] Unlike the learner who is taught specific linguistic and cultural knowledge in preparation for encounters with a specific new culture, the intercultural speaker or mediator is able to thrive in multiple situations: he/she is globally competent. [...] The globally competent intercultural speaker is at home and happily mobile in this increasingly borderless world. (Wilkinson, 2012, 296, 298)

Since this mediation and negotiation of difference cannot happen in the absence of a common language, intercultural competence acquisition usually falls within the competencies foreign language tutors must teach, as it has been emphasized by the updated version of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (2020). The document highlights the importance for students nowadays to have specific linguistic skills coupled with pluricultural and plurilingual competence plus mediation abilities to ensure a rounded, holistic training and preparation for today's labour market. They need to have the "capacity to deal with 'otherness' to identify similarities and differences, to build on known and unknown cultural features, etc. in order to enable communication and collaboration" (CERF 2020,124). The "willingness to act as an intercultural mediator" and the "readiness and capacity to expand linguistic/plurilinguistic and cultural/pluricultural awareness through an attitude of openness and curiosity" (CERF 2020,124) are traits that language teachers are expressly

encouraged to develop in their students by this famous European linguistic guideline. This tight connection between language and culture has also been underlined by Monica Antonello (2023) in her analysis of English as a lingua franca of transcultural communication:

Language and culture are conceived of as two interrelated complex systems that are continuously negotiated in interaction and cannot be described or categorized a priori, they emerge through the speaker's linguistic and cultural practices and thus are closely bound to the context in which these practices are performed. (Antonello, 2023, 49)

According to Jane Wilkinson, if languages are identity markers, then: "language learning and intercultural speaking are transformative and do give rise to changes in identity, and [...] the specific languages being learned and spoken are formative in shaping that identity. [...] This understanding concomitantly grants learners agency in shaping their own identities and imbues languages (specific languages) with a transformative power." (Wilkinson 2012, 306) This powerful statement highlights how an interculturally competent foreign language speaker may personally benefit from an enlarged understanding of the world, may develop new connections with outsiders even beyond the scope of the professional activities and interactions.

If intercultural experiences are life-altering, affecting both tourists and locals, and the authentic pluricultural communication is interactive and participatory, the language teacher must pay attention to carefully evaluate not only the intercultural competence (often described as a host of abilities needed to perform appropriately when dealing with people from a different cultural background), but also the intercultural performance. Performance in such interactions implies "flexibility, humour, patience, openness, interest, curiosity, empathy, tolerance for ambiguity, and suspending judgements, among others". (Fantini, 2012, 393)

Developing proficient intercultural communication and interaction skills is vital in the hospitality industry where tourists and hosts often belong to divergent cultural backgrounds and where the guests' holiday choices and the hosts' attitudes towards the sojourners can be heavily influenced by how close or distant, they perceive the other culture to be from their own. Wishing to pursue familiarity and avoid potential conflicts on the tourists' side and desiring to offer a warm welcome without imprinting on the values of a foreign culture on the locals' side are common attitudes to be found in intercultural exposures.

Perceived cultural and linguistic differences between themselves and their hosts might be viewed as potentially discomforting, even alienating or threatening, and can form the basis of prejudice. These emotional, or affective

elements of attitudes towards the culturally different can influence tourists' choice of holiday destination (e.g. avoiding certain countries or regions seen to be "too different") or type of accommodation (e.g. choosing a large hotel complex with hosts who speak their language) [...]. Divergent attitudes might also be discerned in the perspective of the locals. For some, tourism can be threatening and viewed as corrosive of local cultural traditions and languages. For others, contact provides an opportunity not only for earning money by meeting tourist demands, but also for the preservation of their minority languages / ethnolinguistic communities and for intercultural and language learning. (Jack & Phipps, 2012, 537, 538)

If ignorance and prejudice-based obstacles are to be overcome, future tourism specialists need to improve their specific knowledge of other cultures' traditions, habits, lifestyles, beliefs, etc. with punctual information that will help them avoid cultural blunders. At the same time, they must be aware of how 'untranslatable' language, context-based stories and actions can be 'interpreted' for the tourists; to help create a common ground where both hosts and visitors alike can build mutually profitable and emotionally fulfilling interactions. Mastering mediation skills and the intricacies of intercultural verbal and non-verbal communication can help future tour guides, hotel managers, concierges, travel agents, restaurateurs increase their business profitability and market their destination to its true value. Knowing how to navigate the treacherous waters of pluricultural space can also help balance the uneven power relations that are established between the usually poorer hosts and the richer tourists. This occurs by mitigating tensions, reducing prejudice and discrimination, improving the economic and social development of local communities in a fair and conflict-free manner.

We can better understand how this works by investigating the concept of culture and cultural interaction first from a theoretical perspective. Ingrid Piller (2012) underlines the permeable membranes of each culture and the fact that to some extent each culture is an 'imagined community' which is interconnected with others and therefore in constant flux. There are no clearly defined boundaries (not for characterizing individuals anyway) and most intercultural miscommunications are actually linguistic in nature, which makes them more manageable through an increased language proficiency – just what ESP teachers love to hear!

Whether culture is viewed as nation, as ethnicity, as faith, as gender, or as sexuality, all these 'cultures' have one thing in common, they are imagined communities. [...] That means that members of a culture imagine themselves and are imagined by others as group members. These groups are too large to be 'real' groups (i.e.) no group member will ever know all the other group members. Therefore, they are best considered as discursive constructions.

That means that we do not have culture, but we construct culture discursively. [...] The obvious point is that, given the state of connectiveness of our world, no culture exists in isolation. [...] 'Culture' is in a constant state of flux and cross-fertilization. Given that each of us belongs to many cultures in this sense, and that all these combinations are slightly different, it is thus possible to argue that, in this sense, all communication is intercultural. [...] Some misunderstanding that are considered 'cultural' are in fact linguistic misunderstandings. (Piller, 2012, 5, 7, 9)

On the one hand, Piller (2012) and Gumperz (2005) emphasize linguistic proficiency in an international foreign language as a solution to intercultural miscommunication, showing how a mere matter of intonation falling and rising may cause misunderstanding and poor customer relations. Yet the latter, Gumperz (2005), emphasizes how socio-cultural norms affect all levels of speech production and interpretation, because understanding meaning is more than understanding individual words and the linguistic ties between them.

On the other hand, Janet Holmes (2012) focuses on understanding other people's etiquette and behavioural norms and not using our framework for interpreting foreign cultures. Politeness, in her view, is pragmatic, requires a context, it can only be evaluated by assessing others' behaviour in relation to societal norms (as we know them, that's why our background knowledge and open-mindedness are important). According to her, "meaning is co-constructed, and hence politeness is a matter of negotiation between participants. Interaction is regarded as a dynamic discursive struggle, with the possibility that different participants may interpret the same interaction quite differently". (Holmes, 2012, 211) The accent still goes on the fluid, unhinged nature of intercultural interaction that needs to be constantly negotiated or at least mediated.

The next question would be how can a tourism expert know how different cultures interpret various types of interactions? How can a hospitality student solve a conflict triggered by a cultural blunder? Stella Ting-Toomey (2015) shows that solving conflicts depends on the type of communication and cultural traits different countries/nations have, connecting her findings to cross-cultural investigations like that of Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010). She exemplifies her statement with the differences between individualism-based societies that emphasize the importance of individual identity and rights over those of group identity, vs. collectivistic communities that put group obligations over individual needs.

For individualistic, LC [low context] communicators, the bargaining resources in conflict typically revolve around individual pride and self-esteem, individual ego-based emotions, and individual sense of autonomy and power. For

collectivistic, HC [high context] interactants, the negotiation resources in conflict typically revolve around relational “face” maintenance and group harmony, group-oriented status and self-esteem, face-related emotions, and a reciprocal sense of favors and obligations. (Ting-Toomey, 2015, 357)

The famous six-cultural dimension analysis of various countries provided by Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010) is probably the most user-friendly paradigm when it comes to showing students how to approach cultural differences, sources of misunderstanding and conflict. According to the authors of *Cultures and Organizations, Software of the Mind. Intercultural Cooperation and Its Importance for Survival* (2010), people are culturally conditioned since early childhood through the informal and formal education they receive from their parents, teachers, through the influence their neighbourhood, workplace and community have on them. This is visible in the cultural traits they adhere to in an unconscious manner. That’s why, on a grand scale, individual exceptions apart, people belonging to a certain nation would behave similarly due to a shared, common, cultural pattern. Following Geert Hofstede’s landmark study carried out initially in-house at IBM on employees of different nationalities (study completed later by G.J. Hofstede and M. Minkov and validated by other studies’ similar results), a large-scale table of cultural variables has been proposed.

The cultural variables illustrated in Hofstede’s study point to differences between cultures measured on six dimensions: power distance, collectivism vs. individualism, femininity vs. masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long term orientation vs. short-term orientation, indulgence vs. restraint. Understanding that people from various countries around the world have different values which inform their behaviour and interactions, can be easier if, for example, as illustrated in *Figures 2a* and *2b*, we compare the cultural values that Romania has with those of the United Kingdom for example. The existence of a topic-related website - <https://www.hofstede-insights.com> - provides the digital natives of the Z generation with an easy tool to navigate and help them grasp cultural differences.

Knowing how to interact with visitors from Asian countries and how to behave when visiting African or South American communities is essential for future tourism students. Anticipating correctly the interaction with members of the out-group can help us navigate culture shock because, “in a way, the visitor to a foreign culture returns to the mental state of an infant, in which the simplest things must be learned over again. This experience usually leads to feelings of distress, helplessness, and hostility toward the new environment.” (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010, 384) Considering that “globalization by multinational corporations and supranational institutions [...] meets fierce local resistance because economic systems are not culture free” (Hofstede,

Hofstede and Minkov, 2010, 24), we can see why mastering these cultural differences and their interplay is also key to understanding the economy of the 'global village' and to finding a suitable and rewarding career, despite current frictions and incongruities.



Figure 2a. Illustration of a country comparison tool for Hofstede's six cultural dimensions.
(Source : <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison-tool?countries=romania%2Cunited+kingdom>)

The works mentioned in this theoretical background point to the complexities of ICC and to the necessity, for the language teachers mostly, to build in their students strong linguistic skills reinforced with optimal ICC and mediation abilities. They should emphasize the need for openness to diversity, curiosity for the new social practices and the new stories of other cultures. Above all, students should remember that in their encounters with alterity, meaningful interactions and successful tourism careers are the result of a tight collaborative process between hosts and guests.

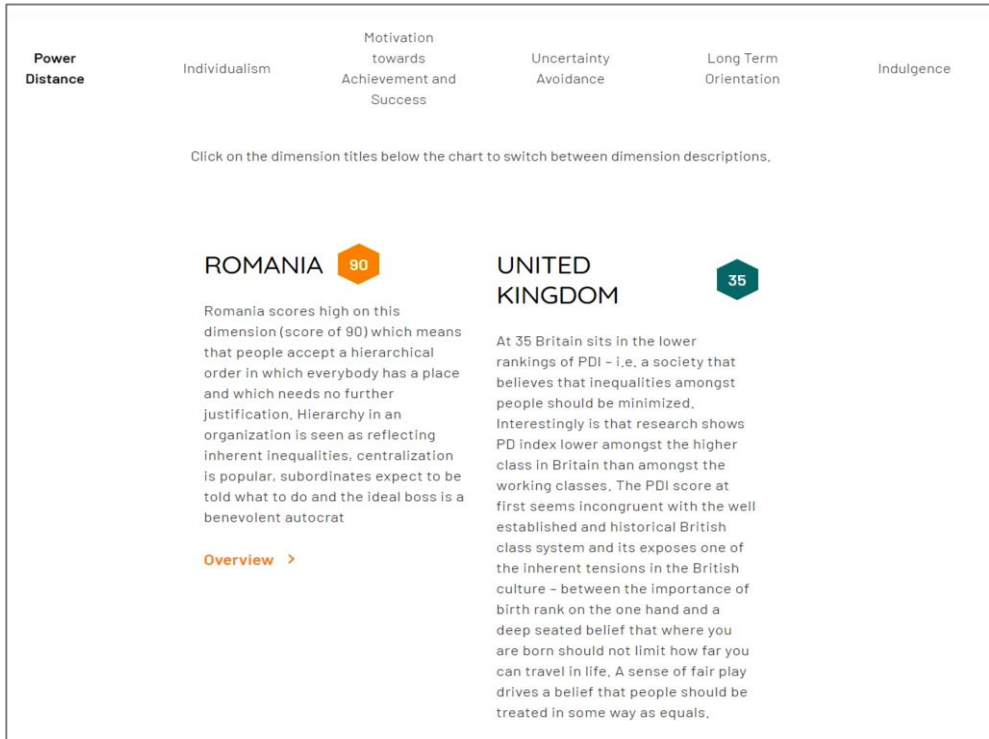


Figure 2b. Illustration of a country comparison tool for Hofstede’s six cultural dimensions – here a detail about the **Power Distance** values for Romania and the UK. (Source : <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison-tool?countries=romania%2Cunited+kingdom>)

The Study

While communication skills are the bread and butter of specialized foreign language courses, the focus on the intercultural side of communication is more of an exotic ingredient in most Romanian universities, with some notable exceptions. Courses focusing on the development of intercultural communication skills are rare and most often, such abilities or even basic notions are taught occasionally, most often by language teachers, whenever the topic of their courses or isolated reading / listening / speaking activities point to this direction. Some universities still offer their tourism students courses in the culture and civilization of various peoples, yet those are primarily directed toward the acquisition of historical facts, theoretical notions and do not target the development of interactive abilities for connecting with foreign people. In

view of this context, the development of intercultural communication skills seems to fall within the responsibilities of the foreign language teacher who could dedicate some time and attention to raising the students' awareness in this respect. If course tutors are aware of the need to focus on ICC skills as well during their ESP courses, besides the regular language and specialized vocabulary acquisition, less investigated have been the students' opinions on the validity of such an endeavour and on the specific means teachers could use to develop the types of ICC skills students consider they would use most in their future jobs. Considering that at the core of the teaching process are the students, and that the teaching needs to be directed towards preparing them for integration in the labour market, we have thought necessary to focus on the students' perception of their need for ICC skills/ competencies and the form this should take in order to really help them get an optimal preparation for their future jobs. Consequently, the present study tries to investigate the students' opinions regarding the importance of intercultural communication skills for their future professional path and the particularities of an improved Tourism English curriculum that would address this need.

Data Collection and Analysis

The current article analyses the results of a quantitative questionnaire that was sent to 1st year students specializing in the Geography of Tourism (at the Faculty of Geography) and 2nd year students specializing in Cultural Tourism (at the Faculty of History) from Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. The survey was carried out online, using the Google Forms format. It was addressed to the 130 students enrolled in the two specialisms at the beginning of the academic year and received 80 responses. The study was conducted over a period of two weeks in November 2023 and comprised a quantitative questionnaire based on 16 multiple-choice questions. For statistically processing the results of the survey, we have used the SPSS software to determine the possible K means clustering showing groupings of similar variables (testing for possible associations or correlations gave no statistically valid results). Also, a more simple, descriptive analysis of the results accompanied by graphs is presented further on.

Sampling

The sociometric measurements of the target group reveal that the great majority of respondents are very young high-school graduates, 18-20 years old – 85%, the rest being aged between 21-24 years old, and a comfortable majority

are female – 61%. Regarding their linguistic background, overwhelmingly they have started studying English at a very young age: 28 respondents while in kindergarten, 32 while in primary school. Only 14 respondents have started studying it in secondary school, 3 in high school and 2 declared having started its study at university. Besides English, most have also studied French – 60%, German – 47%, Italian – 6% and Spanish – 6%, 1 respondent also mentioned having studied Japanese and another one Portuguese. Regarding their mother tongue, out of 80 respondents, 57 declared it is Romanian and 29 Hungarian, resulting that 6 respondents are bilingual since they have chosen both options. These data reveal that our students have a very solid linguistic background because most of them have studied at least two foreign languages, English even from early childhood, while 1/3 of them can speak both Romanian and Hungarian with (relative) ease. Taking into account these findings, the language barrier should not be a problem for them when interacting with foreign people. Regarding their exposure to foreign cultures, we have found out that the great majority – 66 respondents have already travelled abroad while only 14 respondents have yet to do that.

Main Findings

1. Statistical interpretation of the survey's results

K-means clustering is a common technique for dividing a dataset into K unique, non-overlapping groups or clusters. As a prototype for the cluster, each data point is a member of the cluster with the closest mean. The procedure seeks to minimize the sum of squared distances between each point and its designated cluster centroid, often known as the within-cluster variance. K centroids are randomly initialized at the start of the process. The cluster centres are first estimated by these centroids. Next, depending on a distance metric - typically the Euclidean distance - each data point is assigned to the closest centroid. The dataset is divided into K clusters in this step. The mean of all the data points allocated to each cluster is then used to compute the centroids, representing the new cluster center. Up to convergence, the final two phases are iteratively performed while changing the centroid locations and cluster assignments. When the centroids' changes decrease to a certain level or the assignments stop changing, convergence is reached. We use the Elbow Method to determine K, the right number of clusters.

Based on the survey questions, we have focused on the following variables:

- **Previous Interactions with Foreign Tourists/Friends/Colleagues:** different ratings of attitudes, including worry about cultural differences, language obstacles, and curiosity, among others.
- **Importance of Good Intercultural Communication Skills:** required for jobs in tourism, education, management, sales, public administration, professional and personal development, study abroad, and other fields.
- **Boosting Intercultural Competence:** The suggested approaches outside of university education.
- **Components of Intercultural Communication:** Crucial competencies recognized as essential for tourism professionals.

The variables "average number of languages spoken" and "travel experience" were also included in the dataset for the cluster analysis in order to aid in the definition and distinction of the clusters. Based on the closeness of the respondents' replies to all of the included variables the K-means algorithm then clustered the respondents. These characteristics, which represent varying degrees of exposure to and comfort with cross-cultural interactions, assisted in defining and differentiating the clusters.

To determine the ideal number of clusters, we first used the Elbow Method. Around three or four clusters, the elbow method graph has a discernible bend, indicating that this may be the ideal number of clusters for the data.

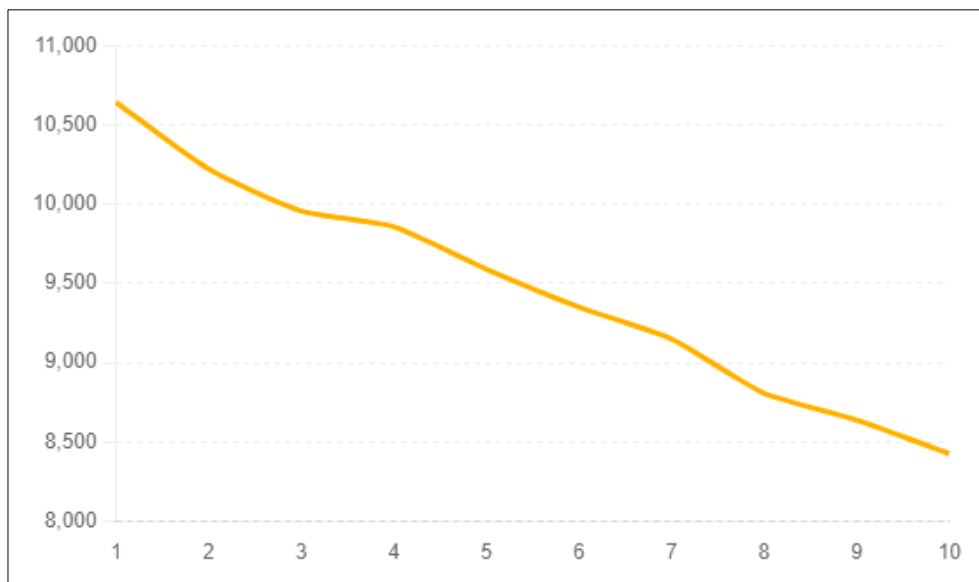


Figure 3. Elbow method for optimal number of clusters

In order to find groups of students who have given similar answers about their preferences and intercultural communication skills, we have grouped the data into four clusters. The number of languages spoken and travel experience seem to be the main differentiators across the clusters, with Cluster 1 being notable for having the largest average number of languages spoken.

Table 1. Table showing the 4 clusters of the survey.

	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4
Average Number of Languages	1.26	2.00	1.00	1.00
Travel Experience	81.8%	100%	100%	100%

The following are the thorough explanations for each cluster, which highlight important attitudes and ideas about intercultural communication:

Table 2. Table describing each cluster, which highlights important attitudes and ideas about intercultural communication.

	Moderately Experienced Travelers	Highly Proficient Multilinguals	Confident Communicators	Cultural Enthusiasts
Language Anxiety	Mostly uncomfortable with language barriers.	Mostly uncomfortable, but better adapted.	High discomfort due to language barriers.	Moderate discomfort, similar to Cluster 1.
Cultural Diversities	Generally uncomfortable with different looks and cultures.	Less discomfort compared to Cluster 1, showing more adaptability.	Significant discomfort with different looks and cultures.	Significant curiosity and eagerness to learn about other cultures.
Curiosity and Comfort	Show moderate curiosity and comfort in intercultural interactions.	High comfort and curiosity in interactions, eager to learn more about different cultures.	High levels of curiosity but significant challenges due to cultural differences.	High levels of comfort and curiosity in intercultural settings.
Importance of Skills	Strong belief in the necessity of intercultural communication skills for personal and professional development.	High emphasis on the necessity of intercultural skills for studying abroad and professional growth.	Moderate to high recognition of the importance of intercultural skills for personal and professional development.	Strong belief in the necessity of intercultural skills, particularly for studying abroad and professional growth.

These clusters illustrate varying degrees of expertise, comfort, and perception in relation to intercultural communication, ranging from highly proficient and comfortable individuals to those facing notable difficulties. This division can be useful when customizing educational curricula or cross-cultural training projects.

2. Tourism students' openness to intercultural interaction stemming from intellectual curiosity and the desire to travel.

If the sociometric findings discussed above indicate that most of our students have travelled abroad, we realize they took part in intercultural interactions outside their fixed culture and have at least a latent curiosity about foreign people and their culture. This interest can well have its roots in the intellectual curiosity that comes with studying tourism and wanting to travel rather than from their own personal experiences of having interacted considerably with foreign friends and colleagues. In the age of online communication that opens borders but diminishes personal interactions, when it comes to friends from other countries, 27 respondents out of 80 mention that they don't have any foreign friends and 22 say they have foreign friends they keep in touch with online, but they have also met face-to-face. Fifteen students keep in touch with their foreign friends but have never met, while 16 have foreign acquaintances but they don't keep in touch. When it comes to foreign school/ university/ work colleagues, most students – 49, mention not having met anybody this way, while 21 of the respondents met their foreign colleagues at school or university, just 6 respondents met them at work. The purpose of these questions was to identify the degree of familiarization students might have with prior intercultural communication outside the field of tourism, and their receptiveness for communicating with foreigners based on their personal experience.

When it comes to their openness for traveling to a foreign country where their exposure to new cultures and peoples will be at maximum, our tourism students welcome it with open arms, even if some of them may feel a little anxiety facing the unknown as illustrated in *Figure 4*. More than a third (33 respondents) view the prospect of international travel as “relaxing, fun and enjoyable”, an almost equal number (27 respondents) consider it “fascinating but also a little frightening because of the new environment / people / language”, and 19 respondents regard it as “relaxing and enjoyable but only if I travel together with my family or close friends from home”. Only six students mention that they are curious about it, but they haven't had that opportunity yet. None of them consider international travel “boring and a waste of time” or something they “must do because of their job/ studies, without being keen on it”.

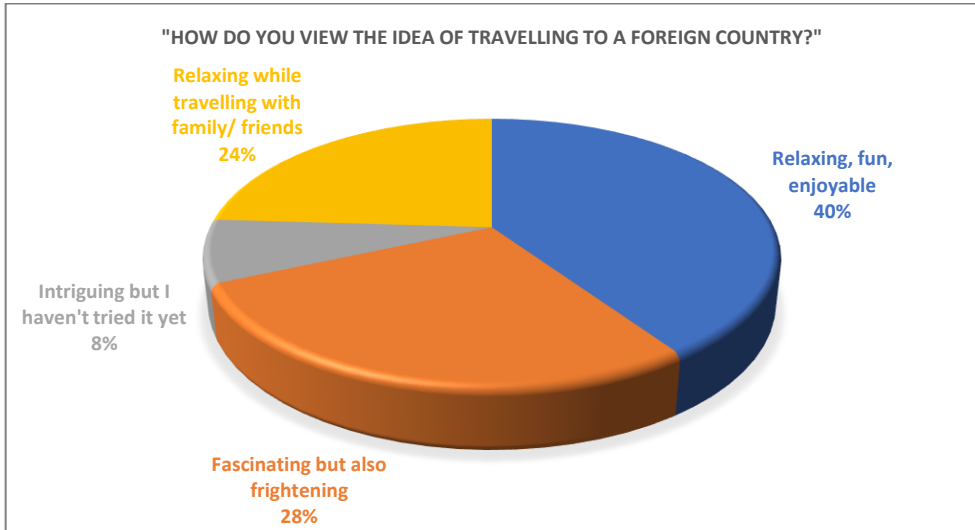


Figure 4. The way Tourism students perceive the idea of travelling to a foreign country.

The students' responsiveness to the idea of travelling to foreign countries obviously is correlated with their academic specialization, Tourism, where curiosity about and interest in foreign peoples and cultures is mandatory. Their slight anxiety to travel abroad, especially on their own without familiar people around them, may be a result of their young age, of not having travelled anywhere without their close relatives before coming to college. If they find this new environment a little frightening, as we will see later in the survey, it will be mostly due to linguistic barriers rather than the strangeness of foreign people or cultures.

3. Tourism students' positive attitude and openness to intercultural interactions and communication

Based on their previous interactions with foreign friends / colleagues / tourists, the interviewed students consistently indicated that they have a positive attitude towards meeting and interacting with people belonging to other cultures, either in their home country and abroad, as illustrated in *Figure 5*. Asked about the existence of a possible anxiety or lack of comfort in interacting with foreigners and its level of intensity on a Likert scale (1 - not at all, 2 - moderately so, 3 - very much), most students (42 respondents) considered it was due to the language barrier in a moderate way, 9 of them considered this was very much the case while 29 had no problem with this at all. Regarding

their possible anxiety towards the outsiders' dissimilarity in terms of appearance (clothes, skin colour, body language) almost all the students (74 out of 80) said they have absolutely no problem with this, and only 6 were moderately rendered uncomfortable by it. A rather similar answer was given about the anxiety that might have been triggered by the foreigners' different culture (religion, system of values and beliefs): a comfortable majority of 66 students mentioned they have no problem at all with it and the rest of 14 only a moderate one. For these two questions regarding their disturbance regarding the outsiders' difference in terms of appearance or culture, no student picked the "very much" variant.

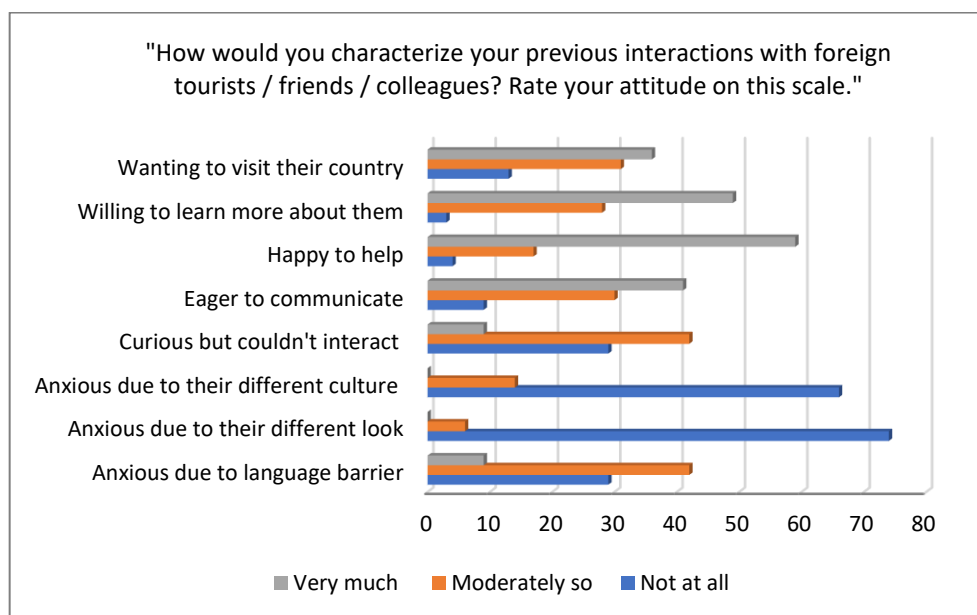


Figure 5. The students' attitude towards interacting with foreign tourists / friends / colleagues.

On the contrary, from the questions asked we can notice that students are curious and eager to interact with foreign people, to learn more about them and their culture. Half of the respondents (42 students) are moderately curious about outsiders and want to interact with them, but they couldn't do that due to the language barrier. Again, half of them (41 students) felt very comfortable in this intercultural exchange and were eager to communicate, while 30 of their colleagues felt only moderately so. A comfortable majority (59 respondents) felt very happy to help the foreigners with information or directions regarding Romania or their city, while only 17 felt moderately so. More than half (49

students) admitted being very curious about the outsiders and being willing to learn more about their country or culture as a result, and only 28 felt moderately so. When it comes to being so satisfied with their previous interaction that it triggered in them the desire to visit that foreign country, an almost equal number of students indicated being very satisfied – 36 respondents and 31 of them picked being moderately convinced of this.

Summing up, we can say that our tourism students do not feel anxious about the differences they might come across in interacting and communicating with foreign people; the only apprehension some have is due to linguistic barriers, the difficulty in speaking one another's language or an international one. (From the *Sampling* part of the article we can notice though that the respondents have a very comfortable linguistic background education that should facilitate easy communication on their side). Counteracting this obstacle, the students declare their openness and curiosity towards interacting with outsiders and willingness to learn about their culture and country, maybe even while visiting it.

4. Intercultural communication skills are essential for a career in tourism

Regarding their professional future and the necessity of mastering intercultural communication skills, almost all students admit that for a career in the hospitality industry this is a necessity: 75 respondents out of 80 agree with this very much, only 5 consider it moderately important. Out of 80 respondents, consistently over 50 students have mentioned that having good intercultural skills is “very important” nowadays also for a career in teaching (54 students), a career in sales (56 students), a career in management (59 students) or a career in public administration (53 students). Over half of the students questioned indicated that such skills are “very important” for a “good professional development in any domain” (47 respondents), as well as for “a good personal development” (50 respondents) and “continuing your studies abroad” (60 respondents). Considering the importance these skills have for the students' further academic and professional development in tourism, and a fulfilled personal life, it was important to find out next where and how they can be best enhanced. Is it the English teacher's duty to highlight them or are they a matter that even specialism teachers can touch upon?

In the course of our investigation, the participants to the opinion poll mentioned that some elements of intercultural communication – i.e. how to communicate / interact with foreigners – have been studied or practiced before in high-school as mentioned by 48% of the respondents. A mere 18% mentioned they have heard of this only at university during the English course while 31% indicated they have never studied this before. None of the students mentioned

studying intercultural communication at university during other foreign language courses or during their specialism courses. Only 1 respondent noted that he/she also studied this at university during a "Culture and Civilization" type of course. Considering these results, one can infer that teaching and improving students' intercultural communication skills falls into the attributions of the English language teacher, since their specialism teachers or other language teachers rarely touch upon these matters.

Asked to indicate their top three choices for the place where they should learn more about intercultural communication, an overwhelming number of students, 71% representing 57 respondents picked a surprisingly pragmatic and informal choice – "we can learn this by travelling abroad". This probably comes as a continuation of the "practice makes learning better" approach many of our students have, almost all of them having already travelled abroad and having interacted with foreign people. Considering they are tourism students, this should not come as a surprise, travelling for them being the instrument they use to understand the world, to explore it, to make a living. Their second option for learning more about intercultural communication was "during the English course" picked by 67% representing 54 respondents, while 47 students mentioned they can learn these skills "informally by interacting with our foreign friends". Only 35 students mentioned the need for learning intercultural communication during their specialism courses. At the other end of the spectrum, just one student picked the option that further studying these skills "is not needed in my opinion".

While the great majority of our students is convinced that mastering intercultural skills is vital today in a globalized world, especially for a job in tourism, many realize that they can improve these abilities using other methods besides academic study and training. Asked to pick their top five choices for improving their intercultural competence besides studying this at university, an overwhelming majority of our students, 80% chose "watching documentaries about new countries and their history/culture", 75% indicated they would prefer to learn these skills by "travelling to foreign countries for holidays", 72% also preferred "reading articles on the internet or watching online travel blogs", for 56% their fourth choice was "listening to audiobooks / podcasts". On the fifth place, an equal number of 42 respondents indicated that either "studying in foreign countries" or "living and working in foreign countries" would be an ideal way to improve their intercultural interaction with sojourners. These choices can be indicative of the preferred pragmatic approach tourism students have towards first-hand interaction with foreigners as indicated by previous responses to other survey questions. They also point towards the strong visual learning and multimedia component that generation Z students are inclined to favour in their approach to formal education. While these tools and activities

can be applied to informal education as well (as our students seem to suggest through their answers), several studies - Huber & Reynolds (2014), Kostyrya et al. (2022) - have emphasized that ICC competence can best be achieved in formal settings as well through real or virtual educational mobility (mobility stays, real or virtual (classroom exchanges), blogs, video-conferences, e-learning platforms, as well as watching movies, reading books and journals).

Considering the last results of the survey which indicate that teaching about intercultural communication and enhancing this competence with tourism students falls within the responsibilities of the ESP teacher, one has to prioritize the elements that must be taught, given the reduced number of hours that the syllabus allocates for specialized English in the students' program. As illustrated in *Figure 6*, students indicated that their top five skills to master would be: 1) knowing how to greet and welcome foreign people – as picked by 70 respondents, 2) knowing how to give specific information to foreign people – as indicated by 62 respondents, 3) knowing how to help foreign people by offering solution to their problems – as preferred by 61 students, 4) knowing how to behave when you visit foreign countries – as mentioned by 51 respondents, and last but not least, 5) mastering specific information on new cultures (about their history, religion, language, values and beliefs systems) – as chosen by 50 students.

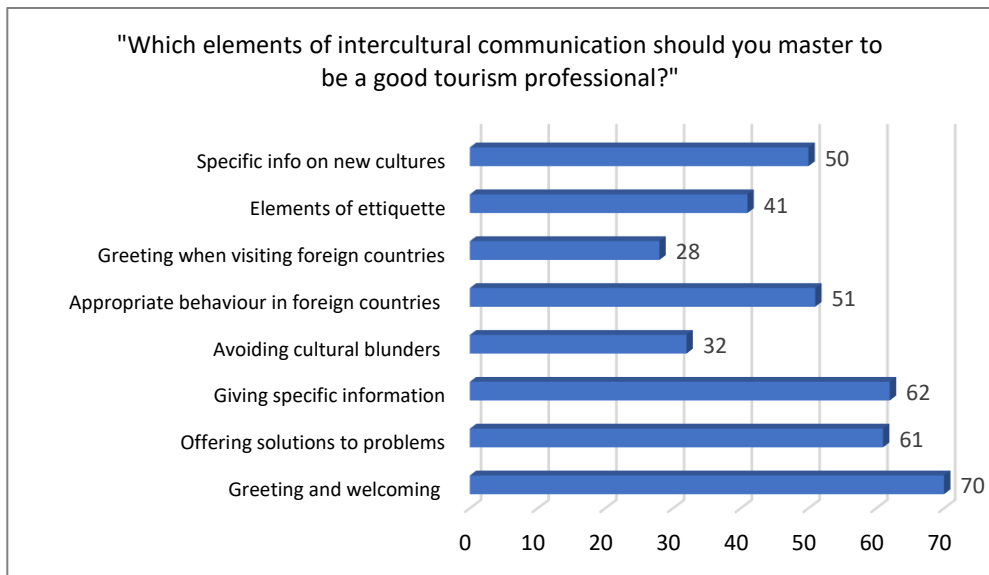


Figure 6. Elements of intercultural communication students should master to be a good tourism professional.

All the above-mentioned skills are very pragmatic in nature and domain-related, therefore our tourism students will have to master these if they desire a successful career in tourism. Knowing how to have a first interaction that can set the tone, knowing how to help sojourners and how to behave in a new country are essential for the performance of any tour guide, hotel receptionist or even for a travel agent. It's to be noted that elements that are somewhat theoretical in nature – specific cultural information, elements of etiquette, avoiding cultural blunders and elements of sartorial knowledge are not considered priorities by future tourism specialists. Their preference is consistently directed towards performance and the customer service facet of intercultural communication and interaction, as they should be in such a people-oriented industry! It seems that as teachers we are more concerned with raising our students' awareness of cultural differences, developing in them the right *attitudes* for encountering the Other, transmitting the necessary *knowledge* while our students are more concerned with the *skills* and the *actions* that make a rounded intercultural communication competence. As ESP teachers we need to remember that our duty is not necessarily to teach a certain subject or some skills or specific knowledge, but first we need to teach *students*, to prepare them for their future profession, so their perspective on what they need to learn really counts.

Conclusion

Contemporary students are 'citizens of the world' through the interconnectedness provided by the new electronic media and communication methods, by the easiness with which they travel from one corner of the planet to another, by the rapid access to information, education and consumer products originating in countries they have never been to. Interacting, communicating with outsiders is a necessity and even a daily event for most tourism students nowadays. This early exposure to difference obviously facilitates their understanding of various cultures from around the world and opens their mental horizon for the real interaction with foreigners they will deal with in their future careers. Intercultural competence is still seen as mostly a new type of communication students have to master. It is usually assumed by several stakeholders (higher education providers, students, even recruiters or employers,) that foreign language tutors can and must assume the task of raising the students' awareness towards the intercultural communication and its benefits. Training students in this respect had long been one of the goals of the foreign language courses (even if for only one language - culture component at a time). However, educating tourism students towards being prepared to

meet and interact with a diversity of tourists from all corners of the world would require more time and resources than ESP language courses can regularly provide. Despite limitations, most ESP teachers are equipped for this task, mastering several languages to perfection and having an in-depth understanding of at least one foreign culture. With a careful realignment of the curriculum to suit this goal, or even better, with a specially dedicated course, preparing hospitality students for an international career in such a cosmopolitan domain can be within grasp.

The results of our analysis have shown that tourism students too are aware of the need to master intercultural communication skills for their future professions. Their perception on what precise kind of skills/ competence they need is heavily influenced by a pragmatic vision brought about by their realisation that the hospitality industry focuses primarily on customer relations and satisfaction. If students are to thrive professionally in any domain, especially one as globalized as tourism, they need to break language and cultural barriers to effectively communicate, interact, solve problems, and aid a plethora of tourists and fellow specialists from around the world. Succeeding in doing this means they will be able to achieve customer satisfaction, maybe even informally promote their destination, they will find new career perspectives – and that is no mean achievement in a very competitive industry and ever-changing labour market.

WORKS CITED

- Antonello, Monica. 2023. *Communication Strategies in English as a Lingua Franca Transcultural Communication*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Byram, Michael. 2021. *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence. Revisited 2nd Edition*, Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Corbet, John. 2022. *An Intercultural Approach to English Language Teaching, 2nd Edition*, Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Council of Europe. 2018. *Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture. Volume 1- Context, concept and model*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing. Available at About the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture - Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (coe.int), retrieved July 25th 2024.
- Council of Europe. 2020. *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment – Companion volume*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing. Available at www.coe.int/lang-cefr, retrieved May 20th 2024.
- Egli Cuenat, Miriam and Marisa Cavalli. 2023. "What is My Role and Responsibility as a Language Teacher in Developing Language (and Other) Skills for Learning across the Curriculum?" in *Quality and Equity in Education. A Practical Guide to*

- the Council of Europe Vision of Education for Plurilingual, Intercultural and Democratic Citizenship*, edited by Michael Byram, Mike Fleming and Joseph Sheils, 136-155, Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Fantini, Alvino E. 2012. "Multiple Strategies for Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence" in *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Intercultural Communication*, edited by Jane Jackson, 390-405, London: Routledge.
- Gobert, Melanie. 2015. "Taboo Topics in the ESL/EFL Classroom in the Gulf Region" in *Intercultural Communication with Arabs. Studies in Educational, Professional and Societal Contexts*, edited by Rana Raddawi, 109-126, Singapore: Springer.
- Gumprez, John J. 2005. "Interethnic Communication" in *Intercultural Discourse and Communication. The Essential Readings*, edited by Scott F. Kiesling and Christina Bratt Paulston, 33-44, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Hofstede, Geert, Gert Jan Hofstede and Michael Minkov. 2010. *Cultures and Organizations, Software of the Mind. Intercultural Cooperation and Its Importance for Survival*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Hofstede Insights, <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison-tool?countries=romania%2Cunited+kingdom>, retrieved November 20th, 2023.
- Holmes, Janet. 2012. "Politeness in Intercultural Discourse and Communication" in *The Handbook of Intercultural Discourse and Communication*, edited by Christina Bratt Paulston, Scott F. Kiesling and Elisabeth S. Rangel, 205-228, Oxford: Willey-Blackwell.
- Huber, Joseph and Christopher Reynolds, eds. 2014. *Developing Intercultural Competence through Education*. Council of Europe Pestalozzi Series, No3., Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.
- Gavin, Jack and Alison Phipps. 2012. "Tourism" in *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Intercultural Communication*, edited by Jane Jackson, 537-550, London: Routledge.
- Kostyrya, Inna, Ganna Kozlovska, Oksana Biletska, Marina Shevchenko, Valerii Lastovskyi, Alla Mishechenko. 2022. "Intercultural Communication Skills as an International Tool for the Development of English-Language Communicative Competencies" in *Journal of Curriculum and Teaching*, Vol. 11, No.6, Special Issue, 30-43, doi: 10.5430/jct.v11n6p30.
- Piller, Ingrid. 2012. "Intercultural Communication: An Overview" in *The Handbook of Intercultural Discourse and Communication*, edited by Christina Bratt Paulston, Scott F. Kiesling and Elisabeth S. Rangel, 3-18, Oxford: Willey-Blackwell.
- Scollon, Ron and Suzanne Wong Scollon. 2001. *Intercultural Communication. A Discourse Approach*. 2nd Edition. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Spitzberg, Brian H. 2015. "A Model of Intercultural Communication Competence" in *Intercultural Communication, A Reader*, edited by Larry A. Samovar, Richard E. Porter, Edwin R. McDaniel and Carolyn Sexton Roy, 343-355, 14th Edition. Boston: Cengage Learning.
- Ting-Toomey, Stella. 2015. "Managing Intercultural Conflicts Effectively" in *Intercultural Communication, A Reader*, edited by Larry A. Samovar, Richard E. Porter, Edwin R. McDaniel and Carolyn Sexton Roy, 355-367, 14th Edition. Boston: Cengage Learning.

- Tranekjær, Louise. 2023. "What Do I Need to Know about Plurilingual-and-Intercultural Democratic Competencies" in *Quality and Equity in Education. A Practical Guide to the Council of Europe Vision of Education for Plurilingual, Intercultural and Democratic Citizenship*, edited by Michael Byram, Mike Fleming and Joseph Sheils, 35-35, Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- UNWTO (2023). *World Tourism Barometer*, Volume 21, Issue 4, November 2023, (Excerpt), p.1. Available at: https://webunwto.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2023-11/UNWTO_Barom23_04_November_EXCERPT_v2.pdf?VersionId=Q3i27HkRVsyU9gSP6yV4NCgxZiPdHrE, retrieved January, 2, 2024.
- Wilkinson, Jane. 2012. "The Intercultural Speaker and the Acquisition of Intercultural / Global Competence" in *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Intercultural Communication*, edited by Jane Jackson, 296-309, London: Routledge.

ICT-ENHANCED MARITIME ENGLISH TEACHING AND LEARNING AT TERTIARY LEVEL. A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS

Mariana BOERU¹ 

Article history: Received 6 March 2024; Revised 25 June 2024; Accepted 15 October 2024; Available online 10 December 2024; Available print 30 December 2024.

©2024 Studia UBB Philologia. Published by Babeş-Bolyai University.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License

ABSTRACT. *ICT-Enhanced Maritime English Teaching and Learning at Tertiary Level. A Contrastive Analysis.* This article aims to investigate the academic impact of employing ICT means and approaches in the context of teaching ESP to Marine Electrical Engineering students at “Mircea cel Batran” Naval Academy, Romania. The research question to be answered is whether a switch from a face-to-face, paper-based learning setting to a face-to-face, digital, interactive one would influence the overall academic performance of our students, with a focus on elements such as student interest, motivation, and autonomy. The article reports on and discusses the findings of quantitative and qualitative research conducted by the author on two separate groups of second-year Naval Academy students. First, a control group was selected and offered the traditional, paper-based, face-to-face course in English for Marine Electrical Engineering for the second year of study, while the experiment group was exposed to the digital, interactive version of the same course, which had been uploaded on the Academy Moodle LMS platform. Both groups underwent identical mid-semester and final semester assessments, and their results were recorded and compared. A keen interest was taken in 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

¹ **Mariana BOERU** is a lecturer at the Department for Marine Electrical and Electronic Engineering, The Faculty of Marine Engineering, “Mircea cel Bătrân” Naval Academy, Romania. Research interests: teaching and assessing within ESP programs at tertiary level, e-learning and digital pedagogies, gamification in ESP, ICT tools and ESP, ESP curriculum development. Email: mariana.boeru@anmb.ro.

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.

Keywords: *ESP, ICT, e-learning, digitalization, contrastive research*

REZUMAT. Predarea și învățarea limbii engleze maritime prin intermediul mijloacelor TIC la nivel universitar. O analiză contrastivă. Acest articol își propune să investigheze impactul academic al utilizării mijloacelor TIC în contextul predării limbii engleze de specialitate pentru studenții la Inginerie Electrică și Electronică Navală, din cadrul Academiei Navale „Mircea cel Bătrân”, România. Întrebarea de cercetare a acestui studiu este dacă trecerea de la un context de învățare față în față tradițional, la unul față în față digital, interactiv, ar influența performanța academică generală a studenților noștri. Cercetarea vizează acele elemente precum interesul studenților, motivația și autonomia lor de învățare. Articolul raportează și analizează rezultatele cercetărilor cantitative și calitative efectuate de autor pe două grupuri separate de studenți din anul II la Academia Navală. În primul rând, a fost selectat un grup de control care a urmat cursul de limba engleză pentru inginerie electrică marină, anul II de studiu, în format tradițional față în față, în timp ce grupul experimental a fost expus la versiunea digitală, interactivă a aceluiași curs, care fusese încărcat pe platforma online Moodle a Academiei Navale. Ambele grupuri au fost supuse unor evaluări identice la jumătatea semestrului și la final de semestru, iar rezultatele lor au fost înregistrate și comparate. Un interes deosebit a fost acordat gradului de retenție a conținutului lexical specializat și contextualizarea comunicativă ulterioară a acestuia. Mai mult, studenților vizați de studiu li sa administrat un chestionar de sfârșit de semestru care a urmărit să identifice modul în care aceștia se raportează la materialele de curs în ceea ce privește nivelul lor de interes și motivație și relevanța și eficiența percepută a conținutului și formatului cursului etc. Pe lângă evaluarea contrastivă a metodologiei de curs folosită în ambele cazuri investigate, studiul de cercetare a analizat și percepțiile studenților cu privire la valoarea adăugată a mai multor alți factori, cum ar fi accesul la materialele de curs și posibilitatea și ușurința studiului individual, care se corelează cu dezvoltarea autonomiei de învățare și dobândirea de competențe transversale pentru învățarea pe tot parcursul vieții. În esență, acest articol urmărește să aducă în discuție câteva aspecte cheie ale integrării mijloacelor TIC în predarea limbii engleze de specialitate la

nivel academic, deoarece predarea limbajelor de specialitate bazată pe tehnologie a devenit o evoluție incontestabilă și inevitabilă în cadrul practicilor de predare a limbilor străine din secolul XXI.

Cuvinte-cheie: *predarea limbajelor de specialitate, mijloace TIC, e-learning, digitalizare, cercetare contrastivă*

Introduction

It is undeniable that the advent of ICT has tremendously impacted and profoundly transformed the field of ESP in terms of its educational settings, the teaching and learning approaches and strategies, the input format, and the teacher-student and student-student interaction and communication patterns. In fact, today, ICT can no longer be regarded simply as an additional tool in the teaching and learning of ESP but rather as its underlying support framework. ESP in itself is now recognized as “a major player in both research and pedagogy in applied linguistics.” (Hyland 2022, 202), having developed “a number of specific affinities, (...) a special relationship” (Sarré, 2021) with ICT.

This study will look at the literature produced on the topic of the integration of ICT in ESP practices to date and proceed to review those concepts to be verified in the research study herein under discussion. In addition, it will consider previous research findings that are relevant to its specific study objectives and correlate them to its own conclusions in the hope of providing further insight. The research study details, procedures, and findings will be described and discussed against the theoretical and pedagogical background previously presented.

Clarifying Concepts. Literature review

ICT Resources. ICT in ESP goes back all the way to the 1990s with the early days of word processors and students’ unidirectional interaction with texts, progressing through the advent of Web 2.0 and the wide access to online resources, and reaching the current state of a multifaceted, profound interconnection based on crosspollination between ICT and ESP.

Collis and Moonen discussed the employment of ICT in connection to what they called “flexible learning” from several standpoints. First, they identified ICT resources as “learning resources.” (Collis and Moonen 2001, 10-11) Nowadays, ESP teachers can choose from a large selection of free or paid ICT resources; the free ones also known as Open Educational Resources (OER).

As such, there is an array of learning apps dedicated to numerous varieties of occupational English and equally substantial multimedia interactive learning software as well as specialized online dictionaries, etc. Teachers can also exploit various online authentic textual, graphic, audio, and video content and online collections of specialized materials for different professional fields in the form of webpages, blogs, wikis, etc.

Second, they connected ICT to “the instructional organization of learning,” referring, for instance, to Learning Management Systems such as Moodle, on which Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) can be uploaded and delivered; and, finally, they acknowledged ICT as being instrumental in facilitating synchronous and asynchronous “communication” within a learning context with tools such as email, chats, messaging, forums, and live video conferencing facilities, either integrated into an LMS or freestanding.

Types of ESP. The intrinsic relationship between the different learner communities’ own, specific linguistic needs and the latter’s transformation into the objectives and approaches of various ESP courses has prompted the emergence of quite a wide variety of types of ESP: EAP (English for Academic Purposes), EOP (English for Occupational Purposes), EAOP (English for Academic Occupational Purposes, combining EAP and EOP), and ESCP (English for Sociocultural Purposes for learners who, for instance, are seeking local community membership) (Belcher 2017, 3). Sarré goes even further and uses what he calls different “grains of specificity within ESP” (Sarré, 2021) combined with the extent of familiarity of the learner with the target context to identify EGAP (English for General Academic Purposes), English for Specific Academic Purposes, English for General Professional Purposes (e.g. general professional oral or written communication skills such as correspondence and participating in meetings), English for General Occupational Purposes (e.g., English for the hospitality industry), and English for Specific Occupational Purposes (e.g., English for tourist guides, receptionists, etc.). (Sarré, 2021)

Learning theories in ESP. The current integration of ICT into ESP practices has meant taking the principles of constructivism, connectivism, and Task-Based Language Teaching and harnessing their combined effects in a technology-driven setting that aims to cater to the learners’ specific needs as much as possible. Constructivism views learners as actively constructing meaning and knowledge and making choices while trying to make sense of their experiences and creating their own learning system. (Driscoll, 2000, 376) Mamakou and Grigoriadou deem socioconstructivism “the appropriate paradigm for ESP learning in tertiary education,” claiming that a constructivist approach to language learning is “absolutely appropriate for adult learners that need to develop academic and professional/vocational discipline-specific language skills through a

collaborative setting.” (Mamakou and Grigoriadou 2009, 463) In this approach, collaboration emphasizes the social dimension of learning - the fact that learners learn through interaction and cooperation with other learners, the teachers, and even other professionals belonging to their field of work. Hence, the relevance of the professional socio-cultural context, which encompasses a particular group’s learning experience.

The socioconstructivist view of learning through collaboration and networking is broadened and enhanced by the theory of connectivism, which is defined by George Siemens as “the ability to see connections between fields, ideas, and concepts,” an ability that he sees as a “core skill.” (Siemens 2005, 6) Connectivism means the practice of connecting resources (material and human alike) as a perpetual learning strategy, creating useful information patterns which is what is “required to learn in our knowledge economy.” (Siemens 2005, 4) What is more, with the tremendous advance of ICT, which has opened learners’ access to multidimensional networking in the field of education, Siemens argues that the conjugated effect of technology and connectivist learning activities has been the propulsion of “learning theories into a digital age.” (Siemens 2005, 4).

The way ESP teaching approaches have operationalized these theories has been mostly through task-based and project-based activities that facilitate the learners’ collaborative use of the language in a manner that is adequate to meet real-life professional objectives and outcomes. These activities are centered on the learners and their need for real communication skills and specialist lexical knowledge. Thus, ESP teachers strive to involve their students in engaging, interactive, collaborative and connective activities in which meaning and knowledge are actively co-constructed and linguistic proficiency is performative and goal-oriented. As Hyland points out, there should be “a focus on inductive, discovery-based learning, authentic materials, and an emphasis on a guided, analytical approach to teaching.” (Hyland 2022, 213)

In this context, especially with ICT being more and more embedded in ESP, the role of the teacher has shifted from being the main source of knowledge to being a facilitator, “a guide to support learners through the process of learning.” (Gimeno-Sanz 2014, 29) It is obvious that there are now multiple hats that language teachers have to wear. For instance, Li (2018) outlined the evolving roles of teachers in ICT-based ESP, connecting specific digital tools and activities to a certain teacher role: organizer for Wikis, audience/reader for blogs, guide for corpus projects, participant/facilitator on online forums, and evaluator for students’ oral and written work. (Li 2018, 16)

Needs analysis. Authentic materials. Right from the onset, ESP has been defined by its pursuit of the specific needs of the target learners (Paltridge and Starfield, 2013, Arnó-Macía, 2012, Belcher, 2009), determined through needs

analysis. This has profoundly influenced the objectives, the content, the resources, the approaches, and the dynamics of ESP programs. More precisely, when establishing the learners' profile with the help of needs analysis, course designers should consider, as Hyland points out, the "learners' goals and backgrounds, their language proficiencies, their reasons for taking the course, their teaching and learning preferences, and the situations they will need to communicate in." (Hyland 2006, 73) It is important to notice the multifold insight provided by Hyland's list. First, there are the learners' initial background and linguistic proficiency constituting the foundation onto which the learning experiences will be articulated, and second, there are the learner's own learning objectives formulated in close connection to their envisaged performance in real-life professional communicative contexts, the starting point and the end point of their learning experience being bridged by *their teaching and learning preferences*. This stresses the utmost importance of the learners' own input into their learning process. In ESP, learners are not passive recipients of imparted knowledge unilaterally selected by teachers but rather invested actors who constantly shape their learning experience, influencing what, how, and how much they learn. Moreover, learners are themselves sources of authentic information and experience that are to be exploited by language teachers. For instance, Marine Electrical and Electronic Engineering students who have already been on their cadet training voyage onboard merchant ships can impart their real-life expertise in English during the course, engaging, thus, in communicative practices that connect their language skills to their real-world knowledge.

A significant role of needs analysis is to offset "any excesses of theory-building with practical applications." (Hyland 2022, 205) Indeed, there is a difference between EFL and ESP in terms of course objectives, with the former striving for linguistic proficiency while the latter being more focused on developing strategic communicative skills. Consequently, training learners for the real-life tasks they will need to perform and targeting the acquisition of the linguistic content they will have to comprehend, operate with, and interact with has warranted the value placed on authentic materials in ESP practices.

Authentic materials refer to authentic textual (articles, blogs, forums, wikis, technical manuals, procedures, etc.), visual (e.g., pictures of various equipment), audio and video (practical demonstrations, specialist lectures, interviews, etc.), digital (specialist software, etc.), and graphical (maps, graphics, diagrams, etc.) inputs, while authentic communicative tasks mimic those performed by learners in their professional contexts either orally or in writing (providing explanations, giving instructions, making demonstrations, issuing orders, asking and answering questions, participating in discussions, describing processes, making inquiries, writing plans, reports, etc.).

According to Li, the Internet is the prime source of “natural, context-rich, and culturally specific materials” (Li 2018, 12). Authentic materials offer the advantage of not being edited, which, while raising some comprehension challenges due to a likely excess of unfiltered information, may nevertheless open opportunities for negotiation of meaning and self-study strategies. Learners have the possibility of becoming adept at processing large amounts of multi-format content; they learn how to seek and locate necessary information quickly and how to synthesize the collected information into comprehensible forms. In this way, they develop their life-long learning skills by doing online research for group projects and preparing presentations, just like they will do later on in real life.

In addition to being an ever-expanding repository of up-to-date and relevant, specialized learning material in all the forms mentioned above, the Internet allows learners to interact with various specialists in their particular field of expertise, authentic sources in their own right. On social media, for example, learners can find expert advice on various topics explored in their language course. In addition, there are numerous academic research programs that seek to bring together the learning communities and the communities of practice, facilitating a fruitful exchange of ideas. Such an example is *SeaMentors*, <https://seamentors.com/>, an Erasmus+ KA2 strategic partnership program led by “Mircea cel Bătrân” Naval Academy in partnership with four other maritime universities and one maritime innovation company. The program has created an online platform to enable the transfer of experiential knowledge and offer career guidance and mentoring to cadets and young seamen at the beginning of their careers. The platform brings together experienced seafarers and shipping companies’ managers in live dialogue with aspiring cadets who have, thus, the opportunity to access all the available theoretical, practical, material, and human resources. This is an example of putting socioconnectivist theories into practice by connecting one’s own knowledge to that of authentic sources online and, consequently, expanding one’s competence in the process.

Online learning spaces. LMSs. One important affordance of integrating ICT in ESP is the opportunity to develop a learner-oriented educational environment in the form of LMSs or VLEs where communication and cooperation are facilitated mostly by embedded tools such as emails, messages, notices, online collaborative workspaces, live video conferencing, etc. They constitute what Bloch called “a space for creating new forms of communicating.” (Bloch 2013, 385). Such online learning environments also incorporate a variety of innovative resources and activities and, most importantly, facilitate learner self-direction, simultaneously boosting motivation and engagement.

It is considered essential for ESP learners to develop autonomous learning skills and strategies, to become independent, and to assume full responsibility for their own learning journey. "Learning, as a self-organizing process" (Siemens 2005, 4), requires a proactive and self-reflecting attitude toward learning in which learners self-manage by setting individual objectives and milestones, developing digital competences, making choices as to which types of tasks and activities they find most efficient, etc. On online learning platforms, learners can track their own progress, practice and revise at their own pace, create their own resource collections (online portfolios of their own work, mini glossaries, etc.), and acquire the digital competences they will use throughout their entire professional lives. This idea is echoed by Deacon, Parkin, and Schneider, who argue that nowadays language graduates need "more specific and wide-ranging skills if they are to compete in the current and future job markets. It is now widely accepted that universities have a direct responsibility to prepare students for employment, and, in the 21st century, *this preparation needs to include digital literacy and competencies.*" (2017, 137, emphasis mine) By exercising their digital literacy, ESP learners can connect to communities of practice worldwide, accessing opportunities on a global scale.

LMS features offer numerous advantages to the language learner: *Availability* and *accessibility*. In terms of availability, LMSs host content that can be accessed by multiple users at any time from anywhere with a web connection. LMSs can include tutorials and further instructions on how to use their features, which adds to their perceived ease of access. *Privacy*. LMSs are private learning spaces that can only be accessed via a registered student or teacher account and a course membership. Only learners and their teachers can access individual student information, which has a positive impact on the overall trust and openness of the learners towards the learning environment and the learning process itself. *Tracking and reporting*: Learners can visualize a coherent content organization by units, lessons, etc., which conveys the idea of progress. They can track their work with the help of the built-in features; they can see their progress reports and their quiz scores, which can act as motivating factors. *Evaluation*. LMSs have built-in testing features and allow for pre-course, progress, and final evaluations. Tests can be easily updated; teachers can open and close tests, time tests, set the number of allowed retakes, etc. Tests can include audio, video, pictorial, and graphic input in addition to the classical textual content. *Feedback*. Interactive online activities offer immediate feedback, either in the form of the correct answer or extended written feedback and further clarifications. Students can also receive written feedback on their writing assignments, with useful commentary and even links to further online resources outside the LMS. *Updateability*. LMSs allow for regular updates of the posted

educational content, while the types of activities and resources made available by the platform (e.g., Moodle) are constantly expanded and upgraded with new and improved learning tools and features.

Research studies on LMSs in ESP. There is a plethora of published studies on the impact of digital technology on ESP practices. Herein, however, I will review some relevant studies focused on the research of LMSs and their effects on ESP learning. In this way, I intend to connect the present research to the literature already available on the subject at hand.

In 2015, Reza Dashtestani and Nadežda Stojković published a review of 55 research studies on the use of technology in ESP. Discussing the findings of the studies concerned with the use of CMSs (Course Management System) and LMSs (Learning Management System) in ESP training, Dashtestani and Stojković conclude that “there is adequate qualitative and quantitative evidence that illustrates that integrating CMSs/LMSs in the ESP instruction would increase student engagement and participation in the classroom (...) The use of LMS can also improve student autonomy and independence” (Dashtestani and Stojković 2015, 437) and that they have an overall positive impact on the quality of instruction. (Dashtestani and Stojković 2015, 451) One of the studies showed that the use of Moodle as a LMS improved the students’ intake of specialized vocabulary. (Perea-Barberá and Bocanegra-Valle 2014) All studies indicated an overall positive attitude of the learners towards ICT resources and technology-enhanced education in general.

In particular, Kučirková, Kučera, and Vydrová conducted an experimental investigation of the results of a pilot ESP e-learning course in Business English, using a control and an experiment group of students. They also employed end-of-course questionnaires to find out the students’ views on e-learning. The control group was taught in a face-to-face setting, while the experiment group was exposed to e-learning. Using pre- and post-tests, the researchers wanted to determine whether the format of training impacted its effectiveness in any way, as evidenced by the differences in test results. Apparently, the differences were not significant enough to indicate one teaching format as yielding better results than the other: “The e-learning method did not help the important improvement of the skills, but at the same time it did not worsen them.” (Kučirková, Kučera, and Vydrová 2012, 182) The questionnaires revealed overall positive attitudes towards e-learning, with special appreciation of the flexibility and practicality offered by the LMS used on the online course: “In general, students also expressed that they were satisfied with the possibility to do, finish, or revise activities in Moodle at home, and the lessons in an electronic form seemed to be practical for them.” (Kučirková, Kučera, and Vydrová 2012, 183)

Other studies (Knežević, 2017, Gupta and Vohra, 2017, Alcántar, et al., 2018, Keshtiarast et al., 2022) came to the same conclusions. Gupta and Vohra, in particular, emphasized the opportunity to develop digital competences and learning strategies. According to the researchers, “most of the students were enthusiastic about the course regarding adopting new technologies that promote and enhance language learning by blending online and face-to-face communication tools.” (Gupta and Vohra 2017, 9) Alcántar et al. analyzed the views of a very large cohort of International Business students at a Mexican public university on the use of technology as a tool in support of language learning, trying to determine the factors considered favorable to ICT-based learning by students. The authors report that 60% of the students agree that using ICT tools strengthens their learning, with an emphasis on their reading skills (Alcantar et al. 2018, 11); however, they also point out that students tend to shy away from more technical applications such as Prezy, Cmaps, etc. The researchers attribute this fact to the students’ lack of exposure to a variety of digital tools, as they point out that “students and teachers alike do not know the pedagogical use of the foregoing materials.” (Alcantar et al. 2018, 12) Thus, they emphasize the importance of teacher training in developing digital pedagogies with a view to incorporating ICTs more in their teaching practice: “lack of teacher training affects the operation and activities in blogs or educational platforms; and presenting only activities from a data repository has a demotivating effect on the students who use these technologies since it limits their learning.” (Alcantar et al. 2018, 12)

An interesting finding resulted from the study conducted by Gimeno-Sanz in 2017 on an online course provided by the university LMS. The researcher found that 83% of the respondents considered the online environment less threatening than a face-to-face one (Gimeno-Sanz 2017, 257), while 88% -Sanz 2017, 258) It seems that studying on an LMS in a more autonomous way, using the incorporated digital tools to organize and pace one’s learning process, is more motivating and encouraging for some students, especially lower-level ones, who might experience performance anxiety in a face-to-face setting. The 2020 survey conducted by the same Gimeno-Sanz, this time on 14.000 learners from four B2 MOOCs, targeted student motivation, expectations, and learning styles. The findings indicated the lack of human interaction in online learning as a demotivating factor. On the other hand, technology-based materials were found to be better suited for self-paced learning and for self-access learning, offering more flexibility and accessibility. The respondents appreciated online materials as more engaging, interactive, dynamic, and richer in audio-visuals. Plus, the online materials were considered useful in reinforcing knowledge by offering the possibility of follow-up due to the incorporation of immediate feedback and scoring systems. Finally, learners felt they learned faster and more while attending online courses. (Gimeno-Sanz 2020)

The Research Study

Test cohorts. The present study investigated the second-year, second-semester, Maritime English seminar for Marine Electrical and Electronic Engineering students. The control group and the experiment group were each made up of 20 second-year students in the 2022-2023 academic year.

Their initial level of general English knowledge was established with the help of an integrated reading, listening, and writing test. The initial test content (reading and listening texts, the topic of the writing task) pertained to the general Maritime English sphere discussed throughout the first year of study and the first semester of the second year. The initial test did not include any specialized Marine Electrical and Electronic Engineering lexical items that would be introduced beginning with the second semester of the second year of study. Both groups were administered the same test. Their results placed both groups at an initial level of general English around B1/B1+, according to CEFRL, with an overall homogenous distribution.

Maritime English language training at the Romanian Naval Academy. Maritime English (for the merchant navy) is a compulsory 2-hour/week seminar over five semesters for all maritime engineering undergraduate programs at “Mircea cel Bătrân” Naval Academy in Constanța. Each major (Navigation, Marine Mechanical Engineering, Marine Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Port Management) includes a core general Maritime English course spread over more or less the first year of study and then branches out into its own major-specific, specialized Maritime English course for the rest of the undergraduate program. There are 28 hours of English training per semester, resulting in a total of 140 hours per undergraduate program.

The aims of the second year, second semester, Maritime English seminar for Marine Electrical and Electronic Engineering target the students' acquisition of specialized Maritime English vocabulary pertaining to the ten topical units making up the semester coursework and its efficient contextualization in oral and written professional communicative settings using appropriate language communicative functions and register. The ten units are: direct current, alternating current, electrical installations, ships' operational requirements, basic electrical design, electro-magnetic compatibility, main components of electrical system: generators, motors, and cables, main components of electrical systems: switchboards, breakers, starting equipment, automation and communication systems. In addition, the development of students' comprehension of specialized oral and written texts is pursued throughout the seminar. The target language functions to be developed throughout the course are describing equipment and processes, explaining cause and effect, giving details, providing instructions, etc.

The traditional face-to-face course is based mostly on the dedicated course book and teacher-developed supplementary materials, including audio and video content. Texts are generally selected from technical manuals. In order to acquire the target vocabulary and develop their comprehension skills, students are required to carry out a variety of learning tasks, which include fill-in, true/false, multiple choice, matching, ordering, open-ended comprehension questions, vocabulary crosswords and puzzles, etc. As far as developing their productive skills, students are involved in short discussions as part of the production phase of the lesson after doing vocabulary and text comprehension work. In addition, they are asked to prepare and deliver short PowerPoint presentations as part of their end-of-course assessment. Course assessment involves an initial test at the beginning of the seminar, a mid-course test, a final test, and a PowerPoint presentation on an assigned topic selected from those studied during the seminar.

The online course is uploaded onto the Academy LMS (Moodle), a media-rich electronic learning environment. It is delivered face-to-face in a multimedia lab with a smartboard, internet connection, and networked teacher and student laptops. The course is organized around the same 10 topical units as the face-to-face paper-based one. In each seminar, the students log onto the ADL platform, access the course, and work on the assigned unit on their individual computers. The students are listed as participants, and their grades can be viewed by both the teacher and the individual student. There is a built-in progress report tool wherein students can keep track of their progress and grades. In terms of communication tools, the platform allows for announcements; there is a chat option, a forum, messaging tools, etc. The students are notified of any communication in their e-mails. Each unit includes a dedicated online mini-dictionary of key terms, illustrated with pictures or audio input where possible. The course materials also include grammar notes, fact sheets, diagrams, videos, etc. There is an accompanying vocabulary practice test, which accounts for 10% of the unit grade. The theoretical grammar content is then practiced with the help of other interactive, multi-choice exercises. Grammar accounts for 20% of the unit grade. The unit reading, listening, and video content contextualizes the key concepts, and students develop their comprehension skills with the help of a variety of interactive exercises. In addition to the exercises loaded onto the platform, students practice with a variety of web-based gamified learning activities, such as online jeopardy games (for collaborative work), dedicated Quizlet flashcards, Wordwall games, etc. The *knowledge* part accounts for 10% of the unit grade. A series of learning strategies have been embedded in the online interactive coursework design so as to facilitate and foster learner

autonomy. For instance, the self-assessment exercises for each unit allow several attempts so that each student can choose their own learning strategy. There is also a unit final test, which accounts for 50% of the unit grade and includes items testing all the elements listed above (vocabulary, grammar, and text comprehension). All units are structured in the same manner. The average grade of each unit contributes to the final semester grade. Students have to take a mid-course test and a final test and deliver a PowerPoint presentation at the end of the course to evaluate their productive skills and their integration of the target specialized vocabulary.

Research objectives and procedures. The research aimed to investigate how and to what extent a switch from a face-to-face, paper-based learning process to a face-to-face, digital, interactive one would positively influence the overall academic performance of our students. In addition, the research sought the opinion of the students regarding the use of digital technology to optimize their English language learning experience, trying to identify those factors considered favorable by the respondents, with a focus on elements such as student interest, motivation, and autonomy. The quantitative and qualitative research was conducted on two separate groups of second-year Naval Academy students. The control group was offered the traditional, paper-based, face-to-face course, while the experiment group was exposed to the online version described above. Both groups underwent identical mid-semester and final semester assessments, and their results were recorded and compared. A keen interest was taken in the exposed levels of specialized lexical content retention and its subsequent, successful communicative contextualization, as evidenced by their presentations of the assigned research project. The research cohorts were administered an end-of-semester questionnaire that sought to identify how students related to the course content, format, and pedagogy in terms of their level of interest and their perceived relevance and efficiency, all directly connected to the students' level of motivation. 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 correlated with the development of students' learning autonomy and the acquisition of transversal skills for life-long learning.

The research instrument consisted of a questionnaire that was created to meet the objectives of the research based on a review of the literature and echoing previous relevant research. It comprised 5-point Linkert scale closed-ended questions with two options in each polarity, a median one, and an open-ended question.

Test results. Discussion of findings. Both the control and the experiment groups were administered the same mid-course and end-of-course tests. The tests consisted of multiple-choice items testing their acquisition of the target specialized vocabulary and their comprehension of written and oral specialized texts. Mention must be made that the experiment group was also offered online interactive self-assessment tests within each topical unit; however, these results were not considered in the contrastive analysis of the test results since the control group course did not offer them. Both groups were tested on their written and oral presentation skills. The descriptive rating grid rated students based on their task fulfillment, organization, delivery, and grammatical and lexical accuracy, with an overall maximum score of 100 points. Table 1. below summarizes the test results for both the control and the experiment groups in ascending order.

Table 1. Control group and experiment group test results

Control group					Experiment group				
Stds.	Initial level	Mid Test (100 max. pts.)	Final Test (100 max. pts.)	PPT Presentation (100 max. pts.)	Stds.	Initial level	Mid Test (100 max. pts.)	Final Test (100 max. pts.)	PPT Presentation (100 max. pts.)
S 01	A2+	67	72	68	S 01	A2+	72	78	66
S 02	B1	70	76	70	S 02	A2+	73	80	68
S 03	B1	70	78	70	S 03	B1	75	80	68
S 04	B1	70	84	74	S 04	B1	75	82	70
S 05	B1	72	86	74	S 05	B1	76	84	70
S 06	B1	73	89	76	S 06	B1	76	85	70
S 07	B1	76	87	80	S 07	B1	78	86	72
S 08	B1	78	86	80	S 08	B1	79	86	72
S 09	B1	80	89	82	S 09	B1	82	90	80
S 10	B1	80	88	86	S 10	B1	83	88	86
S 11	B1	81	89	90	S 11	B1	84	92	86
S 12	B1	82	90	90	S 12	B1	84	88	86
S 13	B1	85	88	92	S 13	B1	86	87	84
S 14	B1	86	92	92	S 14	B1	89	94	88
S 15	B1	89	90	90	S 15	B1+	92	98	90
S 16	B1+	90	94	94	S 16	B1+	94	96	90
S 17	B1+	91	95	96	S 17	B1+	96	98	92
S 18	B1+	92	96	96	S 18	B1+	96	99	92
S 19	B1+	94	96	100	S 19	B1+	97	100	96
S 20	B1+	96	100	98	S 20	B2	98	100	100

The test results indicate an overall improvement of the students' scores from the mid-course test to the final test in both the control group and the experiment group, with all students reaching the course objectives. There are no significant differences between the control group and the experiment group in terms of how much the students improved their scores from one test to the next. However, the experiment group seems to have performed slightly better than the control group if we consider their initial levels with higher mid-test and final test scores, especially in the lower-level segment. This might be attributed to the fact that students in the experiment group were more exposed to the types of tasks (multiple choice) used in the mid- and final test, as their course included online self-assessment interactive (multiple-choice) exercises after each unit, with multiple retakes allowed. Therefore, it could be inferred that task format familiarity and extra practice might have had a positive impact on their mid- and final test performance. In addition, lower-level students on the online course seemed to have performed better than the lower-level students on the face-to-face course. The built-in self-pacing and self-management features of the online course appear to have had a more positive impact on the evolution of the lower-level students. Overall, the online medium seems to have been better suited for vocabulary acquisition and the development of comprehension skills. This finding is supported by insights from literature on the issue: "computer-based vocabulary learning is a frequent and effective approach to developing retention and learning new words." (Regina and Devi 2022, 2365)

However, when analyzing the students' scores in the oral presentation of their assigned research project and correlating them to their initial level and their mid- and final test performance, the control group (the face-to-face, paper-based course) seems to have done slightly better than the experiment group (the online course). Correlating that with the teacher's own observations and notes, it might be the case that students on the online course encountered more difficulty producing extended, organized oral discourse around the key lexical items they acquired during the seminars. They might have managed to acquire the targeted lexical items and developed their reading and listening comprehension skills, but their speaking skills were less developed. This issue is even more evident in the case of lower-level students on the online course. Those were the ones who performed better in their tests than their control group peers but underperformed in their oral presentation evaluations. One explanation is that the face-to-face paper-based course offered more opportunities for speaking practice than the online interactive course, which dedicated more time to the practice of vocabulary and the development of comprehension skills due to its specific format. According to the teacher's informal observations, the students seemed more absorbed by technology in the online coursework and less willing

to leave the digital space in order to interact with each other orally in speaking activities. Another practical observation is that the physical arrangement of the learning space seemed to have impacted the organization of speaking activities. While the face-to-face paper-based course was held in a regular classroom with a whiteboard, a multimedia projector, and multiple possibilities for arranging and rearranging the seats and the overall classroom orientation (i.e., group work, pair work, individual work, frontal teaching, etc.), thus more conducive to oral interaction, the online course was held in a multimedia laboratory with individual computer desks, glass partitions, and a frontal orientation, without any possibility of rearrangement, perfect for individual computer work but less so for class speaking activities with the exception of PowerPoint presentations. These observations point to the need for teachers to design a greater variety of digital activities aiming to develop the students' productive skills, keeping in mind the specificity, the technical possibilities, and the inherent limitations of the online educational environment.

The end-of-course questionnaire asked students from both the control group and the experiment group to evaluate their learning experience in terms of several factors:

The course materials. The students evaluated the topics and format of the reading and listening texts, the video and graphic input, and the vocabulary presented during the course in terms of their level of interest and perceived relevance to their future profession. Both the control group and the experiment group appreciated the topics of the reading and listening texts as "very interesting" and "interesting" (80% combined for the control group and 90% for the experiment group) and "very relevant" and "relevant" (90% combined for the control group and 90% for the experiment group). Given the fact that the course materials are based on technical, authentic, and adapted materials, it appears as though the authenticity of the input has contributed to the students' overall positive attitude towards it, with an equally beneficial impact on their motivation.

The respondents evaluated the format of the course content (paper course book vs. online digital texts) as "very interesting" and "interesting" (75% combined for the control group and 90% for the experiment group) and "very relevant" and "relevant" (80% combined for the control group and 90% for the experiment group). It appears as though the experiment group found the topics and format of the course materials slightly more interesting and relevant to their future profession than the control group. This might be justified by the appeal of digital technology to our student population of digital natives, given the fact that the content in itself was mostly the same in both cases, only the format was obviously different. The video and graphic input and the vocabulary presented during the course were equally appreciated as very interesting and very relevant by both groups.

The course activities. The students then critically looked at the types of learning activities carried out during the course. The activities were found to be “very interesting” and “interesting” (70% combined for the control group and 85% for the experiment group) and “very relevant” and “relevant” (85% combined for the control group and 90% for the experiment group). The experiment group students seemed to be more appreciative of the learning activities, finding them more interesting and relevant than the control group. It might be the case that the accessibility and interactive features of the online course contributed to a more positive attitude of the students, even if the types of activities were essentially the same in both cases (e.g., true/false, multiple choice, fill in the gaps, matching, etc.). The online students might have liked the instant individual feedback, the lack of the pressure of checking answers in plenary, and the fact that they could redo the activities as many times as they wanted, as opposed to the face-to-face class during which not everybody might have gotten the chance to finish the task or have it checked. The students were also asked to evaluate how much they felt they had developed their speaking skills during the course. The control group was quite positive in their appraisals, with 60% of them stating they had made “very much” and “good” progress (combined). The experiment group was less confident in their speaking skills, as only 40% of them (combined) felt they had made “very much” and “good” progress. It is obvious that the students’ perceptions correlate with their test results, as the online course offered fewer opportunities for speaking development.

Learning experience. The students were then asked to express their opinions on the best way to learn Maritime English by choosing one out of the four given options: 1) face-to-face with a teacher; 2) face-to-face with a teacher and aided by digital technology; 3) a distance online course with an online tutor; 4) a self-access online course without a tutor. Both the control group and the experiment group opted massively for option number two (85%-90%), the control group as a desire for the future and the experiment group as confirmation of a positive learning experience. The on-site blended learning setting seems to have emerged as the most popular option, as students appear to be ready to embrace technology but not yet willing to forego the benefits offered by a face-to-face learning process in which the presence of a teacher is an enabling factor, providing instant, constructive feedback and offering facilitation that is meant to support and guide the progress of the students towards autonomy and self-empowerment.

Open-ended question. The respondents were also asked to consider an open-ended question aimed at investigating what elements they liked best during the course. Here are some positive elements mentioned by the control group: “It is useful for my work,” “I can understand electrical engineering

English," "I improved my English speaking," "I can participate in an interview at a crewing company," etc. The experiment group mentioned the accessibility of the online course: "I was able to study from home if I missed a seminar," the grade tracking system: "I could see my course results," the extra features like the unit dictionaries with visual input: "I could look up words in the online dictionary," the interactive gamified tasks: "I liked the flashcards and the online games," etc.

Conclusions

To sum up, it seems that digital technology had an overall positive impact on the learning process, enhancing students' learning experience, increasing their level of interest, and thus boosting student motivation and autonomy. In addition, motivation seems to have been connected to the perceived relevance of the course and the possibility of employing the linguistic knowledge and skills gained during the course outside of it in real-life professional contexts. These findings support the view that emphasizes the importance and benefits of implementing ICT within ESP practices, not simply as an additional teaching tool but rather as "a long-range strategy for future vocational training, with flexibility and the facility of access representing an enabler of life-long learning as well as a catalyst for change and sustainability." (Pop 2010, 1186)

This research study has carried out a contrastive analysis of a face-to-face ESP course in Maritime English versus its digitalized online version taught on-site. The study has identified the relevant affordances offered by the integration of ICT in ESP as listed in the literature review and verified them against its own findings. Moreover, this study has critically connected to previous similar research and has contributed its own findings by trying to illuminate some of the issues affecting the students' learning experience in an ICT-enhanced setting. While this study has confirmed the generally acknowledged positive contributions of ICT in the teaching of ESP, with special mention given to the facilitation of the development of digital skills and inclusive learning at all levels, it has also shown the need for what Hyland calls "the development of innovative language teaching practices" (2022, 210) as he points out that research studies seem to have pushed classroom methods towards the margins of the academic forum on the greater topic of ICT in ESP (Hyland 2022, 203). Thus, study has revealed the necessity of developing more diversified, engaging communicative activities, which are then shown to be efficient in developing the students' productive skills on an online course.

WORKS CITED

- Alcántar, María del Rocío Carranza, Claudia Islas Torres and Mónica Lizbeth Maciel Gómez. 2018. "Perception of Students Regarding the Use of ICT and Learning English." *Apertura* 10, no. 2: 1-18. <http://dx.doi.org/10.32870/Ap.v10n2.1391>.
- Arnó-Macía, Elisabet. 2012. "The Role of Technology in Teaching Languages for Specific Purposes Courses." *The Modern Language Journal* 96 (Special Issue): 89-104. doi:10.1111/J.1540-4781.2012. 01299.
- Belcher, D. 2009. "What ESP is and can be: An introduction." In *English for Specific Purposes in Theory and Practice*, edited by Diane Belcher, 1-20. University of Michigan Press.
- Belcher, D. 2017. "Recent Developments in ESP Theory and Research: Enhancing Critical Reflection and Learner Autonomy through Technology and Other Means." In *Synergies of English for Specific Purposes and Language Learning Technologies*, edited by Nadežda Stojković, Milorad Tošić and Valentina Nejković, 2-19. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Bloch, Joel. 2013. "Technology and ESP." In *The Handbook of English for Specific Purposes*, edited by Brian Paltridge and Sue Starfield, 385-401. Boston: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Collis, B., and J. Moonen. 2001. *Flexible learning in a digital world. Experiences and expectations*. London: Kogan Page.
- Dashtestani, Reza and Nadežda Stojković. 2015. "The Use of Technology in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) Instruction: A Literature Review." *The Journal of Teaching English for Specific and Academic Purposes* 3, no. 3 (Special Issue): 435-456. UDC 811.111'276.6:(159.953.5+52-14).
- Deacon, Amanda, Lucy Parkin and Carolin Schneider. 2017. "Looking Beyond Language Skills – Integrating Digital Skills into Language Teaching." In *Innovative Language Teaching and Learning at University: Enhancing Employability*, edited by Carmen Álvarez-Mayo, Angela Gallagher-Brett and Franck Michel, 137-144. Research-publishing.net.
- Driscoll, M. 2000. *Psychology of Learning for Instruction*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Gimeno-Sanz, Ana Maria. 2014. "Fostering Learner Autonomy in Technology-Enhanced ESP Courses." In *Languages for Specific Purposes in the Digital Era*, edited by Elena Bárcena, Timothy Read, Jorge Arús, 27-44. Springer International Publishing Switzerland.
- Gimeno-Sanz, Ana Maria. 2017. "Analyzing Learner Attitudes to Learning ESP Online." In *Synergies of English for Specific Purposes and Language Learning Technologies*, edited by Nadežda Stojković, Milorad Tošić and Valentina Nejković, 244-275. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

- Gimeno-Sanz, Ana Maria. 2020. "Analyzing Learner Motivation." Conference Paper. The Future of Education. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351558903_Analysing_Learner_Motivation.
- Gupta, Pooja and Shalini Vohra. 2017. "Technology Integrated English Language Learning: A Case Study." *Advances in Computer Science and Information Technology (ACSIT)* 4, no. 1 (January-March): 5-9.
- Hyland, Ken. 2006. *English for Academic Purposes: An Advanced Resource Book*. London: Routledge.
- Hyland, Ken. 2022. "English for Specific Purposes: What Is It and Where Is It Taking Us?" *ESP Today - Journal of English for Specific Purposes at Tertiary Level* 10, no. 2: 202-220. <https://doi.org/10.18485/esptoday.2022.10.2.1>.
- Keshtiarast, Bahareh, Hadi Salehi, Omid Tabatabaei and Roya Baharlooie. 2022. "Solving ESP Problems: Students and Teachers' Perceptions of Integrating Information and Communication Technology into ESP Instruction." *Journal of Nusantara Studies* 7, no. 2: 444-472. <http://dx.doi.org/10.24200/jonus.vol7iss2pp444-472>.
- Knežević, Žana. 2017. "IT Students' Perception of Use of Modern Technologies in ESP." In *Synergies of English for Specific Purposes and Language Learning Technologies*, edited by Nadežda Stojković, Milorad Tošić and Valentina Nejković, 285-294. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Kučírková, Lenka, Petra Kučera and Hana Vostrá Vydrová. 2012. "Study Results and Questionnaire Survey of Students in the Lessons of Business English E-Learning Course in Comparison with Face-To-Face Teaching." *Journal on Efficiency and Responsibility in Education and Science* 5, no. 3: 173-184. doi: 10.7160/eriesj.2012.050306.
- Li, Li. 2018. "Integrating Technology in ESP: Pedagogical Principles and Practice." In *Integrating Information and Communication Technologies in English for Specific Purposes*, edited by Rosa Muñoz-Luna and Lidia Taillefer, 7-25. Springer International Publishing Switzerland.
- Mamakou, I. and M. Grigoriadou. 2009. "Project-based instruction for ESP in Higher Education." In *Handbook of Research on E-Learning Methodologies for Language Acquisition*, edited by R. de Cássia Veiga Marriott and P. Lupion Torres, 456-479. Hershey, NY: IGI Global.
- Paltridge, Brian and Sue Starfield. 2013. "Introduction." In *The Handbook of English for Specific Purposes*, edited by Brian Paltridge and Sue Starfield, 1-4. Boston: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Perea-Barberá, M. D. and A. Bocanegra-Valle. 2014. "Promoting Specialised Vocabulary Learning Through Computer-Assisted Instruction." In *Languages for Specific Purposes in the Digital Era*, edited by Elena Bárcena, Timothy Read, Jorge Arús, 129-154. Springer International Publishing Switzerland.
- Pop, Anisoara. 2010. "The Impact of the New Technologies in Foreign Language Instruction, Our Experience." *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences* 2: 1185-1189. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.03.169.

- Regina, D. and Anitha Devi. 2022. "Computer-Based Vocabulary Learning in the English Language: A Systematic Review." *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* 12, no. 1 (November): 2365-2373. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1211.17>.
- Sarré, Cédric. 2021. "Technology-Mediated ESP Learning And Teaching (TESPLAT): from language learning theory to ICT integration principles." In *CALL for Background*, edited by Anna Turula, Anita Buczek-Zawila, Peter Lang. 9783631845295. 10.3726/b18284. hal-03829121.
- Siemens, George. 2005. "Connectivism: A Learning Theory for the Digital Age." *International Journal of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning* 1: 1-8. https://jotamac.typepad.com/jotamacs_weblog/files/Connectivism.pdf.

THE DEGREE OF SPECIFICITY IN TEACHING LSAP VOCABULARY

Dina VÎLCU¹ 

Article history: Received 10 January 2024; Revised 26 July 2024; Accepted 15 October 2024; Available online 10 December 2024; Available print 30 December 2024.

©2024 Studia UBB Philologia. Published by Babeş-Bolyai University.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License

ABSTRACT. *The Degree of Specificity in Teaching LSAP Vocabulary.* Joining a long-running debate in the field of teaching and testing language for specific academic purposes (LSAP), the present study focuses on the degree of vocabulary specificity to be targeted in this type of courses. Researchers' choices range between 'pure' general academic language and input with a high degree of specificity. The present study proposes a categorisation of vocabulary in the following groups: 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. Choosing the level of vocabulary specificity is one of the most difficult decisions the LSAP teacher needs to take in preparation of a course. He/She needs to consider factors like the available resources or the students' familiarity with the domain. This study analyses the course of specialised language for humanities and arts in Romanian at Babeş-Bolyai University. Based on literature in the domain, on teaching experience and especially on student feedback, this study is hoped to contribute to setting the most adequate level of vocabulary specificity for different groups of learners, in contexts usually built on a multitude of variables, hardly in the teachers' control.

¹ **Dina VÎLCU** teaches and assesses Romanian as a foreign language (RFL) at Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. She teaches general language and LSAP courses (for social sciences, humanities and arts), as well as tailor-made courses for interpreters and translators. She also teaches courses on LSP and language assessment at MA level. She coordinated the issue of *Studia Universitas Babeş-Bolyai, Philologia* dedicated to assessing RFL, and has edited volumes on language assessment. She is interested in the challenges involved in language assessment for less widely tested languages (LWTL), currently chairing ALTE's LWTL Special Interest Group. Other dimensions of her research are general linguistics and sociolinguistics. Email: dina.vilcu@ubbcluj.ro.

Keywords: *language for academic purposes, specialised language, specificity, general academic vocabulary, border technical vocabulary, humanities and arts*

REZUMAT. *Gradul de specificitate în predarea vocabularului în cursurile de limbaj pentru scopuri academice specifice.* Alăturându-se unei îndelungate discuții în câmpul predării și testării limbajului pentru scopuri academice specifice (LSAS), prezentul studiu se axează asupra gradului de specificitate care poate fi vizat în cadrul acestui tip de cursuri. Alegerile cercetătorilor variază între limbajul academic general ‘pur’ și inputul cu un grad ridicat de specificitate. Acest studiu propune o împărțire a vocabularului în următoarele categorii: general (de frecvență mare și medie), academic general, tehnic de graniță și tehnic. Categoria vocabularului tehnic de graniță propusă aici include cuvinte considerate în mod normal ca aparținând nivelurilor de limbă generală B1 și B2 (putând fi înțelese și folosite, uneori, chiar la niveluri inferioare), dar care sunt folosite frecvent într-un domeniu de studiu și doar incidental în altele. Vocabularul tehnic de graniță și cel academic general sunt categoriile propuse ca focus al predării și obiect al evaluării în cursurile de limbaj specializat, fără a se exclude limbajul tehnic din procesul de predare. Alegerea nivelului de specificitate a vocabularului este una dintre cele mai dificile decizii pe care profesorul de LSAS trebuie să le ia atunci când își pregătește cursul. El/Ea trebuie să țină cont de factori precum resursele disponibile sau familiaritatea studenților cu domeniul. Acest studiu analizează cursul de limbaj specializat pentru științe umaniste și arte, în limba română, la Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai. Bazat pe literatura de specialitate, pe experiența de predare și mai ales pe feedbackul din partea studenților, se speră că acest studiu poate contribui la stabilirea celui mai adecvat nivel de specificitate a vocabularului pentru diferite grupuri de studenți, în contexte construite, de obicei, pe o multitudine de variabile, ce rareori sunt controlabile de către profesori.

Cuvinte-cheie: *limbaj pentru scopuri academice, limbaj specializat, specificitate, vocabular academic general, vocabular tehnic de graniță, științe umaniste și arte*

1. Introduction

EAP (English for Academic Purposes) gained prominence as a new branch of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) in the early 1980s drawing on previous developments in the sixties and seventies (Hyland 2006, 1; Hamp-Lyons 2011, 90; Flowerdew 2016, 7) as a response to the need of young people all over the world to prepare for higher education in English. In the following decades, the demographic mobility and an ever-growing international connectivity brought the field of EAP to unprecedented development. The range of specialisations of interest for the future students diversified and the concept of a monolithic academic English was rightfully challenged (Hyland 2006, 4). At the same time, the

educational systems in different languages opened to non-native speakers², and this expanded the scientific discussion from EAP to LAP (Language for Academic Purposes). While new contexts brought new challenges, the questions crucial to this field already from its emergence remained also in focus.

Specificity has always been central to defining LAP as a field engaging specialized use of language, as different from everyday interaction, and a significant density of concepts and terms particular to a domain of study. The complexity of this aspect reflected in the theoretical debate, research and class practice migrating between the extremes: on the one hand, arguments have been brought in support of limiting teaching LAP to general academic language; on the other hand, breaking down the specialized language to the domains the students prepare for has been considered the most effective approach. A third view sees specificity as a continuum rather than a dichotomy, a dilemma rather than a conflict (Hyland 2016, 17).

Specificity is not limited to the vocabulary particular to a certain domain. In a survey conducted in 2018 (Vilcu, Van Gorp 2018)³ with 33 respondents teaching LSAP (Language for Specific Academic Purposes) in seven universities in Romania, in different domains, the teachers mentioned various other language and communication aspects they needed to teach: syntactic, morphological and rhetorical structures; particular models of oral interaction (e.g. negotiation techniques, doctor-patient dialogue); specific genres and types of written documents (e.g. theatre review, medical letter, commercial contract); contextual information (e.g. medical protocols, job descriptions); specific legislation (e.g. occupational medicine, health insurance system); use of substances or equipment (e.g. medical, musical, IT applications); cultural context (e.g. patient typology, management styles). However, researchers and LSAP teachers share a continuous preoccupation for the degree of specificity that should be set for the vocabulary taught in these courses. The lack of a definitive and unquestionable answer needs to be taken as a datum, since a variety of factors shape every LSAP teaching context.

This study will first propose a classification of vocabulary in the LSAP course according to successive levels of specificity. It is important to mention that this classification does not contain its own purpose. This is not proposed as a categorisation of the LSAP vocabulary in absolute, applicable in any context. It has been realised with the perspective of the students preparing to start their specialised studies in a foreign language in mind. Second, it will show the specificity levels chosen as part of the teaching process, in the context of an

² A multitude of language learning programmes include now courses of academic language, in widely used languages like English, French, German or Spanish, but also in less widely spoken and taught languages, like Romanian, Hungarian or Bulgarian.

³ The results of the survey were presented in Vilcu, Van Gorp 2018 (*Developing Resources for LSP Tests: A Reflection*).

LSAP course (part of the preparatory year for Romanian language at Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca). Third, the factors which define this teaching context and their impact on the degree of vocabulary specificity will be presented. The last part of the study illustrates the teaching context and the level of vocabulary specificity with input for the domain of archaeology in relation with the receptive skills.

2. Levels of specificity in vocabulary

Accessing domain specific vocabulary inventories can only be a small part of the LSAP teaching-learning process. Specialised terminology represents a significant share in written texts of different genres and in oral presentations, courses and conferences, which students need to understand in their complexity. The vocabulary analysis in these written and oral texts reveals different degrees of specificity. Research in the domain, study of input materials, my own professional experience of teaching LSAP and feedback from students informed my perspective on the layers of vocabulary specificity which can be identified in the LSAP course:

2.1. General (high-frequency and mid-frequency⁴) vocabulary.

This layer of vocabulary might often be dismissed in LSAP teaching for various reasons: it is common language and it should be taught in the courses of general language; by the time they start their LSAP courses, students should normally be familiar with this vocabulary; it deprives the course of its specificity, etc. It has been shown that general language courses and textbooks usually focus on high-frequency vocabulary, while the LSAP teachers are concerned with either general academic or technical vocabulary (Schmitt and Schmitt 2012). This might leave the mid-frequency vocabulary in a limbo, accessed by the learners rather incidentally than part of a systematic apprehension endeavour. And yet Schmitt and Schmitt showed that high frequency and technical words are not usually sufficient for the students to cope with domain-specific texts⁵ and mid-frequency vocabulary is essential for this process (Schmitt and Schmitt 2012).

⁴ Schmitt and Schmitt see the distinction between low-frequency and high-frequency vocabulary as insufficient. They label the vocabulary between these two categories as mid-frequency vocabulary (Schmitt and Schmitt 2012, 484).

⁵ Nation analyses the number of words necessary for performing typical receptive activities like reading a novel, reading a newspaper, watching a movie, and taking part in a conversation. For a coverage of 98% of a text, which is needed for unassisted comprehension, 8,000 to 9,000

2.2. *General academic vocabulary*

Lists of general academic words have been produced for various languages and became crucial instruments in the process of LAP teaching⁶. A significant number of authors consider that the specificity of the LSAP courses should be limited to this level, supporting the idea of EGAP (English for General Academic Purposes)/LGAP (Language for General Academic Purposes)⁷. Arguments supporting this approach include: the assumption that LAP teachers might not have the necessary level of content knowledge to understand and master technical vocabulary confidently (Spack 1988, Farrell 1990, Hyland 2006); students (especially the ones who attend pre-sessional courses) usually have limited content knowledge, insufficient for completely understanding the meaning and use of technical words (Hyland 2006); vocabulary of this type, the same as generic forms and skills, is transferrable across domains; some of the students do not choose their specialization(s) before starting the EAP course. Moreover, educational institutions often find it more convenient to combine in the same group students who will pursue different lines of study, especially when they are in rather small numbers.

2.3. *Border technical vocabulary*

In my perspective, this category of vocabulary would include words which are usually considered as belonging to mid-frequency vocabulary, relating especially to B1 or B2 (or even lower) CEFR levels. These words are used intensively in studies or in the exercise of the profession in one or some domains and (almost) not at all in others. Some examples would include, for the domain of archaeology, words like: *to dig, to dig up, to bury, to date, grave, ancestor, and ancient*. For English

word-family vocabulary is needed for comprehension of written text and 6,000 to 7,000 for spoken text (Nation 2006, 59). Schmitt and Schmitt conclude that this volume of vocabulary goes far beyond high-frequency vocabulary. Actually, it takes us beyond high-frequency, academic and technical vocabulary combined (Schmitt and Schmitt 2012, 487). This conclusion is consistent with the idea that the gap between high-frequency vocabulary the learners might possess and the technical (or general academic) vocabulary, normally targeted in LAP/LSAP courses is quite large and could hinder the comprehension of written and oral texts.

⁶ A very influential academic word list for English was compiled by Averil Coxhead at Victoria University of Wellington, in 2000. (<https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/lals/resources/academicwordlist>). Suggestions for similar tools more oriented towards the learners' productive needs have been made by Paquot (2007), preceded by work by Rundell (1998). For Romanian language, studies have been conducted showing how a corpus of scientific papers can be used to produce lists of academic vocabulary (Rogobete, Mureşan and Chitez, 2023).

⁷ See the difference between the 'wide-angle' and 'narrow-angle' approach in Dudley-Evans (1993).

and for some other languages these words are placed at CEFR levels B1 or B2, with some of them (e.g. *to bury*) covering, with slight differences in meaning, both levels (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/bury>). These are normally not considered technical words (at least not in the narrow sense). As an illustration, the glossary of the Archaeological Institute of America (<https://www.archaeological.org/programs/educators/introduction-to-archaeology/glossary/>) includes none of them. There are indeed phrases/syntagms containing them, which should be (and are) part of a list of technical words (*Carbon dating, Radiometric dating, Absolut dating, Relative dating, boat grave, grave goods*). However, in certain LAP teaching contexts, a small minority of the students would be able to understand all these words. I called this layer of vocabulary *border technical vocabulary* because these words are both part of the general vocabulary, and very much used in a certain educational or professional domain (here, archaeology).

I see this basic layer of specialized words as having a crucial importance for the future students' capacity of coping with written texts, oral discourses and university courses. This is because, in spite of their frequency in the specialized written and oral texts, and unlike the technical words, these are words which: 1) the content teachers will never explain during a course, considering them basic vocabulary for the domain (and for the general language⁸); 2) are of crucial importance for understanding any specialized written or oral text in the field; 3) will often be part of definitions of technical words whose understanding will depend on the familiarity with exactly these border technical words (e.g. *excavation* – the *digging up* and recording of archaeological sites, including uncovering and recording the provenience, context and three-dimensional location of archaeological finds – <https://www.archaeological.org/programs/educators/introduction-to-archaeology/glossary/>). Falling between the general high-frequency words and the technical ones and not being part of the academic word lists either, this category of vocabulary is often overlooked during the LAP courses, in the run towards one end or the other of the specificity continuum.

⁸ The students who graduate from preparatory year and continue their studies in the language of the host country will normally attend courses (especially in domains like the sociological and artistic ones, with fewer foreign participants than medicine or engineering, for example) in the same groups with native speakers of that language. The content teachers will probably not know that there are non-native speakers in the group and even if they do, they rarely have the training, time or availability to adapt their discourse for this category of students or to explain more than they usually do in terms of technical vocabulary.

2.4. Technical vocabulary

This category includes words which are (highly) specialized and specific to a domain. Continuing with examples from the field of archaeology, the same glossary of the Archaeological Institute of America provides us with examples like: *Ionic, Doric and Corinthian column, chert, amphora*, etc. Supporting the case for teaching specific LAP, researchers show that students might be more motivated to learn closer to their future field of study. More than that, lack of specialized vocabulary when they start their studies was seen by the students as one of the most serious problems they face (Durrant 2014, 328). Limiting the vocabulary taught in the LAP courses to the general academic words might generate a lack of response to the students' needs. Starting from researchers' suggestion that generic academic vocabulary useful to students across university might not be very large, Durrant explains that this argument has two main prongs: "First, it claims that purportedly generic academic words are not evenly dispersed across disciplines, and so are not equally useful for all learners. Second, it claims that even those words which are used across a range of disciplines are not used in the same ways across all areas" (Durrant 2014, 329). Researchers also argue that the prestige of the LAP teaching domain might be higher if students and content teachers see the benefits which teaching specialized vocabulary and structures might have (Hyland 2006).

3. The specificity level and the real world: human, material and time resources

3.1. The human resources

In the survey conducted in 2018, Vîlcu and Van Gorp show that all the LAP teachers were graduates from general language studies and ethnology. To a large extent, they have to rely on self-preparation both for the specialised language they teach, and for LAP instruction. The remarkable level of specialisation they reach in the domain(s) they teach shows in the fact that they find it difficult to change these domains⁹. Knowing and mastering vocabulary in all levels of specificity becomes one of their assets on the job.

Dudley-Evans considers that when teaching "more specialist materials", the ESP teacher might actually need "less knowledge of the content than one

⁹ Almost 70% of the respondents said that they needed to study in the domain for which they taught specialized language much and very much. More than 72% said that they could not change the domain(s) easily.

might need when one is teaching more basic level common core ESP classes” (Dudley-Evans 1993, 3) and refers to units/topics in textbooks on general science and engineering.

“Clearly one needs an interest in the discipline and a willingness to find out about the genre conventions and the favoured ‘stories’, but one does not necessarily need to have detailed knowledge of the actual content. One needs to try to find out how the discipline works, what sort of questions they are seeking answers to rather than necessarily know or understand all the answers. /.../ To put it very simply, one needs to know more about the ‘savoir-faire’ of the discipline than the actual ‘savoir.’” (Dudley-Evans 1993, 4).

While I agree that the LAP teacher needs to be very knowledgeable in relation with the micro-skills specific to a certain domain, it is hard to imagine him/her as someone whose role is to pass on a black box, placing himself/herself in the vulnerable position of not being able to provide answers to questions the students are likely to ask. Moreover, this strategy might work - if the teacher is willing to assume it - when he/she has resources at hand with input, tasks, level of specificity, assessment instruments, etc. already selected for the course by the educational programme developers. However, this is rarely the case with LAP, especially with less widely taught languages. When the teacher is in the position of creating rather than selecting teaching material, with little or no help from more experienced colleagues or from subject specialists (Krekeler 2013), their instruction in the domain and a satisfactory understanding of the content become instrumental for providing the students with the adequate learning resources.

3.2. The material and time resources

The issues related to material resources (textbooks, teaching instruments, written and oral input, etc.) make the difference between English¹⁰ and the less widely taught languages apparent again. Scarcity of resources is only one of the problems the LAP teachers in less widely taught languages need to face. The groups of students are often very heterogeneous, which puts even more pressure on the teachers when they need to select/adapt/create teaching materials.

Christian Krekeler analysed the dilemma one of his colleagues faced when asked to teach a course of specialised language. Being a general language teacher, his colleague had been asked to teach an LSAP course for accountancy

¹⁰ While a quite significant number of resources have been developed in languages like German, French or Spanish, for other languages the resources are scarce and the deficit goes deeper for certain specialisations. As an example, there is a significant number of resources for the medical domain in Romania, while for other specialisations less than five (going to zero) resources can be found, leaving the teachers the ‘liberty’ to create their own teaching and testing materials.

in German. After investigating all the factors which might determine such a decision, Krekeler concluded: "...taking on LSAP courses under such circumstances requires a pioneering spirit – and time" (Krekeler 2013, 58). Time is one of the most important resources an LAP teacher needs, especially when he/she teaches students with a challenging - fascinating as it may be - combination of specialisations. Even if the teachers are committed, interested and determined to offer their students a course of the highest quality, they will need time to study, to select teaching materials, to prepare tasks and exercises and then, after judging their efficiency and measuring them against the students' reactions, to be able to adapt them again accordingly. Numerous LSP or LAP teachers complained about the lack of time which hinders their activity (Krekeler 2013, Szawara 2015, Kawaguchi 2015). More than that, while discussing the challenges of a course of Japanese for business, Kawaguchi proposed solutions related precisely to the time necessary for producing the course. Developing and teaching the course involve additional work for the faculty members who already teach other courses. "How much they can commit to the business Japanese course depends on whether they will receive a salary increase, release from existing workload, or additional staff" (Kawaguchi in Trace, Hudson and Brown 2015, 156).

Educational institutions are not always very perceptive to the role and the importance of the LGAP/LSAP courses, which might bring them in the position of being marginalised and underfunded. Other teachers (content teachers and, surprisingly, some language teachers) see these courses as useless and time consuming (the students could go on learning general language in this time). From the point of view of some content teachers, they might also be misleading, since the LAP teachers are not always seen as sufficiently knowledgeable in the domain. All these factors bring the LAP courses into what Raimes called 'the butler's stance' (in Hayland 2006, 10). The students might soon catch on that and lose confidence in the utility of the course, which will make the LAP teachers' mission even more difficult.

4. The course of humanities and arts

4.1 The context

When choosing the specificity level for the LAP courses, decision makers at different institutional levels, course developers, and teachers need to have in view the literature in the domain, but also many variables: the students' level of general language, teachers' experience, logistics, course objectives, resources, etc.

The course presented in this study is the LAP course in Romanian language for humanities and arts, part of the preparatory year (language year) at Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. The students are mostly high school graduates who, after finishing the preparatory year, will study in one of the following domains: philology (language and literature, applied modern languages); philosophy; history (history, heritage studies); theology; culture studies; architecture and urbanism; visual arts; art history and theory; theatre and the arts of performance; cinematography and media; music. These domains are grouped together through a government decision which is renewed every year and are included as such in the syllabus of the course which is called “specialized language: humanities and arts”. There are not enough students for the group to be further divided. In the academic year 2020-2021 the group included students with the following specialisations: music, language and literature, graphics, theatre, film, interior design and in 2022-2023: history, philosophy, language and literature, fashion design and painting. There are no textbook or other resources. The course starts after most of the students took the B1 level exam in general language. Some of the students might still be studying level B1. There is one 5-hour practical course of specialised language per week.

4.2. The students

The students in the course of specialised language for humanities and arts are mostly high school graduates (some are BA graduates, who will pursue master studies), with a variety of L1 (Arabic, French, Spanish, Russian, English, German, etc.). Most of them will do their studies in Romanian (unlike in other domains; for example, medicine studies can be pursued in English and French in Romania and many students choose one of these options, even if they graduate the preparatory year in Romanian).

For me, like for so many LAP teachers in Romania and around the world, one of the most pressing questions was related to the level of specificity I should choose for my course. Is LGAP the only possible choice, given the combination of specializations in the group? However unescapable this alternative might seem, a lot of other factors need to be considered – for example, the spread of the specialisations is hard to be covered with general academic language; reduced use of such a choice has been proven for groups with domains much closer to each other (Hyland and Tse 2007, Durrant 2014). This can only result in frustration for the students and a questionable efficiency of the course itself, in spite of the huge amount of work the teacher would still need to invest in designing and delivering the course and the assessment instruments.

In order to determine the level of specificity I should pursue in my course I decided to conduct a needs analysis (NA) with different categories of

stakeholders, like students who were going to begin the LAP course, but also graduates from the preparatory year who had started their specialized studies. In order to increase the number and the relevance of the responses, the part of NA for which questionnaires were used was addressed to medical students. At the same time, I continued to ask the students in the domains of humanities and arts for feedback after they finished their first semester or first year in their new line of study. The most relevant answers received during NA were related to the skills and sub-skills the students considered were the most important and the ones related to the biggest difficulties which they faced in their new study environment. The questionnaires included also open questions, so the students were free to share their own concrete experiences¹¹.

The information coming from preparatory year graduates who started their specialized studies was, ultimately and decisively, the one which determined my choice of the degree of specificity in the course. For choosing the level of specificity of vocabulary in the course of specialised language some information resulting at the end of the survey was very relevant. This relates to: the difficulties the students have in understanding the courses and presentations, not because of the new technical terms, which are explained, but because of the general language and of what was called here border technical words, which the teachers and colleagues use; writing texts and abstracts, which is harder due to the fact that the students do not have enough familiarity with the general academic vocabulary; answering in examinations – for which the students noticed that do not have the necessary level of language. It was also crucial for my uneven approach of the skills and sub-skills in the course and for deciding what type of work should be done in the classroom, with all the group, or at home, individually.

NA and the feedback I received over the years from the students led to my understanding of the layers of specificity in vocabulary, as presented above, in Chapter 2. In the specific conditions of this LAP course, I consider that the layers of specificity which need to be focused on are the one of general academic vocabulary and the one of border technical vocabulary. They are vital for the students to be able to read texts and to follow courses and conferences. The technical vocabulary is normally explained by the content teachers. However, all the explanations and all their discourse come in language structures built, to a great extent, on the high-frequency and mid-frequency vocabulary, on academic words and on border technical vocabulary. It is true, by the time they start their

¹¹ All the instruments used in the survey, the same as the presentation of the responses to the closed and open questions are available on the ALTE website (https://www.alte.org/resources/Documents/Guidelines_Illustration_final.pdf). They accompany the *Guidelines for the Development of Language for Specific Purposes Tests*, illustrating the way in which this resource can be used.

course of specialised language, the students should have a good grasp of the high-frequency vocabulary. However, the academic and the border technical vocabulary should be taught and practiced, to the extent possible, during the LAP course. The technical words will not be excluded from the range of vocabulary in the course and exam; however, they will not constitute the focus of the course and will not be the object of assessment. The specificity level will thus occupy the central part of the continuum, not excluding its extremes.

The choice of this level of vocabulary specificity for this LAP course audience can be supported further through the following arguments.

4.2.1. These students are not yet domain specialists, who only need target language instruction. Consequently, the objective of aiming at highly technical vocabulary in the LAP course proves futile for various reasons. First, it would be difficult for them to understand and to master specific concepts in the absence of basic subject knowledge; the content teachers will not only explain these concepts and terms better, but will also know exactly when, in course progress, certain concepts need to be introduced and clarified, giving the students the chance to use them as part of their learning process. Second, the students might simply forget the terms they learnt as part of the LAP course by the time they start their specialized studies, if these words have not been integrated into a coherent and progressive line of study. Third, some students might want to or have to change their study option. In this case, a highly specialised technical vocabulary for a different domain than their own will almost completely lose utility.

4.2.2. The students' level of general language needs also to be addressed. I agree that LAP courses are not meant to be remedial courses for the general language (Hyland 2006, 116). However, the difference between EAP and LAP is relevant at this point. Our students start the preparatory year without any knowledge of Romanian language. In one academic year (28 weeks of study) they need to get to B2 level in general language and to do the LAP course in the last weeks of the second semester. At the same time, it will rarely be the case for students who take EAP classes to step into a completely new territory when it comes to the language, since learning English is part of educational systems all over the world and access to international news, entertainment, communication, etc. is provided in English to a very large extent. This exposure to language provides a much larger basis in general language, which will help in all the phases of the learning process. In the case of less taught and used languages, like Romanian, much more will need to be built at the levels of mid-frequency vocabulary, general academic vocabulary and border technical vocabulary¹².

¹² I agree that the study of specialized language does not need to start after the students master a core vocabulary and that a stepwise modality of language acquiring has not been supported by research

4.2.3. Researchers analysed also cases of EAP and of specialised studies being taught in countries where English is not the official language, like in Singapore and Hong Kong (Hyland 2006, 3). As for Romania, a report of the Ministry of Education¹³ shows that at the end of 2022, more than 10.000 students were enrolled in higher education programmes with English as a teaching language. The teachers who deliver the courses in these programmes are, in a vast majority, native speakers of Romanian, not English (or French, the other language in which similar programmes are taught). This impacts on the language they use in course, limiting it to the academic register (Hyland 2006, 4). However, when it comes to academic programmes taught by teachers in their mother tongue, the whole discourse becomes much more complex for the non-native students, participant in these programmes. Some of the most interesting responses received from students as part of the NA conducted in 2018 and in the following years were related to their capacity of understanding their content teachers, with all the discourse complexity and phonetic aspects specific to the native speaker, but also with contextual and cultural knowledge hard to access by non-natives.

Answers like the following ones show that the language problems the students face when starting their specialised studies do not start with the technical language, but with the complex linguistic structuring through which it is delivered: "I did not go to classes at all in the first semester because I did not understand my teachers." (W., Lebanon, medicine); "All the lessons were difficult for me. Actually, I only understood what was very clear and simple, because the teachers spoke very fast and used metaphors I did not know. It was ok for me to read anything, and it was ok to speak." (G., Syria, painting); "The first semester was difficult because of the language, not because of course content. The language my teachers and colleagues used was colloquial language, with many idiomatic expressions, short forms and different intonations." (L., France, kinesiotherapy). All these students had taken their studies in Romanian very seriously, they graduated from the language year with good results and yet the impact of the first semester/year of specialised studies was a very significant one. They all managed to continue their studies, some of them already graduated.

Experiences like the ones presented above, along with the quantitative results of NA show clearly that the students who study abroad need to be equipped with adequate coping strategies, which can be prepared as part of the LAP course.

in second language acquisition (Hyland 2006, 10-11). However, more experience with the use of language can definitely help when the students start learning for their future specialisation.

¹³https://www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/_fi%C8%99iere/Minister/2022/Transparenta/Starea_invatamantului/Raport-Starea-nvatamantului-superior-2021-2022.pdf

4.3. The course

The specialisations of all the students in the group are addressed. The first course of specialised language is dedicated to humanities and art disciplines in general, focusing on academic vocabulary which might be of use for all the specialisations. The course is based on discussions about the role of humanities and arts in our life, types of sciences, sub-domains of the disciplines they will study, their experience with the field, what they think will be most important and most difficult when they start their specialised studies. Vocabulary introduced and explained in this course includes lexemes like: branch, field, object of study, concept, conception, research, investigate, divide, contain, etc. Elements of the academic vocabulary are recycled in every course, with the whole group. Each of the other courses is focused on one of the specialisations of the students in the course. The class activities are mainly focused on the oral abilities (listening and speaking) and the vocabulary specificity is kept at a level which is both comprehensible and of use for all the students. While this choice was, to a certain extent, determined by the context of the course and the teaching conditions, the students' feedback was very positive about this ("The most useful thing was that you combined specialisations in one course and I could learn diverse vocabulary which helps me with my courses and the fact that you chose themes which help me with what I study now." – G., Syria, painting; "The different discussions we had were very useful. I learnt a lot of new words and I could talk about my field of study in Romanian." – Z., Syria, Letters; "The greatest profit from this course for me was opening a perspective on different events. As an Asian student, I always accept the teachers' ideas and opinions and, step by step, I lose my own position on a topic. But when I saw the vivid debate among colleagues, I was very inspired." – V, China, Letters).

The work the students need to do at home is specialised for each domain (e.g. the materials on philosophy are only for the student(s) who will study philosophy). They need to read texts, to resolve tasks (related to vocabulary, text comprehension, but also integrated tasks – e.g. they need to write their opinion on questions approached in the texts they read). As a level of complexity, they are usually texts (published higher education courses) of the type: introduction in archaeology/graphics/interior design, etc. and texts of popularisation. The materials are deposited in separate folders, in a common drive and the students will each access the ones for their specialisation. Any questions the students might have about the homework can be addressed in class or in separate tuition sessions. Along with the texts they need to process (which I select and for which

I create tasks), I also include a list of vocabulary for each specialisation in the drive. The words range between border technical and technical vocabulary. The writing tasks are also done individually, and they are sent for feedback.

The courses which are done in classroom with the whole group are focused on the oral skills in the effort of equipping the students with strategies for coping with the specialised courses when they start their studies. The survey conducted in 2018 and part of the feedback the graduates from the course of humanities and arts sent showed that the biggest challenge the students needed to face was related to understanding the courses taught by the teachers in class. As a result, I considered that they need to be familiar with this type of discourse and part of the input material in class are small fragments of real courses taught for each (or as many as possible) of the disciplines. The videos are only a few minutes long and are part of introductory courses, with a reduced level of complexity and with less technical vocabulary. The videos are discussed in relation with: vocabulary (including expressions or syntagms from the common language – idiomatic, popular, colloquial), discourse structures, speech delivery strategies, para-verbal language, etc. Another fundamental element of these courses are the discussions, debates and presentations from the students, which help them become more confident with their oral production abilities in relation with their future subject of study.

Assessment has a common part (listening), with tasks of comprehension and of note taking, while the other exam components (vocabulary, reading, writing, speaking, integrated tasks) are subject specific.

This course has been redesigned in order to increase its efficiency and to help students build strategies for coping with their future educational environment. The course is permanently open to feedback and to change.

5. An example

This chapter presents an analysis of a small corpus of texts (two written texts and one oral presentation), which can be used as input for a course in the domain of archaeology (preparatory year, specialised language for humanities and arts).

The purpose of this analysis is to show the proportion of vocabulary in the categories defined under 2 (high-frequency and mid-frequency, general academic, border technical and technical vocabulary) and to indicate the categories recommended as focus in the course.

The small corpus includes texts which could be representative for the course of specialised language from the point of view of vocabulary specificity, text

dimension and level of difficulty. The written texts are part of a higher education printed course in archaeology and sum 1266 words (only the words included in the categories above were counted). The first part was extracted from the chapter on the history of archaeology and the second text is part of the chapter *Excavation methods and techniques*. From the oral text I extracted 1233 words belonging to the above-mentioned categories. The text presents the typical work an archaeologist does (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mR8Xbae0ay8>). This is part of a documentary about a museum of archaeology meant for audience interested in history and archaeology, but not specialist in the domain. Consequently, the level of technicity is not high.

The results are presented in tables and diagrams showing the number of words and collocations according to the categories defined in Chapter 2 above and examples for each category. The tables also include examples of low-frequency words and of names in the texts (persons, places and titles of studies or books). The list of general academic words includes also linkers which are not common to everyday interaction.

The inclusion of the words in the corresponding categories was based on the consultation of technical dictionaries for archaeology, the consultation of academic vocabulary lists for English (the Academic Word List), intuition and experience. The distribution of some words between the list of high and mid-frequency and that of general academic words could be refined.

The words in the inventory are not unique entries, they were counted every time they appeared in the text. This way a more accurate picture of the proportion of vocabulary in the texts could be obtained.

I included the words as they appeared in the text, and sometimes I kept not the headword, but a related word because this 'fits the profile' of the text better. For example, I preferred to keep the word *hidden*, instead of including the headword *hide*. The text mentions treasures hidden in the ground, while the headword *hide* would lose the intended connotation.

The results show that the general academic words and the border technical words represent approximately 40% in both the written and the oral texts. They are extremely relevant for the students' understanding of written and oral texts and are recommended as the focus of teaching for multiple reasons: many of these words are likely to be unknown to the students; the context of this course is a rare opportunity for the students to have these words explained; these words are of crucial importance for understanding the oral and written texts in their future line of study; while the content teachers will explain the technical words as part of the courses, they will not normally explain any of the words included in these two categories.

Table 1. Distribution of words in the written texts

categories of vocabulary	high and mid-frequency words	general academic words	border technical words	technical words	names	low frequency words
distribution						
number of words and collocations (total: 1266)	420	431	63	211	121	20
percentage	33%	34%	5%	16.5%	19.5%	2%
examples	interest, old, first, history, artist, time, know, object, world, event, meet, important [interes, vechi, primul, istorie, artist, timp, ști, obiect, lume, eveniment, întâlni, important]	amplify, signification, manifest, found, initiate, extend, describe, prevail, acquire, comprehensi ve, for instance, regarding [amplifica, semnificație, a se manifesta, înființa, iniția, extinde, descrie, predomina, procura, cuprinzător, de pildă, cu privire la]	dig, wrap, gather, spread, sink, ditch, hole, rock, statue, treasure, surface, hidden [săpa, împacheta, aduna, a se întinde, scufunda, șanț, groapă, piatră, statuie, comoară, aduce la suprafață, ascuns]	helmet, icon, cult, vestige, hieroglyphs, inscription, excavation, medieval, archaeological site, prospect, necropolis [coif, icoană, cult, vestigii, hieroglife, inscripție, excavare, medieval, sit arheologic, prospecta]	Thotmes IV, Khefren, Mesopotamia, Thucydides, Homer, Iliad, Oddysey, Old Kingdom of Egypt, Athens, Rome, Alessandro Farnese [Tuthmes al IV-lea, Khafra, Mesopotamia, Tucidide, Homer, Iliada, Odiseea, Vechiul Regat Egiptean, Atena, Roma, Alessandro Farnese]	exhortation, palpable, resound, meticulousness, plunder, vessel, overpass, pundit [îndemn, palpabil, răsuna, meticulozitate, a prăda, navă, pasarelă, expert]

Table 2. Distribution of words in the oral text

categories of vocabulary	high and mid-frequency words	general academic words	border technical words	technical words	names	low frequency words
distribution						
number of words and collocations (total: 1233)	470	424	75	216	23	25
percentage	38%	34.5%	6%	17.5%	2%	2%
examples	think, help, find, object, picture, place, question, time, person, village, year, present [crede, ajutor, găsi, obiect, imagine, loc, întrebare, timp, persoană, sat, an, prezent]	distinguish, research, examine, measure, investigate, interpret, reach a conclusion, method, natural sciences, characteristic ics, task, role [distinge, cerceta, examina, măsura, investiga, interpreta, ajunge la o concluzie, metodă, științe naturale, caracteristic i, sarcină, rol]	draw, bury, remove, grave, skeleton, dish, rock, cemetery, bone, trace, depth, tools, bracelet, ring [desena, înmormânta, îndepărta, mormânt, schelet, vas, piatră, cimitir, os, urmă, adâncime, unelte, brățară, inel]	carve, restore, vestige, clay, settlement, aerial archaeology, archaeological complex, remains, corrosion, funeral ritual, numismatic catalogue, funerary offerings [sculpta, restaura, vestigii, lut, așezare, arheologie aeriană, complex arheologic, rămășițe, coroziune, ritual funerar, catalog numismatic, ofrande funerare]	Tisa, the Carpathians, Arpad, Ladislau the Saint, Szabolcs, Jósá András [Tisa, Carpați, Arpad, Ladislau cel Sfânt, Sabalcs, Jósá András]	roam, slurp, allot, plow, far-off land, bovine, caldron, defunct, minutely, aforesime [cutreiera, sorbi, plug, meleaguri, bovine, căldare, defunct, minuțios, odinioară]

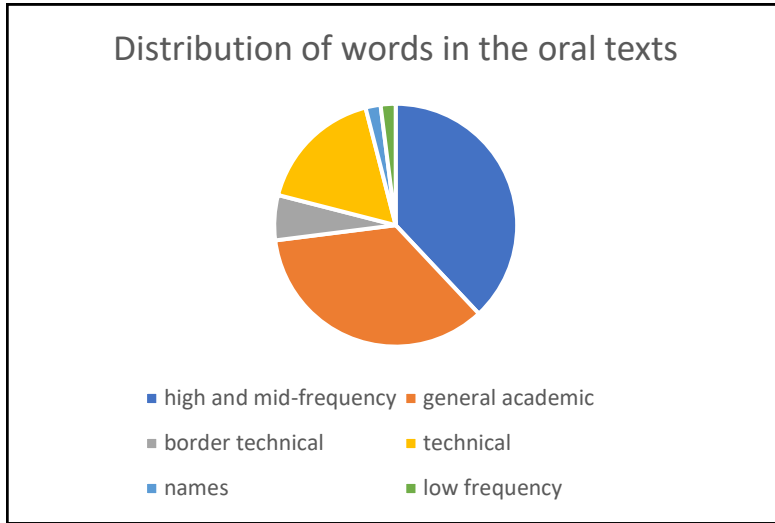


Figure 1. Distribution of words in the oral texts

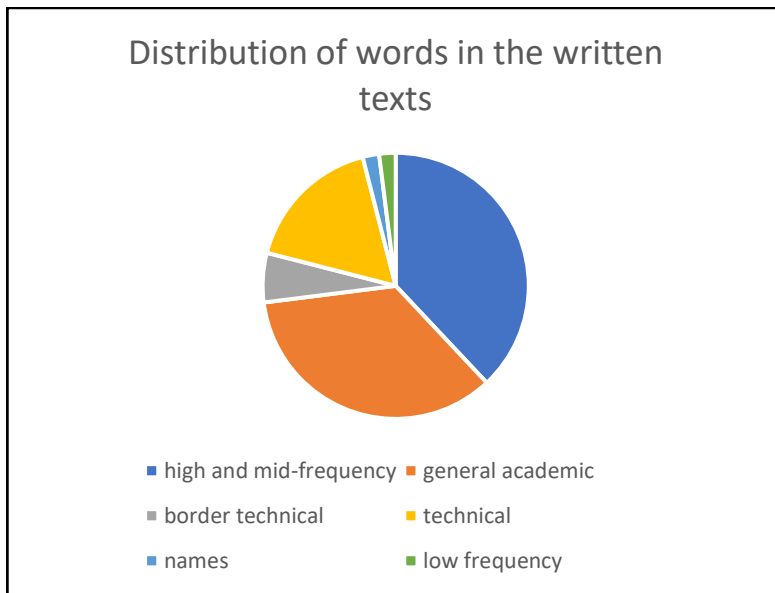


Figure 2. Distribution of words in the written texts

6. Conclusions

The main goal of this study was to contribute to the discussion on the level of vocabulary specificity in relation with the course of specialised language

for academic purposes. This is a vast discussion indeed, since this type of courses covers considerably varied contexts and the choice of the level of vocabulary specificity is impacted by a multitude of factors (the available resources, the students' familiarity with the content and their level of general language, the teachers' experience and specialisation in the domain, etc.). The categorisation of vocabulary can help the teachers decide on the level of specificity which would best fit the students' needs. This study proposes four categories of vocabulary: general (high and mid-frequency), general academic, border technical and technical vocabulary and recommends as the focus of teaching and the object of assessment the general academic and border technical vocabulary. The analysis on the corpus for the course of specialised language for archaeology shows the significant percentage these two categories occupy in the texts (approximately 40%). The examples collected from the written and oral texts are both relevant for the domain and potentially difficult for the students in the absence of explanations and representative contexts.

The study needs to be continued and refined from different perspectives: first of all, the analysed corpus needs to be larger, including more written and oral input. The vocabulary for other domains should be included in the analysis. It should also be tested to what extent the students are familiar with the border technical words in their future line of study once they graduate from B1 and B2 general language courses.

It is only hoped that this study, based on research, teaching experience and especially the students' feedback, can help teachers decide on the level of vocabulary specificity for their courses, in contexts similar to the one presented here.

WORKS CITED

- Bolohan, Neculai. 2022. *Introducere în arheologie. Curs universitar. Învăţământ la distanţă*. Iaşi: Universitatea „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”.
- Dudley-Evans, Tony. 1993. “Subject specificity in ESP: How much does the teacher need to know of the subject?” *Actes du 13e colloque du GERAS et de l’atelier Langue de spécialité du 32e congrès de la SAES 1/1993*: 2-8.
- Durrant, Philip. 2014. “Discipline- and level-specificity in university students' written vocabulary.” *Applied Linguistics*, 35(3): 328-356.
- Farrell, Paul. 1990. *Vocabulary in ESP: A Lexical Analysis of the English of Electronics and a Study of Semi-Technical Vocabulary*. CLCS Occasional Paper No. 25. Trinity College.
- Flowerdew, John. 2016. “English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) Writing” *Writing and Pedagogy*, 8(1): 1-4.

- Hamp-Lyons, Liz. 2011. "English for Academic Purposes" *Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning. Volume II*, edited by Eli Hinkel, New York and London: Routledge: 89-105.
- Hyland, Ken. 2006. *English for Academic Purposes. An advanced resource book*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Hyland, Ken. 2016. "General and Specific EAP" *Routledge Handbook of EAP*, edited by Ken Hyland and Philip Shaw: 17-29.
- Hyland, Ken, and Polly Tse. 2007. "Is there an 'Academic Vocabulary'?" *TESOL Quarterly*, 41/2: 235-253.
- Kawaguchi, Mariko. 2015. "An Online Elementary Business Japanese Course for Working Professionals in Michigan" *Developing Courses in Language for Specific Purposes*, edited by Jonathan Trace, Thom Hudson, and James Dean Brown, Hawaii: National Foreign Language Resource Center: 142-165.
- Krekeler, Christian. 2013. "Language for specific academic purposes or language for general academic purposes? A critical reappraisal of a key issue for language provision in higher education" *Language Learning in Higher Education CercleS* 3(1): 43-60.
- Nation, I.S.P. 2006. "How Large a Vocabulary is Needed for Reading and Listening?" *The Canadian Modern Language Review/La Revue Canadienne des langues vivantes*, 63,1 (September/septembre): 59-82.
- Paquot, Magali. 2007. "Towards a productively-oriented academic word list" *Practical Applications in Language and Computers 2005*, edited by J. Walinski, K. Kredens and S. Gozdz-Roszowski, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang: 127-140.
- Rogobete, Roxana, Mureşan, Valentina and Mădălina Chitez. 2023. "Academic Word Lists in English and Romanian: a corpus-based contrastive analysis" *Quaestiones Romanicae* X(1): 373-386.
- Rundell, Michael. 1998. "Recent Trends in English Pedagogical Lexicography" *International Journal of Lexicography* 11(4): 315-342.
- Schmitt, Norbert, and Diane Schmitt. 2012. "A reassessment of frequency and vocabulary size in L2 vocabulary teaching" *Language Teaching* 47(04): 484-503.
- Spack, Ruth. 1988. "Initiating ESL students into the academic discourse community: how far should we go?" *TESOL Quarterly*, 22 (1): 29-52.
- Szawara, Anna. 2015. "Polish for Health Personnel" *Developing Courses in Language for Specific Purposes*, edited by Jonathan Trace, Thom Hudson, and James Dean Brown, Hawaii: National Foreign Language Resource Center: 48-64.
- Vîlcu, Dina, and Koen Van Gorp. 2018. *Developing Resources for LSP Tests: A Reflection*. Plenary presentation at ALTE 51st Conference Day. Babeş-Bolyai University. Cluj-Napoca. 13th April.

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND CULTURAL AWARENESS: IMPACT OF BLACK LIVES MATTER IN EFL INSTRUCTION

Andrea Roxana BELLOT¹ , Anca Daniela FRUMUSELU² 

Article history: Received 18 July 2024; Revised 17 November 2024; Accepted 25 November 2024; Available online 10 December 2024; Available print 30 December 2024.

©2024 Studia UBB Philologia. Published by Babeş-Bolyai University.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License

ABSTRACT *Language Proficiency and Cultural Awareness: Impact of Black Lives Matter in EFL Instruction.* This paper evaluates the effectiveness of a Black Lives Matter (BLM) teaching unit designed to enhance students' cultural awareness and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) skills. Employing a mixed-method approach, the study investigates students' viewpoints through online questionnaires. The methodology integrates pre- and post-questionnaires to analyse the pedagogical impact, drawing on established theories of communicative competence and intercultural pedagogy to contextualize the study. The results demonstrate that the project significantly contributed to students' social consciousness development while also improving their English language proficiency.

Keywords: *Black Lives Matter (BLM); cultural awareness; English language skills; literature & cultural studies; social consciousness*

¹ **Andrea Roxana BELLOT**, PhD, is an associate professor in the Department of English and German Studies at Rovira i Virgili University (URV) in Tarragona, Spain. She specializes in teaching English literature and culture. Her primary research focuses on language and literature education, as well as the literary and cultural representations of conflict. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0561-2132>. Email: andrea Roxana.bellot@urv.cat.

² **Anca Daniela FRUMUSELU**, PhD, is a Serra Húnter lecturer in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures at University of Lleida (UdL), Spain. Her research interests encompass foreign language learning and teaching, intercultural communication, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and audiovisual translation, the integration of new technologies in EFL education, e-learning, m-learning, gamification, and virtual exchange in language learning contexts. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4395-7841>. Email: ancadaniela.frumuselu@udl.cat.

REZUMAT. Competența lingvistică și conștientizarea culturală: Impactul unității didactice Black Lives Matter în contextul EFL. Această lucrare evaluează eficiența unei unități didactice Black Lives Matter (BLM) concepută pentru a conștientiza studenții la nivel cultural, dar și pentru a le îmbunătăți abilitățile de limba engleză ca limbă străină (EFL). Studiul investighează opiniile studenților prin intermediul unor chestionare online, printr-o abordare metodologică mixtă. Metodologia folosită integrează chestionare aplicate înainte și după desfășurarea unității didactice pentru a analiza impactul pedagogic, bazându-se pe teorii consacrate ale competenței comunicative și pedagogiei interculturale pentru a contextualiza studiul. Rezultatele demonstrează că proiectul a contribuit semnificativ la dezvoltarea conștientizării sociale a studenților, îmbunătățindu-le totodată competența lingvistică în limba engleză.

Cuvinte-cheie: *Black Lives Matter (BLM); conștientizare culturală; abilități în limba engleză; studii literare și culturale; conștiință socială*

Introduction

This paper is based on the implementation of a class proposal concerning the subjects of racism and urban violence to integrate cultural awareness in the English B.A. degree in Spain. The main aims of the study are to foster societal values such as esteem, integration, and acceptance towards the ‘Other’, but also to improve students’ critical analysis and proficiency in English as a foreign language. This would promote EFL learning of cultures in a meaningful way by making use of current day topics in the news, such as the violent demonstrations that took place around the globe in the summer of 2020 to condemn cases of police brutality derived from the homicide of George Floyd perpetrated by police officers in Minneapolis in May of the same year.

This research is a follow-up study of a theoretical and pedagogical proposal developed by the authors (Frumuselu and Bellot 2020) to be implemented in the EFL subject—*Literature and Society*—at university level. The main aspects addressed in this study concern the integration of teaching foreign cultures in an EFL classroom at university level to promote cultural awareness while fostering English foreign language skills. By integrating cultural awareness in the EFL classroom, students are encouraged to develop their critical competence and grasp the current social realities worldwide.

Thus, this paper intends to analyse quantitatively and qualitatively the reactions of university students enrolled in a literature and culture subject taught online during the 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic. The gathered data

originated from polls reflecting students' opinions via two online questionnaires, before and after the implementation of the Black Lives Matter (hereafter BLM) teaching unit. This approach enabled an examination of their initial preconceptions alongside their final reflections on the overall experience. The main objectives of this teaching proposal were to promote cross-cultural understanding, improve language proficiency through the analysis of English-language literary texts, and strengthen the use of English for academic purposes. So far, the project has provided a significant avenue for cultivating cultural awareness in the English literature classroom, enabling students to comprehend current social realities worldwide while enhancing their EFL abilities in a meaningful context with current topics.

To further guide the research, the study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: How does the implementation of the Black Lives Matter teaching unit influence students' cultural awareness in an EFL context?

RQ2: What is the impact of the unit on students' English language proficiency, particularly in terms of productive and receptive skills?

RQ3: How do students perceive the integration of social justice topics, such as the BLM movement, into their EFL learning experience?

As follows, a thorough review of the existing literature on the topic will be presented, together with the contextualization of the key concepts, terms and ideas used to support the implementation of the research study. Additionally, current pedagogical models are being added as a means to provide an insightful view of the theoretical background chosen to develop the topic. After that, the research methods are pointed out, together with the instruments used to gather and analyse the data. The choice of the teaching material is thoroughly justified and references to the course texts used for the implementation of the BLM unit are being made. Finally, the findings of the study are being revealed, together with their implications and impact on the material design and on learners' linguistic and cultural competences. The concluding remarks section summarizes the results of the BLM pedagogical proposal and offers a model-like example for future material designers and practitioners at university level.

Literature Review

The process of culture learning in the classroom can become complex and highly personal. Learners are faced with the challenge of construing, inferring and interacting with new forms of cultural behaviours, mindsets and perspectives. According to Brown, "culture learning is a process of creating shared meaning between the cultural representatives" (Brown 2000, 182).

This means that this process is deeply linked to past experiences which may influence one's way of thinking, feeling and behaving. The process of learning a second/foreign language requires the acquisition of a second identity, being prone to orient towards a new culture, also known as 'acculturation'. Acculturation involves adopting aspects of a secondary or additional culture, in contrast to enculturation, which is the process of deeply connecting with one's original culture. This concept was initially introduced by Damen in 1987 and later discussed by Tran-Hoang in 2010. Enculturation is meant to construct cultural and social identity, fostering strong beliefs and grounded values aimed to generate recurrent means of living and ethnocentrism. Acculturation, on the other hand, entails detachment from the ethos of the first culture and adaptation to new forms of reality and societal moulds. Being involved in a process of acculturation may produce a culture shock, given that one's self-identity, mentality, feelings and means of expression could be dislocated when getting in contact with another culture (Brown 2000). Learning a foreign culture is a 'hermeneutic process' (Kramer 2009). This may encompass a clash between students' own cultural views and identity and the features of a new language and culture. Therefore, fostering learners' cultural and cross-cultural awareness in the foreign language classroom is crucial for sparking their interest in the cultural distinctions between the two languages they encounter.

Cultural awareness involves becoming aware of the values, beliefs, and perspectives of different cultural groups, a concept explored by Cortazzi & Jin in 1999 and later by Tran-Hoang in 2010. In order to develop cross-cultural awareness, learners should be aware that culture is compelled by behaviours, beliefs and values (Knutson 2006). Understanding and exploring one's own cultural patterns and behaviours is integral to gaining cross-cultural perspectives, an idea initially put forward by Damen in 1987 and discussed in Tran-Hoang's work in 2010. Moreover, as Kramersch (2014) states, in order to develop cross-cultural awareness, learners need favourable circumstances to get in contact with the target culture, discover the novelty, and reflect on the similarities and differences between their own culture(s) and the target one(s). Thus, various people belonging to different cultural backgrounds could jointly create a culture with mutual meanings. Kuang (2007) mentions 4 levels of cultural awareness. The first one shows how people are solely focused on their vision and way of approaching things, ignoring other cultural differences. The second one refers to people who are conscious of other cultures, but they still believe their way of acting is the only valid one, neglecting other cultural differences. The third level deals with people who are aware of their own and other cultural values and ways of acting, but they choose the one they consider fit in a certain context. Finally, the fourth one highlights individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds

collaborating to establish new rules and directions tailored to the needs of a specific situation. In this way, moving from the first to the fourth level of cultural awareness abovementioned entails gradually migrating from the stage of 'cultural ignorance' to 'cultural competence' (Tran-Hoang 2010).

An in-depth cultural exploration at the introductory level of a Spanish as foreign language class was carried out by Mitchell (2018, 583) by using the social media tool Pinterest to explore diverse cultural perspectives in the classroom and develop learners' cross-cultural awareness. The results revealed that establishing a personal connection with the target culture is the key element to an increased cross-cultural awareness level, in particular the use of pedagogical practices that focus on learning about the people of the culture, their differences and similarities and why these should be viewed as something positive, be appreciated and acclaimed by the learners. The author also stresses out the importance of the relational aspects of a culture, highlighting that the personal type of connection is what makes cultural learning come to life for students and help them connect to the target culture(s) at a deeper level and not view culture as a mere set of facts to be memorized. The current pedagogical approaches in the EFL classroom promote the inclusion of cultural elements in a dynamic way rather than in a static one, as "culture learning is seen not as the acquisition of facts but as a process of discovery, social construction, and meaning negotiation" (Su 2011, 74). Teachers play a crucial role in encouraging students to develop knowledge through social interaction and authentic experiences, nurturing them to become socially active, creative, and aware of both constructed realities and of their own perspectives. This concept was highlighted by Abrams in 2002 and discussed further in Su's 2011 work. To this end, instructors should provide an authentic environment and context that would enable learners to engage in meaningful and enriching activities for their learning experience.

Hence, educators and instructors should bring forward cultural and cross-cultural issues in the classroom, relevant social topics aimed to develop their communicative skills both at a personal and interpersonal level. Our main objective when designing this BLM Unit was to debate topics related to anti-racism urban protests, i.e., the BLM civil movement, to promote social consciousness and help students be aware of sensitive topics in relation to racial injustice. This would make young people become more open, tolerant and respectful to racial and ethnic diversities and identities inside and outside the university classroom.

A similar initiative was carried out by Ordem (2022) at a Turkish university, in which the teacher-researcher and sixteen learners collaborated to design a mini-syllabus to promote the inclusion of Black Lives Matter (BLM) anti-racial movement in the EFL classroom as a means to trigger students' meaningful actions and to foster their oral skills. The findings reveal that this reflective

practice addressed in the classroom made learners state their opinions freely in a democratic setting and enriched their lexical knowledge with topic related vocabulary and phrases. Building on the Critical Language Pedagogy (CLP), their proposal aims to deconstruct the discursive constituted syllabus of EFL textbooks and instead, provide a free space for debate of real-life situations that bring forward socio-political topics in the United Kingdom and the United States (Ordem 2022, 184). The theoretical framework known as Critical Language Pedagogy (CLP) emphasizes teaching second, additional, heritage, or other languages through the lens of social justice values. It is based on Freire's (1967) theory of education, and it promotes the values associated with democracy, i.e., liberty, equality, and solidarity, social justice and current socio-political issues (Crookes 2021, 247). CLP is intended to include in the curriculum topics that are usually not approached in the mainstream EFL textbooks. Thus, foreign language teachers should be encouraged to implement the CLP approach in their classes, question the power relations within society and motivate learners to get involved and take actions for a better world through collaboration and dialogue (Ordem 2022, 176). Students should not only gain theoretical knowledge in their fields of interest but also develop the social skills necessary to navigate the global marketplace and thrive in an interconnected world. To become global citizens, they must cultivate intercultural communication competencies, social responsibility, an understanding of global crises, and active participation in social movements at local, national, and international levels. (Kaowiwattanakul 2020, 294).

In exploring modern communicative contexts, our study draws upon the foundational work of Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell (1995), who developed a pedagogically motivated model of communicative competence with detailed content specifications. Their model includes the concept of sociocultural competence, a sub-component of communicative competence, highlighting the integral role of cultural understanding in effective communication. Furthermore, the updated model proposed by Celce-Murcia in 2008 offers a refined perspective, emphasizing the evolving nature of communicative competence in contemporary educational settings. These theoretical frameworks provide a valuable lens through which to examine the impact of the Black Lives Matter teaching unit on students' development of sociocultural and linguistic competencies.

Drawing upon *Engaging Language Learners in Contemporary Classrooms* by Mercer and Dörnyei (2020), the approach of our BLM teaching unit mirrors the advocated principles of fostering emotional, behavioural, and cognitive engagement in language learning. This unit not only enhanced linguistic and cultural competencies but also embodied the engagement dimensions highlighted by Mercer and Dörnyei. By creating a learning environment that nurtures active

participation, the BLM unit exemplifies effective educational practices aimed at promoting learner autonomy and positive emotions, essential for a responsive and dynamic classroom setting.

By applying the BLM unit in a literature subject, we aim to promote an understanding of cultural diversity and to tighten the relationship between our students and the world around them. Thus, as Kaowiwattanakul (2020, 295) sets forth, literature studies have the potential to enhance student global mindedness while encouraging them to collaboratively undertake the role of responsible global citizens in a global community. The types of texts and material chosen are essential to accomplish this scope and to make learners see themselves as members of the wider community and critically reflect on their active role at a social, political, religious and educational level.

The 'intercultural perspective' in this study refers to the capacity to understand, respect, and engage with cultures other than one's own. It encompasses an awareness of cultural differences, the ability to empathize with different cultural viewpoints, and the skill to communicate effectively across cultural boundaries. This perspective is intrinsically linked to language competence as language is not only a tool for communication but also a carrier of culture. Proficiency in a foreign language, therefore, extends beyond mere linguistic ability; it includes the understanding of the cultural context in which the language operates. In this way, language competence and an intercultural perspective are interdependent – effective language learning involves developing an understanding of foreign culture issues, while an enriched intercultural perspective enhances the depth and efficacy of language use. Language and culture are both in constant change, as Schauer (2024, 147) states, thus, if our goal is to make our learners able to communicate appropriately today and in the future, teachers need to make them aware that cultural norms, values and language use may change and adapt throughout time. This means they need to be prepared for these upcoming changes and be equipped with adequate skills, knowledge and information in order to be effective intercultural communicators.

As follows, the methodology section will be detailed, the participants involved in the study, the procedure and the material employed, and the instruments used to collect and analyse the data.

Methodology

Participants

The BLM teaching unit was implemented as part of the subject *Literature and Society* from 19th April to 18th May, in the spring semester of 2021. The participants were undergraduate students from the English Bachelor

degree in a Catalan public university. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all classes were held online via Microsoft Teams. The total number of students registered for the subject was sixty-two ($N=62$), but not all the students participated actively in this project, as some of them missed some classes, others quit or never attended the online sessions. For the sake of obtaining reliable data for the present study, we included only information from the students who attended regularly all the classes and did all the tasks related to the unit. The data were collected from the students through two online Google Forms questionnaires, administered as pre-BLM questionnaire ($N=48$) and post-BLM questionnaire ($N=35$). Despite the instructors' constant reminders to fill in both the pre and the post-BLM questionnaires, the number of students' responses was uneven. Thus, this aspect was taken into consideration when carrying out the statistical analysis and a non-parametric statistical questionnaire was chosen to limit the downsize of uneven responses between the BLM pre and post questionnaire.

Students' age ranges from 18 to 26 years old, however the mean age of the students is 18 years old (54.2%) and they live near de university or in the outskirts of Tarragona, while 1 student's home is in the south of Spain, Jaén (Andalusia). When asked about their gender, 37 students identified as female (77.1%), 10 students as male (20.8%) while only 1 student opted for the 'prefer not say' option (2.1%). Regarding their mother-tongue, the majority of the students indicated that they are bilingual in Spanish/Catalan, while some other languages mentioned are Romanian (3), Arabic (3), German (1). When asked about what foreign languages they speak other than English, their choices cover French, German, and Italian.

Teaching Materials and Implementation of the BLM Unit

To expose students to different text types, the project integrated a variety of sources, including journalistic articles, videos, political speeches, personal essays, and novel excerpts. This broad range of sources allowed the project to cover a wide array of topics related to the BLM movement, as well as the historical perspective on racism and racial segregation. Other themes addressed in class included human rights, immigration, multiculturalism, integration, Otherness, police brutality, civil unrest, violent demonstrations, gender equality, domestic violence, women and writing, and black writers (for a more detailed description of the project topics, texts, and classroom elements, see Appendix 1).

The BLM unit was implemented over a period of five weeks. Every week, the lecture would start with a brief theoretical explanation of the main themes of the session: e.g., racial segregation, human rights, the roots of the BLM

movement, etc. Then, students were introduced to BLM excerpts, photos, videos and articles from mass media as a warm-up. Then, they were given the readings of the given text(s) to be discussed on that session. After that, students were invited to actively engage in class debates, role plays, group discussions, using the newly acquired concepts, vocabulary items and ideas. Additionally, they would reflect on the broader implications of the themes discussed in the texts. At home, students were recommended to read critically the texts to be analysed in the next class and to extract the main lexicon. It is important to underline that the teachers' role was not to dictate or impress ideas on to the students, but to offer texts and theoretical methodology and allow them to question and construct their own thoughts, beliefs, and doubts.

Instruments and Data Collection

Two questionnaires, comprising both open and closed-ended questions, were developed using Google Forms to gather data. The objective was to explore students' perceptions on topics such as racism, urban conflicts, immigration, and multiculturalism before and after the implementation of the BLM teaching unit. Additionally, the questionnaires aimed to assess the impact of the unit on students' English language skills in a relevant and contemporary context. The five thematic categories in the surveys are explained hereafter:

- *Language & Literacy Skills and Materials Use:* This category assesses how the BLM teaching unit influences students' English language and literacy skills, particularly focusing on the effectiveness of the materials used in the unit.
- *Cultural Awareness:* This section explores students' understanding and sensitivity towards different cultures, particularly how the BLM unit has impacted their awareness of cultural diversity.
- *Global and Intercultural Competence:* This category evaluates students' ability to navigate and engage with diverse cultural contexts and perspectives, crucial for understanding global issues like racism and immigration, as highlighted in the BLM unit.
- *Attitude towards the Target Culture and Immigration:* This focuses on students' perceptions and attitudes towards the cultures and communities discussed in the BLM unit, especially in the context of immigration.
- *Identity and Values in Relation to Racism and Urban Conflicts:* This area delves into how students' personal identities and values intersect with themes of racism and urban conflicts, subjects central to the BLM discourse.

These categories collectively aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of how exposure to the BLM teaching unit impacts students' language skills, cultural awareness, and perspectives on critical social issues.

They are designed to measure both the linguistic and sociocultural outcomes of the educational intervention.

The *Pre-BLM Questionnaire* comprised 25 questions in two sections. The first section gathered demographic information (name, gender, age, mother tongue, place of residence, other languages spoken) through open-ended questions. The second section, with 18 questions, aimed to understand students' perspectives on BLM-related topics and their foreign language skills. Fifteen questions were closed-ended, requiring students to choose agreeable options or rate their language abilities on a 5-point Likert scale. The remaining three open-ended questions sought detailed views on BLM topics and foreign cultural issues. Questions were grouped into five themes: Language & Literacy Skills and Materials Use; Cultural Awareness; Global and Intercultural Competence; Attitude towards the target culture and immigration; Identity and values related to racism and urban conflicts. The questionnaire was distributed via email a week before the BLM unit began, with voluntary participation and confidentiality assured. A total of 48 responses were received.

The *Post-BLM Questionnaire* had 17 questions, mirroring the pre-BLM format to assess shifts in perceptions or language skills post-exposure to the BLM unit. The first section included a single open-ended question for identification. The second section included 14 closed-ended and 2 open-ended questions designed to compare pre- and post-exposure responses, focusing on changes in intercultural perspectives and foreign language skills. The response rate for this questionnaire was 35, indicating some dropout from the initial respondents.

Results

The responses to the questionnaire were analysed using a mixed approach method, both quantitatively and qualitatively, since we were interested in the general tendency of the responses, but also in their overall experience and perceptions in relation to the content of the teaching unit. For the sake of the length and scope of the current paper, only the first two categories will be thoroughly analysed and presented, i.e., Language & Literacy, and Cultural Awareness.

In the case of the quantitative analysis, descriptive statistics and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test were run with the SPSS statistical software to analyse the data gathered from the pre- and post-questionnaire in relation to students' perceptions of their language skills improvement. As for the qualitative analysis, special attention was given to the items related to students' pre and post cultural awareness after experiencing with the BLM content, but also to their deep knowledge on the topic and the impact it had on their personal and social life. The questions were separated into five main categories: (1) *language*

and literacy skills; (2) cultural awareness; (3) global and intercultural competence; (4) attitude towards the target culture and immigration; and (5) identity and values in relation to racism and urban conflicts. The items analysed for the first two sections will be described in detail below and the overall results will be reported accordingly in order to identify any specific trends before and after implementing the BLM teaching unit for a period of five weeks.

Language and Literacy Skills

This section aimed to reveal students' perceptions of their language and literacy skills development before and after the BLM teaching unit. The pre-BLM questionnaire included seven items, while the post-BLM had six, with additional questions about the appropriateness of the materials used. Students were also asked which linguistic and lexical areas they believed authentic materials would help them develop most during the BLM unit. The first question in both questionnaires assessed students' perceptions of their EFL speaking and writing (productive skills), listening and reading comprehension (receptive skills), and lexical and grammatical proficiency before and after the BLM unit. Students rated their abilities on a 1 to 5 Likert scale (1 being beginner, 5 being proficient). The collected data were analysed using SPSS statistical software for descriptive statistics and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to identify any significant increases in their EFL skills.

The pre-questionnaire analysis reveals that students' average results for productive skills were lower compared to the post-questionnaire. For the pre-questionnaire, the mean score for speaking skills was 3.67 (SD=0.66), and for writing skills, it was 3.88 (SD=0.64). In contrast, the post-questionnaire results showed a mean score of 3.66 (SD=0.72) for speaking skills and 3.97 (SD=0.66) for writing skills, given the ratio of responses (see Table 1 below). Although the difference in means between the speaking skills pre- and post-questionnaire results seems almost the same, even slightly higher in the pre-questionnaire, the number of responses was lower in the post-questionnaire, so this means that according to the ratio of students that answered the post-questionnaire, the results are still considered statistically significant. This is also reinforced by the p-value of the questionnaires which is lower than 0,05 ($p < 0,001$). This means that there is a notable perceived improvement in students' productive skills after being exposed to the content of the BLM unit over a period of five weeks.

Table 1. Productive Skills. Descriptive Statistics and Kolmogorov-Smirnov Questionnaire Results

LANGUAGE SKILL	PRE-QUESTIONNAIRE			POST-QUESTIONNAIRE			99% CONF. INTERVAL P-VALUE
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Speaking Skills	48	3,67	0,66	35	3,66	0,72	<0,001
Writing Skills	48	3,88	0,64	35	3,97	0,66	<0,001

Likewise, the data analysis carried out for the receptive skills (listening and reading comprehension) follows a similar trend. The findings reveal that students' listening and reading comprehension average results in the pre-questionnaire ($M= 3,90$; $SD= 0,83$ for listening comprehension and $M=4,08$; $SD=0,79$ for reading comprehension) were lower than in the post-questionnaire ($M=4,11$; $SD=0,71$ for listening comprehension and $M=3,26$; $SD=0,85$ for reading comprehension) (see Table 2 below). The p-value of the questionnaires is also lower than 0,05 ($p<0,001$), which shows a statistically significant perceived improvement in students' receptive skills after being exposed to the content of the BLM teaching unit.

Table 2. Receptive Skills. Descriptive Statistics and Kolmogorov-Smirnov Questionnaire Results

LANGUAGE SKILL	PRE-QUESTIONNAIRE			POST-QUESTIONNAIRE			99% CONF. INTERVAL P-VALUE
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Listening Comprehension	48	3,90	0,83	35	4,11	0,71	<0,001
Reading Comprehension	48	4,08	0,79	35	4,26	0,85	<0,001

Apart from the productive and receptive skills, two additional language elements were analysed, i.e., vocabulary and accurate grammar usage. The data analysis reveals a similar trend among the participants' responses, with statistically significant results between the pre- and post-questionnaires. The average pre-questionnaire results ($M= 3,54$; $SD= 0,65$ for vocabulary usage and $M=3,63$; $SD=0,64$ for accurate grammar usage) were lower than the post-questionnaire ones ($M=3,83$; $SD=0,85$ for vocabulary use and $M=3,71$; $SD=0,62$ for grammar use) (see Table 3 below). The p-value of the questionnaires is also lower than 0,05 ($p<0,001$), which shows a statistically significant perceived improvement in students' lexical and grammatical usage after being exposed to the content of the BLM teaching unit.

Table 3. Lexical and Grammatical Elements. Descriptive Statistics and Kolmogorov-Smirnov Questionnaire Results

LEXICAL AND GRAMMATICAL ELEMENTS	PRE- QUESTIONNAIRE			POST- QUESTIONNAIRE			99% CONF. INTERVAL P-VALUE
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	
Vocabulary Usage	48	3,54	0,65	35	3,83	0,85	<0,001
Accurate Grammar Usage	48	3,63	0,64	35	3,71	0,62	<0,001

To sum up, it seems that the statistical results of all the language skills and lexical and grammatical elements are significant and encouraging after students were exposed to various types of tasks, texts, vocabulary items and grammar structures as part of the BLM unit over a period of five weeks (see Figure 1 below). They seem to perceive their receptive skills (listening and reading comprehension) the most proficient ones, given that the pre-questionnaire scores were the highest among all the other skills. Similarly, their post-questionnaire results keep the same tendency with the highest scores among all the other language skills. This seems logical because they were exposed to a considerable number of BLM-related reading and listening texts (short stories, news articles, speeches, news reports, etc.) throughout the teaching of the unit. However, the highest increase in their perceived scores is in the use of vocabulary with a difference of 0.29 between the pre-and post-questionnaire mean scores. The result can be understandable given that their vocabulary exposure and usage has increased significantly by being in contact

with a variety of texts and vocabulary items that had to be used appropriately in meaningful tasks related to the topic of the unit. The speaking skills and the use of grammar were the elements that revealed the least increase among the participants' pre-post-questionnaire mean scores. The focus of the subject in which the BLM unit was implemented was literature and culture, so the main target was to expose students to a variety of text genres and their specific vocabulary items and not so much on developing their speaking and grammar skills in context.

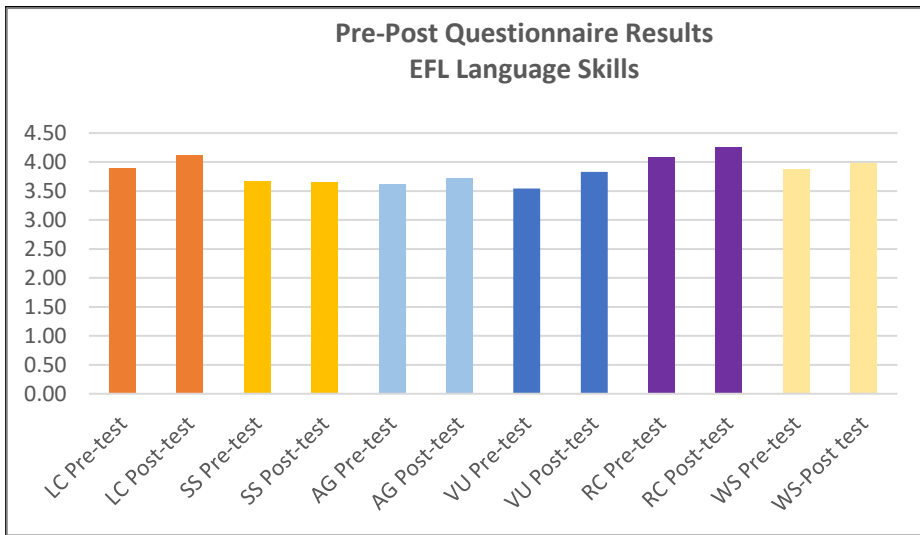


Figure 1. Outline of the pre-post questionnaire scores for all language skills and elements

Cultural Awareness

As regards students' familiarity with the BLM movement in the pre-questionnaire, the majority (57,4%) reported they were familiar with the movement, while 42,6% mentioned they did not know anything about it. This was quite surprising, given that the movement had been widely made public on TV channels, social media and written and online press. This is proof that despite being a well-known and highly spread current social movement, a vast number of students were not familiar with it, so it is important to bring these social movements to class, although most of the group was aware of it. This idea is reinforced by the answers received in the post-BLM questionnaire when they were asked if they learned new aspects about the BLM movement and related topics due to the implementation of the unit in their regular class. 54,3% of the participants

reported that they learned lots of new things about BLM and related topics and 42,9% stated they still learned new things about the movement although they were already familiar with the topic. There was only one participant that mentioned he/she did not learn much because he/she was already familiar with the topic. Similar answers appeared in the pre-questionnaire when they were asked whether they believe that the upcoming BLM project would help them raise awareness regarding societal characteristics and societal values (see Figure 2 below). A predominant majority (87,2%) responded 'yes' to this question, while only 2 answers (4,3%) were reported as 'not sure', and 4 (8,5%) answers as 'maybe'.

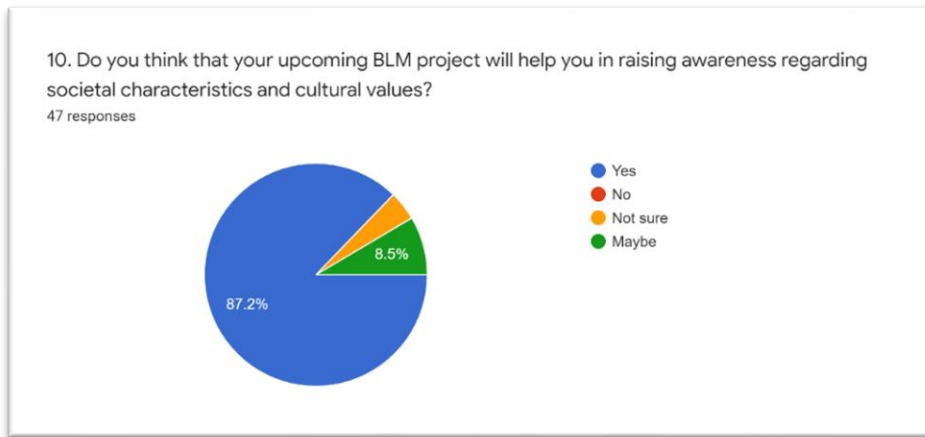


Figure 2. Pre- BLM expectations about raising awareness regarding societal characteristics and cultural values.

When asked in the pre-BLM questionnaire to tick the aspects regarding cultural awareness they think this project will help them the most, the widely voted option referred to learning new things about racism and multicultural perspectives (88,4%). The second most voted option was when asked about being more aware of their own societal characteristics and expanding their knowledge about the target culture (72,1%). These options were also the most voted ones in the post-BLM questionnaire.

Participants were also asked about what they knew about BLM and what type of knowledge they expected to get out of the upcoming learning unit. This was an open-ended question, so the majority replied they found out about the movement from social media, and they knew it was an activist movement concerning racist acts against people of colour. Some of them even mentioned they expected to learn more about the history and some ways to get involved and be more socially active. Some of the most representative replies are displayed below:

What do you know about BLM and what do you expect to learn during this unit dedicated to BLM movement? (Pre-BLM Questionnaire, Question 9)

I have seen the hashtag #blacklivesmatter on social media. It is an activist movement dedicated to fighting racism against Black people. I hope to learn more about this and contribute to social justice (Student 1).

I know it's a fight for the rights of black people which has gone on for a long time and is still going. I expect to learn more about their history and be given tips on how to help them and get involved (Student 2).

BLM is an important movement that reflects the injustices that black people have suffered and continue to exist in the present and I expect to know more in depth about the subject (Student 3).

I've been following the BLM movement in the social networks, and I know that is something very important for all of us to be able to build a better community without racism or violence. I expect to learn about its origins and how can I contribute to the movement (Student 4).

In the same line, when asked in the post-BLM questionnaire whether they found the implementation of the unit an effective way to learn about the culture of the foreign language being studied, the majority state this was a great opportunity to learn not only about the language, but also about the culture and be aware of the origin of the movement and its implication to society. Some of the most representative answers were the following:

Was the implementation of the BLM topic a fruitful way to learn about the culture of the foreign language you are studying? If yes, mention briefly why? (Post-BLM Questionnaire, Question 10)

Yes, it was great to see their culture in the real world, with their own social problems (Student 1).

Yes, it helped us know the historical background in order to understand what is happening and why (Student 2).

Indeed! Thanks to the speeches, articles and stories that I have been reading, I feel closer to the English culture now. Analysing them in class has been helpful because we have been able to share our points of view and understand them better. (Student 3).

The BLM topic was a wonderful opportunity to learn more about English and the English speakers. We have been able to study language skills from different perspectives while learning about racism. (Student 4).

Yes, as I have been able to see the origin of a movement that has united many people to fight an injustice. That says a lot about the people they are (Student 5).

Yes. Because even though I knew about the BLM movement, after studying this topic in class I realized that I wasn't fully informed, and I didn't know enough about it (Student 6).

Discussion and Conclusions

This study presents the findings of a teaching unit centered on the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, implemented in the Bachelor of English Studies program at Universitat Rovira i Virgili in Catalonia, Spain. Drawing from English literature, cultural studies, and English as a Foreign Language (EFL), this five-week unit aimed to enhance students' cultural awareness while developing their EFL proficiency. To achieve this, students engaged with a variety of authentic English texts, designed to foster cultural sensitivity through an exploration of issues such as racism and violence against people of color. The data collected via online questionnaires were analyzed using a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative research tools. The statistical findings indicate a notable enhancement in students' self-perception of all the English language skills and lexical and grammatical elements after having been exposed to a variety of tasks, texts, vocabulary items and grammar structures as part of the BLM unit. The qualitative findings align with the quantitative results, highlighting that the BLM teaching unit effectively enhanced students' cultural sensitivity and social awareness. Additionally, the project holds significant social implications, empowering young people to become critical observers of societal realities. This equips them to set informed opinions and advocate against discrimination based on race and ethnicity, while fostering cultural diversity and tolerance. Responses to the open-ended questions demonstrated that students found the experience valuable, not only for improving their English language skills but also for deepening their cultural understanding of the origins and ongoing impact of a topic that remains highly relevant in contemporary society. Being exposed to the BLM unit has also reinforced their position in relation to urban violence. By getting to know the depths of the movement, they became more aware of its consequences, especially in the case of the discrimination acts against people of colour.

The overall findings from this study underscore the pivotal role of culturally relevant teaching units like BLM in enhancing linguistic and cultural competencies. The marked improvement in students' English language skills, coupled with their heightened cultural sensitivity, signifies the efficacy of integrating contemporary social issues into language learning. This approach

not only aids language acquisition but also fosters critical thinking and a deeper understanding of global issues.

Furthermore, the study contributes to the ongoing discourse in educational pedagogy, emphasizing the importance of materials that are not just linguistically enriching but also socially and culturally relevant. The positive student feedback underscores the value of such educational interventions in fostering a well-rounded, socially aware, and empathetic learner profile.

Looking forward, these insights can be instrumental for educators and curriculum designers. Incorporating socially relevant themes like BLM into language teaching could be a significant step towards creating a more engaged, informed, and socially responsible student body. This study, therefore, extends beyond the confines of linguistic improvement, touching upon the broader impacts of education in shaping societal attitudes and cultural understanding.

WORKS CITED

- Bracelli, Patrick. 2020, July 1. "Black Lives Matter, what statues have been removed and why." *LifeGate*. <https://www.lifegate.com/black-lives-matter-statues>
- Brown, Douglas H. 2000. *Language Learning and Teaching* (Vol. 4). White Plains, NY: Pearson Education.
- Celce-Murcia, Marianne, Dornyei, Zoltan, and Thurrell, Sarah. 1995. "Communicative Competence: A Pedagogically Motivated Model with Content Specifications." *Issues in Applied Linguistics*, 6(2). <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2928w4zj>
- Celce-Murcia, Marianne. 2008. "Rethinking the Role of Communicative Competence in Language Teaching." In: *Intercultural Language Use and Language Learning*, edited by Eva Alcón Soler and Maria Pilar Safont Jordà, 41-57. Dordrecht: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-5639-0_3
- Cortazzi, Martin, and Jin, Lixian. 1999. "Bridges to learning: Metaphors of teaching, learning and language." In Lynne Cameron & Graham Low (Eds.), *Researching and Applying Metaphor* (pp. 149-176). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Crookes, Graham. 2021. "Critical Language Pedagogy: an introduction to principles and values." *ELT Journal*, 75(3), 247-55.
- Day, Elizabeth. 2015, July 19. "#BlackLivesMatter: the birth of a new civil rights movement." *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/19/blacklivesmatter-birth-civil-rights-movement>
- Freire, Paulo. 1967. *Educação como Prática da Liberdade [Education as the Practice of Freedom]*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Paz e Terra.
- Frumuselu, Anca, and Bellot, Andrea. 2020. "Enhancing Urban Culture Awareness and Anti-racism Values in the EFL Classroom." *Cultural Perspectives. Journal for Literary and British Cultural Studies in Romania*. No. 25: pp. 169-188. <https://pubs.ub.ro/?pg=revues&rev=cp&num=202025&vol=0&aid=5178>

- Grovier, Kelly. 2020, June 12. "Black Lives Matter protests: Why are statues so powerful?" *BBC Culture*. <https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20200612-black-lives-matter-proquestionnaires-why-are-statues-so-powerful>
- "Hundreds join march to protests against systemic racism in the UK." 2020, August 30. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/30/hundreds-join-march-to-proquestionnaire-against-systemic-racism-in-the-uk>
- Kaowiwattanukul, Sukanya. 2020. "Development of EFL Student Global Mindedness Through Transformative Learning in the Literature Classroom at a Thai University." *Journal of Transformative Education*, 18(4), 293-309. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1541344620935417>
- Knutson, Elizabeth. 2006. "Cross-cultural Awareness for Second/Foreign Language Learners." *The Canadian Modern Language Review/La Revue canadienne des langues vivantes*, 62 (4), 581-610. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cmlr.62.4.591>
- Kramer, Jürgen. 2009. "Cultural studies in English studies: A German perspective." 6(1), 27-43. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07908319309525134>
- Kramersch, Claire. 2014. "Teaching Foreign Languages in an Era of Globalization." *Modern Language Journal*, 98 (1), 296-311. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43651759>
- Kuang, Jin-feng. 2007. "Developing students' cultural awareness through foreign language teaching." *Sino-US English Teaching*, 12(4), 74-81. <http://www.davidpublisher.com/index.php/Home/Article/index?id=20673.html>
- Mercer, Sarah, and Dörnyei, Zoltán. 2020. *Engaging Language Learners in Contemporary Classrooms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mitchell, Claire. 2018. "Pinterest: A Vehicle to Promote Cross-cultural Awareness in an Introductory Spanish Course." *Hispania*, 101(4), 573-586. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26781131>
- "Protests in UK tear down 17th century slave trader's statue." 2020. *ABC News*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3oS75r4Re>
- Ordem, Eser. 2022. "Black Lives Matter in an EFL speaking class." *ELT Journal*, 77(2), 176-185. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccac048>
- Rowery, Wesley. 2017, January 17. "Black Lives Matter: birth of a movement." *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jan/17/black-lives-matter-birth-of-a-movement>
- Schauer, Gila A. 2024. *Intercultural Competence and Pragmatics*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan
- "Slave trader's statue toppled in Bristol as thousands join anti-racism protests." 2020. *BBC News*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cs36SAytfuE>
- Su, Ya- Chen. 2011. "Promoting intercultural understanding and reducing stereotypes: Incorporating the cultural portfolio project into Taiwan's EFL college classes." *Educational Studies*, 37(1), 73-88. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03055691003729039>
- Tran-Hoang, Thu. 2010. "Teaching Culture in the EFL/ESL Classroom." Paper presented at the *Los Angeles Regional California Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages*, California, September 11.
- "Who was slave trader Edward Colston and why was his statue pulled down?" 2020, June 8. *The Independent*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l70SI9I1UPk>

Appendix 1: Outline of the BLM Teaching Unit

What follows is a detailed description of the project elements as they were implemented in class:

DATE	SESSIONS/TOPICS & MATERIALS
WEEK 1	<p>BLM pre-questionnaire Session 1: Texts discussed in class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I have a Dream" Martin Luther King (1963) (speech) • "Rivers of Blood" Enoch Powell (1968) (speech) <p>Topics: racism, racial segregation, human rights, Black Lives Matter (BLM), immigration, multiculturalism, integration, otherness</p>
WEEK 2	<p>Session 2: Newspaper articles, videos and pictures about the movement BLM and the violent demonstrations from summer 2020 around the globe.</p> <p>Texts discussed in class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Black Lives Matter, what statues have been removed and why". Lifegate (Bracelli, 2020) • "#BlackLivesMatter: the birth of a new civil rights movement." The Guardian (Day, 2015) • "Black Lives Matter protests: Why are statues so powerful?" BBC Culture (Grovier, 2020) • "Black Lives Matter: Birth of a Movement." The Guardian (Rowery, 2017) • "Hundreds Join March to Protests against Systemic Racism in the UK," The Guardian (2020) • "Slave Trader's Statue Toppled in Bristol as Thousands Join Anti-Racism Protests," BBC News (2020) • "Protests in UK Tear down 17th Century Slave Trader's Statue," ABC News (2020) • "Who Was Slave Trader Edward Colston and Why Was His Statue Pulled Down?" The Independent (2020)
WEEK 4	<p>Session 3: Texts discussed in class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Their Eyes Were Watching God" Zora Neale Hurston (1937) (novel fragment) • "Just Walk on By: Black Men and Public Space" Brent Staples (1986) (essay) <p>Topics: Literature + Race, gender, domestic violence, women and writing, black writers</p>
WEEK 5	<p>Session 4: Language Focus on the texts covered on previous sessions. QUESTIONNAIRE on BLM (Moodle Questionnaire) BLM post-questionnaire</p>

THE IDENTITY REPERTOIRES OF ROMANIAN MICROCELEBRITIES. A DIGITAL ETHNOGRAPHY APPROACH TO TELLING A LIFE STORY ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Alexandra COTOC¹, Anamaria RADU²

Article history: Received 7 March 2024; Revised 16 April 2024; Accepted 1 September 2024;
Available online 10 December 2024; Available print 30 December 2024.

©2024 Studia UBB Philologia. Published by Babeş-Bolyai University.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License

ABSTRACT. *The Identity Repertoires of Romanian Microcelebrities. A Digital Ethnography Approach to Telling a Life Story on Social Media.* The multimodal identities of microcelebrities on social network sites and the complementarity between textual and visual elements contribute to telling an autobiographical story that surpasses the digital world. Using a digital ethnography approach, we aim to analyse the way in which queer Romanian microcelebrities construct an online presence and produce online diaries of their personal lives. Adjacent to this analysis of constant online identity performance, this study will show that the digital practices used by these netizens also raise awareness of the minority groups they represent and shed light on various contemporary social issues. As such, placing emphasis on the collage technique, a qualitative analysis is needed to provide an emic perspective of the performance of fluid identities and the narrativisation of the self via complex language, discourse, and semiotic architecture.

-
- ¹ **Alexandra COTOC** is a lecturer PhD in the Department of English Language and Literature at the Faculty of Letters, Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania. Her scientific fields of interest are Internet Linguistics, Sociolinguistics, Discourse Analysis, and Digital Humanities. She is member of the Scientific Committee of the European Summer School in Digital Humanities Culture & Technology, Cluj-Napoca, Romania and an alumna of the European Summer School in Digital Humanities in Leipzig, Germany. Alexandra Cotoc teaches undergraduate courses on English grammar, courses and seminars on New Media Communication and Digital Culture, Sociolinguistics, and Internet Linguistics. Email: alexandra.cotoc@ubbcluj.ro.
- ² **Anamaria RADU** is a junior lecturer in the Department of Romanian Language, Culture and Civilization at Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. Currently, she is an ILR lecturer at the Department of Romance Languages and Literature at the Humboldt University of Berlin. In addition to teaching and evaluating Romanian as a foreign language, her research interests include Language Acquisition, Sociolinguistics, Discourse Analysis, and Digital Humanities. Email: anamaria.radu@ubbcluj.ro.

The significance of our sociocultural linguistic study is discussed in relation to the fact that the microcelebrities under consideration showcase Romanian emblematic profiles of the selfie-culture in which self-representation is constructed by apparently disjointed bits and pieces that constitute a complex matrix.

Keywords: *digital discourse, digital ethnography, fluid identity, multimodal identity repertoires, microcelebrity*

REZUMAT. Repertoriile identitare ale microcelebrităților românești. O abordare etnografică digitală a construirii unor autobiografii pe platformele online de socializare. Identitățile multimodale ale microcelebrităților de pe platformele de socializare și complementaritatea dintre elementele textuale și cele vizuale contribuie la relatarea unei povești autobiografice care transcende lumea digitală. Folosind abordarea etnografiei digitale, ne propunem să analizăm modul în care microcelebritățile queer din România își construiesc o imagine online și produc jurnale online ale vieții lor personale. Adiacent la această analiză a construcției identitare în spațiul digital, acest studiu va arăta că practicile digitale folosite de utilizatori sensibilizează, de asemenea, grupurile minoritare pe care le reprezintă și pune în lumină diferitele probleme sociale contemporane. Din cauza caracterului fragmentar al discursului în mediul online, este necesară o analiză calitativă pentru a oferi o perspectivă emică asupra identităților fluide și a narativizării sinelui prin intermediul limbajului complex, al discursului și al arhitecturii semiotice. Importanța studiului nostru constă în faptul că microcelebritățile analizate prezintă profile românești emblematic ale culturii selfie în care auto-reprezentarea este construită prin fragmente aparent disjuncte care constituie o matrice complexă.

Cuvinte-cheie: *discurs digital, etnografie digitală, identitate fluidă, repertorii identitare multimodale, microcelebritate*

Introduction

The online space offers a voice to the voiceless and, through the use of digital technologies, users become part of participatory cultures and communities of practice. Through digital discourse (posts, comments, and images), users express and construct their identities, while at the same time contributing to the construction of other people's identities and engaging in various forms of digital activism in order to promote and defend ideologies, life beliefs, and rights. In this respect, the marginalised groups represented by the Romanian queer influencers construct multimodal discourses which reflect light identities

in the online space. They also aim to tell a story with a social impact. The content produced in interaction with other users is strongly connected to issues and problems faced on a daily basis by these individuals in particular contexts, determining these users to take a stance and express attitudes that could change the sociocultural scenarios for the better, embracing diversity and including people regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, religion and beliefs, economic status, and other diverse backgrounds.

This study aims to analyse examples produced by three Romanian queer microcelebrities on social network sites (Instagram and YouTube): Daria Jane, a transgender woman from Bucharest, and Antonio and Răzvan, a gay couple who lives in Cluj-Napoca. Daria Jane is a very active user, posting regularly on her YouTube channel and producing content almost daily on her Instagram. Antonio and Răzvan were as active as Daria Jane regarding issues concerning the LGBTQIA+ for a long period, but they have recently changed their digital behaviour entirely, shifting from an active and engaging online queer presence to creators of content addressing topics like fitness, challenges, food, professional identity content, omitting the queer dimension entirely.

These three users' online content was similar in their approach to addressing LGBTQIA+ rights for a considerable amount of time. They have been acknowledged as microcelebrities as a result of a consistent online presence, and they have received recognition and validation not only in their communities but also outside the boundaries of these communities. They now play a prominent role in the Romanian LGBTQIA+ community and have become iconic figures.

They typically depict themselves engaging in mundane activities with their mothers, siblings, and partners, such as drinking coffee, going to work, or participating in social events. This digital behaviour and exposure demonstrate that queer people's lives are on a par with those of cisgender and heterosexual people³, offering an example for other couples and encouraging everyone to embrace their life stories openly. In addition, they also post reactions to the social problems persisting in Romanian society, such as (Christian) homophobia, transphobia, abortion, abuse, sexual education, patriarchy, and gender versus sex.

This paper starts by outlining a context and highlighting theoretical considerations, the methodology, and three aspects essential for our analysis of

³ There is an ongoing discussion on the use of proper terminology, as the spectrum is diverse, some terminological clarification is needed: *heterosexual* refers to sexual orientation, as opposed to *homosexuals* and *lesbians* which refer to people who are attracted to same sex; *cisgender* is used to describe a person whose gender matches the body they were born with; *transgender* person is used to describe a person whose gender does not match the body they were born with.

marginalised identity repertoires. We will also examine and discuss a few examples from our corpus. The corpus is mostly written in Romanian, and for authenticity reasons, we will provide screenshots from YouTube and Instagram, and we translate keywords and relevant excerpts. We also provide our conclusions.

Sociocultural Background

Analysing the identity mechanisms and the categories identified requires situating the topic into the local context which has had conservative representatives whose views are against same sex marriage and transitioning. *The Coalition for Family* was created in the first decade of the 2000s, gathering people of different religions who initiated the Referendum in Romania (6-7 October 2018) with the aim of changing the constitution to mention that marriage is the union between a man and a woman, not merely between two spouses. By asking for this constitutional change, the leaders of the pro-referendum parties, such as *The Coalition for Family*, declared that there was a need to make clear that marriage can only happen between two individuals of the opposite sex, thus excluding gay couples from winning the right to get married. As a consequence to this initiative, NGOs such as *Accept Romania*⁴ and *MozaiQ*⁵ started organising online boycotting campaigns (only a low percentage of eligible voters cast their votes), which determined the government to extend the vote to two days instead of one. This was reported as unusual in the media relating the event (see BBC news⁶, *Romania marriage poll: Referendum to ban gay unions fails*). And it was an ad hoc change regarding the timeline of the process which was perceived as contradicting the intrinsic idea of democratisation and participation.

The constitution retained the neutral wording, and no change occurred after the referendum, which could be considered a milestone in Romanian society, signalling a shift towards a more accepting and inclusive culture. In this context, micro-celebrities' discourses and user-generated content started to disclose information pertaining to a broad spectrum of queer communities in both media and new media. As such, it determined more high-profile individuals

⁴ ACCEPT Association is the first non-governmental human rights organisation in Romania that defends and promotes LGBTQIA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual) rights at national level. Link: <https://acceptromania.ro/>

⁵ MozaiQ is a community organisation that addresses LGBTQIA+ people in Romania. MozaiQ places special attention to different groups in the community: LGBTQIA+ Roma people, trans people, HIV+ people, sex workers, LGBTQIA+ people in a precarious socio-economic situation, people with different abilities, as well as seniors and young people. Link: <https://www.mozaiqlgbt.ro/>

⁶ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-45779107>

to openly discuss aspects of their personal lives that had been previously tabooed. Some examples include Dragoş Bucurenci, a Romanian journalist and trainer, and Emil Rengle, a Romanian dancer, choreographer, and winner of Romania's Got Talent in 2018, who outed themselves as being bisexual. This paved the way for a new era of digital activism in support of LGBTQIA+ rights, and more and more young adults started their own YouTube channels, some of them gaining so much popularity that they became microcelebrities.

Daria Jane is an advocate of transwomen and configures a digital space in which she constructs her representation as iconic for the community of transwomen. She emphasises that transwomen should not be regarded as abnormal and raises awareness on the relevant aspects of the lives of transwomen and on the risks and steps to consider in the process of transitioning from a male body to a female body. While engaging in this complex self-representation with the aim of gaining her rights in society and empowering and encouraging other transwomen as well, she places herself in a position of power and shows that transwomen can have the same roles as biological women.

Antonio and Razvan, the gay couple, decided to launch their YouTube channel in 2020, being the first Romanian gay couple that wanted to participate in the process of normalization of queer identities in Romania. Their main wish was to show normality, to prove that their life is as ordinary as any other heterosexual couple's. Their discourse did not only advocate for the LGBTQIA+ community at large; rather, it placed particular emphasis on normalising the discussion about homosexuality and the fact that homosexuality is natural.

Microcelebrities like Daria Jane, Antonio, and Razvan have constructed their online personas in accordance with the affordances of the digital space and the derived norms of the Selfie culture, which has narcissistic and, at times, shallow undertones, but also mirrors marginalised identities and mainstream society through multimodal content with the goal of engaging in digital activism and changing people's mentalities towards accepting otherness, embracing diversity, expressing their individual identity freely and taking a stance in their community. They give other users a voice in various groups and online spaces, denouncing inequality and discrimination and making a solid case for the need to act and react in order to make a change.

The way in which these microcelebrities are received by established media and new media content producers also echoes how Romanian society perceives the LGBTQIA+ community as the nexus online-offline is based on the mutual influence of one medium over the other. On the one hand, the online environment is a significant social and communicative discursive space where offline identities are continuously exposed and negotiated. On the other hand, actants in the offline space further inquire about online identity construction

practices. For example, *Vice* magazine published an interview⁷ with Antonio and Răzvan after the two men launched their YouTube channel. In this interview, Antonio and Răzvan explain the reason behind creating a YouTube channel, emphasising that they decided to present themselves as a couple with the aim to helping people by showing that they are in a happy relationship, and not alone and isolated due to their sexual orientation. They state:

You rarely meet two gay men who are assertive and open about their relationship. In fact, many straight people can't imagine how two men can live together and think of their relationship as a sci-fi movie. We want to show that we are not more special than a straight couple. We are two people who love each other and want to build a memorable life together. (our translation)⁸

The VICE interviewers note that Răzvan and Antonio's online practice of exposing their offline gay identities influences in a positive way the online audiences who declare having partaken in their online production together with family members who are traditionalists and the videos helped both parties to find middle ground and have a positive attitude towards topics that initially had been difficult to tackle:

Although they have only been doing this for a short time, they have received messages from young people telling them they watched their first video with their homophobic parents, and the reaction has been positive. Their work is paying off and can bring about change, as in the case of one young woman who told them how her mother didn't accept her sexuality. "They watched the show together, and then her mom told her it was okay if she loved someone the way we love each other. That gave us hope," they say. (our translation)⁹

The users in this study represent the category of educated people, having invested in their personal and professional development and growth. They express their sexual orientation, talk about their gender transition, and engage in

⁷ <https://www.vice.com/ro/article/xgd8zw/cuplu-vloggeri-gay-romania-mrandmr-rob-youtube>

⁸ „Rar întâlnești doi gay care să fie asumați și deschiși în privința relației lor. De altfel, multe persoane hetero nu-și pot închipui cum doi bărbați pot să conviețuiască împreună și se gândesc la relația dintre noi ca la un film SF. Vrem să arătăm că nu suntem cu nimic mai speciali decât un cuplu hetero. Suntem două persoane care se iubesc și care vor să construiască o viață memorabilă împreună”. Link: <https://www.vice.com/ro/article/xgd8zw/cuplu-vloggeri-gay-romania-mrandmr-rob-youtube>

⁹ Deși fac treaba asta de puțin timp, au primit mesaje de la tineri care le-au spus că s-au uitat la primul lor video alături de părinții homofobi, iar reacția a fost pozitivă. Munca lor dă roade și poate aduce schimbare, așa cum s-a întâmplat și în cazul unei tinere care le-a povestit despre cum mama ei nu-i accepta sexualitatea. „Au văzut emisiunea împreună, iar apoi i-a spus că e okay dacă și ea iubește la fel ca noi. Asta ne-a dat speranță”, spun ei.

an articulate dialogue with their community of fans, but also with users opposing their life choices. They stand amongst those who openly talk not only about their daily routines but also about more sensitive topics that might offer support and guidelines to the communities. In this respect, see their comments extracted from the same article that appeared in VICE:

"It's essential to have examples of happy, openly queer people in your country."
"Accountability is built little by little every day. We don't believe that there is a moment when you behave radically differently because you realise certain things, but the other way around, by experiencing certain shocks you manage to gradually change the way you see life and stop letting feelings of guilt and fear control you." (our translation)¹⁰

Mapping the Selfie Culture through Digital Ethnography

The content posted by queer users stands as "an example of cultural realities existing in the online sphere that are worthy of ethnographic insight" (Kaur-Gill and Dutta 2017, 2) because the texts and images posted by these users contain complex meanings and show a rich "communicative ecosystem" (Ardévol and Gómez-Cruz 2014, 7), while portraying ritual practices and cultural modes. As such, the digital ethnography approach adopted in this study "examines how cultural identities, representations, and imaginaries, such as those hinged to youth, diaspora, nation, and indigeneity, are remade, subverted, communicated, and circulated through individual and collective engagement with digital technologies" (Coleman 2010, 488). Coleman's concept of digital ethnography aligns with the idea that the LGBTQIA+ community leverages new media to remake, subvert, communicate, and circulate cultural identities and representations, ultimately contributing to the visibility and empowerment of LGBTQIA+ individuals in digital spaces.

The users under scrutiny are well aware of the fact that digital spaces, through their very glocal nature, are powerful tools in displaying transformations and behaviours which are subsequently endorsed by the audience in a reciprocal way: "users generate discourses that are embedded in ideologies (beliefs, points of view and ideas that they share within particular groups) and become social actors who sometimes design and redesign their behaviour and life decisions in relation to the individuals and groups they interact with online"

¹⁰ „Este esențial să ai exemple de oameni asumați și fericiți din țara ta.”

„Asumarea se construiește puțin câte puțin în fiecare zi. Nu credem că există un moment în care te poți comporta radical diferit pentru că realizezi anumite lucruri, ci invers, trecând prin anumite șocuri reușești să-ți schimbi treptat modul în care vezi viața și nu mai lași sentimentele de vină și frică să te mai controleze.”

(Cotoc and Radu 2022, 57). There is an inherent transformative relationship between the content produced and consumed, which spreads belief systems and desired lifestyles. In this sense, digital media has a global reach, but at the same time also a provincialising effect, becoming “central to the articulation of cherished beliefs, ritual practices, and modes of being in the world” (Coleman 2010, 489). In line with the digital ethnography approach and the principles of digital media, Răzvan and Antonio, and Daria Jane become links between the lives of globally known queer VIPs and the local members of the community who aspire to have similar openly embraced lives.

In “the self-photographing cultures” (Peraica 2017, 8) of social media sites, images and text are powerful tools for exposing life narratives with an impact both on the online autobiographical manifestation and at the level of local communities in which users construct individual and group identities with the aim of belonging and integrating into society as a whole.

In the case of marginalised groups, in social media, the nexus image-text communicates a story with light multimodal identities that are intertwined. Text and images produce content through a digital collage. More than in a face-to-face context, identities emerge from the narrativization of the self, which implies the ‘suturing into the story’ that is partially imaginary (Hall 1996, 4), and the identities are always constructed through the relationship with *the other, the constitutive outside* (concept that Hall has taken from Derrida 1981; Laclau 1990; Butler 1993).

The regular people in this study have become microcelebrities in the selfie-culture of the social network sites by revealing information about themselves and posting content to audiences and communities. “People practicing microcelebrity must uneasily navigate between revealing personal information to seem truthful and real to their fans and revealing something that could harm them personally and professionally” (Marwick 2013, 361). There is always this erosion between private and public, as noticed by many researchers (e.g. Senft 2013) and this erosion constitutes an assumed risk, microcelebrity bringing new threats and opportunities. “It also means new responsibilities. In a time when we can intervene in the lives of others in so many ways remotely, we must explain why we’ve chosen to watch certain events transpire in front of our eyes” (Marwick 2013, 353).

The profiles analysed have a double function, that we describe in Rugg’s words:

“the awareness of the autobiographical self as decentred, multiple, fragmented, and divided against itself in the act of observing and being; and the simultaneous insistence on the presence of an integrated, authorial self, located

in a body, a place, and a time. Photographs enter the autobiographical narrative to support both of these apparently opposing views; photography placed in conjunction with autobiographical texts helps to unpack the issue of reference in all its complexity" (1997, 2).

These users' activity stands as proof that "there is a kind of utopian optimism around the greater visibility digital imaging technologies create—especially for the minoritized and voiceless, who have historically found themselves shut out of representation, or wilfully misrepresented, stereotyped, or caricatured" (Murray 2022, 7). In the case of the Romanian queer community, cyberspace offers a voice to those who want to create representations of their identities as they wish. Also, the multimodal representations connect "not just what is said, but also the context within which narratives unfold" (Giffney 2009, 7 in Leap 2013, 562), being "an exercise in discourse analysis" in the sense that "[it] takes very seriously the significance of words and the power of language" (2009, 7). Moreover, exactly as "the 'queerness' of linguistic practices derives as much from the audience response to linguistic practice as from any formal representation that speakers give to intended message or meaning" (Leap 2013, 563), the digital practices and identities of the three users are deeply intertwined with the audience response, and there are always "intersubjective negotiations" that stem not only from "a predetermined inventory", but also from "the dynamic engagement of speakers and interlocutors" (see Leap 2013, 565).

In the beginning, selfies do not contribute much to community building, but the emergent identities are constructed gradually, and most often than not they grow to become microcelebrities. In this way, online self-representation becomes relevant to the queer community, providing the members of the community with an authentic, unbiased, and iconic voice that other people can relate to and even trust. We observe that in the case of self-representation in cyberspace the image prevails over the text and validation is quantifiable through the number of likes/shares/comments and thus becomes iconic for the community.

Becoming iconic for the community and acknowledging the impact of online identity construction on both personal and professional lives enables new discursive possibilities and dimensions to play with the content so that it serves users' purposes at a specific time. The content can be revised and changed in accordance with the expectations of the audience. This affordance of revising and changing content emphasises the fluidity of online identity and all the possible configurations of shifting desired representations of online presence on social media sites.

Glocal Spaces for Marginalised Identity Repertoires

For our study, we provide a diachronic perspective on the YouTube and Instagram accounts, collecting corpus from YouTube and Instagram and operating a selection of examples from 2017 until 2023 by focusing on milestones. We chose YouTube because these users document their lives via videos and multimodal cues and Instagram because it complements the audio-video elements with powerful images and text. The affordances of these two platforms allow for a multimodal representation of stories and identities while foregrounding visual storytelling through instantaneous, genuine, and multimodal content and ensuring the mimetic desire and function on the part of the audience wanting to emulate the practices presented.

Three aspects are essential for our analysis of marginalised identity repertoires: the interconnection between visual representations and written content in constructing autobiographies of marginalised Romanian queer users; online persona manifestations as dynamic modes of expression with a stable core; online identity changes based on the desired outcome and *status quo*.

As previously mentioned, our study focuses on the multimodal content produced by a transgender influencer Daria Jane and a gay couple, Antonio and Răzvan on Instagram and YouTube.

Daria Jane started her YouTube channel (see Figure 1.) in 2017 with her first video *Male to Female (My transition timeline)*, which currently has 926k views (see Figure 2.). She currently has 144k subscribers on YouTube and 130 videos. She uploads approximately one video per week and removes previous content that no longer reflects her desired identity.



Figure 1. Daria Jane YouTube channel



Figure 2. Daria Jane: Male to Female

On Instagram, she has the username *daria.janee* 28.9T followers. She invests a lot of time in curating images, selfies, the descriptions accompanying the images, and the YouTube thumbnails. She describes herself as:

Daria Jane 🦋 she/her

Digital creator

🎧 Transylvanian Music Producer & Songwriter

🔥 Accidentally DJ

👤 Check out my other socials ➡ @daria.everywhere

🌐 Business inquiries: iamdariajane@yahoo.com

Antonio and Răzvan started their YouTube channel on September 29, 2021, with their first video *Cuplu gay. Premieră în România*, which had 23k views. They changed the name of the channel to AntonioRob and their channel currently has 5.59k subscribers. They used to post roughly a video per week. Each of them also has an account on Instagram, but their online presence has undergone a fundamental transformation. While Răzvan had the account *Razvansabau* with 4.893 followers, deleted this account and opened a new one (*razvan__sabau*, 1.112 followers), Antonio had the account *antoniorob* (5.102 followers) which changed, and it is now called *potentialinfinit* (5.499 followers) (See Figure 3.). However, both of them shifted focus from their gay couple life to their professional identities: Răzvan constructs the professional identity of a hairstylist, while Antonio that of a Transpersonal Psychology Coach, but the content related to their relationship is still produced regularly. The only digital trace of their gay couple life can be found on VICE magazine, where a photo of the two men is captioned as: *This gay couple of vloggers from Cluj showed me that there is hope for the homophobic Romania* (our translation) (see Figure 4.).

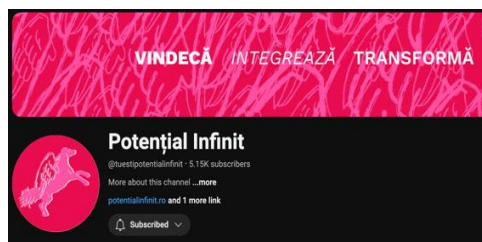


Figure 3. Răzvan YouTube Channel



Figure 4. Antonio and Răzvan in VICE

We started analysing the accounts of Daria Jane and Antonio and Răzvan in April 2022 and we continuously followed closely their means of constructing an identity which proved to be fluid and volatile as anticipated. We noticed that since they first produced content (Daria Jane in 2017 and Antonio and Răzvan in 2021), they have shaped and reshaped some of their posts to match their evolving identities. Both in the case of Daria Jane and Antonio and Răzvan, their online activity functions like a diary available not only to followers but also to themselves, curating, documenting, and archiving life through multimodal content.

The photoshopped thumbnails, their Instagram stories and posts are symbols for idiosyncratic aspects of their personal and public lives. Complemented by the text and interpreted in the whole assemblage of posts, these productions constitute a collage representing their *light multimodal identity* (see Blommaert 2017). All elements create a “horizon of expectation” (Jauss 1982) and the images can be decoded exactly as a book cover with titles complementing the images.

Identity Repertoires through Salient Categories

The content posted reveals their autobiographies in detail, bringing into light even intimate details from their offline lives such as their coming out stories, the process of transitioning, episodes of depression and burnout, and also daily life such as having a coffee with their partners, meeting their families, decorating the Christmas tree and so on. We analyse the digital content they created by organising some of the content into salient categories: close family ties, social and mundane activities, professional life, social activism, artistic photos.

Close Family Ties

Photographs of the netizens’ family members address sensitive issues, promoting acceptance and a healthy, loving family relationship that is not dependent on one’s sexual orientation or gender identity. The pictures and the accompanying text raise awareness and constitute an attempt to normalise their sexual orientation and individuality inside their families, and in society, in general. As can be seen in the two examples below, the text serves as an aid to the visual element, complementing the photo’s meaning and simultaneously constructing moments of life and relationship celebration. The emergent discourse in Figure 5 is a post made by Antonio with the occasion of his 29th birthday. The picture shows Antonio with Răzvan and Răzvan’s mother spending time together. A fragment of this post is: [Today I am celebrating my 29th birthday, but I don’t feel like celebrating. I feel like it’s all about a life that, for the first time, I’m really starting to live] (*Azi împlinesc 29 de ani. Dar nu simt că e despre o zi pe care să o sărbătoresc. Simt că e despre o viață pe care, pentru prima oară, încep cu adevărat să o trăiesc*). Figure 6 contains a multimodal discourse expressing gratefulness towards the mother who supported Daria in becoming a new person: [I wouldn’t be here today if it wasn’t for her, or if she wasn’t the way she is] (our translation). Daria also demonstrates that she has reached a point in her life where she has the financial means to show gratitude to her mother even by inviting her to travel together to an exotic destination: [The wheel has turned: she no longer takes me on holidays as she used to do every year when I was a child, now I take her. I brought her to a place that is very dear to me for many reasons, the Costa del Sol].

THE IDENTITY REPERTOIRES OF ROMANIAN MICROCELEBRITIES. A DIGITAL ETHNOGRAPHY APPROACH TO TELLING A LIFE STORY ON SOCIAL MEDIA

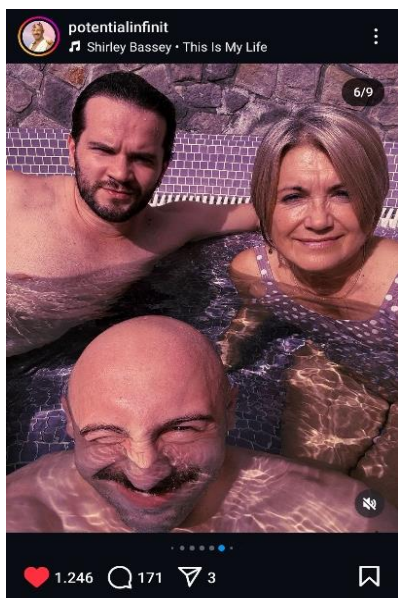


Figure 5. Răzvan's Mom



Figure 6. Daria's Mom



Figure 7. Antonio's Father



Figure 8. Antonio's grandmother

On Instagram, the focus is on visual displays that show the users with their family members in ordinary settings (for instance, Răzvan and his father in front of a house, Figure 7) or Antonio's grandmother with a birthday cake (Figure 8). The texts accompanying these images are only descriptions of the obvious representation, which does not require further interpretation.

The discursive attitude adopted both on YouTube and Instagram aims to have an effect on the audience in terms of their cognitive processing, emotive experiences, and behavioural patterns which would eventually lead to an online community in which marginal identities are depicted as equal to mainstream identities.

Social and Mundane Activities

The Instagram pictures depict Daria, Antonio and Răzvan in various social activities: going to restaurants, cinema, interacting with family members, and partners, and traveling. Memories are thus digitally archived and construct the puzzle of their online identities and digital footprints. These pictures are accompanied by a short explanatory text. Daria uses English in many of these descriptions and also highlights a wealthy lifestyle, Figure 9: *I got myself a car and some hair extensions. Life is cool*; Figure 10: *Sometimes all I need is Istanbul*. She involves her partner in many social activities, emphasising the fact that they are a strong couple regardless of social conventions. Comparing themselves to Bonnie and Clyde, as the photo description shows (Figure 11), she portrays themselves as a rebel couple that stands out and is destined to gain notoriety.



Răzvan and Antonio exhibit a more playful explanatory text alongside the images chosen, and they also address the audience directly, eliciting reactions from the online community, while at the same time engaging the audience in the public arenas created on their Instagram pages. The examples selected show direct address and thankfulness addressed to the followers: *La mulți ani, în fiecare zi, vouă și vă mulțumesc că sunteți aici. Am încredere în voi!* 🍷 [Happy birthday every day to you and thank you for being here. I trust you!] (Figure 12); an invitation to reflective thoughts on one’s relationship: [5 signs that you suffer from relationship anxiety] (Figure 13).



Figure 12. Cheers!

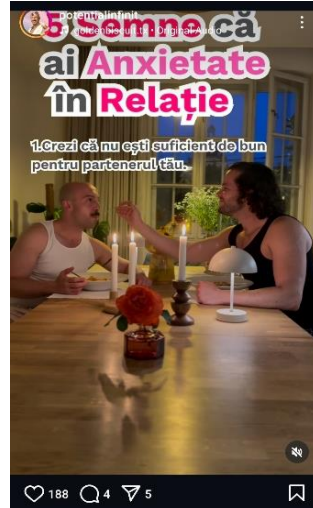


Figure 13. Dinner for Two

This display of social activities and the digital participation of followers are practices that Jan-Hinrik Schmidt would consider part of personal public spheres formed through the information that is personally relevant for the users themselves, even though it presents only mundane activities. This information about their social activities is “directed to an intended audience of strong and weak ties (instead of the dispersed, unconnected, and unknown audience of mass-mediated public spheres); and [...] “is presented mainly to engage in conversation (in contrast to the one-way mode of publishing)” (2013, 371). Exposing this information blurs the boundaries between public and private information and fosters “digital exhibitionism”, but it also builds a networked identity and a “connected presence” (Licoppe and Smoreda 2005, 317). They document their lives while performing daily routines: repotting plants, bathing in the river, having breakfast in bed, etc. (see Figures 14-16 below).



Figure 14. Repotting plants



Figure 15. Bathing in the river



Figure 16. Bed and Breakfast

Professional Life

Their fulfilment in their professional lives is also often depicted because, especially for microcelebrities, “the Internet contributes to a dynamic by which users frame themselves simultaneously as seller, buyer, and commodity” (Senft 2013, 348). Daria is a content creator and influencer, participating in various online marketing campaigns (see Figure 17 below), while Antonio and Răzvan promote their businesses online (see Figures 18 and 19 below).

These three users want to show to the members of the community and to others that one can be gay, trans, etc., and successful in their workplace at the same time. Thus, they intend to showcase the fact that they have a complete life and that, career-wise, they are on par with any other heterosexual Romanian.



Figure 17. Influencer



Figure 18. Hairdresser

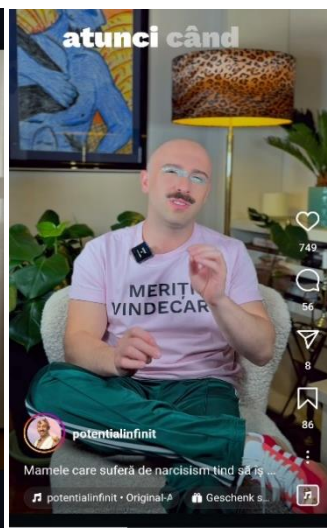


Figure 19. Transpersonal Coach

Social activism

Almost all their posts contain messages that encourage the members of the community to be authentic and to take all the steps to be happy and fulfilled. In some posts, they explicitly offer informative and insightful content about various social causes and their position in society as gay, or transgender: they react to homophobia and transphobia (see Figures 20 and 21), to abortion, to the ideas put forward by conservatives, and they provide information on the history of homosexuality, gender studies, feminism, and other related topics. They choose thumbnails which are self-explanatory in revealing the social cause they fight for.



Figure 20. Homophobia



Figure 21. Transphobia

Artistic Photos

These three users dedicate time and effort to constructing artistic images, and this demonstrates the significance that they place on the aesthetic dimension. The semiotic architecture of text and images reveals curated online representations, but also various imageries. In the case of Daria, the imagery pertains to feminine beauty and perfection: *Celebrating the divine feminine... It's Isis, Aphrodite, Venus, Astarte, Bastet... all of them and many more that lie within ourselves* (see Figure 22); self-confidence and self-awareness: *Peace is a state of mind* (see Figure 23). Many of her photos also evoke eroticism, advocate for feminism and freedom of expression, and normalise body exposure.

Antonio and Răzvan produce erotic and sensual content (see Figure 24). Many of their pictures contain also teasers/captatio benevolentiae/linguistic strategies for attracting and maintaining followers, collage technique, humorous discourse.



Figure 22. The divine feminine



Figure 23. Peace



Figure 24. Couple Portrait

Autobiography: Change of Course (Daria Jane)

We identified this last salient category only in Daria’s online journal. She thoroughly presents her autobiography, including very intimate details with the aim to familiarise Romanian people with the journey of transitioning from a male body to a female body. She digitally documents her autobiography in an impactful manner, making use of straightforward images, illustrating cliches, and sometimes using the collage technique to which she adds simple, concise, and short text with a focus on keywords. The keywords are sometimes written in capital letters and highlighted in different colours. Some examples include: “Ce înseamnă să fii fată TRANSGENDER?” [What does it mean to be a TRANSGENDER girl?]; “Am făcut o SCHIMBARE DE SEX?!” [Have I undergone SEX CHANGE?!] (our translation), which is the Netspeak signal of surprise, or shock, or they function as attention-grabbing devices. The transitioning process is depicted in a non-glamorous manner in both her discourse and her choice of images. She often uses images that you cannot unsee in order to explain the complex and difficult journey of transitioning, but also to raise awareness about the implications of the procedure.

Conclusions

The selection of emblematic examples from the YouTube and Instagram accounts of the featured microcelebrities demonstrates that online identity is a fluid representation, and it is carefully curated by users. Users shift their focus as many times as they wish, they juggle with the content by using techniques and multimodal strategies that keep their followers engaged, and they create stories that are not necessarily predictable but, in most cases, relatable. The online identity constructed is a fluid multimodal representation with a stable core. Besides, online identity is a multidimensional construct which shifts focus depending on the desired outcome and *status quo*.

Their approach is convincing because it is authentic; their images placed in conjunction with autobiographical texts help in unpacking the story of all marginalised Romanian queer users. They all have a voice through the voices of Antonio, Răzvan and Daria. They cover a wide range of issues and reveal so much of their personal lives that anyone can find something that speaks to them directly.

The fluidity of online identities is manifested by the subjective selection of the content they decide to post, by the carefully constructed images, and by various multimodal strategies and digital practices (using caps lock, colours, including hashtags, collage techniques, etc.). In the case of Daria Jane, we notice an evolving identity as she documents all the changes that occurred after the aesthetic surgeries, thus constructing an archive of representations marked by fluidity. Moreover, in some posts the focus is on her being like any other woman, while in other posts, the trans identity is foregrounded. In the case of Antonio and Răzvan, fluidity is manifested differently, in the sense that they decided to completely reshape their online representation, deleting all their videos on their YouTube channel, and reconfiguring their Instagram profiles. They expressed their desire to no longer be viewed as an unconventional couple because they are gay. They stated that they would continue to post and share content from their personal and professional life, but they stopped foregrounding the idea that they are gay/homosexuals.

As “digital media are effective tools for liberation, empowerment, self-actualisation, and participation” (Lindgren 2017, 73), the rise of microcelebrities, notably exemplified by Daria Jane, has led to their recognition, resulting in invitations to diverse events such as festivals and mainstream TV shows¹¹

¹¹ *Teo Show* 2018: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5NSYr8yIqwA> and 2022: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ItEXdB1-dqU>; *În Oglindă* 2021: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NOa2MQ3-RKo&t=696s>; *La Măruță* 2020: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XfjuNp-5JcE>; 2021:

meant to educate the Romanian audience on LGBTQIA+ topics and issues. This phenomenon demonstrates a substantial social impact within Romanian society, especially when compared to other transgender women in their participation in TV shows a decade ago, when being queer was stigmatised in the media. Thus, originating from their online presence and fuelled by the powerful and catchy nature of visual content, these netizens succeeded in making a difference in perspective and perception of queer identities. As suggested by De Jesus and Tchalian (2021, 243), “historical processes develop from discursive changes, which also take place in daily life”.

WORKS CITED

- Ardévol, Elisenda and Edgar Gómez-Cruz. 2014. “Digital Ethnography and Media Practices.” In *The International Encyclopaedia of Media Studies, First Edition. Volume VII: Research Methods in Media Studies*, edited by Fabienne Darling-Wolf, 1-21, John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. Published 2014, DOI: 10.1002/9781444361506.wbiems193.
- Blommaert, Jan. 2017. *Durkheim and the Internet. Sociolinguistics and the Sociological Imagination*. London, New York, Oxford, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Butler, Judith. 1993. *Bodies That Matter*. London: Routledge.
- Coleman, E. G. 2010. “Ethnographic Approaches to Digital Media.” In *Annual Review of Anthropology*, no. 39, 487–505. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25735124>.
- Cotoc, Alexandra and Anamaria, Radu. 2022. “The Digital Discourse of Romanian Social Media Prosumers during the Covid-19 Pandemic”. In *Studia UBB Philologia*, LXVII, no. 4, 55 - 84. DOI:10.24193/subbphil.2022.4.03.
- De Jesus Danie Marcelo, Tchalian, Vicente. 2021. “Transmale Models: A Discursive Analysis on Porn Ads.” In *Multicultural Discourses in Turbulent Times*, edited by Cotoc, Alexandra, More, Octavian, Mudure, Mihaela, 227-245, Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană.
- Derrida, Jaques. 1981. *Positions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Giffney, Noreen. 2009. “Introduction: the “q” word”. In *Ashgate Research Companion to Queer Theory*, edited by Noreen Giffney and Michael O’Rourke, 1-13, Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kI_E5MPy9iY ;				2023:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2cbNRuWLYtM ;			Unica	2019:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5VMWA0-ebPg ;	ProTV	Viața bate	vlogul	2020:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-LVsyQMSPk ;		Galben		2023:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30-UqwD2DyE				

- Hall, Stuart. 1996. "Introduction." In *Questions of cultural identity*, edited by Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, 1-18, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Jauss, Hans Robert. 1982. *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Kaur-Gill, Satveer and Mohan J. Dutta. 2017. "Digital Ethnography." In *The International Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*, DOI: 10.1002/9781118901731.iecrm0271.
- Laclau, E. 1990. *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*. London: Verso.
- Leap, William L. 2013. "Queer linguistics, sexuality, and discourse analysis." In *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, edited by Gee, James Paul and Handford, Michael, 558-571. London and New York: Routledge.
- Licoppe, Christian, Zbigniew Smoręda. 2005. "Are Social Networks Technologically Embedded?: How Networks Are Changing Today with Changes in Communication Technology." In *Social Networks*, Volume 27, Issue 4, 317-335, ISSN 0378-8733, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socnet.2004.11.001>.
- Lindgren, Simon. 2017. *Digital Media & Society*. Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Marwick, Alice E. 2013. "Online Identity." In *Companion to New Media Dynamics*, edited by Hartley, John, Burgess, Jean and Bruns, Axel, 346-354. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing.
- Murray, Derek Conrad. 2022. "Introduction: "The Selfie as Visual Culture: A Methodological Quandary." In *Visual Culture Approaches to the Selfie*, edited by Murray, Derek Conrad, 1-19. Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group, New York and London.
- Peraica, Ana. 2017. *Culture of the Selfie: Self-Representation in Contemporary Visual Culture*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures. Available at: <https://networkcultures.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/CultureOfTheSelfie.pdf>
- Rugg, Linda Haverty. 1997. *Picturing Ourselves: Photography and Autobiography*, University of Chicago Press.
- Senft, Theresa M. 2013. "Microcelebrity and the Branded Self." In *A Companion to New Media Dynamics*, edited by Hartley, John, Jean Burgess, and Axel Bruns, 346-354. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing.
- Schmidt, Jan-Hinrik. 2013. "Practices of Networked Identity". In *A Companion to New Media Dynamics, First Edition*, edited by Hartley, John, Burgess, Jean and Bruns, Axel, 365-374. Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

INTERNET SOURCES

Figure 1. Daria Jane YouTube channel

Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/@DariaJane13>

Figure 2. Daria Jane: Male to Female

Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8aSlSfZQctI>

Figure 3. Răzvan YouTube Channel.

Available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC7pi6djpL6CVIhbURlm4Bfw/featured>

Figure 4. Antonio and Răzvan in VICE

Available at:

<https://www.vice.com/ro/article/cuplu-vloggeri-gay-romania-mrandmr-rob-youtube/>

Figure 5. Răzvan's Mom.

https://www.instagram.com/p/DAs6fvTIpo1/?img_index=5&igsh=azJvM3dsN3Y3aTQw

Figure 6. Daria's Mom

Available at: https://www.instagram.com/p/Cd7nFJcDa7p/?img_index=1

Figure 7. Antonio's father

Available at:

https://www.instagram.com/p/C-QPkZjoqfc/?igsh=ZmQwZzFvcHMzOW96&img_index=1

Figure 8. Antonio's grandmother

Available at:

https://www.instagram.com/p/C-QPkZjoqfc/?igsh=ZmQwZzFvcHMzOW96&img_index=8

Figure 9. Wealthy lifestyle

Available at: https://www.instagram.com/p/Ce1JipdDvCj/?img_index=1

Figure 10. Istanbul

Available at: https://www.instagram.com/p/CZ7AiXNMIh3/?img_index=1

Figure 11. Bonnie & Clyde

Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/p/Cbk0yydMgmK/>

Figure 12. Cheers!

Available at:

https://www.instagram.com/p/DAs6fvTIpo1/?img_index=5&igsh=azJvM3dsN3Y3aTQw

Figure 13. Dinner for Two

Available at:

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/C9znjnrlZIS/?igsh=ZGlibTQwMmJ1amZr>

Figure 14. Repotting plants

Available at:

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/C9r6YDWInog/?igsh=MTd5bTZwN2kzMDh1bA%3D%3D>

Figure 15. Bathing in the river

Available at:

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/C-kFQx8oFZf/?igsh=OXV00GdqMjZvbG9p>

Figure 16. Bed and Breakfast

Available at: https://www.instagram.com/p/CbhjM91suNK/?img_index=1

Figure 17. Influencer

Available at:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/Czrnid3ojgB/?igsh=MWwzMjFuc3ZmOGhtMQ%3D%3D>

Figure 18. Hairdresser

Available at:

https://www.instagram.com/p/C_Prvn9s7iB/?igsh=c3ZhMnFvOGtmcGJm

Figure 19. Transpersonal Coach

Available at:

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DBOP2xxolB-/?igsh=MXF5dml3aThsdmNjOQ%3D%3D>

Figure 20. Homophobia.

Available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mxm-UIJO6hM&t=6s>

Figure 21. Transphobia

Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5PXAF8tYdE&t=1s>

Figure 22. The divine feminine

Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/p/Ca2MFYLMGrx/>

Figure 23. Peace

Available at: https://www.instagram.com/p/CY_CYXIoUMv/

Figure 24. Couple Portrait

Available at:

<https://www.vice.com/ro/article/cuplu-vloggeri-gay-romania-mrandmr-rob-youtube/>

<https://acceptromania.ro/>

<https://www.mozaiclgbt.ro/>

<https://www.vice.com/ro/article/xgd8zw/cuplu-vloggeri-gay-romania-mrandmr-rob-youtube>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-45779107>

POSSIBLE WORLDS FOR FICTION. A RECONSTRUCTIVE APPROACH, WITH A PRACTICAL OUTLOOK INTO IAN MCEWAN'S *ATONEMENT, ON CHESIL BEACH AND THE CHILD IN TIME*

Adriana Diana URIAN¹

Article history: Received 11 June 2024; Revised 25 October 2024; Accepted 15 September 2024; Available online 10 December 2024; Available print 30 December 2024.

©2024 Studia UBB Philologia. Published by Babeş-Bolyai University.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License

ABSTRACT. *Possible Worlds for Fiction. A Reconstructive Approach, With a Practical Outlook into Ian McEwan's Atonement, On Chesil Beach and The Child in Time.* The present paper aims at presenting how the possible world framework can function for fictional worlds. It starts from presenting different perspectives on how fictional universes can be understood. It then grounds its reconstructive approach in modal logic theories, such as the ones postulated by Kripke and Lewis, attempting to find a possible world system which can be adapted and become custom-fit for fiction. The theoretical approach favors re-creations of the modal system for fiction, as presented by Marie-Laure Ryan or Ruth Ronen. The study of this particular topic is eclectic, putting together various perspectives on literature, fiction and modality. The theoretical input is accompanied by practical reverberations from the three novels presented in the title, which function as its scientific playground.

Keywords: *possible worlds, possible world semantics, fiction, fictional worlds, counterfactuals, postmodern fiction, fictional entities, modal logic.*

REZUMAT. *Lumile posibile și domeniul ficțional. O abordare reconstructivă cu aplicații practice în romanele lui Ian McEwan Ispășire, Pe plaja Chesil și Copilul furat.* Prezenta lucrare își propune să prezinte modul în care sistemul lumilor posibile poate fi aplicat și lumilor ficționale. Demersul de cercetare pornește de la prezentarea unor perspective diverse asupra modului în care

¹ **Adriana Diana URIAN** is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Specialized Foreign Languages, at Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj Napoca. She holds a PhD in Philology since 2015. She teaches English for specialized purposes in the field of Social Assistance. The study of possible world semantics and its application onto postmodern fiction is an interest she has explored through her doctoral thesis and which still constitutes a vivid part of her research endeavors. Email: adriana.urian@ubbcluj.ro.

lumile ficționale pot fi înțelese. Apoi fixează abordarea reconstructivă în teoriile logicii modale, așa cum apar ele prezentate de Kripke sau Lewis, încercând să găsească un cadru modal care să poată fi adaptat și să fie relevant pentru studiul ficțiunii. Abordarea propusă favorizează re-creații ale sistemului modal pentru domeniul ficțional, cum ar fi teoriile lui Marie-Laure Ryan sau ale lui Ruth Ronen. Viziunea teoretică este una eclectică, analizând diverse perspective asupra literaturii, ficțiunii și modalității. Perspectivele teoretice sunt însoțite de exemplificări practice din cele trei romane expuse în titlu, acestea funcționând ca un ideal teritoriu practic.

***Cuvinte-cheie:** lumi posibile, semantica lumilor posibile, ficțiune, lumi ficționale, ficțiune postmodernă, entități ficționale, logică modală*

Introduction

The prospects of considering the possible world framework for the study of fiction raise an interesting topic with a vast territory for discussion. There are valid arguments which support the idea that possible world theory can function for fiction and reveal an in-depth view of the inner modal structure of the fictional universe and all of its contents. While there are so many ways to study fiction, the present paper will analyze the fictional discourse and will operate with the notion that being fictional signifies acquiring a special ontological status.

To clarify, the possible world framework is based on possible world semantics, according to which meanings (or semantic values) are assigned to sentences in terms of the truth values they have across possible worlds (Kripke 1981). Kripke is best known for his application of possible world semantics in the field of modal logic (1981), with meaningful contributions also presented by David Lewis and his theory of counterfactuals (2001). Kripke intended to resolve the contradictions left over by Frege (1980) and Russel (1905) by providing the necessary means to identify entities across possible worlds by way of rigid designation (Kripke 1981). While Kripke's theories are mostly related to epistemology, the philosophy of language and other areas where truth values are connected to the idea of assigning sense and reference, literary studies also have an applicability in literary studies. Still, certain alternations are needed for the possible world framework to have theoretical validity in fiction.

In this respect, Marie-Laure Ryan proposes two different theories of fiction, a referential and an intensional one (2004). Briefly put, the former refers to the fact that fiction creates an ontologically independent universe, for a limited number of entities and the latter focuses on the fictional discourse seen as a

special kind of communicative act (Ryan 2004). Similar to Ryan (2004), Curie also discusses a referential theory of fiction (1990, 2010). According to both perspectives, the best way to think of fiction is as the opposite of reality or perhaps even more to the point, as the opposite of actuality. In the actual world, truth values are assigned based on facts inherent in the actual world. As such, we can assign truth values to propositions which abide by those facts. When facts in the actual world cannot support the validity of a proposition, then those propositions are considered false, erroneous, even fictional. Thus, being the opposite of actual world facts, one can be tempted to believe that fiction itself is a set of incongruities and that the fictional discourse is in itself erroneous, depicting a distorted reality. The referential theory of fiction attempts to pinpoint that fiction can function under an ontologically independent system, which allows it to be free of “errors”, “lies”, irrespective of the intentionality of the speaker.

The present article aims at offering a unifying attempt of presenting several essential perspectives on how the possible-world framework applies to fiction, setting forward their strengths and weaknesses, as well as revealing the complex nature of such an analysis, taking into account the various areas of ambiguity that the fictional territory imposes. As such, the present paper will constitute an eclectic approach towards possible world modality, within the fictional universe, the results of which will be elaborated upon, in the hope of obtaining a clearer picture of how the language of fiction speaks through a system of modal logic.

2. Arguments against Possible Worlds

There are several philosophers who fiercely argue that introducing possible worlds in the study of language would inevitably lead to a highly chaotic representation of the relations within language, namely strictly referring to that particular vague process of assigning world relations to objects. Thus, one of the major counterarguments against possible worlds is that they are not necessary to describe language, being engulfed in a chaos of possibility and probability. The reason for this would be that speakers' beliefs are altogether different from what can be roughly identified as the actual world. If an element of whatever nature differs from what the actual world accurately indicates, that particular element is void of meaning and its existence is liable to be doubted, since it is impossible to enter a discussion regarding any other elements than the ones inhabiting our own world, the world of active experience. To an even lesser extent, we can then refer to such notions as fictional characters (see Cecilia in *Atonement* or Florence in *On Chesil Beach* or Stephen in *The Child in Time*), since

any statement made about such characters, would not be considered valid strictly because language does not work for anything else than for the elements in the actual world.

The resistance against introducing possible worlds within the spectrum of language study meets another high point when faced with the reality of accepting possible worlds within fiction. On the already shaky territory of fiction, possible worlds are mostly feared as a linguistic tool, mainly due to the even higher ambiguity they would be prone to create. Taking matters to a further extreme, the prohibition about making identity statements in fictional worlds is then extended to making statements about the actual world that are contrary to the state of facts. For instance, a question such as: *What if Selma Lagerlöf hadn't written The Wonderful Adventures of Nils?*, is meaningless, since it would require an equivalence between Selma Lagerlöf in the actual world and Selma Lagerlöf in that particular scenario in which she doesn't write the famous children's book. The argumentation brought forward for excluding any validity in the meaning of such statements, stands on a principle of identity. In order for these sentences to become acceptable samples of language, the object in the actual world would have to be identical to the object in the possible world, which according to the same theoreticians is logically impossible.

Goodman (1978) goes to assert that fictional discourse need not be concerned with possible worlds, since fiction is merely another way of speaking about the actual world. Within this view, any type of discourse, even the one concerned with possibility and probability, with that typical "what if", constitutes a readjusted description of the actual world. Surpassing the boundaries of the latter would mean that such a discourse would have to be ranked as a false description of the actual world. Therefore, any type of discourse lacking strict correspondence with the actual world is invalid. But what about fictional characters? Abiding by this theory, any fictional character, in order to be taken into consideration, should be a mere projection of a set of qualities identifiable in the actual world. Under no circumstances could such characters be considered individuals inhabiting their own possible worlds, for that would automatically mean that their correspondent in the actual world would not exist, casting them into inexistence as well.

However, using ambiguity as a pretext against possible worlds for fiction only indicates the lack of understanding of the appropriate manner in which such a valuable tool may be employed to the benefit of comprehending fictional mechanisms.

3. Arguments for Possible Worlds

Contrary to dealing with the cons pervading the acceptance of possible worlds, the steps to be taken at this time are most likely to be concerned with explaining and exemplifying, first of all, how possible worlds can be accessed with respect to fiction especially, and then, how accessing possible worlds redefines and improves the general existing concept of fiction itself.

To begin with, starting this quest in more general terms means going through Kripke's (1981) own magnifying glass of understanding the essential notion of accessibility in terms of logic. Therefore, under these terms, possibility is synonymous with accessibility, meaning that "a world is possible in a system of reality, if it is accessible from the world at the center of the system" (Ryan 2004, 31). This kind of reporting oneself to the issue of possible worlds is specifically related to viewing possible worlds through the mechanisms of logic. By means of logic, any world is possible as long as it satisfies the principle of non-contradiction, that is, a proposition must be either true or false, but never both true and false at the same time. To provide an example in this sense, it is necessary to resort to a situation verifiable in the actual world, as illustrated below:

President Kennedy was assassinated in Dealey Plaza Dallas after which he held a speech in front of an adoring crowd.

From a logical point of view a world in which president Kennedy is assassinated in Dallas and then gives a speech for the present crowd is impossible, since it implies that the subject of such an utterance was actually alive after his own assassination, a state of affairs which is illogical. Taken logically, possible worlds and how they can or cannot function, appear to be a fairly accessible and understandable linguistic tool, but applying the same framework to the realm of fiction, may prove that the system needs yet more molding in order to fit the much wider spectrum that fiction readily opens for research, meaning that much wider ranges of accessibility relations are imminently required. (Urian 2021, 248).

For such purposes Marie-Laure Ryan (2004) proposes a separate system by means of which possible worlds can be integrated in the study of the fictional genre. Ryan comes up with a possible solution which constitutes the pathway towards accessing fiction by way of the possible world theory. She points out that when it comes to fiction, there occurs a recentering. This is necessary for preventing the actual world from interfering with the fictional world or worlds, leading to a rough misinterpretation of the piece of fiction itself. Recentering, as suggested by Ryan (2004) is achieved through a structured system in which

a central world is surrounded by satellite worlds. The center of the system is represented by the actual world, while the satellite worlds are the alternative possible worlds. A further distinction is then made between the notions of actual world (AW), which is understood as the world of experience and the textual reference world (TRF) which is the textual actual world. (Polgar 2019, 257)

It is by no means uncommon that a fictional text of any type should preserve, if not a literally precise reproduction of reality, at least a close image of what reality represents, a procedure encountered in a relatively similar manner in cinematography, when the viewers are warned against the fact that any type of resemblance to actual facts and events is merely coincidental. In the exact same way, the authors of the relatively newer genre of “true fiction” may feel tempted to produce the same warning for their readers as well, leaving an utterly reduced border between what should be understood as sheer fiction and the rest, which should be perceived as nonfiction. The difference lies in the particularity that nonfiction will always claim to represent reality thoroughly, meaning there is a genuine sense of equivalence between the textual reference world (TRW) and the actual world (AW). By opposition, within the fictional text, the textual reference world will preserve distinctive marks from the actual world, despite the appearance of identity with the actual world, induced by mimetic practices.

Dealing with the notions of fiction and nonfiction, fiction and its possible worlds, as well as nonfiction, the range of worlds it creates, doesn't yet establish the exact gateways possible worlds devise in order to infiltrate themselves in the realms of fiction. Even so, Ryan (2004) identifies a set of nine possible gateways by means of which the actual world may access the textual actual world, with the important mentioning that such access is not mandatory and that there may exist numerous derogations from the initial scheme. “The magic behind these accessibility relations lies in their property of combining and rendering different types of fictional constructs” (Polgar 2018, 81).

1. The first port of access, and the most basic one is given by linguistic compatibility, namely that the TAW can be accessed from the AW, if the language in which the TAW is rendered, may be understood by the AW.

2. Having surpassed the code barrier, the next gateway can be identified in the form of analytical compatibility, namely the TAW is accessible from the AW, if they share analytical truths. This would imply the existence of objects rendered by the same worlds, which also possess the same properties in both worlds. For instance, Napoleon in the AW would be of analytical compatibility with a Napoleon pictured in a work of fiction.

3. The next level of compatibility resumes to logical compatibility, meaning that the TAW is accessible from the AW, if both worlds abide by the same logical principles of non-contradiction.

4. Taxonomy is yet another level of compatibility, which needs to be met in order for the TAW to be accessed from the AW. As the name clearly indicates, both worlds should contain the same species and these species should be met with the same range of properties.

5. The TAW is accessible from the AW, if they both share a physical compatibility or if they are governed by the same natural laws.

6. Access from the AW to the TAW can be granted only if no temporal relocation affects any of the constituents identifiable in the AW. This means that the TAW cannot be located in any other time span than the AW or that the present of the TAW is not posterior in absolute time to the AW's present.

7. All the members comprised of the AW should be completely integrated in the universe depicted by the TAW in order for the two domains to obtain a compatibility of inventory.

8. It is not enough that all the members of the AW should simply be included. The eighth gateway depicted by Ryan sets forward an identity of inventory, by means of which the objects integrated in the TAW, should also be identical to the same objects identifiable in the AW.

9. Finally, the last item on the list of accessibility relations from Marie-Laure Ryan's perspective, is represented by the identity of properties certifiable if the objects common for the AW and the TAW are proven to detain the very same properties, as the very name suggests it as well.

This spectrum of accessibility relations is far from being a sum of definitive rigid notions. This system must be perceived as undergoing continuous modeling and reformatting, in accordance with the great variety of texts of different natures. Ryan's system is thus open to multiple other accessibility relations, which might appear on the way, while at the same time, Ryan herself has identified four more candidates for an eventual expansion of the previously presented model. As such, the extended model would include notions similar to: historical coherence, psychological credibility, socio-economic compatibility and categorial compatibility.

4. A Reconstructive Approach through Possible Worlds

Possible world theory may be just as valid an application for systems of reality as it may be for those debatable areas of fiction and fictional universes, a state of facts which would be prone to indicate that the semantic universe projected by a fictional text need not be centered around the constantly pressing

element of the AW. Any fictional text, thus, opens an entirely separate world, a world of textual semantics, which can be accessed through the lens of the possible world theory, with the aid of the concepts of modal logic.

Any type of narrative concerns directed towards drawing palpable resemblances between the worlds of textual creations and what can be identified as AW, constitutes specific human behavior, embodying the necessity of constantly reencountering, at least partially, the world of actual experience, in any exterior demeanor, including when reporting oneself to fiction. Marie-Laure Ryan (2004) makes an essential breakthrough by identifying the concept of narrative semantics: "rooted in an exploration of the world making activity through which we interact with and try to shape the world we regard as actual." (2004; 110) This means that understanding sequences of events randomly represented in fictional texts, is a result of the readers' capacity to classify that particular information, and at the same time to project on it a principle of similitude with the events in the actual world.

This interiorized mechanism of processing information and thoughts is prone to demonstrate that possible worlds are altogether constructions of the mind as well and precisely due to this characteristic Marie-Laure Ryan (2004) sees it fit to link possible world theory with principles of modal logic. According to this procedure, mental activity of this nature involves the existence of two elements that are tinged with modality, in so far as they involve truth-functional and fact-defining propositions of the sort: *thinking that p*, *hoping that p* or *intending p*. Based on these premises, the whole theory implies that possible worlds are in fact constructs of the mind, constructs envisaged not as bridges across the AW, but rather on the contrary, as escapes from the actual maze of palpable experience. They are parallel universes, just as ontologically legitimate as the actual world. They reconstruct within a semantic domain, the system of reality outlined by a text of fiction.

Since the notion of semantic domain has already been introduced in this system of reconstruction, it would be advisable to differentiate between the meaning, the purposes and the utility of what is understood through narrative universe and what is understood through semantic domain. Beginning with the former, the narrative universe is perceivable through the text's unquestionable property of bringing brand-new worlds to life, of enriching them with equally multiple individuals, places. As such, the entire world-like attire is thought fit to meet the purposes of the text itself. Once the narrative universe has been endowed with the formation of one such world, the text will further on enact this narrative act of birth, by conveying an increased insight of actuality, an artifice also meant to oppose the world of actuality to a set of merely possible alternatives.

If the narrative universe establishes precise facts with regards to the system of worlds in the text, the semantic domain is a collection of all the possible meanings, which may inhabit this system of worlds. Such meanings may fall under: "statements of fact", "generalizations", "symbolic interpretations", "subjective judgments expressed by the narrator" or "formed by the reader", as Marie-Laure Ryan (2004) describes them. Thus, if a reader freely interprets, for instance, the symbolic meaning of a particular concrete element existing within the narrative universe and, if all the more, the reader makes a proposition regarding this particular element, by virtue of this statement, such a symbolic interpretation reaches the semantic domain.

When using the same model for the novel *Atonement*, it is required to settle on an element upon which symbolic interpretation may be bestowed, one of the numerous such elements present not only in the case of this particular textual universe, but quite randomly in any fictional creation. Therefore, the chosen image would be that of the vase, that particular vase which achieves the great propriety of bringing Cecilia and Robbie together, after their return home as adults. In the narrative universe of the text the precise facts known about the vase reveals that it belonged to Mr. Tallis' brother, who had received it as a present during World War I. The Tallis family decided to keep it in order to honor the memory of the departed. Still, following the thread prepared in the narrative universe, the vase later on brings Cecilia and Robbie together as they both have a fight about the vase in front of the fountain, break it inadvertently and Cecilia boldly and purposely takes off her clothes and jumps into the water. This somewhat awkward situation causes Robbie to write that dooming apologetic note (in both its variants) igniting the abnormal flow of the events to follow. Later on, Briony mentions the breaking of the vase, an event which immediately alerts Cecilia.

Because of the extensive amount of information in the textual world relating to this particular vase, any reader would be able to create a proposition such as: *Cecilia parallels the fortunes of her relationship with Robbie with the vase-related mishap*. Since such a parallel is, after all, suggested by the text itself, being also part of the actual world of the narrative universe, by means of this statement, the symbolic value of the empirical vase transcends the narrative universe and reaches the next level of the semantic domain. The relevance of the modality of the possible world system lies in "providing a convenient method for assigning truth value to sentences in fiction and interpreting the fictional universe accordingly" (Polgar 2018, 81). It is also a theory formulated by David Lewis (1988) and Currie (1990, 2010).

4.1. The Textual Actual World and Its Representatives

The inner structure of TAW reveals a fairly complex system of worlds and possibilities which are not necessarily displayed by a chaotic or random ruling, but rather appear to be settled by a logic and precise prerequisite. Primarily to all its other properties, the TAW must be seen as cumulating various states and events which combined, will result in a history as well as a set of general laws meant to retain the wider range for future developments within the plot, based on the present situation. As such, it would mean that the TAW is divided into several main domains among which: a factual domain and an actualizable domain, the latter constituting a possible world in itself. What makes this possible world different from the rest is that unlike the other alternative possible worlds (APWs) present in a narrative universe its existence is unconditional, namely it exists irrespective of any mental act of a fictional character.

If by means of various mental acts, similar to any mental act in the AW, fictional characters can themselves create and access an extremely broad range of alternative possible worlds, this would normally lead to the conclusion that a specific set of worlds populates the TAW and that one must also be able to distinguish between them. Marie-Laure Ryan (2004) identifies three main types of such worlds and she classifies them under the following denominations: K-World (for definitively known propositions), O-World (for obligations, social norms, moral principles) and W-World (formulated wishes and desires of the characters).

Yet, it seems quite difficult to objectify the manner in which such fictional entities as Fitzwilliam Darcy, Briony, Andrei Bolkonski or even Red Riding Hood for that matter, impact the imaginative representations of readers across the globe. This is mostly due to the fact that their existence does not have a certifiable belonging to the actual world of reality, a significant theoretical aspect which has never prevented such entities from being acknowledged, recognized and to some extent even revered outside the boundaries of their fictional appearance.

At this stage, it might be of greater interest to introduce Peter Lamarque's distinction between the concept of "literature" and the concept of "fiction" (1997). As such, fiction is a linguistic concept of neutral value, applying to names, sentences, discourses. Literature, however, has a more complex definition, as it extends to the manner in which imaginative and creative writing results in a sense of value. So, in other words, in order to elevate a work of fiction to a work of value, in the literary sense of value, the fictional piece should acquire a particular level of complexity, be it by way of discourse, by way of characters or by an intermingling of both.

Nevertheless, the fact that a literary piece is considered to be the bearer of an indisputable sense of artistic significance, from the point of view of the

actual world-possible worlds balance, its characters, as well represented as they may be, are still the inhabitants of a fictionally based reality. And yet, at this ontological crossroad in fictional character identity, Lamarque (1997) establishes "The Character Identity Principle", namely that: in literary works, character identity is intrinsically connected to character description. There is one necessary truth of utmost importance which needs to be sought within Lamarque's principle of identity, and that is the fact that fictional characters cannot exist in the absence of the narrative itself. The narrative is the source of character description, offering all the necessary pieces to build up the nature of a fictional character.

This kind of approach would readily solve the identity issues related to fictional characters whose appearance is repeated across various different fictional universes. The example Lamarque offers in this respect is that of the mythological figure Faust, heartily portrayed in literature by several authors. Every representation of Faust starts from the mythological premise of the savant who sells his soul to the devil. Nonetheless, Marlowe's fictional Faust will differ from Goethe's, just as the two authors' narrative is in itself different. The same goes for any fictional character, Briony, Florence, Stephen, in McEwan's fiction, for instance. If the author recreated them in a different fictional work, then there would be a new Briony or a new Florence or a new Stephen developing in a new narrative. Still, the same premise would remain valid, namely that an essential feature is preserved, that particular feature which would make these characters recognizable across different fictional worlds.

Still, none of these characters are actual entities. They have never been proven to have existed in real life, their actions and behavioral prototypes are the result of authorial creation, and yet their existence is somewhat justifiable in actual world existence. According to Daniel D. Hutto (2007: 2) in his article, *Narrative and Understanding Persons*, the characters pertaining to narrative worlds, even though fictional, bear certain roles outside their fictional destinies by: "(a) enabling us to exercise our imaginations in unique ways; (b) developing our everyday understanding of actions performed for reasons; and (c) external reflection, evaluation and orientation in our understanding of situations of ourselves and others."

Narrative worlds, just like any other independent universes of existence, are structurally endowed with their very own set of representations meant to recreate a self-sufficient network of universal truths. In the very same manner, a universal system of beliefs would reverberate in actual life situations, sustaining the meaningfulness of the story and justifying the permanence of its characters. Gregory Currie (2010) similarly refers to it as *the framework* of a narrative. As such, a narrative functions as self-sufficiently as the world of experience.

Their structures are utterly similar, they create threads of story, introduce real life acting figures, empowered by a textual universe whose complexity is paralleled solely by what can be understood as the world of reality itself.

Both theorists view narrative as an artefact. It is just as much an act of making by its creator, as an act of grasping authorial intentionality by the audience. The same process applies to fictional characters. The fact that they are carefully placed in isolation, in a universe of more or less artificial origin, does not suffice at all. The reader has to plunge in and blend the framework with the authorial intentionality, for the entirety of the narrative artefact to have fulfilled its mission.

Similarly, in McEwan's *Atonement*, or *On Chesil Beach* or *The Child in time*, the framework unfolds steadily with the characters. Every inquest into Briony's mind and actions or Florence's thought process, or Stephen's constant revisiting of the moment he loses his daughter in the supermarket, has the single purpose of pinpointing essential pieces of information about the characters. According to Currie (2010), the framework and the story are very much interdependent and they cannot occur separately. Both elements, equally essential to the structure of the narrative, represent the prerequisites for how the narrative is, in the end, perceived. Framework and story are, therefore, strongly intermingled. They constitute a unanimous corpus, we read the story, but assign meaningfulness to its facts, based on its framework.

The very thin border between framework and story will leave room for indeterminacies of interpretations. Framing is a natural feature of communication. It appears in the simple narratives of early childhood and it is somewhat subconsciously imitated within the narrative process. This is also why the audience is quite easily able to pick up the pieces of information carefully placed in the framework and direct the reading on the path toward which it has already been intended.

Narrative framing as opposed to its counterpart in communication is a limited technique. The processes of framing and understanding exactly which possible world in fiction to assign to a particular piece of writing, doesn't seem enough to justify the completeness of fictional characters. Completeness needs to be understood as legitimacy to exist across all possible worlds. Within the issue of completeness of fictional characters and their fictional existence, Ingarden (1973) distinguishes three different facets. The first aspect would be that fictional entities will never be fully determined; the second one states that fictional beings will always present spots of indeterminacy and stemming from here, the last one implies that, when dealing with a work of fiction, the audience is hardly ever aware of the existence of these intrinsic fictional gaps.

Fictional entities pose an issue of maximal complexity upon the validity of the possible world philosophy in fiction. Their existence is limited to the

narrative process that puts them out there, into the indeterminacy of fictional imagination. One cannot speak of Florence outside the fictional world of the novel *On Chesil Beach*, for instance. Florence, just like any other fictional persona, cannot be pragmatically defined. As such, Florence, in contrast with any other entity in the actual world, is an incomplete entity. It has been established that fictional characters cannot be understood outside of the narrative of its framework.

Still, before drawing further conclusions about the status of completeness or incompleteness of fictional characters, a good starting point would be to define the very notion of ontological incompleteness and only then to further analyze whether it is just to label fictional characters as such. A good approach is offered by Ruth Ronen, who sees incompleteness as the feature distinguishing between types of existents (1994, 122). Therefore, the distinction between fictional and non-fictional entities lies mainly in deciding which entity can be awarded a maximal set of properties and which entity presents a limited set of properties, in the same category. Non-fictional figures will always be maximal, while fictional figures will always be lacking. The status of incompleteness is also given by way of logical and semantic principles. Fictional entities will, thus, be logically incomplete because any statements related to these characters outside their world of fiction, are indistinguishable, meaning that we cannot assign any truth value to them.

For instance, statements of the sort *Briony was an overthinker* or *Florence was overinterpreting her feelings*, have no value outside the fictional world they belong to. The reason for this is that there is no actual referent. There is no real Briony or Florence in the actual world of existence to justify the validity of these statements. Even in those cases in which both the narrative and the framework of a fictional work provide all the necessary information, the fictional character will still maintain a certain degree of incompleteness. There will always exist a particular set of features, which a fictional character will not abide by. Just like there will always be a great ontological gap between the actual world and the various possible worlds of fiction.

The treatment of fictional characters, even across possible worlds, should be approached differently, a perspective that handles the issue of incompleteness diversely and move it closer towards a semantics for literary texts. Such approaches that combine the principles of possible world theory for logics and semantics, with the rather ambiguous notoriety of fictional characters might offer more light into the matter. One such approach is Margolin's (1996) theory of characters. Margolin names the necessity of four intrinsic conditions for the validity of a fictional character: existence, individuality, uniqueness, and the unity of features under a given category, all of which need to pertain to the fictional discourse. The novelty brought about by this type of view, lies in the fact that the distinguishing mark of fiction is its complete dependence on the world-constructing act of the narrative and its framework. An ontological choice upon the nature of

incompleteness opens up at this stage. We can choose to either view incompleteness as a permanent obstacle in the attempt to integrate fiction in a system of logic, or we can choose to accept it as an inherent feature of fictional texts and build on from here.

Ruth Ronen settles the indecision over the issue of incompleteness stating that: “for literary theorists, the incompleteness of fictional entities is transformed from a problem of a *logical* order into a problem of *rhetorical* order” (1994, 112). It is thus clearly established that within the philosophy of language, the focus will constantly be placed upon the logical aspects of fictional existence, while literary theorists will always choose to focus on how fictional characters are constructed by way of language. Incompleteness is in its entirety a philosophical dilemma. If we were to go back to Margolin’s principles (1996) of character identity and scrutinize them from a philosophical point of view, it would readily result that the problematic incompleteness of fictional characters is related to how the status of incompleteness affects the uniqueness of the fictional entities. Furthermore, it is related to whether the status of incompleteness is fictionally inflicted. Either way we may look at it, fictional entities will never lose their status of incompleteness, if their ontologically different world is constantly linked or compared to the actual world.

Fictional characters are not entities of the actual world, they are the entities existing in the actual world of a narrative, which sets a framework and an actual mode of existence for its fictional characters. It might be of more ontological use to view fictional characters in the sense of their completeness within the textual actual world or to reach a purposeful compromise, perhaps a new manner of justifying their ontological existence.

4.2 The Necessity of Naming

The necessity of naming and its importance for fictional entities is justified under the following terms. Primarily, if the procedure of naming establishes a clear connection between what is being named and the world the named entity is placed into. Secondly, if the act of naming attaches meaning defining descriptions. Finally, if the act of naming is freely employed, without triggering any descriptions or any particular referents.

With respect to naming, Searle (1958) claims that a proper name also includes a set of identifying descriptions, meant to ascertain its particular meaning. Proper names would then be constitutionally linked with the set of descriptions they embody and they would also contain the property of defining the individual they refer to, be that individual fictional or not. Quite the extreme approach, if we were to apply Searle’s naming theory to one of McEwan’s novels, like *The*

Child in Time, and we were to focus on the character of Stephen and pick out any random feature of his character, clearly depicted in the novel, such as “the father of the lost child”, we would then have laid out a proper name and a descriptive notion attached to it. In Searle’s terms, the descriptive notion “the father of the lost child”, should be able to replace Stephen in determining the very same referent.

Proper names have the indisputable property of naming the very same referent across different worlds and across different situations. While the descriptive patches attached to any character in particular might change, proper names are fixed notions. They will still refer to the very same entity across different worlds and possibilities. Stephen or Briony or Florence will still refer to the very same entities, whatever additional descriptions might be assigned to them.

In order for the entire idea of possible worlds to apply to fiction, it would be necessary to unwind the system of referential functions. One step in this direction has been made by Kripke (1981), whose approach distinguishes between rigid and non-rigid designators and furthermore by Putnam’s (2011) twin earth theory. Even though both approaches are centered on the self-sufficiency of the actual world and greatly condition their justification within the ontological maze of fictional possible worlds, they have still managed to ensure the referential function of names and set the basis for a more stable system of establishing identity across possible worlds.

The applicability of Kripke’s or Putnam’s naming theories upon fiction has limited applicability for fiction, because they assign the feature of non-rigidity to fictional entities. As such, fictional characters cannot designate rigidly across possible worlds, a postulation which finds its roots within the prerequisites of logic. It is obvious that neither Cecilia nor Stephen nor Florence would mean anything outside the narrative and its framework, but this also doesn’t imply that references made to them within the actual world of existence need to be completely meaningless. Ruth Ronen concludes that: “names can function as rigid designators in non-actual contexts, because they satisfy the existence condition, which guarantees the fixity of identity of the object concerned despite movements across world boundaries and into counterfactual states of affairs” (1994, 135). It would be at least interesting to think of fictional characters as rigid designators in the Textual Actual World of the narrative, as Marie-Laure Ryan (2004) suggests. This would allow a trace of legitimacy to the fictional characters within the universe of their existence. Certainly, possible worlds of fiction are just as endless as the possible worlds stemming from the actual world of existence, with the mentioning that the zones of indeterminacy will always be far greater, whenever the fictional universe is at stake.

The initial act of baptism establishes the identity of a rigid designator permanently across all possible worlds, including those possible worlds in which the said designator isn't named in the same way. For instance: Madonna will always be Madonna even in those possible worlds in which she chooses a different stage name. As such, we could acknowledge a similar act of baptism for fictional characters. The narrative by way of authorial voice performs such an act when introducing a character for the very first time within the cosmological universe of the fiction. So, when in McEwan's *On Chesil Beach*, the narrative states: "Edward did not mention that he had never stayed in a hotel before, whereas Florence, after many trips as a child with her father, was an old hand" (2008, 3), introducing the two main characters for the first time, a fictional act of naming and baptizing is performed. Thus, an act of baptism is already performed when the characters are first presented, an act which doesn't necessarily need to come from the part of the author or the narrator. The act of baptism comes through with the character's first appearance within the fictional world.

The process of fictional baptism is not unique to fictional characters. It is followed by a more descriptive process of assigning certain attributes and features to the blank individual, that has only just been brought to light by way of naming. The descriptive process which may be extended to the length of the entire narrative is thoroughly individuating and what theorists might call defining. As it also appears in the introductory statements presenting Edward and Florence, the act of baptism in McEwan's novel was immediately assisted by a few lines of meaningful, individual description. The situation is similar also with Stephen in *The Child in Time*: "Stephen stepped quickly through the crowds, through layers of in-car audio blather-jingles, high-energy breakfast DJs, news-flashes, traffic 'alerts'" (McEwan 1992, 1). The characters are fictionally baptized and traces of their individuality are laid out by a tiny piece of description. The defining process that follows the baptism and which is supported by the narrative descriptions, is also endorsed by the narrative framework. Characters are formed by descriptions and framework, the descriptions may offer definitions of character, but the framework indicates how these descriptions need to be understood.

Descriptions, identity, naming, all these terms acquire an uncommon degree of ambiguity within fiction. Fiction can hardly meet the demand of completeness. This is one of the most crucial areas of ambiguity revealed by the application of the possible world framework upon fiction. With fictional worlds, it is difficult to establish which level or standard indicates that the descriptive processes have been completely saturated. In the actual world, areas of discrepancy, vagueness or incompleteness are easily dissipated when referring to a concrete object as the standard of reference. Fiction doesn't have this feature and the

next check point would be: is such a feature imperative for fiction as well? Across the literary worlds, different authorial voices have imposed different narrative styles which then incorporated different fictional universes, but none of these have ever become 'a standard'. Especially with postmodern literature, there's no telling the authors how to conduct their own fictional world, how to enhance their descriptive processes, how to baptize or define their characters. The framework holds the key to how fictional entities need to be understood and how they need to function within the textual worlds of the narrative and within this framework, the completeness becomes an overall accepted condition.

More interestingly, there are theorists who are ready to support the idea that "being creatures of fiction and constructs of language, fictional entities suspend the logic of actuals" (Ronen 1994, 154). This automatically has the function of excluding the demand for completeness, at least in the same manner in which it is applied to actual world entities. Fiction is notwithstanding conceived as a parallel universe, which can recreate bits and pieces available in the actual world or it can create a brand-new world completely free of any actual world elements. Legitimately, fiction needs to be granted a good sense of independence from the actual world of existence. It is also the direction Marie-Laure Ryan (2004) was pointing to, with the TAW. Fiction has long been accepted to be ontologically different from the actual world. This is furthermore the reason why fictional entities do not derive their actuality or substantiality from within their ontological status.

There is nothing wrong with acknowledging the self-sufficiency of fiction in a similar way in which acceptance is given for the self-sufficiency of the actual world. Fictions have invariably been labeled as universes ever uncommitted to actual world existence and audiences have long comprehended and consented to their ontological independence. Fictional entities, the rightful inhabitants of these possible worlds of fiction, are complete between the narrative world and its framework. Cecilia, Briony or Stephen may not require a further degree of completeness than precisely that degree which derives from what is narratively known about them and what is implied by way of framework. The fact that fictional entities, as the ones mentioned, may be referred to within language, is the result of the processes of naming which originated within the narrative.

4.3. Fictional Characters, Possible Individuals, Non-actual Scenarios

As resulting from the previous subchapter, fictional characters acquire enough ontological justification. The debate about fictional characters across possible worlds might be a case of overly forced reductions. According to the modality of possible worlds, as David Lewis (2004) would put it, possible worlds

are actual worlds in which real possibilities are made actual. It is absolutely necessary here to clearly distinguish between the notions of “reality” and “actuality” and furthermore to try and incorporate fiction into the mix.

Thus, with David Lewis (2004), reality comprises a far too large number of options. It includes all the possibilities and the totality of possible worlds. Actuality, however, refers strictly to that particular world inhabited at the moment, a distinction which may prove to be extremely useful for the future treatment of fictional worlds and their comprising entities. Actuality pinpoints which world, from the maze of possibilities, is the world matching the current state of facts, so, while all possible worlds available within the boundaries of reality are in fact possible, actuality decides which one of them is the one currently inhabited. The maze of all the other possible worlds, which manifested themselves as valid possibilities to the state of actuality are, therefore, non-actual. They are valid possible, but non actual realities.

Fiction is by definition a non-actual ontological universe. It would be legitimate to refer to fictional worlds as non-actual possibilities, a status which would be extending to all the built in fictional entities. If we allow fictional worlds to be considered as non-actual, this perspective would also account for why it is impossible to find a counterpart for fictional characters in the actual world of existence. It would explain what Cecilia Tallis is according to what the narrative of *Atonement* tells us, and why an actual Cecilia Tallis may not have physically existed.

Quine (1980) would readily argue that possible entities lack the criteria of identity. Quine of course refers to the bald man/fat man analogy, which he used as an example: “Take, for instance, the possible fat man in the doorway; and again, the possible bald man in that doorway. Are they the same possible man or two possible men? How do we decide? How many possible men are there in that doorway?” (1980, 4) What results from here, is the impossibility of providing any answers to whether Quine’s man is bald or fat or whether it is both, or whether there are two different individuals or a single one. In the very same manner, we wouldn’t be able to provide any commonsensical statements about fictional entities. Narrative and framework apart, any other accounts on Briony, Stephen or Florence will lack the necessary support for being considered meaningful. And, also, what about those fictions which relate impossible happenings?

The ambiguity of fictional characters within the modal system of possible worlds is yet to be solved. Nevertheless, it would be useful to analyze the most important features, so as to look at these fictional entities through the magnifying glass of several different types of approaches, for a better understanding of how they can modally function, when the question of their identity is utterly contradicted.

5. Conclusions

The present paper has been an attempt to demonstrate that fictionality is pervaded by a very strong modal structure, a feature which is best brought out by the theory of possible worlds. The proposed method was to apply theories of modal realism, such as Saul Kripke's naming and necessity theory, David Lewis' theory on counterfactuals and combine them with more specific perspectives, literary in nature, such as Marie-Laure Ryan's recentering system or Ruth Ronen's reinterpretation of fictionality through possible worlds.

What resulted from Marie-Laure Ryan's system of textual worlds in combination with Ronen's approach, which was situated closer to the literary field, was the emergence of a quasi-logical, yet at the same time quasi-literary system meant to describe the manner in which the fictional universe of the three novels might be viewed as a conglomerate of worlds and possibilities, centered around a core universe of reality. This justifies both the ontic independence of the fictional universe from the actual world and the necessity for perceiving it under the prerequisites of a sense of modal logic.

Approaches supporting the one world semantics perspective have a limiting effect on understanding the manner in which language functions, even more so, the language of fiction. Possible world theory which is a valid application for systems of reality, can offer a reconstructive approach of the way we understand fiction. This is possible because any fictional text opens a world of textual semantics, which can be accessed through modal logic.

Nonetheless, devising a possible world system for fiction appears to be a complicated endeavor. The captivating hypotheses set forward by Kripke and Lewis through the possible world framework, were not intended for the study of fiction. Applying the possible world framework on fiction, reveals a complex manner of understanding fictional entities, but it is necessary to operate with the understanding that the treatment of fictional entities needs to acknowledge that they are non-actual entities and that the actual world does not determine their existence.

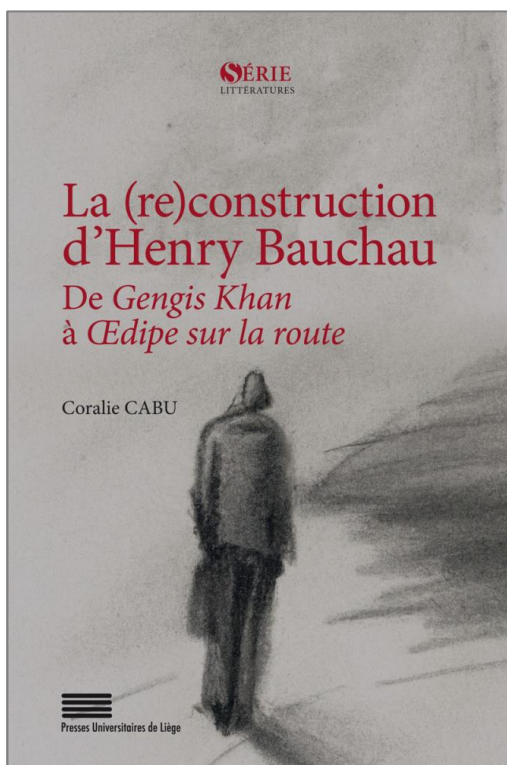
WORKS CITED

- Currie, Gregory. 1990. *The Nature of Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Currie, Gregory. 2010. *Narratives and Narrators. A Philosophy of Stories*. New York: Oxford University Press.
Frege, Gottlob. 1980. *On Sense and Reference*. Oxford: Blackwell.
Goodman, Nelson. 1978. *Ways of Worldmaking*. Harvester Press.

- Hutto, Daniel David. 2007. *Narrative and Understanding Persons*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ingarden, Roman. 1973. *The Literary Work of Art: An Investigation on the Borderlines of Ontology, Logic, and Theory of Literature*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Kripke, Saul. 1981. *Naming and Necessity*. Harvard University Press.
- Lamarque, Peter. 1997. *Truth, Fiction and Literature. A Philosophical Perspective*. Clarendon Paperbacks.
- Lewis, David. 1988. *Truth in Fiction*. Philosophical Papers.
- Lewis, David. 2001. *Counterfactuals*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Margolin, Uri. 1996. *Characters and Their Versions. Fiction Updated: Theories of Fictionality, Narratology, and Poetics*. University of Toronto Press.
- McEwan, Ian. 2002. *Atonement*. London: Vintage Books.
- McEwan, Ian. 2008. *On Chesil Beach*. London: Vintage Books.
- McEwan, Ian. 1992. *The Child in Time*. London: Vintage Books.
- Polgar, Adriana Diana. 2018. "Possible world semantics and fictional discourse. Highlights for Ian McEwan's *Atonement*." *Studii de Știință și Cultură* vol. XIV, no. 1: 77-86.
- Polgar (Urian), Adriana Diana. 2019. "Possible Worlds Semantics and Character Identity. Highlights for Ian McEwan's *On Chesil Beach*." *Synergy Journal* vol. 15, no. 2: 252-268.
- Putnam, Hilary. 1983. *Realism and Reason*. Philosophical Papers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Putnam, Hilary. 2011. *Representation and Reality*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.
- Quine, Willard. 1980. *From a Logical Point of View*. Harvard University Press. Harper Torchbooks.
- Ronen, Ruth. 1994. *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ryan, Marie-Laure. 2004. *La narración como realidad virtual. La inmersión y la interactividad en la literatura y en los medios electrónicos*. Barcelona: PAIDÓS
- Searle, John R. 1958. *Proper Names*. Oxford University Press.
- Urian, Adriana Diana. 2021. "Narrative Language and Possible Worlds in Postmodern Fiction. A Borderline Study of Ian McEwan's *The Child in Time*." *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai Philologia* 66, no. 3: 247-264.

BOOKS

Coralie Cabu, *La (re)construction d'Henry Bauchau, De Gengis Khan à Œdipe sur la route*, Liège, Presses Universitaires de Liège, 2023, 118 p.



Paru en 2023 aux Presses universitaires de Liège, le livre de Coralie Cabu se propose de réexaminer la double composante identitaire de Bauchau, liée à sa double vocation. La chercheuse retrace ainsi « la sinuosité d'un parcours » (p. 10), marqué par ses tentatives d'engagement social et politique, abouties à des échecs, qu'il réinvestira plus tard dans son œuvre littéraire.

À ce propos, Coralie Cabu convoque les théories de l'agentivité de Florent Coste, qui proposent d'envisager le texte dans sa capacité d'agir sur le réel, sur les lecteurs et sur soi-même, afin d'arriver à une reconfiguration de soi. Le propos de cette recherche s'appuie sur le postulat exposé sur la 4^e de couverture, celui de « s'éloigner de l'approche très univoque de l'œuvre généralement proposée ».

Dans la première partie, « De Bauchau à Bauchau », l'auteure présente les actions de la jeunesse de l'écrivain, vouées à « former une élite intel-

lectuelle » (p. 34), basée selon Bauchau, sur la rigueur, le travail et l'ordre. Dans cette première partie, il est apparu que Bauchau était un homme plein de contradictions et d'obsessions, dont la reconfiguration identitaire est suivie dans la partie suivante, qui interroge de quelle manière ces contradictions sont transférées en écriture.



Dans la partie « Bauchau contre Bauchau », Coralie Cabu s'attache à déceler les motifs et les thèmes récurrents de l'œuvre bauchalienne (le pouvoir, la violence, le travail), des aspects ancrés dans la biographie de l'écrivain, à partir desquels est analysée la relation entre les personnages. Ainsi admire-t-il les grandes figures de force physique, et c'est face aux figures de pouvoir qu'il ressent ses faiblesses. Le sentiment d'échec est un des thèmes les plus analysés. En effet, dans l'après-guerre, ce sentiment le mène à l'exil en Suisse, puis à Paris. La cure entamée ici avec Blanche Reverchon Jouve, une des premières traductrices en français de Freud, lui permet de surmonter les blessures, d'apprendre à vivre dans la déchirure et de s'accepter comme écrivain. Dès son entrée en littérature, un changement se fait sentir, « il passe du jeune homme empreint d'une certaine violence, au sage, écrivain par espérance » (p. 41).

Cette deuxième partie permet une lecture cohérente et fluide de certaines œuvres. La chercheuse s'appuie dans sa démonstration sur une pièce de théâtre, *Gengis Khan* (1961) et sur trois romans : *La Déchirure* (1966), *Le Régiment noir* (1972) et *Œdipe sur la route* (1990). Les textes, dans la perspective de l'agentivité, sont analysés dans leur possibilité d'enquêter le réel et d'instaurer un principe d'ordre pour chercher des solutions en profondeur. On retrace ainsi les grandes étapes parcourues par Bauchau et la reconfiguration de soi par le biais de ses écrits, un travail voué à le conduire vers ce qu'il était réellement.

Gengis Khan revendique la nécessité de former des hommes nouveaux qui seront à l'origine d'une société nouvelle, à façonner par le travail, qui dans cette pièce prend une forme violente. La chercheuse parle de l'obsession du maître (pp. 48-50) et du « fantasme du maître absolu » (p. 49). Pourtant, dans sa vie, Bauchau ne s'est jamais mis à la place d'un « maître », à savoir du premier, mais du second. Cette « posture », ce type de rapport de forces, repéré dans la vie de l'écrivain, est à observer aussi dans la dialectique instaurée par la violence de Gengis Khan et la sagesse de Tchelo t'sai ; il s'ensuit que pour Bauchau la violence se trouve en amont du sage.

L'étude se centre ensuite sur la recherche d'une possibilité de médiation entre passé et avenir, pour mieux repartir après l'échec. La thématique de la lignée (dans *La Déchirure* et dans *Le Régiment noir*) renseigne sur comment peut-on se tourner vers l'avenir sans nier son passé. L'idée émergée dans *Gengis Khan*, que les sociétés occidentales sont inférieures à d'autres, valorisées pour leur authenticité, est de retour dans *Le Régiment noir*, où Pierre constate son infériorité face à ce qui est naturellement admirable en Johnson. La coexistence des contraires (Yin-Yang) est réaffirmée dans la relation entre ces deux personnages, vue comme une résolution selon les principes de coexistence et d'équilibre.

Enfin, le travail sur soi, voué à trouver un sens à l'existence, implique le fait de dompter la folie – les passions enfouies en soi – pour faire émerger ce qui est vraiment authentique. À cet effet, le travail sur la vague dans *Œdipe sur la route* s'avère une écoute de l'intériorité et un ordonnancement des forces par l'art. La fin de ce roman met en évidence le fait que le sentiment d'élitisme, ressenti dans les œuvres précédentes, est remplacé par la position du mendiant, plus proche de la vraie grandeur ; c'est pourquoi Coralie Cabu trouve qu'avec *Œdipe sur la route*, on assiste à « la clôture de son parcours d'initiation » (p. 97). Et pourtant, l'auteur l'avait avoué lui-même à la fin de ce récit, qu'il

était bien loin de la fin de ce parcours, car « Œdipe est encore, est toujours sur la route »¹. Une lecture critique de l'ensemble des écrits de Bauchau, selon les théories de l'agentivité, mettrait probablement en évidence le fait que, chez Bauchau, le travail sur soi et l'action sur les lecteurs, va bien au-delà d'*Œdipe sur la route* ; certes, une lecture qu'on voudrait enrichie d'importantes sources bibliographiques, car ce travail très méthodique de Coralie Cabu est appauvri de certaines références essentielles, dont la prestigieuse *Revue Internationale Henry Bauchau*, et les documents contenus dans le fonds d'archives de Louvain-la-Neuve. Consulter un ensemble plus grand et pertinent de références, ne ferait que consolider la perspective de Coralie Cabu, celle de dépasser « l'approche très univoque de l'œuvre, généralement proposée ». On attend avec intérêt cette suite.

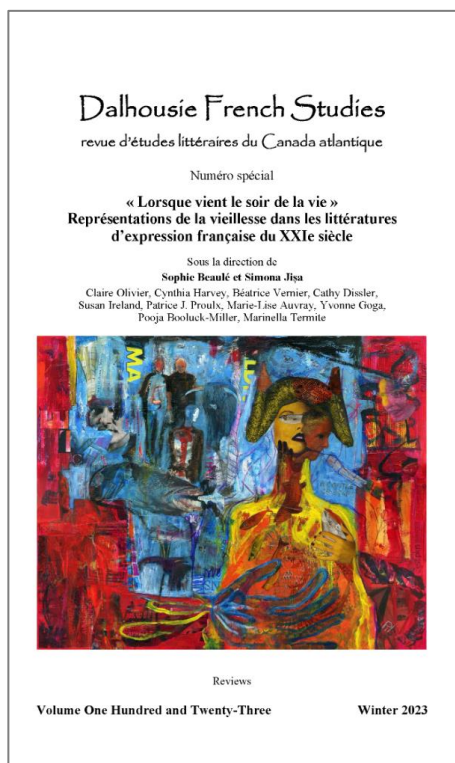
Corina Dâmbean BOZEDEAN 

*Maître de conférences,
UMFST Târgu Mureș
corina.bozedeana@umfst.ro*

¹ Henry Bauchau, *Œdipe sur la route*, Actes Sud, « Babel », 1990, p. 380.

BOOKS

Sophie Beaulé et Simona Jişă (dir.) « Lorsque vient le soir de la vie ». Représentations de la vieillesse dans les littératures d'expression française du XXI^e siècle, *Dalhousie French Studies. Revue d'études littéraires du Canada atlantique*, vol. 123, 2023, 113 p.



Comme les deux coordonnatrices de ce numéro – Sophie Beaulé (de l'Université Saint Mary's, Halifax) et Simona Jişă (de l'Université Babeş-Bolyai, Cluj-Napoca) l'affirment dès l'« Introduction », la littérature et l'art en général nous interpellent « lorsque vient le soir de la vie » et nous invitent à réfléchir à une réalité complexe. Sans doute les œuvres qui décrivent la vieillesse peuvent-elles « réparer le monde » (Alexandre Gefen), revêtant une fonction thérapeutique pour l'auteur ou l'autrice, tout comme pour le lecteur ou la lectrice.

La revue bénéficie d'une superbe couverture où l'illustration « Corrida » de Sylvie Pilotte nous invite déjà à penser comment la figure de la personne âgée apparaît dans les littératures francophones d'après 1970 (l'année clé où paraît *La vieillesse* de Simone de Beauvoir). Suite aux nombreuses discussions et analyses sur l'impact dévastateur de la pandémie de COVID-19 sur la population âgée, ce volume se propose d'offrir une analyse nuancée de la question de la fin de la vie sous tous ses aspects.

Le volume contient onze articles qui touchent plusieurs facettes des questionnements sur la vieillesse. Le regroupement se fait en deux sections, délimitées par des illustrations de formations rocheuses. La première section s'ouvre sur une image des

Carpathes roumaines ; la tradition assimile les formes créées par la nature à des « Vieilles femmes ». La deuxième, une sculpture faite par l'homme dans la roche, représente Décébale, le roi des Daces. Entre l'érosion étonnante de la pierre des « vieilles femmes » et la sagesse qu'inspire le roi, toute une gamme de sentiments et d'actions peuvent être associés à cette tranche d'âge que l'être humain craint.

Les articles réunis dans la première partie examinent les positions des personnages âgés dans leur milieu familial ou communautaire, tandis que dans la deuxième, les articles analysent des œuvres qui mettent en avant le personnage vieillissant. D'une part, ils offrent une perspective nuancée sur les personnes âgées en tant que groupe social ; d'autre part, ils mettent l'accent sur un personnage doué d'une individualité et d'une certaine agentivité.

Le premier article, signé par Claire Olivier décrit comment Olivia Rosenthal parvient à mettre en œuvre l'injonction du titre de son récit, *On n'est pas là pour disparaître*. À cette fin, elle interroge les modalités narratives et poétiques qui permettent de restituer littérairement la vieillesse et se penche sur la manière de l'autrice de travailler la « démence ». Olivier utilise un système fondé sur des contradictions comme : être-là / n'être-là, l'intime / l'universel, dire / dénie, altérités – système utilisé pour expliquer la régression narrative de Rosenthal, les vides et manques dont elle parle, les pratiques et miroirs de la vieillesse par rapport au visage de l'autrice, tout en concluant par un ambigu, mais juste « C'est compliqué » (p. 17).

Cynthia Harvey analyse l'écrivaine saguenéenne Nicole Houde, qui s'intéresse au « monde marginal des laissés-pour-compte » (p. 20). Ainsi, dans son roman *Les Oiseaux de Saint-John Perse* elle met en scène un couple de personnes âgées, sous le regard de Josée, une auxiliaire familiale. Cet article cherche à approfondir les liens qui unissent les trois personnages, ainsi que leur rapport à l'espace intérieur et extérieur.

Une autre perspective sur la personne âgée en tant que représentante d'une époque révolue qui demeure encore perceptible dans son environnement intime est celle de Béatrice Vernier, qui parle du livre *Mémé* de Philippe Torretton. Vernier examine l'accusation que l'auteur porte contre le consumérisme et ses effets sur des classes défavorisées.

L'approche de la mort et son influence sur les relations familiales est également un sujet important, comme le montre l'article de Sophie Beaulé dans la clôture du segment des « Vieilles femmes ». *Chemin Saint-Paul* de Lise Tremblay et *De synthèse* de Karoline Georges décrivent l'approche de la mort telle qu'éprouvée par les parents mourants, mais surtout l'emprise qu'elle a sur les deux narratrices-filles.

Les deux articles qui ouvrent la seconde partie, « Décébale », donnent aussi une image unique sur le vieillissement en institution. La contribution de Cathy Dissler vise à observer les modalités d'appropriation littéraire de l'espace institutionnel dans un corpus de six récits dédiés à la vieillesse en établissement. Par rapport à l'enfermement et la confrontation continue à la mort, qui sont des sentiments constants dans ce type d'espace hétérotopique, l'écriture romanesque jouera, à suivre l'auteure, un rôle réparateur.

Parlant de maladies psychiques et d'institutionnalisation, un corpus croissant d'analyses académiques et d'œuvres de fiction ou autobiographiques contestent, depuis les années 1990, les clichés qui dénigrent les personnes âgées dans cette situation.

Dolce Agonia de Nancy Huston et *L'heure mauve* de Michèle Ouimet, comme l'expliquent Susan Ireland et Patrice J. Proulx, mettent en avant le questionnement autour de l'expérience du vieillissement, de la maladie et de la perte.

Les espaces utopiques, non utopiques et hétérotopiques sont explorés par Marie-Lise Auvray chez Jacques Poulin. Cet article tend à montrer comment les personnages du Chauffeur dans *La tournée d'automne* et de Jack dans *Les Yeux bleus de Mistassini* trouvent leur propre équilibre grâce à des « contre-espaces » et échappent par là même au drame du corps vieillissant.

Le rapport vieillir – être soi-même est à son tour bien illustré, vu la manière dont se rejoignent le contenu et le but du récit d'une vie dans le roman *Le bonheur à la queue glissante* d'Abla Farhoud, qu'Yvonne Goga se propose d'analyser à travers la perspective d'une mère qui vieillit et se rappelle les moments-clés de son existence. Goga s'intéresse au fait que l'écrivaine nous montre – bien que la littérature ne présente pas souvent la vieillesse sous cet angle – qu'au lieu d'être un échec, vieillir peut devenir aussi l'occasion d'être enfin soi-même.

L'article de Pooja Booluck-Miller sur *L'exil selon Julia* de Gisèle Pineau souligne non seulement le travail de la nostalgie et de la mélancolie dans un nouveau milieu, mais il analyse également la créativité et la résilience dont fait preuve Julia pour recréer sa propre Guadeloupe en France.

Enfin, les derniers articles concluent parfaitement le recueil en parlant de vieillesse et résilience. Parmi tous les dérapages de l'existence qui produisent l'exclusion et l'exclusivité à la fois, la vieillesse constitue une manière paradoxale de sillonner le vivant pour mettre à l'épreuve la capacité dynamique de régénération et de récréation, pense Marinella Termite. C'est ainsi que le reflux d'humanité, qui agite l'imaginaire des marginaux typiques de l'écrivaine mauricienne Ananda Devi, s'appuie sur des personnages capables d'interagir avec leur âge, sans en faire un accessoire immobile de la narration, mais plutôt une ressource à explorer.

À la fin de « Décébale », l'article de Simona Jişa se propose de revisiter la riche synonymie spleenique (tristesse, regret, nostalgie, mélancolie, ennui, spleen, guignon, fatigue, lassitude, langueur, angoisse, névrose, pessimisme, désespoir, dépression), afin de voir comment elle peut se rattacher à un roman du XXI^e siècle (*Le dernier des snoreaux* d'Abla Farhoud) et à une tranche d'âge spécifique, la vieillesse.

Écrire ou lire un texte qui tente de circonscrire la vieillesse équivaut à un acte d'empathie, d'apprivoisement désespéré, une préparation in extremis aux épreuves que notre existence nous réserve, comme le soulignent les coordonnatrices. C'est exactement ce que ce numéro spécial de *Dalhousie French Studies* nous offre – une analyse rigoureusement structurée qui nous porte vers la fin de la vie humaine et nous laisse désirer savoir, ou, peut-être, imaginer plus pour comprendre mieux.

Emanuela Maria GRIGORESCU

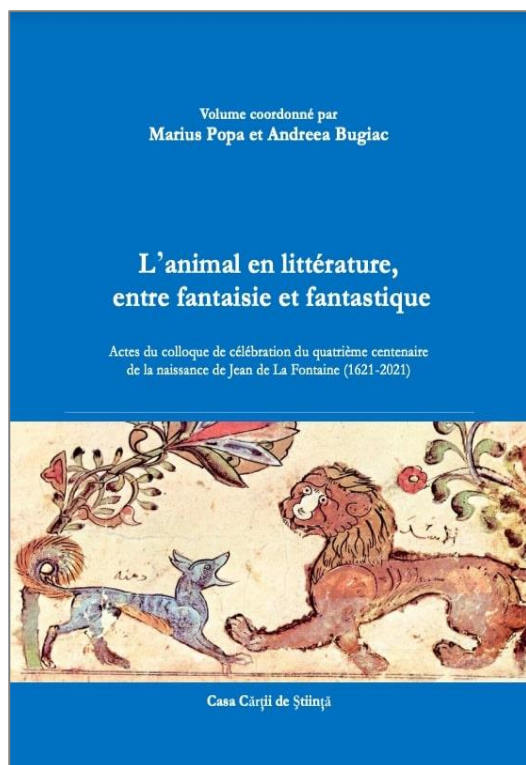
Étudiante à la Faculté des Lettres,

Université Babeş-Bolyai de Cluj-Napoca, Roumanie

emanuela.grigorescu@stud.ubbcluj.ro

BOOKS

Marius Popa, Andreea Bugiac (coord.), *L'animal en littérature, entre fantaisie et fantastique. Actes du colloque de célébration du quatrième centenaire de la naissance de Jean de La Fontaine (1621-2021)*, Cluj-Napoca, Casa Cărții de Știință, 2022, 313 p.



À l'occasion du 400^e anniversaire de la naissance de Jean de La Fontaine, Marius Popa et Andreea Bugiac, ont proposé de revisiter, en utilisant les textes du fabuliste français comme point de départ, un sujet déjà amplement recherché, mais toujours actuel dans la culture européenne – l'animal dans la littérature. Traversant plusieurs époques, depuis le Moyen Âge jusqu'à la contemporanéité, les études choisies visent les modulations imaginaires du bestiaire littéraire, la dialectique entre fantaisie et fantastique, ainsi que la métamorphose des approches herméneutiques concernant les animaux.

Réunissant les actes d'un colloque international organisé en octobre 2021 à l'Université Babeș-Bolyai de Cluj-Napoca, le volume propose une structure tripartite, dont chaque axe majeur de réflexion est développé à travers plusieurs articles. Dans l'étude introductive signée par Patrick Dandrey et intitulée « Pour un

bestiaire des fables de La Fontaine », l'auteur relève l'importance d'un tel ouvrage (« aucune étude globale n'ait jamais été écrite [...] sur le monde animal qu'il [La Fontaine]



met en scène », p. 11) et propose la « constellation » comme métaphore des visions présentées dans chaque chapitre. Malgré le fait que « le ciel des *Fables* est piqué de trop d'étoiles pour que le télescope braqué sur elles ait encore pu en dresser la carte complète » (p. 33), l'auteur résume la note distinctive du présent ouvrage et observe « l'intérêt d'aller recenser attentivement et précisément les données du bestiaire des fables, espèce par espèce, pour dissiper les illusions, détromper des attentes, infirmer de fausses évidences » (p. 14).

Concernant la structure du livre, on peut remarquer que la première partie, « Pour une imagerie de la fable », réunissant les contributions d'Olivier Leplatre, Antoine Biscéré, Irène Kristeva et Livia Titieni, propose plusieurs approches iconiques de l'animalité, en soulignant comment les représentations non-littéraires de celle-ci offrent des indices sur la perception des créatures des fables dans le passé. La deuxième section du livre, « L'animal "hiéroglyphe" : entre éclectisme et métamorphose, entre métamorphose et réinvention », contenant les études de Louis-Patrick Bergot, Élodie Ripoll, Olivier Guerrier et Teresa Baquedano Morales, souligne, à travers des comparaisons entre l'époque médiévale et celle moderne, le caractère toujours changeant de l'image de certains animaux. Le dernier volet, « L'imaginaire onirique et fantastique de l'animalité », regroupant les contributions de Ramona Malița, Brândușa-Petronela Ionescu, Nadège Langbour, Marion Crackower, Astrid Fizyczak et Marie Pascal, offre un mélange d'analyses du bestiaire dans divers espaces francophones, tout en insistant sur le rapport entre le littéraire et le socio-politique.

L'article « L'animal dessin. Figures de l'animalité dans les gravures de François Chauveau pour les *Fables* de La Fontaine » d'Olivier Leplatre ouvre le premier volet du triptyque. L'auteur montre que, pour Chauveau, l'animal, interprété comme une simple « image transparente d'une créature », contribue en réalité « pleinement [...] à la vie de l'image » et que tous ses accidents graphiques « sont les symptômes de l'énergie qui conduira précisément à l'existence plus affirmée, quoique toujours mouvante, des figures dans l'espace de la gravure » (p. 53). Ensuite, Antoine Biscéré (« Aux frontières du réel. La représentation anthropomorphique de l'animal dans les livres de fables illustrés ») s'enquiert de l'apparente discordance entre « la transposition allégorique des mœurs humaines dans le règne animal » (p. 70), tandis qu'Irène Kristeva (« "L'homme et son image" de Jean de La Fontaine. Un cas particulier de spectrophobie ») parle d'un Narcisse qui fuit son propre visage, essayant de « circonscrire les caractéristiques du catoptrophobe incarné par ce personnage » (p. 103). En fin de cette première section, l'étude « Réécritures lafontainiennes dans la fable roumaine. L'exemple de Grigore Alexandrescu » de Livia Titieni constate les similarités (« une fidélité à la trame narrative, à la portée moralisatrice et pédagogique ») et les différences (« des substitutions dans l'intrigue de l'original, [...] métrique et prosodique adaptées », p. 118) entre les *Fables* de La Fontaine et leur équivalent roumain.

Louis-Patrick Bergot ouvre le deuxième volet avec l'article « Le Pelage bigarré. De la panthère et du léopard au Moyen Âge », qui traite de la « métamorphose symbolique » (p. 151) de la panthère en léopard chez La Fontaine – à l'époque, deux êtres différents, aujourd'hui renvoyant à la même créature. Ensuite, le lecteur assiste à une mise en relief de la figure du renard dans l'article « Métamorphoses d'un maître du langage. Le Renard de La Fontaine à Saint-Exupéry » d'Élodie Ripoll, dont l'objectif est d'interpréter l'évolution du discours appartenant à cet animal, en soulignant « ses modèles

rhétoriques, ses dialogues et jeux intertextuels, [...] mais aussi son rapport au texte et à la création littéraire » (p. 154). L'idée de transformation est reprise par Olivier Guerrier dans « Les métamorphoses de Gryllus et du Gryllos (XVI^e-XVIII^e siècles) », l'auteur s'y proposant de relever la transfiguration du cochon, de cet « animal-phare et de son discours » (p. 177) chez Plutarque. Le dernier texte, « La salamandre, une vie parmi les flammes de la littérature » de Teresa Baquedano Morales, vise le domaine de l'art et de la littérature comme « espace commun » (p. 187) entre l'animal et l'être humain, la salamandre étant le liant entre ces « deux versants différents, voire opposés » (p. 205).

Le dernier volet de l'ouvrage offre, à commencer par l'étude « L'artisanat alimentaire tel qu'il apparaît dans *Le Roman du Renart* » de Ramona Malița, un examen de la thématique de cette industrie et des « miniatures illustrant l'intérêt culinaire et les passions nourricières », suivant « le détail "parlant" », qui permet à l'auteur médiéval de crayonner « l'illusion du réel pour cet ensemble d'histoires peuplées par des animaux-masques vraisemblables » (p. 211). Brândușa-Petronela Ionescu met en évidence, à travers sa recherche sur « L'homme et la bête dans l'univers fantastique de Corinna Bille », un amour guidé par « l'instinct sauvage » (p. 241) qui dépasse « les limites de l'humain » et vise « une confusion avec l'animal » (p. 234), ce qui donne l'impression d'une amoralité chez les protagonistes de l'écrivaine analysée. Ensuite, si Nadège Langbour rapproche l'animalité d'une perspective éco-critique avec « La parole animale dans les fictions écologiques contemporaines de littérature de jeunesse », se concentrant sur l'influence lafontainienne dans la mise en scène, de nos temps, du discours animal, Marion Crackower se focalise sur les « Animaux ordinaires, fantastiques, extraordinaires et inattendus » chez Chrétien de Troyes, pour voir comment les animaux « construisent le monde réel dans lequel évoluent les chevaliers et en même temps un monde merveilleux » (p. 262). Finalement, « Les animaux chez Elizabeth Bishop, du réalisme politique à l'onirisme » d'Astrid Fizyczak porte sur le pouvoir de ces créatures, qui semblent « surgir au cours de rêveries ou de moments d'ivresse qui assaillent les *personae* », de donner naissance « à de nouveaux sujets et voix lyriques » (p. 278), tandis que Marie Pascal, dans l'article « Du totem à la bête humaine », choisit comme point de départ les romans *Ourse Bleue* de Virginia Pésémapéo et *Anima* de Wajdi Mouawad pour présenter la « perméabilité entre le monde des humains et celui des bêtes » (p. 292).

En guise de conclusion, nous pouvons dire que *L'Animal en littérature, entre fantaisie et fantastique* mêle des connaissances provenant de plusieurs domaines parfois considérés comme antithétiques (la philologie, l'iconographie et les sciences), chaque article consacré à Jean de La Fontaine ou, en général, à l'animal littéraire ouvrant une nouvelle piste d'interprétation en ce qui concerne la perception littéraire des animaux. L'importance de ce volume s'explique non seulement du point de vue culturel, puisque ces recherches traversent plusieurs époques de l'évolution du bestiaire en littérature, mais aussi dans le contexte actuel visant la nécessité d'une nouvelle dynamique homme-animal : le dernier n'est plus un être subordonné au premier, mais un être important par lui-même.

Elisabeta Maria MÂRZA

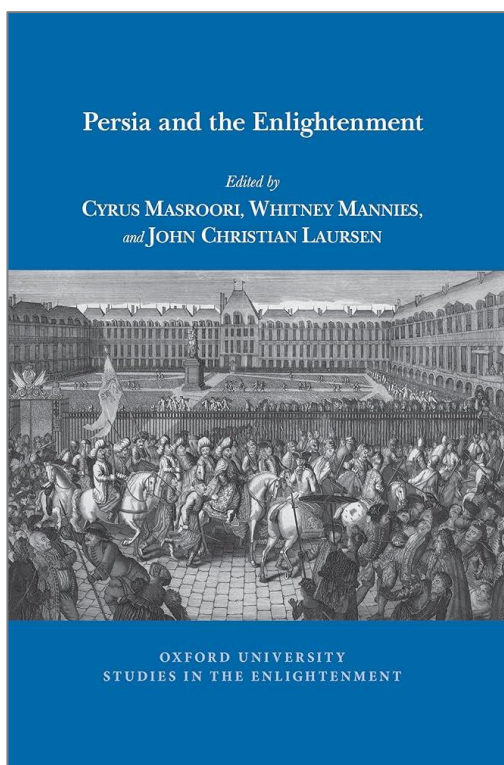
Étudiante à la Faculté des Lettres,

Université Babeș-Bolyai de Cluj-Napoca, Roumanie

elisabeta.marza@stud.ubbcluj.ro

BOOKS

**Cyrus Masroori, Whitney Mannies, John Christian Laursen (eds.),
Persia and the Enlightenment, Liverpool: Liverpool University
Press, 2021, 273 p.**



Seventeenth and eighteenth-century diplomats and travelers to Persia wrote extensively about the region, nourishing the European interest in remote cultures and providing enough details about its cultural, social, and political life to intrigue Enlightenment thinkers. Montesquieu, Voltaire, Diderot are only some, but arguably the most famous of the Enlightenment intellectuals that employed this discursively constructed space as a backdrop for political and philosophical reflection. *Persia and the Enlightenment*, a collective volume edited by Cyrus Masroori, Whitney Mannies, and John Christian Laursen, is a most welcome addition to both Enlightenment scholarship and cross-cultural studies. In nine essays, the volume explores the multifaceted intersections of Enlightenment thought and Persian civilization. From the fascination of the European Enlightenment intellectuals with Persia, to strategies of constructing otherness, to the role of Persia in the

configuration of modern European identities, this volume engages with a wide range of captivating questions that reveal the complexity of (early) modern cultural encounters and contribute to debunking reductionist assumptions about the East-West cultural dynamics.

The introduction to the volume provides a solid and nuanced theoretical discussion, which justifiably veers away from Said's *Orientalism* and embraces theoretical



models that examine Europe's pre-colonial engagement with the East as "grounded in critical reflection and mutual recognition" (2). The Enlightenment is approached in Foucauldian terms, which coheres with the volume's predisposition to reflective thinking, reticence to generalizations, and refusal of grand theories. The Enlightenment is therefore viewed as "a web of languages in a wide range of disciplines and practices such as philosophy, theology, politics, art, and historiography, which communicate with each other because they subscribe to several broadly defined but never fully stable concepts such as reason, autonomy, liberty, tolerance, and rights" (12).

The essays support the volume's "aim to demonstrate how visions of Persia informed religious debates, political struggles, social criticism, and philosophical meditations" (14) in Enlightenment Europe either by examining impressive corpora of sources on Persia, most of them by European travelers and diplomats, or by narrowing the discussion to how the image of Persia was appropriated by specific Enlightenment scholars with a view to advancing their religious, philosophical, or political projects.

The first essay, by Cyrus Masroori and John Christian Laursen, offers a most useful and well-documented record of the more or less accurate information about Persia (from ancient, medieval and Renaissance sources to early modern travelogues) that contributed to the European perceptions of the region. As the authors point out, Enlightenment intellectuals used the image of Persia to advance their own theses, with little regard for the accuracy of their perception of Persian society. John Marshall contributes an impressively well-documented essay discussing the question of Persian religious (in)tolerance and its representation in the European travel literature of the early Enlightenment, with emphasis on how European scholars perceived the religious animosity between Sunni and Shia. The discussion about religion is later particularized by Marta García-Alonso's "Persian Theology and the Checkmate of Christian Theology: Bayle and the Problem of Evil", an essay that focuses on Henri Bayle's use of Persian theology for his own religious preoccupations. Rolando Minuti's essay contributes an investigation into the representations of the military achievements and political career of Nadir Shah in the work of French intellectuals. As Minuti points out, Nadir Shah's image is polarized between "the deliverer of the Persian nation and patriot" to "the prince devoured by ambition and power and destined to become a detestable despot" (114). Of course, the work of Montesquieu could not miss from a volume on Persia and the Enlightenment. Antônio Carlos dos Santos's contribution complements the already rich exegesis on the *Persian Letters* starting from the premise that Montesquieu's work "seem[s] to resonate in a different way with each generation" and engages in an exploration of the novel "from within our own context of political struggle against prejudice, also typical of the era of Enlightenment, and the struggle for a more tolerant world" (126). Cyrus Masroori's essay continues the exploration of pseudo-Oriental letters by moving the discussion to the British soil and looking into George Lyttleton's *Letters from a Persian in England, to his friend at Ispahan*. Lyttleton's book, not as well-known nowadays as Montesquieu's, was very popular immediately after its publication and consequential in the political debate of the time (Lyttleton was part of the opposition to Robert Walpole's politics), which offers Masroori the prerequisite for arguing that pre-Orientalist scholars "used Persia as a platform for diverse domestic

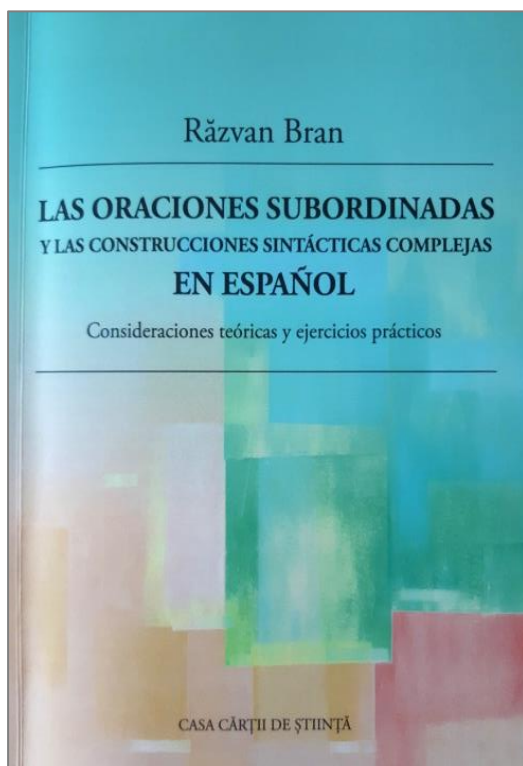
purposes, to criticize various European institutions and practices, and to shape what it is to be French, English, or European” (156), which reinforces the thesis guiding the entire volume. Voltaire’s engagement with Persia is documented and discussed by Myrtille Méricam-Bourdet’s essay. Just like the European scholars discussed in the essays preceding this one, Voltaire seems to have been interested in Persian religion, politics, history, and civilization only insofar as it provided a fertile ground for the critical investigation of the French/European political and religious context of the time. In “Persia in Diderot’s *Encyclopédie*”, Whitney Mannies also notes that, even if in the eighteenth century the interest in the Oriental world took an empirical turn, the accuracy of the information was not the main concern of the encyclopedists, nor was the question of whether the portrayal of Persia might be (un)favorably prejudiced as important as “the development of the historical-sociological perspective itself, which implied that religion and government are merely temporal, contextual, and artificial – not eternal, universal, and divine” (188). The last essay in the volume, “‘Peuplade estimable’: late-eighteenth-century radical critics of religion and the Ghebres” by Erica J. Manucci, looks into how French revolutionary thinkers employed to the religious culture of modern Zoroastrians for their project of “dismantling religion itself” (210).

Persia and the Enlightenment is a valuable resource for students and researchers of the European Enlightenment (particularly the French). It consists of well-documented essays that propose nuanced examinations of a series of aspects that informed Europe’s sense of itself in the Age of Reason and well beyond.

Amelia PRECUP 

Lecturer, Babes-Bolyai University,
Cluj-Napoca, Romania
amelia.precup@ubbcluj.ro

Răzvan Bran, *Las oraciones subordinadas y las construcciones sintácticas complejas en español. Consideraciones teóricas y ejercicios prácticos*, Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2023, 274 p.



El libro *Las oraciones subordinadas y las construcciones sintácticas complejas en español. Consideraciones teóricas y ejercicios prácticos*, escrito por Răzvan Bran y publicado por la editorial Casa Cărții de Știință en 2023, es un manual de sintaxis destinado en especial a los estudiantes rumanos que estudian el idioma español.

Tal y como menciona Răzvan Bran (2023, 7-8) en la sección introductoria, el libro presenta la sintaxis de la lengua española desde una perspectiva didáctica y contrastiva (español-rumano). De hecho, constituye una continuación del libro *El verbo español. Teoría y práctica*, escrito por el mismo autor y publicado por Ars Docendi en 2018. Se puede decir que también complementa a la serie *Curso práctico de español* publicada por Editura Universității din București/Bucharest University Press entre 2020 y 2023. Răzvan Bran es coautor de dicha serie, la cual abarca seis manuales de E/LE destinados a los estudiantes de

Lengua y Literatura Españolas, Traducción e Interpretación y Lenguas Modernas Aplicadas.

El libro *Las oraciones subordinadas y las construcciones sintácticas complejas en español. Consideraciones teóricas y ejercicios prácticos* abarca 22 unidades temáticas. Cada unidad contiene una parte teórica y una parte práctica conformada por ejercicios.

En las partes teóricas las explicaciones se proporcionan de una manera clara y estructurada y se acude a contextos esclarecedores y a cuadros de síntesis. Los contenidos se repasan en los más de 260 ejercicios prácticos e incluso teóricos. Se trata de ejercicios de relleno, de selección múltiple, de reformulación, de transformación, de sustitución o de traducción que ayudan al lector a sistematizar y adquirir los contenidos teóricos. El nivel de dificultad es gradual. Los ejercicios que requieren explicaciones teóricas o correcciones acuden al espíritu crítico y a la capacidad analítica del lector. Hay también ejercicios que estimulan la creatividad, ya que el lector tiene que continuar las oraciones o responder libremente al usar ciertas estructuras gramaticales. Las traducciones del rumano al español ayudan a concienciar las diferencias entre las dos lenguas. Se han incluido en los ejercicios también fragmentos literarios de obras de autores rumanos y españoles.

Aparte de la presentación de los conceptos fundamentales de la sintaxis española y de las clasificaciones hechas por los lingüistas, el libro tiene también como objetivo el desarrollo de la competencia sintáctica y el fomento de la lengua española, constituyendo así un material imprescindible para los niveles C1 y C2. Se hace hincapié en “[...] la estructura, el uso y los valores que poseen algunas construcciones sintácticas para expresar distintos contenidos y cumplir varias funciones discursivas” (Bran 2023, 7). En el libro se presentan las diferencias semánticas y estilísticas que se dan entre las construcciones paralelas (conjunciones y locuciones polisémicas con matices distintos), al tomarse en cuenta también las diferencias de registro. Se describen aspectos relacionados con la norma, los usos actuales y los usos erróneos propios del español coloquial o que surgen a raíz de la adquisición de lenguas o del contacto lingüístico (Bran 2023, 7). Se han tomado en cuenta el Plan Curricular del Instituto Cervantes (PCIC) y el Marco Común Europeo de Referencia (MCER) en el diseño de los contenidos del libro.

En la unidad *Consideraciones teóricas generales y conceptos fundamentales* destacan los apartados en los cuales el autor aclara las diferencias entre *el enunciado y la oración*, *la oración /la proposición/la cláusula absoluta* y, por último, entre *la oración simple y la oración compleja*. El autor hace un repaso de las oraciones compuestas por coordinación y presenta la relación de subordinación.

Las siguientes unidades van dedicadas a las oraciones sustantivas de sujeto, de complemento directo, de complemento indirecto y de complemento de régimen (preposicional). Van seguidas por una unidad dedicada a las oraciones subordinadas sustantivas de complemento del nombre, del adjetivo y del adverbio y por una unidad dedicada a las oraciones subordinadas de atributo y de complemento predicativo. Siguen luego unidades que versan sobre las construcciones relativas, causales, finales, consecutivas, condicionales, concesivas y comparativas. El autor puntualiza las reglas en el caso de las construcciones de tiempo, de lugar y de modo en una de las unidades del libro.

En las consideraciones teóricas se señalan de manera detallada las particularidades de cada tipo de subordinada, se presentan los verbos regentes, los nexos, su posición con respecto a la oración regente, la selección de los modos, las posibles confusiones que puedan surgir en relación con otras estructuras, etc. En los apartados denominados *Norma y uso*, se resaltan los fenómenos lingüísticos censurados normativamente como *el queísmo* y *el dequeísmo*. Como elemento novedoso, se describe también *el quesuismo*, lema aún no

recogido por el *Diccionario de la Lengua Española* en línea (DLE, la vigesimotercera edición). Se trata de un fenómeno en la lengua hablada o en el lenguaje jurídico-administrativo que consta en el uso del relativo *que* seguido por el posesivo *su* en lugar del empleo de cuyo, a, os, as (Bran 2023, 118). Se presentan las teorías tradicionales, pero también se mencionan las interpretaciones actuales de la sintaxis española.


Destaca la unidad que se centra en el discurso directo, indirecto e indirecto libre. A través del discurso indirecto libre se pueden insertar, sin verbos introductorios, enunciados que pertenecen a un personaje en la voz del narrador (Bran 2023, 102-103).

La unidad sobre los nexos con distintos valores es de suma utilidad, ya que abarca una tabla que se puede consultar para ver los valores de algunas conjunciones españolas, los cuales surgen en relación con el modo seleccionado. Por ejemplo, *como* puede tener valor modal (+ indicativo, *Hazlo como acabamos de explicarte*; + subjuntivo, *Hazlo como quieras, me da igual*), valor causal (+ indicativo, *Como no lo habían invitado, no se presentó*), valor condicional (+ subjuntivo, *Como no lo hagas, la abuela te reprenderá*), valor completivo (+indicativo, *Ya verás como sí lo haré*) y valor comparativo (+indicativo, *Sabe tanto como sabemos todos*) (Bran 2023, 241).

En el caso de las consecutivas no intensivas hay visiones contrastantes, pero Răzvan Bran sigue la interpretación de la *Nueva gramática de la lengua española*, que las clasifica como oraciones subordinadas (Bran 2023, 16). En el libro se detallan también las causales del enunciado y de la enunciación (Bran 2023, 156) y las finales del enunciado y de la enunciación (Bran 2023, 169). Se distingue entre las causales explicativas y las causales no explicativas. Destaca la unidad sobre las construcciones comparativas, ya que el autor realiza una descripción minuciosa de las estructuras comparativas: las comparaciones introducidas por la preposición *de*, las comparativas relativas, las comparativas proporcionales / de progresión proporcional / relacionadas, las comparativas progresivas, las comparativas prototípicas (elativas), las construcciones pseudocomparativas, etc.

En *La selección de modos personales. La alternancia indicativo vs. subjuntivo*, el autor realiza un repaso de la selección del modo en las oraciones sustantivas, relativas y circunstanciales. El autor dedica una unidad a la correspondencia de los tiempos y una unidad a los valores y funciones sintácticas de los modos no personales. El libro concluye con un repaso final, cuya meta es de consolidar el conocimiento adquirido en las unidades anteriores.

El libro constituye una sólida y valiosa contribución al campo de la sintaxis. Se podría utilizar como material de apoyo tanto en las clases de E/LE como en los cursos, los seminarios y los talleres de sintaxis. Podría servir de guía también a los traductores, a los intérpretes y a todos los interesados en la enseñanza/aprendizaje del español como lengua extranjera. Gracias a la sistematicidad, a la rigurosidad y a la claridad de las consideraciones teóricas, el libro nos invita a solucionar los ejercicios con confianza, esmero y mucho gusto.

Simona-Luiza ȚIGRIȘ 

Universidad de Bucarest

Bucarest, Rumanía

simona.tigris@lls.unibuc.ro