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Human, Humane, Humanities. Voices from the Anglosphere

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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Plenary 1

Thursday 11 September h. 9:30-10:30, Auditorium

Researching audiences for subtitled media in the UK

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We study media audiences to understand what media people watch, when, why and how, and to understand how media mediate people's understanding of contents, events and narratives. We study the audiences for subtitled media because subtitles mediate, and therefore potentially inflect the reception of the original media.

But subtitles are not just a conduit to media to which we might otherwise have no access. Subtitled media may also have its own cultural 'centre of gravity'. British audiences have historically had limited access to subtitled media, which needed to be accessed via specialized cinemas and at odd times of the night on broadcast television. As a result, subtitled media has become its own genre in the UK and other anglophone countries. A recent project on UK film audiences identified five genres preferred by UK audiences; one of these was "arthouse and foreign language film" (Merrington et al. 2019: 122). These do not only include 'art' films but also mainstream releases from other countries which just happen to be subtitled for their UK release.

This paper discusses what it means to research the reception of subtitled media in anglophone countries, including the specific features of the UK media landscape which shape research, the changing profile of subtitle users, the changes in subtitling norms, and the impact of rapid recent changes in research methods. Users of subtitled media in the UK used to be restricted to d/Deaf and hard of hearing viewers and the largely middle-class, urban audiences who watched subtitled films in the cinema. Now, due to evolving broadcast legislation and the rise of streaming media, subtitles are available on most media and data suggests that they are increasingly a default option for viewers, particularly younger viewers (Yougov, 2023). This is not only the case in the UK, but also in the US (Ballard, 2023). Subtitles are used for a wider range of purposes, including to help concentration and to enhance the viewing experience, and by groups of people who have not been previously considered in research, such as neurodivergent viewers.

Subtitling norms are also changing. Previously, subtitles were more or less condensed to make them cognitively easier to process, but recent research suggests that UK viewers, at least, are heavily in favour of subtitles which are as verbatim as possible. Netflix, one of the major vectors for subtitled media in the UK, has made line lengths longer, frame gaps shorter and reading speeds faster.

This suggests that we need to look again at what viewers actually want. Recent years have seen a rapid rise in experimental methods for researching subtitling reception, particularly using eyetrackers. This research has been enormously important, but my paper will argue that we also need to consider subtitling reception research more holistically, and in relation to audiences as well as individual research participants. This move towards the social is influenced by scholars such as Elena di Giovanni and Chiara Bucaria. I propose questions such as: how do audiences for subtitled media form and evolve in the anglosphere? What aspects of subtitled media are important to these audiences, and how? What is at stake for audiences in watching subtitled media? How is the cultural value of subtitled media articulated, by whom? To use Kirsty Sedgman's words, I seek to understand audiences for subtitled media in "the messy, situated reality of diverse spectatorial engagement" (2019: 170).

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Plenary 2

Thursday 11 September h. 14:30-15:30, Auditorium

When we 'were' posthuman. Scanning our lost future?

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This lecture stems from my personal need, as a scholar, to navigate a highly stimulating yet potentially disorienting field of study due to the vast amount of material produced over the past two decades—namely, the contemporary articulation of the crisis of Humanism, understood both as a basic notion of the Human and as a historical category within the disciplinary field of the Humanities. Positioned between the two movements of Transhumanism and Posthumanism, this exploration will unfold paradigmatically between theoretical reflection and narrative thematization.

After briefly addressing the construction of the humanistic myth of the autopoietic subject and its early crisis, some contemporary novelists will be examined in relation to some of their works, which can be classified as speculative fictions. These works depict a transhumanist future realized through unsettling modalities. To frame Transhumanism, reference will be made to the Western intellectual tradition of rationalism and its dualistic foundations, linking classical philosophical thought to Cartesian modernity and, subsequently, to contemporary critics and transhumanist theorists (Huberman, 2021). Regarding the threat posed by Transhumanism, the critique advanced by liberal theorists such as Francis Fukuyama (2002) and Yuval Noah Harari (2015) will also be considered, as they were among the first to express concerns about the neo-classist dimension of access to the benefits of transhumanist enhancement. Indeed, all the novels analyzed substantiate the critique of the risks associated with the imbalance of the human towards forms of improvement that remain the privilege of limited elites, while the vast majority of people are excluded from the schemes of human 'intensification'. These novels take the narrative form of dystopian universes, yet they are deeply rooted in the observation of technological potentials and authoritarian political tendencies that are already fully visible today.

Other Anglophone authors will be examined instead through the lens of a form of "idealist" realism, to substantiate an idea of Posthumanism conceived as a post-anthropocentric and post-dualistic model of thought. Tracing the emergence of the term "Posthuman" from the 1970s with Ihab Hassan (1977) to the present day with ground-breaking thinkers—particularly female scholars—such as Val Plumwood (1993), Rosi Braidotti (2013), Donna Haraway (2016), Serenella Iovino and Serpil Opperman (2014), and many others, this talk will seek to outline a coherent proposal that connects key moments of poststructuralist elaboration and the celebration of difference with the more recent ecofeminist and neo-materialist turns.

My talk will begin with two questions: "Is Transhumanism already with us?" and, more importantly, "Is Posthumanism already with us?" In attempting to answer these questions, the aim will be to assess, on the one hand, the extent to which certain natalist scenarios of eugenic and transhumanist orientation are already a reality. On the other hand, it will explore whether the posthuman perspective—an ethical praxis based on a *relational ontology* that assumes human responsibility towards other creatures and all vulnerable subjects—remains a viable project within our vision of the near future. In a provocative vein, which explains the title of this speech, the discussion will conclude with the question of whether it is still possible to pursue the posthumanist demystification of human exceptionalism and universalism, or whether we are increasingly facing a reality in which it becomes ever more difficult to challenge the resurgence of patriarchal, heteronormative, and climate change-denialist perspectives that are gaining ground across many spheres of our contemporary society.

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Plenary 3

Friday 12 September h. 9:00-10:00, Auditorium

Postdigital intimacies in the Anglosphere: Implications for human connection and English language practices

Caroline Tagg (The Open University, UK) caroline.tagg@open.ac.uk

Abstract

Charlie, a 40-year-old language teacher, is eating lunch at home watching the winter Olympics when he receives a typically long and chatty WhatsApp message from his former colleague, Abby, and an iMessage from his brother, Seth. He replies immediately to Seth and the two engage in light-hearted banter as Charlie finishes lunch and starts work. After a subsequent trip to the dentist and a football game, it is not until Charlie is in bed that night that he has time to give Abby's message the attention he feels it deserves, and in his response he attends carefully to each of her updates.

In my talk, I explore the personal, relational and linguistic implications of recent developments in mobile communication practices, with a focus on mobile messaging use in the UK. Like other countries in and beyond the Anglosphere, the UK can be described as a 'postdigital' society; that is, a society transformed by new technologies, in which the digital is no longer experienced as salient or novel but as a mundane part of everyday life (Cramer, 2014) and communication (Bhatt, 2023). The challenge facing English language scholars is how to approach, capture and analyse communication practices that sit at the 'online-offline nexus' (Blommaert, 2019) where digital interaction is coordinated in various ways with physical action (Androutsopoulos, forthcoming). My interest is in how postdigitality shapes, and is shaped by, our human need for intimacy. Intimacy is characterized by deep care, comfort in physical and emotional proximity, and a profound understanding of each other (Berlant, 1998). It is enacted in part through language, and develops in contexts characterised by vulnerability, consent, self-disclosure, reciprocity, safety, appreciation, and acceptance. The notion of 'postdigital intimacies' (Evans & Ringrose, 2025; Tagg & Thompson, forthcoming) is used to critically explore the ways in which human intimacies are shaped by an increasingly networked and mobile society in which relationships are established and maintained across an array of physical and digitally mediated spaces. How do people like Charlie, Seth and Abby achieve human connection when relationships are carried out at-a-distance through mobile-mediated conversations punctuated by other physical and digital activities and encounters?

To address this question, I draw on examples of postdigital interaction collected as part of a British Academy-funded research project called 'Mobile Conversations in Context'. The project positions individual users at the centre of their communicative practices by adopting a 'day-in-the-life' approach (Tagg & Lyons, 2021) which looks across the multiple and often parallel or intertwined communicative encounters in which a networked individual engages during a typical day. It combines interactional messaging data with interviews and time-use diaries collected from twelve UK-based participants aged 35-76, which are analysed quantitatively and qualitatively to understand how postdigital intimacies are expressed and managed through distinct interactional strategies across messaging apps. My analysis of extracts from participants' mobile messaging interactions shows how varying levels of intimacy are co-constructed not only through interlocutors' semiotic choices but also through the rhythms of each exchange, and the ways in which interlocutors synchronise their involvement through reciprocity and affiliation. Analysis also reveals how each mobile conversation shapes and is shaped by the everyday offline and online activities in which interlocutors are simultaneously engaged, showing how postdigital intimacies must be understood in relation to an individual's repertoire across communicative and social practices, and to the immediate concerns, everyday activities and longer-term priorities of those involved.

Overall, the focus on postdigital intimacies highlights how, in an increasingly networked world, humans are adroit at harnessing and exploiting new communication technologies to achieve familiar personal and relational goals, whilst further transforming what it means to be human. I finish by arguing that there are implications for all English language scholars, given the increasing encroachment of digital technologies into all areas of social life, across and beyond the Anglosphere.

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Plenary 4

Saturday 13 September h. 11:30-12:30, Auditorium

Deep Fake: Plato's cave and the Virtual World

Radhika Jha, Cosmopolitan Author

Human beings are animals who use tools. But the tools we use also reshape us – changing the way we think, the way we organize our lives, our relationships, our societies. Each time, the introduction of a new technology into human societies has brought war, the destruction of human lives. Because with technology change we get paradigm change. When there is paradigm change, what it means to be human changes too. For the way we see and interact with the world around us determines who we are.

And yet, some things don't change. Essential to being human are two things - ideas and love. But today, with the coming of the internet and the smartphone, how we access love and ideas has changed. No technology has had quite as much of an effect on so many human lives at once as the internet. We all spend at least a few hours on our computers and phones. We all have at least two identities, a digital one and a real one. This is as true in Africa as it is in Iceland, in Delhi or New York. Today we find and enact love through apps. Accessing news and ideas is happening mostly through apps. We see ourselves through the eyes of social media apps. We listen to music on apps. And social media 'influencers' can bring down governments or get a president elected.

Technology also affects the words we use. It can even produce new words. In the eighties, the spread of cheap music technology brought words like 'rewind' and 'fast forward' into the English vocabulary. 'Groovy', a very seventies hippie word, came from records and vinyl technology. Most of these words died along with the technologies that produced them. But some didn't – they lingered, taking on a life of their own as they attached themselves to concepts that were important to us humans.

The internet has generated all kinds of interesting words – 'reddit', 'ping me', 'like', 'emoji'. But I will concentrate on one word, 'deep fake', for it symbolizes, for me, the central problem of the internet age: trust. I came across this word around the time of the first Trump election and since then my mind won't let go of it for it symbolizes the central conundrum of our internet world – the loss of trust. Society is built on trust. One has to have some trust between people in order for society to function. Trust is an important part of any relationship whether it is with one's partner or with one's banker. But how do you trust a person when you are communicating through a machine? How do we know what is real and what is not?

Deep Fake, to me, refers to something that is fake but which people believe in and act upon because they no longer trust. I believe we are living in an age of 'deep fake' where certain concepts such 'truth' no longer play an important part in our political and social lives, what matters more is liking or not-liking ideas/people. Trust has been replaced or is being replaced with liking or disliking, loving or hating.

Lastly, I will look at the relationship between trust and education. What does one study in a world where one cannot trust that what one is being taught/learning is important? What can one learn if liking what one is learning feels more important than learning something new? And how does the crisis of trust affect literature and writing fiction?

Which brings me to Plato's allegory of the cave. Today Plato's cave is the digital world. When we are online, we do not, or cannot, look behind or around us. We forget that it is not the real world at all, but a simulacrum of the real world, and that the knowledge we seem to be able to access so easily, is not really knowledge at all but a shadow of knowledge, a compilation of knowledge with some important elements left out or misunderstood. Have we entered a time when even philosophers cannot get out of the cave for 'light' (truth in Plato's case) itself is no longer important?

SEM1. Shakespeare and the re-invention of the human

13 September h. 8:30-11:00, PN 16

Convenors

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Abstract

In his provocative *Shakespeare and the invention of the human*, Harold Bloom controversially posits that Shakespeare is the true inventor of the human. More radically, we ask: Is the concept of 'the human' still a valid category in Shakespeare studies? Can the idea of the human—along with its various denials, approximations, extensions, and inversions—be re-invented by considering the dual meanings of 'inventing', both as creating anew and as discovering? How does the human intersect with vaguer, more indistinct concepts, and how is this (re)discovery portrayed in Shakespeare's works? We encourage contributions that examine how Shakespeare's texts challenge or reinforce early modern notions of humanity, explore the relationships between humans, nature, and other beings—such as monsters and aberrations—and investigate how his writings shape the conception of the human. Additionally, we welcome discussions on the contemporary relevance of Shakespeare's portrayal of humanity, considering how these early modern perspectives can inform modern debates about identity, agency, and the environment.

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SEM1. Papers

13 September h. 8:30-11:00, PN 16

- *Stuck in between: Paradox as Shakespearean expression of liminal humanity* (Beatrice Righetti, Università di Verona)
- *Human troubles: Rethinking social conflict and monstrosity in Shakespeare's Plays* (Carmen Gallo, Sapienza Università di Roma)
- *"I have suffered with those that I saw suffer". Compassion and the early modern discourse of vision in The Tempest* (Alessandra Squeo, Università degli Studi di Bari)
- *Shakespeare as Pananthopos: Serbian perspectives on playwright's humanity (1864/1916)* (Petra Bjelica, Università di Verona)

SEM1. Abstracts

Shakespeare as *Pananthopos*: Serbian perspectives on playwright's humanity (1864/1916)

Petra Bjelica (Università di Verona) petra.bjelica@univr.it

This proposal deals with two Serbian interventions in global celebrations of Shakespeare which declare the playwright an epitome of perfect humanity. The Romantic poet, playwright and first translator of Shakespeare to Serbian, Laza Kostić, in his ode *On Shakespeare's Tercentenary* (1864), framed Shakespeare as God's creation of a perfect human that "in one being, in one life ... unite[s] all the beauty of all beings" (Bečanović-Nikolić, 2018: 179). During the First World War,

Saint Nikolay Velimirović, an Orthodox Bishop who was the first ever Orthodox priest to preach at St. Paul's Cathedral, elevated Shakespeare to *Pananthropos* in his contribution to *A Book of Homage to Shakespeare* (1916).

While these claims do not seem to add particularly original thoughts on Shakespeare's humanity and resonate greatly with Romantic Bardolatry, their significance may lie in their historical, cultural and possibly theological specificities. As Bečanović-Nikolić convincingly demonstrates, through an imaginary dialogue with Shakespeare, Kostić articulates the 'subaltern' position of Serbian identity, between Anglophone and German cultures, inviting "him to become one of the Serbs (ll.136–138)" (Bečanović-Nikolić, 2018: 144). Bishop Nikolai Velimirović's perspective places the playwright's humanity within Orthodox anthropology and patristic theology.

This proposal interrogates whether a local (Serbian/Orthodox) understanding of 'human' may contest or reinforce concepts of humanity in Shakespeare's works? By situating these interventions within broader discourses about Shakespearean concept of 'human', the analysis aims to illuminate whether the interplay between a specific Serbian subalternity and Orthodox ideals on personhood offers new insights.

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Human troubles: Rethinking social conflict and monstrosity in Shakespeare's plays

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This paper explores the rhetorical construction of monstrosity in Shakespeare's plays as a means of interrogating the dynamics of social conflict. In early modern culture, monstrosity often serves to stigmatize those who deviate from prevailing norms—whether gendered, racial, or social. Shakespeare's dramatic corpus abounds with characters who threaten the foundations of societal order—such as Romeo, Othello, Desdemona, and Caliban—figures frequently described in animalistic or hybrid terms, through a grotesque lexicon that renders them simultaneously threatening and other.

The paper argues that Shakespeare does not simply reproduce these cultural scripts but critically stages them, exposing the ideological mechanisms by which monstrosity is constructed and deployed to regulate difference. Particular attention is paid to representations of gender and class transgression, as well as corporeal ambiguity—forms of deviation often framed as monstrous in ways that reveal broader anxieties about the instability of social hierarchies. Through close textual analysis, the study examines how monstrosity functions as a strategy of containment, delegitimizing dissent while paradoxically foregrounding the constructedness of the human.

Ultimately, the paper contends that Shakespeare's plays articulate a vision of humanity frequently at odds with normative ideals. By foregrounding the theatrical and metaphorical operations of monstrosity, Shakespeare exposes the fragility of the boundaries that define the human subject and the violence entailed in efforts to enforce them. In doing so, his work contributes to a broader understanding of literature's capacity to both reflect and critique the social imaginary of its time

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Stuck in between: Paradox as Shakespearean expression of liminal humanity

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In *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), Robert Burton identifies jealousy as more than a destabilising emotion: it is emblematic of human folly and a metonym for the human condition. Building on this premise and in dialogue with Harold Bloom's assertion that Shakespeare "invented" the human, this paper explores how Shakespeare dramatises jealousy as a force that unsettles fixed notions of identity and humanity. Rather than merely disrupting emotional balance, jealousy triggers an ontological rupture that casts both lover and beloved into a liminal space—neither fully human nor inhuman. The beloved becomes at once familiar and alien, idealised and reviled ("most foul, most fair," *Much Ado*, 4.1.100). Simultaneously, the jealous subject undergoes a process of self-estrangement, sometimes through the eyes of others ("my lord is not my lord," *Othello*, 3.4.125), and at other times through their own disoriented self-perception ("that's he that was Othello? here I am," *Othello*, 5.2.280).

This state of in-betweenness is expressed in Shakespeare's plays through paradox—a rhetorical strategy that reflects the ontological contradictions inherent in jealous perception. By staging logical impasses, paradox opens up a transitional space in which the very definition of "the human" is thrown into crisis ("most foul, most fair," *Much Ado*, 4.1.100). This paper examines how such liminal identities are constructed differently across gender lines by focusing on two character clusters: Hermia (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Cleopatra (*Antony and Cleopatra*), and Adriana (*The Comedy of Errors*); and Claudio (*Much Ado About Nothing*), Othello and Iago (*Othello*), and Leontes (*The Winter's Tale*). Drawing on early modern medical theory and gender studies, it argues that jealousy, as imagined by Shakespeare, becomes a site of ontological experimentation—offering not only a psychological portrait of emotional extremity, but also a philosophical inquiry into the limits and contradictions of what it means to be human.

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"I have suffered with those that I saw suffer". Compassion and the early modern discourse of vision in *The Tempest*.

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The Tempest is imbued with the language of compassion, reflecting early modern thought in which, shaped by both classical and Christian ethical frameworks, emotions were regarded as "positive forces within the soul, that provided stimulus to virtuous action, as long as they were channelled, restrained, and controlled" (Whittington 2014: 98-9). Miranda's empathetic response to the shipwreck in the opening lines exemplifies the Aristotelian notion of catharsis, with a 'mirroring' of emotion conveyed through the parallelism in her phrasing "I have suffered"/ "I saw suffer" (Cavell 1976; James 2001; Whittington 2014).

Even more significantly, Miranda's response introduces, from the very beginning, a crucial link between compassion and vision, connecting emotional responsiveness to the act of seeing – a central motif throughout *The Tempest*, culminating in Prospero's final gesture of forgiveness when, prompted by Ariel's appeal, he is moved to *see* and feel the suffering of his enemies with unexpected tenderness. "If you now *beheld* them, your affection would become tender," Ariel gently urges, "Mine would, sir, were I human". This decisive shift metaphorically leads Prospero away from the omniscient, 'absolute' vision of the magician – *ab-solutus* literally meaning detached from relational ties and the contingencies of embodied identity – and toward a 'human' gaze: one imbued with the limitations and inherent imperfection of situated perspectives. It is this gaze that renders him 'humane': grounded in a renewed mode of vision that recognizes vulnerability, invites ethical response, and reflects a redemptive form of insight.

Focusing on these issues, this paper explores the intersection of compassion and early modern discourses on vision in *The Tempest*, a play that interrogates the status of the visible and the complexities of human perception by staging a

multiplication of perspectives – both thematically and structurally – within a multifaceted cultural context, in which the reliability of human vision was increasingly questioned, due to new developments in medicine, optics, philosophy, and technology (Hakewill 1608; Peirce 1986; Clark 2007; Massey 2007; Hendrix 2012; Del Sapio 2016). As the concluding section of this paper will argue, early modern perspectives on vision continue to inform contemporary debates on the re-invention of the human in significant ways. In particular, they gain renewed relevance within the field of the Positive Humanities (Pawelski 2022; Tay-Pawelski 2022) and, more specifically, within the Health and Medical Humanities, where the act of seeing – understood as a relational, interpretive, and compassionate engagement – is increasingly regarded as central to the practice of care (Scardicchio 2019; Bleakley 2020). The paper will illustrate these intersections by presenting preliminary findings from an ongoing research project at the University of Bari, which employs *The Tempest* as both a pedagogical and interpretive tool for exploring how emotions are expressed, perceived, and understood within healthcare settings.

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SEM2. Humanism in motion: Travel literature, salon culture, and cosmopolitan networks

11 September h. 16:00-18:30, S6 Moro

Convenors

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Abstract

This seminar proposes an exploration of the importance of humanism within travel writing from the Anglosphere, focusing on salon culture and the social role of travel writing. The chronological focus of the seminar broadly encompasses works from the 17th-19th centuries. Recent historiography has investigated the complex relationship of salon culture to the public sphere (Habermas, 1989), and, more importantly, the role of women in shaping such a culture (Landes, 1988; Pekacz, 1999), while other scholars, such as Dena Goodman (1994), have highlighted the value of salons as spaces where ideas could circulate across national and cultural boundaries. Travel writers often operated within complex networks of patronage and sociability, positioning their works as mediators of cultural dialogue and as reflections of humanist ideals.

By situating travel writing within these broader frameworks, this seminar seeks to investigate its dual role as a representation of individual human experience and as an instrument for collective understanding. In order to promote a wide engagement on the topic, and invite a truly transdisciplinary style, we welcome methodological approaches varying from literary criticism, cultural studies, discourse analysis, historiographical approaches, and digital humanities.

We invite topics focused on, but not limited to:

- the influence of humanist principles and how they are articulated by travel writers
- travel writers as mediators of culture(s)
- the role of salon culture in the production and dissemination of travel writing
- salons as networks of cross-cultural dialogue and as sites for exchanging ideas
- the importance of the role of women in travel writing.

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SEM2. Papers

11 September h. 16:00-18:30, S6 Moro

- *Great news from Ireland at door! A corpus-based discourse analysis of coffee house dialogues and their discursive practices in late 17th and early 18th century England (1662-1712)* (Ersilia Incelli, Sapienza Università di Roma)
- *Travel writing and well-being: Anna Riggs Miller and Hester Lynch Piozzi as mediators of Italian culture in England* (Laura Pinnavaia, Università degli Studi di Milano)

- “*The cause of liberty still warms my bosom*”: Helen Maria Williams and the lesson of recent history of France (Tiziana Ingravallo, Università di Foggia)
- *Women, travel, and public discourse: Exploring the personal and public dimensions of Lady Sarah Lyttelton's and Lady Elizabeth Grosvenor's travel writings* (Marta Zonca, Università del Piemonte Orientale)
- *Mapping contact: Tracing salon culture in women's travel writing through digital humanities tools* (David George Lyons, Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna)

SEM2. Abstracts

Great news from Ireland at door! A corpus-based discourse analysis of coffee house dialogues and their discursive practices in late 17th and early 18th century England (1662-1712)

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Abstract

This research presents a corpus-based study which examines various speech-related written genres from the period 1662-1712, comprising transcribed coffeehouse dialogues, plays, poems, trial proceedings, as well as the written genre of broadsheets and newspapers (The Spectator, The Tatler, The London Spy). The corpora of collected texts reflect the popularity of public coffeehouses in England, renowned as public social spaces where people gathered news and discussed politics, religion, travel, science, poetry, literature, and other matters. Although coffeehouses have been studied from the historical, social theorist point of view (Habermas, 1989), this research adds linguistic insight into the experience of these public spaces, revealing the peculiarity of changing relationships between self and society. Hence, the aim of the study is to explore the linguistic features relevant to the socio-historical and pragmatic aspects of the texts in their sociocultural, communicative contexts, focusing on speech acts, politeness strategies, conversation principles, hedging and assertive utterances. Data retrieved so far reveal a significant tension in the supposed discursive practices. The idea of the coffeehouse as a peaceful place of rational, genteel discourse, egalitarian dialogue and reasoned argumentation (Steele, 1711; Habermas, 1989), contrasts sharply with linguistic evidence from primary sources which reveals coffeehouse conversations as not always civil (*you Rogue*), and orderly (*On this a quarrel soon began*), with unrestrained turn taking and frequent impoliteness (*But parted each to shew his spight,... I'd kick him headlong to the Devil*). This study also looks at recurrent pragma-dialectical features such as: high frequency pronouns *I, thou*; referencing style and discourse markers, e.g. *Pray sir*.

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“The cause of liberty still warms my bosom”: Helen Maria Williams and the lesson of recent history of France

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Abstract

Helen Maria Williams travels to France in 1790 and witnesses the Revolution first hand. She becomes the main correspondent of Revolutionary events for the English audience through her *Letters from France*. She shapes her letters as a travelogue. Her eight volumes take her readers on a tour of important Revolutionary sites and events. Public and private places and the stories they contain organize her reporting. As a woman, a foreigner, and a letter writer she places herself to occupy the role of historical spectator by eyewitness reportage and embedded memoirs. Soon after her arrival in France, she becomes a leading figure in the community of British and French radicals. The main protagonists of the historical

events of the moment liven up conversation in her Paris salon. She considers her experience and her adherence to the revolutionary ideals thoroughly cosmopolitan. She argues: “This was not a time in which the distinctions of country were remembered. It was the triumph of humankind. [...] It required but the common feelings of humanity to become in that moment a citizen of the world.” Her letter-writing mingles radicalism with sentimental accounts in order to make the British readership sympathize with “the sublimer delights of the French Revolution”. For Williams, revolutionary ideas were the result of the cultivation of empathy towards others.

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Mapping contact: Tracing salon culture in women’s travel writing through digital humanities tools

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Abstract

This paper explores how various digital humanities methods can be utilised to identify, map, and interpret points of cultural contact in women’s travel writing from the mid-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century. By collecting an ample corpus of female-authored travel texts, the project aims to trace the itineraries and intellectual geographies of women travellers, re-evaluating their contributions to cosmopolitan exchange, cultural mediation, and the performative spaces of Enlightenment sociability.

At the methodological core is a combination of Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques and geospatial visualisations achieved using Python programming language. Named Entity Recognition (NER), implemented using a comprehensive, large-scale English language processing model developed by spaCy, enables the extraction and quantification of proper nouns—people, places, institutions—which function as proxies for cultural nodes. Supplementary rule-based filtering allows for the identification of key terms related to salon culture, through common nouns such as *salon*, *conversazione*, tea, drawing room, or again via proper nouns such as names of individual hosts and intellectuals. By cross-referencing entity frequency with contextual usage, the project reveals how salons are not only social spaces but also textual markers of intellectual and affective networks.

In parallel, itineraries are extracted and plotted using Geographic Information System (GIS) tools, allowing the spatial reconstruction of travel routes. This geographical dimension illuminates similarities and divergences in women’s movements across Europe, highlighting how physical travel intersects with imagined geographies (Chard 1999: 9) of nationhood, class, and gender. Further experiments with topic modelling offer a way to visualise thematic issues—such as nationalism, exoticism, or gender performance—as they alter across regions and texts.

Through an approach based on distant reading (Moretti 2005; 2013), this proposal demonstrates how digital tools, rather than flattening historical nuance (Marche 2012), can offer a compelling way to uncover patterns and devices otherwise hindered by the scale or stylistic variability of the corpus. Ultimately, this paper argues that digital methods not only permit us to revisit women’s travel writing with revived analytical rigour, but also reanimate texts long dismissed as anecdotal or eccentric (Mills 1991: 27). Salons, mapped and named, become coordinates in a transnational system of intellectual circulation. What emerges is a dynamic cartography of cultural contact—one that reclaims the epistemic importance of women’s mobility, sociability, and textual self-fashioning.

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Travel writing and well-being: Anna Riggs Miller and Hester Lynch Piozzi as mediators of Italian culture in England

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From the 17th century travelling around Europe became a consolidated practice for many, representing an important educational experience, by which young people, and principally men, of the higher ranks of society could acquire the skills of observation and analysis necessary for them to build up the intrepidity and initiative essential for a successful future career. In offering the uninterrupted learning of lessons needed to build the “honnête homme” (Monga 1996:19), it provided cultural well-being.

For this reason, this practice was not limited to the journey but also and above all involved the reporting of it. As travellers began to recount their journeys, these travel books came to constitute a brand-new literary genre in the 17th century, which was to continue right through the 18th century and beyond (see among others Hulme and Youngs 2002, Schaff 2020, Thompson 2015, Youngs 2013).

Italy was knowingly a mandatory point of arrival in these travels. Travellers setting off from England would cross the Channel and visit Flanders, Holland, and France. Arriving in Genoa, Leghorn or Civitavecchia, they would then travel to Florence, Rome, and Naples (and some even to Sicily). On their way back, they would stop at Venice before their homeward journey through Switzerland and Germany (De Seta 1999: 16).

The aim of this research is to examine the role of two female figures within the male-dominated tradition of travel writing. More precisely, by analysing Miller's *Letters from Italy* (1776) and Hester Lynch Piozzi's *Observations and reflections* (1789), we would like to show how both women were important mediators of Italian culture in England. Based on Fairclough's (2003) theory on genre, discourse, and style, we will show how they offer an unexpected sensitivity towards Italian cities and their inhabitants, thus contributing in a new way to travel writing, reinforcing the concept of well-being upon their readers back at home.

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Women, travel, and public discourse: Exploring the personal and public Dimensions of Lady Sarah Lyttelton's and Lady Elizabeth Grosvenor's travel writings

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Abstract

In 1813-1814 and 1827, respectively, Lady Sarah Lyttelton and Lady Elizabeth Mary Grosvenor (née Leveson-Gower) travelled to northern European countries, documenting their experiences in personal journals and in letters sent to family members. The journeys of these two prominent noblewomen reveal many similarities in their itineraries, the people they met, and the social groups they engaged with. As demonstrated by Lady Lyttelton's intention to share her writings mainly with "that dear circle" of her family – and by the fact that they reached a wider readership through the efforts of her daughter and granddaughter – it is evident that the dissemination of Lyttelton's work was largely a personal endeavour. In contrast, Lady Grosvenor edited her own journal and letters and had them published in 1879, fifty-two years after her journey, an action that proves her willingness to enter the public sphere.

This contribution delves into the ways in which the two women engaged with travel writing, and how their writings reflect broader trends in cultural exchange and the social networks of the period. Indeed, the apparently private and domestic discourse of Lyttelton's and Leveson Gower's writings flows into public discourse revealing interesting networks of patronage and sociability and validating Homi Bhabha's suggestion that domestic spaces "become sites for history's most intricate invasions. In that displacement, the borders between home and world become confused; and uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorientating". This exploration thus aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the multifaceted role of women in the intellectual and cultural exchanges of the nineteenth century, offering insights into the ways travel writing served as both a personal narrative and a public instrument for cross-cultural dialogue.

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SEM3. “In behalf of the human race”: Reviving *The Liberal* and liberalism

13 September h. 8:30-11:00, PN 19

Convenors

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Abstract

The Liberal: Verse and Prose from the South was a short-lived but influential literary and political periodical published in London in 1822–23 and co-edited in Pisa and Genoa by prominent intellectuals including Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley led by Leigh Hunt. This publication emerged in the early 1820s as a platform for the trio’s shared vision of artistic freedom, political reform, and social justice. Reflecting the radical ideals of the time, *The Liberal* advocated for liberty, individual rights, and the critique of political and social institutions, particularly those representing authoritarianism and oppression. It featured original poetry, essays, translations, short stories, and commentary, and its contributors included not only Byron, Hunt, and Shelley but also other figures such as Mary Shelley and the radical journalist William Hazlitt. Though made up of only four issues, the periodical is a pivotal, yet often overlooked, historical document, useful for understanding early 19th-century intersections of political thought and literary innovation, as it provided a critical space for the circulation of ideas central to Romantic-period debates and the early phases of liberalism in Britain.

This seminar aims to bring together a range of scholarly perspectives on *The Liberal* in order to reconsider how it reflects both the ambitions and limitations of Romantic political radicalism, as well as its broader literary and cultural implications for European liberal culture. The seminar intends to illuminate the complex relationship between literature and politics in the early 19th century, focusing on the ways in which, through *The Liberal*, Byron, Shelley, and Hunt engaged with contemporary debates over liberty, authority, and the role of the artist in effecting social change.

Objectives:

- to examine *The Liberal* as a collaborative work that reflects the distinct political and poetic visions of its contributors
- to reposition *The Liberal* in 1820s culture in Britain and Italy
- to investigate its relationship to the political and social context of post-Napoleonic Europe, particularly in regard to radicalism and liberal culture
- to consider its legacy in the broader context of Romanticism, of Anglo-Italian relations, and its continued relevance to contemporary discussions of literature and politics.

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SEM3. Papers

13 September h. 8:30-11:00, PN 19

- “And my poor Fool is hanged!” *Nineteenth-century Shakespeares in The Liberal* (Giacomo Ferrari, Università degli Studi di Firenze)
- “A journal to be directed against everything in religion, in morals and probably in government and literature”: William Wordsworth and/in *The Liberal* (Alessia Testori, Università di Parma)

- *Promoting “the true Italian language” in Britain: Leigh Hunt as a reviewer and translator for The Liberal* (Fabio Liberto, Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna)
- *The erotic Liberal in James Joyce and Salman Rushdie* (Alessandra Crotti, Sapienza Università di Roma)
- *“We little band of atheistical perverts, free-lovers, we poeticals” : Reviving The Liberal and liberalism in neo-romantic biodrama* (Maria Elena Capitani, Università di Parma)

SEM3. Abstracts

“We little band of atheistical perverts, free-lovers, we poeticals”: Reviving *The Liberal* and liberalism in neo-romantic biodrama

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The Romantic period generated a number of travelling figures and narratives that still haunt the cultural imagination, both nationally and globally. Thus, it is hardly surprising that the Romantic heritage should be the object of sustained dramatisations; instead, what is remarkable is that these re-imaginings have not yet been investigated as a cohesive phenomenon. Addressing this scholarly deficit, this paper will explore two contemporary plays on P.B. Shelley, focusing on the representation of *The Liberal* and liberalism in Neo-Romantic biodrama.

More specifically, I will examine Howard Brenton’s *Bloody Poetry* (1984), which was commissioned by Foco Novo Theatre Company and first presented at the Haymarket Theatre, Leicester, a biodrama reprising some iconic moments in the transnational trajectories of P.B. Shelley and his circle as well as their radical ideas and scandalous lifestyle. Here, the British dramatist aimed “to salute their Utopian aspirations for which, in different ways, they gave their lives. It is a celebration of a magnificent failure” (Brenton, 1989: xiv). The short-lived *Liberal* venture is briefly but explicitly mentioned in the tenth scene of the second act, in which Shelley, on a Ligurian beach with Byron, defines the periodical as “[a] voice in England – radical, fierce, uncompromising” (303).

If Brenton’s play covers a longer time span (1816-1822) and includes multiple locations (Switzerland, England, and Italy), Maggie Rose’s unpublished *Shelley: A Diet for Peace* (2022), first performed in La Spezia by a group of secondary-school students, entirely takes place at Casa Magni on the 1st July 2022, two hundred years after the Romantic poet sailed off from San Terenzo to Leghorn to meet Byron and Leigh Hunt in Pisa about *The Liberal*, just one week before his death. In the first version of this one-act play, Rose imagines an “impossible encounter” (2022: 1) between Shelley and a twenty-first-century Scottish journalist, Susan Morgan, who interviews him on his “natural diet”. Despite the focus on vegetarianism, Shelley constantly digresses and their stimulating conversation ranges from free love to literature and politics.

This paper thus aims to put Brenton’s and Rose’s dramatic recreations of Shelley’s life on the map as part of a multifaceted and resonant cultural manifestation, while throwing light on the academically neglected but significant presence of *The Liberal* and liberalism in contemporary British playwriting.

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The erotic *Liberal* in James Joyce and Salman Rushdie

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In *Byron: the Erotic Liberal* (2001), Jonathan D. Gross introduces the concept of “erotic liberalism” to describe the interplay between liberal politics and erotic sensibility in Byron’s works. More broadly, the four issues of *The Liberal* reveal the contours of a shared political vision among its contributors, one in which eros functions as a tool of political resistance intimately tied to cosmopolitanism, censorship, and intellectual dissidence. *The Liberal*’s engagement with erotic liberalism anticipates, I will argue, key thematic and formal concerns of twentieth-century authors such as James Joyce and Salman Rushdie, whose works similarly entwine sexual and political transgressions as acts of dissent. While neither writer engages directly with *The Liberal*, the periodical survives in their works both in form and in function as an articulation of their shared investment in the Romantic tradition. This is particularly evident in *Ulysses* (1922) and *The Satanic Verses* (1988), where *The Liberal*’s distinctive mode of erotic liberalism works as a conceptual and formal template for the construction of Joyce’s and Rushdie’s dislocated, yet defiant heroes and heroines, heirs to the erotic liberal of the Romantics.

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“And my poor Fool is hanged!” Nineteenth-century Shakespeares in *The Liberal*

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The paper will address the presence and meanings of Shakespeare in *The Liberal* (1822-1823). The issue will be approached from two perspectives: firstly, a general assessment will be made of the quotations of or references to the Bard and his works in the four issues of the periodical; general considerations will be made as to the intention behind such references, in light of the contemporary critical and popular views on Shakespeare. Secondly, the only contribution to *The Liberal* specifically about Shakespeare – Charles Armitage Brown’s “Shakespear’s Fools” – will be analysed. The reading of the essay will not so much underline its critical merits and faults, as consider its many references to the Shakespearean literary-philological debate and theatre scene of the time, in order to position it in these spheres. The conclusion will be an attempt to decipher the purpose and implications of the presence of “Shakespear’s Fools” in the periodical. In particular, and with reference to the other mentions of Shakespeare in the four issues, the essay will be positioned with respect to the cultural, poetical, and political ‘agenda’ of *The Liberal*.

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Promoting “the true Italian language” in Britain: Leigh Hunt as a reviewer and translator for *The Liberal*

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Leigh Hunt (1784-1859) played a pivotal role in the conception and editing of *The Liberal* (1822-23). Following his blatantly sarcastic claim that the “object of our work is not political” (*TL*, n. 1, p. vii), Hunt envisioned *The Liberal* as a platform for radical ideals that were to be conveyed through a specific selection of foreign materials and a panoply of original literary pieces. The radical subtext that runs through the four issues of the periodical appears evident in the attempt of its contributors to promote foreign cultures in Britain. Even more radical was the specific focus on southern European literatures, which the subtitle of the periodical readily entails. The centrality of Italian literature and culture in the periodical is remarkably sustained by Hunt’s own contributions, from his well-known *Letters from Abroad*, serialised in all four issues of *The Liberal*, to his short story ‘The Florentine Lover’.

This paper intends to examine Hunt’s engagement with Italian language and literature in some of the translations he provided for the periodical. One article, in particular, offers interesting insights on Hunt’s strategies and practices as a reviewer, editor, and translator. In “The Giuli Tre”, published in the second issue of *The Liberal*, Hunt presents his readers with a review of Giambattista Casti’s collection of sonnets *I tre giuli* (1762). In the article, which includes typical elements of his periodical writing style, Hunt meticulously contextualises Casti’s work within the frame of reference of its British addressees, providing short summaries of some of the sonnets. To make his readers more familiar with the original text, Hunt also includes a few transcriptions of Casti’s sonnets as well as his own literary translation. The proposed paper will shed light on a number of aspects revolving around Hunt’s review and translation, on the strategies that he uses to present the text to the British audience, and on the impact the article had on the dissemination of Casti’s work in Britain.

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“A journal to be directed against everything in religion, in morals and probably in government and literature”: William Wordsworth and/in *The Liberal*

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On 20th April 1822, in a letter to Walter Savage Lindor, William Wordsworth expressed his strong aversion to *The Liberal*: “Byron, Shelley, Moore, Leigh Hunt [...] are too lay their heads together in some Town of Italy, for the purpose of conducting a journal to be directed against everything in religion, in morals and probably in government and literature”. Despite this seemingly unwarranted hostility towards the editorial project, the poet—whom Byron mockingly referred to as “Wordswords” and “Turdsword”—emerges as a significant influence on the second generation of Romantic poets, as well as on *The Liberal* itself, both in poetic and political terms. This paper aims to investigate Wordsworth’s complex presence in *The Liberal*, through a critical analysis of the following works: Leigh Hunt’s *The Dogs* (1823), William Hazlitt’s *On the Scotch Character* (1823) and *My First Acquaintance with Poets* (1823). Each of these lyrical and reflective pieces discusses the figure of Wordsworth from a distinct perspective, while also exploring the significant influence that the first-generation Romantic poets had on the second. These early Romantics are examined not only as subjects of critique within the periodical, but also as foundational voices in shaping the liberal political ideology embraced by the editors of the Anglo-Italian periodical. Accordingly, this paper examines the roots of Wordsworth’s opposition to *The Liberal* and his seldom-explored criticism of said periodical, which briefly appears in his correspondence, as well as in *The Westmorland Gazette* (1818-ongoing). This talk also considers the motivations behind Wordsworth’s political apostasy—a shift that Byron and Hazlitt both attributed to his appointment as Distributor of Stamps, a position they

believed compromised his “mental independence” (Medwin, 1824, 237) and marked his estrangement from liberal ideals. Ultimately, this paper seeks to address the following question: Would Wordsworth have supported—and perhaps even contributed to—*The Liberal* if it had been conceived and published during his youth, at a time when he was a passionate liberal poet and a supporter of the French Revolution?

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SEM4. British Romantic literature as cultural heritage: Texts, objects and places

4A 12 September h. 14:00-16:00, S5 Moro

4B 12 September h. 16:30-19:00, S5 Moro

Convenors

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Abstract

The seminar intends to explore the many ways in which British literature of the Romantic period becomes a site of cultural heritage when writers, texts, and places become objects of material enquiry. Key to this are two concepts: on the one hand, the idea of literature as ‘heritage’ finds its rationale in the recently redefined guidelines of the UNESCO Convention (2017), which introduces the notion of ‘cultural landscape’ as one that is able to trigger specific associations in the human mind, connecting a number of artifacts, literary texts included, with places. On the other hand, the idea of the humanities, and therefore literature, as cultural heritage puts institutions, places and practices at a centre stage for materialist and neo-materialist investigations (Gillman, 2010). This perspective is especially crucial at present in an attempt to account for the complex interplay between tangible and intangible elements in a world dominated by digital practices.

A practice grounded in this perspective is certainly literary tourism (Palmer & Tivers, 2019), which traditionally designs destinations and shapes itineraries, conflating the tourist's gaze (Urry and Larsen, 2011) with the expectations of the readers. Romantic literature offers many an example of this, both in the UK and abroad. The period witnessed the rise of a new attention to natural and cultural sites that promoted conservatism, and the institutionalization of places such as Dove Cottage, Chawton House, Keats House at Hampstead, and the Keats-Shelley House in UK and *Golfo dei Poeti* in Italy further demonstrate this (Castellano, 2013; Bevan, 2023). In their role as sites of memory (Nora, 1989), these places give new meanings and realities to the literary text, often suggesting alternative stories as in the case of Chatsworth House, which lives in the popular imagination as ‘the real’ Pemberley owing to the success of the BBC adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* (1995). At the same time, the role of institutions is crucial in reshaping the transmission of Romantic literature as cultural heritage, bringing about new scenarios where the complex relationship between material textual holdings, and the cultural practices in which they are entangled, invites novel investigation (Sommer, 2025). The Convenors invite proposals for papers exploring the ways in which British literature of the Romantic period redefines the role of the humanities in contemporary context by becoming cultural heritage.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- literature as material heritage
- tourist itineraries and experiences connected with British Romantic literature in the UK and abroad
- textual materiality
- sites of memory and the role of institutions
- literary mementos and souvenirs.

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SEM4. Papers

4A 12 September h. 14:00-16:00, S5 Moro

- *Slavery, abolition and cultural memory: The role of the museum* (Serena Baiesi, Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna)
- *From Netley Abbey to Northanger Abbey: Gothic tourism and the cultural legacy of the dissolution of the monasteries* (Caterina Daolio, Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna)
- *From chivalric spectacle to cultural landscape: Ivanhoe's legacy in Ashby-de-la-Zouch* (Angel Antonio De Oliveira Amata, Università di Pisa)

4B 12 September h. 16:30-18:30, S5 Moro

- *From verse to vista: Romantic memory and place-making in Lerici and Portovenere* (Marco Canani, Università degli Studi di Milano)
- *Piazza di Spagna: British Romanticism's gateway to Italy and Europe* (Andrew Brayley, Università di Catania)
- *The Euganean Hills and their romantic heritage: Past and present* (Myriam Di Maio, Università degli Studi "G. d'Annunzio" Chieti-Pescara)

SEM4. Abstracts

Slavery, abolition and cultural memory: The role of the museum

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Since the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade in Britain in 2007, universities, cultural institutions, museums, and art galleries around the world have increasingly sought new ways to interpret, discuss, and represent the often painful history of British involvement in the transatlantic slave trade, which reached its peak between the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. A key challenge shared by educational institutions and museums has been how to convey this complex history to diverse audiences in an accessible, engaging, and respectful manner.

In response, literary scholars—particularly those focused on the Romantic period—and museum curators have revised their methodologies, employing texts and objects as powerful tools to explore this pivotal historical era, which continues to resonate in contemporary society. In particular, museums have increasingly incorporated physical artifacts, audiovisual materials, personal narratives, and interpretive texts to encourage active dialogue and reflection. This emphasis on sensory engagement echoes the strategies of nineteenth-century abolitionist writers, who used poems, novels, and pamphlets to elicit emotional and embodied responses from their readers.

British museums such as *Wilberforce House* and the *Equiano Exhibition* at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery actively address the legacy of slavery using modern technology. These institutions employ interactive elements—such as outline drawings and recessed display spaces—to evoke the confined conditions of the Middle Passage. Similarly, the *International Slavery Museum in Liverpool* utilizes audiovisual installations to communicate lived experiences. Such embodied approaches mark important efforts to narrate the history of slavery through sensory and corporeal means.

This talk examines how nineteenth-century narrative strategies of abolition in Britain are reinterpreted and performed in contemporary museum spaces alongside the display of objects engaging sight and sense in a path of remembrance and awareness. It argues that integrating literary approaches with museum practices can deepen public understanding of both the historical realities and the enduring legacies of slavery and abolition in global society.

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Piazza di Spagna: British Romanticism's gateway to Italy and Europe

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The Keats Shelley Memorial House in Piazza di Spagna, Rome, is the house where Keats lived the last three months of his life. To quote a former curator of the house: “In every way it is an impressive house, belonging to Piazza di Spagna, that very Roman piazza, but because of Keats, belonging to the world” (Cacciatore, 1970). At the same time we may point out that this “very Roman piazza” was, after the Napoleonic Wars, virtually an English colony (Morgan, 1824, II, 248). The centrality and importance of Piazza di Spagna as a cultural hub is emphasised in the following passage which quotes G. M. Trevelyan: “From the Piazza di Spagna the ordinary nineteenth century tourist could radiate in all directions to that vast outer world of Rome which is ‘the heart of Europe and the chronicle of Man’s long march to civilization’” (Rogers, 1970). Gabriele D’Annunzio seems to have recognised the importance of the piazza when he says of one of his characters: “Egli avrebbe dato... il Campo Vaccino per la piazza di Spagna” (D’Annunzio, 2016, 38). The house is the seat of a very important library where we can find in particular the works of the second generation of Romantic poets. Thus, Piazza di Spagna is the site of a unique cultural heritage which enriches the humanities and acts as a bridge between English and Italian cultures. It is also in a zone with which Shelley, his wife Mary and Byron were familiar. At the same time, it is important to remember that these writers not only enriched the humanities but also showed themselves to be humane by identifying themselves with the struggles of the Italians against Austria. This applies in particular to Byron who, through his connections with the family of his last mistress, Teresa Guiccioli, collaborated with the carbonari. The aim of my paper is to show how this cultural heritage which bears witness to Anglo-Italian cooperation down the centuries can continue to act as a bridge between England and Italy, not to speak of Europe, by drawing on the lessons of the past in order to shape the future. It is not an accident the King Charles, in his speech to the Italian Parliament spoke about “two peoples, two nations whose stories are deeply intertwined-including of course with that of our European continent”, and this at a time when, notwithstanding Brexit, the United Kingdom seems to be moving closer to Europe.

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From verse to vista: Romantic memory and place-making in Lerici and Portovenere

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The Cinque Terre, a series of five towns on the coast of Liguria, first gained popularity as a tourist destination in the 1970s due to their scenic allure, but also as the result of place branding strategies. In 1997, UNESCO included the area in the World Heritage Site list, acknowledging its “outstanding universal value” as a model of sustainable interaction between the environment and anthropic presence (UNESCO, 2025; Vegnuti, 2020). Two towns, Lerici and Portovenere, are an especially significant destination for literary tourism because of their association with British Romantic poets. In April 1822, the Shelleys rented Casa Magni in San Terenzo, while Byron allegedly swam across the Gulf of La Spezia. Notwithstanding the lack of documentary and literary records, the event is part of an enduring legend, as the Grotta Byron suggests. Shelley’s tragic death off the coast of Viareggio further contributed to branding Cinque Terre as a “lieu de mémoire” (Nora, 1989), placing the area not only on the tourist map, but also in cultural memory. In this paper I argue that “The Gulf of Poets”, the toponymic metaphor with which the Gulf of La Spezia is referred to, calls for an examination of the role of Byron and Shelley in constructing the cultural identity of the region between history, literature, and

discursivity (O'Neill 2019; Ramazani, 2020; MacLeod 2024). Accordingly, I firstly suggest that Portovenere and Lerici are instances of “cultural landscape” as defined by the UNESCO Convention (2017) in that their institutionalization as sites of memory relies on associations between places and cultural artifacts. Secondly, I examine the ways in which Shelley’s and Byron’s poetry has been instrumental in constructing the Gulf of Poets as a heritage site, creating travel itineraries through a storytelling approach that predates the global popularity of Cinque Terre. Finally, I focus on the local celebration of literary heritage through events such as the “Coppa Byron”, an annual swimming competition across the Gulf, and the “Sentiero delle parole”, a walking tour in Lerici that combines landscape and poetry. These initiatives ritualise and recontextualise Byron’s and Shelley’s literary legacy, transforming it into an enduring cultural asset.

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From Netley Abbey to Northanger Abbey: Gothic tourism and the cultural legacy of the dissolution of the monasteries

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This paper examines the role of Netley Abbey (Hampshire, England) as a site of particular importance to the rise of both the Gothic aesthetic and Gothic tourism in the XVIII century (Townshend, 2014, 378). The abbey, founded in the XIII century by bishop of Winchester Peter des Roches, like many other religious buildings, fell prey to King Henry VIII’s Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1536. Consequently, the monastic life of the Cistercian monastery came to an abrupt end and the edifice was converted into a great country mansion which was abandoned at the beginning of the XVIII century. The neglected site came to be celebrated as a romantic ruin and started to attract visitors, especially artists and also celebrated authors such as Horace Walpole and Thomas Gray. According to Dale Townshend, between the years 1764 and 1807 the ruins of Netley prompted and inspired approximately ten poetic responses (Townshend, 2024, 382). In addition, the abbey was also included in various tourist guidebooks of the time, such as Thomas Linden’s, who recommended a visit to the site also due to the long-established legend of the abbey’s haunting related to the death of local speculator Walter Taylor (Butler, 2019, 3). Hence Netley ruins became increasingly attractive in the second half of the XVIII century, as the romantic movement gathered strength and people were increasingly interested in England’s religious and medieval past (Hare, 1993, 222). It is reported that Jane Austen herself visited Netley in 1807, finding inspiration for her novel *Northanger Abbey* (1817). Thus, apart from assessing Netley Abbey’s significance as a culturally significant destination for eighteenth-century travellers who sought out ruins, churches, and graveyards that stimulated the feelings of horror and awe they knew from Graveyard Poetry and popular fiction (Uden, 2022, 10), the aim of this article is also to consider Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* as a case study to evaluate the impact on society of the Suppression of the Monasteries. Namely, this novel is believed to articulate a sense of loss over the dissolution of the monasteries, which in the past had served as spaces of hospitality and universal welcome (Cox, 2019, 6). In the novel, Austen situates the narrative within the ruins of a dissolved English monastery to reflect on and foreground the socio-economic and religious consequences of the Dissolution, revealing a longstanding engagement with England’s monastic past and a sense of nostalgia for the dissolved abbeys (Moore, 2011, 57, 61).

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From chivalric spectacle to cultural landscape: *Ivanhoe*'s legacy in Ashby-de-la-Zouch

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This paper aims to explore the legacy of *Ivanhoe* (1819) by Walter Scott, from the 19th century re-enactments of medieval tournaments to the cultural and identity-making processes of the English town of Ashby-de-la-Zouch, a key setting in the novel's plot. Through a historical, literary, and cultural analysis, I aim to show how Scott's narrative acted as a driving force in the development of commemorative and touristic practices during the nineteenth century—such as the Eglinton Tournament of 1839 in Scotland (Bell, 2005; Pionke, 2008) and the creation of the Ivanhoe Baths in Ashby-de-la-Zouch—and how it continues to exert a significant influence on the town's public memory and symbolic economy. It is particularly interesting to observe that, although *Ivanhoe* no longer holds the cultural prominence it enjoyed in the 19th and early 20th centuries, it still plays an important role in shaping Ashby-de-la-Zouch's identity. This influence persists through the formation of *lieux de mémoire* (Nora, 1989) and the novel's continued circulation across various media forms (Rigney 2012). Today, *Ivanhoe* remains central to institutional initiatives that consolidate its status as intangible cultural heritage, including local museum exhibitions, place-naming (Ivanhoe College, Ivanhoe Line), and heritage promotion activities led by the English Heritage association. By situating this case study within the framework of "cultural landscapes" (UNESCO, 2017), this paper offers a concrete example of how British Romantic literature can generate layered forms of cultural heritage, capable of shaping space, institutions, and collective practices up to the present day.

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The Euganean Hills and their romantic heritage: Past and present

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In the summer of 1818, after spending a short period at the Baths of Lucca, Mary and Percy Bysshe Shelley continued their Grand Tour and travelled separately to Este (Padua), where they took up lodgings in an old villa Lord Byron had rented but allegedly never occupied (Selmin, 2017). Nestled in the hills a few miles away from Petrarch's house and tomb, which they visited, the Euganean Hills became their home until the next season, inspiring Shelley to write some of his most accomplished works: there he began his *Prometheus Unbound* and wrote *Julian and Maddalo* and *Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills*. This last poem was the result of "a day's excursion among those lovely mountains which surround what was once the retreat [...] of Petrarch," proving the perfect place to shape the poet's Romantic self (Shelley, 2008). As Mary recalls in her notes, the young poet would spend most of his time in the summer house garden, "which [he] made his study," amazed by the beauty of the surrounding landscape and fascinated by its literary tradition and medieval past (Dowling, 2008). Struck by the picturesque beauty of the place, Mary herself set part of her historical novel *Valperga* in Este (1823). Thus, the Euganean territory quickly became part of these writers' Romantic imagination; their

works from the period often evoke the ex-Capuchin convent where they dwelled, the massive castle, the green hills with their exquisite vegetation, and Petrarch's hamlet. Today, their short but significant stay is still remembered and celebrated by the municipality of Este and other local organisations. The villa facing the Carrarese castle is privately owned but remains associated with Byron and the Shelleys and is open to occasional visitors. As part of the "Francesco Petrarca and the Euganean Hills Literary Park," the place has been equipped with commemorative plaques quoting famous passages, thus becoming a pilgrimage site for experts and literature enthusiasts. Since 2024, the entire area has also been designated a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, combining sustainability, ecotourism, and cultural promotion. The paper aims to examine the impact that English Romantic writers of the second generation have had on the Euganean territory, as well as their role in becoming a fundamental part of its long-established literary tradition and cultural heritage. It also aims to address the contemporary phenomenon of literary tourism and the institutionalisation of mixed literary trails.

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SEM5. U/Dys/Eco-topias: Hope and despair in anthropocenic literature

13 September h. 8:30-11:00, PN 11

Convenors

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Abstract

Since Moore's *Utopia* (1516), ideal nowhere lands envisioning a "redeemed future" (Garrard, 2004: 37) have often morphed into dystopian stories that "frighten and warn, [engaging] with pressing global concerns" (Basu, Broad, & Hintz, 2013: 1). From Wells and Perkins to Dick and Atwood, from *The Matrix* and *Avatar* to *Wall-e*, imaginary futuristic scenarios increasingly address climate change, environmental disaster, and humanity's destiny.

In today's Anthropocene era, eco-anxiety dominates, with young adult dystopias like *Uglies*, *The Hunger Games*, and *Divergent* becoming blockbuster films, and post-apocalyptic tales like McCarthy's *The Road* (2006) earning literary prizes and worldwide acclaim. Recent studies, however, question dystopic narratives' effects. Rather than alerting readers to urgent environmental needs, the doom-and-gloom rhetoric (Arnold, 2018), by undermining people's *locus of control* (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002), often triggers flight, fight, or freeze responses (Wakeman in Young, 2022), generating inactivity, escapism, or aggression. Ecotopias and solarpunk fiction, instead, inspire positive emotions like hope and desire. These narratives portray "future worlds that [are] not depressing but instead so enticing that they might lead us to yearn for a new way of being" (Weik von Mossner, 2017, 163), encouraging activism and change.

This seminar invites contributions on classic or recent works read through the lens of Climate Change and the Anthropocene, Petrocultures and Energy Humanities, Posthumanism, and Ecocriticism. Moreover, we are interested in papers that apply affect studies to explore how these imaginary worlds influence readers' reactions and behaviour.

Possible topics include but are not limited to:

- U/Dys/Eco-topias and Ecoanxiety and Solastalgia
- U/Dys/Eco-topias, Affect Studies and Empirical Ecocriticism
- U/Dys/Eco-topias, Petrocultures and Energy Humanities
- Cyberpunk, Solarpunk, & co.
- Eco-Apocalypses and Cli-fi
- U/Dys/Eco-topias, Ecocriticism, Ecofeminism, and the Environmental Humanities
- U/Dys/Eco-topias, Posthumanism and New Materialism
- U/Dys/Eco-topias rhetoric, stylistics, and discourses
- U/Dys/Eco-topias and children's literature, picturebooks, games, and films.

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SEM5. Papers

13 September h. 8:30-11:00, PN 11

- *The second creation. Intermediality and ecocritical discourse in Under Milk Wood* (Davide Crosara, Sapienza Università di Roma)
- *"Focused anger" and "radical hope" in young adult climate fiction: an affective reading of Lauren James's Green Rising* (Chiara Xausa, Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna)

- *Narrating resistance: YA dystopias and the ecological imagination* (Carolina Celeste Granini, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia)
- *Expecting the end: Affective turns and green utopianism in The Future* (Asia Battiloro, Sapienza Università di Roma / University of Silesia in Katowice)

SEM5. Abstracts

Expecting the end: Affective turns and green utopianism in *The Future*

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Abstract

Since the early 2000s, the Anthropocene has come to signify not just a geological epoch but also a culturally resonant paradigm shaped by awareness of human-driven ecological disruption (Keller, 2017). In this context, eco-narratives have become key forms of cultural expression. From the perspective of audience-reception studies, they serve analytical and didactic functions by reframing scientific knowledge through affective strategies, thereby shaping readers' psychological, cultural, and ecopolitical responses (Benedetti, 2021; Schneider-Mayerson, 2018; Schneider-Mayerson et al., 2023). Reflecting this concern with affect, Lisa Garforth (2018) identifies "green utopianism" as a key mode through which contemporary Western literature imagines ecological futures that resist dystopian closure and offer readers a renewed sense of hope.

Combining a reader-oriented approach with insights from Garforth's (2018) study, I argue that Naomi Alderman's *The Future* (2023) exemplifies a post-millennial articulation of green utopianism. Set in a near-future United States shaped by climate crisis, inequality, and billionaire-controlled AI systems, the novel links environmental collapse to religious apocalypticism. The apocalyptic tone, sustained by the CEOs—central characters who believe in an AI-predicted global catastrophe—is further intensified through biblical references which are repurposed in digital survivalist forums as both ecological prophecy and moral rationale. Drawing on Garforth (2018), I argue that *The Future* reimagines apocalypticism not as a culmination, but as a generative space for transformation. In fact, Garforth (2018, 23, 109) contends that twenty-first-century green utopias harness emotions such as fear, nostalgia, and mourning to give rise to eco-utopian possibilities. Consistent with this view of apocalypse-induced utopianism, Alderman's novel engages deeply with apocalyptic tropes and elite fantasies of survival, only to ultimately subvert them. The anticipated collapse is revealed to be a fabrication, and the CEOs' exile unexpectedly facilitates the conversion of harmful tech systems into tools for ecological restoration. By resisting dystopian closure, the narrative redirects its emotional intensity toward imaginative agency and empowerment.

The Future's affective trajectory aligns with what Alexa Weik von Mossner identifies as a central challenge for environmental narratives: the need to balance hope and despair. Overly bleak representations, she argues, risk alienating readers or inducing emotional paralysis rather than encouraging action (2017, 98). Alderman's novel responds to this challenge by drawing readers into emotional proximity with crisis, then reorienting that affective investment toward utopian transformation. In doing so, it reframes the future not as a fixed endpoint, but as a site of open-ended possibility.

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The second creation. Intermediality and ecocritical discourse in *Under Milk Wood*

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The long and troubled genetic history of *Under Milk Wood* (1953) testifies Dylan Thomas' complex reaction to postwar anxieties. Scenes overtly charged with references to repression and confinement were expunged from the last draft of the "play for voices". The influence of coeval radio broadcasts which aired characters roaming through bombed cities (*Return Journey* being probably the most relevant example of this stance) was lessened to the point that the last works of Thomas were accused of regressive, nostalgic escapism. The aim of this paper is to reframe *Under Milk Wood* as a work wittingly enacting a second creation after the catastrophic annihilation of the Second World War. The *Piece for Radio* tests the boundaries of genre, delineating an intermedial perspective where poetry, theatre, radio and cinema converge and collide. It simultaneously voices a new language and a new sense of place: the village of Llareggub is a postwar utopia where the lexicon of war economy metamorphoses into a secular breath of the Spirit: "a breeze from the creased water sighs the streets" (Thomas, 2000, 62). The dead and the living share a new notion of creaturality: far from being docile and reified beings, they voice and embody a second creation where a posthuman version of the pastoral emerges.

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Narrating resistance: YA dystopias and the ecological imagination

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Young Adult and Children's Literature serve as critical sites for negotiating identity, ethical agency and imaginative responses to crisis. In the context of the Anthropocene, climate fiction aimed at younger audiences emerges not merely as cautionary narrative but as a pedagogical tool that cultivates ecological awareness and resilience. This paper examines how three contemporary YA novels, Saci Lloyd's *The Carbon Diaries 2015* (2008), Laura Lam's *Goldilocks* (2020) and Lauren James's *Green Rising* (2021), use near-future scenarios to engage with the climate crisis through emotionally resonant, youth-centered narratives. While adult climate fiction leans heavily on apocalyptic pessimism, these texts combine rebellion, realism and a necessary "glimmer of hope" (Hintz, 2003).

Lloyd's *The Carbon Diaries 2015* is the most realistic representation of a future Britain under stringent carbon rationing. The story is narrated through the diary of sixteen-year-old Laura. As climate regulation reshapes daily life, from energy use to food access, the novel explores the tensions of living sustainably and foregrounds personal growth and collective adaptation. *Goldilocks* envisions a climate-ravaged Earth governed by patriarchal authoritarianism, prompting five women to steal a spacecraft and flee toward a habitable exoplanet. Blending feminist ecofuturism with themes of reproductive politics, survival ethics and personal betrayal, the novel dramatizes how ecological breakdown intersects with maternal bonds, resistance and agency. In *Green Rising*, teenagers around the globe develop "Greenfingers" supernatural abilities to grow plants from their skin. As their powers are craved by corporate interests, protagonists must navigate environmental ethics, class politics and the burden of activism. Through its multimedia narrative and the use of tweets, podcasts and forum posts, the novel becomes a dynamic allegory for contemporary climate resistance.

Grounded in Ecocriticism and Children's Literature Studies, the paper argues that these narratives reimagine ecological storytelling not as paralyzing doom, but as affectively rich and pedagogically empowering. By foregrounding resilience, interconnectedness and the power of adaptability, these texts also offer what Weik von Mossner (2017) terms "affective ecologies": emotional landscapes that foster desire for transformation rather than retreat. They invite young readers to see themselves as agents of change, to critically think about contemporary issues with narrative resources to imagine and enact better futures. By re-coding dystopia with ecotopian sensibilities, *the three YA dystopias* exemplify a literary movement that shifts climate discourse from fatalism to hope for the future, helping a generation not just inherit crisis but learn to re-story it.

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“Focused anger” and “radical hope” in young adult climate fiction: An affective reading of Lauren James’s *Green Rising*

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According to a global survey published in Lancet Planetary Health in 2021, nearly 60% of young people (aged 16-25) are very or extremely worried about the future of the planet (Hickman et al.). These feelings of helplessness are amplified by a sense of intergenerational injustice that makes many young people feel abandoned. At the same time, climate change is often framed as a tale of and for the children (Rogers), with climate change legacy bestowed upon future generations. Investigating the role of YA climate fiction in helping young readers to cope with the negative emotions emerging in the Anthropocene, and to turn climate anxiety into ecological citizenship, is of the utmost importance. The potential of literature to promote hope for humankind in the post-Anthropocene is the subject of intensive research that stresses the central role of young generations in addressing anthropogenic changes in Earth's ecosystems (Oziewicz, 2022). With regard to YA literature, Alexa Weik von Mossner (2017) argues that reading a literary text is a form of mental simulation that engages readers' bodies in a way similar to their interaction with the real world. This chapter proposes a reading of Lauren James' *Green Rising* (2021), a recent YA climate fiction novel revolving around a group of teenagers displaying a supernatural ability to grow plants from their skin. The analysis will use YA literary criticism, affective ecocriticism, and critical dystopian/utopian studies to suggest that the entanglement of negative and positive emotions in the novel might help readers to go beyond the dichotomy of hope and despair.

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SEM6. Contemporary narratives of humanity in a dystopian world

6A 12 September h. 14:00-16:00, S1 Moro

6B 12 September h. 16:30-19:00, S1 Moro

Convenors

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Abstract

Since the beginning of the 20th century, dystopias have been far more popular than utopias: all contemporary forms of storytelling seem to compete to imagine a negative, if not catastrophic, future for humanity. Both utopias and dystopias have always constituted a critical mirror of contemporary society, but while the former project – in another place or time – a better version of reality, as in an inverted mirror (reality as it should be), the latter tend to act as a deforming mirror of a present that finds itself reflected in its worst version (reality as it should not be or become).

The seminar's objective is to explore the reasons behind the contemporary unabashed preference for the genre of dystopia. As Krishan Kumar noted in 1987, fictional dystopias frequently do not signify a sense of pessimism and resignation, but rather, they function as a form of caution, motivated by an aspiration to avert potential political, ideological, or technological scenarios that could result in adverse consequences. Consequently, dystopian narratives aim to provoke awareness and galvanize individuals to act ethically before the most unfavourable outcomes materialize. The prevailing threats to liberal democracy, the looming catastrophe of climate change and environmental collapse, along with the apprehensions engendered by the transhumanist vision of hyper-technologized bodies and lives, within a milieu increasingly dominated by algorithms and artificial intelligence (Harari, 2018), could collectively provide ample rationale for the pervasive presence of dystopian, if not apocalyptic, narratives.

However, should we totally surrender to the idea that the world will persist in being envisioned solely as it ought not to be, or to be recounted retro-topically, as Bauman (2017) laments, rather than explore the options for a better society? Might we consider alternatively Fredric Jameson's (2005) perspective, which emphasizes the importance of resuming utopia as a political instrument and an in-depth reflection on the future of humanity, intended to counteract dominant discourses that may seek to divert attention from any aspiration for change?

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SEM6. Papers

6A 12 September h. 14:00-16:00, S1 Moro

- *Asylum, surveillance, and nomadic erasure in Ali Smith's Gliff* (Giuseppe De Riso, Università di Napoli L'Orientale)
- *The algorithm is watching: Surveillance, paranoia, and dystopian logic in Lucy Kirkwood's That Is Not Who I Am* (Francesca Forlini, Sapienza Università di Roma)
- *Posthuman empathy and affective simulation: The case of Hotel Reverie* (Chiara Frescofiore, Università di Napoli L'Orientale)
- *Companion species in a pandemic dystopia: Humans and/as hybrids in the TV series Sweet Tooth (2021-2024)* (Maria Fiorella Suozzo, Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II)

6B 12 September h. 16:30-19:00, S1 Moro

- *Kazuo Ishiguro's altermodern utopia Klara and the Sun* (Laura Colombino, Università di Genova)

- *Gender fluidity and dystopian materiality in Aliya Whiteley's The Beauty (2014)* (Maddalena Carfora, Università di Napoli L'Orientale)
- *Re-storying the apocalypse in Indigenous speculative and science fiction* (Francesca Mussi, Università di Pisa)
- *The power of dystopian narratives at the crossroads between literature and media* (Lucia Esposito, Università di Roma Tre / Alessandra Ruggiero, Università degli Studi di Teramo)

SEM6. Abstracts

Gender fluidity and dystopian materiality in Aliya Whiteley's *The Beauty* (2014)

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This paper aims at exploring the disruptive nature of dystopian narratives in the way it displays in Aliya Whiteley's *The Beauty* (2014), whose fungal allegories and bodily metaphors offer critical tools to reflect on the social dimension they refer to. This novella deals with the issues of gender and sexual fluidity, represented by a transformative and hybrid corporeal materiality, as well as with the power of language in framing reality.

Set in The Valley of the Rocks, *The Beauty*'s story is narrated by Nate and concerns the events of a group of people who decided to make it their home to escape the overwhelming city life and be closer to nature. Suddenly, a strange event takes place, perturbing the daily life of that community, as well as the entire world: women get sick with some unknown illness and die; no woman survives, and they all disappear from the earth. Six years later, something is changing again: some yellow mushrooms are proliferating in the graveyard. This leads to a very unexpected consequence: hybrid creatures with both human and fungal traits come to life from the corpses of the women and the people in The Valley of the Rocks react with both desire and repulsion, resulting in opposite occurrences: birth and death, progeny and massacre.

Therefore, this contribution aims at investigating how Nate's narration, which advocates a deconstruction of social heteronormative dynamics, shows the reader a fictional world in which humanity, as we know it so far, has come to an end. The only chance for human beings to survive is transgressing boundaries and leaving violence behind to be part of such a process of regeneration and corporeal hybridisation.

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Kazuo Ishiguro's altermodern ustopia *Klara and the Sun*

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Ishiguro's fictional world is pervaded by the theme of memory and is usually structured around the undulations of a reminiscing mind. It is also invariably and predictably concerned with the past, whether distant or recent. His mildly sci-fi, dystopian novel *Never Let Me Go*, now celebrating its 20th anniversary, is no exception, but the recent companion work *Klara and the Sun* (2021) departs from this usual pattern, as Ishiguro sets this eerie tale of transhumanist aspirations and horrors sometime in the near or not-so-near future. The paper investigates the consequences of this temporal setting in terms of both aesthetics and genre by testing the applicability of the concepts of altermodernism and ustopia.

Much attention has been given to the neo-authoritarian development of the posthuman society that is depicted somewhat in the background but affects the feelings and psychology of the characters at the centre of *Klara and the Sun*. Much less attention has been paid to the formal aspects of the novel, its (alter)modernist fascination with the idea of stylistic

experimentalism – especially associated with the visual – at the dawn of a new technological age. Does the (alter)modernism of *Klara and the Sun* – which garners creative strength from futuristic technologies – sit problematically with its dystopian landscape and its cautionary intent? And to what extent can the concept of ustopia illuminate this conundrum of concern combined with new possibilities in this brave new world of human enhancement and friendly androids?

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Asylum, surveillance, and nomadic erasure in Ali Smith's *Gliff*

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This paper offers a critical reading of Ali Smith's *Gliff* (2024) as an illustration of William Walters' concept of domopolitics (2004). The novel depicts a near-future dystopian society where the state functions according to the logic of a household, prioritising control, pervasive surveillance, and the entrenchment of existing social hierarchies. Within this framework, *Gliff* portrays a society characterised by significantly reduced social interaction and mobility, rigidly monitored environments, and exacerbated inequalities based on gender and class. This leads to the marginalisation and erasure of individuals and groups who exist outside dominant economic structures, with a particular focus on nomadic communities. Drawing a parallel to the exclusionary motivations and consequences observed in the Brexit movement (as analysed by Heinz, 2025), the paper discusses how *Gliff* traces the difficult experiences of a family as they confront cultural and class-based discrimination, revealing a social landscape where widespread inequality cultivates a sense of stagnation and where even emotions become commodified. Ultimately, the paper contends that Smith's novel offers a powerful critique of contemporary asylum practices, presciently anticipating recent governmental policies concerning the deportation of migrants, while also exploring potential avenues for resistance and the development of resilience within this oppressive societal context.

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The power of dystopian narratives at the crossroads between literature and media

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Since the second half of the twentieth century, a considerable number of critical studies have sought to offer a systematic framework for understanding the terminological and conceptual domain of dystopia in relation to utopia. Others have delved into the classics of the dystopian genre, with a particular focus on those from the twentieth century; still others have explored the category of female utopia and dystopia. It is not surprising that a substantial number of ground-breaking

studies were published in the 1980s, when the now mythical year 1984 had arrived and we found ourselves coming to terms with a reality that, as Margaret Atwood noted while writing *The Handmaid's Tale* in that same year, did not seem too far removed from the one prefigured by George Orwell. Although further studies have been published since then, the critical attention paid to the genre does not appear to correspond with the exponential proliferation of dystopian narratives, often blending with horror, fantasy, science fiction, or apocalyptic genres. Even in the case of seemingly utopian visions, as Krishan Kumar pointed out, it is often precisely the fearful heterotopic concretisation (Foucault 1984) of certain dreams that are not meant to be realised – as the very definition of *u-topos* as *non-place* would indicate – that arouses the dystopian writer's anxiety, indignation and upside-down dreams.

The crossover between literature and visual media is a distinctive feature of these narratives. This is exemplified by the sequel to *The Handmaid's Tale* (*The Testaments*, 2019), which was released following the success of the television production of the same name, itself initially adapted from the novel; or the TV series *Black Mirror*, with its *Literary Season* frequently announced to be published and yet to come. And it is also due to the urgent necessity for authors to intervene politically, with a view to ensuring the broad dissemination of the ethical and political messages underlying their narratives.

This paper seeks to identify some inter- and trans-media products that are contributing to the broadening of the field, with a particular emphasis on the strands of technological, political and ecological dystopia.

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The algorithm is watching: Surveillance, paranoia, and dystopian logic in Lucy Kirkwood's *That Is Not Who I Am*
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In *That Is Not Who I Am* (2022), Lucy Kirkwood crafts a paranoid thriller for the age of digital surveillance. Framed as a censored play “leaked” to the public, the performance follows Noah, a civil servant whose belief that the state is monitoring and manipulating him escalates into isolation and radical suspicion. Through meta-theatrical devices and unreliable narration, the audience is drawn into the logic of mistrust that the play interrogates.

This paper reads *That Is Not Who I Am* as a dystopia of mediated perception: a world where truth, fiction, and control are increasingly indistinguishable, and identity is overwritten by systems too diffuse to resist. Drawing on Krishan Kumar's (1987) notion of dystopia as a critical mirror of the present, the play reflects the authoritarian structures embedded in everyday life. It also resonates with Yuval Noah Harari's (2018) concern that liberal democracy is being eroded by algorithmic governance, datafication, and the loss of human agency. In the play, Noah's paranoia emerges less as delusion than as a rational response to a world in which behaviour is tracked, predicted, and shaped — what Harari terms the “hacking of humans”. The enemy, in this dystopia, is not the state but the network: invisible, decentralised, and largely indifferent.

Kirkwood does not project future catastrophe. Instead, she reveals how dystopia operates, embedded in our habits of seeing, interpreting, and doubting. Her theatre becomes both critique and complicity, exposing the mechanics of mistrust and implicating the audience in the same feedback loop of paranoia that defines the post-truth era. The play asks not only “what is real?” but “who gets to decide?”, performing the ordinary mechanisms through which dystopia is normalised and sustained.

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Posthuman empathy and affective simulation: The case of *Hotel Reverie*

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“Empathy is our ability to identify what someone else is thinking or feeling and to respond to their thoughts and feelings with an appropriate emotion” (Baron-Cohen, 2011, p. 17). Within the framework of posthuman theory, scholars such as Braidotti (2013) promote an ethical paradigm in which empathy extends beyond the human, encompassing hybrid, artificial, and virtual forms of life. Similarly, Hayles (1999) explores how subjectivity may emerge in non-biological systems, arguing that the human/posthuman binary is increasingly obsolete. In this context, empathy becomes a cognitive-aesthetic process that enables resonance with algorithmic others.

The *Black Mirror* episode *Hotel Reverie* (Season 7, 2025) provides fertile ground for exploring the dynamics of posthuman empathy, understood as the capacity to develop a meaningful emotional response toward non-human entities. The protagonist forms an affective bond with an artificial intelligence that, as the narrative unfolds, begins to display signs of agency. This emergence of autonomy complicates both the protagonist’s emotional investment and the viewer’s own ethical engagement, raising questions about the authenticity of emotion and the nature of sentient experience.

Within this narrative configuration, affective simulation emerges both as a structuring device and as a site of ambiguity, prompting reflection on how technologically mediated environments reshape emotional life and redefine the conditions of relationality both in real and fictive world. As Ryan and Thon (2014) explain, emotional credibility in storytelling does not rely on factual truth but on the internal consistency of the narrative world, which fosters immersion and affective engagement. Fiction thus becomes an authentic experiential space.

This immersive quality is central to Calabrese’s (2017) argument that the reader’s (or viewer’s) empathetic response to fiction closely mirrors real-life experiences. *Hotel Reverie* operates as an emotional testing ground embedded in a media ecology shaped by algorithmic logic, where new forms of empathy are developed. Rather than offering a moralizing stance, the narrative foregrounds the complexities and ethical tensions inherent in posthuman affective experience. In doing so, it intervenes in contemporary dystopian discourse by depicting a future where emotional life is determined by technological processes, raising critical questions about relationality, agency, and the boundaries of the human.

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Re-storying the apocalypse in Indigenous speculative and science fiction

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Originating from the Greek *apokalypsis* (revelation), the word apocalypse is associated biblically with the end of the world (or the end of time) and secularly with a very serious event resulting in destruction or damage on a catastrophic scale, such as war or environmental disaster (Daschke 2014). Lawrence Buell has, in fact, argued that “[a]pocalypse is the single most powerful master metaphor that [mainstream] contemporary environmental imagination has at its disposal” (1995, 285).

This paper engages with the notion of the apocalypse with reference to settler colonial/Indigenous contexts and asks: what does apocalypse mean for Indigenous peoples? How do Indigenous writers engage with and represent the

apocalypse? Since the publication of *Walking the Clouds* (2012) – a seminal anthology edited by Anishinaabe author Grace Dillon – it is possible to observe a growing number of Indigenous science and speculative works, warranting a reflection on the extent to which Indigenous writers distance themselves from mainstream science fiction and Western understandings of the apocalypse to foreground Indigenous perspectives, traditional knowledges, and temporalities (Blaire Topash-Caldwell, 2020). As Danile Heath Justice (Cherokee) emphasises, when “the apocalypse or environmental catastrophe appears as overt theme in Indigenous writing, it’s more than speculation – it’s experiential, even in its most fantastical, because in a very real way it hasn’t ended” (2018, 168).

Focusing on Waubgeshig Rice (Anishinaabe)’s *Moon of the Crusted Snow* series (2018 and 2023) and Claire G. Coleman (Wirloimin Noongar)’s *Terra Nullius: A Novel* (2017), this paper examines how Indigenous authors reinvent the speculative and science fiction genre to challenge assumptions and expectations of the real, providing a way of re-shaping understandings of the past, present and future. As my analysis shows, these novels reconfigure the apocalypse as an experiential phenomenon rather than a cautionary metaphor that is often used in dystopic, futuristic narratives. More specifically, the discussion of these novels demonstrates how Indigenous fiction can become a powerful site of decolonisation, bringing to the fore the apocalyptic impacts of the settler colonial logic on Indigenous communities, cultures, and relations, while simultaneously regenerating Indigenous knowledge systems, traditional ways, sense of kinship and relationality.

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Companion species in a pandemic dystopia: humans and/as hybrids in the TV series *Sweet Tooth* (2021-2024)

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The TV series *Sweet Tooth* (2021–2024), adapted from the eponymous graphic novel by Canadian author Jeff Lemire (2009-2013), presents a post-apocalyptic dystopia in which a man-made ecological catastrophe precipitates the end of the human species and the rise of a new hybrid generation. These young beings, something more than critters but not quite humans, blend animal physical characteristics such as antlers and tails with unmistakably human traits and symbolize the hope for survival in a world marked by the scarcity of natural resources and a mysterious virus decimating humanity. The narrative is therefore to be intended as pandemic dystopia (Bulleid, 2023) within the contemporary genre of eco-science fiction.

The presence of hybrids evokes ongoing debates around non-normative subjectivities, the limits of humanity, and the possibilities of posthumanism. Their troubled coexistence with humans unfolds against the background of wild landscapes and apocalyptic settings, which makes them nearly protagonists of the story. Existing studies have thoroughly explored the series’ most apparent dystopian features using a variety of frameworks, ranging from an ecocritical perspective which focused on extractive resource exploitation, to a postcolonial lens attentive to the representation of indigenous mythology and spirituality; however, less attention has been paid to how the TV adaptation stages human-hybrid relations, at times diverging from its source material. These relationships are enacted within spaces that are far from neutral, but rather marked by power dynamics that shape and influence them: the Preserve, where young Gus bonds meaningfully with other hybrids; the biopolitical nightmare of Dr. Singh’s laboratory, where the scientist himself is trapped within the technocratic delusions of ‘old humanism’; the Alaskan outpost refuge; and the paradisiacal mirage of Yellowstone National Park. Each place serves as a site where identities, relations and hierarchies are constructed, contested and negotiated.

Focusing on the centrality of interpersonal relations among the characters, which resonate with Donna Haraway's concept of companion species, this paper proposes to analyse the construction of space in the series through the theoretical frameworks of heterotopia, biopolitics (Foucault, 1984), and liminality as a site of resistance (hooks, 1990).

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SEM7. Monstrous bodies: Deviance, transformation, and belonging in contemporary British fiction

13 September h. 8:30-11:00, S6 Moro

Convenors

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Abstract

This seminar will explore how contemporary British fiction (2000–2025) portrays monstrous or deviant bodies as sites of cultural anxieties and resistance. The works of authors such as Ian McEwan, Jeanette Winterson, Ali Smith, Julian Barnes, Zadie Smith, Guy Gunaratne, Mohsin Hamid, and Deborah Levy often challenge and redefine humanity's boundaries, examining intersections with disability, gender, queerness, race, and social marginalization. They also engage with disembodiment and transformation through emerging technologies, the metaverse, and cyborg identities.

Building on Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's seminal *Monster Theory* (1996), which frames monstrosity as a cultural construct reflecting societal fears and desires, the seminar will focus on how British fiction reimagines these ideas in response to sociopolitical and technological changes. These shifts disrupt traditional understandings of embodiment and reshape human interaction, creativity, and labour. The notion of monstrosity, often associated with the othering of bodies and identities, is reconfigured amidst evolving cultural anxieties. Theories by Donna Haraway, Lennard J. Davis, Rosi Braidotti, and Avtar Brah underpin the examination of monstrosity's intersections with migration, displacement, diasporic identities, and disability.

The seminar also addresses how contemporary British fiction interrogates the impact of Brexit and UK immigration policies on cultural narratives of belonging and exclusion, critiques evolving definitions of humanity, and examines how 'new monsters' emerge in an era of globalization, technological disruption, and ecological crisis.

Possible topics include:

- Brexit, migration, and diasporic displacement
- Monstrosity, agency, and resistance
- Representations of physical and cognitive disabilities as they intersect with monstrosity
- Gendered and queer embodiment as resistance or marginalization
- Posthuman transformations: cyborgs, digital bodies, and virtual identities
- Monstrosity and ecological crises as human failure narratives
- Empathy and compassion in depictions of deviant bodies
- Reworking classical monstrous archetypes

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SEM7. Papers

13 September h. 8:30-11:00, S6 Moro

- *Spectral app-aritions, prosthetic compositions: Jeanette Winterson's Night Side of the River* (Andrea Raso, Università di Roma Tre)
- *Monstrous others, posthuman selves: Challenging boundaries and rethinking identities in Machines Like Me by Ian McEwan* (Irene Montori, Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II)
- *Monstrous bodyscapes: Queer(ing) complex embodiments in Michel Faber's Under the Skin (2000)* (Giuseppe Capalbo, Tor Vergata Università degli Studi di Roma)
- *"I'm not a monster": Deviant bodies as resistance in Mohale Mashigo's Intruders* (Marta Fossati, Università degli Studi di Milano)

SEM7. Abstracts

Monstrous bodyscapes: Queer(ing) complex embodiments in Michel Faber's *Under the Skin* (2000)

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This paper explores Michel Faber's *Under the Skin* (2000) by bringing Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's *Monster Theory* (1996) into dialogue with Tobin Siebers's theory of complex embodiment (2017). Set in Scotland, the novel follows the life of an alien, Isserley, as she searches for hitchhikers to abduct and send to her planet, where "they have to serve as meat for the alien elites" (Monticelli 2019, 7). In doing so, Faber seems to draw a monstrous bodyscape, that is "a cartography of the body" (Federici and Parlati 2018, 7) which challenges and redefines humanity's boundaries: from Isserley's alien body – surgically altered to appear human – to the commodified bodies of the many men she procures for consumption. In line with the consistent body of scholarship which sought to analyse the novel from a variety of viewpoints (e.g. Dillon 2011; Monticelli 2019; Fishova 2023; Jha 2024), this paper seeks to read the way(s) in which the complexity of Faber's bodies unsettles – queers – normative borders of species, gender, and class.

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"I'm not a monster": Deviant bodies as resistance in Mohale Mashigo's *Intruders*

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If much of South African apartheid-era fiction is characterised by a realist – almost testimonial – style, functional to an indictment of the injustices of the segregationist regime, South Africa's literary landscape in the new millennium is marked by an opening and broadening of themes, genres, and styles. In particular, genre literature such as speculative fiction has witnessed a boom in recent years, which testifies to South Africa's participation in transnational and world literary trends. Starting from these considerations, my paper aims to discuss the short-story collection *Intruders* (2018) by South African-born writer Mohale Mashigo. Even though Mashigo herself opposes generic labels such as 'speculative fiction' and 'Afrofuturism', her short-story cycle *Intruders* imaginatively investigates the life of marginalised South African characters – the eponymous 'intruders' – who are marked by monstrosity and therianthropic transformations. By exploring Mashigo's representation of the deviant bodies of her liminal characters – for the most part, Black South African women – this paper argues that *Intruders* powerfully interrogates the new South African predicament thirty years after the end of apartheid. By transforming her gendered and racialised protagonists into 'monsters' such as winged creatures and modern-day mermaids, Mashigo endows her characters with a transformative agency that resists and writes back to normative narratives of Black South Africans. Ultimately, this paper seeks to foreground *Intruders*' subtle interplay of the local and the global since Mashigo recasts the depiction of deviant bodies – a staple thematic concern of speculative fiction – into a markedly local and contemporary South African urban frame.

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Monstrous others, posthuman selves: Challenging boundaries and rethinking identities in *Machines Like Me* by Ian McEwan

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In *Machines Like Me and People Like You* (2019), Ian McEwan reimagines the classical trope of *hybris*—where the creature defies its creator, from Lucifer to Prometheus—within the context of the human encounter with Adam, a hyper-realistic humanoid endowed with autonomous intelligence, emotional complexity, and moral reasoning. Through the figure of Adam, McEwan explores the disruption of creaturely boundaries posed by both the human protagonist, Charlie, and the humanoid itself, presenting it as a dramatic and simultaneously parodic articulation of the posthuman sublime. No longer rooted in the Romantic imagination of vast natural landscapes as vehicles of transcendence, the posthuman sublime in this narrative emerges through technological alterity and ontological disorientation. The encounter with the human-like machine provokes not elevation but a sense of epistemic and affective decentering—a vertiginous confrontation with the limits of the human. In this sense, Adam is a monster in the etymological meaning of a portent—a being that signals a rupture in the balance of human order. At the same time, he serves as a warning (*monstrum*, from *monere*), embodying the latent perils inherent in the relationship between the human and the non-human. Through Charlie’s fractured perspective—oscillating between fascination, anxiety, and cognitive dissonance—*Machines Like Me* dramatizes the ethical and symbolic instability produced by techno-human hybridity. Adam, as a hybrid entity, embodies the posthuman sublime: at once a Promethean figure and a monstrous other, the humanoid becomes a contested locus of cultural projection, ethical ambiguity, and ontological unease (Cohen, 1996).

Building on Fredric Jameson’s theorization of the “hysterical sublime” (1991), and reframing it through posthumanist perspectives such as those articulated by Rosi Braidotti (2013) and Francesca Ferrando (2019), this paper investigates the convergence of monstrous identities and the posthuman sublime in McEwan’s *Machines Like Me*, situating the novel within contemporary British fiction’s broader engagement with cultural anxieties surrounding technological embodiment, subjectivity, and the shifting boundaries of existence and ethics.

Rather than resolving this crisis through dystopian closure, McEwan’s narrative enacts a form of posthumanist reflexivity. It is through its metafictional and self-conscious discourse that the novel performs what Francesca Ferrando calls “posthuman awareness” (2024): a mode of self-inquiry that engages with non-human alterity not as a threat to be subdued, but as a generative site for rethinking subjectivity, embodiment, and relationality beyond the human.

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Spectral app-aritions, prosthetic compositions: Jeanette Winterson’s *Night Side of the River*

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In *Night Side of the River* (2023), Jeanette Winterson rediscovers spectrality to navigate the ontological consequences of AI systems, which curb the monopoly of biology on what it means to be human and alive. The post-digital ghost, which Winterson describes as a “post-human visitation” (17) and “app-arition” (21), still reigns in our popular imagination as we flirt with the possibility of digital immortality. Indeed, the hauntological spectral turn of Derridean legacy is being repurposed to address “what it means and takes for a spectral body to make itself present” as well as to “re-imagine performativity through this troubling of conventional categorizations of the ontological” (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013, 17). Thus, ghosts are not mere symbols of absence, but paradoxical manifestations of the virtual, defined by Shields as the “presence of absence” (2003, 212), which, by hinting at the dispossession of materiality, limits any claim to human exclusivity.

However, in Winterson, the bodily dimension is not deleted, but reassessed as part of the mind-body nexus, as a tangible surface whose malleable essence is lived vicariously through numerous devices, so that the wholeness of the human(ist) body is fragmented, substituted by phantom ‘limbs’ that complicate the notion of selfhood by means of a prosthetic logic, “which suggests that the forms in which we know ourselves are always at a remove from us, that we are not identical with our manifestations” (Boxall, 2020, 14). To this end, the Spinozist embrained bodies/embodyed brains are

recuperated by Winterson, for whom haunting is sensory: “Motor neurons carry information from the brain to the body. The link is the spinal cord – the pathway from brain to body and body to brain. It’s physiology, not phantoms. I think I am being haunted, and so my body is clenching in fear, and returning this fear to my brain” (2023, 31). In fact, the prosthetic molecularization of bodies does not aim to deny the affective matrix of embodiment (cf. Shildrick, 2002, 126), but to demolish, along a material-semiotic continuum, the centrality of the western logos (cf. Shildrick, 2022, 12).

As this paper will attempt to demonstrate, Winterson’s ghost stories offer an exploration of the dis- and re-appearance of bodily paradigms to counter the normativization of non-normative bodies, which are actively silenced in epistemically violent narratives (see Leder, 1990). Then, the Foucaultian connection of body and power emerges again thanks to Winterson’s critically posthuman evaluation of both the de-naturalization of bodies through technology and the non-essentialist re-naturalization brought about by new materialism, two approaches which, Braidotti reminds us, in the posthuman context intersect since they “agree on the basic point that there is no uncontaminated matter nor naturally born humans” (2019, 152).

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SEM8. Questioning the *anthropos* in Anglophone Anthropocene narratives

8A 11 September h. 11:00-13:00, S6 Moro

8B 12 September h. 14:00-16:00, S6 Moro

Convenors

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Abstract

Since its emergence in 2000, the concept of the Anthropocene – which identifies our epoch as the one in which the human species has become a geological agent – has catalyzed a heated intellectual discussion. In the humanities, the Anthropocene has brought to the forefront crucial challenges such as global climate change, alterations in the water cycle, soil degradation, accelerated loss of biodiversity, and pollution from toxic and non-biodegradable substances. It also raises biopolitical issues, like overpopulation and new forms of authoritarianism. In this light, the contentious interpretations of human responsibilities towards the environment – tackling who is truly responsible for environmental collapse and thus questioning who is the *Anthropos* in ‘Anthropocene’, with its implications of undifferentiated responsibilities – have generated intense debate (Haraway, 2016; Chakrabarty, 2021). Several alternative definitions have been put forward to illuminate the contradictions of the human impact on the planet, such as, among many others, Capitalocene (Moore, 2015) and Plantationocene (Barua, 2024). These contradictions are particularly evident in discussions surrounding the postcolonial Anthropocene (van Amelsvoort, 2024), which seeks to highlight the multifaceted and uneven nature of human impact on the planet. Importantly, and in parallel to these discussions, the proliferation of cli-fi and other cultural expressions that address the new realities brought about by the Anthropocene highlights the growing significance of climate change in today’s cultural landscape: the Anthropocene, in short, can be argued to be the unconscious of the art and literature of our time (Bould, 2021).

Starting from this premise, in this seminar we invite scholars to expand this narrow understanding of the ‘human’ by engaging with the multiple forms of the human impact on the planet as represented in Anglophone literatures and other media (novels, poetry, drama, personal essays, memoirs, films, TV series, and other storytelling practices).

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- climate migration
- critiques of sustainability and mainstream environmental discourses
- postcolonialism and ecojustice
- hydrocolonialism
- nuclear cultures
- intersections of gender, class and ethnicity in relation to environmental or climate crises
- the posthuman condition and the future of the human species
- indigenous and/or marginalized ecological discourse; environmentalism of the poor

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SEM8. Papers

8A 11 September h. 11:00-13:00, S6 Moro

- *"Poor Visitor": Jamaica Kincaid on place, belonging and environmental Justice* (Simona Corso, Università degli Studi Roma Tre)
- *The art of not adapting in the Anthropocene: Indigenous perspectives on resilience in Mahasweta Devi's "Pterodactyl, Puran Sahay, and Pirtha" and Cherie Dimoline's Marrow Thieves series* (Lucio De Capitani, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia)
- *Eco-apocalypse in the Anthropocene: An analysis of John Christopher's novels* (Laura Chiara Spinelli, Università degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro)
- *Posthuman Dasein: Biopolitics, ontology, and the limits of the human in Kazuo Ishiguro's Never Let Me Go* (Antonino Virga, Università di Catania)

8B 12 September h. 14:00-16:00, S6 Moro

- *Planetary subalterns and nation states: A critique of classical climate justice* (Alessandro Vescovi, Università degli Studi di Milano)
- *Bio-logos. Pondering the Anthropocene through self-narration in Helen Macdonald and Olivia Laing* (Elisa Bolchi, Università degli Studi di Ferrara)
- *More and less than human: Posthuman conditions in Mickey 17 and Companion* (Gaia Zaccaro, Università di Napoli L'Orientale)
- *The natural resource curse: An eco-stylistic analysis of verbal and non-verbal defiance in What Mama Said (2003) by Osonye Tess Onwueme* (Aminat Emma Badmus, Università degli Studi di Modena e Reggio Emilia)

SEM8. Abstracts

The natural resource curse: An eco-stylistic analysis of verbal and non-verbal defiance in *What Mama Said* (2003) by Osonye Tess Onwueme

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This contribution aims to conduct a stylistic analysis of Osonye Tess Onwueme's *What Mama Said* (2003), focusing on how the playwright depicts collective resistance and women's activism through verbal and non-verbal acts that include songs, music, dance performances enacted by the female characters in the play.

Drawing on ecosylistic approaches and leveraging upon existing research that links contemporary neocolonial processes to the deterioration of the natural ecosystem, this analysis will highlight Onwueme's eco-feminist intent. It will demonstrate how the text interrogates the impact of anthropogenic environmental pollution and oil companies' commercial hazards on women and, more generally, the Nigerian community.

Particular attention will be given to the semantic, syntactic and morphological features of Nigerian pidgin English to demonstrate how its use evokes an indigenous worldview rooted in the interconnectedness and interdependence between human beings, animals as well as the natural environment. The study will ultimately highlight how the use of unmarked verbs, interjections, copula, lexical reduplication, together with the inclusion of ethnic terms, contributes to the stylistic distinctiveness of the play.

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Bio-logos. Pondering the Anthropocene through self-narration in Helen Macdonald and Olivia Laing

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The informal term ‘Anthropocene’ as the current geological time interval in which many conditions and processes on Earth are profoundly altered by human impact has already proven highly useful to Earth science research communities (AWG), as well as to the humanities. Living in the Anthropocene, it is thus compelling to read literature from an ecocritical perspective, studying the relationship of the human and the non-human in culture (Garrard, 2012), and Helen Macdonald’s collection of essays *Vesper Flights* is an interesting case in point. Having worked for years as a historian of science, she knows how humans have always viewed the natural world as a mirror of themselves, and she wrote *Vesper Flights* as an exercise “in interrogating such human ascriptions and assumptions” (Macdonald 2020: 2). While admitting that science reveals to us a planet that is insistently not human, and that we need hard sciences to establish the rate and scale of environmental crisis, she claims that “we need literature, too” because it can “teach us the qualitative texture of the world” (3). She thus writes her essays in the form of memoirs, using self-narration to “reflect upon the size of our lives in relation to the vastness of the universe” (2). Moving from Macdonald’s considerations about the need for literature to show us that “we are living in an exquisitely complicated world that is not all about us” (2), I will then read Olivia Laing’s memoir *To the River* through the lens of cultural ecology, which looks at how the living interrelationship between culture and nature are explored, providing a site of “critical self-reflection of modern civilization as well as a source of creative cultural self-renewal” (Zapf, 2016: 3). Using Virginia Woolf as guiding spirit, as is clear from the title paying homage to *To the Lighthouse*, and thanks to her training as a medical herbalist, Laing intertwines her cultural narration with accurate scientific descriptions of the biodiversity she encounters during her 42-mile walk along the river, spanning from the Cretaceous to Woolf’s death. Laing’s one-week walk along the river Ouse from source to sea thus becomes much more than the typical nature writing with the author retreating from humans and city life to indulge in wilderness because, as she writes, “the idea that nature can be prised free from civilisation is, in England’s overpopulated south at least, absurd” (Laing, 2011: 28). Acknowledging that in the Anthropocene human activities have become the dominant force shaping the planet’s environment and geology, leaving a lasting mark on the geological record (Rafferty, 2025), both Macdonald and Laing show how landscape has been shaped by centuries of man’s activities but also how man “has been shaped by the land” (Laing, 2011: 42).

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“Poor Visitor”: Jamaica Kincaid on place, belonging and environmental Justice

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In her novel *Lucy*, Jamaica Kincaid tells the story of a Caribbean girl who goes to the United States to work as an *au pair* with a wealthy family. Mariah, her employer, a kind woman of progressive political views, becomes involved with some friends in campaigning against the ecological degradation of the landscape surrounding her summer house in the Great Lakes region. Lucy wonders why Mariah and her wealthy white friends can’t see “the connection between their comforts and the decline of the world that lay before them”, why Mariah doesn’t realize that “if all the things she wanted to save in the world were saved, she might find herself in reduced circumstances” (54-55). This connection that Mariah, the 40-year-old white, rich, ecologist employer, refuses to make – the connection between the material well-being of those like her and

environmental degradation – is a theme very dear to Jamaica Kincaid, who, ahead of the theoretical debate, starts to investigate it in her books from the 1980s. Drawing on *A Small Place* (1988), *Lucy* (1990), *Among Flowers* (2005), and the theoretical debate about space and ecojustice (Lefebvre, 1974; Heise, 2008; Nixon, 2011; Robbins, 2017) my paper aims at shedding light on the writer’s analysis on socioenvironmental justice and some very volatile notions such as “sense of place”, “visitor”, “tourist”, “resident”. In Kincaid’s oeuvre space is never neutral, but rather a socio-cultural product, created and experienced through social and economic structures, and imbricated in patterns of domination and inequality. Our ‘sense of planet’, Kincaid suggests, must ultimately rest on a deep historical consciousness — the only foundation for any meaningful activism.

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The art of not adapting in the Anthropocene: Indigenous perspectives on resilience in Mahasweta Devi’s “Pterodactyl, Puran Sahay, and Pirtha” and Cherie Dimaline’s *Marrow Thieves* series

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The concept of resilience – frequently used to discuss a community’s ability to deal with crises, adapt to hazards, and recover – has become widespread in Anthropocene discourse and debates, often framed as a key skill to survive to the era of planetary climate breakdown. Many, however, have stressed its potentially reactionary side, as mainstream understanding of resilience may enforce an idea of adaptation that neatly dovetails with neoliberal subjectification and practices of colonial/capitalist extraction. This is particularly true for Indigenous peoples, who have historically been one of the primary victims of such practices, while being framed, more recently, as quintessential resilient subjects. Therefore, narratives about/by Indigenous peoples are an interesting site to discuss resilience and to reframe the concept in radical terms, if not to replace it with alternative concepts altogether. To do so, in this essay, I juxtapose Mahasweta Devi’s novella “Pterodactyl, Puran Sahay, and Pirtha” (1995) and Cherie Dimaline’s *Marrow Thieves* series (*The Marrow Thieves* 2017; *Hunting by Stars*, 2021). The former focuses on an Adivasi community in post-Green Revolution India, affected by famine and drought. The latter is a dystopic fiction in which Indigenous peoples in Canada are hunted down to steal their capacity to dream, which settlers have lost after environmental collapse. I compare Devi’s and Dimaline’s narrative strategies, taking into account the different cultural and historical contexts in which they write and their different positionalities (most notably, Devi is an Indian/Bengali Hindu, and not Indigenous, whereas Dimaline, a member of the Metis Nation of Ontario, is). I show how both texts, through the experiences of their Indigenous protagonists, juxtapose competing understandings of resilience and adaptation, which promote, respectively, forms of environmental justice based on self-determination, or practices of environmental *injustice* requiring assimilation within settler-colonial states.

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Eco-apocalypse in the Anthropocene: An analysis of John Christopher's novels

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The Anthropocene is permeated with the imagination of catastrophe and eco-disaster. In the context of the Cold War, the British author John Christopher portrays how humanity faces the challenges of such an exceptional situation. *The Death of Grass* (1956) depicts the global spread of a plant virus originating in China, which devastates rice crops and subsequently affects the *Gramineae* family. Wheat and grass in pastures die, thus leading to famine and the breakdown of moral and civil laws. As many narratives of eco-apocalypse, the novel “is a vision of nature’s revenge for its mistreatment” (Macfarlane). Hence, the author appears to anticipate our concerns regarding the impact of human activity on the environment, in warning against the risks posed by the spread of monoculture, overpopulation and urbanization. In the novel, exploitation of natural resources is ascribed not only to the East, perceived as “the other”, but also to Western nations, thereby questioning their presumed superiority. Clashes among ethnic groups in the wake of catastrophes is also at the heart of Christopher’s *The World in Winter* (1962), where post-apocalyptic fiction and dystopia merge. The narrative describes the coming of a new ice age and the resulting shift in the global balance of power (Oramus, 2023). British middle-class professionals are offered the opportunity to migrate to warmer African countries, but this eutopia soon turns into dystopia: Nigeria proves to be an upside-down world where the white refugees are unemployed or relegated to servant roles, while African governments prepare to colonise Britain. Rather than focusing on ecological discourse, – climate change in the novel is not anthropogenic – the author shows how the centre and the margins can switch places, thereby reflecting the anxieties connected to the decline of the British Empire, between nostalgia and historical guilt.

Within the theoretical framework of ecocriticism, this paper aims to explore how eco-disaster has redefined humanity in Christopher’s novels and to identify where to place the author’s discourse “along the anthropocentric-ecocentric continuum” (Zurru, 2018), through the scrutiny of the representation of natural and urban scenery. The analysis will highlight the interdependence between physical environment and human life: in landscapes shaped by non-human agency, characters may contribute to reconstruction or simply show their endurance, thus maintaining a horizon of hope within the text.

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Planetary subalterns and nation states: A critique of classical climate justice

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The environmental crisis has created a class of people that one may call planetary subalterns. With this phrase, I want to refer to a group of people whose subaltern conditions are not due to historical, sociological or political issues, but rather to the planetary forces triggered by the environmental crisis. Following Dipesh Chakrabarti (2021), I use the term “planetary” in opposition to “global”, where the latter is a cultural construction, while the former relates to the Earth System. The characteristic of subalterns is that they hardly belong to any given nation. The impact of an unbalanced Earth System on very low-income people makes them “planet subalterns”.

Nation-states are a Western invention and cut up the land according to criteria that are hardly relevant in South Asia. Amitav Ghosh criticised the concept of nation-states in his correspondence with Dipesh Chakrabarti. Likewise, Ghosh, both in his novel *Gun Island* (2019) and his article “The Great Uprooting” (2021), points out that the solidity of nation borders makes sense only to the middle class.

If the idea of the nation-state is inadequate and largely a colonial remains, some tenets of classical climate justice (Agarwal & Narain, 1991) should be revised. I shall consider two of the different forms the concept of Climate Justice may take; synchronic and historical. The former posits that the cost of a conversion to a less energy-intensive economy

must be borne by the global north because it would be unfair to make subalterns (who mostly live in the global South) pay its price. The historical argument goes that those countries that resorted to carbon-intensive economies at the dawn of the Industrial Revolution should pay a proportional price (Baer, 2011; Gardiner, 2011; Howarth, 2011; Sankaran, 2022).

Both views take the idea of nation as a natural entity, and imagine that in northern nations live only the descendants of former industrialists, while subalternity is a phenomenon of the global South only. This line of thought is doubly flawed: it takes for granted that subalterns only live in the global South and will continue to do so, which is improbable in the age of great migrations, and it takes for granted that their lot may improve if the global South does not implement measures to reduce their carbon footprint. In fact those who live closer to the poverty line are those who run the higher risk of becoming planetary subalterns.

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Posthuman Dasein: Biopolitics, ontology, and the limits of the human in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*

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The Anthropocene has unveiled not only the planetary ramifications of anthropogenic activity but also the intrinsic fragility and contested nature of the human as a category. In response to critiques of the Anthropocene's homogenising rhetoric (Haraway, 2016; Chakrabarty, 2021), this paper undertakes an analysis of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005) through the intersecting frameworks of biopolitical critique, posthuman theory, and Heideggerian ontology. The aim is to illuminate how Ishiguro's narrative interrogates the uneven distribution of vulnerability, mortality, and agency in a context of systemic exploitation.

The presentation of this study will be organised in three sections, each corresponding to a distinct analytical axis. The first part will explore the clones as figures of ontological precarity – organisms genetically engineered for servitude, stripped of autonomy, and subjected to meticulously orchestrated life cycles culminating in their predetermined demise. Interpreted through Heidegger's notion of *Sein-zum-Tode* (being-toward-death), their existence will be shown to epitomise a form of suspended subjectivity in which temporal agency and existential authenticity are precluded in advance.

Subsequently, the paper will address the novel's refusal to grant full human status to these cognitively and emotionally articulate beings, thereby exposing the ethical impasses of liberal humanism and the exclusions on which modern subjectivity rests. In this light, *Never Let Me Go* will be read as an allegory of Anthropocenic biopolitics, wherein certain lives – human or more-than-human – are rendered disposable to uphold the comfort of others.

As a conclusive perspective, the analysis will situate the text within the 'cultural unconscious' (Bould, 2021) of the Anthropocene: a symbolic terrain where ecological trauma, technoscientific domination, and moral disavowal converge. By foregrounding the novel's capacity to unsettle entrenched categories of the human, the presentation will argue for the urgency of reimagining personhood, disposability, and care at the intersection of environmental collapse and ethical responsibility – a task that literary narratives such as Ishiguro's render both imaginable and imperative.

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More and less than human: Posthuman conditions in *Mickey 17* and *Companion*

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In his refusal of the Anthropocene label, McBrien (2016) incisively traces the foundational link between capitalism and humanity, arguing that “we have mistaken who ‘we’ are [...] for what ‘we’ perform through capital.” This reflection frames the thematic core of two science fiction films released in early 2025: Bong Joon-ho’s *Mickey 17* and Drew Hancock’s *Companion*. Despite stark differences in budget, tone, and narrative scale – the former a darkly comic space frontier movie, the latter a “final girl” thriller/horror – they both interrogate what it means to be human in the context of late capitalism.

Set in 2054, *Mickey 17* follows the hapless Mickey Barnes from his escape from an ecologically devastated Earth to his enrollment as an “expandable”, a disposable clone assigned to lethal missions in the service of a populist authoritarian leader’s colonization plan (a grotesque caricature of Trump-like politicians). Conversely, *Companion* focuses on Iris, a young woman who slowly realizes she is actually a companion android, whose “love programming” is hijacked by her manipulative partner to fulfill his greedy schemes.

While neither film introduces radically new tropes to the sci-fi genre, a comparative analysis of these two narratives through a postcolonial, feminist and posthuman lens allows the present study to investigate the topical existential questions prompted by their non-human protagonists. Rather than portraying technological advancement as inherently dangerous, both films expose the ways in which transhumanist dreams (such as the overcoming of death), when shaped by capitalist logics, devolve into nightmares. The antagonists – whether a fascistic leader or an entitled “nice guy” – embody the real anthropos responsible for the appropriation and abuse of non-human life. Alien critters, alongside female and queer androids, serve both as reflections of historical patterns of colonial and gendered exploitation and as grim warnings about ongoing and future forms of violence.

Crucially, in line with Haraway’s (2016) idea of *becoming with the other* and Braidotti’s (2013) vision of posthumanism as *becoming the other*, both films shift the definition of humanity away from biological essentialism and toward relationality: it is in their striving for connection, in their humane engagement with otherness, that Mickey and Iris articulate a new, posthuman ethics.

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SEM9. New gender perspectives in the literary Anglosphere: A more inclusive view of the ‘human’

9A 11 September h. 11.00-13.00, S2 Moro

9B 11 September h. 16:00-18:30, S2 Moro

Convenors

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Abstract

Since the publication of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* by Mary Wollstonecraft in 1792, feminist thought has developed over the centuries not only as a response to gender inequalities but also to assert a concept of ‘human’ and ‘human nature’ all the more inclusive and multifaceted. Gender equity is the process of being fair to women and men. Equity leads to equality. Where gender inequality exists, it is generally women who are excluded or disadvantaged in relation to decision-making and access to economic and social resources. More recently, gender studies have connected the term ‘gender’ to the economic, social and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female. Gender thus differs from sex in that it is social and cultural in nature rather than biological. While emphasizing the masculine bias in scientific culture, Donna Haraway back in 1985 dismantled the ‘antagonistic dualisms’ or dichotomies that order western discourse, among which male/female, self/other, culture/nature, human/nonhuman, with the metaphor of the ‘cyborg’, which rejects rigid boundaries, even that between human and machine. Judith Butler (2006) has offered a further critique of any binary division by seeing gender as a reiterated social performance rather than the expression of a prior reality and Rosi Braidotti (2021) claims that feminism is one of the precursors of the present posthuman turn. Finally, gender is inflected according to race, ethnicity and religion in contemporary multicultural societies and postcolonial countries. Non-western cultures and ontologies include different paradigms in gender relations and issues. The seminar will include papers dealing with new inflections of feminisms, new gender representations, and new gender perspectives that redefine the concept of ‘human’, in English and postcolonial literary works.

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SEM9. Papers

9A 11 September h. 11.00-13.00, S2 Moro

- *Women scientists in the contemporary fictions of the anglosphere* (Carmen Concilio, Università di Torino)
- *Posthuman feminism in Alisdair Gray’s Poor Things* (Paola Della Valle, Università di Torino)
- *Women characters in Abdulrazak Gurnah’s Theft (2025) between female agency and neocolonialism* (Costanza Mondo, Università di Torino)
- *Neo-Victorian metafiction of affliction: Inclusive feminist reflections on female disability* (Enrica Zaninotto, Università di Verona)

9B 11 September h. 16.00-18.30, S2 Moro

- *“Oh Cassandra [...] let us devise a method by which men may bear children”: Virginia Woolf’s and Angela Carter’s perspectives on humanness between androgyny and the cyborg* (Savina Stevanato, Università degli Studi Roma Tre)
- *Gendered labour and double colonisation: Women in the textile industries of Biella and Bombay* (Harjot Banga, Università di Torino)

- “*Until to atoms I dispersed be*”: *The human and the non-human in Hester Pulter’s poetry* (Alessio Mattana, Università di Torino)
- *Love as action: Women as negotiators of conflict and promoters of progress in Pakistani Anglophone fiction* (Daniela Vitolo, Università di Napoli L’Orientale)
- *The cost of living: Upward mobility and migration in Anglophone women’s writing between the Caribbean and USA* (Federica Zullo, Università di Urbino Carlo Bo)

SEM9. Abstracts

Gendered labour and double colonisation: Women in the textile industries of Biella and Bombay

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This study investigates the intersection of gendered labour, postcolonial critique, and inclusive conceptions of the ‘human’ through a comparative analysis of women’s experiences in the textile industries of Biella (Italy) and Bombay/Mumbai (India). Although rooted in distinct historical and industrial trajectories, both contexts reveal how women have navigated and resisted overlapping structures of patriarchy and capitalism. Through the literary lens of Kiran Nagarkar (1994), the oral histories collected by Neera Adarkar and Meena Menon (2004), and the interviews with women workers in the woollen mills discussed by Simonetta Vella (2004), the research foregrounds women’s embodied practices as sites of negotiation and agency.

The framework of “double colonisation,” as articulated by Gayatri Spivak (1994), guides the analysis of women’s dual oppression under colonial-capitalist regimes and patriarchal constraints. Drawing on Judith Butler’s theory of gender performativity (1988, 2006), the study considers how everyday acts within both millwork and domestic life constitute subtle forms of resistance. In Nagarkar’s portrayal of Bombay’s *chawls*, women’s experiences complicate the binary of oppression and emancipation, echoing Donna Haraway’s (1985) dismantling of antagonistic dualisms.

At the core of this analysis lies the figure of *Ardhanarishvara*, a Hindu deity embodying the synthesis of masculine and feminine energies. Reinterpreted through Jaina C. Sanga’s work (2004), this non-Western paradigm offers a fluid, hybrid conception of gender that challenges fixed Western constructs. By bringing Biella’s industrial heritage into dialogue with Bombay’s postcolonial realities, the study engages with diverse ontologies of embodiment and labour.

Employing an interdisciplinary methodology—combining literary analysis, oral testimony, and feminist theory—this research highlights women’s strategies of resilience and transformation. The findings suggest that, despite enduring structural marginalisation, women have carved out spaces for autonomy, redefining the human as a porous, adaptive subject. Their dual labour, both industrial and domestic, becomes emblematic of a cyborg-like negotiation of roles (Haraway, 1985), merging survival with subversion. Ultimately, this research contributes to postcolonial and posthuman feminist discourse by positioning women’s textile labour as a critical lens through which to reimagine pluralistic and inclusive understandings of gender, embodiment, and the human condition.

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Women scientists in the contemporary fictions of the Anglosphere

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Gender equality is not only one of the Sustainable goals of the 2030 Agenda, it has become a heated debate in these latest years, in Italy, as well as elsewhere. The role of women scientists, in particular, is therefore crucial in demonstrating the multifaceted functions of women in contemporary society as wives, mothers, scientists, scholars and sometimes public figures and activists for the rights of women and of minorities. In this contribution, I would like to analyze the role of women scientists in contemporary novels from the Anglosphere, trying to compare the fictional characters to their real counterparts and historical models (i.e. Jeanne Baret, Rachel Carson, Suzanne Simard), and to understand how they are represented by writers such as Richard Powers, Amitav Ghosh, Doris Lessing, Jane Urquhart and Anne Michaels. Botanists, marine biologists, entomologists, historians, and medical doctors will be shown in their real and symbolic role and scrutinized under the lens of ecofeminism and environmental humanities (Haraway, Akomolafe, Barad, Ghosh). Last but not least, this contribution aims at detecting recurrent or new patterns of empowerment, emancipation or else failure, as a projection of scientific commitment into a future of climate change and climate action, to foreground also didactic choices and practices.

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Posthuman feminism in Alisdair Gray's *Poor Things*

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In the last two decades there has been a radical shift in the humanist perspective, which has found its way into the philosophical debate in favour of a posthuman vision. Rosi Braidotti is among the promoters of such a transformation as attested by her trilogy *The Posthuman* (2013), *Posthuman Knowledge* (2019) and *Posthuman Feminism* (2022). Posthumanism explicitly calls into question the anthropocentric biases of humanist thought and human exceptionalism, the optimistic belief in technological progress, and the hierarchical categories of culture and nature, self and other, human and nonhuman. Feminist posthumanities, in particular, can be described as a re-negotiation of “the human” in a manner that questions all hierarchical conceptualisations of the term, first and foremost its androcentrism in gender relations, which separates all that is Other than rational (white) heterosexual man — that is: woman, the non-heterosexual, the colonized and the enslaved, the marginalized and the non-citizen, and the non-human animal species. Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things* (1992) offers a good terrain for a reading in posthuman feminist terms. The novel honours Mary Shelley's masterpiece *Frankenstein* in exploring the consequences of the creation of a new being by a Victorian scientist, Godwin Baxter, whose name is, significantly, often abbreviated as “God”. The “creature” is obtained by bringing back to life the corpse of a pregnant woman, who committed suicide to escape a despotic husband, and transplanting the brain of her foetus into her. The result of the experiment is an unpredictable “posthuman being”, Bella Baxter, with no past prejudices, memories or experiences, and with a psychological tabula rasa. The creature, at first presenting an unbalanced adult body and infant mind, will grow up into a complex and highly educated woman that progressively emancipates herself from her creator, asserting her own identity and independent will. Most importantly, Bella is devoid of moral restrictions and can unmask the hypocrisies that characterize her time, demonstrating how these norms are not only arbitrary but also harmful. She explores sexuality with a freedom that challenges the views of her age and overturns any possible expectation. By refusing to be sexually and socially defined, Bella Baxter shakes the confidence of all people around her, especially men. The novel therefore provides a powerful insight into gender issues, questioning the binary gender system and the traditional notion of body, destabilizing the unitary vision of the subject and ultimately opening up to multiple belongings and complex reconfigurations of diversity.

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“Until to atoms I dispersed be”: The human and the non-human in Hester Pulter’s poetry

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This paper focuses on woman poet Hester Pulter (1605–1678) to examine the ways in which her poetry establishes a structural continuity between human and non-human entities.

Since the discovery of the manuscript in the University of Leeds Brotherton Library in 1996 containing Pulter’s unpublished poetry dating back to the 1640s and 1650s, scholars have identified some of the main themes running through her poems, including alchemy (Archer, 2005), astronomy (Hutton, 2008), atomism (Eardley, 2012) and religious devotion (Hatton, 2022).

By building on this scholarship, this paper makes the two-fold argument that within Pulter’s poetic universe, human and non-human entities are to be considered as two parts of the same whole. On the one hand, it will be shown that Pulter’s poetry portrays human death as a form of transmutation into natural elements. By conflating the common trope of the body being a cage to the soul with scientific knowledge about astronomy and alchemy, Pulter conceives of death as a chemical transformation back into “atoms”, meant as the first constituents of nature. On the other hand, attention will be given to the way Pulter personifies rivers, trees and animals as part of her contention that nature has the same sensitivity that is ascribed to human beings. As will be finally argued, Pulter’s belief that human beings and the rest of nature share a common structure was based on some of the natural philosophy ideas then current in mid-seventeenth-century Britain.

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Women characters in Abdulrazak Gurnah’s *Theft* (2025) between female agency and neocolonialism

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Women characters emerge vividly from Abdulrazak Gurnah’s literary production, from *Dottie* (1990) all the way to *Afterlives* (2020). Nonetheless, the portrayal of gendered relationships and feminist perspectives conveyed by such female characters are issues that have been mainly left unexplored by literary criticism, with some exceptions (Berman, 2023; Boparai, 2021; Callahan, 2023). In line with Donna Haraway’s (2016) encouragement for feminism to tackle kin-making practices, this paper focuses on the female characters in Gurnah’s latest novel *Theft*, by analysing their “female agency” (Uwakweh 2023) and disruption of gender roles for an equitable conception of ‘humanity’ within the Swahili culture of 1990s Tanzania. By taking a closer look at the narrative dynamics in the novel, I will show that Gurnah’s multi-layered women characters destabilise the narration in a karstic way and offer rhizomatic reflections on the meaning of being ‘human’ in the story, whose main focus addresses the brotherly relationship between two young men, Karim and Badar. The first section will examine the character of Raya, who divorces her husband and remarries, thus asserting her freedom and, later, dismantling normative assumptions about motherhood. The second section is concerned with the specular figures of Geraldine – a European tourist who recklessly begins an affair with Karim – and Fauzia – Karim’s wife. Geraldine’s patronising attitude towards Fauzia echoes Karim’s paternalistic behaviour and represents a Western woman’s condescension towards another fellow woman, thus adding a neocolonial edge to societal colonial-driven conceptions of

gender in Africa (Òjó et al., 2020). Notwithstanding Geraldine and Karim's vocal and reiterated condescension, Fauzia's rhetoric of endurance and silence eventually leads her to experience freedom and happiness, as happens in Badar's narrative arc. In *Theft*, the polysemic profusion of female characters and different ways of being 'human' offer a fascinating example of feminism in Gurnah's oeuvre and encourages further examinations of gendered relationships in his earlier novels.

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“Oh Cassandra [...] let us devise a method by which men may bear children”: Virginia Woolf's and Angela Carter's perspectives on humanness between androgyny and the cyborg.

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Although no explicit aesthetic or ideological lineage appears to link Virginia Woolf and Angela Carter, both authors engage in daring forms of sideways thinking and feminist commitment that reveal commensurable and inclusive perspectives on humanness.

Drawing on a theoretical framework informed by posthumanism, posthuman feminism, and eco-ethical criticism, this paper explores a shared “sensitivity in posthuman feminism” (Braidotti, 2022) between the two writers. It examines and compares key aspects of their discourses on the intersections of gender/culture and sex/biology, beginning with a subtle yet resonant echo between Woolf's short story “A Society” and Carter's novel *Passion of New Eve*. By referencing the myths of Cassandra and Eve, Woolf and Carter point to a gender-biased condition regarding fate and free will, while simultaneously exploring these figures as “tropes for possibilities” (Gustar, 2004) for transcending both gender and sex boundaries. In this context, Carter's New Eve can be seen as fulfilling the aspiration voiced by Woolf's Cassandra. My analysis will focus on selected textual excerpts from these writings, with relevant cross-references to other works, including “The Introduction”, *Orlando*, and *Nights at the Circus*. Despite historical, aesthetic, and perspectival differences, Woolf and Carter both contribute significantly to a critique of humanism and its dualistic ontology. Their respective visions not only adopt a gendered perspective but also move beyond it, proposing diverse correctives that challenge rigid boundaries—between genders, between human and non-human, and across the natural and technological realms. In doing so, both authors promote a vision of humanness grounded in metamorphic interconnectedness.

Finally, the paper addresses the tension in Woolf's suggestion that women should actively renew society while remaining “outsiders”. As Woolf herself foreshadows and as Carter will later critique, this aspect remains problematic in a contemporary society that continues to struggle with valuing difference and relational interdependence as foundational to an inclusive conception of humanness.

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Love as action: Women as negotiators of conflict and promoters of progress in Pakistani Anglophone fiction

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Contemporary English-language fiction by Pakistani women depicts the gendered experience of navigating a highly patriarchal society. Fiction written in English, the language of the cultured elite, speaks from and to the upper and middle classes, to which both writers and readers belong, and elaborates progressive ideas. At the same time, Anglophone women's narratives show that the female experience in Pakistani society is varied, depending on several factors, mostly related to the socio-cultural environment in which they live. While the authors reveal the intersectionality of power dynamics, they also show that patriarchal mechanisms of force affect women across the entire social spectrum, even if with different degrees of coercion. Agentivity, a shared characteristic of the novels' protagonists, reveals and questions the structures that weigh in on women while it invites them to take action. The writers provide their readers with resolute female models pointing out that a positive social transformation is possible through personal acts of resistance. Particularly, the intervention examines how women writers portray the clash between tradition and modernity reflecting on the role that women can play as moderators in conflict situations. Female sensibility to fostering interpersonal relationships, understanding and empathy becomes a means of social progress when arranged marriage is rejected by young people who want a love marriage that their families do not approve of.

In the novels *Salt and Saffron* (2000) by Kamila Shamsie and *How It Happened* (2012) by Shazaf Fatima Haider, the female protagonists fall in love with a man whom they would not be allowed to marry for social reasons because of their class and religious differences. This marks the beginning of a period of crisis in which the characters must come to terms with the fact that they do not want to disrespect their families and traditions, but they also refuse to accept the limits imposed on individuals by conservative logic. The positive resolution of the stories is made possible by the protagonists' ability to let love prevail over an impersonal reproduction of social norms. In fact, while the news often tells of women killed for honour after a love marriage, the novels depict women who are able to find a way to open a space for dialogue with their intransigent families. Because they are able to make their positions and desires understood by their relatives, they also contribute to social change by showing that extreme positions can be moderated when the human dimension prevails over logics of propriety and class and religious segregation.

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Neo-Victorian metafiction of affliction: Inclusive feminist reflections on female disability

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The present paper, inspired by my doctoral project, surveys non-freak female disabled corporeality in Neo-Victorian works of fiction. It draws primarily on the conceptualisation of Neo-Victorianism as both a reconfiguration and a reflection on the Victorian Era, holding great socio-historical awareness and critical potentiality. Analogously, it bears its foundation on the proliferation and actual delineation of disabled characterisation in the nineteenth-century English novel. Framed within an interdisciplinary framework, this research specifically reviews portraits of disabled women through a Feminist Disability Studies lens, an inclusive perspective scarcely acknowledged by both Disability Studies (e.g., the Social Model) and mainstream Feminist Theory. Despite the pervasiveness of Critical Disability Studies research within Victorian literature, Neo-Victorianism has not sparked the same scholarly interest, aside from studies devoted to Neo-

Victorian freak characterisations of disability. Out of the broader body of Neo-Victorian literature, the research focuses on Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things* (1992) and Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace* (1996) as primary texts which embody Neo-Victorian cultural and disability consciousness. Early findings demonstrate that, compared to the Victorian past, Neo-Victorian narratives include significantly fewer disabled characters. Nonetheless, when disabled characters are included (as for the above-referred novels), they take centre stage in a way that is more prominent and pervasive than in their nineteenth century predecessors. To conclude, this study fills the gap in research by examining the intersection of disability, gender and Neo-Victorianism, while finding practical application in contemporary disability culture, as in matters of activism and representation of disabled womanhood. Analogously, it paves the way for new venues of research that can further reflect on the influence of literature on the current representational patterns of disabled women.

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The cost of living: Upward mobility and migration in Anglophone women's writing between the Caribbean and USA

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In my paper I investigate different female characters' attempt to reach upward mobility within the complexity of postcolonial societies and the experience of migration, trying to establish bonds and communities across borders and languages. The women protagonists in the stories written by Edwidge Danticat (Haiti and USA) and Alecia McKenzie (Jamaica, USA, Singapore and France) locate themselves on the borderlines of the present, in the "beyond" space formulated by Homi Bhabha, which now represents "the trope of our times", where there is "a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction" (Bhabha, 2000). These women make efforts to move away from the singularities of class and gender as primary and organizational categories, since they elaborate strategies of selfhood that initiate new signs of identity, innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself. Their troubled and painful experiences of migration mirror the difficult negotiation that affects the process of identity formation, since they belong to the generation who witnessed the transition from the colonial period to the ideology of independence, grew up with the language of it and then recognized that there were neocolonial processes within the new nation, regarding, for example, race, gender, and economic inequalities. In the collection of stories *Everything Inside* (2020) by Danticat and *Stories from Yard* by McKenzie (2005) I explore the way authors create elsewhere worlds and places and consciousness, to participate, as Boyce Davies asserts, in a "growing collage of uprising textualities" oriented to articulating presences and histories across a variety of boundaries imposed by colonizers, but also by the men, the elders and other authorized figures in their various societies. (Boyce Davies, 1994)

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SEM10. Gender-ed representations and/in migration

12 September h. 14:00-16:00, PN 15

Convenors

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Abstract

The seminar seeks to explore the narratives and literary representations of migration and diaspora, spanning across both the temporal and geographical boundaries of the Anglosphere. By examining these stories with particular attention to the gendering of migrant identities, the seminar intends to investigate how migration experiences are portrayed and re-imagined. It brings together interdisciplinary fields such as travel writing, gender studies, and diaspora and migration studies to critically analyze how human migration is represented in various literary genres.

Incorporating the concepts of ‘humane’ and ‘human’ interaction, the seminar will consider how literary works about migration reflect the complexities of migrant experiences and identity formation. These literary texts often capture the struggles, resilience, and transformation of individuals as they face the challenges of displacement. With reference to the field of gender studies, the seminar will interrogate how gender shapes and redefines migrant identities.

Prospective speakers are invited to submit proposals that address the diverse modes of migrant identity formation and reformation, considering how these identities are circulated across different genres and cultures. By intersecting gender with diasporic and migration studies, the seminar will explore the various issues that arise from the representation of migrant identities, questioning the power of these portrayals to shape public perception and policy, as well as the ethical responsibility of representing such profoundly human experiences.

The aforementioned issues are represented in writings by a large variety of authors. Examples include diasporic writers from the global South such as Samuel Selvon, George Lamming, Buchi Emecheta and Imbolo Mbue. Their works show how, in relocating in their host societies, migrants are not only challenged to overcome ethno-cultural boundaries but also have to cope with thorny gender questions that complicate their identities and sense of belonging.

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SEM10. Papers

12 September h. 14:00-16:00, PN 15

- *The (Re)formation of gendered migrant identities: The literary case of Julia Alvarez’s How the García Girls Lost Their Accent* (Alessandra Di Pietro, Università degli Studi “G. d’Annunzio” Chieti-Pescara)
- *‘Debriefing the Rose’: the migrant body between identity, gender and memory in Mary di Michele’s poetry* (Concetta Maria Sigona, Universidad de Burgos)
- *Edinburgh’s Italian daughters: Gender, diaspora and identity in third-generation oral narratives* (Giuseppe Vitale, Università degli Studi di Napoli Parthenope)
- *Monisha Rajesh’s “hyphenated” cultural identity in Around India in 80 Trains (2012)* (Giulia Nonno, Università “G. d’Annunzio” Chieti-Pescara)

SEM10. Abstracts

The (Re)formation of gendered migrant identities: The literary case of Julia Alvarez's *How the García Girls Lost Their Accent*

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How the García Girls Lost Their Accent (1991) is a *Bildungsroman* written by Dominican-American author Julia Alvarez. Born in New York to Dominican parents, Alvarez grew up between the United States and the Dominican Republic. A novelist, poet, and essayist, Alvarez's literary works, which are written in English, often engage in the representation of the consequences of geo-cultural displacement upon migrant subjects: the fragmentation and reformation of cultural identities, linguistic assimilation, hybridity, the transgenerational divide caused by the experience of migration, as well as the resistance to gendered socio-cultural expectations in Latin America and the United States – these are among the recurring themes present in Alvarez's literary works. *How the García Girls Lost Their Accent* recounts the lives of four sisters who were forced to leave the Dominican Republic because of Rafael Leónidas Trujillo's dictatorship (1930-1961). Set between the 1960s and the 1980s, the novel is a semi-autobiographical, chronologically reversed *Bildungsroman*, which begins with the García sisters' adult lives in the United States and only then recounts their childhood in the Dominican Republic. The text is composed by various interconnected short stories narrated through shifting perspectives; the main narrative voice throughout the narration, however, remains that of the character of Yolanda, Alvarez's alter ego. This presentation particularly focuses on the second part of the novel, which narrates the family's collective experience of living in the United States as immigrants. By analysing the linguistic and cultural mechanisms of identity fragmentation and reformation represented by Alvarez, the presentation highlights how gender further complicates the ambivalence inherent in migrant subjects: while all four sisters display difficulties in navigating life in the United States, the character of Yolanda is the one who suffers the most from a loss of cultural identity. This is evident in the various nicknames Yolanda uses throughout her life: such an "onomastic displacement" (Luis, 2000) becomes representative of the multiple personalities Yolanda experiences as a female migrant. The aim of the presentation, therefore, is to investigate the modalities of identity fragmentation and reformation of migrant (female) subjects in the novel, while also looking at the role of a *mestizo* text (Benítez-Rojos, 1997), that is, the ways in which Caribbean diasporic literatures can offer a transnational perspective on migration.

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Monisha Rajesh's "hyphenated" cultural identity in *Around India in 80 Trains* (2012)

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The present paper sets out to explore the complexities of migration and identity formation by examining the writing of the British travel writer Monisha Rajesh, who investigates her multicultural origins and, what Carl Thompson calls, 'hyphenated' (2025, 258) cultural identity by travelling by train in the Republic of India. In 2010, Rajesh set out on a journey that would take her across India on board a selection of trains for four months to rediscover her Indian cultural heritage and a country she was becoming estranged from. This exploratory endeavour was deeply documented in *Around India in 80 Trains*, a travel book Rajesh published in 2012, in which she contemplates her interplay of belonging and estrangement from her family cultural heritage. This study shows how the distinctive nature of Rajesh's work is characterised by an in-depth exploration of Indian culture through a self-reflective lens. Rajesh examines her otherness, dual identity, and being constantly in between British and Indian cultures.

Around India in 80 Trains offers a profound insight into the search for authenticity and a meaningful dialogue between cultures. Rajesh illustrates the complexity and richness of migration experiences, from her non-resident Indian perspective, by studying the cultures, traditions, and communities of the regions from which her family originates.

Travelling around India and dealing with feelings of belonging, estrangement and marginalisation constituted a pivotal moment in the formation of Rajesh's identity. This reinforces her complex relationship with her parents' place of origin, previously threatened by her geographical and cultural distance. The dynamic interaction with the train passengers facilitates Rajesh's acknowledgement of the foreign within herself, of her hidden, complex hyphenated cultural identity. As posited by Julia Kristeva, "the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity [...] and he disappears when we all acknowledge ourselves as foreigners" (1991, 1). By immersing herself in a kaleidoscope of stories, Rajesh comes to realise how Indian nationals are concerned by perception and acceptance of Indians abroad. The direct speech gives voice to the passengers' desire to comprehend the extent to which Rajesh perceives herself as a foreigner or an outsider in Britain, and whether she has been the victim of discrimination. These questions facilitate Rajesh's introspection regarding her identity, compelling her to interrogate the concept of otherness in relation to strangeness and foreignness, and to contemplate its manifestation within the sociocultural contexts of the Republic of India and Britain.

This paper aims to demonstrate how travelling compels Rajesh to broaden and re-evaluate the intricacies and richness of migration experiences, thereby facilitating a more profound comprehension of her identity as an Asian British. In *Around India in 80 Trains*, Rajesh defines her sense of belonging both to Britain and India: to the former she belongs as a loyal and long-standing member; in the latter she feels at home and no longer a foreigner. *Around India in 80 Trains* provides an insider-outsider stance, in which Rajesh is not wholly external but to some extent speaks from, and for, the community she describes from a second-generation immigrant perspective.

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"Debriefing the Rose": The migrant body between identity, gender and memory in Mary di Michele's poetry

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In her collection of poems *Debriefing the Rose* (1998), Italian Canadian poet and writer Mary di Michele explores the most intimate intersections between migration, gender and corporeality.

In it, she explores the complex dynamics of identity as, coming from and belonging to a multicultural reality, Di Michele, through her poetry, examines the transformations of identity, lost memories and new forms of belonging that mark and characterise the diasporic condition.

My contribution analyses the representation of the migrant condition from the point of view of corporeality, which is in a continuous process of 'debriefing'. The poems belonging to this collection, as evidenced by various critical studies, reflect a feeling of uprooting and suspension between two worlds. The body in this sense represents vulnerability, memory and desire, echoing memories, traumas and desires that are often in conflict with each other.

The rose is, on the other hand, a recurring symbol in this work and evokes the beauty and fragility of the migrant identity always exposed to a process of search and redefinition.

In the exploration of the body and identity, language plays a crucial role in *Debriefing the Rose*, as it becomes a tool of expression, memory and resilience.

Di Michele uses a hybrid language, mixing English and Italian, formal and colloquial registers, which produces an effect of foreignness and familiarity at the same time. This linguistic mix reflects the complexity of the migratory experience. The body, in turn, appropriates language, expressing through gestures, sensations and symbols the most intimate truths of the individual.

Another key aspect of this study concerns the role of gender in the construction of migrant identity. Di Michele explores the challenges that migrant women are often forced to negotiate between the traditional expectations of their communities of origin and the new freedoms that the host society offers them. The female body thus becomes a battleground, where cultural identity, individual desires and power dynamics clash. The collection deals with topics such as sexuality, motherhood and body image and offers an intimate and often painful perspective on the construction of female identity in the context of diaspora. This collection represents a significant contribution to the literature of migration and diaspora, as it sensitively and intelligently explores the intersections of cultural identity, gender, language and corporeality. The work takes the form of an invitation to 'interrogate' our perceptions of migration and the body, recognising the richness and complexity of the human experience behind each story of uprooting and rebirth. The body, in

this perspective, becomes the privileged place to explore the most intimate truths of the individual and to build bridges between different cultures and identities.

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Edinburgh's Italian daughters: Gender, diaspora and identity in third-generation oral narratives

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Since its establishment in the early 20th century, the Italian Scottish community has generally been successful in integrating into host society over time in social, economic and linguistic spheres. However, this somewhat homogenous picture may not fully reflect the experiences of all within the community, particularly women, whose integration pathways and societal roles might have differed significantly from those of their male counterparts. As highlighted by Sandra Chistolini's longitudinal socio-anthropological study, *Donne italo-scozzesi* (2011), which explored issues of womanhood, maternity, family dynamics, marriage and roots among Italian Scottish women in Edinburgh from the *Ciociaria* region, female integration into Scottish society varied considerably across generations. Despite gaining some level of emancipation over time, first-generation women often remained primarily dedicated to managing their households, marriages and their children's education. In contrast, the third generation, growing up in a more integrated societal landscape, showed a greater inclination to pursue opportunities outside the domestic sphere, with some expressing a desire to leave home for personal and professional development and potentially return to Italy to explore their ancestral heritage. Drawing upon these compelling findings, this paper aims to explore the intricate intersection of gender and diaspora issues as experienced by third-generation Italian Scottish women in Edinburgh from the Comino Valley, located in the same geographical area investigated by Chistolini. Specifically, it focuses on a corpus of four oral narratives gathered through semi-structured interviews conducted in Edinburgh during March and April 2025 with prominent third-generation Italian Scottish women from the Comino Valley: Anna Alonzi, Carina Contini, Mary Contini and Anne Pia. Through a corpus-driven approach, this proposal investigates the discursive and rhetorical construction of self and group identity in the stories shared by these Italian Scottish women. It pays particular attention to key narrative devices such as positioning, self-presentation, categorisation and indexicality. The analysis of these categories ultimately demonstrates that these women have not only integrated successfully into Scottish society but have also achieved significant milestones across a diverse range of fields, most notably in education, the catering business and the contemporary literary scene.

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SEM11. Empathy in aesthetic experience: Themes, genres, forms

13 September h. 8:30-11:00, PN 20

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Abstract

Empathy is one of the most defining experiences of the human condition. It is no coincidence that both literary and non-fiction works on posthuman and human-machine interactions often highlight the question of whether these new ‘beings’ can experience emotional engagement, not only with other machines but also with humans themselves (Braidotti, 2013; Winterson, 2021). Moreover, the theme of empathy and its limits has long been central to works of fiction which deal with experimentation with human life and nature. From Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) to its more recent reinterpretations, such as Winterson’s *Frankissstein* (2019), the failure of empathy has been a key theme in examining the complex relationship with new forms of otherness.

Empathy is a feeling that is also involved in the aesthetic experience, especially if we consider it as a form of encounter and dialogue with the other. From Nussbaum (1990) to the more recent insights from neuroscience (Keen 2007), numerous contributions over the past few decades have enriched the debate on the role of literature and art in fostering empathy and enhancing the exercise of “putting ourselves in another’s shoes” (Chavel, 2012). Not only can artistic fruition be seen as an exercise in empathy, but the creative process itself can stem from this feeling. In literary genres such as biography and narrative medicine, empathy is crucial, but also plays a significant part in various forms of rewriting and intermedial reuse – such as transpositions and fanfictions – where empathy for minor characters can lead to a revision of canonical works from postcolonial or gender perspectives. At the same time, art serves as a privileged space for exploring various forms of empathy. It often presents negatively connoted figures and spaces that foster ambivalent, destabilizing relationships – simultaneously invoking both attraction and repulsion. This dynamic is what Ercolino & Fusillo (2022: 10) term “negative empathy”, which allows one to test “the limits of the ethical positioning of the user of the work of art”.

This seminar aims to engage with the latest discussions surrounding the role of empathy, with a particular focus on investigating the limits of this experience in both aesthetic fruition and production. It invites proposals that explore this topic across a range of domains, including – but not limited to – the following:

- the role of empathy in the reading experience
- the role of empathy in aesthetic fruition (theatre, cinema, tv series, graphic novels)
- the role of empathy in the writing experience (including both original texts and rewritings and adaptations from the perspective of minor characters)
- empathy as a theme
- empathy and literary genres (e.g. biography, narrative medicine, posthuman)
- negative empathy.

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SEM11. Papers

13 September h. 8:30-11:00, PN 20

- *Learning to be sympathetic in All is True by Shakespeare and Fletcher: Instructions for rulers and magistrates* (Maria Grazia Dongu, Università degli Studi di Cagliari)

- *A common stream: Empathy and the tides of consciousness in Virginia Woolf* (Serena Ammendola, Università della Calabria)
- *Empathy and lack of empathy in contemporary psychiatric narratives: the cases of Kavan, Quin and Galloway* (Daniele Corradi, Università di Parma)
- *William Trevor and the lures of critical empathy* (Angelo Monaco, Università degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro)
- *Empathy at the edge of the human: Trauma, voice, and otherness in Ishiguro's narratives* (Claudia Cao, Università di Cagliari / Angela Leonardi, Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II)

SEM11. Abstracts

A common stream: Empathy and the tides of consciousness in Virginia Woolf

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Virginia Woolf's work deeply explores empathy as a force that connects not only characters with each other, but also with nature and the past, transcending the boundaries of individual consciousness. This abstract examines Woolf's representation of empathy as 'vicarious and spontaneous sharing of affects' (Keen, 2007), evident in her treatment of human frailty, ecological interconnectedness and the persistence of memory.

In *Mrs Dalloway*, Woolf confronts the clinical detachment of the doctors with the empathic resonance of the protagonist. War veteran Septimus Warren Smith, modelled on Woolf's own struggle with mental health, is pathologised by those who coldly dismiss his trauma as a 'lack of proportion'. Their cold rationality contrasts sharply with Clarissa Dalloway's visceral response to his suicide, which she interprets as an act of defiance against the constraints of life. Her identification with Septimus - despite their social separation - reveals empathy as an egalitarian force that unites different lived experiences. Woolf extends this empathy to non-human life in *The Death of the Moth* (1942), where she anthropomorphises a moth's struggle against mortality, framing its 'superb' final protest as a universal metaphor for human resilience. By narrating the moth's plight through intimate, humanised language ('he', 'his'), Woolf elicits spontaneous emotional mirroring, embodying Keen's concept of shared affection. Similarly, in *Kew Gardens* (1919), the meticulous journey of a snail becomes a site of empathetic attention, reflecting Woolf's belief that even the smallest life possesses narrative significance.

Empathy in Woolf's work also transcends temporal boundaries. In *To the Lighthouse* (1927), Mrs Ramsay's painful absence reverberates through the memories of others, illustrating how emotional bonds persist beyond physical presence, defying the abyss of death. This underlines the role of empathy in shaping collective consciousness, as characters internalise shared histories and landscapes.

Woolf's work posits empathy as the foundation of the human condition, challenging the separation between mind and body, man and nature, present and past, life and death. Through stream of consciousness, anthropomorphism and temporal fluidity Woolf redefines empathy not only as an emotional resonance, but as an ethical imperative to perceive the interconnected fragility of life.

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Empathy at the edge of the human: Trauma, voice, and otherness in Ishiguro's narratives

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In Kazuo Ishiguro's fiction, empathy emerges as both a narrative strategy and an ethical problem. From the traumatic silences of *A Pale View of Hills* (1982) to the dystopian reflections of *Never Let Me Go* (2005) and the posthuman affectivity of *Klara and the Sun* (2021), Ishiguro's works challenge traditional understandings of intersubjectivity and the human. Drawing on recent critical theory in empathy studies and posthumanism (Hayles 1999; Pinotti 2014; Keen 2007;

Colombino 2025), this paper examines how Ishiguro constructs empathetic engagement not only through the portrayal of emotionally complex protagonists, but through narrative structures that dislocate the reader and reframe identification.

In *A Pale View of Hills*, Etsuko's fragmentary, elliptical memories of postwar Nagasaki resist cohesion, mirroring the structure of trauma and forcing the reader to empathize with absence, ambiguity, and unreliability. In *Never Let Me Go*, Kathy H.'s subdued narrative voice and use of autobiographical framing complicate readerly empathy, especially as it becomes clear that she is a clone bred for organ donation. Finally, *Klara and the Sun* offers a deeply affecting perspective through Klara, an artificial being whose moral intuitions and emotional perceptions often exceed those of her human counterparts. In all three works, internal focalization, temporal disjunction, and symbolic objects (photographs, cassette tapes, sunlight) coalesce into what Shameem Black has called Ishiguro's "inhuman aesthetics" (2009), pushing empathy to its limits.

These narratives interrogate the ethical boundaries of care, affect, and relationality—between self and other, human and nonhuman, memory and forgetting. As Zsófia Novák (2023) notes, Ishiguro's fiction partakes in a broader literary shift toward "inter-creatural empathy," where the permeability of human-nonhuman borders becomes the ground for new forms of ethical reflection. Ultimately, Ishiguro's novels construct empathy as a gesture both necessary and fraught: a mode of engagement shaped by gaps, silences, and the refusal of closure.

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Empathy and lack of empathy in contemporary psychiatric narratives: The cases of Kavan, Quin and Galloway

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Suffering from mental illness represents an experience of profound existential pain, one that, by its very nature, transcends the realm of so-called normality. For this reason, to possess such fundamental human qualities as compassion and empathy can be of crucial importance in dealing with individuals who face this kind of predicament. Empathy, in particular, would seem to be a necessary requirement for those whose very role in society is to care for individuals with mental health conditions – not to mention the pretension to cure them. Yet, the history of psychiatry demonstrates that this essential human quality has largely been set aside in psychiatric practice, which has traditionally favored a purely medical approach, often objectifying and dehumanising in nature. While this trend was especially prominent during the era of involuntary commitments and closed asylums, it remains disturbingly present in the psychopharmacological era as well.

In this context, it is striking to observe that one of the first things that stands out to readers engaging with the testimonies and autobiographical narratives of former mental patients, such as Anna Kavan's *Asylum Piece* (1940), Ann Quin's *The Unmapped Country* (1973), or Janice Galloway's *The Trick Is to Keep Breathing* (1989), is that the principal source of suffering for many patients throughout their involvement with mental institutions often lies not so much in the pathology itself, but rather in the process of dehumanisation and in the utter lack of empathy experienced during hospitalisation or in otherwise dealing with the institution. Narratives such as these, in fact, emerge first of all as desperate pleas for empathy, warmth, and understanding: the very human comforts that patients have been denied during their often-prolonged involvement with the psychiatric system and its various practitioners. These accounts, in turn, offer readers the

opportunity to cultivate their own empathy and deepen their existential understanding of mental illnesses, potentially fostering a more positive and compassionate attitude toward people who suffer from similar pathologies.

Given these premises, the aim of this paper is to examine three contemporary texts and authors that present first-person accounts of mental illness and/or experiences within the psychiatric system. The main objective is to assess the impact and significance of empathy in the dealing and treatment of mental health conditions, as well as the negative repercussions of more dehumanising approaches. Some considerations will also be made on the importance of testimony and the role of writing in relating such experiences to others. The texts under consideration include works written both before and after the phase of major reforms and the introduction of psychotropic drugs that reshaped psychiatry around the 1970s, leading to the dismantling of traditional mental hospitals. This temporal scope will allow some considerations on whether these changes have resulted in more humane and healthier practices in recent times.

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Learning to be sympathetic in all is true by Shakespeare and Fletcher: Instructions for rulers and magistrates

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While there has been renewed interest in sympathy, scholars have often excluded the early modern period from a thorough analysis of this emotion, distinguishing it from the passive passions that drive human beings. Robert Meek convincingly demonstrates, however, that sympathy is discussed in depth in early modern sermons, pamphlets, and dramas. As Meek puts it, sympathy was not considered a passive emotion but an active response that authors, characters, and readers could engage in; not the emotions themselves but the words to define them were invented or used in the eighteenth (sympathy) and twentieth (empathy, as distinct from sympathy) centuries (2013: 14; Schliesser 2015: 3-4).

In line with Meek's statements, I aim to show that charity is a substitute for sympathy in Shakespeare's and Fletcher's *All is True*. This concept upholds the Christian system of justice and service to the common good, while being challenged by passions such as greed, ambition and betrayal. These latter forces embody the threats to the long-standing alliance between the king and his nobles and operate according to a diverse value system that denies or mocks charity and compassion. While not neglecting recent discourses on empathy and morality, which have shifted towards understanding these concepts as integral to ethical decision-making (Mayborn 2013), I primarily seek to compare Shakespeare's discussion with the *Mirror for Magistrates* tradition to trace the depiction of a good and empathetic ruler and magistrate in the Elizabethan era, highlighting the crucial role of empathy in ethical decision-making.

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William Trevor and the lures of critical empathy

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In my presentation, I intend to reflect on the relationship between empathy and literature by taking into consideration William Trevor's novel *Felicia's Journey* (1994). Winner of the Whitbread Prize and adapted into a film directed by Atom Egoyan in 1999, the story follows a young, unmarried, pregnant girl, Felicia, who leaves her small Irish town

searching for her boyfriend, Johnny Lysaght. Once Felicia gets to the English Midlands, penniless and frustrated, she meets Joseph Ambrose Hilditch, an overweight catering manager who offers to assist her in looking for Johnny. And yet, as the narrative unfolds, the reader learns that Hilditch is a pathological liar with a history of childhood abuse. Hilditch thus embodies an eccentric, deviant character typical of Trevor's work—a psychopath fixated on food and grappling with an emotional void. Though Trevor intentionally avoids delving into Hilditch's mental illness, readers feel an almost magnetic pull to empathise with Hilditch's malevolent motives, extending compassion for his troubled past. Thus, using flashbacks and narrative embedding, Trevor deepens the reader's initial interpretations and expectations of the central character, Felicia.

Building on the theoretical framework of narrative empathy, which highlights the ethical potential of literary writing (Keen 2007; 2015; Nussbaum 1997; 2001), my presentation's working hypothesis posits that Trevor resists the allure of easy empathy. Instead, the novel seems to engage with what Eric Leake calls "critical empathy" (2024), understood as a social phenomenon located in the rich contexts of our encounters. In truth, *Felicia's Journey* depicts cruelty and suffering as ordinary phenomena, blurring the border between perpetrator and victim, prompting readers to question their emotional responses to marginalised characters such as Hilditch. Trevor's exploration of the darkest sides of human nature shatters the readers as they run the gamut of emotions, from empathy to shock. Ultimately, *Felicia's Journey* calls for interpretation, inviting the reader to unravel the ethical effects of empathy. In so doing, Trevor's fiction edges towards the aesthetics of vulnerability, encompassing a reading and writing ethics that confronts the more unsettling facets of human existence.

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SEM12. Innovative approaches to the teaching of literature between theory and practice

13 September h. 8:30-11:00, PN 14

Convenors

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Abstract

As scholars and teachers of English literature, we want to emphasize the value of literary studies in the Humanities. Despite the challenges of substantial cuts in the field and the impact of A.I. as a substitute of critical thinking, we vindicate the importance of getting to grips with the flexibility and ambiguity of the literary texts. In C. S. Lewis's words, "Literature adds to reality, it does not simply describe it. It enriches the necessary competencies that daily life requires and provides".

Our aim is to explore and expand the range of ways in which literature can be taught and discussed inside a university classroom. Prospective contributors are invited to share their own experiences in organizing classroom activities that engage students at diverse levels, fostering the development of skills that comprise critical and interdisciplinary thinking, narrative and fictional creativity, teamwork, public speaking, forms of performance. The idea is that of using the classroom as a space in which instructors and students creatively interact among themselves and with the literary texts, within a wider historical, cultural and linguistic context.

Also building on the experience that the recent pandemic has enforced, this seminar welcomes and aims to foster practical and theoretical reflections concerning the teaching of literature through active learning and related instructional strategies such as flipped classrooms, rewriting and adaptation strategies, remediation from the verbal to the visual and problem-based learning – all teaching possibilities that can be enhanced by the use of dedicated online platforms.

The seminar itself is meant as a springboard for new reflections as well as a site for sharing teaching experiences across different generations of instructors. We welcome submissions that showcase firsthand teaching experiences, offering insights into practical classroom strategies and challenges. Additionally, we encourage papers that delve into theoretical perspectives on literature instruction, examining pedagogical frameworks, methodologies, and innovative approaches to engaging students with literary texts.

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SEM12. Papers

13 September h. 8:30-11:00, PN 14

- *Teaching Shakespeare through adaptations* (Laura Tosi, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia / Rachele Bassan, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia)
- *Cordelia is doing yoga: Playing ecocritically with Shakespeare* (Shaul Bassi, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia)
- *The wing wherewith we fly to heaven: Rethinking education across borders* (Mariacristina Cavecchi, Università degli Studi di Milano)
- *Give beauty a chance: Teaching English language & literature through lyric poetry* (Richard Ambrosini, Università degli Studi Roma Tre)
- *Beyond anxiety: Pursuing hot cognition in a co-creative environment* (Maurizio Ascari, Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna)

SEM12. Abstracts

Give beauty a chance: Teaching English language & literature through lyric poetry

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The beauty of the English language should play a major role both in the language-acquisition process and in the study (and especially enjoyment) of English literature. That beauty comes to life in an English-learning environment when we apply a method aimed at encouraging ESL learners to identify the rhythmic patterns, the echoing of rhyme, assonance, or alliteration, and other prosodic elements. This is why I believe this seminar offers us an ideal opportunity for a discussion of how and why opening a space for poetry in our courses can enrich our work and make it more effective. (I write ‘opening a space’ because I don’t think poetry can be ‘taught’.)

The first innovation would involve devising a methodology based on developing in our Italian students an ear for the variety of rhythms, spoken and musical, rather than on metrical scansion, the method we find applied in English and American introductions to poetry. Over the past few years the beat prosody developed by Derek Attridge has earned a wide recognition among linguists and literary critics (see Duffel, Culler); a teaching practice based on this alternative to metrical scansion can now count on a substantial body of theoretical work; scholars teaching poetry in an ESL classroom can make a significant contribution to this body of work. (As Amittai Aviram wrote, “the test of a theory of poetry should be at once the vision it gives us of poetry and its pedagogical efficacy”.)

The variety of sounds and rhythms created by both the long and short poetic lines is of crucial importance for poetry readers who are learning English. This is why we need to reject the established hierarchy based on the pre-eminence of the iambic pentameter over the tetrameter and the trimeter, and explore instead the continuum between the poles of speech and music.

Finally, a cultural history of English literature and of the English language is not possible without an understanding of the way poetic forms and lyrical genres were reinvented in different periods, often by previously unheard poetic voices, and how the evolution of metrical poetry led to free verse.

These are some of the reasons why I believe we should find innovative ways to create a space for poetry in our courses on English literature and languages.

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Beyond anxiety: pursuing hot cognition in a co-creative environment

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The teaching of literature has greatly changed in recent years, shifting away from the transmission of notions as its primary goal. While enhancing our understanding of the ‘human’ by putting us into contact with various forms of *otherness* (be they related to the past or the present), the teaching of literature offers other related opportunities for personal and societal growth. Many of us now teach literature also with the aim to develop that cluster of abilities that goes under the definition of soft skills, ranging from critical thinking to public speaking, debating, team-building and creative writing.

These formative goals can be woven into the texture of literature courses also to implement an underlying educational strategy that pursues *hot cognition* and *embodied cognition* instead of traditional academic forms of *cold cognition*. Meaning-making is a complex cognitive activity, which is powered by the emotions and which is also effected through the body. Our cultural background can be likewise described as a psycho-physical complex, and relating new

learning experiences to our own horizon of interests, motives and emotions – also through various forms of performance – is the best way to ‘internalise’ them.

In a hyper-mediated world – in which information can be easily retrieved through a click of a button, but in which an inner sense of direction seems to become more and more difficult to develop – literary teaching practices need to be redesigned in order to avoid the danger of scarcely productive, exam-oriented memory efforts. We face the challenge of promoting a new sense of dialogue or conversation, a co-creative learning environment through which participants are offered the opportunity to evolve.

At a time when students increasingly suffer from forms of anxiety that they describe as paralysing – and consequently voice their preference for solitary activities, like writing a paper at home or answering multiple choice questions, to the detriment of in-presence exchanges – we need to create new arenas for guided peer interaction. Fostering a condition of intellectual and emotional trust is a central component of the university’s formative mission, for it this openness that strengthens the cohesive texture of society, while also triggering progress thanks to the mutual sharing of intellectual landscapes.



Cordelia is doing yoga: Playing ecocritically with Shakespeare

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What happens when Shakespeare meets climate anxiety, digital storytelling, old printing techniques and a group of curious students in Venice? This paper traces the evolution of a series of playful experiments in BA and MA courses such as *English Theatre* and *Ecology and Literature* at Ca’ Foscari University. Born during the isolating days of the COVID-19 pandemic, these projects have grown into imaginative ways of reading—and rereading—Shakespeare through an ecocritical lens. At the heart of these experiments is collaboration: small, self-selected groups working together as creative micro-communities, defying the convention of the lone student essay and/or oral exam. From digital tales to handcrafted books made in unplugged classrooms and fascinating print studios, students have reimaged Shakespeare with environmental urgency and artistic flair. Expect to encounter Ophelia floating in climate-changed waters, and *Tempest*-inspired volumes drifting ashore on the island of Lazzaretto Nuovo—a historical quarantine site turned theatrical stage. In a world increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence, these hands-on, minds-on approaches to literature invite us to reclaim the power of collective, playful, and planetary thinking.



The wing wherewith we fly to heaven: Rethinking Education Across Borders

Mariacristina Cavecchi (Università degli Studi di Milano) cristina.cavecchi@unimi.it

The paper explores the pedagogical and social implications of an experimental prison Shakespeare workshop held annually since 2016 at the “Cesare Beccaria” juvenile detention centre in Milan. Based on participatory theatre, the workshop brings together two seemingly distant learning communities – detained minors and university students – to promote emotional literacy, mutual recognition and civic awareness through the rewriting of a Shakespeare play. By inviting university students to engage with incarcerated peers through creative and embodied practice, the project redefines the university as a space not only for the transmission of knowledge but also for the cultivation of empathy, critical thinking, and social responsibility. It positions education as a collaborative and affective encounter that transcends institutional walls, and it demonstrates new possibilities for inclusive and socially engaged learning in higher education.



Teaching Shakespeare through adaptations

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Rachele Bassan (Università Ca’ Foscari Venezia) rachele.bassan@unive.it

Shakespeare and Adaptation Studies is a growing field that offers multidisciplinary perspectives on the teaching of Shakespeare, extending beyond drama to include film and other forms of media (see Iyengar 2023). It is now difficult to imagine an English literature module focused on Shakespeare that does not include some element of adaptation.

Adaptation studies have equipped students with new approaches to interpretation, encouraging engagement with the texts and the creation of original, creative responses (Cartmell and Whelehan 2014).

In this paper, we present a selection of rewriting and creative activities designed to engage a class of Italian and international students enrolled in the first year of the *Corso Magistrale* (LLEAP) during a 60-hour English Literature module at Ca' Foscari University. The course was delivered in a blended format, comprising 40 hours of in-class teaching and 20 hours of online activities (without live online instruction). These online components included both passive tasks (such as listening to custom-designed podcasts, watching selected video excerpts, or reviewing narrated PowerPoint presentations) and active ones, where students produced creative responses inspired by the texts and guided by prompts, questions, or quizzes. The challenge was always to guide students beyond the question of fidelity and encourage them to explore notions of intertextuality and regard sources as re-sources (Drakakis 2021).

A portion of the course focused specifically on narrative adaptations of *Macbeth* and *The Tempest* for children, including the Lambs' *Tales from Shakespeare* (1807), Cowden Clarke's *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines* (1850–52), several YA novel adaptations of *Macbeth*—such as Lisa Klein's *Macbeth's Daughter* (2009)—and contemporary picturebook versions. These adaptations, which are often simplified both linguistically and ideologically, illuminate the complex relationship between dramatic language and prose narrative, or more broadly, linguistic storytelling. They invite discussions around key choices: what kind of language should an adaptor use? Should they translate it into a modern idiom, offer a paraphrase, or preserve Shakespeare's diction? And what is the relationship between text and illustration—far more than simple visual translations, illustrations can function as critical interpretations in their own right. Another central issue is relevance: all adaptors, in different ways, attempt to make Shakespeare's works meaningful and convincing to child readers across different times, cultures, and languages. What strategies do they use—or could they use—to achieve this? All of these questions require students to make critical decisions. They begin by analysing and evaluating existing adaptations, and then become adaptors themselves—making choices that they previously only observed. In doing so, students gain agency, becoming collaborators with Shakespeare across time and space.

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SEM13. Weaving voices: Collaborative creativity in literature and culture

11 September h. 11:00-13:00, Gorr 3

Convenors

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Abstract

Literary theory and book history have increasingly questioned the notion of individualistic authorship, given the multitude of factors influencing the processes of writing, editing, and publishing. Stone & Thompson's (2006: 19) heterotextual model frames the author as a composite entity "incorporating different subjectivities and speaking in multiple voices"; similarly, Van Hulle (2022: 75) considers creativity as an "ecology" involving the manuscript's physical environment, the author's literary influences, dialogic exchanges with peers, and other non-human agents of change. However, a tendency persists to regard modifications deriving from non-authorial sources as forms of impurity, contamination, or unnatural hybridization; as Stillinger (1991: vi) observes, "where others besides the nominal author have a share in the creation of a text, we ... call it corruption and try to get rid of it". Arguably, standard editorial practices continue to adhere to what McGann (1984: 8) characterizes as "ideas ... which so emphasize the autonomy of the isolated author as to distort our theoretical grasp of [creativity]".

This seminar invites investigations into diverse forms and modes of joint creativity – ranging from overt co-signatures to silent revisions – across literary and non-literary contexts, from antiquity to the present day, in traditional and digital spaces, and encompassing interactions both among humans and between humans and computers.

Potential topics include:

- Gendered perspectives on collaboration and authorship
- Manuscript studies, archival work, and textual variance
- Editorial practices, textual authority, and the history of the book
- Translation as a collaborative process
- Digital humanities and its evolving practices
- AI-human collaboration and its implications for authorship
- Scholarly co-writing and knowledge-making.

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SEM13. Papers

11 September h. 11:00-13:00, Gorr 3

- *The plurivocal art of silence* (Boris Zakić, Georgetown College, Kentucky)
- *Collaborative tensions and editorial agency in Yeats and Ellis's Blake project* (Arianna Antonielli, Università degli Studi di Firenze)
- *Reading, publishing, translating: Intertextual and professional collaborations in Virginia Woolf's writing* (Letizia Dolcini, Università di Trento)
- *Interconnected, interrelated: Percy Bysshe Shelley's societies of texts and affections* (Ilaria Natali, Università degli Studi di Firenze)

SEM13. Abstracts

Collaborative tensions and editorial agency in Yeats and Ellis's Blake project

Arianna Antonielli (Università degli Studi di Firenze) arianna.antonielli@unifi.it

This paper focuses on the intricate cooperative writing and editing process of William Butler Yeats and Edwin John Ellis, from the University of Reading Manuscript 293/2/2 to *The Works of William Blake. Poetic, Symbolic, and Critical* (WWB; 1893). The two co-editors' efforts to analyse Blake's system and prophetic books were marked by a dynamic partnership that defied traditional collaboration models. As Yeats himself acknowledged, rather than working "hand in hand", they sought to "pursue the game on different tracks and in the evening divide their spoils" (WWB, x). This unconventional division of labour not only fostered intellectual exchange and diversity of interpretation but also gave rise to challenges and inconsistencies—as Yeats himself acknowledged. The complexities of their collaboration can be identified by examining Yeats's reservations, expressed in letters and marginalia, about Ellis's tendency to "trespass his own 'boundaries'" and to rewrite parts of the text that lay outside his field of expertise.

Yeats's concerns underscore the potential for conflicts arising from divergent interpretative approaches and the lack of clear demarcation between his own and Ellis's respective contributions. A thorough assessment of the co-editors' collaborative endeavours is further complicated by the perspectives and editorial mistakes or inferences introduced by the publisher, Bernard Quaritch, whose interventions led to inconsistencies within the final printed edition. Yeats's documented frustration with these outcomes highlights the broader challenges of reconciling differing editorial visions and ensuring textual coherence. Focusing on Ellis's editorial overreaches in the manuscript cluster and the consequences of these transgressions, as well as on the role of Bernard Quaritch in shaping the published version of WWB, the paper explores how all these factors influenced their edition of Blake's works. By tracing these editorial negotiations and tensions back to the manuscripts, this paper not only sheds light on the material and dialogic aspects of the Yeats-Ellis partnership but also contributes to broader debates on collaborative authorship, editorial agency, and the instability of textual authority.

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Reading, publishing, translating: Intertextual and professional collaborations in Virginia Woolf's writing

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It is no mystery that Virginia Woolf, one of the leading figures in the development of British modernism, embodied the very spirit of her time, by fusing different literary roles, composing a specific creative writing process, a collaborative one, which resulted in the end in a joint – and original – creation. This paper aims to show the meanings that the idea of "collaborative creation" can take on within the framework of Virginia Woolf's and modernist poetics, with a specific focus on the role of translations in the development of Woolf's writing. Drawing from Rebecca Beasley's statement that "the conversion of sensation to concept, experience to knowledge, is frequently conceived by these thinkers as an act of translation", this paper will illustrate how not only Woolf's position as a reader, critic and publisher of translations helps her in the intertextual process of incorporating texts into her writing, but also her reflection while translating – usually in collaboration with other intellectuals – becomes a way to "translate" her collaborative experience with the text into original creative works.

Particular attention is given to Woolf's works in connection with the publication of Roger Fry's translations from the Greek, produced between 1915 and 1920, and his later translations from the French, such as his 1936 version of Mallarmé. These instances of translation provide a useful context for interpreting Woolf's essay "On Not Knowing Greek," written in the early 1920s, as well as for examining literary representations of translation and reading in *The Voyage Out*. *Jacob's Room* may also be fruitfully read through this lens. The paper further considers Woolf's involvement, alongside Leonard Woolf and S.S. Koteliansky, in the collaborative translation of Russian literature, and examines her role as a publisher in facilitating the English-language reception of Freud's work.

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Interconnected, interrelated: Percy Bysshe Shelley's societies of texts and affections

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Percy Bysshe Shelley's notebooks from his late Pisan phase, especially Bodleian MSS Shelley adds. e.8 and e.18, offer a paradigmatic example of his collaborative, recursive, and rhizomatic modes of literary composition. Drawing on Dirk Van Hulle's model of the "creative ecology" of writing, this paper approaches Shelley's drafts as dynamic loci constituted by the manuscripts' physical environment, the author's literary influences, interactions with peers and collaborators, and other forces active in the compositional process.

The poetic fragment known as "Ginevra," published posthumously in 1824, is examined with particular attention to its compositional entanglement with *Adonais* (1821), revealing that the two texts emerged in near simultaneity and through a shared mosaic of literary appropriations and allusions. Shelley's drafts of the elegy for Keats incorporate phrases, motifs, and entire lines from "Ginevra," embracing a resolutely anti-teleological conception of the writing process.

Arguably, Shelley's creative networks suggest that he conceived intra- and intertextual dynamics as articulating a broader notion of relationality and sociality – one expressive of his embeddedness in a community of writers engaged in long-standing collaboration and the collective shaping of literary texts. Central to this network is Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, whose editorial and conceptual interventions position her not merely an inspirator and posthumous editor, but, in many respects, as a co-author of her husband's poems.

Within this paradigm, the notion of literary activity as a process of encounter and combination extends beyond material practices and writing spaces to embrace even the open-endedness of authorship itself, conceived as a porous and ongoing negotiation among selves, others, and the textual traces that link them across time.

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The plurivocal art of silence

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Le Roman de Silence is an illuminated manuscript composed in the first half of the thirteenth century. The romance's narrator, Master Heldris of Cornwall, chronicles the adventures of Silence, a revolutionary hero(ine) who navigates her identity while disguised as a boy. In 2023, the Theatre Department at Georgetown College in Kentucky brought the romance to the stage, while its Art Department formed *The Silence Scriptorium* for the occasion. Each hoped to recreate a captivating blend of Heldrian ideas for contemporary audiences in a series of live performances, scenographic solutions, studio works, installations, and gallery exhibitions.

This paper investigates the collaborative energy inherent in the original manuscript, as identified in subsequent translations and medieval scholarship, and the challenges of adapting its joint modalities to meet today's eisegetical expectations. For one, the manuscript's reputed author was likely a pseudonym, a moniker for an individual or a group, which, despite his name, may not include a male member at all. Correspondingly, *The Silence Scriptorium* alone reflects an ecology of creativity beyond individualistic authorship, evidenced by an assembly of unique individuals of diverse ages, genders, dexterities, backgrounds and interests. This paper contributes to ongoing discussions about gendered perspectives of collaboration, the fluidity of textual authority, and the implications of joint creativity in contemporary arts.

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SEM14. “P raises his head”: Acts of resistance in Samuel Beckett

14A 11 September h. 11:00-13.00, S4 Moro

14B 11 September h. 16:00-18:30, S4 Moro

Convenors

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Abstract

Despite the fact that it is often characterized by nihilistic interpretations, Beckett’s oeuvre depicts several acts of resistance, from Word’s final sigh in *Words and Music* (1962) to the upward gaze of the Protagonist in *Catastrophe* (1982). The weight and inescapability of mortality marks Beckett’s work since its very beginning, as testified by his first poetry collection, *Echo’s Bones* (1935). Beckett’s meditation on finitude is nonetheless accompanied by an enquiry into the residual possibilities of language, even when his goal is to dissolve “that terrible materiality of the word surface” (Beckett, 1937), testing the limits of the linguistic medium. Beckett’s postwar considerations on painting are imbued with explicit ethical undertones, as clearly indicated in the “obligation to express” which concludes *The Three Dialogues* (Beckett, 1949). The intermedial experiments that follow often stage acts of domination and torture, frequently alluding to contemporary historical events, from the Algerian War to the Cold War. Strongly opposed to the idea of writing as a repository of a political message, he conveys his ethics by means of a rigorous reshaping of form. The aim of this seminar is to examine the presence and meaning of resistance in Beckett’s corpus.

Proposal may address, but are not limited to, the following topics:

- Beckett and resistance
- Beckett and testimony
- Beckett and anti-totalitarian dissent
- Beckett, nationalism and internationalism
- Beckett and censorship
- Beckett and ethics
- Political interpretations of Beckett
- Philosophical interpretation of Beckett
- Modalities of resistance: the dissolution of identity
- Modalities of resistance: the dissolution of form
- Modalities of resistance: the dissolution of language
- Beckett as a director: freedom and the marketplace
- Beckett and his publishers: freedom and the marketplace
- Alienation, commodification and the marketplace in his prose, plays, essays, poetry
- alienation, commodification and the marketplace in Beckett’s correspondence
- Hybrid bodies in Beckett
- Ecocritical interpretations of his work
- Beckett and popular culture
- Acts of resistance in Beckett and his contemporaries
- Political reappropriations of Beckett
- Postcolonial rewritings of Beckett

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SEM14. Papers

14A 11 September h. 11:00-13:00, S4 Moro

- *The twilight of resistance: Representations of old age in the work of Samuel Beckett* (Irene De Angelis, Università di Torino)
- *"You love me so": From musical-box tune to revealing song in Happy Days* (Yuri Chung, Sapienza Università di Roma)
- *The space of silence in Beckett's radio plays: Words and Music (1962) and Cascando (1963)* (Sara Pallante, Università degli Studi di Salerno / Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II)
- *Wor(l)ds fall apart: The obligation to express and the resistance to interpretation in Beckett's theatre* (Antonio Sanges, University College London)
- *"I say it as I hear it": Fundamental sounds in Samuel Beckett's later texts* (Rossana Sebellin, Tor Vergata Università degli Studi di Roma)

14B 11 September h. 14:30-17:00, S4 Moro

- *"P raises his head". Acts of resistance in Beckett's corpus* (Penelope Ioannou, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens)
- *"Accursed progenitor!". Beckett and the container* (Paolo Caponi, Università degli Studi di Milano)
- *The life of the mound* (Livia Sacchetti, John Cabot University)
- *Samuel Beckett's regimes of ignorance: Ethico-political acts of resistance* (S. E. Gontarski, Florida State University, US)

SEM14. Abstracts

"Accursed progenitor!". Beckett and the container

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The image of the "container", in Wilfred Bion's terms, acquires a particular relevance in Beckett's oeuvre during the Fifties, i.e. the period that includes the narrative burst of the trilogy (1951-53) and his successful beginnings in the theatre. It is an overdetermined image, coalescing in the receptacle of the jar (*Molloy*) or the ashbin (*Endgame*), imbued with literary and figurative influences and triggered by Carl Gustav Jung's 1935 conference at the London Tavistock clinic attended by Beckett with is then psychotherapist Bion. In spite of its obvious, regressive function, the jar also stands as a reactive expedient, one that both propels the story forward and operates as a container of a hybridized body that stubbornly opposes his hiding, removal, or disappearance. My contribution will focus on this symbol and on its plastic relevance in Beckett's work.

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“You love me so”: From musical-box tune to revealing song in *Happy Days*

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“One cannot sing just to please someone,
however much one loves them, no,
song must come from the heart” (S. Beckett, *Happy Days*, Act I).

As Knowlson recalls, Samuel Beckett was faced with a dilemma when he was trying to complete *Happy Days*. He had to choose Winnie’s song for the finale of the play. At first, there seemed to be a preference for “When Irish eyes are smiling”, a famous tribute song to Ireland, but, in the end, he opted for “I love you so”, the waltz duet from Franz Lehár’s *The Merry Widow*. His friend, Alan Schneider, had advised him to choose the latter for pathos purposes and its universality, with the author concurring with these points.

According to Maier (2008), this finale represents a moment in which Winnie can finally express her feelings, deriving from the “heart”, in a pseudo duet which, from his point of view, turns into an unanswered song, a sort of prayer. Similarly, O’Brien Johnson (1989) sees it simply as a variation, an interchangeable substitute of her ending prayer habit. But since Winnie is a person of fixed habits, shouldn’t she pray instead? And is she really expecting an answer to her song?

Furthermore, when analysing *Happy Days*, Loftis (2013) focuses on Winnie’s “loss of memory and deliberate forgetting” in the play, concluding that the past could never be completely erased or forgotten. If citations, like the Shakespearian ones and many others, are partially misquoted due to falling memory, Winnie’s final song instead follows a different direction. If, in the first act, only the tune can be heard coming from a musical-box with a failed attempt by Willie to reproduce its lyrics, Winnie in the end offers a faithful rendition of it. Memory, by means of this song, seems intact and resistant to the aforementioned failures.

The aim of this paper is to show how these final sung words give further meaning to a work, which Beckett himself had to modify due to the choice of this waltz duet.

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The twilight of resistance: Representations of old age in the work of Samuel Beckett

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This paper proposes to explore the complex and often poignant representations of old age in the work of Samuel Beckett in light of the themes suggested in the call for papers. Far from being a mere phase of biological decline, old age in Beckett proves to be fertile ground for exploring the dynamics of resistance, testimony and dissolution. Through the analysis of iconic figures such as Hamm and Nagg in *Endgame*, Winnie in *Happy Days*, and the protagonists of *Krapp’s Last Tape* and *Rockaby*, this study will examine how older characters confront loss, memory, and the approaching end through acts of tenacious survival, recollection of the past, and a peculiar form of inner resistance.

In particular, the paper will focus on how progressive physical and mental disintegration is reflected in the deconstruction of dramatic and narrative form, and how language itself is worn down and fragmented in an attempt to express the ineffable experience of ageing. It will also discuss whether and how the vulnerability and dependence associated with old age can be interpreted in relation to the dynamics of alienation within an often ruthless existential context. Finally, it will suggest how Beckett’s representations of old age can offer a critical perspective on contemporary notions of productivity, autonomy and individual worth, raising questions about the dignity and meaning of existence in its final stage.

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Samuel Beckett's regimes of ignorance: Ethico-political acts of resistance

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Beckett's is, foremost, an anti-authoritarian and so an ethico-political discourse. That is, Beckett was part of the resistance to particular political regimes at a particular moment in history, but much of his resistance, and Beckett remained a resistance writer for the entirety of his career, was more broadly to what Foucault would call "regimes of power," diffuse and discursive as well as concentrated and coercive. For Foucault, "power is everywhere," diffused and embodied in discourse, knowledge and "regimes of truth" (Foucault 1991, 27-28).

Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its "general politics" of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (Interview, "Truth and Power," 131)

Or again,

"It seems to me that power is 'always already there', that one is never 'outside' it... [But] to say that one can never be 'outside' power does not mean that one is trapped and condemned to defeat no matter what...

[Resistances] are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised" (Interview, "Power and Strategies" 141-142).

If Beckett accepted, practiced and professed a "regime of ignorance," it was because knowledge is allied to and so complicit with power and control, part of a "regime of truth"; that is, power is constituted through knowledge, Foucault reminds us. Beckett's professed ignorance, about his work, about the history of Philosophy, about the aesthetics of art, is an overt and conscious act of ethical resistance, the model for which may be the language-less protagonist in the first "Act without Words," who is involuntarily "thrown into the world" but whose apparent final passivity is an act of resistance, of willed political defiance, even as he has exhausted the possibilities of a future.



"P raises his head". Acts of resistance in Beckett's corpus

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This paper proposes a close reading of Samuel Beckett's *The Unnamable* through the Greek triad of ἀπορία (aporia), ἀταραξία (ataraxia), and ἀθανασία (athanassia), asking how the novel mobilizes linguistic instability in its radical resistance to philosophical containment, and understanding its verbal world as one of perpetual suspension, disintegration, and regeneration. Beginning with the jagged first utterances—"Where now? Who now? When now?"—the paper explores how Beckett's syntactical violence and semantic slipperiness render the Cartesian cogito inoperative, recasting skepticism as a restless, recursive mode of becoming rather than an endpoint of detachment.

Drawing on the semantic elasticity of ἀπορία, which carries both the burden of a roadblock and the promise of its surpassing, I argue that Beckett's text refuses stillness even as it hungers for it. As the text enacts a form of procedure-by-aporia, ataraxia—the equanimity toward which philosophical aporia traditionally tends—is repeatedly suspended and

undone by the text's formal and rhetorical unruliness: with its rhythmic stuttering and irreconcilable speed, Beckett's prose makes a poetry out of resisting stillness at every turn.

The paper also considers the novel's engagement with ἀπορία not only as philosophical impasse but as a term embedded in everyday Greek—used colloquially to indicate both a question and the means through which that question might move past its own obstacle. In this light, Beckett's language—autolytic, kinetic, and constantly doubling back on itself—becomes both the site of confusion and its own strange engine of clarity. Finally, the paper draws a brief parallel to Abdellkebir Khatibi's *Love in Two Languages* to illuminate the shared terror and ecstasy of language under erasure—of words poised always between *mot* and *la mort*. In both texts, linguistic aporia becomes a condition not of stasis but of infinite, if uneasy, survival.

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The space of silence in Beckett's radio plays: *Words and Music* (1962) and *Cascando* (1963)

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The modernist interest in incommunicability and the unspoken is well known. Counteracting the essentiality and silences of the modernist text are the urban and technological clamours. Radio, with its incessant flow of words, sounds and noises, develops in this context. In contrast to writing, silence on the radio often means complete absence: if disembodied sounds and voices were also silenced, they would become dead air. Yet silence, in its studied alternation with voices, sounds, and noises, can be one of the most powerful imaginative stimuli even in the radio context (McWhinnie: 1959). This article intends to focus on the role of silence in two radio plays by Samuel Beckett, *Words and Music* (1962) and *Cascando* (1963). Although the centrality of silence has often been examined in Beckett's works, these two radio plays have been interpreted as the author's intention to express the triumph of the essentiality and abstractness of music over the rhetoric of words (Prieto: 2020: 565-569). Each radio play is a meta-narrative of the creative process, in which a character strives to foster collaboration between words and music in order to craft a composition. This analysis has the primary objective of demonstrating that the interruption of sound and voice should not be interpreted merely as a postmodern indication of the complete breakdown of artistic expression – whether verbal or musical – within the landscape of mass communication. Even on the radio, silence can serve as a space of resistance – empty, and yet not devoid of life – a space to which one must cyclically return to revitalize artistic expression and renew the pursuit of elusive meaning.

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The life of the mound

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In her essay *There Must be a Lot of Fish in the Lake*, Una Chaudhuri reflects deeply on the relationship between stage space and natural spaces. She argues that the stage has often been limited to the portrayal of "human existence as a seamless social web", ignoring the necessary relationship between human and nature or, in rare cases, using the latter as a metaphor. She continues by arguing that "the ideological discourse of realism thrust the nonhuman world into the shadows, from which it emerged in the ghostlike form of strangely menacing-yet inanimate-objects" and, in this light, she considers "the junk-strewn, garbage-choked stages of Pinter, Mamet, Shepard, and others". While Beckett's work would seem to father the work of those mentioned in the latter statement, *Happy Days* stands as a stark contrast to plays that only portray human-made wastelands.

This paper proposes to read *Happy Days* in ecocritical terms. It will evaluate the relationship created between the mound, Winnie, and Willie as a haunting presage of the climate crisis. As is often the case with Beckett's use of stage space, the mound that entraps Winnie is neither fully a metaphor nor fully literal. It is designed to inhabit a liminal space,

one that provokes the audience by remaining boldly undefined. The play offers no explanation for the mound; hence, no accurate assessment of its nature can be made. However, the mound's movement--or growth--is the only traceable progress made on stage. Winnie's and Willie's actions, instead, are bound to it, but are also inconsequential. Confined by a natural phenomenon that devours their prospects and limits their present, Winnie and Willie seem unconcerned with it, taken as they are with their consumption of the objects they carry. As they busy themselves with nostalgic memories about "the old days", lipsticks, newspapers, and idle talk, the mound grows threateningly, moving out of the space of a mere metaphor. It is not the wasteland of *Waiting for Godot* or "ashcans" of *Endgame*, it is an active, vital force; one that moves and grows pervasively, ultimately intimating doom. Winnie's and Willie's lack of concern with their natural habit seems to anticipate with glaring accuracy the current crisis. As they are increasingly reduced to earthworms, crawling, entombed, and unaware, the mound stands strong in both triumphant and destructive terms.



Wor(l)ds fall apart: The obligation to express and the resistance to interpretation in Beckett's theatre

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Beckett depicts characters whose lives are not worth living at the limits of the grotesque (Nell and Nagg in *Endgame* are two old people living in a dustbin): this led the critics to think about Beckett as depicting absurd or nonsensical situations. Furthermore, similar to Cioran, Beckett had no faith in the possibility of language to express: 'There is nothing to express' (Cohn 1983). This suggests that not only did Beckett have a pessimistic and nihilistic view of life, but he also had no faith in the possibility that art could play a role in such a worldview, and that any tentative to resist the meaninglessness of life would be fruitless. Many critics read Beckett's oeuvre with the lens of Existentialist philosophy or Nihilistic philosophy, and original interpretations such as those by Adorno or Cavell are allegorical interpretations that significantly differ from each other. It is possible to read Beckett's remarks on philosophy in his Philosophy notes, which are rather unoriginal: for example, Beckett says that in ancient Greek philosophy, pessimism is an 'imminent' consequence of hedonism (Beckett 2020). Furthermore, Beckett's engagement with philosophy seems to be very peculiar, and he was interested in Schopenhauer (as it is possible to understand by reading his letters) just because the philosopher provided an 'intellectual justification of unhappiness' (Beckett 2009). In Beckett's novels and plays, the characters deal with major problems of the Western philosophical tradition: destiny, love, death, and suffering. However, Beckett never deepens these themes, and he banalizes them at the level of a conversation about the weather, as if suffering is an important matter.

I argue that Beckett acknowledges that it is impossible to solve the problems of the Western tradition that led to the acknowledgment of the meaninglessness of life: for example, on several occasions in which the author hints at the fact that it is better not to be born. Once this is acknowledged, the artist can take their pessimism and nihilistic view as an obvious thing and banalize it. The meaninglessness of life is obvious. The artist cannot philosophically engage with this problem, which, in Wittgensteinean words, would be outside of their 'world' (Wittgenstein 1998); instead, the artist could just deal with 'superficial' themes (Sanges 2023). In this way, the artist can create artworks in which he expresses his pessimistic worldview without dealing with it. Nevertheless, the artworks remain valuable in themselves, as they function as self-contained esthetic games that resist interpretation.

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“I say it as I hear it”: Fundamental sounds in Samuel Beckett’s later texts

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The question and quest of “fundamental sounds” in the later production of Samuel Beckett produces an increasingly idiosyncratic blurring of the genres. The pursuit of the right word (replicated in the self-translation) further enhanced an obliteration of genre distinction operating in Beckett since his early works (see for example *Echo’s Bones*). His later prose and drama dismantles the limits imposed by genre; even beyond Beckett’s own intentions (and sometimes to the author’s discomfiture): his prose is dramatized, his radio plays staged, his drama published in poetry collections, interpreted or read as prose. The aim of this paper is to investigate the remnants of drama when dialogue is erased, the relics of prose when its form becomes intrinsically performative, the critical aurality of radio plays rife with images. As I hope to demonstrate, Beckett’s radical pursuit of the perfect word quickly turns into an act of resistance to genre distinctions.

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SEM15. Italian approaches to stylistics

15A 12 September h. 14:00-16:00, S7 Moro

15B 13 September h. 8:30-11:00, S2 Moro

Convenors

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Abstract

Stylistics is the systematic study and analysis of texts, grounded in precise and comprehensive linguistic description, and characterized by a meticulous close reading and interpretation of the texts under examination. As a discipline within the humanities, stylistics is primarily concerned with the linguistic composition of texts and the central role of language in textual construction. Over time, the field has developed a robust theoretical framework along with a diverse array of linguistic and analytical methodologies that enable the critical, scientific, and systematic interrogation of not only language, texts, and textual meaning but also the interpretive contexts of readers. In this sense, stylistics extends beyond linguistic meaning-making processes and textual features to enlarge the focus to human subjectivity in order to examine the cultural and social ideologies, perspectives, and belief systems embedded within individual texts and their broader social and cultural frameworks.

Within this context, this seminar will explore how geopolitical, ideological, and ecological challenges and crises are represented in texts and discourses, as well as how these texts and discourses engage with, respond to, and critique such issues. Aligned with the objectives of the Poetics and Linguistics Association (PALA) and the Centro di Ricerca Interuniversitario di Argomentazione, Pragmatica e Stilistica (ARGO), the seminar contributions will analyze a range of literary and non-literary texts, through the application of theoretical frameworks and methodologies advanced by contemporary stylistics. In doing so, the seminar will offer a comprehensive mapping of current stylistic approaches embraced by Italian scholars and the analytical methodologies presently employed within the Italian stylistics research community, reinforcing the integral role of stylistics within the humanities.

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SEM15. Papers

15A 12 September h. 14:00-16:00, S7 Moro

- *Ecostylistic approaches to landscapes* (Daniela Francesca Viridis, Università degli Studi di Cagliari)
- *A new addition to the family? Introducing the theory and practice of postcolonial stylistics* (Esterino Adami, Università di Torino)
- *The stylistics of healthcare discourse: transitivity, modality, and the representation of femininity in online patient information leaflets* (Annalisa Federici, Università degli Studi Roma Tre)
- *Stylistic mediation in news translation: Ethics in Italian journalism* (Eleonora Fois, Università degli Studi di Cagliari)

15B 13 September h. 8:30-11:00, S2 Moro

- *Neurodivergence, foregrounding, and narrative empathy in *Flowers for Algernon*: A stylistics-based reader-response study* (Piergiorgio Trevisan, Università degli Studi di Trieste)
- *"Thou shalt find that I exceed my sex": Styling female agency in *Shakespeare** (Chiara Ghezzi, Università di Napoli L'Orientale)
- *Language and worldview in *Malcolm Lowry's Under the Volcano*: A computer-aided analysis of Mexican-Hispanic and Indigenous languages* (Giuseppina Balossi, Independent scholar)
- *Merging deixis: time, space and persona in *4.48 Psychosis** (Mariaconcetta Mirto, Università di Napoli L'Orientale)

SEM15. Abstracts

A new addition to the family? Introducing the theory and practice of postcolonial stylistics

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Stylistics is a robust and vast scientific domain that keeps growing like a family, spanning both traditional and innovative disciplinary areas and methodologies, such as (im)politeness and ecolinguistics, all of which have received much attention from the Italian research community (Del Villano, 2008; Viridis, 2023). My contention is that to such a list we should add postcolonial stylistics (Adami 2025), which aims to fruitfully integrate stylistic frames, such as foregrounding, cognitive metaphor and modality, and postcolonial theories, like Orientalism, mimicry and hybridity. Such a timely project recognises the importance and scholarly production of the two fields, especially in the Italian context. It also shows that postcolonial studies can be viewed as a key to understanding our complex contemporaneity, from a social, historical and even environmental perspective, given the pernicious link between the inheritance of colonialism and the current climate crisis (Zurru, 2025). However, the idea of postcolonial stylistics is not simply a possible application of linguistic analysis to less critiqued texts, but it is part of a political reflection and social commitment within a “radical move” (Stockwell 2023), as both stylistics and postcolonial studies pivot around on the interconnection between human beings, identitarian values and powerful discourses, often addressing and denouncing cases of inequality, racism and marginalisation (Dawson Varughese, 2012; Tunca, 2014).

This paper intends to discuss how merging stylistics and postcolonial studies can contribute to the critical study of the humanities today because, on the one hand, stylistic analysis guarantees a high degree of ‘rigour, retrievability, and replicability’ and, on the other, working with postcolonial texts allows to consider non-canonical and non-western narratives and concepts. The talk accords with the stylistic manifesto illustrated by Carter and Stockwell (2008) that try to encourage scholars to be “eclectic”, “holistic” and “evangelical”, and offers a preliminary investigation of two recent non-fictional postcolonial texts: ‘Youth’ by Gibraltarian writer Mark G. Sanchez, and ‘On structure’ by Chinese-Canadian author Madeleine Thien. Put differently, this paper illuminates the expansion of the ‘family’ of stylistics as we critically look at the (language of the) present age, and its discontents.

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Language and worldview in Malcolm Lowry’s *Under the Volcano*: A computer-aided analysis of Mexican-Hispanic and Indigenous languages

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This paper investigates the intersections of Western and Mexican worldviews in *Under the Volcano* (1947) through Malcolm Lowry’s use of language — specifically Spanish, Mexican Spanish, and Nahuatl, one of the Uto-Aztecan languages of Mexico. The analysis examines how these languages function as linguistic markers of culturally shared or divergent understandings between the novel’s Western characters and the local people, and how these understandings are conceptualized and represented from differing perspectives.

The first part of the paper identifies, through statistical analysis, the lexical elements that connote the physical and human environment of Cuernavaca: toponyms that contribute to creating Lowry’s apparently precise and realistic style,

and Hispanic-Mexican or Nahuatl terms — some lacking English equivalents—that help establish a vivid sense of place and characters.

The second part of the paper focuses on its central concern: the contrasting worldviews of European and indigenous characters. It explores, through concordances and samples extracts, linguistic phenomena such as code-switching (*e.g.* tag-switching, intrasentential and intersentential switching, and intra-word switching), authentic conversations, borrowings from literary and historical sources (*e.g.* “No se puede vivir sin amar” (Fray Luis de León: 1527–91), as well as a variety of language registers (*e.g.* “the Oficina Principal of the Compañía Telefónica Mexicana Esq., San Juan de Letrán e Independencia, México, D.F.,” from a realistic-sounding telegram). Together, these linguistic elements create a complex and idiosyncratic representation of the Western-Anglo-American characters’ socio-cultural reality, highlighting the role of language in constructing identity and worldview.

The analysis draws upon Linguistics, Cognitive Stylistics, Corpus Linguistics, and Anthropology. Computer-assisted methods facilitate a systematic linguistic analysis of the Mexican-Hispanic and Nahuatl lexis, and their co-textual analysis interpreted through the worldview theory, although these are only a few of the many intertextual features in the novel that offer rich opportunities for further exploration of worldview in *Under the Volcano*.

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The stylistics of healthcare discourse: transitivity, modality, and the representation of femininity in online patient information leaflets

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Nowadays, there is a growing body of work employing corpus methods to conduct stylistic analyses of non-literary texts, supporting the argument that restricting stylistics to the study of literary texts alone is reductive. For instance, Price has effectively shown that “stylisticians interested in the language of health and illness might usefully apply methods from corpus stylistics [...] to health communication data” (2023, 560). Furthermore, discussing corpus stylistics in relation to health communication, Price notes that the definition of this relatively recent subfield of stylistics remains under debate. While some scholars describe corpus stylistics as the application of corpus methods to the analysis of literary texts, McIntyre and Walker define it as “the application of theories, models and frameworks from stylistics in corpus analysis” (2019, 15). In other words, the focus of corpus stylistics lies in investigating stylistic questions across a variety of texts, rather than merely analysing literary texts using corpus methods. Viewed in this way, corpus stylistics emerges as a recognisable field in its own right, given that stylistic concerns can significantly enrich corpus linguistic enquiry. Drawing on this theoretical and methodological background, the present paper aims to illustrate how corpus evidence can be used to address stylistic questions in healthcare informational material publicly available online. Combining quantitative methods from corpus linguistics (Adolphs et al., 2004; Atkins & Harvey, 2010) with qualitative methods from stylistics (Solly, 2015; Demjén & Semino, 2021), it shows how healthcare discourse can be fruitfully examined from a (corpus) stylistic perspective. In particular, this study offers a stylistic analysis of the role played by transitivity and modality in the discursive representation of femininity within a corpus of eighty-four patient information leaflets available on the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists website (<https://www.rcog.org.uk/for-the-public/browse-all-patient-information-leaflets/>). The aim is to examine the linguistic choices through which female subjects are construed and notions of female health and well-being are conveyed. Analysis of these healthcare texts reveals a number of recurrent

stylistic features and discursive strategies, notably the widespread use of epistemic and boulomaic modal expressions to minimise imposition and deliver medical knowledge/advice in non-peremptory ways, as well as the predominance of Relational and Mental processes over other process types in non-modalised verbs. In these samples of healthcare communication, such linguistic traits signal how leading figures in the healthcare system provide medical guidance and information that enables female subjects both to understand typical conditions associated with various life events (e.g. disease, pregnancy, childbirth, menopause) and to make informed decisions concerning their health.

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Stylistic mediation in news translation: Ethics in Italian journalism

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Translation is closely linked to stylistics, which concerns itself with how a text means rather than merely what it means—an insight that is essential to translation (Boase-Beier, 2014). Style plays a central role in how journalistic writing constructs meaning and cultural representations of people and places (Riggs, 2020). News translation operates similarly: narratives may be reshaped or distorted, and public opinion influenced, sometimes exacerbating international tensions. In the 21st century, public trust in journalism has declined, partly due to the spread of disinformation and biased reporting. Yet, the role of translation remains opaque, as does awareness of the implications of cultural and textual mediation. First, the translating agent significantly shapes the framing and narrative of translated news. Second, the lack of transparency surrounding the translator’s identity complicates accountability and raises questions about who bears responsibility for ideological shifts or factual distortions (Fois, 2022). Third, recontextualisation is influenced by the need to align content with the ideological and stylistic preferences of editors and target readers. This may introduce bias, especially in direct quotations and other ostensibly objective textual elements, thus raising ethical questions about meaning and intent. The shift toward cross-platform journalism—where content is adapted for diverse audiences across multiple media formats—intensifies these challenges.

This paper investigates such issues in the context of Italian cross-platform journalism, focusing on the coverage of the re-emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement. Given the topic’s deep cultural specificity, it demands high levels of intercultural sensitivity and stylistic awareness in translation.

The analysis draws on foreign affairs coverage, where translation of sources is indispensable. However, entire articles and related social media posts will be examined to capture how recontextualisation and framing operate from an ethical standpoint. Italian outlets were selected based on their inclusion in the Reuters Digital News Reports (2020, 2021) with a trust score of at least 65%.

The qualitative analysis is informed by theories of language in use to show how stylistic choices, power dynamics, and cultural norms shape translation and affect meaning reception. Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005) provides a framework to investigate attitudes and stances in recontextualised texts; Pragmatics and Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 2002) offer insight into recontextualisation processes. Multimodal Discourse Analysis (Machin & Ledin, 2018) will be used to examine extra-verbal elements typical of cross-platform journalism.

The analysis will offer critical insights into how stylistic and editorial choices in translation shape the ethical positioning of cross-platform journalism, particularly in representing culturally sensitive issues.

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“Thou shalt find that I exceed my sex”: Styling female agency in Shakespeare

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Over the past few years, Shakespearean stylistics has extended its scope towards a more pragmatic dimension, investigating the linguistic context of historical literary texts. The present contribution aims to further explore this field. Using both stylistics and pragmatics as methodological frameworks, the study focuses on foregrounded features and rhetoric modalities – speech acts, shading, figures of speech and (im)politeness – in order to categorise the linguistic patterns of female agency in Shakespeare, to understand whether and how these women are able to break through their ceremonial state and expected passivity to become acting characters.

In his first tetralogy – *Henry VI Part 1, 2, 3* (1588-1592) and *King Richard III* (1591-1594) –, Shakespeare not only reconstructed the historical rise to power of notorious male characters, but also depicted the alluring dramatic portraits of mighty women prone to rule and fight. Whether they are unintentional victims of their passions or vengeful viragos defending justice, Shakespearean leading ladies share some marked linguistic strategies in their discourses of power.

Caught between subversion and submission, unruly invectives and expected silences, the women of the tetralogy – Joan of Arc, Margaret of Anjou, Anne Neville and Elizabeth Woodville – share different destinies and discursive valency in the great scheme of the plot.

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Merging deixis: Time, space and persona in 4.48 Psychosis

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On the verge of the XXI century, Sarah Kane wrote what Micheal Billington described as “a 75-minutes suicide note” (30 June 2000): *4.48 Psychosis* (Kane, 2002) was staged at Royal Court Theatre Upstairs on the 23rd of June 2000, one year and four months after Kane committed suicide hanging herself in her room at King’s College Hospital; the play is a complex puzzle of thoughts, dialogues and visions, coming together and constantly reassembling the identity of the speaking voice. The addressees (Jakobson, 1997) do not know the main character’s name, and little – if none – is explained about her story, conferring to the text a layered texture where emotions, words, and images merge and expand at once; within the chaos of a fractured mind, the act of differentiating among past, present and future equals to get lost, only to find oneself projected in a web of merging timelines and spaces.

The aim of this proposal is to analyse deictic markers of time, space, and persona in one of the most famous quotes of the play, where different timelines – and spaces – are evoked and merge. The results will show how those pieces of different realities are channelled into the play to trigger the addressee’s sensibility, blending (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002) to generate new “here-s and now-s” where there is no difference between the I-speaking and the perpetrators of several acts of violence – from genocide to sexual children abuse, to psychological violence. In *4.48 Psychosis*, the

identity is fragmented and never finds it wholeness again, and, instead of closing the faults, it opens them up even more through the recollection of human cruellest instincts: as for *Blasted* (Kane, 2002), the seed of mass violence blooms in the soil of little, private acts of violence, but where in her first work it was an escalation, in her last play it is presented as an interiorized plunge that departs from the collective memory of the Nazi's terror and lands in the present time of an ill mind.

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Neurodivergence, foregrounding, and narrative empathy in *Flowers for Algernon*: A stylistics-based reader-response study

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While the topic of narrative empathy is gaining increasing attention in both theoretical and empirical research within the humanities, there remains much to explore regarding how readers engage empathically with fictional characters. In particular, unconventional, unreliable, or idiosyncratic characters—especially those who deviate from social norms (Bonasera, 2023) or exhibit neurodivergent traits (Trevisan, 2023)—offer a compelling case for investigating the dynamics of reader-character empathy. These figures often challenge conventional identification patterns, prompting readers to negotiate more complex emotional and cognitive responses.

Research in stylistics has helped clarify the relationship between textual features and readers' empathetic responses, thereby offering insights into how narrative empathy is experienced (cf. Fernandez-Quintanilla and Stradling 2023). Among such features, foregrounding—the use of stylistically marked language to disrupt habitual perception—has been extensively examined in empirical studies on affective reader response (Hakemulder, 2004; Fialho, 2007; Van Peer et al., 2007; Kuzmičová et al., 2017). These studies suggest that stylistic salience may heighten emotional engagement and stimulate reflective or transformative reading experiences.

Building on this research, the present study investigates the role of literary style—particularly foregrounding—in shaping readers' empathic engagement with unconventional characters. It focuses on a survey-based analysis of reader responses to *Flowers for Algernon* (1959), the well-known science fiction short story by Daniel Keyes. Despite its widespread popularity and frequent inclusion in educational settings, the emotional and empathic impact of this story has received limited attention from stylistic and linguistic perspectives.

This study aims to test whether foregrounded features enhance readers' empathic responses to a text narrated by an unreliable and neurodivergent character. We hypothesize that participants exposed to the original version of the story, which retains a high degree of foregrounding, will report stronger emotional and empathic reactions than those who read a stylistically manipulated version with reduced foregrounding.

In this talk, I will present the results of this empirical investigation, drawing on data from 80 participants.

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Ecstylistic approaches to landscapes

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Moving from the results achieved in recent research (my latest book-length study and the volumes I edited or co-edited), this presentation discusses ecstylistic approaches to landscapes and nature as represented in literary and non-literary discourse. Theoretically, the presentation introduces the terms and theories in the discipline of stylistics which can be applied in ecstylistic analysis, namely, foregrounding, point of view, metaphor and framing, lexical choices, collocation, compounding, semantic crescendo, corpus stylistics. Analytically, the presentation examines five case studies belonging to as many different text types, that is, environmental website, pornographic novel, academic lecture, tourist web portal, magazine article. The main research purpose of this study is twofold: 1. To investigate the ecstylistic strategies utilised to produce a sample of texts treating landscapes and nature; 2. To identify the ideologies and agendas underlying these texts. Furthermore, and above all, this presentation would like to inspire us to reconsider who we are and to reformulate our ecological and social priorities. The presentation falls within the disciplinary aims and scope of ecstylistics, and is relevant to such neighbouring areas as ecolinguistics, ecocriticism, discourse analysis, environmental communication, and the ecological humanities as a whole.

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SEM16. The grammar of silence: Cross-disciplinary, transmedia echoes

16A 11 September h. 11:00-13:00, S8 Moro

16B 12 September h. 14:00-16:00, S8 Moro

Convenors

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Abstract

“Nor was the Silence and Emptiness of the Streets so much in the City as in the Out-parts, except just at one particular time, when, as I have mention’d, the Plague came East; and spread over all the City”
(Daniel Defoe, *A Journal of the Plague Year*).

During the coronavirus pandemics, perceptions of silence and sound changed forever. They embodied a sonic dystopia in which the two etymological meanings of the lemma ‘silence’ – the Latin verbs *silēre* and *tacēre*, denoting now the absence of sound (*silēo*), now the absence of speech (*tacēo*) – interplayed. Silence may be reticent, dissembling, or imposed by others. Voluntary or enforced, it might be the silence of women, of marginalized social and religious groups, of communities that are denied the right to speak. With these considerations in mind and moving from the recent experience of Covid19, this seminar aims to reconceptualize the historical, textual and literary forms of silence, including the silence of individuals and cultures, of the physical voice or the written word and of information erased from the page.

We invite proposals addressing the many voices of silence, including erasure, reticence, pauses, ellipses, discretion, *omertà* in the Anglosphere from conterminous vantage points. The period considered is from 1700 to the present days. Proposals using multimodal, Film Sound and Media Studies approaches are also welcome.

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SEM16. Papers

16A 11 September h. 11:00-13:00, S8 Moro

- “*The music you make has always been in your own power*”: voice, silence and the human in Emma Donoghue’s “*The Tale of the Voice*” (Sidia Fiorato, Università di Verona)
- *Silenced voices and echoes of tyranny: Delhi Calm and the trauma of the Indian Emergency* (Michela Canepari, Università di Parma)
- *Unveiling the unsaid: Exploring the grammar of silence in Robert Graves’s poetry* (Adriana Marinelli, Università degli Studi di Napoli Parthenope)
- *Silence, alienation and subversion in Tennyson’s Geraint and Enid* (Lucrezia Scarpa, Università degli Studi “G. d’Annunzio” Chieti-Pescara)

16B 12 September h. 14:00-16:00, S8 Moro

- *The seduction of the unsaid: Silent gods in exile in E. M. Forster’s short stories* (Paolo Bugliani, Università di Pisa)

- *Reticent narrators in Virginia Woolf's novels and Rachel Cusk's Outline Trilogy* (Luca Pinelli, Università degli Studi di Bergamo / Università di Verona)
- *"A shapeless whirl of nothings": Silence and the exhausted writer in George Gissing's New Grub Street (1891)* (Angelica Belloli, Università degli Studi "G. d'Annunzio" Chieti-Pescara)
- *From sound to silence – A diachronic comparison* (Edward Andrea Sheldon, Università degli Studi "G. d'Annunzio" Chieti-Pescara)

SEM16. Abstracts

"A shapeless whirl of nothings": Silence and the exhausted writer in George Gissing's *New Grub Street* (1891)

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In the competitive Victorian literary market of the late 19th century, language risks becoming a commodified surplus, while critical reflection and slowness are pushed to the margins. In *New Grub Street* (1891), George Gissing responds to this crisis by portraying silence not as absence or failure, but as a space charged with desire, labour, and rejection. This paper argues that silence in the novel functions not only as a personal or economic defeat, but as a structural system to the demands of literary production and as a form of resistance. The analysis traces how narrative strategies of silence unfold across three interrelated dimensions: thematically (through unfinished books and aborted letters), formally (via narrative stasis, ellipses, fragmentation), and affectively (through the psychosomatic symptoms of non-productivity – neurosis, exhaustion, burnout).

The refusal to produce, the embrace of slowness and incompleteness, become ways of thinking critically against a system that accelerates and empties meaning. Rather than offering closure, Gissing's novel deepens its tensions, transforming silence into a medium for critical reflection in a culture that devalues intellectual labour. In this tension between speech and withdrawal, productivity and block, *New Grub Street* anticipates modernist and postmodern critiques of intellectual work and its perceived obsolescence, suggesting that the most radical gesture may not be to speak, but to remain deliberately, critically silent. It further dismantles the romantic myth of the solitary genius, proposing silence – deliberate, structural, and resistant – as a space where critical thought endures.

Finally, the article approaches silence not as what the novel omits, but what it insists on: a quiet that demands attention rather than eludes it.

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The seduction of the unsaid: Silent gods in exile in E. M. Forster's short stories

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My paper explores E. M. Forster's fantastic short stories as a privileged space where the author could transcend the constraints of realist narrative and experiment with more elusive, metaphysical themes. In particular, it focuses on the recurring figure of the "god in exile," a mysterious and often silent presence that interrupts the everyday with uncanny intensity. Inherited through the aesthetic lineage of Walter Pater's refined sensualism, this divine figure becomes, in Forster's fiction, a vehicle for epiphanic disruption—an emissary of the unsaid, the ungraspable, the sacred repressed by modernity.

A key example is *The Story of a Panic*, where the presence of Pan—never named but unmistakably evoked—manifests through a young boy’s sudden and violent transformation. The divine operates not through direct action but through an atmosphere of disquiet, triggering a crisis that reveals the limits of rational perception. My analysis reads these moments as articulations of spiritual exile and narrative silence, staging the return of an ancient, ineffable force into a desacralized world, one that often is, although tacitly, equated with homoerotic desire.



Silenced voices and echoes of tyranny: *Delhi Calm* and the trauma of the Indian Emergency

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This paper critically examines Vishwajyoti Ghosh’s powerful graphic novel *Delhi Calm* (2010), which provides a compelling chronicle of the 21-month state of national Emergency (1975-1977) in India, a period during which the Prime Minister, ostensibly acting to protect democracy, suspended civil liberties, suppressed fundamental rights (including press and personal freedoms), and arrested activists, dissidents, and members of the opposition. This paper therefore examines how Ghosh exploits the graphic novel form to reveal how the central government – operating within a democratic framework – transitioned into a tyranny under Indira Gandhi and her son Sanjay, thus creating an oppressive system characterized by censorship, violence, slum clearances, and forced sterilizations that echoes other historical tyrannies. The central aim of this paper, therefore, is to analyze how *Delhi Calm*’s narrative depicts the enforced silence imposed in India during the Emergency, and how – through the use of caricature typical of graphic novels (Agarwal, 2016) – it depicts the dehumanizing effects of power and terror, visually representing how the pursuit of absolute power and the experience of suffering distort human features, reducing individuals to grotesque versions of themselves.

While acknowledging scholarly arguments that trace the origins of the Indian graphic novel to Western comic book traditions (e.g., Corey K. Creekmur, 2015), this paper argues that India’s deep-rooted history of visual storytelling and iconography has provided a crucial foundation for the medium to serve as a platform for marginalized voices. Recognizing the growing significance of the graphic novel in the Indian subcontinent, this research therefore explores how the text’s multimodality articulates the silenced cultural, political, and identity issues of the time through its unique blend of visual and textual elements.

Through a detailed analysis of the graphic novel, this paper explores the intricate interplay between verbal and visual language, including color, typographical choices, and semiotic resources such as speech balloons and visual metaphors, to bring to the fore the text’s meaning-making process and its capacity to convey the complexities of the Emergency.

The paper argues that *Delhi Calm*’s effective juxtaposition of images and words frames India’s Emergency in a way that underscores the present’s ongoing engagement with the past, and that – by focusing on the disruption of individual lives – the graphic novel strategically blends realism with political commentary and fantastical elements, effectively employing Rothenberg’s (2000) concept of ‘traumatic realism’ to depict the era’s profound democratic decline through the unique lens of the graphic novel medium.

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“The music you make has always been in your own power”: voice, silence and the human in Emma Donoghue’s “The Tale of the Voice”

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Emma Donoghue’s “The Tale of the Voice” (1997) underlines the gendered construction of fairy tales and the social constraints that lead the protagonist to renunciate her voice and her identity. The story’s source, Andersen’s “The Little Mermaid”, presents the loss of the voice as a condition for the acquisition of humanity, as well as of a body which discards monstrous attributes, and which moves in constant pain in order to inscribe itself in the human world.

Traditionally voice and agency are connected to the wicked characters in fairy tales, while contemporary retellings stage the reappropriation of the protagonist's female voice, both as a character and as a narrator. This takes place also through the structure of Donoghue's collection, which first seems to frame the narration – also typographically, and then disrupts it, by passing the power of the voice to the reader to continue the storytelling process. The paper aims at investigating the tales' focus on the presence and absence of the voice, including the communicative potentialities of silence.



Unveiling the unsaid: Exploring the grammar of silence in Robert Graves's poetry

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In his essay *Mammon and the Black Goddess* (1965) the British poet Robert Graves (1895-1985) draws upon classical motifs to highlight the concept of the afterlife through literary and classical lenses. Focusing on the Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, Graves emphasises Orpheus's enduring presence even after his death, thus embodying the triumph of his poetic voice over the inevitable silence of mortality. As is characteristic of his huge oeuvre, classical mythology serves as a foundational framework as well as source of inspiration for Graves's literary output.

Within this context, the theme of silence related to the struggle for immortality emerges as particularly significant. This paper focuses on the multifaceted dimension of silence in the poetry of Robert Graves, exploring its role as a profound engagement with mortality, thematic counterpoint to classical mythology and ultimately as an "artistic choice". Specifically, a close reading of some key points – "A Last Poem", "Leaving the Rest Unsaid", "To Evoke Posterity" – will foreground the ways in which Graves employs death as epitome of silence. However, silence itself is strictly related to the poetic of "the unsaid", a powerful dimension which is increasingly relevant in his later work, reflecting his growing interest in the unspoken complexities of poetic experience of love.

Starting from the comparison with classical motifs, I will demonstrate how silence results as a complex and dynamic force with its own distinct "grammar" – a system of omissions, allusions, and unspoken implications that shapes meaning. Reconstructing Gravesian "grammar of silence" will underscore his unique poetic voice in his complex human experience of which poetry serves as his lasting testament. Moreover, its understanding offers a compelling perspective on how the multifaceted dimension of silence contributes to the enduring legacy of Graves as a love poet across time.

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Reticent narrators in Virginia Woolf's novels and Rachel Cusk's *Outline Trilogy*

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Virginia Woolf's invaluable contribution to the early twentieth-century intellectual history is often framed in terms of giving voice to the lived experience of women, for she, as a 'daughter of an educated man' (Woolf, 2015, p. 91 and *passim*), managed to shed new light on the connection between authorial voice and gendered experience. Her remark on having found her 'voice' after writing her third novel, *Jacob's Room* (Woolf, 2023, p. 232), points to the importance of an aural/oral mark on her writings which could reflect her own sense of authorship, and in her essays (e.g. "Montaigne", "Modern Fiction") she often thought of literature as a sort of technology that allows authors to capture an evanescent and elusive entity called life. In a similar vein, her work in life-writing testifies to the enduring legacy of her father, Leslie Stephen, in her oeuvre, as well as her creative and, in today's terms, feminist engagement with the lives of the obscure, anonymity, and silence, in stark contrast to the lives of great men that tended to dominate (institutionalised) literary biography in the nineteenth century.

In more recent times, Rachel Cusk has suffered the consequences of an all-too-candid representation of her own life in writing, especially after she published her memoirs on motherhood, Italy, divorce and separation and received vitriolic attacks – not to mention a lawsuit – from the public. Her subsequent trilogy – interestingly translated as the 'listening

trilogy' in Italian ('Trilogia dell'ascolto') – has been praised, among other things, for the convincing representation of a reticent narrator, Faye, who mostly limits herself to registering what other people say to her. Defined as a sort of 'recording device or processing machine' in newspapers and magazines (Julavits, 2017), Faye as a reticent narrator makes an interesting contribution to the subversive potential and literary value of women's silence in writing, as recently highlighted by Mary K. Holland (2023).

This paper intends to explore the potential of reticence as a hermeneutical category in narrative texts. Building on the recent turn to neo- or metamodernism as a useful term that brings closer together modernist writers like Woolf to contemporary authors like Cusk, this contribution will focus on the narrators who also feature as characters in Woolf's work (the biographers of *Jacob's Room* and *Orlando*, Bernard in *The Waves*) as well as on Cusk's Faye, so as to highlight the formal and structural continuities and differences between the two women writers. Broader philosophical and political questions related to the gender of reticence and silence will be addressed.

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Silence, alienation and subversion in Tennyson's *Geraint and Enid*

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Tennyson's Victorian re-elaboration of Geraint and Enid's story was first published in 1857 with the title *Enid*. It is just in the 1873 edition of the *Idylls of the King* that the story is presented as divided into two consequent parts: *The Marriage of Geraint* and *Geraint and Enid*. This change in the title seems to suggest Tennyson's intention to shift the focus from the character of Enid alone to Geraint's perspective and relationship with Enid.

The present paper, focusing on *Geraint and Enid*, aims to study the disruptive force of silence in the marriage between them and especially how silence affects the character of Geraint, alienating him from the exterior world. The quest that stands at the core of the narrative originates from silence: both the silence of Enid, who is unable to tell her husband the rumours which are circulating about his alleged loss of masculine attributes, and of Geraint, who, after misinterpreting part of Enid's monologue, is unable to face her and ask her the meaning of the words he overheard.

Silence is also what Geraint imposes on his wife to prove her loyalty. Enid, however, cannot obey: in the middle of the wilderness, Geraint's wrathful absorption in his doubts becomes alienation from the outside world and its dangers and it is Enid's voice, disobeying the rules she had been imposed, that prevents Geraint from being slayed. From this perspective, silence functions as an enchantment that isolates the knight from his surroundings and blinds him to the perils of the quest. It is the damsel, a figure that traditionally is the one who should be saved from the dangers posed by the outside world, who breaks the spell with her voice and who eventually saves the knight. In short, the alternation of silence and speaking in this idyll activates a negotiation between gender roles, overturning the expectations and problematising both characters.

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From sound to silence – A diachronic comparison

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The phenomenon of silent letters (Ranbom & Connine, 2010), regarded as graphemes that remain unpronounced in speech yet are present in English spelling, dwells into the historical relationship between orthography and phonology. Silent letters are the result of long-term linguistic processes, including phonological reduction, spelling standardisation and sociolinguistic influence. This paper investigates the development and sociolinguistic significance of the consonant cluster ‘gh’ during the period of Early Modern English (Nurmi, 2017), when many words were added to English from other languages due to the event of the Chancery Standard. For instance, in the term ‘night’ the cluster ‘gh’ was initially pronounced, yet, in the period from 1500 to 1700, it became silent. The two consonants ‘gh’ will be the testers for a qualitative analysis in order to examine their phonological and phonetic characteristics, morphological function and historical transformation in depth. Preliminary findings suggest that the cluster ‘gh’ has been shaped not only by its phonological, phonetic and morphological variations, but also by extralinguistic factors such as prescriptive norms, educational reform, cultural prestige and language contact (Heitner, 2024). To this end, this study is based on a diachronic corpus-based comparative analysis within a historical sociolinguistic framework. The objective is to gather information on how the selected cluster has adapted to, or resisted, language transformation in response to both internal and external factors, such as linguistic development and social influences. Finally, the paper proposes a multidimensional framework to understand how the consonant cluster ‘gh’ both reflects and shapes broader patterns of linguistic and social variation.

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SEM17. Framing the feminine: Language, crime, and cultural narratives

11 September h. 16:00-18:30, S8 Moro

Convenors

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Abstract

This seminar explores how language and cultural narratives frame representations of women in crime, examining how linguistic choices and storytelling conventions shape perceptions of gender, agency, and justice. By analyzing the intersection of language, crime, and culture, we aim to uncover the discursive and narrative strategies that construct women's roles as victims, perpetrators, and consumers of crime across media, legal texts, and fiction. Drawing on methodologies from corpus linguistics, critical discourse analysis, frame theory, and feminist literary criticism, the seminar will analyze how gendered stereotypes are perpetuated or challenged in crime narratives.

Crime narratives, whether factual or fictional, reflect and reinforce societal attitudes toward gender and justice. Women's roles in these narratives are often framed in ways that perpetuate patriarchal norms, with female criminals portrayed as emotional or deviant and female victims depicted as passive or vulnerable. These representations are not merely descriptive but performative, influencing how society perceives and responds to women involved in crime. The seminar will investigate how language and cultural narratives intersect to produce these gendered portrayals, as well as how audiences engage with and interpret them.

We invite papers that examine the representation of women in crime across a variety of contexts, including true crime media, courtroom discourse, crime fiction, and social media discussions. Potential topics include the lexical framing of female criminals, the narrative construction of women's agency or victimhood, and the cultural tropes that shape readers' perceptions of women in crime. By bridging the gap between linguistics, cultural studies, and literary analysis, this seminar aims to offer new insights into how language and cultural narratives perpetuate or challenge societal norms.

This seminar will provide a platform for interdisciplinary dialogue, bringing together researchers from linguistics, literary studies, media studies, and gender studies. By examining the intersection of language, crime, and cultural narratives, we hope to contribute to broader discussions about justice, representation, and equality. Join us in uncovering the linguistic and cultural mechanisms that frame the representation of women in crime narratives, and in exploring how these representations influence societal attitudes and behaviors.

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SEM17. Papers

11 September h 16:00-18:30, S8 Moro

- *Disposable femininity and linguistic deviance: The "Chavette" as cultural folk devil in British crime discourse* (Emilia Di Martino, Università degli Studi Suor Orsola Benincasa)
- *Old crimes, new words: the case of femi(ni)cide* (Elisa Bertoldi, Università degli Studi di Padova)
- *Unnamed crimes: Redefining gendered violence in Elena Ferrante's My Brilliant Friend* (Tehezeeb Moitra, Università degli Studi Suor Orsola Benincasa)
- *Getting away with murder: (In)famous Victorian trials from the court to the page* (Elisabetta Marino, Tor Vergata Università degli Studi di Roma)

- *Linguistic and narrative constructions of crime-related female agency in The Cleaning Lady: A critical discourse analysis* (Viviana Gaballo, Università degli Studi di Padova)

SEM17. Abstracts

Old crimes, new words: the case of femi(ni)cide

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Attested since 1831 (Oxford English Dictionary), the word “femi(ni)cide” has witnessed a sharp increase in use since the 2000s (Google Books N-gram Viewer), a trend not observed for near-synonyms like “murder of women”, “murder of wife” or “uxoricide”.

Feminicide and the discourse about it have been investigated in sociological and legal contexts (e.g. Bandelli, Porcelli, 2016; Dino, 2019). This paper examined the co-text of use of “femminicidio” and “femi(ni)cide” in 4 comparable and 4 parallel English and Italian corpora representative of legal-political and newspaper discourse, available through SketchEngine (Eur-Lex 2/2016 English and Eur-Lex 2/2016 Italian; EuroParl Spoken: English and EuroParl Spoken: Italian; British Parliamentary Debates and Italian Parliamentary Debates; English Broadsheet Newspapers and Italian Trends).

Concordances revealed three main findings:

I) the lemma “femminicidio” was fairly frequent only in two Italian corpora, while the lemmas “femicide/feminicide” were rare in all the English corpora;

II) in both Italian and English, the concept denoted by “femminicidio/femi(ni)cide” was represented as: the focus of law enforcement (“the first conviction for femicide”; “il disegno di legge sul femminicidio”); a topic of discussion (“a national conversation about femicide”; “stiamo parlando di femminicidio e di dignità della donna”); a social phenomenon, possibly associated with others (“forced disappearances and femicide”; “violenze precedenti al femminicidio”); a negative trend to contrast (“we will stop femicide”; “contrasto al femminicidio”); or a term to be introduced (“what he called femicide”; “la parola femminicidio è entrata nell’uso comune”);

III) language-specific semantic preferences were also observed: in the English data “femi(ni)cide” was mostly represented as a statistical pattern (“the scale of femicide”; “data on femicide”; “worst femicide rates”), while in the Italian data “femminicidio” was represented as the subject of a narrative/chronicle (e.g. “ogni giorno una donna muore per femminicidio”; “notizie in cui si parla di femminicidio”), and attention was drawn to the “stakeholders” involved (“gli autori di femminicidio”; “gli orfani di femminicidi”).

In both languages, that crime was recurrently defined as an extreme force of violence against women because they are women (“the killing of women because they are women”; “intendendo l’omicidio volontario di donna in quanto donna”). However, the episodes reported suggested an alternative account, namely that feminicide was the outcome of machism, hatred, and determination to control a woman’s behaviour, although this interpretation was rarely made explicit (e.g. “[...] that need to control and coerce. Sometimes it leads to rape [...] femicide or just controlling a women's choices so she can't go where she wants and see who she chooses”; “per questa idea del controllo della donna, l’avrebbe uccisa accoltellandola”).

The findings suggest that there is a need to raise awareness of the motive behind feminicide, which is a man’s punishment of or revenge against a woman who refuses to conform to his wishes in choosing to (not) associate herself with a given romantic partner.

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Disposable femininity and linguistic deviance: The “Chavette” as cultural folk devil in British crime discourse

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This paper explores the figure of the “Chavette”—a derogatory stereotype of white, working-class women in the UK—as a discursively constructed symbol of social deviance and moral panic. Drawing on methodologies from critical discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, and feminist media criticism, the paper analyzes how language and cultural narratives intersect to frame the Chavette as both a product and perpetrator of crime, and as a cautionary tale of failed femininity. Through her hyper-visible appearance, stigmatized accent, and perceived moral laxity, the Chavette has become a cultural shorthand for dysfunction, irresponsibility, and criminality.

Focusing on the role of linguistic enregisterment, the paper investigates how features associated with Cockney and Multicultural London English are weaponized in media and popular discourse to mark the Chavette as linguistically deviant. These features—such as h-dropping, th-fronting, and glottal stops—are not neutral phonetic phenomena but are loaded with social meaning. They index class, race, and gender, and in the case of the Chavette, they are used to render her speech—and by extension, her identity—as unintelligible, excessive, or even threatening. The accent becomes a kind of linguistic “evidence” of her unsuitability, her failure to conform to middle-class ideals of femininity, restraint, and respectability.

The paper also traces how this figure is constructed across a range of cultural texts, including satirical characters like Vicky Pollard (Little Britain), reality television shows such as *The Only Way is Essex*, and tabloid media. These texts not only reflect but actively shape public perceptions, turning classed and gendered identities into objects of ridicule, fear, or fascination. The Chavette becomes both a consumer of “trash culture” and a symbol of its moral and social consequences, a representation that reinforces broader narratives about welfare dependency, teen motherhood, and anti-social behavior.

Yet the figure of the Chavette is not entirely passive. Through social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, women from working-class backgrounds have begun to reclaim elements of the stereotype—accent, fashion, even “chav” aesthetics—as forms of identity and resistance. This digital recontextualization raises important questions about whether such acts subvert or reproduce the underlying structures of classism and misogyny.

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Linguistic and narrative constructions of crime-related female agency in *The Cleaning Lady*: A critical Discourse analysis

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This paper bridges media linguistics, critical race theory, and feminist television studies, offering a systematic analysis of how language shapes gendered and racialized power dynamics in crime narratives. The study employs critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine the linguistic and narrative representation of women in the American crime drama *The Cleaning Lady* (Fox, 2022–present). Focusing on the protagonist Thony De La Rosa—a Cambodian-Filipino immigrant who becomes entangled in criminal underworlds while working as a cleaning lady—the study investigates how the series linguistically constructs female agency, victimhood, and resistance within intersecting frameworks of gender, race, and class.

Drawing on Fairclough’s three-dimensional CDA model (2001) and feminist stylistics (Lazar, 2005), this study analyses the lexical and syntactic choices used to label Thony and other female characters (e.g., “cleaning lady”, “immigrant”, “mother”) versus male counterparts (e.g., “boss”, “doctor”, “agent”); the transitivity patterns that

grammatically frame women as passive subjects (“Thony was forced into ...”) or active agents (“Thony manipulated the situation”); the modality and speech acts that underscore how women’s dialogue is hedged, interrupted, or policed, particularly in interactions with law enforcement and criminal figures; and the narrative framing, to expose the series’ use of voiceovers, flashbacks, and focalization that align audience sympathy with Thony’s perspective or undermine her credibility.

Preliminary analysis reveals that *The Cleaning Lady* both challenges and reinforces gendered stereotypes through its linguistic and narrative strategies: Thony’s dual roles as caregiver and criminal are linguistically marked by tension between maternal lexical fields (“protect my son”) and underworld jargon (“I’ll make a deal”); racialized and classed descriptors (e.g., “illegal”, “maid”) frequently position her as subordinate, even though her actions drive the plot; interrogation scenes show marked differences in how male authorities address Thony (frequent interruptions, rhetorical questions) versus male suspects; supporting female characters (e.g., Fiona, Nadia) are often framed through emotional or sexualized language (Molina-Guzmán 2010), contrasting with Thony’s pragmatic speech.

Extending the analysis beyond the text, this study examines a corpus (Baker 2006) of online discourse (forum threads, social media debates, and media reviews) to assess how audiences interpret Thony’s agency. For example, fan discussions often emphasize her “sacrificial motherhood”, while critics debate whether the series exoticizes her immigrant identity (Jeffrey 2007).

While *The Cleaning Lady* ostensibly centers a resilient, complex female lead, its linguistic and narrative patterns often revert to familiar tropes of the “noble immigrant” or “desperate mother”. By applying CDA to the series, this paper highlights how crime dramas linguistically negotiate—and often constrain—female agency at the intersections of gender, race, and class. The study calls for more nuanced portrayals that resist reducing women to their marginalization.

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Getting away with murder: (In)famous Victorian trials from the court to the page

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The Victorian period was marked by (in)famous murder cases and trials, surprisingly involving women as offenders. In 1845, Martha Brixey slit the throat of one of the children who had been entrusted to her care. Despite the brutality of her act, she was soon released as menstrual irregularities had allegedly impaired her mental faculties. In 1857, Martha Bacon suffered from repeated fits of so-called “puerperal insanity”, after the birth of her second child; her condition ultimately resulted in the cold-blooded slaughter of her offspring, the poisoning of her mother-in-law, and the symbolic destruction of her family home by arson. Bacon was eventually acquitted, as she was not held entirely responsible for her actions (she had previously spent some time in a mental asylum). In the same year, a young Scottish woman, Madeleine Smith, laced chocolate intended for her lover with arsenic, so that she could free herself from him and marry a wealthier man. Needless to say, the verdict was “not proven”.

This paper sets out to elucidate how these cases impacted the imagination of women writers, such as Mona Caird, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, and Ellen Wood, as well as male writers, such as Wilkie Collins and Henry James. Although undoubtedly shocked by the crimes, these writers made female offenders the protagonists in their novels and narratives to explore and problematize gender roles, expectations, and prerogatives. Special emphasis will be placed on the language employed both in the official trial reports and by these writers to highlight the offenders’ transgressions and the puzzling and alarming clash between their physical appearance, proper manners, and their outrageous deeds. The depiction of female insanity (and its exploitation) will also be the object of investigation.

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Unnamed crimes: Redefining gendered violence in Elena Ferrante's *My Brilliant Friend*

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Elena Ferrante's *My Brilliant Friend* (L'amica geniale) offers a powerful critique as to how gendered violence is legitimized, obscured and reframed within cultural and linguistic parameters using what Heidensohn and Silvestri call 'selective deafness' (2012). This paper examines how Ferrante's narrative highlights the subtle, and oftentimes insidious, mechanisms through which violence against women is articulated and the systemic responses it evokes. Violence, whether physical or psychological, is rendered invisible, excused, or portrayed as part of the female experience— with abusive behaviors renamed as expressions of love, passion or discipline, rather than as criminal acts. By analyzing the tension between speech and silence, visibility and erasure, the paper explores how Ferrante reconsiders the boundaries of crime, justice and moral responsibility. In the novels, female victimization is often framed within the context of deeply ingrained societal norms and cultural expectations, positioning violence against women as a normalized part of the natural order. Through the characters of Lila and Elena, Ferrante examines how the language surrounding women's suffering perpetuates their victimization. Ferrante's linguistic choices, particularly her use of indirect speech or use of dialect, draw attention to the gap between public and private experiences, illustrating how women's voices are often marginalized, reinterpreted or smothered in both familial and societal contexts. By foregrounding the tension between what is seen and what is unseen, Ferrante calls for a critical examination of the ways in which cultural and linguistic frameworks narrate the woman's role in crime. The paper argues that Ferrante's interrogation of gendered violence is not only a reflection of the past but also a commentary on the ongoing denial of women's agency and victimhood within contemporary society. Ultimately, *My Brilliant Friend* (L'amica geniale) challenges readers to confront the hidden dynamics of gendered violence and to consider the broader societal complicity in its normalization and denial.

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SEM18. Discourses on memory: Cultural, literary and linguistic perspectives

18A 11 September h. 11:00-13:00, S1 Moro

18B 11 September h. 16:00-18:30, S1 Moro

18C 12 September h. 14:00-16:00, S4 Moro

Convenors

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Abstract

“...there are stores in the archives of collective memory
of symbolic wounds that need to be healed”
(Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*)

This seminar seeks to explore memory through a diverse range of approaches, methodologies, and objects of study across different literary, cultural, and linguistic disciplines concerned with discourse in society. It aims to investigate how linguistic perspectives, both epistemologically and methodologically, can deepen our understanding of how collective and cultural memories are formed, represented, and transmitted across generations and communities. The ways in which we talk about the past can alter the very content of those memories, influencing collective identity and cultural narratives. Simultaneously, memories themselves are embedded in the cultural and historical contexts from which language emerges, shaping its usage and evolution.

Memory can also turn into a politically and culturally contentious issue as regards those who have been relegated to the margins of official history and narratives: from (post-)colonial subjects to women, from the so-called ‘freaks’ to all those individuals who did not conform to social standards. In this respect, oral histories, archives, novels, poems, journals, graphic novels, and audiovisual texts can become fundamental in rediscovering and recovering submerged stories.

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SEM18. Papers

18A 11 September h. 11:00-13:00, S1 Moro

- *General semantics, time-binding and collective memory* (Margaret Cassidy, Adelphi University, NY, USA)
- *Why not “Make the story more premium than life”? Autofictional gap-filling in cultural memory* (Massimiliano Manni, Università degli Studi di Brescia)
- *Food, nostalgia and cultural identity: The role of culinary memoirs in promoting cultural continuity in the anglo-indian diaspora* (Mette Rudvin, Università degli Studi di Palermo)
- *Erased from memory: Linguistic silencing, royal narratives, and the un-grievable case of the “Hidden Cousins”* (Alessandra Serra, Università degli Studi della Toscana)

18B 11 September h. 16:00-18:30, S1 Moro

- *Memory and identity in John Donne's Metempsychosis* (Audrey Taschini, Università degli Studi di Bergamo)
- *Raw materials of memory: Representing the street child in late victorian literary and visual culture* (Greta Perletti, Università di Trento)
- *"Time has passed over me": Personal and collective memory in Orlando: A Biography* (Simona Laghi, Sapienza Università di Roma)
- *Telling the past anew: Memory, narrative, and cultural identity in the construction of Irish literary identity through Lady Gregory's Deirdre (1902)* (Melania Mauri, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore - Milano)
- *Gleaming tokens of memory: A multimodal study of memory and language in nineteenth-century jewellery* (Angelo Riccioni, Università degli Studi Suor Orsola Benincasa di Napoli)

18C 12 September h. 14:00-16:00, S4 Moro

- *History and memory: Remembering the great war in an Irish context* (Elena Cotta Ramusino, Università di Pavia)
- *Transgender memory and identity in tv series: A critical discourse analysis* (Giulia Magazzù, Tor Vergata Università degli Studi di Roma)
- *The role of memories in ethnic identity construction: The case of Italian Americans on Instagram* (Federica Silvestri, Università di Catania)
- *Thunder Bay: A place where memory keeps the truth alive* (Kamelia Talebian Sedehi, Sapienza Università di Roma / Laura Ferrarotti, Sapienza Università di Roma)
- *Retrieving narratives of memory in contemporary archaeological novels* (Roberta Geftter Wondrich, Università degli Studi di Trieste)

SEM18. Abstracts

General semantics, time-binding and collective memory

Margaret Cassidy (Adelphi University, NY, USA) cassidy@adelphi.edu

General semantics is a discipline that was formulated to help people become more aware of their use of symbolic forms (particularly language) and to use those forms to think and act in more humane ways. It was first formulated by Alfred Korzybski, a Polish engineer who, having experienced the horrors of war in his military service in World War I, sought to formulate a teachable system that would bring sanity and peace to what he saw as an "un-sane" and turbulent world. His books, *Manhood of Humanity* and *Science and Sanity*, map out his central principles, and numerous scholars have added hundreds of books and thousands of articles to these foundational texts (see, for example, Anton, 2011 and Strate, 2011).

General semantics continues on in communication studies, linguistics, anthropology, systems theory, psychology, and other disciplines where its principles resonate. The Institute of General Semantics and the New York Society for General Semantics hold regular symposia and seminars, and publish a quarterly journal and a variety of books. As president of the NYSGS and board member of IGS, I hope to bring general semantics—in particular, Korzybski's concept of time-binding—to this AIA conference.

At the heart of Korzybski's work time-binding, which he saw as the very essence of what makes us human. He describes time-binding quite beautifully in his book *Manhood of Humanity*:

I mean the capacity to employ as instruments of increasing power the accumulated achievements of the all-precious lives of the past generations spent in trial and error, trial and success; I mean the capacity of human beings to conduct their lives in the ever-increasing light of inherited wisdom...And because humanity is just this magnificent natural agency by which the past lives in the present and the present for the future, I define HUMANITY, in the universal tongue of mathematics and mechanics, to be the TIME-BINDING CLASS OF LIFE." (24)

Humans use time-binding to connect past, present and future, to preserve important memories, and to benefit from all that humanity has learned and experienced up to this point. Although Korzybski was talking about much more than what individual families or communities might do to preserve and build upon their own members' past experiences, it is quite easy, and fascinating, to consider our own families and communities in his reference to the "all-precious lives of past generations," and to think about how we enact this time-binding process. It is this application of the concept of time-binding to the process of establishing and maintaining collective memory that I intend to discuss in this presentation.

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History and memory: Remembering the great war in an irish context

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Owing to the divisive history of the country, memory is central to Irish literature. The way communities remember shapes who they are, and the perspective from which they view history serves different purposes. The selection of what to remember – and how it is interpreted – is crucial to the present, as the past both persists in the present and forms its foundation. In Irish literature, the past offers not only a source of reflection on events and origins, but also imagined alternatives, whether in fiction, drama or poetry. It is not only history – what happened – but also memory, that is, how what happened is remembered, that proves crucial to the present.

Historical revisionism has been seminal in re-reading the national myth, enabling authors such as Roddy Doyle and Sebastian Barry to reassess the national narrative. Their works provide alternative interpretations of the Easter Rising and shed light on people considered to be ‘on the wrong side of history’, among them the Irish soldiers who took part in the Great War.

In the present paper I aim to investigate the memory of the Great War in Ireland, a particularly interesting case given the differing ways in which it has been remembered by the Catholic and Protestant communities. Thanks to the rise of historical revisionism, the memory of the Great War began to circulate more openly in the Republic, whereas in Ulster it had long been a celebrated myth. For instance, a poet like Michael Longley was haunted by the war fought by his father; Frank McGuinness’s powerful play *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching towards the Somme* engages with members of the Ulster Division and their sacrifice in the Battle of the Somme. On the other hand, Seamus Heaney’s poem “In Memoriam Francis Ledwidge” delicately addresses the issue of Catholics who fought in the First World War. However, it was only with the dissemination of historical revisionism that this topic began to be artistically explored in the Republic, as seen, for example, in Sebastian Barry’s novels about the Dunne family.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of the memory of the Great War in an Irish context, focusing on works by Michael Longley, Seamus Heaney and Sebastian Barry. These authors engage with memory not simply as a record of the past, but as a means of negotiating identity, community, and cultural belonging. By exploring how the war is remembered, their works reveal the complex role memory plays in shaping national narratives. In doing so, they demonstrate how memory can respond to different needs.

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Retrieving narratives of memory in contemporary archaeological novels

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This paper investigates the entanglement of archaeology and cultural memory in recent Anglophone fiction, with a focus on the narrative strategies that define this engagement. Through close readings of three very different novels –Peter Ackroyd’s *The Fall of Troy*, Barry Unsworth’s *The Land of Marvels*, and Michael Ondaatje’s *Anil’s Ghost* – it will reflect on the centrality of memory in the intersection of literary form and archaeological discourse as a framework, since in these

fictions archaeological sites materials could be considered what Pierre Nora defined *lieux de mémoire*, sites “where collective memory crystallizes and secretes itself”. The imagery, language and interpretive strategies of archaeology feature in these novels as discourses of and on memory, collective, effaced and contested, and imbricated in ideology and power.

Drawing on the complexity of contemporary conceptions of archaeology, partly indebted to Foucault’s *Archeologie du savoir*, the paper examines how these texts foreground the constructedness of historical interpretation and the inherent violence that can be entailed in acts of retrieval. Each dramatises the epistemological and ethical tensions involved in excavating the past in different geographical and historical contexts, constructing narrative histories themselves forms of excavation and interpretation that configure cultural memory. The archaeological search and object thus function both on the narrative and metaphorical levels, as theme and framework, representing the hermeneutic process of literary textuality in its relation to memory, ideology, and historical discourse.

While *The Fall of Troy* is a postmodern ironic revisitation of Schlieman as a visionary hero, deconstructing the authority of historical “truth” and exposing mythmaking, the other two novels extend the scope of the archaeological imagination to a colonial dimension and to questions of collective memory and trauma. Unsworth’s features British imperialism and the complicity of science and capitalism in Mesopotamia, and Ondaatje’s stages forensic archaeology in contemporary Sri-Lanka, torn by the civil war, treating human remains as the most disturbing of the archaeological ‘objects’ which invoke a restorative narrative of memory and justice.

In light of the recent scholarly interest in the formal strategies shared by archaeology, fiction and historiography – whereby “(T)he crafts of archaeology and writing are intimately interwoven in the creation of historical narrative” (Witchner and van Helden in Gill et al.)–, the paper will focus on the narrative devices deployed by these novels, which highlight the precariousness of memory itself.

The study will thus analyse the ways in which the archaeological search in contemporary fiction seems to depart from “popular archaeological discourse” of the Victorians, and rather respond to the idea of archaeology as a “space of ambivalence” (Duesterberg), similar to literature itself in its endeavor to uncover and reconfigure traces of a buried or occluded past that can never be restored to wholeness, piecing together the conceptual, the material and the memorial.

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“Time has passed over me”: personal and collective memory in *Orlando: A Biography*

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Memory as recollection and narration of the past plays a crucial role in Virginia Woolf’s novels, diaries, and essays. Her exploration of suitable linguistic tools to mirror the transformations of the twentieth century is closely tied to her role as an intellectual committed to reflecting on human identity and the role of women in society. This paper aims to analyse how Woolf, in *Orlando: A Biography*, merges personal and collective memory to problematise themes concerning gender equality and women’s agency across the centuries.

It begins by examining Woolf’s search for the most appropriate linguistic means to narrate the past, as this emerges in her diaries, novels, biographies, and autobiographical writings. In *A Sketch of the Past*, she openly discusses the challenges of memoir writing, which stem from “the enormous number of things” that come to mind and “the number of different ways in which memories can be written”. As Nicola King points out, “We remember in different ways at different times,” but it is challenging to express those “ways” without metaphors; interestingly, Woolf describes the past as “a long ribbon of scenes”.

Then, the paper focuses on *Orlando: A Biography*, which Woolf described as both “truthful and fantastic”. The aim is to demonstrate that Orlando’s biography is the pretext for an experimental work that departs from traditional genre and style conventions. Orlando appears to be not only a biography but an autobiography, or heterobiography, in which personal and collective memories are intertwined. This innovative feature is reflected in the shifting use of personal pronouns, which marks Woolf’s literary style. The voice of the biographer/autobiographer oscillates between the

masculine “he” and feminine “she” to represent Orlando’s gender change and between singular and inclusive plural pronouns such as “we,” “us,” and “our” to shift from personal and collective memory. This fluidity of voice, combined with references to iconic male and female sartorial items, such as ruffs and crinolines, stimulates the reader’s imagination and deepens the connection with the writer in the discourse on human identity construction across time.

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Transgender Memory and Identity in TV Series: a Critical Discourse Analysis

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Transgender individuals in the United States and around the world are gaining more visibility, with evolving social attitudes that are enabling greater participation of transgender people in mainstream society (Goldberg, 2017). The representation of transgender people and characters on American television has also increased, with prominent figures such as Caitlyn Jenner, a former athlete turned reality TV personality, and Laverne Cox playing Sophia Burset on the drama series *Orange is the New Black* (Capuzza & Spencer, 2017). The focus of this paper is the acclaimed web series *Transparent* (2014-2019), one of the first American TV shows to feature a transgender character as the main protagonist. The series tells the story of Maura Pfefferman, a retired professor who transitions into a woman later in life, and her three adult children. Using flashbacks, the show explores the women’s memories, their personal traumas, sexual discoveries, and journeys of self-exploration. This paper explores how *Transparent* portrays the transmission of transgender memory within the family, as well as among both transgender and cisgender queer women. Given the focus on transgender representation, this analysis combines Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with queer, trans, and feminist theories, especially their contributions to gender and representation studies (De Vries, 2012, Villarejo, 2016, among others). The analytical approach integrates CDA methods outlined by Fairclough (2001) and Machin and Mayr (2023). CDA was selected as the theoretical framework because of its focus on analyzing language and discourse to reveal power structures and systems of oppression. Fairclough (2001) emphasizes the role of semiotic elements, genres, and styles in discourse analysis, which can show how dominant ideologies are either upheld or contested. While CDA has traditionally examined how language helps maintain power, some scholars have advocated for a more positive form of discourse analysis that highlights examples of language used to promote equality. In this context, the present study aims to examine *Transparent* as an example of a progressive shift in transgender representation.

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Why not “make the story more premium than life”? Autofictional gap-filling in cultural memory

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In his latest book on autofiction, Hywel Dix (2023) notes that this literary form, now flourishing in the English-speaking world just as French critics seem to have tired of the notion, is no longer being treated as a “mainly stylistic innovation on the part of individual authors”, but as a “form of testament to social commitments” (p. 102). While the British scholar thus deepens our understanding of the genre by hinting at the constellations of relationships that make it into our life stories, it is worth probing whether the two tendencies, i.e. formal eclecticism and cultural memory, could coexist, resulting in forms of community storytelling that are effective precisely for their unconventional structure. Through my two case studies, the third-person magical realist novel *Everything Is Illuminated* (2002) and the pseudo-epistolary *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* (2019), I will try to show how the choice of the autofictional form inherently subverts traditional historiographic and autobiographical discourses, albeit in ways that reflect each individual author's background and social positioning. Both Safran Foer and Vuong have their narrators speak for a community they are performatively forging in the telling, but while the former relinquishes control over the realistic narrative to an extravagantly clumsy English speaker and only trusts himself to spin fanciful tales about his Jewish ancestors' erased past, Vuong takes it upon himself – a fatherless gay Vietnamese refugee in the US – to bridge the sociolinguistic gulf between his family and his unwelcoming host country. Not only must the narrators fill the gaps in collective memory and communication, but in their autofictions they make absences in the telling emphatically present, whether through pages full of ellipses or by favouring the ambiguous semantics of punctuation over that of words and clauses.

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Telling the past anew: Memory, narrative, and cultural identity in the construction of Irish literary identity through Lady Gregory's *Deirdre* (1902)

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This paper explores Lady Gregory's translation and rewriting of the myth of Deirdre as a significant intervention in the construction of Irish cultural and literary memory during the early twentieth century. Lady Gregory's adaptation in *Cuchulain of Muirthemne* (1902) stands out not only for its literary style but for the cultural work it performs. The choices made by Lady Gregory in collecting and reworking material that presented multiple versions and possibilities for depicting a tragic, yet representative figure of indigenous culture reflect an attempt to grant dignity to the island's mythical literature, which Matthew Arnold described as feminine and 'undisciplinable, anarchical, and turbulent.' (Arnold, 1962, p. 347)

Deirdre's legend, known by the general Irish public as one of the *Three Sorrows of Irish Storytelling*, has been passed down in several and different versions. Lady Gregory's decision to retell this tale—amid a broader project to consolidate Irish myth—was not incidental. On the one hand, Deirdre represents an emotionally resonant figure of loyalty, exile, and doomed love. On the other, she has often been interpreted as a passive heroine, a characterization Lady Gregory both preserves and challenges. Though her Deirdre seems resigned to fate, the choice to end her life rather than submit to Conchobar complicates her passive portrayal, offering a model of moral autonomy. Lady Gregory makes some subtle changes to the material and stated that 'I had done what I wanted; something for the dignity of Ireland. The reviews show the enemy could no longer scoff at our literature and "its want of idealism"' (Lady Gregory, 1974, p. 391).

This paper examines how Lady Gregory curates the material by selecting a version that highlights emotional and ethical complexity, simplifying the language to reflect Irish oral tradition, and omitting violent or ambiguous details. These choices elevate the legend as a symbol of cultural dignity, reaffirming the value of Irish heritage in response to

colonial narratives. Her stylistic decisions—such as using simplified English influenced by Irish speech patterns and emphasizing clarity and tone—make the legend more accessible while preserving its authenticity. Through this, Lady Gregory contributes to the broader project of recovering and reshaping Ireland’s cultural memory.

In presenting Deirdre’s myth as both a legacy and a literary artifact shaped by the concerns of its reteller, Lady Gregory offers an engaging example of how cultural narratives evolve through transmission. Her work stands as a deliberate act of memory, crafted with both literary intention and historical awareness, and provides insight into the ways literature, language and storytelling preserve and reframe the past for future generations.

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Raw materials of memory: Representing the street child in late victorian literary and visual culture

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This paper explores how late Victorian literary and photographic discourses constructed the figure of the street child as a form of “raw material”—malleable and performative—and argues that such constructions both reflect and contribute to broader narratives of cultural memory.

Building on recent scholarship that reads the impoverished child’s body as a privileged site of interest for social, health, and political reformers (Koven, 2004; Boehm, 2013; Kubie, 2018), the paper elaborates on the circulation of these discourses within Horace Warner’s photographic archive *Spitalfields Nippers* (c. 1900). In particular, I argue that what makes Warner’s images especially intriguing for scholars working on cultural memory is that the photographs clearly participate in and reinforce a long-standing literary-visual tradition, which includes Henry Mayhew’s investigative journalism, Charles Dickens’s novels, early detective fiction, as well as visual texts by Oscar Rejlander and Dorothy Tennant. Like these works, *Spitalfields Nippers* frames street children as suspended between potential usefulness and latent danger: helpless victims or clever survivors, yet requiring institutional shaping to avoid deviance.

By imagining street children’s bodies as “raw materials,” Warner’s photographs engage in a widespread representational mode that casts working-class children as non-subjects—figures to be moulded into moral and civic usefulness. As Deborah Wynne (2015) argues, the Victorian association between rags and redemption constructed children—like recycled cloth—as raw materials to be cleansed and imprinted with moral and civic value. Claudia Nelson (2014) similarly highlights how Victorian childhood was imagined as a site where the state could inscribe social norms and engineer reform.

While acknowledging the presence of such narratives in the memory received and transmitted by Warner’s archive, this paper also contends that *Spitalfields Nippers* intriguingly frames street-childhood as a fiction and performance. Whether cast as actors in narratives of poverty and rescue, picaresque rogues or admirably resourceful creatures, Warner’s child subjects remind us that they are performing in front of an adult viewer. As with all mechanisms of cultural memory, the photographs in *Spitalfields Nippers* create narratives that are both archival and performative: they do not merely record stories, but rather shape and stage them.

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Gleaming Tokens of Memory: A Multimodal Study of Memory and Language in Nineteenth-Century Jewellery

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The Victorian era has been often described as the golden age of jewellery (Gere and Rudoe, 2010). From neo-Renaissance and Etruscan brooches to diamond tiaras and mourning necklaces, the jewellery crafted by nineteenth-century culture continues to be exhibited and admired in major institutions such as the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Many of these objects are deeply embedded in a complex discourse of memory (Ricoeur, 2004). Locketts, for instance, might open to reveal a lock of hair from a long-deceased parent or spouse, while cufflinks and rings are often decorated with intaglios and cameos that speak to the identity of their former owners. Understanding these features frequently requires engagement with the specialized and technical literature on jewellery produced during the Victorian period (Pointon, 2009). Moreover, these items communicate through a visual and tactile language that must be interpreted in the context of the unwritten rules governing the multimodal sensory world of nineteenth-century adornments: seal rings, stick pins and novelty brooches, for example, might incorporate ciphers, words, or symbols designed to convey secret messages to selected observers (Sherwood, 2018). Although, as Kress and van Leeuwen (2021: 39-40) observe, “the multimodality of written texts has, by and large, been ignored”, other scholars have explored the ways in which text and image interact (Bateman, 2014). Applying this multimodal framework to the specialized field of Victorian jewellery proves especially relevant if one considers not only the jewels themselves but also the period's jewellery handbooks and catalogues, where distinctions between different modes of communication are frequently blurred: the pages are often rich in illustrations that visually render processes such as embossing and enamelling, and in some cases the drawings are covered in gold to evoke the gleaming quality of the jewels they represent (Streeter 1993). By integrating cultural, linguistic, and art historical perspectives this paper seeks to offer a nuanced understanding of the interplay between jewellery, language, and memory in the long-nineteenth century. Specifically, it investigates the language of Victorian jewellery through a multimodal lens. To this purpose, a range of sources such as catalogues, archives and essays will be examined in the hope of shedding light on the multimodal dimension of memory in a domain marked by gleaming, though elusive, linguistic features.

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Food, nostalgia and cultural identity: The role of culinary memoirs in promoting cultural continuity in the Anglo-Indian diaspora

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This talk explores how communities are constructed through food-writing by analysing culinary memoirs and cookery books in the Anglo-Indian diaspora. The paper argues that maintaining, revisiting and recreating culinary traditions from

‘home’, in the new country, has profound significance for 1st generation migrants whose memories are still alive with the tastes and smells of their home countries and equally so for the following generations who build culinary and community identities through the narrated memories of their parents and grandparents.

Like other cultural artefacts, food is a potent symbol and representation of cultural identity, forging cultural links that are an essential part of identity-formation. Preparing food – for everyday meals or for festivities – crosses geographical, cultural and generational boundaries, forging new expressions of cultural belonging (See Ojwang 2013) and promoting cultural continuity. Food is also a powerful storytelling-frame because it embodies the senses in a very tangible manner: the memory of tastes and smells, deeply embedded in the human brain through evolution, is profound.

The paper examines how food and food-writing are used to position the narrator in a space that integrates ‘the old and the new’ countries, cementing a new Self. The nostalgic re-invention of culinary traditions brings together the narrators’ disparate identities, foregrounding and debating issues of culinary authenticity through local and family recipes. Cultural continuity is thus forged through the acts of cooking and remembering.

Where Madhur Jaffrey’s cookbooks have been instrumental in maintaining a cultural tradition through Indian cuisine in the diaspora, the combined effect of Indian diasporic cuisine in the UK has led to a British-Indian fusion-cuisine that has become an integral part of UK culture (the weekend ‘curry-night’). Other cookery books, such as Vicky Bhogal’s *MummyJi*, illustrate how the Anglo-Indian communities have adapted their traditions to a new British habitat, leading to a hybrid, fusion-based cuisine and representing the 2nd+ generations’ British-Indian cultural identity.

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Erased from memory: Linguistic silencing, royal narratives, and the un-grievable case of the “Hidden Cousins”

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This work investigates the discursive policies of erasure, marginalisation, and institutional oblivion in the case of Katherine and Nerissa Bowes-Lyon, two cousins of Queen Elizabeth II. Because of cognitive disabilities, they were institutionalised for decades and officially recorded as deceased while still alive. The story – largely omitted until its mediatic exposure – displays how linguistic and narrative strategies shape cultural memory by privileging collective identity and by stigmatising individualities that fail to conform to dominant health, strength, and institutional decorum. Adopting the intersecting perspectives of discourse analysis, disability studies as well as theories of cultural memory, the study explores how these existences were culturally rendered irrelevant, invisible and *un-grievable* (Butler 2009): unacknowledged by public mourning, omitted from official genealogical records and excised from the representational repertory of the monarchy.

Through a critical discourse analysis of media texts (from contemporary documentarist and journalistic coverage to biographical and televisual narratives) this study identifies specific linguistic patterns as markers of a broader system of socio-cultural invisibilisation, e.g. the use of passive constructions, euphemisms, lexical absences, and specific attributes to define the women involved in the story. Taken as a whole, it constitutes a discursive process that enacts a form of *slow violence* (Nixon 2011): a gradual, subtle form of damage rooted in bureaucratic, linguistic, and symbolic structures that, over time, produce a systemic form of exclusion.

The paper also engages with disability and diversity studies (Garland-Thomson 2002; Puar 2017), framing the sisters’ erasure from visibility and memory within biopolitical and necropolitical political logics that confine disabled bodies through silence and spatial segregation. Their “unwatchability” (Kaplan 2005; Mirzoeff 2011) is literal and symbolic: there are no official images, funeral rites, or televisual acknowledgement until their recent re-emergence in a

TV documentary and the Netflix series *The Crown*. These contemporary re-mediations briefly rekindled some public sympathy and interest for the cousins, who were soon consigned once again to cultural amnesia.

Ultimately, the case exemplifies how discourse operates as a *technology of memory*, shaping not only *what* is remembered but also *who* is allowed to be remembered, thereby highlighting the role of language in constructing the boundaries of collective memory.

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The role of memories in ethnic identity construction: The case of Italian Americans on Instagram

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Memory plays a crucial role in the construction of identity, and it is especially the case for diasporic communities (Hua, 2005). For Italian Americans, it is through the retelling of family stories that ethnic heritage and identity have been maintained and transmitted intergenerationally, even if the majority of the stories of many Italian migrants who arrived in the U.S. between the 19th and the 20th centuries had been marked by the pain of severe discrimination (Michaud, 2011). Nowadays, current generations of Italian Americans seem to have moved past the negativity associated with those experiences and have recently shown a renewed interest in reconnecting with their cultural roots, mostly due to the growing prestige associated with ‘Italianness’ (De Fina, 2014). Within this context, social media platforms have emerged as key spaces through which Italian Americans engage with their heritage and with one another (Longo, 2023). Drawing on these premises, this study investigates how contemporary Italian Americans’ personal and familial memories linguistically and narratively shape their ethnic identity. In this initial phase of research, I analysed a pilot dataset comprising 1000 comments posted by Italian American Instagram users under posts shared by one of the most prominent accounts in the Italian American Instagram community (@growingupitalian). To compile the dataset, beginning on the 1st of January 2024, I collected all comments from individual posts in which users shared their families’ memories until reaching a total of 1000. These comments were qualitatively analysed by means of a linguistic-pragmatic approach. The findings reveal three aspects. Firstly, numerous Italian American users choose to reclaim their heritage by recounting their families’ stories and positioning themselves as keepers of these memories. This form of ‘reclaiming’ is often linguistically signalled by certain linguistic practices, like the frequent use of loanwords from Italian or regional dialects or even attempts at using entire sentences in one of their heritage languages, for instance when referring to one’s family’s geographical origin (“Nonna era di Calabria”), underscoring personal involvement and communal belonging. Secondly, the notion of ‘Italianness’ is, in most cases, no longer associated with shame, but reflects a positive re-evaluation of identity, suggesting that the stigma experienced by earlier migrants has been overturned. Finally, the significance of family stories among younger Italian Americans demonstrates that collective memory remains a powerful force in the construction of identity, even generations after the original migration.

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Thunder Bay: A place where memory keeps the truth alive

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In 2023, a Canadian four-part documentary TV series adapted the podcast *Thunder Bay* (2018) and engaged its audience with horrific incidents that happen in Thunder Bay, Ontario, and remain either silent or reported in inauthentic manners. The podcast informed its listeners about the systematic racism toward Indigenous peoples in Thunder Bay. The podcast was hosted by Ryan McMohan and some of its episodes, specifically, focused on murder and rape of Indigenous women and girls and the TV series went along the same line. This paper intends to focus on the first part of the TV series in which the murder of Barbara Ketner was discussed. The paper will focus on the reason why the town is called as a post-truth town by applying post-truth as a methodology to the TV series. Moreover, the paper will discuss the traumatic effects of murder and rape of Indigenous peoples on the survivors, their families, and the whole community using Suzanne Methot's concept of trauma. Besides, the language of the testimonies will be discussed in order to emphasize how narration and storytelling help the community to keep the memory of their loved ones alive and resist the power of colonial racism. Corpus linguistic analysis and discourse analysis of the selected TV episode which provide some testimonies, specifically the language and vocabulary used by Indigenous peoples and also settlers, brings forth a better understanding of racist attitudes in Thunder Bay which led to murder and rape.

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Memory and identity in John Donne's *Metempsychosis*

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Few critical studies have been devoted to John Donne's long satirical poem, *Metempsychosis*. This work addresses the theme of the transmigration of the soul as a metaphor for portraying the fall of humanity into sin and as a narrative structure through which to discuss complex moral, religious, and philosophical issues. This analysis traces the historical sources that played a role in shaping Donne's poem, ranging from classical antiquity to Neoplatonism and the Christian theological tradition. Donne's poem reimagines the soul's journey by replacing Porphyry's *regressus animae*, which returns to a blessed origin, with the Christian *progressus animae*, which moves forward through the sin described by Augustine and Reformed theology. In *Metempsychosis*, Donne not only explores the idea of the transmigration of souls, serving as a metaphor for the fall, but also offers a profound reflection on identity, memory, corporeality, and the relationship between the physical and spiritual worlds. The soul's progress from less complex to more complex beings is not a sign of acquired virtue or inner evolution but, on the contrary, an indication of increasing spiritual and moral depravity. The memory of previous lives allows the recognition of the soul's identity as it transitions from one living species to another, fostering a negative evolution that culminates in the triumph of human *metis* and the emergence of a new human identity, no longer grounded in the divine original image that once defined it, but rather in sin, which has shattered it.

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SEM19. Reframing human(e) voices: Exploring contemporary British identities through cultural studies and the multimodal toolkit

11 September h. 16:00-18:30, PN 18

Convenors

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Abstract

Drawing on a theoretical paradigm integrating the interpretative tenets of Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis and Cultural Studies, this seminar investigates the complex identity negotiations that permeate the (re)configurations of contemporary Britishness as portrayed in cultural products of the first decades of the new millennium which converse with multimodal textualities and cross-digital platforms (such as TV adaptations, theatre transpositions, song playlists, podcasts, blogs, etc). More specifically, the seminar aims to disclose the transformative role of storytelling in constructing, challenging, and re-signifying British cultural identities within a conflictual glocal sphere so as to foster possibilities for social justice and renewed human(e) relationships.

In this context, the investigation of the interplay of the inherent affordances of the cultural texts under scrutiny through the analytical lens of MCDA reveals how their sociopolitical constructs evolve, are shaped, challenged, and redefined across different media and over time, reflecting broader shifts in the understanding of Britishness in contemporary society. Inasmuch as the multimodal analytical perspective enables the examination of meaning-making practices within complex intertextual and cross-media networks, the critical framework adopted here helps interrogate how cultural products engage with and reframe key concepts such as language, (classed/racialized/gendered) identity, community and belonging. Thus, this seminar explores how the theoretical porosity between the culturalist and the multimodal paradigms provides new opportunities to scrutinize the complexity of today's British meaning-poietic arenas. Against this backdrop, the English language is viewed as a carrier of (oppositional) semiotic resources and a vehicle for decentred/excentric discursive practices, interwoven with performances of cultural identity.

Aiming to reflect on the perceptions and self-perceptions of an ever-evolving Britishness in the context of contemporary socio-political events and historical/cultural shifts, the convenors welcome abstract proposals centred around (but not necessarily limited to):

- revisited perspectives on and intersections of class, race/ethnicity, gender, etc., in contemporary British (multimodal) storytelling, particularly within urban and suburban settings
- the analysis of hybrid narratives and storytelling across transmedial circuits
- the (problematized) depiction of migration, cultural relocation, and multiculturalism in contemporary British cultural products
- the engagement of artistic expressions, such as Artivism, with political and social discourses surrounding British cultural identities.

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SEM19. Papers

11 September h. 16:00-18:30, PN 18

- *Critical crossings: Analysing the mediascapes of Open Water and Sex Education through the culturalist and multimodal paradigm* (Ester Gendusa, Università degli Studi di Palermo / Emanuele Monegato, Università degli Studi di Milano / Anna Pasolini, Università San Raffaele Roma)
- *Migraction. Multimodal storytelling, agency, pedagogy* (Nicoletta Vallorani, Università degli Studi di Milano)
- *Staging resistance and belonging: Cultural identity in the poetic performances of Warsan Shire and Shailja Patel* (Carla Tempestoso, Università della Calabria)
- *Quiet pluralism in print: Entangled voices and multimodal dissent in The Dublin Magazine* (Elena Ogliari, Università degli Studi di Milano)

SEM19. Abstracts

Critical crossings: Analysing the mediascapes of Open Water and Sex Education through the culturalist and multimodal paradigm

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Our paper intends to both cast light on and test, through selected case studies – the productive analytical models that emerge from the often overlooked or insufficiently acknowledged theoretical intersections between Cultural Studies and Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA).

Their respective peculiarities have long prevailed onto their critical porosity, with few loci of reciprocal engagement. While some analyses acknowledge this theoretical permeability only partially, others incorporate elements of both paradigms without fully recognizing them as part of an integrated critical approach.

Against this background, we wish to underline that, when brought to dialogue, Cultural Studies and MCDA operate as transformative analytical frameworks, engaging with the ways in which (Foucauldian) discourse shapes – and is shaped by – power relations and disclosing the meaning-making potential of multiple semiotic modes as they intersect in specific media environments. The analysis of the proposed case studies illustrates the extent to which their intersection creates a fertile ground for analyzing how language – be it textual, visual, or performative — can function as an instrument of resistance, subverting power structures within the examined mediascapes produced in contemporary cultural contexts of the British Isles.

Indeed, a close examination of the debut novel *Open Water* (2021) by Caleb Nelson and the TV Series *Sex Education* (Netflix 2019-2023) allows us to unpack the ways in which both Cultural Studies and MCDA interrogate the sociocultural and ideological forces underpinning identities, representation, and meaning-making processes, providing specific methodological tools to dissect the multimodal semiotic resources that challenge – but also sustain – dominant narratives.

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Quiet pluralism in print: Entangled voices and multimodal dissent in *The Dublin Magazine*

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In a present-day Ireland confronting surging xenophobia, arson attacks on refugee housing, and conspiratorial rhetoric such as “The Great Plantation”—a localised adaptation of the “Great Replacement” theory—discourses on nationhood are increasingly shaped by economic anxiety as well as ethnic and cultural protectionism. Even though the most extreme views remain minority positions, their growing influence invites reflection on earlier historical moments of growing isolationism when the boundaries of Irishness were similarly contested. The early 1920s, marked by the foundation of the Free State and the 1922 Irish Race Conference, witnessed the consolidation of a Catholic ethno-nationalist vision that excluded cultural and religious minorities. The continued application of British Aliens legislation, anti-emigration campaigns motivated by concerns over ethnic and moral purity, and laws such as the Censorship of Publications Act (1929) institutionalised this narrow vision. Yet, amid this context of exclusion, literary periodicals played a crucial role in imagining alternatives.

This paper examines *The Dublin Magazine* (1923–1958), edited by Seumas O’Sullivan with the vital collaboration of his partner and later wife Estella Solomons, as a site of pluralistic and multimodal dissent. Focusing on its formative years (1923–1930), I explore how the magazine operated as an entangled artefact—materially and ideologically—within intersecting networks of media, social, and cultural politics. I highlight the editorial and artistic contributions of Solomons and Hannah Berman, two Irish-Jewish women whose works challenged dominant narratives through quiet but sustained resistance.

Berman’s stories and translations, often set in Eastern European shtetls, are steeped in Irish concerns, interrogating antisemitism, marginalisation, and mythologies of tolerance. Solomons’s etchings and editorial labour embedded overlooked urban and social realities into the visual and material archive of Irishness. Aaron Kernoff’s illustrations, particularly his stark artwork for Berman’s “The Charity Box”, further underline the periodical’s multimodal strategies for representing social exclusion and minority experience. Together with contributions from Samuel Beckett, the ‘pagan witch’ Ella Young, and A.J. Leventhal, the magazine became a space where editorial curation assembled voices from across cultural, religious, and aesthetic spectra.

My methodology integrates recent multimodal periodical theory, drawing on the periodical’s role as a “performative” artefact (Ernst *et al.*, 2022, p. 18), alongside cultural studies’ interest in minor archives, affect, and media entanglements. In doing so, I propose *The Dublin Magazine* as a case study in “quiet pluralism”—where multimodality, rather than overt political rhetoric, sustains alternative imaginaries of Irish identity.

At a time when national belonging is again being redefined, this historical instance of media practice offers a model for how visual, textual, and graphic assemblages can foster community, resist homogeneity, and amplify marginal voices not through manifesto or provocation, but through subtle, sustained acts of editorial and artistic curation. This Irish case study also invites comparative reflection on how periodicals across the Anglophone world have shaped—and can continue to shape—inclusive and humane national narratives.

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Staging resistance and belonging: Cultural identity in the poetic performances of Warsan Shire and Shailja Patel

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This paper investigates the poetics of identity, belonging, and resistance in the spoken-word performances (Weinstein 2018) and published works of British-Somali poet Warsan Shire and Indian-Kenyan activist Shailja Patel. Against a backdrop of migration, displacement, and contested definitions of Britishness, both poets craft deeply embodied narratives that interrogate the intersections of race, gender, and cultural memory. Rooted in lived experience and political urgency, their work navigates the emotional landscapes of diasporic pain, inherited trauma, and historical silencing, offering counter-narratives that challenge dominant notions of nationhood and global belonging.

Drawing on the interpretive frameworks of cultural studies, this study explores how Shire's and Patel's poetry transcends the printed page to unfold within shared performative spaces—live, digital, and transnational. Through the concept of “worlding” (Di Leo 2024), the paper highlights how their performances enact a “potentiality of the literary act in time” (Spiers 2020, 256) engaging audiences in acts of witness, co-creation, and resistance. Language, in their hands, becomes both archive and action: a site for staging identity not as static, but as performative, relational, and politically charged.

By foregrounding the affective and communal dimensions of poetic performance, this paper situates Shire and Patel within contemporary British cultural production and broader transnational circuits, tracing how their work reconfigures possibilities for solidarity, empathy, and cultural reimagination in an increasingly fragmented global society.

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Migraction. Multimodal storytelling, agency, pedagogy

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This contribution is part of my ongoing research on the inflections, modes and value of storytelling in an approach to the issue of migration that is able to produce both theoretical, practical and pedagogical tools to promote a deeper awareness of the tragedy taking place in the Mediterranean Sea. My point is how to transform the observation of a pervasive global phenomenon reaching one of the most visible peaks in the Mediterranean sea into positive action through the tools of art and within the educational framework. Partly following Pulitano's reflection on ARTivism (Pulitano, 2022), I will ground my analysis on the assumption that creative storytelling has to be a political gesture aimed at producing a change: a catalyst that can make new paths to a healthy community (Almaraz, 1976).

I will draw examples from some installations by John Akomfrah (*Vertigo Sea*, 2015; *Four Nocturnes*, 2019; *Listening all night to the rain*, 2024) and from some poems of Warsan Shire, with specific reference to the collection *Teaching My Mother How to Give Birth* (Shire, 2011). In both cases, though in different ways, the artists address the audience directly and potently, exploiting the grammar of different media and offering a representation that is at the same time understandable and artistically sophisticated. Their work may prove perfectly suitable as an educational tool precisely because it is multilevel and multimodal, and it opens the way to a much needed cultural turn on how to act about migration.

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Vallorani, N. (2024). *Travelling muses: Women, ancient grammars, and contemporary ARTivism in refugees' tales*.
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SEM20. “It’s the end of the world as we know it”: Politics of the apocalypse in literary and cultural studies

11 September h. 16:00-18:30, PN 8

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Abstract

This seminar will explore the apocalypse as a hermeneutic framework for literature and cultural studies, focusing on how queer theory, postcolonial studies, and ‘post-historical’ perspectives engage with apocalyptic narratives as sites of ideological conflict, historical rupture, and cultural transformation. Apocalyptic imagery shows a productive ambivalence in elaborating the crucial issue of *whose* world is under threat or disappearing. In postcolonial contexts, for example, apocalyptic tropes are often reflective of colonial and postcolonial anxieties, where the apocalypse represents both the demise of imperial authority and the uncertain emergence of new, often fragmented, identities and realities. In queer theory, on the other hand, the apocalypse harks the end of the compulsory gender binary, which may be hailed as empowering or cataclysmic according to different positionalities. Through the lens of post-history, apocalyptic discourses disrupt linear historical narratives, offering a critique of the capitalist, heteronormative, and colonial systems that perpetuate cycles of oppression. We propose that apocalyptic scenarios provide a powerful and even heuristic tool for understanding how histories of oppression and resistance are interpreted and reimagined, and that apocalyptic narratives not only envision ends but also offer avenues for reinterpreting the possibilities of new beginnings.

We invite proposals that discuss the apocalypse as hermeneutic framework in literary and cultural studies, looking at specific case studies or, more widely, at methodologies and their own crises.

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SEM20. Papers

11 September h. 16:00-18:30, PN 8

- *(Post)human (post)apocalypses: Byron and Leopardi after the end of humanity* (Alessandro Cabiati, Università Ca’ Foscari Venezia)
- *“It’s not the end of the world [...]. It’s only the end of us”: On the Beach and the legacy of nuclear catastrophic imagination* (Francesca Guidotti, Università degli Studi di Bergamo)
- *Between collapse and the collective in two apocalyptic narratives of global health crises: Sarah Schulman’s People in Trouble and Gregg Bordowitz’s Pandemic Haiku* (Samuele Grassi, Monash University, Polo di Prato dell’Università degli Studi di Firenze)
- *“I shall not see a world that will be dear to me”: Unveiling the apocalyptic prophecy of the Morrigan* (Luca Sarti, Università di Napoli l’Orientale)
- *Entangled memories: Speculative archives and fictional genealogies in Lidia Yuknavitch’s Thrust* (Arianna Preite, Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna)

(Post)human (post)apocalypses: Byron and Leopardi after the end of humanity

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As a literary genre, post-apocalyptic fiction is a product of English Romanticism. In the 1810s and 1820s, apocalyptic narratives such as Lord Byron's 'Darkness', Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*, and Percy Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* reimagined, through a secular-scientific lens, the classical and religious eschatology of the Western tradition. Indeed, Italian poet Giacomo Leopardi is not usually included among the cluster of Romantic writers who established the post-apocalyptic genre. Leopardi, however, represented human extinction and the end of the world in several of his writings, most notably in 'Dialogo di un Folletto e di uno Gnomo' (1824), part of the collection *Operette morali*. On the surface, Leopardi's 'Dialogo' and works of English Romanticism like Byron's 'Darkness' (1816) describe the end of times in markedly different ways. 'Dialogo' discusses the extinction of human beings from the point of view of two fantastical creatures, a pixie and a gnome, who comment on how natural events are occurring even after humanity's apocalypse: rivers still run and celestial bodies keep on following their courses. In Byron's 'Darkness', the disappearance of human civilization is part of a broader cataclysmic event, the death of the sun, which, unlike in Leopardi's 'Dialogo', stops rivers from flowing and stars from shining. This paper will argue that, despite their apparent differences, 'Dialogo' and 'Darkness' display similar nihilistic tendencies and an analogous rejection of anthropocentrism. In both texts, human extinction is presented as being caused by despicable practices like war and cannibalism; gazettes, royal palaces, and paper money, symbols of human civilization and power, disappear or are destroyed; and other-than-human beings provide an alternative perspective to that of degenerate humanity.

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Between collapse and the collective in two apocalyptic narratives of global health crises: Sarah Schulman's *People in Trouble* and Gregg Bordowitz's *Pandemic Haiku*

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This paper, drawing on queer theory, postcolonial studies, and 'post-historical' perspectives, explores two apocalyptic narratives as sites of ideological and cultural rupture, from two different yet interrelated time-settings: Sarah Schulman's novel, *People in Trouble* (1990), and Gregg Bordowitz's collection, *Pandemic Haiku* (2021).

Written in the heyday of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, Schulman's *People in Trouble* remains to this date "a story of the AIDS crisis from a lesbian perspective" (1998: 9). The novel portrays a global health crisis as an apocalyptic moment, as a historical and political collapse that unmasked systemic neglect and oppression from heteronormative institutions. *People in Trouble* foregrounds queer relationality as a site of survival and renewal, echoing the seminar's call to reimagine apocalyptic ends as also new beginnings. However, the afterlives of the novel also reveal the ways in which minoritarian histories are routinely overwritten in dominant narratives of (queer) inclusion. Schulman's novel was a direct source for Jonathan Larson's musical *Rent*, which reworked Schulman's characters, themes, and settings into a mainstream, prize-winning cultural product. Schulman recounts this process of erasure in *Stagestruck* (1998), where she details how her work – and that of the activist communities she was part of – was extracted and sanitised to fit a marketable image of LGBT progress.

Composed during the COVID-19 pandemic, Bordowitz's *Pandemic Haiku* – in connection with the MoMA exhibition "Gregg Bordowitz: I Wanna Be Well" – offers a fragmented, meditative response to an ongoing apocalyptic event, reflecting on illness, isolation, and care, which is further complicated by Bordowitz's position as an artist and activist living with HIV. The poetic form itself, minimalist and constrained, becomes a formal embodiment of life under

lockdown, underscoring how pandemic temporality disrupts linear narratives and demands new modes of witnessing. *Pandemic Haiku* is a collection of intimate dispatches from someone who knows what it means to live in a constant state of personal vulnerability and political critique, between narratives of the sick body and the body politic. Like Schulman, Bordowitz insists on precarity, interdependence, and the affective lives during the pandemic.

In both cases, the writing extends the moment of apocalypse to hint at community and the collective, against the separation imposed by the individual condition of survival. Importantly, Schulman and Bordowitz are also committed pro-Palestinian, New York-based Jewish writer-activists, with a long history of HIV/AIDS activism dating back to the heyday of the infamous ACT UP NY branch (Schulman 2021). Given the current global political climate, their unique perspective offers “a critique of the capitalist, heteronormative, and colonial systems that perpetuate cycles of oppression”.

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“It’s not the end of the world [...]. It’s only the end of us”: On the Beach and the legacy of nuclear catastrophic imagination

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In the 21st century, we no longer think of disasters as single, isolated events. Instead, the dominant approach has shifted to seeing them as global, interconnected phenomena with widespread, far-reaching consequences. We cannot perceive apocalyptic events in their immediacy because they unfold over centuries or even longer. Like Morton’s hyperobjects, they are so vast and dispersed across space and time that they exceed our ability to fully comprehend them, thus challenging the narrow scope of anthropocentric vision.

The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki marked a watershed in human history and in the human imagination of the apocalypse. The sheer scale of the devastation made it impossible to process the catastrophe immediately, but literature was able to provide ‘rapid response’ narratives that began to process the trauma within a few years of the event, even though it would take generations to better understand its significance. This is the case with Nevil Shute’s novel *On the Beach* (1951), set in Australia after a nuclear war has killed most of the world’s population and the rest know they must die soon as the radiation approaches. Humanity will be wiped out, having proved unworthy of inhabiting the Earth, but one day someone better might take over. Disasters always make us think, or rather rethink, our present and past, but also our future, in a critical way; this rethinking can hopefully lead to a break with past practices.

The culmination of a very long process seems to have come last October, when the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to *Nihon Hidankyō*, a Japanese association of atomic bomb survivors, “for its efforts to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons and for demonstrating through testimony that nuclear weapons must never be used again”. While the crisis of humanism is still on the agenda, our present seems to make more and more room for a heartfelt plea to be humane, to feel empathy, compassion and understanding for our fellow creatures. The apocalypse would then serve as a wake-up call for radical change, an invitation to deal more humanely with the present and the future, including its global catastrophes.

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Entangled memories: Speculative archives and fictional genealogies in Lidia Yuknavitch's *Thrust*

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In her post-apocalyptic novel *Thrust* (2022), Lidia Yuknavitch weaves a tangle of stories around the central thesis that “*memory is proof that imagination is a real place*”—as one of the novel’s underwater creatures declares. Drawing on archival materials and historical studies that reconstruct the multiple temporalities through which the narrative travels, Yuknavitch composes a liminal tale suspended between the real and the imaginary. At its core lies the notion that genealogy itself is nothing more than a form of fiction (Muñoz 2009). From this perspective, memory becomes an act of mythopoiesis: a process of creating myths, tales, and narratives that manipulate past events and reshape how we imagine their futures. Yuknavitch’s novel will be examined through the lens of recent queer and decolonial theories that seek to “*exceed or negotiate the constitutive limits of the archive*” by means of “*a series of speculative arguments*” (Hartman 2008). These approaches aim to open up new narrative possibilities emerging from sites of impossible speech. By analyzing the narrative strategies employed by the author and the effectiveness of the decolonial perspectives that the novel presents, the discussion will trace the connections between the text and the intra-active processes it stages (Barad 2007). These processes give rise to characters that resonate as collective, hybrid voices, blending into a unified movement that weaves together the past, present, and future of the human and more-than-human creatures inhabiting the planet.

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“I shall not see a world that will be dear to me”: Unveiling the apocalyptic prophecy of the Morrigan

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Apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic themes permeate (Anglo)Irish literature, ranging from contemporary novels, such as Sarah Davis-Goff’s *Last Ones Left Alive* (2019) and Eoin Brady’s *Weep* (2022), to ancient mythological texts. Building on this premise, this paper explores the apocalyptic prophecy sung by the Morrigan in *Cath Maige Tuired*, a key narrative in the Irish Mythological Cycle. Focusing on Whitley Stokes’s 1891 English translation of the *The Second Battle of Moytura*, published during the Celtic Revival—an era aimed at reclaiming Gaelic heritage and resisting British domination—the paper examines how the goddess’s verses depict the breakdown of natural and social order. This analysis is then juxtaposed with W. B. Yeats’s apocalyptic poem *The Second Coming* (1919)—often described as applicable “to any and all crisis” (Keane, 2012, p. 37)—which similarly grapples with societal collapse and the rise of new (dis)orders. Both works, in fact, highlight the tension between the destruction of the old world and the unsettling birth of a new one. Ultimately, by framing the end of the world as “a moment of rupture” (Pitetti, 2017, p. 438), this paper demonstrates how apocalyptic imagery is employed to address historical breaks and the formation of new identities in times of crisis.

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SEM21. Literary songs. Literary voices: English literature and popular music

11 September h. 11:00-13:00, Gorr 8

Convenors

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Abstract

Our goal is to throw light on an enthralling and internationally expanding horizon in Cultural Studies, namely the relationship between English literature and popular music. From Early Modern music to Twenty-first century pop, literature and popular music often engage in fascinating dialogues; songs combine a musical composition and a verbal/narrative text, hence we could define pop songs as ‘miniature’ novels, thus paraphrasing Iain Chambers, or we may think of them as poems set to music, highlighting their lyrical aspects. Be as it may, songs related to literature bring the human voice centre stage through singing, thus breaking the silence of the printed literary page. In this perspective the interplay between literature and popular music can also break silence as indifference, expressing themes of humanity, empathy and interconnectedness, as witnessed by Linton Kwesi Johnson giving voice through his words and music to the oppressed Caribbean community in early 1980s London.

Contemporary British popular music is profoundly fascinated by this intermedial dimension and is very often defined by a contamination between the musical and the literary, whether as transmutation of literary works, or as fresh and often experimental forms of song-writing which use literature as an aesthetic prospect from which to construct meaning. The first category implies the translation/adaptation of literary works into songs: David Gilmour, among others, turns Shakespeare’s poems into songs, as did Syd Barrett with James Joyce, and Gavin Friday with Oscar Wilde. The latter category includes songwriters who conceive their music in terms of literary themes and imagery, nourishing their writing with poetic and narrative resources. This approach defines The Smiths’ Morrissey’s poetic songwriting, with his debts to Wilde and Shelagh Delaney, and David Bowie who, besides being fascinated by science fiction, released in 1974 the album *Diamond Dogs* largely based on George Orwell’s *Nineteen-Eighty-four*. Other committed artists working both as poets and singers – from L. K. Johnson to Kae Tempest – have established intriguing dialogues between the two languages inviting their fans to inhabit the threshold between the musical, the literary and the human, turning listening into a critical and ethical process. We invite submissions dealing with, among other possibilities: intermediality in contemporary popular music; writers (from Shakespeare to Rushdie and beyond) and popular music; music, literary orality and the human; pop, rock and intertextuality; literature, music and interconnectedness.

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SEM21. Papers

11 September h. 11:00-13:00, Gorr 8

- *Prospero's speech in a female Voice: the cases of Loreena McKennitt (1994) and Beth Gibbons (2010)* (Maddalena Pennacchia, Università degli studi Roma Tre)
- *Metrical translation as musical re-creation: Adapting Edoardo Bennato’s Peter Pan – Il Musical for English Performance* (Manuela Francia, Università degli Studi “G. d’Annunzio” Chieti-Pescara)

- “We’re just your playful / gale-force friend / in the end times”. *Echoes of the Anthropocene in Kae Tempest’s Let Them Eat Chaos and T.S. Eliot’s The Waste Land* (M. Giulia Laddago, Independent scholar)
- *Wilde personalities. Performing Oscar Wilde in popular music, from the Smiths to the Pet Shop Boys* (Pierpaolo Martino, Università degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro)

SEM21. Abstracts

Metrical translation as musical re-creation: Adapting Edoardo Bennato’s *Peter Pan – Il Musical* for English Performance

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This paper explores the metrical translation of songs from Italian to English in *Peter Pan – Il Musical* (2007), a rock-based stage adaptation by singer-songwriter Edoardo Bennato. Unlike most English-language musicals imported into Italy, this production originated entirely in Italian and has never been officially dubbed or subtitled for international audiences. Translating such a musical thus entails a pioneering act of intercultural and intersemiotic transfer (Kaindl, 2005).

Far from a word-for-word rendering, the process adopts a performative perspective grounded in principles of lyrical adaptation, which prioritize rhythm, prosody, and performability (Low, 2017). The translation process follows a performative and prosodic approach rooted in musical constraints. Translated lyrics are crafted to align with the original metric and rhythmic structure, ensuring that stresses, rhymes, and phrasing are compatible with live or recorded performance. This aligns with Franzon’s (2008) model of singability, which highlights the need to balance music, lyrical, and phonetic elements in song translation.

Through selected examples, the paper illustrates how metrical translation serves not only linguistic but also expressive and rhythmic fidelity, a process that echoes Gorlée’s (2005) notion of vocal translation as a form of semiotic performance. Each translated piece undergoes a vocal testing phase to assess its compatibility with live or recorded performance.

By framing translation as artistic re-creation, the paper sheds light on the challenges and creative potential of rendering Italian musical theatre into English. The case of *Peter Pan – Il Musical* thus emerges as a compelling example of how translation can mediate between cultures, performance modes, and sensory experiences.

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“We’re just your playful / gale-force friend / in the end times”. Echoes of the Anthropocene in Kae Tempest’s *Let Them Eat Chaos* and T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*

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This paper aims to establish a conversation between Kae Tempest’s intermedial poem/album *Let Them Eat Chaos* (2016) and T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (1922), in order to discuss how these two works engage with the human alterations of environment and the notion of Anthropocene (Cruzen 2002). In *Let Them Eat Chaos*, poet and musician Kae Tempest assembles verbal images, voice and sound to create a bleak portrait of life in London in the age of neoliberalism. The city is portrayed as a seemingly dystopian reality where the ultimate goal of life is labour, as crowds of people move following the same trajectory from flat to workplace and vice versa. The fragmentary metrics and form of the poem conjure up frames of the urban space crowded with flats, cars and capitalistic slogans that alternate with the stories of six Londoners living in a state of chronic precarity. Tempest’s bleak depiction of London recalls Eliot’s ‘unreal city’ (*The Waste Land*, l.20) and the iconic scene of the crowd crossing London Bridge as a symbol of the workers’ alienation. As a consequence of war and industrialisation, the urban landscape is deeply affected by pollution, as the Thames ‘sweats / oil and tar’

(l.266-67). The imagery of water works as a common denominator throughout Eliot's poem, symbolising fertility and the lack of it, as well as anticipating today's extreme climatic phenomena such as drought and desertification. In *Let Them Eat Chaos*, Tempest overtly engages with the consequences of climate change; however, water – a 'gale-force friend' – also performs and expresses the poet's own views on the need to cultivate empathy and community against individualism and alienation.

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Wilde personalities. Performing Oscar Wilde in popular music, from the Smiths to the Pet Shop Boys

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If pop is all about the *now* then Wilde – who Michael Bracewell defines “the pop star” *ante-litteram* – becomes a paradigm to perform in our *now* and a perspective from which to read and deconstruct our own age. In this paper I focus on pop and rock musicians who – from the 1980s to the first decade of the new Millenium – have *performed and rewritten* Wilde in complex, fascinating and unpredictable ways. A singer considered by many as the late twentieth/early twenty-first century Wilde, is Morrissey, solo artist and leader of Eighties seminal band The Smiths. Morrissey, like Wilde – and like 1970s Wilde-disciple David Bowie before him – put all his genius into his life and only his talent into his work; indeed, the singer, especially in his Smiths years, made a considerable effort in the construction of his *persona*, often using resources provided by Wilde. Besides sharing Wilde's love of flowers, many of the interviews he gave in the Eighties featured a number of Wildean epigrams and paradoxes, while many of his early songs (like The Smiths' 'This Charming Man') were nourished by a Wildean imagery. A meditation on the darker and more decadent sides of Wilde's life and *oeuvre* informs instead the work of Nick Cave who in 1988 published a rewriting of Wilde's *Salomé* in five short acts and the work of the Irish artist and singer Gavin Friday, who in 1989 released on the *Island* label a concept album dedicated to Wilde entitled *Each Man Kills the Thing He Loves*, from a line taken from “The Ballad of Reading Gaol.” Two other fascinating Wilde *personalities* are Neil Tennant funding member of the Pet Shop Boys, the ultra-clever pop group capable of establish a fascinating dialogue between seriousness and lightness, drama and comedy and solo artist and Libertines/Babyshambles founder Pete Doherty who, besides writing a song entitled 'Salomé', embraced Wilde's art of the pose and was fascinated by excesses of any kind, constructing a dissonant/noisy/disturbing image of himself and his band. All these artists/singers – with their awareness of the importance of being/playing Oscar in their specific worlds and cultural contexts – show us that Wilde can be conceived as a subversive, critical role one might successfully perform and appropriate, *now* more than ever, inviting U.S. not only to cross, but also to inhabit borders and thresholds, opening ourselves to the charm and the unpredictability of the multiple forms of otherness surrounding and inhabiting us.

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Prospero's speech in a female voice: The cases of Loreena McKennitt (1994) and Beth Gibbons (2010)

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The epilogue of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in which Prospero breaks the illusion of the story and speaking directly to the audience announces that his "charms are all o'hertrown" and that the only "strength" he now possesses is his own has been read by many scholars as Shakespeare's farewell to the theatre. The speech has inspired a host of artists over the centuries,

but in this paper I will explore in particular the performance by two female musicians who sang those words with their female voices at the turn of the 21st century: Loreena McKennit and Beth Gibbon. The former included her adaptation of the speech in her album *The Mask and the Mirror* (1994), for which she composed a music very close to the tradition of Celtic sounds, while the latter sang those same words to the music written by Elliot Goldenthal for the long final credits sequence of Julie Taymor's film adaptation of *The Tempest* (2010), in which a female Prospera is played by Hellen Mirren. What happens when this speech is repurposed and adapted or appropriated for a different artistic context and media environment, that is recorded music and cinema? And how does a female voice affect the 'humanity' of the speech? These and others will be the questions I will try to explore in my contribution to the seminar.

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SEM22. The human factor in audiovisual translation history

22A 11 September h. 11:00-13:00, Terracini PN

22B 11 September h. 16:00-18:30, Terracini PN

Convenors

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Serenella Zanotti (Università degli Studi Roma Tre) serenella.zanotti@uniroma3.it

Abstract

Audiovisual Translation is a complex intersemiotic practice whose historical developments are closely intertwined with the introduction and diffusion of novel screen technologies (Cornu, 2014; Cornu & O’Sullivan, 2019). The 20th century has witnessed the professionalization and specialization of a diversely skilled workforce, including linguists, script translators, dialogue adapters, voice actors and directors, subtitlers and editors, who have been engaged in various degrees in the linguistic adaptation of filmic, video, and digital content.

Catering to diverse tastes and sensibilities around the world, AVT work has been impacted by policies that control the production and circulation of screen media across national and linguistic borders, norms and regulations that have in turn shaped the socio-cultural and legal status of AVT professions throughout the 20th century. The more recent introduction of generative AI is now challenging the professional standards of a translation industry that has relied on technological innovation since its inception and thus poses new challenges for both highly specialized practitioners and those who are training and wish to enter the AVT field.

Taking a historical perspective, the proposed seminar aims to investigate the human element in audiovisual translation. It will host a selection of case studies which highlight continuities and disruptions in the *modus operandi* of audiovisual translators at key points in the history of screen media. Based on the analysis of archival materials and extant translations, this seminar ultimately aims to unravel the tension that exists between the human factor and technology-driven practices, assessing how this tension has in turn impacted AVT policy, quality standards and linguistic output.

Specific lines of investigation might include:

- Historical and archival approaches to AVT
- Diachronic perspectives: (shared) translation practices and their evolution
- Agents in AVT history
- Historical approaches to AVT reception: the role of audiences
- Developments in AVT policy and impact on linguistic output
- Changes in artistic, aesthetic and quality standards in AVT
- Becoming an audiovisual translator (linguistic and technical training, market forces etc.); Processes of professional specialization in a historical perspective
- The interplay between technological innovation and professionalization of the AVT workforce

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SEM22. Papers

22A 11 September h. 11.00-13.00, Terracini PN

- *Translating cinema in the silent era: from Charlie Chaplin to Buster Keaton* (Serenella Zanotti, Università di Roma Tre)
- *A matter of authenticity: Hollywood’s wartime language units* (Carla Mereu Keating, University of Bristol, UK / Università di Cagliari)
- *“Per ragioni di ordine pubblico”: Government control of British and American films in Italy in the aftermath of World War II (1946-1959)* (Valerio Monticelli, Sapienza Università di Roma)

22B 11 September h. 16:00-18:30, Terracini PN

- *TV Dubbing in Italy: A diachronic perspective on human translation, adaptation and dubbing practices* (Linda Rossato, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia)
- *The evolution of orality in Anglophone films and Italian dubbing: A diachronic study on hesitations* (Ludovica Calogero, Università degli Studi Roma Tre)
- *In-text intervention vs. paratextual guidance: A shift in the adaptation of sensitive audiovisual content?* (Chiara Bucaria, Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna)
- *Resisting automation: Arnait Video Productions and the power of human subtitling in Inuit cinema* (Eleonora Sasso, Università degli Studi "G. d'Annunzio" Chieti-Pescara)

SEM22. Abstracts

In-text intervention vs. paratextual guidance: A shift in the adaptation of sensitive audiovisual content?

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The introduction of new distribution mechanisms such as streaming platforms on a global scale over the last decade has revolutionized not only the consumption of audiovisual content in general but also the practice, distribution, and access to audiovisual translation modes. Easier access to original and translated versions has also made audiences potentially more vigilant toward the accuracy of the translators' work, with social media and other online outlets empowering viewers to express their disagreement with certain adaptation choices (e.g. Bucaria 2023).

This paper focuses on one aspect of audiovisual localization that has been affected by these recent developments and looks at a recent shift in the adaptation of sensitive language and content that has been happening over the last few years in the dubbing and subtitling for the entertainment industry (Bucaria 2024). Previous research on the cross-cultural adaptation of sensitive and taboo language and subjects has pointed out that blatant examples of manipulation and censorship often occurred in dubbed and subtitled dialogue (e.g. Chiaro 2007, Díaz Cintas 2012, Díaz Cintas *et al.* 2016, Ranzato 2016). While the manipulation of audiovisual dialogue in translation is still practiced (especially in some linguistic-cultural contexts), this paper argues that recent changes in the distribution of audiovisual content – such as the global presence of streaming and on-demand platforms, and an increased linguistic and cultural awareness from certain audience segments – now tend to make it less likely for major cases of cross-cultural taboo manipulation to happen without going unnoticed or generating pushback. In particular, by looking at the cases of Netflix and Amazon Prime Video this paper discusses how the paratextual information available on the interfaces of these streaming platforms – in the form of synopses, extra-textual tags, and content advisories – reframes sensitive content for global audiences in a less invasive way when compared to the heavy-handed, textual manipulation that was common in dubbing and subtitling in the age of (exclusively) linear TV. Examples from the Netflix and Amazon Prime Video English- and Italian-language interfaces will be provided to support the idea that in these cases cultural and linguistic localization through paratextual information can play a crucial role in adapting sensitive content for global audiences and in affecting their viewing choices.

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The evolution of orality in Anglophone films and Italian dubbing: A diachronic study on hesitations

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Hesitations are natural occurrences in spontaneous conversations, resulting from the complex processes carried out by speakers who must both “plan and execute their utterances in real time” (Biber et al., 1999, p. 1048). In AVT, these features are part of what is commonly referred to as “prefabricated orality” (Baños-Piñero & Chaume, 2009); stylistic devices purposefully inserted in dialogues to convey a sense of orality and spontaneity to viewers, allowing to follow the narrative events and draw the correct inferences regarding the story, the characters and their interpersonal relationships (Jucker, 2015; Kozloff, 2000). In translation, however, elements of spontaneous conversation are commonly overlooked, reduced and simplified since their rendering, or lack of rendering, does not seem to alter the overall structure of the story (Bruti, 2019, p. 197; Valdeón, 2008).

By reviewing the communicative functions and meanings of hesitations in spontaneous speech (Kjellmer, 2003), the present study aims to compare the occurrences of hesitations — a phenomenon hitherto insufficiently researched — in both original and translated pre-planned dialogues. This is achieved through a corpus-based diachronic approach and a translation-oriented analysis of a parallel corpus of original Anglophone films and their Italian dubbed version, distributed between 1950 and 2020.

By observing the way hesitations are codified in film speech and their functions within the mechanisms of onscreen interactions, the diachronic analysis allows to attest the evolution of film dialogue over the years, namely any changes in the conventions regarding orality in audiovisual texts, as well as in the translation strategies employed to render hesitations in Italian dubbing. At the same time, in a context in which technological innovation and AI are said to jeopardize the professional role of both translators and dubbing actors, the study of hesitations brings the human element to the forefront, drawing attention to the role of these “paralinguistic alternants” (Poyatos, 2002) in the actors’ performances as conveying a variety of meanings and affecting the overall pragmatic interpretation of both the original and dubbed speech.

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A matter of authenticity: Hollywood’s wartime language units

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My intervention explores how localized practices of sound film translation were disrupted by the outbreak of the Second World War. It focuses on Hollywood’s relocation of their European-based translation activities to the United States in the early to mid-1940s. As restrictive quotas and wartime disruptions affected their film distribution and localization operations in the Continent, large film companies such as Warner Bros and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer began scouting for French, Italian and Spanish “linguists” and “authentic voices” in the United States in order to set up provisional translation units in their West and East Coast studios. In collaboration with the United States Office of War Information (OWI), the majors “hand-picked” some of their backlog films to be dubbed and subtitled in various languages, ready to be shipped to

various European and North African territories as soon as these were liberated by Allied armies (“American Distributors”, 1943; “40 Pix”, 1943).

Some difficulties, however, were encountered when setting up these units across the Atlantic. As experienced in the late 1920s during the transition to sound filmmaking, finding ‘a sufficient number of competent scripters’, translators, titlists and performers suitable for subtitling and dubbing work was not always an easy task; the cost of translating films in the United States was also an issue, as the majors had to pay “higher wages” to technicians and performers than in Europe (“Yank Cos.”, 1943). Discussing a selection of extracts from legal, administrative, press and script materials, I reflect on the role that practices of audiovisual translation had in the circulation of screen propaganda that accompanied the Allies’ advances in the European war theatre. I finally argue for the importance of thinking historically about translation standards, market expectations and geographical and contractual conditions of employment when assessing mode and quality of translation output.

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“Per ragioni di ordine pubblico”: Government control of British and American films in Italy in the aftermath of World War II (1946-1959)

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Foreign films’ censorship in Italy was mainly investigated in relation to the fascist era, a period of decrees aimed at controlling foreign narratives and suppressing representations deemed politically troublesome or morally inconvenient (Mereu Keating 2012, 2016; Ranzato 2016). In this perspective, Mereu Keating analysed the preventive censorship over foreign films guaranteed by dubbing (2016) and the policies adopted in relation to overseas productions (2012). The present study considers the immediate post-World War II period to demonstrate that the dubbing of foreign films in post-fascist Italy served similar functions of control and manipulation dictated by the predominant power structures of the time.

Even though the entire system of laws enforced on the matter was abrogated after the fall of fascism (*D. Lgs. Lgt. No. 678/1945*), the censorship practices related to audiovisual content operated in the previous decades continued to remain in place. The Central Office for Cinematography (Law No. 379/1947) – whose commission became part of the General Direction of Entertainment in 1948 and acted on behalf of the prime minister – consistently inspected all audiovisual products, imposing cuts and significant alterations to imported films to avoid issues of public disorder (Curti 2023). In the commission’s perspective, it was essential that the Allies were not negatively perceived by the Italian audience, and that the country’s national prestige remained unaffected by their narrative. Hence, examining a selection of films translated between 1946 and 1959, this paper explores how censorship was exercised by the Central Office for Cinematography on British and American productions of the period. By focusing on war films and crime drama through the lens of Descriptive Translation Studies, this study investigates how manipulation was effectively achieved through dubbing. The aim is therefore to analyse how Italian translators dealt with the conditions imposed by the Central Office’s commission, identifying the translational strategies they adopted to remove or avoid problematic references to Italianness and Italian institutions that occurred in the Allies’ productions.

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TV Dubbing in Italy: A diachronic perspective on human translation, adaptation and dubbing practices

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Research on audiovisual translation (AVT) has grown considerably within translation studies over the last 20 years. AVT practices have been studied in different language combinations and media. Approached from both linguistic and cultural perspectives and within different theoretical frameworks (Díaz Cintas 2009; Pérez González 2014), the more traditional forms of AVT, namely dubbing (Chaume, 2012; Ranzato and Zanotti 2019) and subtitling (Díaz-Cintas, 2010), as well as more accessible forms of translation, such as subtitling for the deaf and hard of hearing and audio description for the blind and partially sighted, have increasingly received scholarly attention. Both diachronic studies (Mereu Keating 2016; O' Sullivan C. and Cornu 2019) and synchronic approaches (Antonini 2008; Chiaro 2021; Bucaria 2023) have been used to explore the many facets of dubbing and its recent evolution. However, a diachronic overview of dubbing for television in Italy, addressing the specificities of dubbing practices for television and taking into account the nature of the television industry, which differs from the film industry, is, to our knowledge, still lacking in the scholarly literature. From the early days of 'handmade' television dubbing, when dialogue writers had almost the status of literary authors, to the current revolution unleashed by on-demand video streaming platforms that control the dubbing process of globally distributed original TV series, this paper seeks to fill this gap. Based on a series of interviews conducted with Italian professionals in the dubbing industry and on the analysis of key issues of dubbed TV series from a cross-cultural, diachronic perspective, this paper offers an overview of the recent evolution of TV dubbing in Italy, from the 1980s to the present day.

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Resisting automation: Arnait video productions and the power of human subtitling in Inuit cinema

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Arnait Video Productions, a collective of Inuit women filmmakers dedicated to presenting Inuit voices in documentaries and narrative films, is a model for how Indigenous film can cope with the increasingly widespread application of AI in audiovisual production.

As a human-centered production that encourages the strength of community-driven narrative, particularly in opposition to technologies that can threaten cultural specificity, Arnait insists on human translation, cultural authenticity, and community authorship, reminding U.S. that technology needs to work for culture, not against it. In such Arnait movies as *Before Tomorrow* (2008) and *Restless River* (2019), digital editing and subtitling tools were used to streamline post-production, but the team relied on Inuit elders to ensure the Inuktitut dialogue was translated into English with respect to oral tradition and spirituality. From a historical perspective, Arnait's AVT exemplify the indigenous legacy of marginalisation and revitalisation.

Their method of subtitling is not just technical but it reflects decades of linguistic erosion, cultural suppression, and more recent efforts at decolonisation. Historically, Inuit stories were mediated through colonial frameworks, often translated without community consent or cultural accuracy. Arnait reverses this trend by asserting Indigenous agency in every stage of production and translation. I intend to track through these references and look at the issues – the human factor and technology-driven practices, Arnait AVT strategies for protecting against the homogenising tendencies of automation, resistance translation asserting cultural identity, etc – which they raise.

But my central purpose will be to re-read *Before Tomorrow* and *Restless River* through both historical and cognitive perspectives—two approaches that illuminate how subtitling practices serve as tools of cultural resistance, memory, and revitalisation. Historical translation analysis perspective foregrounds the material and ideological conditions under which translations are produced (O’Sullivan & Cornu 2019). Applying historical approaches to audiovisual translation involves understanding how translation practices evolve in response to sociopolitical forces, technological changes, and cultural movements. In the case of Arnait Video Productions, this approach reveals a trajectory of resistance and adaptation that aligns AVT with Inuit self-representation and cultural resilience. As cognitive agents (Rojo & Ibarretxe-Antuñano 2013), Arnait translators bring memory, affect, and local knowledge to each subtitle but their work also occurs with a historical structure. Individual translator choices (cognition) will be investigated as historically situated acts (power, resistance, and agency) in order to show not only the translator’s mental processes, but also the ideological environment shaping them.

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Translating cinema in the silent era: From Charlie Chaplin to Buster Keaton

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Silent film translation was a dynamic and multifaceted phenomenon. As Ruth Vasey (1997) has shown, once films entered distribution, both domestically and internationally, they could be easily modified. The filmic text was vulnerable to intervention and transformation, ultimately shaped by the specific context in which it was exhibited.

Adapting a foreign film demanded a high level of expertise, encompassing complex operations such as translation, film editing and dialogue writing (O’Sullivan & Cornu, 2019b). Translation and re-editing were essential mechanisms for the films being marketed successfully abroad, with film distributors playing a decisive role in encouraging transformative approaches (Zanotti 2025a and 2025b).

This paper will focus on the “adaptive strategies” (Adamson, 2019: 32) employed by film translators to tailor silent films for local audiences, enabling them to transcend their original cultural boundaries. Drawing on contemporary periodicals, censorship records, production documents, and other archival materials, this paper will examine film translation practices in late 1920s Italy. The aim is to unveil the intricacies and complexities of the film translator’s craft, which extended beyond the translation of text on screen (Nornes, 2007).

By focusing on a specific context of reception, the analysis will delve into the notion of translation in the silent film world. It will be shown that, in the silent period, translation encompassed a wide range of transformative practices, including forms of “overtranslation” (O’Sullivan & Cornu, 2019a, 7). Through an analysis of some foreign-distributed versions of films, ranging from Charlie Chaplin to Buster Keaton, it will be shown that films were subject to a wide range of reworkings, confirming the view that “each act of translation create[d] a new filmic text, or ‘cinematic event’” (Serna 2014: 141). It will be argued that, through translation, films could be imbued with discourses markedly different from those of the original creator, thereby coming close to hijacking the original film text.

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SEM23. AI and human audiovisual translation and media accessibility: Ethical and practical challenges for translators and language learners

12 September h. 16:30-19:00, room 2 Moro (second floor)

Convenors

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Abstract

In recent years, the rise and application of sophisticated technologies and tools powered by Artificial Intelligence (AI) have become increasingly pervasive in training audiovisual translation professionals and facilitating second language acquisition, particularly in English as a lingua franca. Among these are speech-to-text applications for subtitling (e.g., Speechmatics, Turboscribe, Broadstream), machine translation tools (e.g., Google Translate, DeepL), machine learning applications (e.g., ELSA Speak, Loora, Talkpal, TalkMe), and language-learning platforms (e.g., Duolingo, Babbel, Rosetta Stone, Pi). More recently, ChatGPT has also become an integral part of interlingual communicative processes.

Within Audiovisual Translation and Media Accessibility training and practice, several studies have highlighted the advantages that AI can offer (cf. for instance, Georgakopoulou, 2019). However, this more-than-human agency has raised not only methodological but also ethical concerns among practitioners and scholars (cf. the AVTE Statement 2024; Oziemblewska & Szarkowska, 2020). In the realm of language learning, conversational AI tools that simulate real-life conversations with learners can enhance the learning process (Sone et al., 2023), regardless of their economic situation (Dugošija, 2024). These tools offer ubiquitous access, foster learner autonomy, and often employ gamification principles (Al-Dosakee & Ozdamli, 2021), thus making it more enjoyable and rewarding. However, their limitations include the (in)ability of chatbots to interpret and respond to user inputs in a manner resembling human interaction (Rapp et al., 2021), as well as difficulties in recognizing and accommodating language variations (e.g., accents, British vs. American English, etc.).

In this light, this seminar seeks to address the following key issues:

- What are the benefits and limitations of using AI tools and technologies in training and learning contexts?
- How effective are these tools and methodologies in improving learners' skills?
- What appreciable differences can be detected in the comparison of human vs. more-than-human agency?
- Can any theoretical and methodological lessons be learned? If so, can such lessons be systematically conceptualized to enhance AVT teaching and/or language learning?

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SEM23. Papers

12 September h. 16:30-19:00, room 2 Moro (second floor)

- *Lesson learnt? The use of AI tools and technology in Translation Training to enhance awareness and competence* (Margherita Dore, Sapienza Università di Roma)

- *Using software, AI tools and technology in English language learning: The case of audio description* (Vincenza Minutella, Università di Torino)
- *The human touch in accessible media: AI and pedagogical innovation* (Alessandra Rizzo, Università degli Studi di Palermo / Maria Luisa Pensabene, Università degli Studi di Palermo)
- *Post-editing MT output in subtitling: what are the challenges?* (Annalisa Sandrelli, UNINT Università degli Studi Internazionali di Roma)
- *Deaf-led, AI-assisted International Sign > English subtitling: Toward a more ethical workflow* (Gabriele Uzzo, Università degli Studi di Palermo)

SEM23. Abstracts

Lesson learnt? The use of AI tools and technology in Translation Training to enhance awareness and competence

Margherita Dore (Sapienza Università di Roma), margherita.dore@uniroma1.it

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into translation training is transforming the landscape of language education and professional development for translators (Siu 2023). However, the rapid spread of AI-powered tools employing neural machine translation (NMT) and deep learning has raised methodological and ethical concerns among scholars and practitioners (cf. the AVTE Statement 2024; Oziemlewska and Szarkowska 2020). The reliability and quality of ChatGPT-driven translation has also been recently put to the test with interesting results (cf. Jiao et al. 2023), confirming how dramatically such tools are reshaping the way translation is taught, practiced, and assessed.

With these premises in mind, this paper discusses the results of task-based activities completed by master's students specialising in translation practice at Sapienza University of Rome. Students were asked to work on a set of translations generated via NMT tools such as Google Translate, DeepL, and ChatGPT, compare them, and create a human post-edited version. These activities not only allowed students to become familiar with these technologies and how they can enhance translator training by providing real-time feedback and automating routine tasks, but also exposed them to their limitations. Most importantly, students were able to identify the major shortcomings of these AI-driven practices, particularly in terms of questionable linguistic patterns and word choices. The findings prompted deep reflections on the pedagogical implications of incorporating AI into curricula, including the development of critical thinking, post-editing skills, and ethical awareness.

While AI offers significant advantages in terms of speed and scalability, it also raises challenges related to quality assurance, over-reliance, and the evolving role of human translators. This study highlights the importance of integrating AI literacy into translation programs to prepare future professionals for a dynamic, tech-driven industry.

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Using software, AI tools and technology in English language learning: The case of audio description

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Several studies have highlighted the benefits of using audiovisual translation and media accessibility in Language Learning (see Lertola 2019; Talaván&Lertola 2022; Talaván et al. 2024). More specifically, some studies have highlighted how audio description for the blind and the visually impaired can be used in foreign language education (see Navarrete 2018 and 2023; Talaván et al. 2024). Combining audiovisual translation modalities and technology can enhance language learning and boost students' interest. Several software and AI tools can be exploited in the classroom to improve

language and digital skills both in trainers and learners, though it is important to be aware of the limitations of such tools and of ethical issues (see Dugošija 2024; Son et al. 2025).

The aim of this paper is to investigate the way in which software tools, AI tools and technology can be used in English language teaching and learning, focussing on audio description. The paper provides practical examples of how speech-to-text applications for transcription (e.g., sonix.ai, turboscribe.ai), machine translation tools (e.g., DeepL and Google Translate), audio description software containing text-to-speech applications (e.g., adauthor, see Minutella 2022) and AI-assisted audio description software (e.g., audiblesight.ai) can be used in the context of English language teaching and learning and in Audiovisual Translation and Media Accessibility training. The challenges, benefits and limitations of using such tools will be discussed.

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The human touch in accessible media: AI and pedagogical innovation

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In recent years, the emergence of concepts such as cultural interaction and inclusion has helped reshape the landscapes of Audiovisual Translation (AVT) and Foreign Language Education (FLE) (Navarrete 2024) to the extent that the revised version of the CEFR Companion Volume (Council of Europe 2020) has incorporated updated descriptors for language interaction. This has encouraged the replacement of integrated skills (writing, listening, reading, speaking) with new communicative activities (reception, production, interaction, and mediation) as part of the learning process including mediation as a new communicative strategy (Pensabene 2023). These significant changes have played a pivotal role in integrating AVT into FLE curricula within which translation can enable students to work with language in dynamic contexts (Talaván, Lertola and Fernández-Costales 2023). More specifically, the use of Audio Description (AD) and Subtitling for the Deaf and the Hard-of-Hearing (SDH) as audiovisual translation practices encompasses the idea of mediation strategies in Didactic Audiovisual Translation (DAT), while also fostering engagement and awareness among students (Brescia-Zapata and McDonagh 2024).

This study offers a contrastive analysis of audio descriptions (AD) and subtitles for the deaf and the hard-of-hearing (SDH) across three translation modalities: professional human translations provided by Netflix, AI-generated texts, and creative translations produced and post-edited by students from Master's programs in Languages and Translation. Using selected episodes from two Netflix series, the research focuses on the transfer of cultural references (i.e., idioms, historical allusions, and sociolinguistic nuances) (Sanz-Moreno 2017) that are essential for creating accessible and contextually rich audiovisual content. Framed within the growing field of accessibility in education, the study emphasises how AVT serves not only as a professional practice but also as a pedagogical tool to promote inclusive communication, intercultural awareness (Jankowska 2022; Rizzo and Spinzi 2023), and linguistic sensitivity in training for translators (Bolaños García-Escribano 2024; Cui, Liu, Moratto 2024). Accessibility is approached as both a technologically-driven workspace in the real-world audiovisual translation industry (Díaz-Cintas and Massidda 2020) and an academic opportunity to foster linguistic skills and cultural awareness among foreign language students.

The comparative analysis reveals substantial differences in how cultural content is handled across the three modalities in terms of adaptability, contextual awareness, and creative problem-solving. The student-created versions, in opposition to AI-generated texts that tend to be more literal and lack sensitivity to cultural nuances, often demonstrate innovative and pedagogically informed solutions that bridge linguistic and cultural gaps. To support this educational dimension, the project integrates two cloud-based platforms - Video-to-Voice and OONA - which allow students to engage directly in the creation and post-editing of AD and SDH materials, fostering both technical skills and intercultural competence (Díaz Cintas and Remael 2021). Ultimately, this research advocates for a human-centered approach to accessible media that capitalise on AVT not only for inclusion but also for innovation in language learning.

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Post-editing MT output in subtitling: what are the challenges?

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In recent years, cloud-based environments have radically altered traditional subtitling workflows, as subtitlers can now collaborate from all corners of the Earth (Bolaños-García-Escribano et al. 2021). Moreover, automatic speech recognition (ASR) and machine translation (MT) tools are being integrated into platforms to speed up the process. This has important training implications. While it would seem relatively straightforward to integrate ASR and MT tools into subtitling workflows, this is far from accurate. In the *¡Sub!: Localisation Workflows that Work* and *Sub!2* projects, postgraduate

students and recent graduates from UNINT and Roehampton University worked in teams over a period of a few weeks in a series of cloud subtitling experiments exposing them to three workflows with different degrees of automation. Each team comprised a Project Manager, a Spotter, a Translator and a Reviser, collaborating on the subtitling of a science documentary according to the instructions received for each workflow (conventional, semi-automated and fully automated). The target language (TL) subtitles they submitted were analysed to identify the workflow that ensured the best quality output in the tightest turnaround time (Massidda & Sandrelli 2023, Sandrelli 2024a). In relation to speed, the fully automated workflow (in which the teams had to post-edit the automatic subtitles produced via ASR and MT tools) was the most time-efficient, but when tackled in the first week of experiments, it was the slowest. Moreover, this workflow initially produced a higher number of technical and translation errors. In their answers to the post-experiment questionnaire, several participants pointed out that dedicated training in post-editing MT output applied to AVT would be needed (Sandrelli 2024b). As the teams documented all the steps of the subtitling process (via a team logbook, screen recordings of work sessions, Quality Assessment forms and workflow reports) and submitted all the drafts produced before coming up with their “final” TL version, the proposed paper aims to identify the changes made by team members to the drafts and pinpoint the most frequent errors. The results of this fine-grained analysis will be used to inform the design of a dedicated module in post-editing MT output in subtitling, thus hopefully contributing to better training.

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Deaf-led, AI-assisted International Sign > English subtitling: Toward a more ethical workflow

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Subtitling sign languages is still an exploratory craft practised by a small pool of professionals (Papastratis *et al.*, 2021). One of the workflows put forth by empirical studies is the relay method: a Deaf professional produces a draft in written English, then a hearing subtitler reshapes that draft into correct and idiomatic written text. While linguistically sound, this arrangement is slow, costly and leaves final authorship in hearing hands, perpetuating the marginalisation of Deaf practitioners reported in accessibility studies (Oziemblewska & Szarkowska, 2020).

On the one hand, fully automated conversion of sign languages into written subtitles is not yet possible. This is due to the scarcity of data: researchers have only small, studio-style video corpora to train on, and those clips do not reflect the diversity of real-world signing (Papastratis *et al.*, 2021). On the other hand, large language models (LLMs) such as GPT-4, can already take a rough draft in any written language and polish it into clear, well-formed sentences in that same language (OpenAI, 2024).

Leveraging this asymmetry, the present pilot tests whether an LLM can assume the hearing-side tasks while Deaf subtitlers retain control of meaning and style. This approach is consistent with the rights-based AI framework adopted by UNESCO (2021) and with Audiovisual Translators Europe’s call for “meaningful human control” over generative technologies (Audiovisual Translators Europe, 2024).

To test this hypothesis, a short video in International Sign was subtitled into written English via two workflows. Conventional relay: a Deaf translator produced a draft in written English; a hearing subtitler converted it into polished written English, handling punctuation, segmentation, and other elements. Deaf + AI workflow: a single Deaf translator generated the draft in written English, then used ChatGPT-4o to draft the polished written English subtitle, including linguistic and stylistic improvements.

The results have been tested via a mixed focus group of Deaf and hearing viewers and the preliminary findings suggest that automating hearing-side tasks yields efficiency gains and consolidates Deaf agency. The logic aligns with the Erasmus+ project “SUBSIGN: Subtitling Sign Languages”, which centres Deaf professionals in workflows for Italian and

Slovak Sign Languages. More broadly, the study illustrates how a more ethical deployment of generative AI can begin to redress, rather than reproduce, long-standing power imbalances in media accessibility.

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SEM24. Artificial intelligence and media accessibility: New frontiers and emerging challenges

13 September h. 8:30-11:00, S1 Moro

Convenors:

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Abstract

The rapid rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and other emerging technologies is profoundly reshaping the field of media accessibility, defined as the practices, tools, and technologies aimed at making media content accessible to all individuals, including those with disabilities or other special needs (Remael, 2012). In this evolving landscape, AI-powered technologies are increasingly being integrated into specific domains of media accessibility (Pereira & Duarte, 2023), ranging from traditional forms such as cinema and video games to streaming and digital platforms. More recent innovations, including virtual and augmented reality (Gluck et al., 2021), as well as interactive tools like chatbots and virtual assistants, are further transforming how media is accessed and experienced. These advancements prompt critical discussions about the future of creativity, the restructuring of traditional workflows, and the role of AI in learning processes, particularly in relation to accessibility (Huang et al., 2022). Additionally, they raise questions about the potential for these technologies to revolutionize user engagement and the ethical considerations surrounding AI-driven systems (Rane & Choudhary, 2024). While AI can contribute to democratizing access to media content and enhancing personalized experiences, it also carries the risk of inadvertently reinforcing existing biases due to the data used to train AI algorithms.

This seminar aims to explore the transformative potential of AI and other emerging technologies in reshaping media accessibility across media environments. It seeks contributions that explore innovative tools, theoretical approaches, and ethical considerations to ensure these advancements foster equitable and accessible outcomes. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- AI-driven innovations: theoretical and practical studies on AI-powered tools for enhancing accessibility
- automation and creativity: investigating how AI is transforming creative and technical work in the media landscape
- linguistic and cultural accessibility: the role of AI in breaking down language and cultural barriers in media content
- ethical challenges: ethical implications of AI use for media accessibility
- personalized media: studies on AI's role in tailoring content delivery to meet individual needs.

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SEM24. Papers

13 September h. 8:30-11:00, S1 Moro

- *Accessible conversations? Investigating chatbot usability as tools to practice English* (Adriano Ferraresi, Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna)
- *Beyond Standard English: Enhancing subtitles for d/Deaf and hard of hearing viewers through AI-powered sociolinguistic tagging* (Francesca Illiano, Università di Parma)

- *A.C.T.I.V.E-ting AI-literate learners: Balancing media accessibility and critical engagement in English language education* (Cristiana Pagliarusco, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia)
- *AI, accessibility, and democratization: Shifting the balance in the Italian AVT industry* (Angela Sileo, Università degli Studi di Milano)

SEM24. Abstracts

Accessible conversations? Investigating chatbot usability as tools to practice English

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Recent advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI) have reshaped how people access and engage with digital content, with profound implications for media accessibility (Marcus-Quinn et al., 2024). Conversational AI tools, often integrated into platforms resembling everyday messaging apps, offer new opportunities for interaction for all users, including users with diverse needs. When used in educational settings, these tools can also serve as accessible environments for foreign language practice, supporting learners through naturalistic, low-pressure communication (Bibauw et al., 2022). As these technologies become pervasive in educational contexts, assessing their usability and accessibility is essential to ensure they do not replicate or exacerbate existing barriers (Ruane et al., 2019). This paper reports on the results of a project investigating how non-specialized conversational chatbots can be used in ways that align with accessibility principles (cf. CAST 2018), while also supporting language acquisition through simulated, goal-oriented communication tasks. The study is based on data from a quasi-experiment in which university students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) interact in English with two chatbots, i.e. ChatGPT and Pi.AI. This quasi-experiment involved 326 Italian university students aged 19-25, with varying levels of L2 proficiency (from beginner to advanced) and including learners with disabilities and learning disorders. Each student was required to complete two tasks in a set order. These tasks were small talk, a conversation on a topic of choice with the chatbot, and a role play activity, in which each student simulated a real-life scenario and interacted with the chatbot to achieve a goal. Feedback from students was collected through a post-hoc questionnaire which included questions about their personal evaluation of the task, based on parameters that included engagement, immersion, discomfort and discrimination. The paper will present a corpus-based analysis of the chatbot interactions, linking students' language output to their perceptions as expressed in the questionnaire. The analysis will focus on two key aspects. First, students' willingness to communicate, an essential component of language practice and acquisition (Fathi et al., 2024), will be assessed through both their conversational behavior (e.g., number and length of turns) and their self-reported engagement. Second, the study will examine how the chatbots adapt linguistically to learners by analyzing language complexity and conversation management, in order to evaluate their potential for personalized, accessible interaction.

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Beyond Standard English: Enhancing subtitles for d/Deaf and hard of hearing viewers through AI-powered sociolinguistic tagging

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As artificial intelligence continues to redefine the landscape of media accessibility, its integration into audiovisual translation offers new opportunities to improve inclusion for d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) viewers. Subtitles for the DHH (SDH) sometimes fail to represent the full range of linguistic variation in audiovisual content, particularly when it

comes to non-standard forms such as slang, dialects, some taboo language, and syntactically marked structures. These omissions can lead to the erasure of speaker identity, sociolinguistic nuance, and emotional tone, i.e., crucial elements for ensuring full access to meaning, cultural context, and engagement (Di Giovanni & Gambier, 2018; Romero-Fresco, 2019). In general, such non-standard features have tended to be sanitised or standardised in subtitles to guarantee readability and comprehension (Díaz Cintas & Remael 2007). The risk was that linguistic flattening would affect DHH audiences, who rely on subtitles not only to access narrative content but also to interpret social identities, dynamics, and affective nuances. Despite recent efforts to include more variation in subtitles (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2021; Zárate, 2021), some gaps remain, particularly on streaming platforms.

This study introduces a computational framework designed to address this gap by improving the detection and classification of non-standard linguistic features in SDH. Working with a 4-million-word corpus of subtitles from four streaming platforms – Prime Video, AppleTV+, Disney+, Netflix – a hybrid AI model was created combining DistilBERT, i.e., a lightweight transformer-based architecture for semantic understanding (Sanh et. al., 2020) with a Graph Neural Network (GNN) to model both local and global token relationships. This integration helps disambiguate word senses in ambiguous contexts, especially where informal or dialectal usage challenges standard NLP tools.

A custom sociolinguistic tag set was employed to label tokens as:

#_SWR: swear words, taboo expressions

#_SLG: slang, jargon, interjections, colloquialisms

#_DIAL: dialectal forms, accent-marked spellings

<MRK>: marked syntax (e.g., lack of inversion, subject-verb disagreement, copula omission).

To further refine predictions, the system incorporates curated lexical libraries and override logic based on external APIs. This post-processing step significantly reduces false positives and negatives while preserving ambiguous or marginalised forms often excluded from mainstream processing pipelines.

The result is a semi-supervised AI system that can assist not only in analysing existing SDH, but also in creating future SDH that are not only functionally accessible, but also socially and culturally representative. By maintaining linguistic variation and stylistic intention, this model enhances linguistic accessibility – a crucial but often overlooked dimension of media accessibility – ensuring that DHH audiences receive a fuller, more inclusive media experience.

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A.C.T.I.V.E-ting AI-literate learners: Balancing media accessibility and critical engagement in English language education

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This paper investigates the intersection of artificial intelligence, media accessibility, and English language education through a qualitative case study approach, grounded in educational technology theory and critical media literacy. Drawing on my dual role as a tenured high school English teacher and adjunct professor of English for Informatics undergraduates, the study examines how AI-powered tools—such as chatbots, machine translation systems, and adaptive media platforms—are being integrated into language learning environments.

While AI technologies hold promises for enhancing media accessibility—enabling multilingual support, neurodivergent-friendly interfaces, and personalized content delivery—they simultaneously pose epistemological and pedagogical risks. These include the erosion of critical thinking, ethical detachment in the use of algorithmic tools, and overdependence on AI-generated content. To address these tensions, the study proposes and implements the A.C.T.I.V.E. framework (Awareness, Critical Thinking, Technical Skills, Integrity, Versatility, Engagement), which is rooted in the principles of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970), human-centred AI ethics (Floridi et al., 2018), and constructivist learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978).

The paper presents observations drawn from a three-hour lesson plan during which a class of 5th grade Liceo students prepared an oral presentation on James Joyce's short story "Eveline" using AI tools such ChatGPT, Grammarly, AI slide assistants like Canva or Power Point Copilot following the A.C.T.I.V.E. framework. The aim was to understand how learners respond to and critically engage with AI-mediated resources through the A.C.T.I.V.E framework which is evaluated not only as a pedagogical model for fostering responsible and reflective AI use but also as a tool for promoting equitable media accessibility in multilingual, multicultural learning contexts. In doing so, the study wishes to contribute to emerging discussions on how educators can design AI-integrated learning environments that are both inclusive and both critically and intellectually empowering.

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AI, accessibility, and democratization: Shifting the balance in the Italian AVT industry

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The introduction of artificial intelligence (AI) in the Audiovisual Translation (AVT) panorama is transforming the Italian audiovisual industry, shifting the long-established balance, and redistributing the use of specific techniques, with voice-over and simil sync/linear sync being occasionally replaced by AI-driven dubbing. This was the case with the latest *Ballando con le Stelle* (2005-) edition, a TV show where AI was employed to dub a Turkish actor in pre-recorded clips which – in previous editions – used to be adapted by either voice-over or simil sync/linear sync techniques. Truth be told, the trend of utilizing AI in deepfakes – in other words, videos utilizing superimposed faces and synthetic voices – has been in vogue on social media for some time now and has lately been employed also in a local commercial advertising a furniture producing company – Arredissima – with the face and voice of renowned Italian showman Gerry Scotti impressed on each staff member and slightly adjusted to fit the original character's gender and age. Even though some artificial voices still sound slightly robotic, and image superimpositions do not always prove to be seamless, recent developments seem rather promising.

At the same time, however, while democratizing access to audiovisual content, they spark debate about the future survival of human creativity as well as the transformation of conventional workflows and the reshaping of specific professional figures within the industry. This presentation aims to showcase the application and evaluate the efficiency of AI software in dubbing a short video clip, addressing multiple translation challenges and potential audiovisual pitfalls, especially in terms of multimodal consistency – i.e., synchronization between the aural and the visual components. The final product will be assessed based on five criteria revolving around efficiency and accessibility and ensuring a seamless and audience-friendly viewing experience, namely qualitative and quantitative sync, audio-visual match, translation accuracy, and voice naturalness.

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SEM25. Language, ecology, and artificial intelligence: A critical eco-linguistic perspective

11 September h. 16:00-18:30, PN 9

Convenors

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Abstract

As artificial intelligence (AI) reshapes our world (Brown et al., 2020, Bender & Koller, 2020, Bowman & Dahl, 2021), its role in framing and influencing environmental perceptions demands exploration. This seminar examines the intersection of Ecolinguistics and AI, emphasizing how AI discourse shapes ecological understanding. As language influences attitudes toward environmental crises, Ecolinguistics (Stibbe, 2021) provides tools to assess how AI narratives reinforce or challenge ecological values (Vallego, 2023). Research may examine how AI reproduces or contests dominant discourses, promotes sustainability or unsustainability, and the ethical implications of AI-generated ‘natural’ experiences.

A central premise is that language does not merely reflect reality but constructs it. Halliday observed how Western languages, particularly English, encode an anthropocentric worldview, positioning nature as passive rather than autonomous. Grammar limits nature’s agency yet frames destruction actively, as in “the earthquake destroyed the city” (Halliday, 1992: 85). If AI is trained on data reflecting these patterns, it risks reinforcing an instrumentalist view of nature, perpetuating its subordination to human interests. Lexical choices in AI-generated texts shape public perception, either reinforcing or mitigating environmental urgency.

This seminar explores AI’s potential to disseminate environmental awareness, reduce ecological footprints via virtual simulations, and enhance digital communication. Conversely, AI could enable greenwashing, subtly manipulating consumers who equate technology with environmental salvation. It may also present simulations as substitutes for direct contact with nature. As ecolinguists, we must ask whether AI can advance the ecological agenda by fostering ethical discourse. Could it amplify voices advocating sustainability or deepen nature’s commodification? We invite contributions addressing these questions and further establishing Ecolinguistics as central to environmental and linguistic studies. We welcome contributions on:

- Virtual vs. real nature experiences
- AI and ecological imaginaries
- AI in environmental politics
- AI and environmental justice
- AI and greenwashing
- AI and sustainability discourse
- Ecological representations in digital media
- AI and green identities
- AI in environmental risk prevention
- AI and biodiversity
- AI for ecological advocacy
- AI and ecological narratives
- AI in human–more-than-human relations

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SEM25. Papers

11 September h. 16:00-18:30, PN 9

- *The role of AI discourse in ecolinguistics and the language of coffee in Italian heritage* (Daniela Giordano, Università degli Studi di Napoli Parthenope)
- *Greening AI? Discourse, framing, and narrative analysis of environment-related AI-generated texts* (Paola Brusasco, Università degli Studi “G. d’Annunzio” Chieti-Pescara)
- *AI and the green narrative: A comparative ecolinguistic analysis* (Vivian M. De La Cruz, Università degli Studi di Enna "Kore")
- *Framing the climate with algorithms: Political discourse and the risks of AI amplification* (Anna Raimo, Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna / Caterina Giachino, Università di Napoli Federico II)
- *The H4rmony project: Ecosophy-guided AI for an ecologically just AI future* (Martina Russo, Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna / Jorge Vallego, Independent researcher at The h4rmonyproject)

SEM25. Abstracts

Greening AI? Discourse, framing, and narrative analysis of environment-related AI-generated texts

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Artificial intelligence (AI) and related technologies are discussed in ways that span from enthusiastically envisioning life-enhancing solutions to scary warnings about a looming Singularity, a superintelligence which will hugely exceed the human brain and possibly endanger human life on the planet. Similarly, with regard to the environment, AI is saluted as a tool that has “the ability to revolutionise how we approach these problems by presenting fresh ideas and data-driven understandings” to combat climate change, reduce energy consumption and improve agriculture (Satpathy et al., 2025: 2), but it is also acknowledged as a generator of texts or visuals that can be used, among others, by corporations, public bodies and cultural institutions to influence consumers’ behaviours and the public’s perception of their actions, resulting at times in greenwashing (Vallego, 2023; Miller, 2018). Concern is also expressed about AI’s sustainability in terms of emissions, energy consumption, and e-waste, as well as the need to ensure that technologies do not worsen the predicaments of already marginalized groups (Dua & Patel, 2024). Vallego (2023) advocated for the incorporation of ecolinguistics principles in the training of Large Language Models like ChatGPT, with an emphasis on the role of human supervision and reinforcement feedback. Building on that study, the paper is based on interactions with ChatGPT, Cohere, and Claude Sonnet ranging from supposedly innocent word-association requests to questions about humans and the planet, from AI’s energy policies to inputs meant to elicit self-reflective answers and ascertain if and to what extent environmental awareness has been added to the training data. The outputs suggest that it has, especially in the case of Claude, whose cutoff date was November 2024. They also show GPT’s tendency to anticipate – and even create – users’ needs by offering to further elaborate on the output or give it a different format, a feature which in certain contexts might be seen as a distractor and surely as a byproduct of the consumeristic paradigm of “more”, as well as a preference, shared with Cohere, for concrete terms, practical solutions and bullet-point answers; Claude, instead, produces articulate answers that highlight the importance of weaving ethics within knowledge and acknowledge cultural diversity and the ensuing different relations to nature. The paper compares the texts generated by the three AIs using discourse, framing and narrative analysis (Van Hulst et al., 2024) in an eco-linguistic perspective in order to assess their potential impact.

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AI and the green narrative: A comparative ecolinguistic analysis

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As large language models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT become widely used in everyday writing, education and communication, they are progressively shaping the narrative landscape. This also includes how people conceptualize nature, climate change, and human-environment relationships, with anthropocentric biases being implicitly communicated and reinforced (Grasso et al., 2025). As Vallego (2023) argues, these systems may very well become the central reservoirs for the stories through which societies interpret the world. This presents both risks and opportunities: while ecologically destructive ideologies may be replicated and scaled, these technologies may also hold the potential for advancing discourse that supports environmental awareness and justice.

Building on Vallego's ecolinguistic analysis of ChatGPT, this paper compares the affective environmental discourse produced by two large language models: the widely used general purpose ChatGPT, and Theophrastus, an experimental AI powered chat assistant developed within the H4rmony project, in collaboration with the University of Gloucestershire, to embody ecolinguistic principles in its conversational outputs. ([hWps://theh4rmonyproject.org/about-us/](https://theh4rmonyproject.org/about-us/)).

The comparison applies Arran Stibbe's (2021) framework of nine cognitive story types: ideology, framing, metaphor, evaluation, identity, conviction, erasure, salience and narrative, to analyze how each system frames ecological meaning, constructs environmental identities, and expresses (or omits) relational values.

Using matched prompts across all nine story types, the study investigates how each model engages with ecological themes, including the simulation of empathy in relation to the more-than-human world. The analysis builds on Vallego's methodological foundation while raising awareness of Theophrastus as a proof of concept, a model designed to implement ecological ethics in AI.

This contribution integrates ecolinguistic theory and critical AI discourse analysis, and invites reflection on how environmental narratives are shaped, and potentially reshaped, by the language technologies we increasingly rely on.

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The role of AI discourse in ecolinguistics and the language of coffee in Italian heritage

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In an era marked by environmental urgency and digital transformation, the intersections between ecolinguistics, artificial intelligence (AI), and semiotics are of growing academic significance (Vallego, 2023). Language models, as a key development in AI, can offer benefits to society by enhancing a range of communicative and technical tasks. However, they may also generate harmful linguistic practices, thus facilitating the spread of misinformation (Brown et al., 2020, pp. 34-35). This is an issue of particular concern within ecolinguistics that, as Stibbe (2015, p. 2) noted, critically examines (multimodal) texts in order to uncover and evaluate dominant cultural narratives from an ecological standpoint.

This paper explores the influence of both human and AI-generated discourse on ecological awareness, with a focus on the semiotic-linguistic function of coffee in expressing and transmitting Italian heritage. To this end, authentic texts will be examined and compared with AI-generated counterparts produced by ChatGPT, with the aim of identifying how discursive strategies vary across sources and modalities. Discourse Analysis of mainstream multimodal texts may reveal

how linguistic constructs may both convey and obscure sociocultural meanings and ecological values and can shape national identities to varying extents (Abbamonte & Cavaliere, 2022).

Drawing on ecolinguistic theories, in particular the dynamic interplay between linguistic practices, ecological systems, and environmental contexts (Fill & Mühlhäusler, 2001), the “stories-we-live-by” framework (Stibbe, 2015), and Goatly’s (1996) concept of “green grammar”, alongside Jewitt’s multimodal framework (Jewitt et al., 2016) as an additional resource, this paper investigates how both AI discourses and culturally embedded linguistic practices, such as those of Italian coffee culture, function as discursive technologies that shape ideologies, perceptions, and ecological values. Manning noted that the overall behaviour of artificial intelligence systems “emerges via learning from data or experience” (2020: 1), signalling a significant shift in system design, whereby behaviour is no longer solely determined by explicit programming but largely shaped through data-driven learning and experiential adaptation. Furthermore, AI is increasingly tasked with shaping food systems (communication) and ecological data flows. Yet, this process demands ethical accountability, and should be examined against the criteria of transparency, traceability and responsibility (Manning et al. 2022: 33-34). Accordingly, ethical implications of mediated environmental and cultural narratives will be discussed, offering some recommendations for responsible AI design and linguistic preservation.

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Framing the climate with algorithms: Political discourse and the risks of AI amplification

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This study explores the linguistic construction of environmental discourse in Italian political communication at the Conferences of the Parties (COP) from 2010 to 2024, adopting a combined ecolinguistic and digital methodological lens. Grounded in the theoretical framework of ecolinguistics (Stibbe, 2021), it employs a mixed-methods approach integrating computational techniques with *Critical Discourse Analysis* (CDA) (Fairclough, 2013; Van Dijk, 2015) and *Frame Analysis* (Goffman, 1974; Hulme, 2009).

To mitigate interpretative subjectivity, automated topic modelling (*Latent Dirichlet Allocation*) was initially conducted using Python’s NLP libraries (nltk, gensim, pyLDAvis) (Jelodar et al., 2018; Xue et al., 2020), enabling the extraction of latent semantic patterns across corpora comprising political texts, institutional speeches, and media discourse. These data-driven results were then interpreted through CDA and Frame Analysis, which respectively illuminate how discourse sustains power structures and how narrative scaffolding shapes public imaginaries of the climate crisis. The analysis identifies two dominant frames – *Sustainability and Climate Policies* and *Economic and Financial Strategies* – each associated with contrasting value systems: intrinsic (e.g. cooperation, justice) and extrinsic (e.g. profit, technological advancement) (Stibbe, 2021).

Finally, in view of the growing use of AI to generate or summarise political and environmental content, the study reflects critically on the risk that such technologies may perpetuate rhetoric detached from ecological data. If language models are trained on corpora imbued with ideologically distorted narratives, they may reproduce misleading

representations of the climate crisis. As Vallego (2023) suggests, ecolinguistics provides essential tools for assessing whether AI-generated narratives reinforce or challenge ecological values, offering a robust framework for the ethical design of environmentally responsible language technologies.

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The H4rmony project: Ecosophy-guided AI for an ecologically just AI future

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As artificial intelligence increasingly generates language that shapes public perception and cultural narratives, the ecological values embedded within these outputs are crucial. The present paper introduces the H4rmony project as an interdisciplinary initiative to guide the development of AI systems, specifically Large Language Models (LLMs), to make the outputs of AI systems more ecologically responsible. Drawing on these principles, H4rmony proposes its own ecosophy, centred on shared values such as care, interdependence, and deep adaptation, that informs all stages of AI model creation, from dataset construction to specialist applications.

H4rmony's ecosophy is not only a theoretical framework but also a guiding architecture for developing four interrelated AI artefacts:

(1) Ecolinguistically-aligned datasets, designed through a specific narrative/counter-narrative structure to (re)align the internal model context through AI techniques such as Supervised Fine Tuning and Reinforcement Learning.

(2) Fine-tuned LLMs, when trained on H4rmony's datasets, enriched with ecologically conscious linguistic patterns, and guided by its own ecosophy, demonstrate a noticeable shift away from anthropocentric ideologies. Instead, they increasingly align with ecocentric narratives that promote sustainability, interspecies justice, and reverence for the ecological systems upon which all life depends.

(3) Evaluation models that assess the outputs of language models through an ecolinguistic lens. These models integrate cognitive structures, drawing upon ecological domains of awareness. They critically examine rhetorical strategies, and operate across a multilingual spectrum, ensuring that ecological values are preserved and articulated across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts.

(4) Specialist models, developed under the supervision of ecolinguists, are trained to assist the analysts in their eco-critical discourse analysis. These specialist models aim at generating discursive insights by identifying, interpreting, and evaluating linguistic patterns that shape perceptions about the natural world.

Our project highlights the linguistic features of the outputs before and after H4rmony's intervention, revealing how ecological narratives are embedded or erased through AI training. We argue that ecolinguistics, with its critical framework and vision for new-stories-to-live-by, offers a valuable structure for analysing and helping in the creation of language models that support sustainability values and environmental justice. In doing so, we position H4rmony as a methodological bridge between AI ethics and ecological discourse, and call for a broader adoption of ecosophy-guided AI design.

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SEM26. Beyond human exceptionalism: Social and ecojustice perspectives in climate crisis discourse

26A 12 September h. 16:30-19:00, Auditorium

26B 13 September h. 8:30-11:00, Auditorium

Convenors

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Abstract

The climate crisis is not solely an environmental issue but also a profound social, cultural, and political challenge, exacerbating vulnerabilities related to gender, disability, poverty, age, place of birth, and indigeneity (IPCC 2023). Moreover, dominant discourse frequently marginalizes, silences, or renders invisible more-than-human participants, processes, and entities (Stibbe, 2021; Bortoluzzi & Zurru, 2024). Given that language and discourse play a constitutive role in shaping ecological realities (Steffensen, 2024), language and discourse analysis can contribute to raising awareness of ecojustice issues, fostering equitable relationships within life-sustaining ecosystems, and challenging the hegemonic ideologies of growth and consumerism (Lakoff, 2010; Fløttum, 2017; Russo, 2018; Caimotto, 2020).

Following this line of thought, this seminar invites scholarly contributions that propose innovative theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, or in-depth investigations examining environmental and climate crisis discourse from an eco- and social justice perspective. In particular, we seek analyses that explore the representation, positioning, and agency of marginalized voices – both human and more-than-human – that are frequently backgrounded or excluded from mainstream environmental narratives. Ultimately, this seminar aspires to advance the scholarly debate on how language and discourse can foster alternative perspectives, stimulate transformative action, and promote social and ecological justice in response to the ongoing climate emergency.

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SEM26. Papers

26A 12 September h. 16:30-19:00, Auditorium

- *An investigation of the online communicative practices of grassroots environmental activism in India: the case of #SaveHasdeoForest* (Elisabetta Zurru, Università di Genova)
- *Searching for eco-fascist discourse online: a corpus-assisted ecolinguistic approach to the politicization of climate change* (Mariasophia Falcone, Università degli Studi di Bergamo)
- *Between protection and exploitation: Biodiversity, more-than-human agency and passivisation in climate-related corporate discourse* (Arianna Del Gaudio, Università di Napoli L'Orientale)
- *An exploration of discourse around ecocentrism in academic books* (Virginia Zorzi, Università di Torino)
- *Towards an ecojustice pedagogy for EFL young learners: Reimagining language education beyond human exceptionalism* (Valentina Adami, Università degli Studi di Bergamo)

26B 13 September h. 8:30-11:00, Auditorium

- *The language of threat or the gentle nudge?* (Denise Milizia, Università degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro)
- *Climate change and Gen Z's digital activism: A TikTok case study* (Simone Causa, Università di Napoli L'Orientale)
- *Becoming parents at the end of the world: Motherhood, trauma and the climate crisis* (Aureliana Natale, Università di Napoli Federico II)
- *Silenced by design: Marginal voices and algorithmic bias in AI-generated climate discourse* (Marina Brancaccio, Università degli Studi Internazionali di Roma)
- *Appraisal and framing in the climate crisis discourse: Comment trend analyses on TikTok and YouTube* (Vincenzo Amendolara, Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna)

SEM26. Abstracts

Towards an ecojustice pedagogy for EFL young learners: reimagining language education beyond human exceptionalism

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The environmental and social challenges of the 21st century require teachers and teacher educators to rethink the dominant educational paradigms through which knowledge is constructed and transmitted, seeking new perspectives that amplify marginalized voices, both human and non-human (Damico, Baildon & Panos, 2020). To equip young learners with the values and skills needed to contribute to more sustainable and just futures, it is essential to integrate ecological and social justice principles into educational practices that emphasise sustainability, equity and critical thinking (Adami, 2024). Ecojustice pedagogy offers a promising pathway to support the development of children's environmental agency, challenging human exceptionalism and promoting collective responsibility. In the context of EFL education, this entails considering the role of discourse in constructing or resisting dominant narratives and reimagining the EFL classroom as a transformative space for critical engagement with environmental and social issues, rather than for the mere acquisition of linguistic skills (Kazazoglu, 2025). Drawing on recent developments in ecojustice pedagogy, language acquisition theories and ecolinguistics, this paper aims to propose a framework for designing environmentally and socially responsive language learning experiences based on storytelling, outdoor education and nature-based approaches (Prins et al, 2025). The theoretical and pedagogical foundations supporting the integration of ecojustice principles into children's EFL education will serve to illustrate how such principles can inform language teaching practices that not only foster communicative competence but also promote socio-ecological awareness and transformative action.

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Appraisal and framing in the climate crisis discourse: Comment trend analyses on TikTok and YouTube

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The dire consequences of anthropogenic climate disruption are vividly exemplified by natural disasters, endangered species, and melting ice caps. According to a recent UNICEF report, extreme climate events disrupted the schooling of over 242 million students in 85 countries in 2024, further amplifying the already critical global learning crisis, particularly in climate-vulnerable regions (UNICEF, 2025).

In parallel, 2024 was also the year in which ‘brain rot’, a term denoting the intellectual deterioration associated with the overconsumption of trivial content on social media, was announced as Oxford’s *Word of the Year*. Social media and the post-truth realities they are shaping have profoundly impacted the narratives, actions and attitudes of modern society in general, and towards the climate crisis in particular, where the concept of a *multicrisis* may thus be seen as the blatant epitome of the current Zeitgeist. At the same time, social media can play a crucial role in addressing such concerns and in fostering eco-awareness (Natale, 2022).

The proposed case study constitutes, in this respect, an instance of ecolinguistic analysis, in which the concepts of *climate crisis* and *ecojustice* are investigated through an eco-thematic selection of *Shorts* from news media accounts across two social media platforms: *TikTok* and *YouTube*. This study aims to contrastively examine the prevailing econarratives (Stibbe, 2024) across news media on both platforms by analyzing user comment trends and identifying specific appraisal (Martin & White, 2005), framing and reaction patterns in the climate crisis discourse on social media.

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Silenced by design: Marginal voices and algorithmic bias in AI-generated climate discourse

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This research investigates how artificial intelligence, and particularly large language models (LLMs), contributes to shaping climate crisis discourse by reinforcing dominant perspectives while sidelining alternative or marginal voices. As AI-generated content becomes increasingly common in public communication—via chatbots, automated news, and algorithm-assisted media—the question arises: whose voices are being heard, and whose are rendered invisible? Building on the work of Stibbe (2021), Fløttum (2017), and Lakoff (2010), and drawing insights from ecolinguistics and posthumanist thought, this research explores the ideological implications of AI-generated climate discourse. While LLMs are often perceived as neutral, their outputs reflect training data largely grounded in mainstream, Global North, and anthropocentric perspectives (Chen et al., 2022; Galaz et al., 2023; IPCC, 2023). As a result, indigenous knowledge systems, ecofeminist viewpoints, and more-than-human agencies are frequently generalised, tokenised, or omitted entirely.

Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA; Fairclough, 2003) as its core methodology, complemented by framing analysis (Cap, 2017), this study examines AI-generated responses to climate justice-oriented prompts submitted to LLMs such as ChatGPT, Bard, and Bing AI. The analysis focuses on the construction of agency, the use of passive or impersonal voice, and the ideological framing of key terms such as “crisis”, “innovation”, and “resilience”. Attention is also paid to discursive silences and omissions—particularly regarding marginalised social groups and nonhuman entities. Preliminary findings suggest that while AI systems can simulate inclusive discourse when explicitly prompted, they default to technocratic and institutional framings that leave little room for plural, situated, or relational ecologies. By interrogating the language patterns and exclusions embedded in AI-generated texts, this research contributes to the ongoing conversation on ecological justice, discursive power, and the ethical design of generative technologies.

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Climate change and Gen Z's digital activism: A TikTok case study

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Climate change has varying effects on different communities, creating a complex dialogue between places and people who are disproportionately affected (Pavola 2017). The internet has become a crucial space for discussing social issues like climate change, allowing marginalised communities to amplify their voices and reach wider audiences. However, it also fosters echo chambers of like-minded individuals, which can limit exposure to diverse perspectives (KhosraviNik, 2018: 436).

In this evolving digital landscape, Gen Z has emerged as a prominent force in environmental activism, leveraging social media to advocate for climate justice (Holmberg & Alvinus, 2019: 88). This paper explores Gen Z's discourses on climate change by analysing content on TikTok, specifically videos tagged under the hashtag *EcoTok*. Initially launched by a group of young climate activists, *EcoTok* has since developed into a broader digital community where users share sustainable practices, promote eco-conscious products, and engage in everyday forms of environmentalism (Denicolai & Domenici, 2023: 181). The analysis will examine videos that have garnered more than 500 likes over a four-year span since the hashtag's inception, shedding light on the TikTok-native eco-justice movements.

Unlike previous studies that often treat online communities as uniform entities (e.g., Bennett & Segerberg, 2013), this research will focus on the geographical locations of posts to assess the resonance of these climate change messages across different regions. Additionally, it will critically analyse the sustainable practices promoted within this digital community. To achieve this, Social Media Critical Discourse Studies (KhosraviNik, 2023) will be adapted to the TikTok platform.

Methodologically, a bottom-up approach combining linguistic and multimodal pattern analysis will be employed and adapted to the videos of the *ecotok* community. Transcript of the videos will constitute the textual data of the study whereas content analysis and multimodal discourse analysis will be employed to analyse the visual patterns. A Python Script gathering metadata will be used to gather video information, Sketchengine and atlas.ti will be used as tools for the linguistic and visual analysis, respectively. This approach will not only examine climate change discourses within *EcoTok* videos but will also analyse their evolution both diachronically and synchronically. By doing so, this study aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how TikTok fosters inclusive—or exclusive—climate activism within Gen Z communities.

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Between protection and exploitation: Biodiversity, more-than-human agency and passivisation in climate-related corporate discourse

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In recent decades, environmental issues have emerged as a pivotal concern for corporations, leading to a significant increase in corporate communication on climate change, environmental sustainability and biodiversity (Catenaccio 2021). In particular, biodiversity protection has emerged as a central theme within contemporary corporate agendas, as corporations acknowledge the importance of preserving irreplaceable species and safeguarding essential ecosystem services. This commitment not only aims to mitigate the loss of biodiversity but also seeks to enhance ecological resilience, thereby promoting sustainable practices that are crucial for maintaining the integrity of natural systems. According to previous studies, discourse is essential in delineating ecological realities within business contexts and in influencing the interplay between corporations and the environment (Yu, 2020; Steffensen, 2024). However, dominant corporate discourse often perpetuates consumerist and growth-oriented ideologies, treating biodiversity and more-than-human entities as passive resources to be managed for profit rather than integral components in life-sustaining ecological systems, effectively diminishing their agency in the broader ecological narrative (Bortoluzzi & Zurru 2024; Stibbe 2021). Yet, the way in which biodiversity and more-than-human entities are represented in relation to humans has received scarce attention in scholarly research (Bortoluzzi 2024).

Building on such premises, the present study investigates how food and beverage corporations position and represent marginalised more-than-human voices, with regard to biodiversity, in climate-related corporate discourse. The investigation draws on Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies and Ecolinguistics (Partington et al. 2013; Poole 2022; Stibbe 2021) to critically analyse the CRCLim corpus, a purpose-compiled corpus of corporate texts addressing environmental issues (7 million words).

The analysis will focus on the strategies employed by corporations to represent more-than-human voices in the context of the climate crisis, shedding light on the role of language in enabling corporate actors to demonstrate care for the environment while erasing the agency of more-than-human natural resources. Therefore, the work aims to examine whether food and beverage corporations perpetuate prevailing environmental narratives through an anthropocentric use of language, which may be disguised as a genuine commitment to environmental stewardship to foster transformative change.

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Searching for eco-fascist discourse online: a corpus-assisted ecolinguistic approach to the politicization of climate change

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Eco-fascism is a far-right ideology that exploits environmental concerns to pursue ethnonationalist and authoritarian objectives. Rooted in nativist beliefs that view racialized others as threats to national and environmental security, eco-fascism results in exclusionary and supremacist responses, blaming immigration and overpopulation for climate change

(Forchtner, 2019; Richards et al., 2022). Recently, it has also served as an ideological basis for acts of terrorism (e.g., the Utøya shooting in 2011, and the 2019 Christchurch and El Paso shootings), and has been echoed in the growing use of the term *illegal aliens* in U.S. right-wing discourse (Hughes et al., 2022; Richards et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2025), suggesting that exclusionary environmental discourses are becoming increasingly relevant as the climate crisis worsens. Notably, online climate discourse fosters knowledge (re)production and rethinking of climate meanings and values (Bevitori & Russo, 2022), thus making digital spaces particularly relevant for the study of how climate issues are communicated. Building on these considerations, this study presents a preliminary investigation into the presence of eco-fascist discourse on Reddit, focusing mainly on climate-related subreddits. In particular, the analysis draws on corpus-assisted ecolinguistics (Poole, 2022), beginning with a quantitative exploration of data and followed by a qualitative analysis into how climate change and its related meanings are presented, possibly reflecting exclusionary or nativist framings, especially regarding how immigration may be linked to ecological threats. Finally, the analysis has two main objectives: first, to investigate whether eco-fascist discourse is present on Reddit and its possible features; second, as the politicization of climate change is likely to increase, with climate-mitigation efforts being embedded in broader ideological conflicts, to examine how discursive strategies may frame authoritarian or exclusionary ideologies as forms of environmental protection, turning environmental action into a vehicle for extremist ideology.

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The language of threat or the gentle nudge?

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This research, part of a larger-scale project, has a twofold purpose: to look at the different policies and approaches used both in Europe and in the U.S. to address the climate crisis, thus analyzing both the language of fear and the gentle nudges, and to investigate the reason why messages spread via social media about the climate are significantly less likely to be shared than those about other contentious issues, including civil rights, guns, immigration, and women's issues (Fine *et al.* 2024).

While it is true that the language of threat is an effective way of grabbing people's attention, motivating them to pay attention, change their beliefs and take urgent action, it is also true that using fear is not the best tactic to persuade people to do something, as the fear evoked can also be demotivating and counterproductive. Fear can lead to climate change fatigue, passive disengagement, active opposition to climate change policies, and denialism (Saab, 2023). Well-meaning attempts to create urgency about climate change by appealing to fear of disasters or health risks frequently lead to the exact opposite of the desired response: denial, paralysis, apathy, or actions that can create greater risks than the one being mitigated. As Hulme (2009) contends, “the thirst for environmental drama and exaggerated rhetoric risks tipping society onto a negative, depressive and reactionary trajectory”.

The ‘gentle nudge’, instead, helps move the bar from fear to hope, persuading people to choose climate-friendly behaviours that are better for themselves and for the community but without imposing restrictions or significant costs, encouraging socially and environmentally virtuous behaviours, and using words and messages strategically. Recent studies show that affective and participative narratives play a crucial role in shaping public perception and active responses to environmental crises (van Dijk, 2024; Pisano & Salvati, 2025), and that taking meaningful action can help alleviate an individual's feelings of anxiety and powerlessness (Jeremic, 2024).

Thus, starting from the assumption that messages are most likely to be shared when they foster emotional responses (Fine & Hunt, 2023), both of fear and hope, we aim (1) to look both at the negative and at the hopeful rhetoric used by politicians in Europe and in the US, and (2) to understand why the messages of politicians – who have an incentive to engage in more climate negativity online – seem not to generate many retweets.

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Becoming parents at the end of the world: Motherhood, trauma and the climate crisis

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This paper proposes to investigate how climate trauma influences reproductive decisions and the cultural imagination of motherhood. As climate change is increasingly experienced as an existential threat, both individual and collective choices about whether to have children are shaped by fear, ethical uncertainty, and anticipatory grief (Dillarstone et al., 2023). The study draws attention to the emerging phenomenon of pre-traumatic stress disorder (Kaplan, 2020), which encapsulates psychological distress caused not by past events, but by anticipated environmental collapse. Using corpus-linguistic and discourse-analytical methods, the analysis focuses on a body of contemporary newspaper articles that explore how a range of female voices articulate their reflections on whether or not to become parents in the face of the climate crisis. These narratives are often marked by instability, extinction fears, and intergenerational disruption (Kaplan, 2016; Lazar, 2005), intertwining ecological concerns with ethical reflections on responsibility, legacy, and the sustainability of life on Earth (Stibbe, 2021), while also expressing the psychological toll of anticipated collapse (Woodbury, 2019).

By combining ecocritical, corpus-based, and critical discourse approaches (Baker 2006; Fairclough, 2003), the study seeks to illuminate the emotional and ethical dimensions of climate anxiety, foregrounding how cultural narratives frame and complicate one of the most intimate human decisions in an age of ecological precarity.

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An exploration of discourse around ecocentrism in academic books

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The anthropogenic climate and ecological crises are complex ongoing phenomena, mainly following from part of the human population persistently taking advantage of the wealth produced by the industrial revolutions while removing the downsides towards contexts perceived as external and separate (Lele et al. 2018: 2). The set of dominant ideologies supporting the above-described exploitative, externalising attitudes includes different forms and degrees of anthropocentrism (Gupta 2024: 18-19), positing human exceptionalism over other beings and elements of our ecosystems (Lamb 2024: 134).

While considering reality primarily from a human perspective is, up to a point, unavoidable for us as a species, there are ways to conceive of ourselves in relation to reality that diverge from unquestioned centrality and exceptionalism. Therefore, challenging the hegemonic ideologies that characterise ecologically damaging behaviours also requires addressing the dominant definitions and roles we attach to ourselves as humans (Gee 2020) as well our beliefs about non-humans.

Among the attempts put forward to adopt counter-hegemonic, less anthropocentric perspectives is ecocentrism, that places inherent value in all (animate and inanimate) components of nature, prioritising the interests of the entire ecosphere with respect to those of single species (Gupta 2024: ix-x). This contribution thus focuses on scholarly discourse – overall considered to be well-informed and authoritative also in those cultural contexts that are most responsible for the climate and environmental crises – around ecocentrism. The study adopts a corpus-assisted discourse analysis framework, applied to a set of 7 academic books (totalling around 960,000 word-tokens) from the fields of philosophy, social sciences, political science and law, collected in digital format through a bibliographical search on the institutional library catalogue, featuring ecocentrism as the main topic or one of the core topics. Through a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches to these texts (taken both individually and as a corpus), the analysis aims to uncover how ecocentrism is defined, and with which concepts and linguistic patterns it is associated; moreover, it explores the way(s) ecosystems and their elements (animate and inanimate, human and non-human), as well as the relationships among them are represented (or backgrounded) in these texts.

Inspired by Positive Discourse Analysis (Stibbe 2021: 26), this research will hopefully contribute to identifying discourses favouring more ecocentric thought processes, whereby human exceptionalism and the current hegemonic ideologies supporting it can be questioned and challenged at their roots.

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An investigation of the online communicative practices of grassroots environmental activism in India: the case of #SaveHasdeoForest

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Studies show that the environmental emergency is deeply intersectional with matters of social injustice in the Global South (Nesmith et al. 2021), where they are often connected to colonialism (ibid.: 39-43). More specifically, indigenous environmental movements have traditionally been on the frontline in the protection of the environment (Etchart, 2022) and are still spearheading many initiatives to counteract environmental injustice as a form of decolonisation (Dhillon, 2022), in fields such land, water and air quality safeguarding (Martínez-Alier, 2023). India is certainly a territory where ecological matters are frequently interwoven with issues of nationalism, displacement and political agendas whose roots can often be traced back to its colonial history. This contribution aims at investigating the online communicative practices of the #SaveHasdeoForest campaign against deforestation and nationalist policies of hostility towards minority groups and indigenous people in the Chhattisgarh area. A corpus of posts will be analysed through ecolinguistics (Stibbe, 2021;

Zurru, 2022), ecostylistics (Virdis, 2022) and multimodal metaphor studies (Pérez Sobrino, 2017, Zurru, 2024), to explore their communicative strategies and stylistic traits.

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SEM27. Revisiting affect: The emotional turn in discourse analysis in the age of technologies. Linguistic, intercultural and translation perspectives

27A 12 September h. 14:00-16:00, S3 Moro

27B 12 September h. 16:30-19:00, S3 Moro

27C 13 September h. 8:30-11:00, S3 Moro

Convenors

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Abstract

Emotions play a fundamental role in the state of being human and being humane; so they inevitably filter – whether implicitly or explicitly – into language and account for a huge part of human interaction through discourse. Emotions influence how individuals and groups relate to one another, driving mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. Given their centrality to human interaction, emotions – often referred to in their complex as ‘affect’ – have increasingly attracted scholarly attention across various disciplines, including sociology, visual analysis, linguistic anthropology, and ethnography (cf. Mackenzie & Alba-Juez, 2019; Milani & Richardson, 2021; Scherer et al., 2001). This growing interest has contributed to what social and cultural theorists describe as the ‘affective turn’ (Clough, 2007).

In the more linguistically-oriented area of discourse studies, however, emotions seem to have received comparatively less attention. Even within the Appraisal model (Martin & White, 2005), which has been instrumental in highlighting the role of emotions in linguistic communication, ‘affect’ – the linguistic resources used to convey emotional reactions – has been somewhat overshadowed by other analytical categories which are now well-established and more extensively relied on (e.g. attitude, engagement, appreciation, graduation, etc.). Yet, the study of emotions in discourse is more essential than ever, particularly in technology-mediated communication, where profiling and algorithm-driven content curation ensure that contents proposed are in line with the reader’s preferences, creating a sort of emotion-driven loop. Moreover, the increasingly multimodal nature of communication, where concise textual content is often paired with images, relies on emotions as cognitive shortcuts, conveying meaning in ways that would otherwise require more elaborate and more explicit reasoning. The study of linguistic resources involved in the encoding of affect, as the direct expression of emotional responses, is key to promoting an awareness that can help foster a more humane approach to communication. In today’s digital and multimodal landscape, it provides linguistic resources that enable writers and speakers to express empathy and respect diverse perspectives.

Building on these insights, this seminar explores the emotive dimension of meaning, i.e. affect, in Discourse Analysis and related disciplines, and in Rhetoric/Argumentation studies (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1956; van Eemeren, 2010), in a context where research has often tended to focus more on the negotiation of values than on the encoding of emotions for expressive and/or perlocutionary purposes. This involves testing theoretical constructs and analytical tools for identifying and interpreting emotional elements in discourse, while also examining case studies across various domains and genres where such elements can be identified. These include social media, corporate communication, scientific research articles, conference presentations, journalism, and political debates, etc., particularly when dealing with critical issues such as climate change, trade policies, war and conflict, vaccination, and other socially and politically charged topics.

Contributions will be welcome especially, although not exclusively, on the following topics:

- Affect in public discourse (political, institutional, media, etc.)
- Emotional resources in public debates on sensitive issues (migration, climate change, race and ethnicity, etc.)
- Affect in specialized discourse (scientific, technological and popularizing)
- Affect in legal discourse (judgements, pleadings, etc.)
- Encoding of emotions in movie dialogue and in its translation (dubbing, subtitling)
- Affect in an intercultural perspective and its translation
- Affect model refinements (or reappraisal)
- Emotions, argumentation and persuasion
- Affective engagement of the audience
- Triggers of emotion in discourse

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SEM27. Papers

27A 12 September h. 14:00-16:00, S3 Moro

- *The sound of silence: Or, how to deal with the emotional rollercoaster of public speaking in a corporate environment* (Annalisa Zanola, Università degli Studi di Brescia)
- *The emotional appeal in the energy sector* (Olga Denti, Università di Cagliari)
- *A corpus linguistic approach to analyzing empathy* (Sabrina Fusari, Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna)
- *Attitude to AI in healthcare communication: Affect vis-à-vis judgement and appreciation* (Giuliana Elena Garzone (Università IULM, Milano)

27B 12 September h. 16:30-19:00, S3 Moro

- *An evaluation of the discourse on climate change in Great Britain parliamentary corpus ParlaMint-GB, 2015-2021* (Anna Re, Università IULM, Milano)
- *Echo chambers and emotional polarization in political discourse: A case study of Donald Trump's social media influence* (Francesco Pierini, Università degli Studi di Genova)
- *Emotions in argumentative discourse on social media: Two populisms compared* (Chiara Degano, Università di Roma Tre)

27C 13 September h. 8:30-11:00, S3 Moro

- *Promoting emotional self-regulation in the English classroom: A Vygotskian approach* (Enrico Grazi, Università di Roma Tre)
- *Translation and affect in the EAP classroom* (Paola Clara Leotta, Università di Catania)
- *Affect in subtitling guidelines: Aligning standards to audience reception on stage and on screen* (Mara Logaldo, Università IULM, Milano)
- *The display of emotions in The Mitchells vs the Machines: Translating family conflicts in the Italian dubbed version* (Mariacristina Petillo, Università degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro)
- *Affective translation: Language as embodied performance* (Fernanda Verçosa, Università degli Studi di Enna "Kore")

SEM27. Abstracts

Emotions in argumentative discourse on social media: Two populisms compared

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The investigation of emotions in discourse is gathering momentum due to the enhanced role they play in contemporary 'phatic culture' driven by social-media (Miller 2008: 398), and more generally in online communication steered by algorithms, where contents are recommended based on the user's preferences, and platform design favours polarization of views and feelings. Recent research on human emotions in discourse sees them as embracing aspects such as appraising a situation, forming expectations about the emotions caused in the hearer, the common-ground of the interlocutors, emotive bodily behaviour, the polarity of the emotion (Alba-Juez/Mackenzie 2019: 16).

Even the traditionally logic-oriented argumentation theory has progressively paved the way for the inclusion of an emotive component. The pragma-dialectical notion of engaged (as opposed to detached) argumentative style (van Eemeren et al. 2022), the studies of multimodal arguments, with their heightened connotative mechanisms, role of emotions in argumentation has been explored also through scientific experiments (Cfr. among others Benlamine et al 2015).

This paper explores the linguistic instruments that are used in the deployment of emotions in argumentation. In particular, it aims to see if and to what extent the category of affect as construed in the Model of *appraisal* (Martyn and White 2005) – the most comprehensive approach to the interpersonal aspects of discourse – can account for the expression of emotions. It will do so identifying Tweets with an argumentative component in which emotions are openly expressed or otherwise conveyed or elicited, comparing the profiles of U.S. president Donald Trump and Sen. Bernie Sanders, taken respectively as representative of right- and left-wing populism in U.S. politics.

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The emotional appeal in the energy sector

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Disclosing information is one of the most important aspects of corporate communication as it contributes to creating and developing the company's image, reliability, reputation and social responsibility.

Emotions are social and interpersonal phenomena, embedded within a specific society and culture. They are critical in the understanding and construction of relationships. Spontaneous expressions of emotions may alternate with strategic emotional displays aiming at mitigating the real sentiment (Langlotz & Locher 2013).

The company implements actions to bridge the gap between stakeholders' expectations and corporate perceived identity, through transparency and the identification of stakeholders' positive and negative attitude towards the firm (Piechocki 2004). To do so, it appeals to emotions, employing pathos-based rhetorical strategies in its communication. Pathos entails emotions, values, beliefs, feelings, and passions. Thus, it is used to persuade by appealing to empathy, sympathy, curiosity, anger, and triggering actions and reactions.

The present paper analyses, both qualitatively and quantitatively (through Sketch Engine) the persuasive effect of metadiscourse and the rhetorical affective appeal of pathos in the webpages and the reports on sustainability and equality, diversity and inclusion, of a corpus of energy sector companies. It focuses on Hyland's (2005) five sub-categories of interactional resources: hedges, boosters, attitude markers (also Mur-Dueñas 2010), pronouns (Liu & Zhang 2022), self-mentions and engagement markers (also Xiaoqin 2017). They incorporate those features employed by companies to connect to their stakeholders, and recognise their presence as discourse participants (Denti & Giordano 2024; Giordano 2024).

Findings show that while some companies build trust by focusing on their commitment, active role, performance, and achievements to be sustainable and respect people and the environment, others rely on their cultural values and traditions, respect and care for people, nature and the community. While some firms pursue a closer relationship by conveying personal judgements and emotions, others prefer being concise and objective.

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A corpus linguistic approach to analyzing empathy

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This paper presents a multi-year corpus linguistic study of the word “empathy” (Fusari, in print 2025), aimed at investigating its centrality to the discourse of both social and individual well-being today, and at shedding light on whether “empathy” is just a “buzzword” in many areas of contemporary discourse, or a fundamental resource to be deployed to achieve better relations among humans, and between humans and the environment.

Methodologically, the study relies on both corpus-based and corpus-driven tools (McEnery, Xiao and Tono 2006; Baker and Egbert 2016) and a systemic functional lexicogrammatical formalism (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004). The context of use of the word “empathy” is analyzed in a large electronic corpus, English Web 2020 (about 36 billion words), available in Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff et al. 2014), from the ideational (focusing on Transitivity and noun group structure), interpersonal (focusing on evaluative language) and textual (focusing on non-structural cohesive devices) points of view. Concordances, wordsketches and other corpus output obtained from Sketch Engine are systematically used, to derive patterns and recurrent phraseologies that may help readers understand what we mean by empathy, whether it is always positive, whether it is learned or innate, and whether it really is “what makes us human” as it is sometimes contended.

Conclusions show that “empathy” has a variety of definitions, many of which are tentative and even apophatic (i.e. achieved through negation, telling us what empathy is not, instead of what it is). This may be problematic, as the lack of a common definition of “empathy” throughout the spectrum of the quite diverse disciplines that use it (e.g. psychology, medicine, sociology, philosophy, cognitive studies, even marketing) is an obstacle not only for research about empathy, but also for its practical use (e.g. measurement), especially for clinical purposes. An agreement on the meaning of empathy is preliminary to studying it from all angles, eventually allowing professional training courses to teach empathy in workplaces where it is increasingly considered as a highly desirable vocational skill. Therefore, empathy deserves more attention in all areas that assign it a pivotal role, from the clinical to the psychological and philosophical, including language and discourse, to open up new avenues of research into the understanding of emotions as well as in the use of inclusive language.

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Attitude to AI in healthcare communication: Affect vis-à-vis judgement and appreciation

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Despite its demonstrable benefits, artificial intelligence (AI) continues to evoke a complex spectrum of emotional responses – from optimism and awe to anxiety and distrust – often possibly rooted in the public’s limited understanding of AI’s inner workings and broader implications. This ambiguity becomes particularly salient in sensitive domains such as healthcare, where the adoption of AI is accelerating. In this emotionally charged context, media discourse – across print, broadcast, and digital platforms – plays a central role in shaping public sentiment, frequently embedding affective cues that extend beyond technical evaluations.

This paper investigates how AI in healthcare, particularly within the context of doctor-patient interaction, is discursively constructed in media communication. It starts from the assumption that media portrayals are seldom neutral, instead reflecting and shaping collective emotional orientations (Lupton, 2014; Topol, 2019). To explore this, a small ad hoc corpus of media texts has been compiled, featuring diverse representations of AI in clinical and caregiving settings.

The analysis is grounded in the Appraisal framework developed by Martin and White (2001), with a particular focus on the *Attitude* system, discussing the relative role of its three main components – *Affect* (resources for construing emotional reactions), *Judgement* (evaluations of ethics and behaviour), and *Appreciation* (aesthetic and value assessments) – to understand how media discourse balances emotional appeal with reasoned evaluation.(cf. e.g. Bednarek, 2006).

While all three dimensions are examined, special attention is given to *Affect*, which captures the emotional tonality embedded in discourse. This focus highlights how the media channel collective hopes, anxieties, and ambivalences regarding AI, and how these emotional appeals intersect with rational evaluations to produce narratives that are as affective as they are informative.

The study addresses two main research questions: (1) What is the relative prominence of the emotional component in media representations of the current and future role of AI in healthcare? (2) How is the perceived transformation or “erosion” of the “humane” dimension of medical care, due to the integration of AI, linguistically constructed?

By tracing patterns of affective vs rational representation, the paper aims to illuminate how media discourse not only informs but also shapes public and professional imaginaries of AI in healthcare.

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Promoting emotional self-regulation in the English classroom: A Vygotskian approach

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This presentation introduces a central concept from Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory (SCT), *perezhivanie*, that is: “How a child becomes aware of, interprets, [and] emotionally relates to a certain event.” (Vygotsky, 1994: 341). I am going to discuss this concept, a propos of the development of high-school learners’ emotional self-regulation through literature education, in the English classroom.

The rationale behind the innovative tasks I designed for this purpose is that through learners’ cooperative reflection on the identities of fictional characters and on their conflictual relationships (i.e., *dramatic events*, in a Vygotskian perspective), it is possible to make students experience social drama. This, in turn, is supposed to lead the class towards a deeper understanding not only of other people’s perceptions, but also of the way their beliefs, emotions, dispositions, etc. motivate and explain their actions. This approach illuminates how students’ participation in group activities and the use of English as a meaningful symbolic resource may foster distinct capabilities that include ways of perceiving the world around us and interacting with it.

In May 2025, I was invited by a school principal and a teacher of English to carry out a workshop on *perezhivanie*, for a class of fifth graders. The aim of this initiative was to enhance learners’ emotional intelligence through a set of purposely designed drama activities, based on an extract from Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, a novel they were studying as part of their English syllabus.

This workshop, which drew on Di Pietro's *Strategic Interaction* (1987), was intended to lead the class through a set of guided exercises, culminating in the performance of *scenarios* (Di Pietro, 1987, p. 41), i.e. the strategic "interplay of roles functioning to fulfill personal agendas within a shared context." The main purposes of this experience were:

- a) Make learners develop a deep understanding of the characters involved in the extract they were going to adapt for their performance, first of all by reflecting on Shelley's text. Indeed, it is through language that literary characters reveal their different *perezhivaniye* and how their personalities develop and change through dramatic events.
- b) Make learners perform Shelley's characters and, through the use of English, stir and control their emotional reactions.
- c) Make learners reflect on the use of English in literary texts to make readers perceive the value of their emotional response.

The theoretical rationale for this workshop was based on the transactional theory of development: working on Shelley's text was expected to activate participants' imagination in order to expand their experience of self-consciousness. This would eventually stimulate learners' awareness of the value of emotional expression to better mediate the social relationships with themselves and the others.

I will conclude my presentation with a look to the potential of this experience, especially as regards the area of teacher development programs.

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Translation and affect in the EAP classroom

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This research focuses on the role of the translator's *affect* and emotions (Koskinen 2020) in the Italian translation of Oliver Sacks' *Gratitude* (2015, translated by Isabella C. Blum, 2016), a poignant collection of essays as a diary-like testament.

The source-target text analysis is conducted through Kwiecinski's method (2001) and the T-lab software (Lancia, 2012). The target text is then compared to a version belonging to collaborative text mediation practice (Nikitina 2022) by non-native students of English for Psychological Studies enrolled at the University of Catania, Italy.

Results show that the translator's "affect" is a key factor that influences and shapes the degree of fidelity in translating Sacks' emotions, including specific terms, key concepts, and syntactic structures retained (i.e., "yarmulke," "Shabbos," and "gefilte fish"), with adaptations made only where necessary to ensure cultural and linguistic coherence.

As for the second target text, instead, on the one hand, the empowering potential is shown of Machine Translation (MT) collaborative-text-mediation practices for non-native students of Psychology (looking at diary translation as an affective, emotional practice), on the other hand, the "affective turn" (Koskinen 2020) that is a dimension of human translation, is absent in the MT output, even if including interesting solutions belonging to the collaborative activity conducted by students.

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Affect in subtitling guidelines: Aligning standards to audience reception on stage and on screen

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Initially conducted as part of the ongoing project “(Trans)National European Theatre: audiovisual tools and simultaneous interpreting for the internationalisation of theatre production and consumption” (TraNET - CREA-CULT-2023-COOP), involving audience surveys and the development of guidelines based on the live surtitling and on the integrated, multilingual subtitling for the theatre plays streamed live and subsequently uploaded on the project website (<https://tra-net.eu/>), this study expands its scope to existing guidelines for broadcast subtitled media contained in the ESIST (European Association for Studies in Screen Translation) corpus and in the European Accessibility Act, which will come into force in June 2025. The aim is to compare the results of the empirical research work with the analysis of the official guidelines. The corpus will be explored through the lenses of Appraisal Theory, with particular emphasis on Affect - “resources for construing emotional reactions” (Martin & White, 2005: 35) - and the alignment between standards and audience reception. Attention will be paid to policies concerning cultural adaptation, readability, narrative significance, thematic coding of affect through text and subtext, and inclusivity as a way to ensure an emotionally resonant viewing experience. The investigation is relevant to the conference theme as it fosters discussion on a more humane and equitable media landscape, highlighting diversity for an authentic representation of audiences and the need to harmonise accessibility requirements.

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The display of emotions in *The Mitchells vs the Machines*: Translating family conflicts in the Italian dubbed version

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The aim of this paper is to focus on the animated science fiction film, *The Mitchells vs The Machines*, distributed by Netflix in 2021, to explore its language of emotions and some communicative patterns within the Mitchells family. This road comedy has at the core of its plot the rebellion of PAL, an AI smartphone digital assistant that turns bad after being defined “obsolete” by his human creator, tech entrepreneur Mark Bowman. The theme of the machines rising up against human beings is not a cinematic novelty (Murphy 2024), but what is new in this film is the role played by the Mitchells, a highly dysfunctional family that will save the world from a throng of destructive robots controlled by PAL. Due to complicated family relations – especially between Katie, a somewhat bizarre teenager aspiring to become a filmmaker, who often clashes with her technophobic father Rick because of her choice to enrol in a film school in California – the film presents some interesting food for thought on the display of emotions in conflict family situations. More specifically, the contribution will firstly investigate how the conversational maxims theorised by Herbert Paul Grice in 1975 are often flouted by characters during emotionally tense verbal exchanges, thus producing ineffective conversation. Secondly, the Italian dubbed version of the film will be analysed in order to compare the rendering of emotional language in confrontational dialogues, for the purpose of verifying whether source and target texts show the same perception of emotions, or whether dubbing choices lead to a different linguistic representation into Italian.

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Echo chambers and emotional polarization in political discourse: A case study of Donald Trump's social media influence

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This paper investigates the emotional polarization of political discourse on social media, with a specific focus on Donald Trump's use of Twitter as a tool for political messaging and identity construction. In an era where digital platforms profoundly shape public discourse, Trump's Twitter feed offers a salient example of how linguistic strategies – such as hyperbole, insults, repetition, and emotionally charged language – can be deployed to manipulate public sentiment and intensify political division (Chilton, 2004; van Dijk, 1998).

Using a qualitative discourse-analytic framework, the study explores a selection of tweets to examine key rhetorical features, including evaluative lexical choices, illocutionary acts, and metaphorical language. These elements are shown to foster strong emotional alignment among supporters, reinforce ideological boundaries, and provoke adversarial reactions among opponents (Hart, 2010; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Trump's discourse is further characterized by a clear construction of in-group versus out-group dynamics, which is central to emotional and ideological polarization.

In parallel, the study reflects on the role of social media algorithms in facilitating echo chambers – digitally constructed environments where emotionally resonant content is amplified and opposing viewpoints are systematically excluded. This convergence of rhetorical strategy and technological affordance contributes to a political communication style that is increasingly affective, antagonistic, and fragmented (Fairclough, 2001; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985).

Grounded in critical discourse analysis and informed by theories of affect and ideology, this research aims to demonstrate how emotional appeals on social media not only shape public opinion but also mobilize political communities and deepen societal cleavages (Billig, 1995). The paper contributes to the growing body of scholarship on the emotional turn in discourse studies, highlighting the urgency of rethinking political communication in the age of algorithmically mediated affect.

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An evaluation of the discourse on climate change in Great Britain parliamentary corpus ParlaMint-GB, 2015-2021

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The global conversation on climate change has become one of the most urgent and contested areas of political and public discourse. The way political actors, media outlets, and the public communicate about climate change plays a vital role in

shaping policy, public opinion, and collective action (Nerlich, Koteyko 2009). Appraisal Theory (Martin and White 2005; Martin, Rose 2007) can offer a powerful framework for analyzing how speakers and writers construct meaning, express values, and position themselves and others in political climate change debates. Through its three subsystems – Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation – Appraisal Theory can enable a nuanced understanding of the evaluative and rhetorical strategies used in climate change discourse (Martin and White 2005). Through Attitude, it reveals emotional and ethical framings; through Engagement, it shows how voices are legitimized or marginalized; and through Graduation, it highlights rhetorical intensity and urgency. These dimensions are crucial in a political context where public understanding and policy action are shaped as much by rhetoric as by empirical data.

The presentation will analyse how the concept of climate change is conceptualized in British parliamentary debates as presented in the Great Britain parliamentary corpus ParlaMint-GB, 2015-2021 available on Sketch Engine (ParlaMint 2.1, CoNLL format, wordcount: 100,967,492) (Kilgariff 2014). The analysis will first identify meaningful words and phrases using the tools offered by Sketch Engine and then analyse them using Appraisal Theory. The aim is to unpack emotional appeals, judgments of responsibility, and the rhetorical force behind discourses on climate change which frequently show rich use of Affect, Judgment, and Graduation strategies to persuade, inform, or alarm. As climate change continues to dominate the global agenda, the analytical tools offered by Appraisal Theory can be beneficial for promoting transparency, accountability, and informed engagement (Keller, C. et alts 2011).

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Affective translation: Language as embodied performance

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Set in Belfast during the early 1970s, at the height of the Troubles, Owen McCafferty's play *Mojo Mickybo* stages the fleeting friendship between two young boys—one Protestant, one Catholic—whose bond is ultimately fractured by the historical and political violence surrounding them. In relocating the play to São Paulo under Brazil's military dictatorship, I engage with translation not as an act of equivalence but as a site of affective, embodied, and ideological engagement. Through this process, translation becomes anthropophagic: a conscious devouring of the foreign not for imitation but for transformation, metabolising it into something culturally specific, affectively resonant, and politically charged within the Brazilian context.

In adapting *Mojo Mickybo* for a Brazilian audience, I draw on the theoretical frameworks of Bertolt Brecht's Epic Theatre and Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed—both of which treat performance as a space of estrangement, rupture, and activation rather than representation. These theatrical paradigms foreground the audience not as passive receivers of meaning but as active participants in its construction and in transforming their environment. Here, affect is reconfigured not as sentimental residue but as a cognitive force capable of fostering not only empathy, but also critical awareness and distance, ultimately leading to change. In Boal's sense, this is not about purging emotion but channeling it: from recognition to action, from passivity to intervention.

This paper ultimately calls for a rethinking of the translator's role—not as a transparent conduit but as an embodied political subject whose decisions are grounded in lived experience and driven by a cause. Translation, in this sense, is neither invisible nor objective; it is somatic and situated. Drawing from affect theory and neuroscience, I argue that the translator's ideosomatic and idiosomatic responses are central to how texts come alive in new settings. What emerges is a holistic practice of translation—one that allows for the haunting of memory, the urgency of voice, and the political force of feeling to shape the contours of discourse.

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The sound of silence: Or, how to deal with the emotional rollercoaster of public speaking in a corporate environment

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The role of public speaking as a skill required in business environments has been a recurring theme in numerous blogs and websites over the last decades (Zanola, 2011a). Beyond providing general descriptions of the emotions experienced by orators when speaking in public, websites offer no scientifically relevant insights (Bodie, 2010). Despite the extensive research that has been conducted on the subject of public speaking from rhetorical and political perspectives (Cooperman and Lull, 2008), or from the perspective of conversational analysis (see Atkinson, 1984), this topic has received limited attention in relation to the emotional impact of oral argumentation in corporate communication. The adjacent areas that have been explored over the past decades include the genres of “conference presentations” (Carter-Thomas, Rowley-Jolivet, 2003) and “presidential debates” (Bendinelli, 2011).

Emotion is increasingly recognised as a critical component of the persuasive process, embedded within oral performance. This assertion is supported by extant research on the manner in which entrepreneurs communicate in public settings (Zanola, Palermo, 2013). Based on the considerations above, it can be argued that the deliberate use of oral argument and emotional language is a new challenge for entrepreneurs operating in international business contexts where English is the primary lingua franca.

Focusing on the role of pauses in the construction of oral argumentation in different business contexts (the meeting with or between employees, the boardroom, the negotiations, to name but a few), the work focuses on how silence, in Cicero's words, is one of the most powerful tools of rhetoric (Jaworski, 1993). From its acoustic definition, to its functional definition, to the concepts of *silence-absence* and *silence-to-communication*, a corpus of examples attesting to the fundamental role of pause in real prosodic contexts highlights a number of functions that can be subjectively assumed by the speaker in professional business contexts.

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SEM28. Women represented: Investigating gender dynamics in political discourse

11 September h. 16:00-18:30, S7 Moro

Convenors

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Abstract

Ensuring women's visibility, influence, and voice in the public sphere is a hallmark of democracy. Women's representation in politics grew steadily throughout the twentieth century, as they gradually overcame structural barriers and accessed more domains of public life. However, in 2025, the outlook for women's political participation appears grim. Conservative, authoritarian, paternalistic leaders, under the pretence of "protecting women", are increasingly re-framing women's rights (e.g., bodily autonomy, education, equal pay, political participation) not as universal human rights but as "special" rights tied to pro-life, pro-family and pro-marriage values. Recent backlash and pushback against gender equality, amplified by social media platforms, the growing reach of the so-called manosphere, and political developments such as Trump 2.0, further underscore the urgency to examine how gender is constructed, contested, and instrumentalized in the public sphere.

Drawing on theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches that have examined how language reflects and shapes gender dynamics (Angouri & Baxter, 2021, Esposito, 2023, Lazar, 2005, Romaniuk & Ehrlich, 2018, among others), this seminar seeks contributions that explore political discourse focused on women as politicians, advocates, and subjects of mediated narratives. It considers discourses surrounding women's political representation and issues such as reproductive rights, gender-based violence, and objectification, through a range of frameworks and approaches, including (M)CDS, feminist CDA, narrative analysis, pragmatics, and corpus linguistics, to investigate intersections among language, gender, power, agency, and ideology.

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SEM28. Papers

11 September h. 16:00-18:30, S7 Moro

- *The long journey towards breaking the US political glass ceiling: From Fannie Lou Hamer to AOC* (Nicoletta Vasta, Università degli Studi di Udine)
- *"Ellen wants to be President": Press coverage of Ellen McCormack's 1976 presidential primary campaign* (Polina Shvanyukova, Università degli Studi di Udine)
- *"In my opinion she has a very low IQ": A critical discourse analysis of Donald Trump's delegitimation strategies to disempower female politicians* (Ester Di Silvestro, Università di Catania)
- *The "childless cat ladies" phenomenon. A discourse analysis of media coverage of JD Vance's comment on female democratic politicians* (Roberta Iacovelli, Università di Catania)
- *Red-pilled rhetoric: A corpus-assisted multimodal analysis of the manosphere's representation of U.S. women politicians* (Jacqueline Aiello, Università degli Studi di Salerno)

SEM28. Abstracts

Red-pillled rhetoric: A corpus-assisted multimodal analysis of the manosphere's representation of U.S. women politicians

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The manosphere, an online network “that proactively advocates misogynistic, anti-feminist, and anti-gender egalitarian positions, and promotes the resentment and hatred of women” (Barnes & Karim 2025, p. 2), has both fueled and been emboldened by Donald Trump's political (re)ascendancy. Its disparate subgroups coalesce around the ‘Red Pill’ ideology, which purports to liberate men of feminism's alleged misandry and systemic subjugation by women (Ging, 2019), and employ emergent, often idiosyncratic, strategies to claim credibility, assert epistemic authority, and aggregate members (McGlashan & Krendel, 2024). Against the backdrop of a mounting backlash to gender equality, the present study examines the representation of U.S. women politicians in the Christian Men's Rights (CMR) movement, a highly interactive, solidarity-driven faction of the manosphere that pursues structural change through coordinated activism and overt political mobilization (Barnes & Karim, 2025). Building on prior analyses of delegitimization tactics employed by Fox News anchors in their coverage of U.S. Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (Aiello, 2023), this study explores how leading CMR-affiliated voices discursively position and undermine prominent women in or seeking political office in the United States. A corpus-assisted multimodal analysis of a purposive sample of CMR Twitter/X posts and YouTube podcasts from the first half of 2025 targeting female politicians is conducted using NVivo to identify and examine the evaluative language, intertextual references, recontextualization strategies, and ‘evidence-based misogyny’ – a micro-political tactic that uses selectively curated ‘evidence’ to essentialize misogyny in gender relations (Rothermel, 2023) – present within these artifacts. By unearthing the discursive and visual mechanisms that generate gendered political antagonism and position female politicians in these online conservative and anti-feminist spaces, this study lays bare the inner workings of insidious misogyny and instrumentalization of gender, exposes the threats that digital misogyny poses to women's political representation, and underscores the urgency for counter-discourses that engender more equitable political imaginaries.

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“In my opinion she has a very low IQ”: A critical discourse analysis of Donald Trump's delegitimation strategies to disempower female politicians

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Although the number of women in relevant political roles on the international stage is growing (Zamfirache, 2010), politics still seems a public sphere dominated by men (Liu, 2019). In this context, gender stereotypes have always had a significant impact on women and limited their participation in the decision-making processes (Liu, 2019). The gender gap in politics is still quite evident and is mostly influenced by how women are portrayed – especially by the media that tends to reiterate representations with gender implications (Di Silvestro & Venuti, 2024) – and, in turn, how they unconsciously view themselves. The United States are undoubtedly one of the most glaring instances of the gender gap and the continued influence of gender stereotypes on how people perceive women. Only two female candidates (Clinton and Harris) made it to the final rounds of the presidential campaign and both were defeated by Donald Trump, who is well-known for his populist, aggressive and misogynistic communication style (Di Silvestro, 2025; Scotto di Carlo, 2020).

This work aims to investigate how Donald Trump represented Hillary Clinton and Kamala Harris in the course of the electoral campaigns, paying particular attention to the gender implications embedded in his delegitimation strategies. In order to achieve this goal, the strategies used by Donald Trump to delegitimize Joe Biden will be analysed as well and compared to the ones used for Hillary Clinton and Kamala Harris. Thirty key speeches (ten per politician) delivered by Donald Trump during the last three months of the 2016, 2020 and 2024 US electoral campaigns will be collected on the website The American Presidency Project and on the YouTube channel Right Side Broadcasting Network. The data will be organised into three corpora and will be analysed focusing on the representational strategies and the textual semiotic choices (Machin & Mayr, 2023; van Dijk, 1998) used by Trump to describe his opponents – foregrounding the gender implications of such choices (Lazar, 2005).

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The “childless cat ladies” phenomenon. A discourse analysis of media coverage of JD Vance's comment on female democratic politicians.

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In 2021, JD Vance lamented that the future of the U.S. was (then) in the hands of “childless cat ladies”, referring to the female democratic politicians with no kids, running the country – implicitly maintaining they had no personal stake in the country's future. When this comment resurfaced on the internet in July 2024, many women (and men) took to social media platforms to make their case that women's social value does not depend on the number of children they may or may not have. Both the remark and the ensuing public response garnered widespread media attention. While research has shown that media's biased representation of female politicians contributes to inhibiting women's participation in the field (e.g., Kittilson & Friedkin, 2008), media coverage of this incident showed an unexpected, supportive, approach.

This study aims to investigate how the media can negotiate representations of women and ideas about their role in society, thus challenging the *status quo* in politics. To do so, it presents the results of a Corpus-Assisted Discourse Analysis (Baker, 2006) of newspaper articles published on the incident by the top 5 U.S. Newspapers (by web visitors) - the Wall Street Journal, the NY Times, the NY Post, the Washington Post, and USA Today - published online between July 2024 (after the 2021 comment was made public again) and November 2024 (with the Trump-Vance election). The present investigation is thus concerned with *discourses* (Fairclough, 1992) used in the media to challenge the conservative view of women's role in society. It aims to show how, by challenging stereotypes on women in their articles, newspapers generated *new discourses*, ultimately favouring a reframed view of women's “feminine role” and “professional value” (particularly in politics). The results of the study will contribute to the understanding of the “gendered pageantry of politics” and of the impact of media representations on women's political participation as reflecting entrenched gender norms (see Laher, 2014).

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“Ellen wants to be President”: Press coverage of Ellen McCormack’s 1976 presidential primary campaign

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Drawing on existing research that has examined media representations of women in politics and leadership positions (Cameron & Shaw, 2020; Chałupnik, Mackenzie, Mullany & Vilar-Lluch, 2025; Heckman, Bhargava & Ndulue, 2025; Mullany & Yoong, 2016), this paper analyzes a sample of campaign coverage taken from US national newspapers of Ellen McCormack’s bid to win the presidential nomination in the 1976 Democratic primaries. Supported by right-to-life activist organizations, McCormack ran as a single-issue, pro-life candidate who championed the passage of the Human Life Amendment (HLA). The launch of a single-issue national presidential candidate was an attention-grabbing strategy that pro-lifers (successfully) used to get media attention on the abortion issue in the aftermath of *Roe v. Wade* (1973). When McCormack, who had never run for political office before, became the first female presidential candidate in US history to qualify for federal campaign funds and Secret Service protection, the media started to take her campaign seriously. The present investigation thus focuses on the discursive construction of an unprecedented media event in which a woman presidential candidate leveraged pro-life rhetoric to position herself as a defender of conservative Christian values (Williams 2016). The analysis starts by identifying key themes in the press coverage of Ellen McCormack’s candidacy and her anti-abortion agenda (e.g., the use of federal campaign funds, a one-issue candidacy) and then examines the inventory of the rhetorical and linguistic devices employed to either amplify or discredit McCormack’s pro-life rhetoric.

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The long journey towards breaking the US political glass ceiling: From Fannie Lou Hamer to AOC

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In their different ways, all the women – Ferraro, Clinton, Palin and Harris – who have so far undertaken the journey as Presidential and Vice-Presidential nominees in the USA have come up against the glass ceiling. Yet, despite their setbacks, their efforts have led the way for other women to pick up the torch. As Hillary Rodham Clinton put it in her 2016 concession speech, “I know we have still not shattered that highest and hardest glass ceiling, but someday someone will and hopefully sooner than we might think right now” (Rodham Clinton 2016, at 14’29”). That someone could well be Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, aka AOC.

As Democratic Congresswoman and Representative for New York’s 14th Congressional District, AOC is both the youngest woman ever to be elected to the US Congress, but more significantly, along with Fannie Lou Hamer in the 1950s and ‘60s, one of the few women who, by matching their political actions with remarkable storytelling skills, have shattered the glass ceiling of male domination in the higher echelons of US Administration (Aiello 2023; Vasta 2023b). AOC’s 10-minute statement, on July 23, 2020, seeking recognition for verbal harassment by Congress veteran, yet hitherto virtually unknown Republican Representative Ted Yoho, “became an instant classic and went viral for its direct indictment of a culture of misogyny and harassment of women in the workplace” (<https://www.thnk.org/blog/anatomy-of-a-speech-aoc/>).

In a diachronic perspective, AOC’s statement against gender-based violence can be analyzed as one of the historic moments in the journey that defines breaking the glass ceiling in terms of changing culture and mindsets, one that follows in the footsteps of Fannie Lou Hamer, who struggled against efforts to prevent her from exercising her right to vote and

against none other than President Johnson, who tried to prevent her from making her voice heard with her *DNC Testimony* and other speeches (Vasta 2023a, 2024). Integrating the tools offered by Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis (Vasta 2023a) and the Discourse Historical Approach (Martin & Wodak 2003; Wodak 2011), the contribution will investigate the interface between gendered identities, agency, power and ideology through various instances of how AOC seems to be lining up with those who, maybe unintentionally and certainly within different socio-historical circumstances, followed in Fannie Lou Hamer's footsteps.

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SEM29. A house is not a home? Discursive representations of contemporary households

29A 11 September h. 11:00-13:00, Auditorium

29B 12 September h. 14:00-16:00, Auditorium

Convenors

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Abstract

Diverse family formations and practices are at the forefront of contemporary societal debates (Balirano et al., 2024) as issues of representation, inclusivity and equity continue to shape the cultural, political and digital landscapes. In this seminar, we explore the discursive representation of different family forms, i.e. households which come together in ways that steer away from the traditional cisgender, heteronormative, binary, monoethnic matrix. From queer (Mackenzie, 2023) and multiethnic (Riboni, 2024) families to the evolving portrayal of diversified households, discourse plays a pivotal role in both perpetuating and challenging traditional norms (Fruttaldo, 2024; Zottola, 2024).

We invite scholars to submit research proposals that explore the heterogeneity of households in contemporary linguistic representations. In particular, we welcome contributions that investigate how discursive practices construct, contest, or redefine kinship identities in and across media, policy and specialized domains. Topics of interest include but are not limited to:

- Intersectionality in discourses of families and households: gender, sex, race, class, disability, age
- The role of language in perpetuating or dismantling discrimination and bias
- Discursive constructions of family and parenting in different cultural contexts
- Queer linguistics and the evolution of language surrounding different household formations
- The impact of digital and multimodal platforms on family and household representations
- Policy, education and institutional discourses shaping contemporary households
- Legal and medical discursive practices that frame contemporary families and households.

We encourage interdisciplinary approaches, drawing on critical discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, queer theory, corpus linguistics, pragmatics, and multimodal discourse analysis. Papers addressing current events, emerging societal issues, or intersectional (in)visibility are particularly welcome.

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SEM29. Papers

29A 11 September h. 11:00-13:00, Auditorium

- #TradWives: Multimodal discursive constructions of a backward trend in family roles (Catherine Del Buono, Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II / Sole Alba Zollo, Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II)
- Representing single-mother families: A discourse analysis of Reddit threads and comments (Maria Cristina Nisco, Università degli Studi di Napoli Parthenope)
- Performing family on TikTok: Multimodal discourses of lesbian motherhood and IVF (Robin Donadio, Independent scholar)
- Reimagining kinship in Sense8: A multimodal stylistic analysis of posthuman household narratives (Roberto Esposito, Università di Napoli L'Orientale)

29B 12 September h. 14:00-16:00, Auditorium

- *Shifting family imaginaries in forced migration contexts: A corpus-assisted analysis of refugee discourses* (Dario Del Fante, Università degli Studi di Ferrara)
- *Sisterhood, solidarity and transfeminist alliances in digital environments: A multimodal critical discourse analysis of the FEMINIST ZINE* (Giuseppina Pirozzi, Università di Parma)
- *Human and AI ideologies: Pragmalinguistic and multimodal representations of contemporary family forms* (Raffaele Pizzo, Università di Napoli L'Orientale)
- *Not a mother: Surrogacy, agency and the reframing of family through the voices of surrogates* (Angela Zottola, Università di Torino)

SEM29. Abstracts

#TradWives: Multimodal discursive constructions of a backward trend in family roles

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One could say the late Phyllis Schlafly – a central figure in conservative family politics in the United States – was the original TradWife (traditional wife): a woman who believes in traditional gender roles in the home, with the household structured with the male as the head and the female as submissive. Like Schlafly, TradWives hold a belief that women are better off with a gender hierarchy than in more equal arrangements (Stewart, 2025). While Schlafly actively worked to successfully defeat the passing of the Equal Rights Amendment in the United States in the 1970s, these TradWives have shown up hawking goods on the ever-growing ‘momosphere’ – a collection of blogs and social media posts that revolve around parenting, cooking, and crafting (Zappavigna & Zhao, 2017; Mackenzie, 2019; Mackenzie & Zhao, 2021; Proctor, 2022). With social media platforms such as Instagram showing #tradwives as thin, beautiful, white young women in vintage dresses and using terms such as ‘true calling’ and ‘old-fashioned values’, it has become a glorified identity. This new-yet-old role of women represents a family dynamic that completely counters any feminist progress made in recent decades and sets up a toxic example for young women to emulate.

Our study aims to investigate a sample of multimodal texts extracted from the ‘ballerinafarm’ Instagram account of Hannah Neeleman, the most prominent of all TradWives who with her seemingly effortless beauty runs a dairy farm and raises eight children without the help of her husband. “Her bucolic, old-fashioned lifestyle is both a masterclass in aesthetics and branding and an illiberal vision of traditional culture and lifestyle” (Shrewsbury, 2025, p. 7). The fact that she has co-opted feminist rhetoric to defend herself by saying it is her choice (Bower, 2024) continues to obscure how problematic this lifestyle is for women’s equality and, in turn, begins to normalize these illiberal ideas.

A multimodal critical discourse analysis (Machin, 2013; van Leeuwen, 2012; Ledin & Machin, 2018) approach will help to detect the most recurrent verbal and visual features in the data under investigation in order to verify to what extent discursive choices can reinforce anti-feminist attitudes and stereotypical gender roles.

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Shifting family imaginaries in forced migration contexts: A corpus-assisted analysis of refugee discourses

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Migration can be understood as a process in which an individual experiences a moment of crisis, partly due to separation from their homeland and the transition from a known familial, socio-cultural and linguistic environment to one that is unfamiliar and often disorienting. In this sense, the migratory experience profoundly shapes the self-perception of those who migrate (Omole, 2024). During this passage from the home community to a new one, the relationship between individual and group identity is placed under strain, as the individual may be required to modify or reconstruct their identity to adapt to the new context (De Fina, 2003). Therefore, the role of family is particularly significant for refugees and migrants, as it is the first place where identity is formed (Bateson, 1973), whether the family is physically present or not. The process of integration into a new society is influenced by the presence of family, and when it is absent, individuals may need to reconstruct it or maintain a special, often distant, connection with their original household. These dynamics are further complicated by legal, cultural and socio-economic barriers in host countries, where migrants and refugees often occupy marginalized positions, as well as by the specific conditions of their countries of origin, which they have left due to economic hardship and political instability, factors that profoundly impact how relationships are maintained, transformed, or imagined across distances.

Therefore, drawing on Corpus-Assisted Discourse Analysis methodologies (Baker, 2023), this study examines how the concept of ‘family’ is discursively constructed and represented in refugees’ words within a corpus of interviews collected from the 1000 Dreams project, a storytelling initiative that challenges mainstream narratives about refugees through a collection of stories by and about refugees from across Europe (<https://1000dreamsproject.com/>). The analysis focuses on strategies of representation (Heritage & Taylor, 2024), with particular attention to the discursive imagery through which interviewees articulate experiences, losses and reconfigurations of family ties. In this way, the study explores how the notion of ‘family’ is not only described but also actively reimagined in the context of forced migration. Indeed, preliminary results reveal a complex landscape of familial experiences that go beyond traditional or nuclear family models. The interviewees, coming from diverse cultural, religious and national backgrounds, offer insights into multiple and intersecting conceptions of family. A wide range of experiences emerges from the interviews, illustrating the plurality and fluidity of familial imaginaries among displaced populations.

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Performing family on TikTok: Multimodal discourses of lesbian motherhood and IVF

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This study analyses how lesbian couples on TikTok discursively construct their identities as families through narratives of their IVF journeys, a process frequently positioned on the platform as a central and emblematic pathway to queer family-making. Among lesbian creators, IVF-related content is particularly prominent, often serving as a highly visible and emotionally resonant mode of representing kinship, biological connection and shared maternal experience. Focusing on a small multimodal corpus of videos and user comments drawn from clearly identified two-mother families on TikTok, and selected through targeted hashtags such as #ivfjourney, #reciprocalivf, #twomomssquad, #wlw, #wlwcouple, #lesbiancouple, and #mumsoftiktok (among others), we explore how traditional membership categories associated with family are reshaped through the strategic deployment of predicates of love, biology, sacrifice and joy.

Drawing on Harvey Sacks’ theory of membership categorization and the role of predicates in social identity construction (Sacks, 1972), this investigation examines how users discursively claim legitimacy within the historically normative ‘happy family’ model, often idealized through heteronormative, nuclear-family tropes (Vanobbergen et al., 2006;

Petintseva, 2018). Using Membership Categorization Analysis (Stokoe, 2012; Fitzgerald & Housley, 2015), we explore how lesbian couples mobilize category-bound predicates to affirm their roles as mothers and partners. Particular attention is paid to how users manage tensions between biological and relational markers of kinship, often negotiating claims to legitimacy in the face of normative expectations. Sequential discourse analysis (Schegloff, 2007) is employed to examine how TikTok videos unfold narratively, from scientific accounts of IVF procedures to emotional affirmations of familial belonging.

Rather than rejecting traditional family ideals, these ‘performances’ are better understood through the lens of Butler’s (1990) concept of performativity, whereby identities are enacted and legitimized through the reiteration of normative discursive practices. In this sense, lesbian family roles and kinship ties are performed on TikTok through recognizable linguistic and visual patterns that both align with and expand the boundaries of heteronormative frameworks. The affiliative bonds produced in this context are not inherent to the hashtags themselves but emerge discursively through what Zappavigna (2012) terms ambient affiliation: the cumulative effect of repeated semiotic strategies such as shared stances, evaluative language and affective framing that align users around communal values. Hashtags like #ivfjourney and #twomomssquad thus function not merely as topical labels but as socially meaningful cues that help to co-construct emotionally resonant digital publics.

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Reimagining kinship in *Sense8*: A multimodal stylistic analysis of posthuman household narratives

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This study investigates the discursive construction of the alternative household representation within the Netflix series *Sense8* (2015–2018), a ‘proud and loud’ manifesto of diversity and equality (Shaw & Stone, 2021). The protagonists’ cluster – a group of eight individuals who share a profound mental and emotional bond – makes a case for the contemporary societal debates surrounding diverse family formations (Balirano et al., 2024). Moreover, series creators, the Wachowskis (directors of *The Matrix*, *V for Vendetta*, *Cloud Atlas*), have notably depicted imaginary, yet not-out-of-reach post-human societies, where individuals are called to inhabit reality beyond hegemonic paradigms, and to evolve *sympoietically* (Haraway, 2016), that is, humanely, emphatically and collaboratively. In *Sense8*, the (re)presented household moves beyond traditional cisgender, heteronormative, binary and monoethnic frameworks, a compelling and all-encompassing trope of intersectionality and inclusivity.

Drawing on the premise that discourse can both consolidate and unbuild power and societal family norms (Fruttaldo, 2024), this research employs a Multimodal Stylistic approach (Nørgaard, 2014) to explore how *Sense8* casts a brand-new sense of family, which in the series is both chosen and biological, to suggest that humans are born with humane capability. Kinship and emotional connection are construed through linguistic devices such as deixis and evaluative lexis, which are scrutinised with a stylistic lens to highlight the evolution of the cluster’s collective voice and negotiation of shared experiences. From a multimodal perspective, these categories are reflected in visual salience, which is cued in the series’ shared spaces and synchronised actions, and in function of eye contact and gaze. These elements, along with reflections on categories of being, doing and existing, increase the sense of belonging and solidarity within the cluster, encouraging the spectators to question and reimagine traditional households and what it means to be humane.

This study also helps to explore the intersectional dimensions of the cluster's experiences. Each member faces distinct forms of discrimination related to gender, sexuality, race, class and ability, mirroring the call for research on intersectionality in discourses of families and households. The analyses highlight both the individual struggles and the collective strength derived from the cluster's interconnectedness, showcasing how their 'sensate' experiences foster empathy and solidarity across diverse identities (Mincheva, 2018). In light of a reconceptualized posthuman subjectivity, grounded in relationality and transversal interconnections across classical axes of differentiation (Braidotti, 2013), it becomes necessary to consider how such a subject engages in the practice of making kin beyond normative familial models (Haraway, 2018). Through its discursive construction of the cluster, *Sense8* offers a compelling reimagining of kinship that challenges traditional models and contributes to broader conversations on inclusive, intersectional representations of family in contemporary media (Riboni, 2024).

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Representing single-mother families: A discourse analysis of Reddit threads and comments

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Family patterns have diversified considerably in the last sixty years, going beyond the married nuclear family (a married – heterosexual – couple with children) and single-parent families are now a widely recognised phenomenon and family assemblage (UN, 2017; Balirano et al., 2024). Yet, according to some narratives, the 'traditional', nuclear family remains a source of morality for nations, a beacon for social order and identity (Sullins, 2021). Indeed, this concept of family has proved to be a fertile instrument of political and public communication because of its resonance across the social spectrum and its ability to engage with social and cultural values (Galvin, 2006). However, amid the many public appeals to embrace the defense of traditional family values – such as love, respect, honesty, responsibility –, a more subtle view has increasingly emerged, capturing the paradox of such narratives. Traditional family values are used as a weapon to deny the rights of differing, non-traditional families (Zartler, 2014).

This study specifically aims to investigate how different concepts of family are discursively construed in social media discourse, focusing on the online interactions that could be retrieved from the platform Reddit concerning single-mother families. Reddit is a platform consisting of topic-based communities, often referred to as 'subreddits', which function as discussion forums where users can share content and comment on a wide range of issues. Its hybrid nature, combining features of traditional forums and social networking sites, has contributed to its growing popularity. A corpus of threads featuring the keywords 'single mom(s)/mum(s)/mother(s)' was collected, including all the replies and comments to the initial messages, as posted over the last 3 years on the platform.

Through a critical approach to discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2006; Jones et al., 2015; Bouvier & Machin, 2018), the construal of single-mother families emerging from Reddit posts and comments will be examined. The investigation will concentrate on conversations on topics relating to single moms, seeking advice/opinion, and so forth, as well as instances of hate speech perpetuating forms of discrimination and marginalization towards such families. By enacting social stigma and stereotyping, hateful narratives exacerbate emotional and social tensions, portraying single mothers as unworthy exceptions to the 'natural' and 'traditional' family.

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Sisterhood, solidarity and transfeminist alliances in digital environments: A multimodal critical discourse analysis of the FEMINIST ZINE

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The present study aims to investigate the multimodal construction of household and sisterhood within the digital community FEMINIST, a popular social-first digital platform that currently engages more than six million people worldwide (FEMINIST, n.d.). Indeed, contemporary fourth wave feminism differs from other phases of the movement mainly because of the new horizons of connections and spaces allowed by the Internet and social media (Peroni & Rodak, 2020). Feminist activists soon recognised the power of the web to build global networks with sisters all around the world and used it to take their battles for change to a new dimension, creating feminist digital communities that have had a significant impact on the development of the contemporary movement (Zottola, 2024). Drawing on the concepts of sisterhood and women's solidarity (hooks, 1984), the community FEMINIST configures itself as a feminist digital household where marginalised subjectivities experience different forms of community, challenging traditional family representations and kinship relations. The community-centred approach of the platform led to the collective creation of the FEMINIST ZINE, a publication of multimodal contributions on what it means to be an intersectional feminist today. The first issue of the FEMINIST ZINE, published digitally in 2022, is the selected corpus for this study. By exploring the discursive practices of the members of the community involved in the creation of the issue, this study intends to investigate the modalities through which the digital household FEMINIST and its bonds of sisterhood are discursively construed. At the same time, the core of the study is to highlight how marginalised subjectivities construct their own intersectional identities and their relationship to each other within the feminist digital environment. The methodology adopted for this study is Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (Kress, 2010), characterised by a specific transfeminist approach (Lazar, 2007). This analytical framework will allow for a critical exploration of the different semiotic resources employed in the construction of meanings and representations. Additionally, the transfeminist-situated approach will allow for a reading of the collected data in relation to the trends and contradictions of feminisms within contemporary neoliberal society (Peroni & Rodak, 2020). Ultimately, the investigation will suggest that the analysis of popular feminist digital households is fundamental to understanding how contemporary feminisms challenge traditional representations of family and kinship identities, promoting an anti-essentialist approach in contemporary family types (Balirano et al., 2024).

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Human and AI ideologies: Pragmalinguistic and multimodal representations of contemporary family forms

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Considering the dynamics of the Web 2.0 as a defining feature of contemporary societies (O'Reilly, 2005), wherein online communities of belonging emerge through users' subjectivity, agency and shared discursive practices (Zappavigna, 2014), this study aims to compare human linguistic conceptualisation of contemporary households with its corresponding representation in AI-driven multimodal design. In particular, this investigation is organised into two distinct phases. The first phase examines university students' discursive representations of family structures. Since "negative and discriminatory depictions [of family practice] have continued to limit the production of dialogic spaces in which non-normative families can exist and feel acknowledged" (Balirano et al., 2024, p. 4), a pragmalinguistic approach (Thomas, 1995) may help uncover both ideological and interpretative biases. Adopting the methodological framework developed within the PRIN ECHOES Project (English Studies to Contrast Hate Online and Enhance Solidarity), data collection involved the design and administration of a survey aimed at prompting students to engage with AI tools (primarily Copilot and ChatGPT) to generate visual representations of their most prototypical concept of family. The second phase of the study applies a multimodal semiotic approach (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020) to analyse the AI-generated images, with the objective of investigating how the AI interpreted the linguistic input and visually constructed the concept of family. By juxtaposing the findings from both phases, the research aims to explore the illocutionary force in students' speech acts (Austin, 1975) and their multimodal interpretation by AI systems, drawing upon the theoretical principles of Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday, 2014).

Through the active generation of AI-driven multimodal representations of family forms, this study aims to investigate the diverse articulations of subjectivity shaped by individual perceptions and student-machine interactions, thereby foregrounding potential biases of both computational and socio-cultural origin. By focusing on pragmatic aspects, the research seeks to examine possible communicative discrepancies between humans and machines through an analysis of their respective illocutionary acts, in both linguistic and multimodal modes. Given the increasingly pervasive role of AI technologies in contemporary society, such discrepancies may reveal how machines interpret, reprocess, and realise intended meanings in ways that diverge from human communicative intent, potentially undermining the user's agency, a defining feature of human discourse. Drawing on Foucault's (1972, p. 49) understanding of discourse as "practices which systematically form the [mental] objects of which they speak", this study aims to analyse possible hidden ideologies within contemporary (human and artificial) discursive practices on the concept of family.

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Not a mother: Surrogacy, agency and the reframing of family through the voices of surrogates

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This paper explores the discursive role of gestational carriers (more commonly referred to as surrogates) in reshaping dominant narratives of family, motherhood and reproduction in the context of surrogacy arrangements. For the purpose of

this study, I focus on women who have carried a pregnancy for couples of gay fathers. This focus reflects the trend of right-wing and religiously aligned media amplifying a reductive and moralizing narrative: that of the exploited, economically disadvantaged surrogate mother (Mongibello, 2024), forced to give up ‘her child’ to fulfill the selfish desires of wealthy gay couples. Central to this framing is the symbolic function of the term ‘mother’, which assigns a parental role that many surrogates explicitly reject.

As a counter-discourse, several reproductive surrogates (by choice) – particularly from North America – have publicly challenged these narratives, producing videos and social media contents that assert their agency and ethical motivations (Smietana et al., 2018). These women describe themselves not as mothers but as gestational partners or even surrogacy activists, emphasizing their role as vessels who enable the creation of a family without claiming parental identity. Their testimony reveals a desire to participate in something larger than themselves, often framing their actions as expressions of solidarity, care and intentional choice rather than victimhood or exploitation.

This investigation analyzes the discourse of one such figure: a self-described ‘retired surrogate’ who, after forming her own family, chose to carry children for others multiple times, The Lotus Woman. Through a critical multimodal discourse analysis (Lazar, 2000, 2005) of her Instagram videos, I examine how she constructs a counter-narrative that both resists maternal framing and makes visible alternative understandings of kinship.

In this perspective, surrogates are also openly acknowledged as part of the extended family network, not as a mother but as a significant figure in the process of family-making. This openness reflects a broader shift in how queer families face and sometimes dismantle heteronormative notions of kinship (Balirano et al., 2024). Ultimately, the study argues that surrogates play a crucial discursive role in challenging the foundational idea that family necessarily requires a mother, thus exposing the limits of normative reproductive imaginaries.

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SEM30. De-/re-humanizing the language of global fears: Crises, extremism, terrorism

30A 11 September h. 11:00-13:00, room 2 Moro (second floor)

30B 12 September h. 14:00-16:00, PN 14

Convenors

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Abstract

The new millennium has brought forth an escalating series of global challenges including mass migration, climate change, pandemics, AI development, acts of terrorism and wars or conflicts (e.g., Russia-Ukraine) – which have contributed to a heightened sense of global fear. These crises are not only material, but also profoundly discursive, as they are framed and reframed in public discourse. At the heart of these representations lies the strategic construction of humanity and its boundaries, which shapes how crises, extremism, and terrorism are mediated, understood, and responded to (Cap, 2017; Demata, 2018; Wodak, 2020 [2015]).

The seminar critically examines how language both dehumanizes and rehumanizes in times of crisis. While dehumanizing strategies strip individuals or groups of their agency and moral worth – reinforcing fear and legitimizing exclusion – rehumanizing discourses work to restore dignity, agency, and empathy, often serving as counter-narratives to dominant fear-based frames (Entman, 1993). We invite contributions that explore these discursive processes across political speeches, media discourse, and other public texts, analyzing both the linguistic mechanisms that construct fear-driven Othering and those that attempt to reclaim shared humanity.

While embracing diverse linguistic approaches outlined in the AIA call for seminars, the proposal prioritizes critical perspectives that analyze how language shapes meaning, constructs identities, and influences worldviews (possibly also considering the interaction with semiotic resources, e.g. Machin, 2013; van Leeuwen, 2014). By examining the processes of de-humanization and rehumanization in political and media discourse, the seminar seeks to uncover pathways for fostering more ethical, inclusive, and empathetic narratives in an increasingly polarized world.

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SEM30. Papers

30A 11 September h. 11:00-13:00, room 2 Moro (second floor)

- “One – and only one – official language”: *Weaponizing English in the US* (Maria Grazia Sindoni, Università degli Studi di Messina)
- *Representations of opioid addiction and homelessness in an American city: A multimodal analysis of news discourse* (Chisom Nlebedum, University of Massachusetts Boston / Jennifer Sclafani, University of Massachusetts Boston)
- *Re-humanizing migrants: Humanitarian discourse in translation* (Maria Cristina Seccia, Università degli Studi “G. D’Annunzio” Chieti-Pescara)
- *Dehumanising and deagentifying migrants through externalisation policies: The cases of Italian and British offshoring/outsourcing to Rwanda and Albania* (Franco Zappettini, Sapienza Università di Roma)

30B 12 September h. 14:00-16:00, PN 14

- *Rehumanizing and dehumanizing news narratives through translation: Ideological translational decisions in the BBC documentary, Gaza: How to survive a warzone* (Denise Filmer, Università di Pisa)
- *Milan's 'lead years'. The human face of political violence in Anglophone media discourse* (Kim Grego, Università degli Studi di Milano)
- *From tools to faith: A paradigm shift in techno-discourse from Brand's human-centered vision to Andreessen's techno-determinism* (Ilaria Moschini, Università degli Studi di Firenze)
- *The discourse of fear and attempts at rehumanization in Waldman's The submission* (Mais Qutami, Al-Zaytoonah University of Jordan)

SEM30. Abstracts

Rehumanizing and dehumanizing news narratives through translation: Ideological translational decisions in the BBC documentary, *Gaza: How to survive a warzone*

Denise Filmer (Università di Pisa) denise.filmer@unipi.it

The BBC's editorial guidelines clearly state its commitment to "achieving due impartiality in all its output"¹. The BBC is the most visited English language news website in the world² and "the most trusted international news broadcaster"³ across the globe. Recently, however, it has come under attack for alleged bias in reporting on the Israel-Gaza conflict. Controversies surrounding the documentary *Gaza: How to Survive a Warzone* (Roberts and Hammash 2025) prompted its removal from BBC iPlayer: the revelation that the father of the film's teenage narrator had worked as a deputy minister for the Hamas-run government in Gaza provoked a chorus of criticism from the right-wing press. Further accusations ensued: the *Daily Telegraph* reported that the BBC had 'whitewashed' the views of Gazan interviewees by "repeatedly mistranslating references to 'the Jews' and omitting the praise of 'jahid'" (Johnston 2025 my emphasis). Journalists are rarely trained in translation (Filmer 2014); therefore, when ideologically loaded lexis becomes a critical point in translational decision making (Munday 2021, p. 3), a closer scrutiny is called for. This paper examines the BBC's translational decisions and investigates the *Telegraph's* allegations of mistranslation from a journalistic translation perspective (Valdeón 2020) in the context of the emotional turn in journalism (Wahl-Jorgensen & Pantti 2021). Drawing on Baker's (2006) elaboration of narrative theory, framing in the news (Entman 1993), and Munday's (2012) *Critical Points in Translational Decision-Making*, the paper argues that the BBC's translational approach in the context of the Gaza-Israel war was more appropriate than a so-called literal translation, thus illustrating how translational decisions can restore or deny agency, empathy, and moral complexity in international news reporting.

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¹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines/guidelines/impartiality/>

² https://pressgazette.co.uk/media-audience-and-business-data/media_metrics/most-popular-websites-news-world-monthly-2/

³ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/whatwedo/worldservice>

Milan's 'lead years'. The human face of political violence in Anglophone media discourse

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Background. Over 50 years – more than half a century – has passed since the 1969 Piazza Fontana attack in Milan, which was among the incidents marking the beginning, both locally and nationally, of the so called 'lead years' (*anni di piombo*) in Italy. This was a period of political unrest that saw numerous violent acts, with many victims, mar the Italian scene, especially during the 1970s and 1980s, but which some scholars see extending into the 2000s. Material. The violent events that took place in those years were chronicled in many news outlets throughout the world. This study focuses on attacks that occurred in Milan, as reported by English-speaking sources. Aim. The purpose is to capture the affective dimension of the protagonists (perpetrators and victims alike) in the way they were depicted in contemporary reports, possibly extending the observation to more recent times, contingent on material availability. Method. The study adopts methods in applied linguistics, drawing on sentiment and discourse analysis in particular. The analysis is predominantly qualitative in nature, backed up where possible by quantitative inputs. Relevance. This paper contributes to studies exploring crises, extremisms and terrorisms, to offer a linguistic exploration of the human construction of those involved and – possibly – to contribute to the overall reflection on societal discourse across cultures.

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From tools to faith: A paradigm shift in techno-discourse from Brand's human-centered vision to Andreessen's techno-determinism

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The paper examines the discursive construction of the human-technology relationship in two influential texts that articulate contrasting visions of technological progress: Stewart Brand's preamble to the Whole Earth Catalog (1968) and Marc Andreessen's Techno-Optimism Manifesto (2023). Although both position technology as central to human flourishing, they substantially diverge in the ways in which they humanize – or dehumanize – the technological subject.

For several decades, Brand's ecological and countercultural vision shaped dominant US-based discourse of innovation. Inspired by R. Buckminster Fuller's (e.g. 1969) belief that access to the right tools could empower individuals to reshape society, Stewart Brand framed technology as a democratizing force (Turner 2006). In the Whole Earth Catalog, tools were considered as empowering conceptual devices for systemic transformation. Such a "tool-for-use" paradigm emphasizes agency and positions the human as a creative actor embedded in ecological and communal systems.

By contrast, Andreessen's Techno-Optimism Manifesto represents a paradigmatic shift in techno-discourse. Framed through conceptual metaphors of inevitability, and salvation (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003), it portrays technology as the autonomous force that drives civilization forward. Human agency is contingent on alignment with innovation's teleology and dissent is considered as a regression. Such a discourse dehumanizes human subjects by collapsing moral complexity into binary logic and forcing subjectivity to a deterministic vision of progress (Cap, 2017).

Using tools from Critical Discourse Analysis and conceptual metaphor theory, the paper explores how language participates in the de-/re-humanization of the subject in digital techno-discourse. The contrast between these two texts reveals a shift in the rhetorical positioning of technology over time: from Brand's "tool-for-use" paradigm rooted in countercultural pragmatism to Andreessen's "technology-as-faith" narrative grounded in market determinism and futurist ideology. While both endorse a pro-technology stance, their different rhetorical strategies highlight competing visions of what technology is for, who it serves, and how it should be integrated into the fabric of human life.

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Representations of opioid addiction and homelessness in an American city: A multimodal analysis of news discourse

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The opioid crisis is an ongoing national public health emergency in the United States that affects urban, suburban, and rural communities alike. Dating back to the 1990s with the pharmaceutical industry's aggressive marketing of prescription painkillers, opioid overdoses have increased exponentially over the past couple of decades. Public health policy debates on this issue are currently being debated at the national, state, and municipal levels. While research has documented an evolution in media portrayals of opioid-related policies, with more positive attitudes toward harm reduction policies in recent years, news coverage continues to use stigmatizing language to present those suffering from opioid use disorder (Carlson et al, 2025).

The present study examines the portrayal of individuals affected by addiction and homelessness in news coverage on "Mass and Cass" (MAC), a tent city and gathering place in downtown Boston that has become the epicenter of the region's intersecting opioid, mental health, and homelessness crises. Based on a corpus of 150 videos of local broadcast coverage (~10 hours) on the events, issues, and policy discourse surrounding MAC over the past decade, we perform a critical multimodal discourse analysis (Eriksson, 2022; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2021; Machin & Mayr, 2023) of news coverage of the situation, focusing on how social actors, actions, and policy solutions MAC are represented and/or silenced in the media.

Findings show that political executives' voices outweigh those of public health and housing experts, and that the concerns of nearby residents and business owners are valued over the homeless individuals residing at MAC. We identify several dehumanizing strategies employed by news networks in representing individuals suffering from opioid use disorder, including:

- (a) subject selection: e.g., interviews with self-proclaimed "community activists" decrying the safety and aesthetic implications of the residents and activities at MAC
- (b) metonymic language: e.g., references to "drugs", "needles" and "tents" in place of people
- (c) framing devices: e.g., interplay between camera angle, distance, and sound effects that highlight transgressive group behavior rather than individual human suffering.

Additionally, by comparing the journalistic practices of various news networks and highlighting the strategies of one news station that bucks these trends, we draw attention to some re-humanizing strategies that may influence public perceptions of addiction and homelessness and better communicate the complexity of their underlying causes and potential solutions.

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The discourse of fear and attempts at rehumanization in Waldman's *The submission*

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This paper examines the way the discourse of fear is utilized and language is misused to be consumed by the American public to reinforce “the other’s” dehumanization in Amy Waldman’s *The Submission*. It is a counter- narrative through which the threat of selective democracy helps to contextualize the dehumanization of Muslims while their rehumanization proves to be achievable through language, dialogue, and unbiased representation. The paper reveals that dehumanization is perpetuated through the construction of a collective enemy and manufactured fear as depicted in the novel. It highlights the way American values of democracy, equality, and tolerance are even denounced as they are held responsible for providing “the other” with opportunities to rewrite their own story, become visible, and be heard.

The dehumanization of Middle Easterners and Muslims is so normalized that the majority do not question their own perceptions of the region or the constructed reality they have been fed. While the protagonist’s work is admired, it is disregarded due to his cultural and religious background in spite of his lack of faith. Waldman demonstrates that attempts to rehumanize “the other” succeed through his relocation to another country where his Arab name is not a liability. Once another culture embraced him and acknowledged his achievements, he regained his dignity, respect, and objective representation. The paper also delves into the issue of control over meanings and values that shape our lives and how this control determines what constitutes terrorism or extremism. In the novel, it is these labels that legitimize the exclusion and dehumanization of Muslim individuals and generate the inability to recognize their potential or humanity within the mainstream.

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Re-humanizing migrants: Humanitarian discourse in translation

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Amid ongoing global challenges posed by inadequate institutional and political responses to mass migration, public communication by humanitarian organizations plays a crucial role in shaping understandings of migration and rescue efforts. Drawing on the framework of Crisis Translation (O’Brien 2016), which emphasizes the role of translation in crisis communication, this paper investigates how two humanitarian organizations operating in the Mediterranean, *Emergency* and *Mediterranea*, conceptualize and present migrants to the international public through their English-language translated press releases. Using a corpus-based Translation Studies approach (see, e.g., Laviosa 2002; Olohan 2004; Hu 2015), this paper analyzes the English lexical items referring to migrants in comparison to the Italian original ones, highlighting how the lexical choices in translation encode varying levels of vulnerability, victimhood, agency and empathy. The analysis will demonstrate how these lexical choices in translation contribute to the discursive re-construction of migrants’ identities. Moreover, it will show the extent to which translation reinforces a narrative of empathy and serves as a tool for humanization facilitating an encounter with the “Other” in times of crisis (Atsmon 2025). This will ultimately shed light on the influence of the translation choices in crisis communication on the public perception of migrants and rescue efforts, thus highlighting the pivotal role of translation in shaping public discourse around migration and humanitarian action.

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“One – and only one – official language”: Weaponizing English in the US

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On March 1, 2025, President Donald Trump signed an executive order declaring English as the official language of the United States (Presidential Actions, 2025), thereby rescinding Executive Order 13166, which mandated federal agencies to provide language assistance to individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP). This policy shift carries significant implications for LEP individuals, particularly in their access to essential services such as healthcare, legal aid, and education. By removing federal requirements for multilingual services, the order effectively marginalizes non-English speakers, exacerbating existing inequalities and hindering civic participation.

This study adopts a Critical Discourse Analysis framework (Fairclough, 1989), informed by systemic-functional approaches to semiosis (Halliday, & Matthiessen, 2014), to analyze the transitivity structures and modality choices within the executive order, revealing how agency is attributed and obligations are framed (O'Grady, 2019). The discussion incorporates insights from translanguaging as a decolonizing project (Li Wei & García 2022) and illustrates how English is positioned as the “common” or “unifying” language, thereby naturalizing its dominance and relegating other languages to a peripheral or divisive status (Ho, Li & Sindoni, in press).

It is argued that the executive order operates as an instrument of linguistic nationalism, weaponizing English to enforce a monolingual identity that undermines the multicultural fabric of American society. The presentation also considers the socio-political motivations behind the order, its impact on marginalized communities, and broader implications for linguistic human rights. Ultimately, it explores how language policies can be used to dehumanize and exclude, transforming English from a global lingua franca into a tool of fear and control.

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Dehumanising and deagentifying migrants through externalisation policies: the cases of Italian and British offshoring/outsourcing to Rwanda and Albania

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Over the last three decades, the externalisation of borders has been a systematic institutional response to the migration ‘crisis’ (Fitzgerald, 2020). Several nations states, as well as the EU, have been promoting policies aimed at offshoring and outsourcing borders management in an attempt to exercise ‘sovereignty by proxy’ and quell public fear of the ‘strangers at our door’ (Baumann, 2016). This study focuses on two recent cases of such policies, namely the bilateral agreements between the British and Rwandan governments and between the Italian and Albanian governments whereby migrants would be processed in/by another country’s jurisdiction. More specifically, the study traces the discursive strategies

(Wodak and Meyer, 2016) of British and Italian PMs to identify how their governments legitimise the aforementioned policies in the public sphere.

Findings suggest that key discursive strategies adopted by political actors are driven by previous electoral platforms committed to 'stop the boats' and are predicated on perceptions of migrants as an external 'threat' to domestic security. From these premises I will argue that the externalisation of borders deagentifies and dehumanizes migrants in significant ways while buying states an easy way out of their international obligations. As they shift the 'burden' of unwanted immigration beyond the imaginary boundaries of nationhood, offshoring and outsourcing migration management restricts migrants' mobility and, crucially, their "access to territorialised human and civil rights" (Fitzgerlad, 2020). Significantly, these policies also conveniently help to conceal migrants' suffering from the public view or, at least, to project human tragedies to the country's even more distantly imagined territorial 'periphery' as immigrants kept at a distance are perceived as less relatable, or at best, seen as 'proximal sufferers' (Ong 2015).

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SEM31. Intersectional hate speech in the digital age: Media, power, and resistance

31A 12 September h. 14:00-16:00, S2 Moro

31B 12 September h. 16:30-19:00, S2 Moro

Convenors

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Abstract

The proliferation of Social Media Sites (SMSs) in recent years has intensified hate speech targeting specific identity markers, including gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, physical aspect and political or religious beliefs (Balirano & Hughes, 2020; Rasulo, 2023). This phenomenon manifests both online and offline, often escalating into hate crimes (European Parliament, 2024).

Rooted in harmful mental models, hate speech serves to dehumanize, stigmatize, and marginalize individuals, thereby reinforcing social divisions and undermining fundamental human rights. Recognizing this threat, global institutions such as the Council of Europe (2022) have implemented monitoring mechanisms and legal frameworks to address its spread.

While hate speech has been widely studied, research on intersectional discrimination, the compounded effects of “interlocking systems of oppression” (ENAR, 2020), remains relatively underexplored (Council of Europe, 2023). This seminar seeks to advance scholarly discussions by investigating the intersectional dimensions of hate speech in media environments, with a particular focus on digital discourse and SMSs (KhosraviNik, 2024). Adopting a critical lens (Flowerdew & Richardson, 2020), we invite contributions that examine how intersectional hate speech shapes power asymmetries, influences identity construction, and triggers resistance strategies.

Potential topics include, but are not limited to:

- Limitations of current hate speech theories
- Identifying and classifying hate speech
- Intersectional hate speech in digital communication and SMSs
- Intersectional representation in the media (e.g., news, cinema, television, advertising)
- Media policies and regulatory responses to intersectional discrimination
- Resistance and counter-discourse strategies in SMSs
- Forms of intersectional discrimination in institutional and political discourse
- Intersectional hate speech in specialized discourse
- The role of humour (e.g., irony, parody, satire) as a tool for intersectional hate speech
- Building in-group and out-group identity through hate speech
- Multimodal representations of hate speech
- Intersectional hate speech in AI
- Rhetorical tropes (e.g., metaphors, metonymy) and discursive strategies in intersectional discrimination

We welcome papers employing diverse methodologies, including (critical) discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, multimodal (critical) discourse analysis, ethnolinguistics, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, comparative studies, translation studies, media studies, and communication studies.

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SEM31. Papers

31A 12 September h. 14:00-16:00, room S2 Moro

- *(Neuro)divergent voices: From stigma to self-advocacy* (Giuditta Caliendo, Université de Lille)
- *“A transwoman is not a woman”: Rising transphobic rhetoric in politics in the Western world. A critical-discourse analytic perspective* (Maria Ivana Lorenzetti, Università di Verona)
- *#yourbodymychoice: Counter-discourses of resistance on X, Instagram and Reddit* (Laura Sofia Pensabene, Università di Catania)
- *Of currycels and currywhores: A thematic analysis of racialised misogyny in the incelosphere* (Giuseppina Scotto di Carlo, Università di Napoli L'Orientale)

31B 12 September h 16:30-19:00, room S2 Moro

- *Hate is in the AI-r? Prompting disrespectful representations in GenAI image tools. An on-field assessment* (Francesco Meledandri, Università degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro)
- *Pandemic Screens: Exploring cinematic representation of anti-Asian sentiment in the US* (Dalia Mennella, Università di Napoli L'Orientale)
- *The intersectional dimension of hate in the media: A multimodal critical discourse analysis* (Michaela Quadraro, Università della Calabria)
- *News narratives of hate speech in the age of neural machine translation* (Aurora Trapella, Università di Torino / Università di Genova)

SEM31. Abstracts

(Neuro)divergent voices: From stigma to self-advocacy

Giuditta Caliendo (Université de Lille) giuditta.caliendo@univ-lille.fr

Neurodivergence is an umbrella term for the neurological brain characteristics present in individuals who have a diagnosis of autism, Asperger's syndrome, dyslexia, dyspraxia or ADHD. Previous studies demonstrated that the social acceptance of neurodivergence can be undermined by the stigma perpetuated by the media, often constructing stereotypes through negative and deficit-oriented discourse. Karaminis et al. (2022), draw on the *Autism UK Press Corpus* to show how language choices and framing in newspaper discourse emphasize adversities associated with neurodivergence. These negative mediatic representations predictably make neurodivergent (ND) people increasingly reluctant to get diagnosed and receive proper help, which can have severe repercussions on their quality of life, including chronic stress, social isolation, and mental health deterioration (Turnock et al., 2022). Stigma rooted in negative media portrayals also exacerbates masking, the act of imitating neurotypical (NT) behaviours and concealing autistic traits in order to meet societal expectations. Because of social constraints to conform to NT norms, masking is especially prevalent among non-male subjects, which contributes to gendered diagnostic disparities and delays in receiving support (Karaminis et al., 2022).

Neurodivergence is increasingly recognized as an emerging social identity (Sochacka, 2022), deserving the same recognition as other identity categories, such as gender and sexual orientation (Livingston, 2023: 12). By framing neurodivergence as a form of cognitive diversity, this study positions the marginalisation faced by autistic individuals within the broader context of social injustice and hate speech, emphasizing the urgent need for a shift in both societal and media representations of neurodivergent people.

Drawing on Positive Discourse Analysis (Martin, 2004; Hughes, 2018), Critical Discourse Analysis, and corpus linguistics, this paper tracks a shift from deficit-based narratives to empowering, self-defined representations of neurodivergent identity. While traditional media have reinforced stigma through medicalized portrayals, often influenced by gender bias, emerging digital platforms provide space for counter-narratives and self-advocacy. The rhetorical strategies that challenge stereotypes of neurodivergence are observed through an investigation of the use of

lexicogrammatical patterns, identity-first language, and community-driven storytelling in a corpus of social media content in English from various platforms. Special attention is given to digital genre innovations, such as ‘autistic coming-out’ narratives and ‘neurodivergence comedy’, to explore how digital platforms promote neurodivergent self-empowerment and challenge the legacy of exclusion and medicalization.

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“A Transwoman is not a woman”: Rising transphobic rhetoric in politics in the Western world. A critical-discourse analytic perspective

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Despite global advances in inclusive practices towards non-heteronormative identities, discrimination and stigmatising rhetoric against transgender and gender-non-conforming individuals are on the rise in the Western world. In the US, the new Trump administration enacted a series of bills diminishing trans individuals’ rights, including legal gender recognition, while also restricting access to sports or the military. At the same time, in the UK, a recent Supreme Court ruling backed the ‘biological’ definition of a woman, de facto excluding transgender women and denying their gender identification rights. These measures reduce transgender individuals to a binary logic, failing to acknowledge the intersectional character of their identities. Transgender individuals have indeed simultaneously many fluid identities and concurrent membership within different social groups (Burnes & Chen, 2012).

Moreover, transphobic attacks promoting the misrepresentation of gender non-conforming people and ultimately fostering their dehumanisation come from a host of interacting heterogeneous sources, ranging from the far right (Mudde, 2016), centrist Christian fanatics to traditionally left-wing institutions, like some strands of transphobic feminism (Tudor, 2023; Bassi & Lafleur, 2022) and often strategically exploit the online affordances of social media to spread their message (KhosraviNik & Unger, 2016). At the same time, trans people are also marginalised within the heterosexual-homosexual dichotomy of orthodox queer theorizing.

Drawing on a critical discourse analysis perspective (Baker, 2014) and on Van Dijk’s sociocognitive framework (Van Dijk, 2013), this paper analyses the framing of transgender individuals in the discourse of UK and US politicians in 2025 in both institutional and social media settings to shed light on different manifestations of misrepresentation, othering and discrimination. Despite differences in the political, cultural and religious backgrounds of these political actors, results highlight four specific narratives characterising current transphobic discourse, including (1) the idea that trans people are ‘paedophiles,’ or generally sick people, (2) that ‘gender identity’ is a false construct, (3) that trans women harm ‘real’ women, and (4) that gender-affirming care and education harms children.

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Hate is in the AI-r? Prompting disrespectful representations in GenAI image tools. An on-field assessment

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In recent times, the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered tools and solutions proved to represent a breakthrough in virtual and real-life practices. Though the idea of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been circulating since the late 1950s (McCarthy et al., 1955) it has only been part of everyone's lives for a few years, since users had the possibility to create language and multimedia contents from scratch. Nowadays the most promising application is probably Generative AI (GenAI), which generates “synthetic data that closely resemble real-world data” (Bandi et al., 2023: 1). Trained upon LLMs (Large Language Models) developed by huge stakeholders (Dao, 2023), GenAI is now closer to the idea of “human reasoning” as it generates plausible contents based on human-induced prompts. There are many issues surrounding this new technology, considering it is within everyone's reach. For instance, ethical issues are paramount to the discussion of AI outputs (Dubber et al., 2020; Boddington, 2023), sparking a debate on the kind of results users can obtain in a matter of seconds. The extreme popularisation of these platforms, along with a lack of authoritative regulation frameworks paved the way to a dramatic rise in hateful and disrespectful comments, some of them being furthered by GenAI tools (Liebowitz, 2025). Though some countermeasures could be implemented (Pendzel et al., 2023), the potential of GenAI in creating ‘new’ forms of hate is huge. Against this background, this presentation aims at assessing how some popular AI tools can create hateful representations starting from users' prompt and ideas. In particular, the attention would focus on AI-powered generative tools that create realistic images from textual prompts, thus carrying out an intersemiotic translation process (Dusi, 2015). In particular, providing different easy-to-use GenAI platforms (including the newly-introduced AI-assistant featured in Twitter/X, Grok) with prompts based on hateful (e.g., racist, sexist, etc.) contents, the analysis would assess the level of faithfulness of such representations, thus evaluating the level of potential filters that could somehow mitigate or inhibit the content users aim at generating.

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Pandemic screens: Exploring cinematic representation of anti-Asian sentiment in the US

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In 1987 Paula Treichler argued that global disease outbreaks produce “epidemics of signification” (Treichler, 1987: 32). COVID-19 is no exception: old and new technologies have shaped an “invisible enemy”, producing a narrative that has reinforced pre-existing racist and xenophobic discourses (Ostherr, 2020). Within this tense situation, the labelling of the virus by several American politicians as “China Virus” has invoked sentiments of fear, hate, othering and discrimination towards a community that has historically suffered stereotyping and exclusion (Ibarra, 2024). During the pandemic period, as a matter of fact, the Trump administration has reignited the “yellow peril” trope demonising China as a global threat to humanity and presenting the US as the only savior of the world (Wu & Nguyen, 2022).

Mainstream media –including films– can, of course, be a conduit for stigma communication. Recent studies confirm a measurable rise in anti-Asian hostility in the US during the pandemic, often linked to media discourse (Cho et al., 2021; Croucher et al., 2020).

In light of this, the present investigation explores how mainstream US films released between 2020-2021, have contributed to the racialisation of the virus and the further marginalisation of the Asian American community in a more or less overt manner. The analysed content is produced by the US film industry, which is responsible, together with other forms of media narration, for the further exacerbation of an already existing stigmatisation due to racial prejudice (Sabharwal et al., 2022). Drawing on Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (Kress, Van Leeuwen, 1996), this study investigates how films of the pandemic period acted as discursive vehicles that, together with other forms of biased representations, contributed –whether intentionally or not– to the intensification of anti-Asian speech, which has a long history of intersection with themes of class and gender. By attending to these intersecting dynamics, this study will highlight how films can contribute to the naturalisation of a multidimensional narrative of exclusion and stigmatisation. This research will, therefore, highlight the intersection between cinematic language and socio-political narratives that position films as subtle, yet strong means of legitimising discriminatory attitudes which, in times of crisis, are further exacerbated by fear.

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#yourbodymychoice: Counter-discourses of resistance on X, Instagram and Reddit

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Social Media Sites (SMSs) brought about a revolution (Balirano & Hughes, 2020) by being spaces where people can express themselves freely, and yet and at the same time, can become targets of inflamed and polarized discussions, generically leading to the use of insulting and offensive language (Mondal et al., 2017).

Hate speech – as this specific type of discourse has been labelled– coincided with the rise of right-wing populism: in Trump’s tweets, for instance, it has been specifically categorized in an intersectional way, as a form of both gendered and racist violence (Saresma et al., 2021). His last campaign trail targeted simultaneously multiple groups, among which women and reproductive rights (Frances-Wright & Ayad, 2024) and acted therefore as a strong catalyst of such violence

online: in one of these instances, Nick Fuentes, enthusiastic Trump supporter, wrote in a tweet on November 5th (day of US election) “Your body, my choice. Forever”, altering the notorious pro-choice motto “My body, my choice”; following his claim, across different platforms, both discourses of support and condemnation could be found.

While the number of studies on hate speech targeting women’s rights is already quite abundant, studies on intersectional counter-discourses on this specific event seem non-existent: in order to fill such gap, this study will be focusing on narratives of resistance on Reddit, X and Instagram; filtering comments and posts that use the #yourbodymychoice to construe counter-discourses and adopting a multimodal critical discourse perspective (Machin & Mayr, 2023), the aim will be that of uncovering how language and other meaning-making semiotic resources contributed to counter hate and fear speech in the two weeks following Fuentes’ tweet, highlighting, when present, what kind of role the interlocking of gender, sexual orientation and race played in the construction of such discourses.

By understanding in which way people, especially women, respond to these threats collectively, creating community in such a threatening political and social ecosphere, we will try to enrich the debate (Council of Europe, 2022) aimed at strengthening discursive resistance towards intersectional hate speech discourses.

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The intersectional dimension of hate in the media: A multimodal critical discourse analysis

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The emergence of digital technologies has introduced new forms of online communication and management of social relationships, which were embraced with optimism as opportunities to cultivate innovative forms of participation, interaction, and democracy (Esposito and KhosraviNik, 2024). However, constant access to mediation technologies has contributed to the promotion of discursive strategies and the reinforcement of exclusion patterns, highlighting multiple systems of discrimination.

This paper intends to analyse the representation of hate in media environments. In particular, we will seek to understand how hate is constructed, communicated, and socially perceived. The emphasis will be on digital discourse and the dehumanising consequences of discrimination and social divisions. For example, the Netflix series *Adolescence* (2025) will be analysed to examine the representation of social media violence and cyberbullying. Depicting a 13-year-old boy arrested after the murder of a schoolmate, the show has received significant recognition for its groundbreaking single-shot filming technique, which enhances the intensity of the representation and the emotional involvement of the audience.

In a multimodal perspective, the analysis will investigate the multiple semiotic choices in language and visual communication that construct hate and achieve specific communicative aims. This model emphasises language as a system of options from which authors select resources and create meanings. Drawing on Kress and van Leeuwen’s ‘grammar’ of visual design (2021) and Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (Machin and Mayr 2023), this paper will examine the multimodal representation of hate and the mental models, thus creating emotional involvement and instilling a sense of threat. How we perceive the participants in the show is also influenced by how their actions are depicted, with reference to Halliday’s work on transitivity, rooted in Systemic Functional Linguistics (2004).

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Of currycels and currywhores: A thematic analysis of racialised misogyny in the incelosphere

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This study explores the intersectional dynamics of misogyny and racialised self-hatred within online incel communities, focusing specifically on the discourse surrounding South Asian incels – commonly referred to as ‘currycels’ – and their perceived exclusion from the sexual marketplace. Through Thematic Analysis, the research examines how whiteness is constructed as the apex of desirability, leading South Asian men to internalise racial inferiority while simultaneously reproducing the white supremacist logics that marginalise them. This paradox reflects a complex interplay of racial and gendered hierarchies, where masculinity is validated only through proximity to whiteness, and ethnicised masculinities are pathologised. The analysis foregrounds how these communities produce a stratified model of sexual capital in which South Asian men are relegated to the lowest rungs, while South Asian women (‘currywhores’) are doubly marginalised – as both sexually undesirable and as traitors for pursuing relationships with white men. The vilification of South Asian women thus operates at the intersection of race, gender, and sexual politics, revealing how patriarchal control is racialised and policed. Furthermore, the study reveals how fantasies of violence – particularly rape and punitive discipline – function as regulatory tools to enforce these intersectional norms and punish perceived transgressions. Ultimately, this research situates the incelosphere as a digital site where structural inequalities of race, gender, and sexuality are reproduced, reinforcing a reactionary politics that thrives on exclusion, self-loathing, and ideological violence. By tracing how intersecting systems of oppression operate within this subculture, the study offers a critical lens on how digital hate speech both reflects and reinforces broader socio-political hierarchies in the contemporary Anglosphere.

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News narratives of hate speech in the age of neural machine translation

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Defining and identifying hate speech can be challenging, due to its conceptual ambiguity and the difficulty in delineating the boundary with free speech (Zottola, 2020). Hence, hate speech is regarded as a controversial topic, subject to analysis from various perspectives. This paper investigates how hate speech is represented in news discourse considering current socio-political shifts, especially within the context of Trump’s administration and the ensuing controversy over “woke culture”, with efforts to restrict policies and practices associated with diversity, equity, and inclusion in federal government communications (Yourish et al., 2025). These recent developments have further blurred the boundaries between freedom of expression and hate speech, raising questions about values, behaviours, and tolerance thresholds in

public communication particularly as they relate to structural inequalities shaped by diverse intersecting dimensions of identity such as gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.

The first aim of this study is to examine how hate speech is constructed and conveyed in news media, using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to highlight underlying ideas and values in language choices (Machin & Mayr, 2023). To this end, a small, specialised corpus of English-language newspaper articles on hate speech will be compiled and analysed, comparing pre- and post-Trump periods to investigate how political discourse in the news construct, obscure, or legitimise intersectional hate speech, considering how overlapping forms of discrimination operate within news discourse to reinforce power hierarchies and marginalisation.

The second objective explores the role of Neural Machine Translation (NMT) in mediating and potentially reshaping these representations. Given the increasing reliance on automated translation tools in journalistic contexts, often with minimal post-editing, this study investigates whether NMT introduces ideological shifts, omissions, or biases when translating politically sensitive content. As NMT increasingly serves as an assimilation tool (Koehn, 2020) in news consumption, the risk of unintentional ideological bias grows, with possible shifts in meaning going unnoticed. Moreover, NMT use in editorial settings, where post-editing is often performed by editors without formal translation training (Troqe & Marchan, 2017), also represents a challenge.

Drawing on examples such as Song (2020), which illustrates subtle ideological shifts in translated political discourse, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how intersectional hate speech is framed and potentially transformed in the age of machine translation and global news circulation.

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SEM32. Addressing hate speech and promoting digital citizenship in English studies

11 September h. 16:00-18:30, room 1 Moro (first floor)

Convenors

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Abstract

In alignment with the objectives of the ECHOES (English Studies to Contrast Hate Online and Enhance Solidarity) PRIN project (project ref. number 2022KZFT24) led by the University of Naples L'Orientale in cooperation with the University of Campania Luigi Vanvitelli, the University of Messina and the University of Naples Parthenope, this seminar seeks to advance research on responsible digital citizenship in and through discourse (Balirano & Hughes, 2020) as advocated by UNESCO's principles (2016). We aim to explore creative and critical engagement with today's multimodal digital products and environments in Virtual English as a Lingua Franca (i.e., VELF, Sindoni, 2023), that is conceptualized as the English language of international communication used within digital scenarios and beyond.

The seminar invites proposals that investigate research methodologies and pedagogical practices, including, but not limited to, studies on multimodal digital literacies (Lim & Tan-Chia, 2022), within educational settings and broader social contexts. These proposals should help develop knowledge dissemination and awareness regarding the identification of hate or harmful online speech and practices, particularly within English multimodal digital texts that threaten individuals, communities, and societal cohesion. To incorporate diverse perspectives and address a range of research questions, we invite submissions employing quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method approaches to the analysis of multimodal digital texts and practices in VELF. Our aim is to advance research on the mechanisms through which hate is triggered within and through digital discourse and to explore strategies for its mitigation in the context of peace education.

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SEM32. Papers

11 September h. 16:00-18:30, room 1 Moro (first floor)

- *A multimodal tool for assessing learners' digital literacies in interpreting harmful contents in English* (Marta Arcovito, Università degli Studi di Messina)
- *Promoting digital citizenship: the ECHOES project first wave results* (Mariavita Cambria, Università degli Studi di Messina / Stefania Taviano, Università degli Studi di Messina)
- *"You're not depressed, you're just lazy. Stop whining and go outside like the rest of us". Hate speech and mental health on social media: Discursive constructions and pedagogical perspectives* (Maria De Santo, Università di Napoli L'Orientale)
- *Counter-hate speech education: Critical tools for school teachers and learners* (Alessandra Ferlito, Università degli Studi della Campania Luigi Vanvitelli)
- *Multimodal digital literacy and AI-generated memes: Exploring AI's role in education-based hate speech prevention* (Annalisa Raffone, Università Pegaso)

A multimodal tool for assessing learners' digital literacies in interpreting harmful contents in English

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In the increasingly complex landscape of digital communication, the need to equip learners with robust multimodal digital literacies has become both a pedagogical imperative and a matter of social responsibility. A recent binational study found that 67% of adolescents in Germany and Switzerland witnessed hate speech at school, and 65% had encountered online hate speech at least once in the past 12 months (Wachs et al., 2023). In the Italian context, exposure to hate speech has been linked to reduced well-being and lower educational self-confidence among adolescents (Di Brango et al., 2024), underscoring the urgent requirement to develop users' critical awareness of linguistic and visual content.

We introduce a newly developed multimodal assessment tool, created within the framework of the ECHOES project (English Studies to Contrast Hate Online and Enhance Solidarity; PRIN ref. 2022KZFT24). The core premise of the project is that the active promotion of inclusion and equality should be pursued through the dissemination of knowledge and the raising of awareness about hate speech and harmful online practices in English multimodal digital texts—particularly those that may threaten or harm individuals, communities, or society.

Within this framework, the multimodal assessment tool has been developed with the aim of evaluating how Italian secondary school students interpret harmful and harmless digital texts in English. ECHOES is a joint research project carried out by the University of Naples L'Orientale in cooperation with the University of Campania Luigi Vanvitelli, the University of Messina and the University of Naples Parthenope. The tool is specifically designed for students in the third year of middle school and the first three years of high school, aligning with A2–B1 levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the Waystage level of the Common Framework of Reference for Intercultural Digital Literacies (Sindoni et al., 2019). It comprises two components: a sociodemographic questionnaire and a rating task involving 24 three-tier multimodal digital items categorised under six types of discrimination—Age (Ageism), Body (Body Shaming), Disability (Ableism), Ethnicity, Gender, and Religion. The tool is designed to measure students' awareness of offensive or respectful content in multimodal texts in the English language. Implemented through Google Forms with randomized element sequencing, the tool not only captures students' interpretive responses but also facilitates research into the perception of harmful content across multimodal formats.

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Promoting digital citizenship: the ECHOES project first wave results

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This paper presents the initial findings of the ECHOES (English Studies to Contrast Hate Online and Enhance Solidarity) PRIN project led by the University of Naples L'Orientale in cooperation with the University of Campania Luigi Vanvitelli, the University of Messina and the University of Naples Parthenope. In line with the seminar's focus on responsible digital citizenship (Balirano & Hughes, 2020), as advocated by UNESCO's principles (2016), these findings reveal how 720 teenagers, aged between 14 and 17, responded to the ECHOES digital questionnaire administered in two secondary schools in Sicily. The questionnaire invited them to reflect on the respectful and/or offensive language used in multimodal digital texts in English. Existing frameworks and taxonomies, i.e. The Digital Competence Framework (DigComp, 2016) and the Common Framework of Reference for Intercultural Digital literacies (CFRIDL, Sindoni et al., 2019) were used as a point of reference for the questionnaire.

The presentation of the findings corresponds to the two main sections of the questionnaire. The first section analyses demographic information regarding secondary school students, their perception of their language skills, and their (if any) multilingual repertoires (Sindoni, 2023). Students were also asked about their knowledge and use of English in educational contexts, as well as sociodemographic variables. The second section focuses on students' responses related to six distinct discrimination areas identified in the project as targets of hate speech: ethnicity, gender, age, disability, religion, and body shaming. Participants answered items in this section using a 5-point Likert scale. The items included in this section were either images, text or images accompanied by text, and participants were asked to assess if the items were respectful or offensive to them (Lim & Tan-Chia, 2022).

These initial findings, representing the first wave of results, aim to encourage reflection on strategies and pedagogical practices that may be effective in raising students' awareness in the collective fight against hate speech and in promoting counter-discourse strategies.

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“You're not depressed, you're just lazy. Stop whining and go outside like the rest of us”. Hate speech and mental health on social media: Discursive constructions and pedagogical perspectives

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In recent years, social media platforms have emerged as key arenas where mental health narratives are shaped, shared, and contested in ways that can both foster solidarity among users and perpetuate delegitimisation or marginalisation. Often framed as spaces of collective engagement - facilitating open discussion around mental health issues, information seeking, and peer support (Bucci et al., 2019; Naslund et al., 2020) – such multimodal and collaborative environments may also, at the same time, pave the way “for language aggression, violence and unrivalled displays of hatred” (Balirano & Hughes, 2022, p. V).

Against this backdrop, the present study examines how hate speech targets individuals who share personal experiences of mental health struggles, and how it is articulated through discursive patterns that are often covert, shaped by socially legitimised forms of speech, and reinforced by dominant ideologies that marginalise vulnerability and emotional suffering. Drawing on Critical Discourse Studies (Wodak & Meyer, 2016) and corpus-based approaches (Baker, 2023; Hunt & Brookes, 2020) the study explores a corpus of social media posts sourced from Reddit communities focused on mental health and TikTok profiles engaging with mental health discourses. The study also adopts a multimodal perspective of analysis (Sindoni, 2020) in order to explore the ramifications of hate expressions (Rasulo, 2023) in digital discourses.

Grounded in the findings of a quantitative and qualitative analysis of harmful online discourses surrounding mental health, the study seeks to offer pedagogical insights to mitigate the spread of hateful content and its broader societal impact. Specifically, it aims to develop pedagogical perspectives for English language and media education by providing learners with the skills and tools to decode hostile language, facilitate inclusive online interactions, and reframe discourse practices toward ethical and inclusive digital citizenship.

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Counter-hate speech education: Critical tools for school teachers and learners

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In recent decades, the issue of countering hate speech has emerged as a pressing concern in both academic discourse and the political agendas of Western democracies. Although international and national institutions, as well as media companies, have introduced legal frameworks, regulatory measures, and sanctions, the phenomenon remains unresolved. What continues to be missing is a widespread dissemination of critical tools that empower individuals to recognise, analyse, and challenge hate speech and its damaging effects (Balirano and Hughes, 2020; Rasulo, 2023). This gap is particularly evident in educational settings, despite the growing acknowledgment of education's pivotal role in this endeavor (Kellner & Share 2019; UNESCO, 2023).

Drawing on these premises, and within the framework of the project *ECHOES. English Studies to Contrast Hate Online and Enhance Solidarity* (PRIN 2022), this contribution presents the principles and approaches behind a set of operational guidelines (*vademecum*) created to support schoolteachers and learners in countering online hate speech. Existing educational toolkits in Italy broadly follow international and European directives that promote digital competence and critical thinking among youth. While they recognise the role of hate speech in reinforcing *us-versus-them* dichotomies, they rarely interrogate the deeper structures of power that sustain such discourse. Crucially, they often overlook the historical roots that continue to nourish hate speech, especially in today's increasingly nationalist, conservative, and reactionary climate. Racist, xenophobic, sexist, or ableist discourses must be deconstructed not as spontaneous emotional reactions, but as embedded in systemic structures of power and privilege (Manzoor-Khan, 2022; Nisco 2020). These are the effects of Whiteness, acts of 'microfascism', and continuations of the 'colonial gaze' (Bratich 2022; Mirzoeff, 2023). At a time when acts of solidarity with oppressed groups are being criminalised, it becomes imperative to renegotiate our understanding of key concepts and categories.

From an interdisciplinary and intersectional perspective, this *vademecum* aims to provide educators with an informative, formative, and critical tool, offering both theoretical insights and practical pedagogical strategies to foster inclusive and emancipatory classroom practices.

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Multimodal digital literacy and AI-generated memes: Exploring AI's role in education-based hate speech prevention

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The rise of generative AI, whose systems are trained on large datasets that may include biased information, has sparked concerns about the amplification of stereotypes, prejudices, and discriminatory attitudes manifesting through the phenomenon of hate speech online (HSO) (Liebowitz, 2025). At the same time, European regulations (Council of Europe, 2018; European Commission, 2021; Vuorikari et al., 2022) demand that teachers and educators equip students with fundamental competencies and skills, including critical digital literacy and active citizenship, to prepare future citizens of the world to live in and contribute to an increasingly sustainable society.

This study explores how AI and multimodal digital literacy intersect in the realm of hate speech awareness and prevention, especially in secondary and high school environments. This research, conducted under the PRIN Project ECHOES, directed at improving students' digital skills and critical understanding of HSO (Balirano & Hughes, 2020), focuses explicitly on designing multimodal educational tools to counteract dominant hateful narratives. Since memes have been recognised as an effective means of HSO dissemination (Polli & Sindoni, 2024), they have been selected as critical instruments to contrast harmful discourses and develop students' metacognitive skills and civic engagement (UN, 2015; Council of Europe, 2018).

Against this backdrop, this study, adopting multimodality (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2013), examines how AI tools respond when prompted to generate multimodal content to challenge hate speech targeting three commonly affected categories (i.e., body, disability, and age). The aim of this research is twofold: (a) to explore how AI constructs prompt-based meanings and whether the outputs meet real-life dimensions and non-discriminatory and instructional objectives, thus unveiling the affordances, constraints, and ethical implications of automatically crafting pedagogical memes; (b) to contribute to the growing body of literature on effective methods for incorporating AI technologies in education to promote EU values and recommended skills while tackling multifaceted societal issues such as HSO.

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SEM33. Edible narratives: Multidisciplinary representations of novel and traditional foods

33A 11 September h. 11:00-13:00, S3 Moro

33B 11 September h. 16:00-18:30, S3 Moro

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Abstract

An interesting notion in the context of food studies has been developed by Montanari (2006): any food can be associated with the values of 'natural' and 'edible' as long as these notions are associated by the specific community that consumes that food. For instance, in the context of digital communication, food blogs in English are a case in point: in these virtual communities, the construction of food-centred discourse and the cultural values that the members of the community come to associate with the food that is presented in the food blog are determined and mediated by the food blogger who acts as the leader of the community itself (Cesiri, 2020).

Therefore, the difference in terms of traditional and novel foods is essentially cultural and has very little to do with their nutritional content. However, it has received early attention from the European Union, which has proceeded with the definition and regulation of novel foods for human consumption in Regulation No. 258/97, which dates back to 1997. Since then, novel foods have been used in the media in association with different kinds of food, from GMFs to cultivated meat, to insects as food (Patinho et al., 2021), whose communicative potential in the general public's psyche is regularly exploited by political propaganda (Domaneschi, 2024).

Drawing on (critical) discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992; Gee, 2014), multimodal analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; van Leeuwen, 2008) and conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), the seminar explores how traditional and novel foods challenge the notions of 'human' and 'humane'. Furthermore, it examines the linguistic and narrative representations of traditional and novel foods in English and how these food practices are discursively constructed across institutional, medical, marketing, corporate, and tourism domains. By analyzing these contexts, the seminar highlights how traditional and novel food narratives stimulate human responses to ecological crises, cultural change, and ethical dilemmas. Finally, it will critically examine these discourses to explore how food is used as a means to reflect and reshape contemporary cultural and environmental paradigms.

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SEM33. Papers

33A 11 September h. 11:00-13:00, S3 Moro

- *Reframing the edible: A multimodal critical discourse analysis of corporate narratives on insect-based products* (Alessia Battista, Università degli Studi di Salerno)
- *Conventional Disruptions: Marketing the humane, the traditional, and the innovative in contemporary food discourse* (Marco Cimini, Università degli Studi di Napoli Parthenope)
- *Novel foods narratives: A critical-discursive insight into the representation of cultivated meat, lab-grown fish and plant-based seafood* (Umberto Faraone, Università degli Studi di Salerno)
- *Food Narratives: Building brand identity through heritage and tradition* (Luisa Marino, Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II)

33B 11 September h. 16:00-18:30, S3 Moro

- *Muffin means Yes: food and resilience in “The handmaid’s tale” and “The testaments”* (Simonetta Falchi, Università degli Studi di Sassari)
- *Cultured meat is (not) veg*n meat: Exploring veg*n attitudes in YouTube comments* (Francesco Nacchia, Università di Napoli L’Orientale)
- *From farm-to-table: Measuring host communities’ efforts to preserve a respectful and authentic relationship with the plant world in Instagram tourism reels* (Elena Mattei, Università Ca’ Foscari Venezia)
- *“Guilt-Free Indulgence”: A corpus-assisted discourse analysis of ethical luxury in the marketing of plant-based products and novel meats* (Gianmarco Vignozzi, Università di Pisa)

SEM33. Abstracts

Reframing the edible: A multimodal critical discourse analysis of corporate narratives on insect-based products

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Growing ecological crises have intensified debates about sustainability, including the need to tackle climate change and food insecurity, prompting the exploration of alternative nutritional sources, such as insect-based foods for humans. In spite of their nutritional and environmental benefits and of the endorsement by international institutions such as FAO and the EU, consumer acceptance of insect-based foods in the Western world remains low (Baiano, 2020). Therefore, scholars and marketers have suggested that the promotion of this type of product be changed, for instance by highlighting their benefits, concealing realistic representations of insects on the packaging, and relying on new conceptual frames and sensory manipulations (Ali, 2016; Tang & Chung, 2023).

Starting from these considerations, the present study explores the narrative representation and positioning of insect-based foodstuffs by three US-based companies, namely *All Things Bugs*, *Eat Chirps*, and *Don Bugito*, which have been selected for their distinctive narratives grounded in science, ‘coolness’, and traditional/indigenous cuisine, respectively. Recognising that food production and consumption go beyond mere sustenance, as they embody social and cultural rituals (Battista, 2025; Rozin, 1996), this contribution focuses on the “About Us” pages and a selection of articles by the three aforementioned companies, and combines critical discourse analysis (Machin & Mayr, 2023), multimodality (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020), and conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). The aim is to analyse the discursive, linguistic, and multimodal negotiation and representation of insect-based products as sustainable and attractive, but also as simultaneously ‘human’ and ‘humane’, innovative and traditional and/or familiar.

Overall, this contribution addresses the challenges posed to the traditional Western concepts of acceptable human foodstuffs, which may eventually be reshaped by novel socio-cultural and gastronomic paradigms. Additionally, examining multimodal corporate and marketing discourses about novel foods makes it possible to understand how narratives on novel foods stimulate responses to ecological crises, cultural change, and ethical dilemmas. Ultimately, this study contributes to a growing body of research on the discursive and linguistic representation of novel foods in marketing and corporate communication.

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Conventional disruptions: Marketing the humane, the traditional, and the innovative in contemporary food discourse

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Food plays a key role in shaping cultural and individual identities, driving social change, and reinforcing or challenging dominant power structures. Research has widely explored how discursive and representational practices involving food across different media function as ideological signifiers in the advancement of particular worldviews and values. In marketing discourse, for instance, consumers are encouraged to embrace ideals of ‘authenticity’ and ‘equality’ and increasingly, ‘humane’ consumption, by purchasing products associated with particular territories (e.g., Italy), communities (e.g., small-scale farms), or moral principles (e.g., fair trade). Such narratives often rely on a conservative imagery, and frame local and artisanal products in terms of ‘traditional’ and ‘natural’ heritage. In contrast, the category of ‘novel food’ – broadly understood as items unfamiliar to European consumers (e.g., insects) or produced through in-vitro processes (e.g., cultured meat) – evokes progressive and artificial associations that disrupt ‘conventional’ food imaginaries. Promoting these products requires distinct strategies to reframe negative representations (e.g., *Frankenstein Food*), overcome consumer resistance, redefine taste boundaries, and legitimize unfamiliar practices. These efforts are further hindered by regulatory constraints (e.g., the EU *Novel Food Regulation*), cultural norms and religious frameworks which determine both how the product is perceived and how it is discursively constructed for different market segments.

This paper adopts a qualitative, discourse-oriented approach to examine how contemporary marketing constructs the opposition between traditional and novel food in the particular case of meat. It focuses on four US-based companies – two cultivated meat pioneers (*GOOD Meat* and *UPSIDE Foods*) and two emblematic representatives of traditional meat production (*Certified Hereford Beef* and *Lobel’s of New York*). Through a comparative multimodal analysis of corporate websites, advertising, and selected social media content, the study explores how notions like ‘natural’, ‘authentic’, ‘humane’, and ‘ethical’ are articulated through metaphor, visual rhetoric, and other semiotic strategies. Results are expected to challenge the assumed dichotomy between ‘traditional’ and ‘novel’ in food discourse, revealing an interplay of competing ideologies determined by shifting ecological, technological, and ethical concerns.

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Muffin means Yes: food and resilience in *The handmaid’s tale* and *The testaments*

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This paper explores how food serves as a powerful narrative and symbolic vehicle for resilience, subversion, and communication within the oppressive regime depicted in Margaret Atwood’s novels, *The handmaid’s tale* (1985) and *The testaments* (2019), as well as in the Hulu TV adaptation of the former. The study investigates how representations of food become vital mechanisms of cultural expression, rebellion, and human connection in the dystopian society of Gilead. The titular example, “Muffin means Yes”, reflects the covert stratagem employed by Marthas in the Hulu TV adaptation, who communicate using baked goods as coded messages, muffins indicating agreement or compliance, and scones signalling refusal or danger. Moreover, muffins as a means of rebellion appear, in Season 2, Episode 12, when June/Offred, receiving an unappealing bran muffin at the Red Centre, sarcastically remarks directly to the camera, “Praise

f*** be”. This overt act of linguistic rebellion, emphasized by her breaking the fourth wall, transforms a mundane item into a trigger of subversion, vividly illustrating how ordinary domestic items can be mobilized as instruments of resistance against oppressive regimes.

Drawing on interdisciplinary insights into food narratives and their communicative and symbolic potential, this paper discusses food’s role in portraying socio-political resistance and psychological resilience. Furthermore, the analysis highlights food as a site of memory and identity preservation amidst severe repression. The paper demonstrates how edible items, portrayed visually and narratively, function metaphorically to illustrate broader ecological crises, ethical dilemmas, and cultural shifts. By critically examining the discursive construction of these food-based practices and metaphors across literary and televised narratives, the paper sheds light on how food is used to confront and reshape contemporary understandings of human dignity, identity, and resistance in oppressive contexts.

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Novel foods narratives: A critical-discursive insight into the representation of cultivated meat, lab-grown fish and plant-based seafood

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Discourses around food and foodways have become increasingly prominent nowadays across diverse intellectual and media landscapes (Matwick & Matwick, 2019), resulting in a food-webbed world. And as societies continue to evolve, so do too our foodscapes, constantly welcoming innovative and alternative food forms which may stimulate the circulation of new food narratives and even call for reinvented communicative paradigms.

In particular, the recent emergence of plant-based seafoods, lab-grown fish and cultivated meat has seemingly determined a shift in the way food is discursively represented, acknowledged and perceived. While traditional foodstuffs are often framed through the lens of ‘authenticity’, insisting on ‘organic’, ‘protected’, or ‘local’ designations, among others, serving as indicators of quality, tradition, and integrity of craftsmanship in consumer culture (Beer, 2008), the arrival of novel foods stemming from cellular agriculture (e.g. cultured meat and fish) or from plant-based replication of animal-based foodstuffs has prompted the emergence of new stories around food as well as new conceptualisations and narratives that foreground a newfangled array of sociocultural and ethical values.

This pilot study seeks to delve into the food discourses revolving around novel lab-grown, cultivated and plant-based edibles, by analysing a selection of English-language websites that market such foodstuffs, with the aim of unveiling the discursive strategies implemented in verbally representing and framing these novel edibles for the intended audiences. By employing qualitative modes of enquiry and incorporating corpus linguistics tools (Baker, 2023), discourse analysis (Goddard & Carey, 2017; Gee, 2014) and critical discourse analysis (Machin & Mayr, 2023; Fairclough, 2010), the study centres on the analysis of referential strategies, semantic prosodies, and framings leveraged to discursively portray the novel foods in question and the stories constructed around them for the intended English-speaking audiences.

Overall, results suggest that the scrutinised websites of the companies that produce and/or sell cultivated/lab-grown edibles and plant-based analogues present their products by underscoring environmental impact, economic benefits, sustainability, transparency, and quality, while ignoring matters relating to tradition and cultural identity.

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Food narratives: Building brand identity through heritage and tradition

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Even though codfish is not endemic in the Portuguese sea, its consumption is widespread all over the country and it is considered a symbol of national (culinary) identity.

This paper investigates the discursive construction of corporate identity from the ten leading Portuguese companies which operate in the field of canned and curated fish. After having retrieved a list from Bureau van Dijk-Orbis, I aim at utilizing Multimodal Discourse Analysis to analyse a corpus comprising the 'About Us' sections of the companies' websites. The companies involved in cod processing, which are under scrutiny here, tend to use narrative strategies which focus on the history of the company and on their tradition in handling such a 'symbolic' product. In this perspective, far from being just food, or a product, codfish seems to play a fundamental role in the transmission of the Portuguese cultural image(s) and archive(s).

The paper aims at evaluating how the texts in the corpus contribute to build the companies' brand identity, identifying the verbal and non-verbal rhetoric devices used to present them as rooted in tradition and willing to preserve their connection with the past. Furthermore, the paper aims at finding communication patterns which could, eventually, influence and shape stakeholders' perceptions.

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From farm-to-table: Measuring host communities' efforts to preserve a respectful and authentic relationship with the plant world in Instagram tourism reels

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Instagram has become a dominant platform for tourism marketing, yet few discourse studies examine its multimodal content, particularly at the corpus level (Mattei, 2024). This paper introduces a multi-level annotation scheme to analyze tourism reels. The aim is to explore how local food is portrayed across different forms of tourism promotion. Within a sociosemiotic, post-humanist framework, we investigate food's representation as a raw, natural element or 'authentic' dish to be consumed (Stibbe 2014).

Using ELAN software, a pilot corpus analysis allowed for the quantification of formal elements like objects, shots, gazes, words and sound in two sub-corpora of reels promoting traditional and regenerative tourism. Content-based categories such as participant roles, types of (re)actions and emotions were also measured (Bateman et al., 2017).

Findings show that traditional tourism often simplifies food preparation, presenting the latter as product, both fostering passive mental, emotive consumption and reinforcing power imbalance between hosts, tourists and the environment. In contrast, regenerative tourism highlights shared moments of food co-preparation and respect for local biodiversity, fostering cultural learning and equality. This study offers avenues for corpus research on ways to promote collective, social-ecological development through travel (Tham and Sharma 2023).

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Cultured meat is (not) veg*n meat: Exploring veg*n attitudes in YouTube comments

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The production of cultured meat is being increasingly allowed in countries worldwide, with the global market being estimated to reach the size of \$214 million by 2025 and \$593 million by 2032 (MarketsandMarkets, 2019). However, studies demonstrate that its recognition as an effective technology in tackling issues concerning human health, the environment and animal welfare has been received with mixed feelings across different countries (Pakseresht et al., 2022). Naming and framing also play a significant role in public acceptance, as shown by Bryant and Barnett (2018), who found that consumer perceptions can shift dramatically depending on how cultured meat is labelled.

The issue is particularly relevant to the veg*n (the term is meant to include both vegetarians and vegans) community, which has embraced different perspectives on it. Despite PETA's explicit endorsement of *slaughterless* meat, an opposing narrative emerges from a share of veg*ns who criticise cultured meat for symbolically violating animal dignity (Chauvet, 2018). This division echoes broader tensions within the veg*n movement regarding authenticity, compromise, and moral consistency (Wrenn, 2016).

Based on these premises, the proposed paper aims to explore the attitudes between veg*ns disapproving of and veg*ns approving of cultured meat by analysing a corpus of 1,050 YouTube comments posted in response to the popular amateur video "VEGAN Tries Lab Grown Meat for the First Time". The analysis draws upon the framework of Socio-cognitive Discourse Studies (van Dijk, 2017) and considers online discourse as a space of affiliation, negotiation and boundary construction (Zappavigna, 2012). In so doing, the study aims to shed light on the diverging perspectives that shape the ongoing dialogue around cultured meat and that might lead to setting new in-group and out-group boundaries within the veg*n community in online settings.

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“Guilt-Free Indulgence”: A Corpus-assisted discourse analysis of ethical luxury in the marketing of plant-based products and novel meats

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With the multiplication of discourses and the consequent normalization of sensitivity toward issues such as the environmental footprint of human alimentation and the well-being of animals, the marketing of plant-based and cultivated meats is shifting from discourses of sacrifice and sustainability to those of pleasure, luxury, and personal empowerment (Caruana et al., 2020; Athwal et al., 2019).

This paper investigates how such products are discursively framed as both ethical and indulgent, offering consumers the promise of “guilt-free” pleasure (Ledin & Machin, 2020). Drawing on corpus-assisted discourse analysis, the study explores how ethical consumption is aestheticized in English-language marketing discourse, focusing on prominent international plant-based and cell-based meat brands such as *Beyond Meat*, and *Oatly*. The study is based on the Ethical Indulgence Corpus (EIC), a purpose-built corpus of approximately 100,000 words, comprising texts retrieved from webpages of international brands producing plant-based and cultivated meat products (e.g., product descriptions, mission statements, press releases). Keyword analysis, collocation patterns, and semantic prosody are used to uncover how key values such as sustainability, animal welfare, and innovation are aligned with sensory and emotional appeals with words like “crave” and “indulgence”. Special attention is paid to relevant collocations (e.g., “clean protein”) and evaluative language that constructs these foods as both morally virtuous and gastronomically satisfying (Chen & Eriksson, 2019). While the primary focus is on verbal language, occasional multimodal analysis of selected promotional visuals complements the linguistic data, shedding light on how ethical luxury is visually signified.

Preliminary findings reveal how novel meat brands strategically blur boundaries between health, pleasure-seeking, and ethics, rebranding alternative products as desirable lifestyle choices.

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SEM34. Crafting comfort: The rhetorical and linguistic representation(s) of well-being in late modern newspapers and magazines

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

Convenors

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Abstract

The Late Modern period witnessed an unprecedented surge in print media production in Britain and its colonies, catering to a growing readership eager for information, entertainment, and self-improvement (Brownlees, 2023; Finkelstein, 2020; King, Easley & Morton, 2016; Shattock, 2017). Newspapers and magazines of this era not only reflected societal values, but also actively shaped them, offering rhetorical and linguistic blueprints for navigating the complexities of modern life and human experience. Among those blueprints, themes of well-being, happiness, comfort, and leisure emerged prominently, encompassing as diverse domains as fashion, food and drink, travel, music, dance, sports, and games (Oishi et al., 2013; Glatzer, 2019; Mazzi, 2023). Those representations served as cultural touchstones, reflecting and constructing notions of individual and collective well-being.

This seminar seeks to explore how well-being and comfort were rhetorically and linguistically crafted in Late Modern newspapers and magazines published in Britain and its colonies. We invite contributions that examine those themes through a variety of methodological lenses, including corpus linguistics, historical sociopragmatics, and historical discourse analysis. By investigating the textual and contextual strategies employed in those representations, we aim to uncover the ways in which comfort and well-being were constructed, contested, and commodified during that pivotal historical moment. Papers might address questions such as:

- How were activities like food and drink consumption, travel, or sports linguistically framed as pathways to well-being?
- What rhetorical strategies were used to persuade readers of the benefits of leisure and self-care?
- How did representations of well-being intersect with issues of gender, class, or national identity?
- In what ways did Late Modern media contribute to the commodification of comfort and well-being?

By bringing together diverse perspectives, this seminar aims to foster a nuanced understanding of the cultural and linguistic underpinnings of well-being in the Late Modern period, shedding light on their lasting impact on contemporary discourses of health, comfort and leisure.

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SEM34. Papers

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

- *The encoding of wellbeing in a corpus of British letters to the editor (1750-1800)* (Elisabetta Cecconi, Università degli Studi di Firenze)
- *Well-being and national identity. Secret societies and the construction of the Italian national state between facts and entertainment* (Isabella Martini, Università degli Studi di Firenze)
- *Journalism, empire and the promotion of sport, outdoor activities and well-being in an English-reading*

world. *A discourse-historical analysis of "The Review of Reviews" (1890-1908)* (Eleonora Natalia Ravizza, Università degli Studi di Milano)

- *Food and well-being in Charles Dickens's periodicals (1850-1870)* (Raffaella Sciarra, Università Mercatorum)
- *The language of well-being in 19th-century newspapers and magazines: A methodological framework* (Massimo Sturiale, Università degli Studi di Milano / Giulia Rovelli, Università degli Studi di Bergamo)

SEM34. Abstracts

The encoding of wellbeing in a corpus of British letters to the editor (1750-1800)

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In this paper, I shall examine how the concept of 'wellbeing' is linguistically represented in a specialised sub-corpus of 18th-century British Letters to the Editor (LTEs) from the period 1750 to 1800. The corpus comprises LTEs published in British newspapers, sourced from the *17th- and 18th-Century Burney Newspaper Collection*. The selected letters specifically address issues of male-female relationships and offer a valuable lens through which to explore the interplay between contemporary conceptualisations of wellbeing and the broader socio-discursive dynamics of gender inequality in the late modern period.

By applying principles of corpus-assisted discourse studies (Partington, 2009; Partington et al., 2013), I shall analyse both the collocational and colligational behaviour of the most frequent lexical items related to wellbeing (e.g., 'happiness', 'pleasure', 'peace of mind'). Through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the most frequent lexical items used to express the notion of wellbeing in late modern LTEs?
2. What does their usage in context reveal about contemporary conceptualisations and perceptions of wellbeing?

Preliminary findings indicate that 18th-century correspondents were eager to seek advice, articulate personal views, and engage in dialogic exchange on issues concerning male and female happiness. As Jones (1996: 45) observes, LTEs represented "the very health element in the English newspaper," serving as a crucial means of "feeling the national pulse." The editorial decision to publish –or in some cases, fabricate– letters addressing wellbeing in the context of gender relations reflects the cultural salience and reader interest surrounding these topics (Brownlees, 2025; Cecconi, forthcoming). As Bednarek (2006: 203) notes with regard to evaluative language in modern-day press, "newspapers will try to construct a text which is in line with what they think are the opinions, attitudes and feelings, hence the evaluative stance of (the majority of) their readers". In this light, LTEs appeared to function not merely as public forums, but as curated reflections of shared affective and ideological concerns, particularly in relation to gendered experiences of wellbeing or the perceived lack thereof.

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Well-being and national identity. Secret societies and the construction of the Italian national state between facts and entertainment

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My paper explores the representation of well-being at the intersection of audience entertainment and of issues of national identity, through a linguistic analysis of the representation, in the British press, of secret societies active in the 19th-century construction of Italy. Having attracted international travellers for centuries as one of the major destinations of the Grand Tour (Black, 1996) in view not only of its favourable climate, but also, and most importantly, because of its artistic and cultural heritage, Italy has been widely represented in the international news discourse over time. However, when the first national movements began to gain momentum in the 19th century, Italy was no longer seen as a destination for cultural enrichment, leisure, and for pursuing the travellers' own well-being only; rather, one prominent focus of the representation of Italy was its social well-being and its construction through the actualisation of an Italian national identity that would eventually correspond to the building of an independent state, liberating the Italians from a centuries-long rule that had fragmented their country (Davis, 2000) and promoting the social well-being of an entire population that was yet to obtain their independence. Despite considerable international press coverage of the key socio-political events and personalities that led to the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy in 1861, and to the capture of Rome in 1870, and of the so-called secret societies that provided a fundamental contribution to the creation of the Italian national state and national identity in the first half of the 19th century (Bartholdy, 1821; Rath, 1964), the related news discourse has received marginal attention to its linguistic features so far.

The same idea of discussing secret societies in the press or making their rituals and symbols explicit – which, for the very constitution of those societies, ought to have remained concealed – leads to further considerations to be made on the aim of their representation in the press beyond social well-being. This paper debates whether making secret societies newsworthy was indeed part of a broader strategy to frame their representation not only within the socio-political considerations of their role in the socio-political scenario of the time, but also by stimulating the interest of readers for gossip and entertainment, tapping into the innate fascination of human minds for anything either mysterious or otherwise inaccessible with the disclosure of what should be inaccessible knowledge – the accuracy of which needs to be further problematised because it is frequently offered by anonymous writers in the news items under consideration. This contribution problematises the existing representation of secret societies in the news by examining the linguistic representation of Italian secret societies in the British press, i.e., in the news and in letters to the editors (LTEs), applying to a corpus specifically built for this study a quantitative and qualitative analytical framework that combines corpus linguistics, corpus-assisted discourse analysis and historical pragmatics (Claridge, 2010; Partington, Duguid, Taylor, 2015). Recurrent clusters, collocations and extended co-textual references in news articles and LTEs are examined to identify their evaluative connotation and ideological representation of some of the most prominent – although ideally hidden – actors in the construction of the Italian national identity between facts and entertainment aimed at the reading public.

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Journalism, empire and the promotion of sport, outdoor activities and well-being in an English-reading world. A discourse-historical analysis of *The Review of Reviews* (1890-1908)

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At the dawn of the twentieth century, the advent of industrialization, which facilitated motorized transportation and expanded leisure time, led to a growing number of individuals engaging in outdoor sports as a means of enhancing their psychological and physical well-being. The London-based monthly magazine *Review of Reviews* (1890-1908), a transnational publishing initiative which catered to audiences in North America, Australia, and beyond, often dealt with this new trend, and actively engaged in the promotion of sport, outdoor activities and health/ well-being related issues (Potter, 2017; Baylen, 1979). A champion of British foreign and imperial interests, the *Review of Reviews*, presented its readers with a selection of original and republished articles, illustrations and caricatures with the self-declared purpose to “democratize the best thought of the world” (1890, i.1, p. 14). Its engagement with the emerging interest in activities such as skiing, mountaineering, or cycling certainly reflected a broader ideological project.

This paper will employ a combination of discourse-historical and social-cognitive methodologies (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001; De Cillia, Wodak & Reisigl, 1999; Van Dijk, 2009; Koller, 2009) to analyze how the representation of sport and outdoor activities in the *Review of Reviews* contributed to the construction and reinforcement of national, gender, and class identities to be exported to all corners of the British Empire. The analysis will specifically examine the portrayal of social actors and actions within the articles dealing with the above-mentioned topics: how are various domains of experience, encompassing processes, participants, and circumstances, constructed through discourse? Appraisal theory (Martin & White, 2007) will also be employed as a more fine-grained analytical framework to discuss what qualities and values are associated with well-being discourses, and how they contribute to specific socio-cognitive representations.

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Food and well-being in Charles Dickens’s periodicals (1850-1870)

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This paper, which combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches, investigates how the cultural debate that developed around the topics of food and nutrition was represented in the two magazines edited by Charles Dickens, *Household Words* (1850-1859) and *All the Year Round* (1859-70). Dickens’s journals provide a rich context for an exploration of the interactions between discourse on food and the periodical press, since they chronicled and participated in the transformation of English diet and dining customs during one of the liveliest and most important periods in English food history. Both *HW* and *AYR* dealt with many crucial aspects of contemporary food culture, such as the industrialization of food, the problem of adulteration, the influence of French over English cuisine, and the growing expansion of the British Empire, which also led to an interchange between different cultures and cuisines. Not least, they advocated awareness of the poor quality of British cooking and called for a change in English attitudes toward cookery, by claiming civilization through the “art of dining”. Accordingly, they played a critical role in spreading a new culture of food, aimed above all at improving the health of the less well-off classes, at a time when issues due to nutritional deficiencies were widespread, and even science was clarifying the methods to ameliorate the diet of both rich and poor, in

particular to fight hunger, a problem that still plagued a significant part of the English population. Their pioneering campaigns for the introduction of highly nutritious aliments into the British diet confirms that the two periodicals were quite progressive in nutritional, as well as social, matters. All these elements were of paramount importance for what can be considered a true gastronomic revolution that the two magazines witnessed and encouraged. The investigation will employ corpus linguistics in order to ascertain the extent to which the periodicals under scrutiny have contributed to the establishment of new nutritional habits and the dissemination of a novel and progressive gastronomic culture.

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The language of well-being in 19th-century newspapers and magazines: a methodological framework

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The concept of well-being is complex and multifaceted, encompassing physical, mental, social, political, and cultural dimensions. Because of this, well-being is also tightly linked to specific socio-historical contexts, which influence not only what well-being is perceived to be, but also how this concept is encoded, represented, discussed and promoted by society at large (Oishi et al., 2013). Since the periodical press both reflects and helps shape societal values, our paper explores how magazines and newspapers can be used to investigate the ways in which this pivotal concept was constructed and negotiated during the Late Modern period. The 18th and 19th centuries were, indeed, characterized by overarching social, political and cultural changes in both Britain and its colonies which certainly had an impact on evolving conceptions of well-being and comfort, and also witnessed an unprecedented surge in print media production, which catered to a growing readership eager for information, entertainment, and self-improvement (Brownlees 2023; Finkelstein 2020; King, Easley & Morton 2016; Shattock 2017). Drawing on materials from major digital archives – including *Newspapers.com* (<https://www.newspapers.com/>), *Nineteenth Century UK Periodicals* (<https://www.gale.com/intl/primary-sources/19th-century-uk-periodicals>), *The Times Digital Archive 1785–2019* (<https://www.gale.com/intl/c/the-times-digital-archive>), and *Canadiana* (<https://www.canadiana.ca/>) – this paper offers a methodological framework for analysing how well-being and comfort were constructed, contested, and commodified during this historically significant era. The approach integrates recent advances in corpus linguistics, historical sociopragmatics, and historical discourse analysis. Different magazine and newspaper sections, ranging from news reports to feature articles, opinion pieces and advertisements, whose distinctive characteristics emerged and consolidated precisely in this period, will be analysed paying particular attention to aspects of well-being related to comfort, leisure and entertainment which emerged prominently at the time and encompassed such diverse domains as fashion, food and drink, travel, music, dance, sports, and games (Glatzer, 2019; Mazzi, 2023).

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SEM35. Language, health and wellbeing: Individual and collective perspectives from past to present

35A 12 September h. 14:00-16:00, PN 10

35B 13 September h. 8:30-11:00, PN 10

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Abstract

From Early and Late Modern medical texts to contemporary public health campaigns, the language of wellbeing has evolved alongside scientific advancements and social transformations producing a variety of texts and discourses which deserve close examination for the role they have in popularizing and disseminating information, and directing individual and collective choices.

The seminar will examine the multi-faceted relationship between language and health, with a focus on wellbeing across both historical and contemporary contexts. Drawing on a range of texts and discourses, the contributions will address how the English language has evolved in its representations of health and illness, offering insights into the socio-cultural contexts that have informed these discourses. Employing methodologies such as corpus linguistics, discourse analysis, and (historical) pragmatics, this seminar will investigate how English has been employed to conceptualize, communicate, and negotiate health and wellbeing. By integrating diachronic and synchronic perspectives and highlighting both personal and collective experiences, contributors will analyze linguistic shifts in medical discourse and the ways in which language shapes, and is shaped, by changing understandings of health.

Potential topics may include:

- Life course health, old age, midwifery, mental and public health.
- Linguistic representations of health and illness in historical and contemporary medical discourse.
- The role of metaphor and framing in shaping perceptions of wellbeing.
- Medical writing and the evolution of health-related terminology.
- Public health campaigns and their linguistic strategies.
- The impact of digital communication on health discourse (e.g., social media, telemedicine, etc.).
- Narrative structures in patient experiences and medical case reports.
- Gender, identity, and power dynamics in medical discourse.

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SEM35. Papers

35A 12 September h. 14:00-16:00, PN 10

- *Writing well-Being in eighteenth-century correspondence* (Giovanni Iamartino, Università degli Studi di Milano)
- *Well-being terminology and discourse in 19th-century British medical texts* (Alessandra Vicentini, Università degli Studi dell'Insubria / Ilaria Gorini, Università degli Studi dell'Insubria / Gilberto Giannacchi, Università degli Studi dell'Insubria)

- *The construction of collective wellbeing in Victorian public health discourse* (Laura Tommaso, Università del Piemonte Orientale)
- *“Live like athletes”: The language of the healthy body in Oswald Mosley’s fascist writings* (Anna Anselmo, Università degli Studi di Milano / Anna La Torre, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona)

35B 13 September h. 8:30-11:00, PN 10

- *The lexis of childcare and wellbeing in early infancy: Exploring (late) 18th-c. British medical writing* (Elisabetta Lonati, Università del Piemonte Orientale)
- *Shaping longevity: Language and well-being in Modern English medical texts* (Elisa Ramazzina, Università degli Studi dell’Insubria)
- *“A julep for childbed women”: Pregnancy and wellbeing discourses in eighteenth-century domestic lexicography* (Martina Guzzetti, Università degli Studi dell’Insubria)
- *Health beyond our years: A linguistic analysis of the discourse of the scientific community vs. providers of radical life extension services* (Francesca Cappellini, Università degli Studi di Milano)
- *Metaphors for a healthy life: An exploration of a science popularization corpus* (Sara Corrizzato, Università di Verona / Valeria Franceschi, Università di Verona / Gloria Mambelli, Università di Verona)

SEM35. Abstracts

“Live like athletes”: The language of the healthy body in Oswald Mosley’s fascist writings

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This paper examines the discursive construction of the healthy, disciplined body in two foundational texts of British fascism: *The Greater Britain* (1932) and *Fascism: 100 Questions Asked and Answered* (1936) by Oswald Mosley. Drawing on methods from critical discourse analysis, the study explores how Mosley mobilises metaphors, imperatives, and anatomical imagery to articulate a vision of the ideal citizen as both biologically fit and ideologically aligned. Across both texts, health is framed not as a private good or human right, but as a political resource – a condition of moral and civic legitimacy. The repeated slogan “live like athletes” encapsulates a key tenet of fascist morality: only bodies trained in discipline, strength, and purpose are worthy of liberty. The body is presented simultaneously as a site of national regeneration and a symbol of unity, echoing the corporate-state metaphor in which society is likened to a human organism directed by a central brain.

The paper further analyses the gendered rhetoric of health. Men are invoked as virile and combative citizens, whose strength underwrites their fitness to lead and fight. Women, by contrast, are primarily valued for their reproductive health and maternal function; motherhood is not merely domestic but “organised and corporate”, politicised within the fascist state. The notion of the microcosm of a national manhood reborn crystallises the aim of producing a racially and morally purified citizenry through bodily governance.

Ultimately, the paper shows how Mosley’s fascist vision transforms the body into a medium of ideological inscription, where fitness becomes proof of loyalty and health becomes the condition of political personhood.

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Health beyond our years: A linguistic analysis of the discourse of the scientific community vs. providers of radical life extension services

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In the last few years, the topic of Radical Life Extension (RLE) has reached new height in the public discourse as well as in the scientific community, where much of the discourse concerned itself with discussing the scientific truthfulness of such processes, such as regenerative medicine to counter the aging process, brain preservation techniques, and cryonics (Moshakis, 2019). The emergence of this new topic has often been linked to the well-being of people in their old age, as the concept of extending one's lifespan almost indefinitely could mean people experiencing more years of good health, delaying or even preventing many age-related diseases and disabilities (Anderson, 2019).

The aim of this contribution is, therefore, to provide an overview on how the scientific community as well as the websites that provide these services related to RLE frame their discourse when it comes to selling what can be a scientific truth or just a hope to the ageing population.

To do so, Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) (Benzécri, 1979, Le et al., 2008, Clarke et al., 2021) was carried out on two corpora containing respectively n=137 academic articles on RLE and the webpages of n=29 websites of RLE services providers, in order to uncover what are their main topics of interest and how do they argue their linguistic choices in their scientific explanations as well as promotion of health beyond the years through RLE. The main dimensions were then analysed according to Biber's (2013; 2019) theory on registers and subregisters, with the aim of finding the main and most representative subregisters related to RLE in the two contexts. More specifically, a number of them will be analysed more in depth and compared in order to see how the scientific community frames this new concept of health and how it is promoted by the companies that provide said services.

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Metaphors for a healthy life: An exploration of a science popularization corpus

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Figurative language, such as metaphors and similes, has been established as an effective strategy to make technical and specialized concepts more accessible and understandable to non-experts (e.g., Scotto di Carlo, 2014; Mattiello, 2019). It is indeed widely employed in popularization discourse, including professional and scientific communication addressing a lay audience. The aim of this paper is to investigate how the general concepts of health and well-being are presented by professionals in spoken texts addressed to a non-expert audience. More specifically, a corpus-assisted analysis was carried out to determine what roles metaphors play in ensuring effective and accessible communication that may influence people to adopt healthier behaviors and lifestyles. The data was drawn from the SciencePop Corpus, developed at the University of Verona, which consists of 104 annotated transcripts of interviews and monologues involving international professionals/experts discussing topics pertaining to human health and well-being.

The combination of corpus analysis techniques and of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) allows for the exploration of a larger sample (Stefanowitsch, 2006): the use of a concordancer to extract instances of the terms 'health' and 'well-being' helps narrow down the context in which to identify metaphors used to define the notion of health. The metaphorical mappings employed in the corpus illustrate how the conceptualization of health and well-being contributes to making these topics more accessible and engaging to a non-expert audience, providing insights into the recontextualization strategies employed in science popularization.

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“A julep for childbed women”: Pregnancy and wellbeing discourses in eighteenth-century domestic lexicography Martina Guzzetti (Università degli Studi dell’Insubria) ma.guzzetti@uninsubria.it

This paper investigates the representation of pregnancy and wellbeing in eighteenth-century domestic lexicography compiled by women. By examining a corpus of thirteen domestic dictionaries of the period, such as, among others, Eliza Smith’s *Compleat housewife* (1727), Arabella Atkyn’s *Family magazine* (1741) and Lydia Fisher’s *Prudent housewife* (1788), this research traces the intersection of language, medicine, and (gendered) cultural norms surrounding pregnancy and maternal health.

The study employs a critical historical-lexicographical methodology, combining linguistic analysis with contextual research into the medical, social, and gendered discourses of the time. Through a comparative approach, the paper will first identify headwords related to women’s reproductive cycle, pregnancy, childbirth, and lying-in. Secondly, it will explore how notions of wellbeing were integrated in the entries, for example in sections about instructions for the practitioner assisting child-bed women, or about the dissemination of medical knowledge to lay patients. Lastly, the study will investigate the role of domestic lexicography in shaping public understanding of women’s reproductive health, emphasising how these lexicons were not merely practical tools but also vehicles for disseminating knowledge about women’s bodies, their reproductive functions, and their wellbeing.

The investigation aims to reveal discourses that went beyond patriarchal control over women’s bodies while also providing insights into the complexities of maternal health in the context of eighteenth-century (domestic) life. Expected results include a deeper understanding of how domestic lexicography contributed to the shaping of cultural norms around pregnancy and wellbeing: by examining these dictionaries, this research will also underscore the role of language in reinforcing or challenging medical and social authority in eighteenth-century Britain.

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Writing well-being in eighteenth-century correspondence

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As part of a current research project on the discourses and contexts of well-being in the history of English (PRIN20228JCCPN), the aim of the essay is to focus on a relevant sample of eighteenth-century British correspondence to show how the themes of health and psycho-physical well-being – and conversely that of malaise and illness – become the subject of reflection and sharing. Indeed, while falling within the conceptual category of ego-documents, letter-writing takes place in a social dimension, which primarily concerns the addressee but potentially opens up to others, also taking into account that letters were often conceived and drafted with a publication in mind. This, at least, in the case of literary figures and highly educated people, such as those whose correspondence will be analysed in the paper: Samuel Richardson, John Cleland and Horace Walpole among the men; Mary Wortley Montague, Hester Lynch Piozzi and Fanny Burney among the women.

By adopting a sociolinguistic and discourse-analytical approach, the paper will examine how the idea and ideal of well-being were linguistically and rhetorically crafted and intersected with issues of gender and class in the correspondence of the abovementioned letter-writers.

Arguably, the resulting data will provide useful insights into the evolution of the concept of well-being, somewhere between the introduction of the neologism *well-being* in the translation of Baldassar Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*, published by Thomas Hoby in 1561, and the presence of the concept of well-being at the heart of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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The lexis of childcare and wellbeing in early infancy: Exploring (late) 18th-c. British medical writing

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The general aim of this study is to explore late 18th-c. medical writing to retrieve the lexis related to childcare and wellbeing in (early) infancy. The main sources for the analysis are British reference works for a multilayered readership of experts and non-experts, male and female audience. In particular, the corpus includes a variety of writings on midwifery, such as treatises, observations, case notes, lectures, etc., written by physicians, surgeons, midwives and men-midwives. Such works are focussed on many different aspects of pre-natal conditions and parturition, but also on after-birth and upbringing, specific treatments to preserve and improve the health of mother and child, and the prevention of illnesses. Medical works of this kind testify to the increased interest in healthy infancy and childhood as fundamental stages of human life. They deserve specific attention as a distinct part of medicine (e.g. midwifery and nursing), since “the human species can only be preserved by taking proper care of the infant race” (Armstrong’s *An essay on the diseases most fatal to infants*, 1767: 2). Hence, the need to expand medical research on infancy and childhood and disseminate good practices (e.g. regimen and the non-naturals, such as food, exercise, air, etc.).

The focus of the study is mainly qualitative (e.g., collocates of ‘child’, ‘children’, ‘infant/s’, etc., semantic preference, textual representation of childcare and wellbeing), but the research path necessarily includes preliminary corpus-based quantitative approaches (retrieval of collocates and clusters, frequency and relevance, KWIC; AntConc 4.3, 2024).

The study will highlight how late 18th-century lexis related to (early) infancy is extremely relevant to represent contemporary interest in childcare and wellbeing “before the formal recognition of paediatrics as a medical specialty” (Williams, 2007: 75).

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Shaping longevity: Language and well-Being in modern English medical texts

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This paper investigates the conceptualisation of well-being in old age and strategies for life prolongation in a selection of Modern English medical and philosophical texts. Drawing on a corpus of seven treatises, namely Joseph Du Chesne's *The Practise of Chymicall and Hermeticall Physicke* (1605), Francis Bacon's *Historie naturall and experimentall, of life and death* (reprinted in 1638), John Heydon's *A new method of Rosie Crucian Physick* (1658), Daniel Sennert's *Nine books of physick and chirurgery* (1658), John Pechey's *A plain introduction to the art of physick* (1697), and George Cheyne's *An essay of health and long life* (1724) and *The English malady* (1733), the study examines how language shaped the ageing body as both a therapeutic site and a moral project.

Using a historical discourse-analytical approach (Brinton, 2015), the paper investigates how lexical and rhetorical choices contrast “green old age” – linked to clarity, serenity, and physiological harmony – with “decrepit old age”, defined by rigidity, dryness, and ethical decline. Metaphors such as “radical moisture”, “lamp of life”, and “balsam of life” reflect medieval and Renaissance humoral frameworks (Porter, 2006) while shaping cultural imaginaries of ageing. The loss of radical moisture anchors narratives of bodily decay, while its preservation supports ideals of dignified longevity (Smith, 1998).

Recurring expressions such as “lengthen out their days”, “preserve their faculties”, or “live as long as crows” convey more than medical advice: they normalise specific hygienic, dietary, and emotional disciplines. These include temperate eating, exposure to fresh air, moderate exercise, and emotional restraint. Such rhetoric codifies medical instruction into rituals of well-being, where successful ageing depends on thinking, speaking, and acting within established boundaries. The study argues that language not only reflects but actively constructs longevity as intelligible and achievable through self-regulation. Elderly well-being emerges not as an anomaly but as the reward for disciplined living (Thomas, 2009), articulated through consistent linguistic choices.

Set against a backdrop of urbanisation, religious introspection, and evolving public health discourses, these texts portray old age as a malleable condition (Ottaway, 2004). It is not conceptualised as degeneration but as the reward for virtuous living, through which attaining longevity and late-life well-being becomes possible.

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The construction of collective wellbeing in Victorian public health discourse

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In the early years of Queen Victoria's reign, mounting public concern prompted Parliament to recognise the urgent need for reforms aimed at improving the lives of men, women, and children in the poorer sectors of society. Social reformers advocated for causes such as safer working conditions, sanitary improvements, and access to universal education (Newsome, 1997; Hopkins, 2013). In particular, as infectious diseases like cholera and tuberculosis swept through Europe and Britain in the 1830s and 1840s, the British government initiated a series of foundational public health reforms (Poovey, 1994; Hamlin, 1998).

By adopting a corpus-based discourse studies approach (Taylor & Marchi, 2018; Baker, 2023), integrated with perspectives from historical discourse analysis (Brinton, 2001), this paper explores the discursive construction of collective health and wellbeing in Edwin Chadwick's *Report on the sanitary condition of the labouring population of Great Britain* (1842). This seminal document not only reflects the reforming spirit of the era but also contributed to the institutionalisation of public health as a field of knowledge and practice, while shaping the emerging scientific discourse on disease prevention.

Preliminary results show that the text combines factual reporting with persuasive elements, reflecting Chadwick's dual aim: to inform and to instigate reform. Specifically, while grounded in scientific evidence and statistical reasoning, the *Report* also incorporates a strong moral appeal, portraying the alarming sanitary conditions affecting the labouring population not only as a public health crisis, but as a moral failing of society. This framing engages the audience's ethical sensibilities and justifies public health reform as essential to the nation's progress and stability, constructing collective wellbeing at the intersection of morality, governance, and social order.

In light of these findings, this study emphasises the role of both corpus methods and historical discourse analysis in tracing the linguistic underpinnings of health narratives. Moreover, it contributes to broader scholarly discussions regarding the enduring influence of past health discourses in shaping modern understandings of wellbeing, civic responsibility, and biopolitical governance.

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Well-being terminology and discourse in 19th-century British medical texts

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This paper explores the terminology of well-being in British medical discourse by examining a corpus of 19th-century medical dictionaries and journals. The aim is to investigate how concepts related to physical and mental well-being were defined, contextualised, and shaped within specialist sources that addressed physicians, practitioners, and students of medicine during a period of significant change in the medical field (Bergoldt, 2008).

The study draws on five medical dictionaries published between 1809 and 1882 – namely, Bartholomew Parr's *The London medical dictionary* (1809), Robley Dunglison's *A new dictionary of medical science and literature* (1833), Richard Hoblyn's *A dictionary of terms used in medicine and the collateral sciences* (1835), James Copland's *A dictionary of practical medicine* (1858), and Richard Quain's *A dictionary* (1882). These works are cross-referenced with terms listed under “well-being” in the OED Thesaurus to trace the presence, meaning, and evolution of the concept across the century. Unlike modern dictionaries, these historical resources often include extended entries resembling treatises or

case narratives, offering valuable material for contextual and discursive analysis. The same terms are then searched for in the *Lancet* (1823) and the *British Medical Journal* (1840), which were – and remain – the two most authoritative medical-scientific journals in Britain.

Preliminary results suggest that the idea of well-being was not limited to the mere absence of disease, even in specialised resources such as these. Interestingly, despite the attestation of the term ‘well-being’ in English as early as 1561 (OED, s.v. ‘well-being’), it does not appear in any of the medical dictionaries examined. It emerges for the first time in 1857 in the *British Medical Journal*, in an article titled “Poor law medical relief” – an occurrence that points to the layered socio-medical conceptualisation of the term. Instead, several related terms such as ‘health’, ‘sanity’, ‘salubrity’, ‘valitude’, ‘happiness’, and others are recurrent in dictionary entries and deserve close analysis to reconstruct the shifting vocabulary around well-being.

By integrating lexicographical and discourse-analytical approaches (Taavitsainen, 2008; Brinton, 2015), the paper sheds light on how medical language reflected and contributed to evolving understandings of well-being in the long nineteenth century. The study stems from a research project on the discourses and contexts of well-being in the history of English (PRIN20228JCCPN).

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SEM36. Tourism discourse at the human-digital interface: Technology, regeneration, storytelling

36A 12 September h. 14:00-16:00, PN6

36B 12 September h. 16:30-19:00, PN6

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Abstract

Contemporary tourism spans a hybrid continuum, from market-driven digital representations of destinations to embodied travel experiences, increasingly mediated by technology. Tourists navigate virtual and real routes through an array of digital tools which include tourist board websites, travel portals and blogs, social media platforms, smart wearable devices, geo-tracking apps, QR codes and augmented reality. These technologies not only guide experiences but also shape expectations, generating vast amounts of data that feed into industry algorithms to personalize and optimize digital tourism offerings and flows.

While such tools enhance customization, they also raise ethical concerns, particularly as overtourism continues to contribute to global inequalities and environmental degradation. Unless aligned with sustainability and social justice principles, the integration of technology into tourism risks perpetuating the same extractive logics.

In response, alternative discourses and practices are emerging in which digital technologies actively contribute to making travel more sustainable in its deepest human-centric articulation of cultural, social, environmental and economic issues. Whereas ecotourism has traditionally emphasized the preservation of natural environments and low-impact travel, these newer trends go further by incorporating social dimensions and digital innovation to reimagine the relationship between visitors and destinations. On the one hand, regenerative tourism reframes destinations as living ecosystems, encouraging eco-sensitive value co-creation and respect for local communities by promoting active involvement in the restoration of natural resources and ensuring fair income distribution. On the other, storytelling in various forms – participatory, community-based, ethical – educates locals and visitors about pluralism by uncovering often neglected perspectives on heritage and tradition beyond the mainstream. Amid differences and similarities, the common anthropological foundation of these approaches arguably lies in the use of digital technologies not just to enhance the tourist-as-consumer experience but to cultivate awareness and stimulate critical participation in the ethical values of justice, peace, and social engagement.

This seminar, framed within the theoretical and empirical scope of Critical Discourse Studies, welcomes contributions that examine recent trends and experiments aimed at integrating digital innovation with human-centric values. Particular emphasis is placed on linguistic, discursive and multimodal strategies that foster ethical engagement, responsible travel and sustainable perspectives.

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SEM36. Papers

36A 12 September h. 14:00-16:30, PN6

- *Tourism goes digital* (Stefania M. Maci, Università degli Studi di Bergamo)
- *Narrating the 'sense of place': A corpus-assisted study of ecomuseum discourse* (Sara Castagnoli, Università di Macerata)
- *"Peace is a walk": Tourism destinations, peacebuilding and the engagement of digital discourse* (Maria Cristina Paganoni, Università degli Studi di Milano)
- *Exploring language in immersive heritage tourism: A discourse-based study of AI-driven mobile storytelling in "Milano Resiste"* (Julia Mary Scilabra, Universidad Complutense Madrid)

36B 12 September h. 16:30-18:30, PN6

- *Tracing the origins of Italian tourism narratives in the digital age: A human-digital interface for academic research and social awareness* (Giuseppe de Bonis, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia)
- *"The perfect destination for sustainable tourism": Understanding sustainability in the digital promotion of Rome* (Barbara Antonucci, Università degli Studi Roma Tre / Lorenzo Buonvivere, Università degli Studi Roma Tre)
- *Exploring AI-assisted content creation in tourism promotion: Insights from a classroom experiment* (Eleonora Gallitelli, Università degli Studi di Udine)
- *"The making of a global destination": Narratives of innovation and urban regeneration in the city branding of Milan* (Giulia Meroni, Università degli Studi di Milano)

SEM36. Abstracts

"The perfect destination for sustainable tourism": Understanding sustainability in the digital promotion of Rome

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The achievement of sustainability in both tourism and cities is "a wicked problem" (Day, 2020: 54). Met with the difficulty of even conceiving a negotiation between urban centres and ecology, discussions of sustainable tourism focus mainly on rural or natural areas, while disregarding tourism cities. Yet, sustainability is professed as a major concern of tourism planning in Rome (Valeri, 2015). The previous (Regione Lazio, 2020) and the recently announced (Regione Lazio, 2025) three-year regional tourism plans, as well as the latest strategic plan for the city of Rome (Città Metropolitana di Roma Capitale, 2022), devote sections to "green tourism" and "slow tourism", and frequently refer to issues of environmental responsibility. Bearing this in mind, this study seeks to answer the following question: how does digital promotional tourism discourse shape the perception of sustainability in Rome? Building on Gallitelli's (2024) work on institutional tourism communication about Rome, this paper offers a preliminary case study that compares national and local official tourism websites (*Italia* and *Turismo Roma*) and travel blogs with an emphasis on sustainable travel (e.g., *Sustainable rookie* and *Explore mindfully*). Through the framework of critical discourse studies (Wodak, 2025), the analysis explores and categorises linguistic items addressing ecological consciousness to understand which areas of sustainable tourism are prioritised by each text (e.g., mobility, tourist intensity, nature-based activities, food, etc.). Initial results appear to suggest that institutional websites focus on proposing alternative activities to established 'sustainable tourists' while travel bloggers mainly focus on educating potential tourists to sustainability per se, as they often provide advice which does not apply to Rome specifically. The study is carried out by the Roma Tre University research unit working on the broader objectives of Spoke 9 (Cultural Resources for Sustainable Tourism) of the CHANGES project, which aims to identify methods and practices for the integration of government agencies, private organisations, and local communities in the development and management of sustainable tourism.

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Narrating the “sense of place”: A corpus-assisted study of ecomuseum discourse

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Ecomuseums represent a relatively recent form of museum that aims to present and preserve the identity of specific areas, offering a holistic interpretation of their natural and cultural heritage. Rooted in local communities and participatory engagement, they “seek to capture the distinctive nature of places” (Davis, 2011). Since the 1970s, the concept of ‘ecomuseum’ has been adopted to refer to community-based heritage projects designed to safeguard and showcase both tangible and intangible heritage resources, foster cultural identity, and generate benefits for local communities (Borrelli & Davis, 2012, p. 33; Li & Selim, 2024, p. 1211).

Positioned at the intersection of *New Museology* and the emerging paradigm of *regenerative tourism* – which transcends both ecotourism and responsible/sustainable tourism – ecomuseums promote a model of tourism that reframes destinations as living ecosystems. This model emphasises social and environmental regeneration, community participation, and inclusive storytelling. As such, ecomuseums offer fertile ground to examine how discourse strategies mediate identity, heritage, and sustainability.

This paper explores how ecomuseums construct their identity discursively. Ecomuseums often articulate their mission through a blend of heritage discourse, environmental activism, and social innovation, presenting themselves as agents of empowerment and stewards of ‘living heritage’. However, the ways in which they represent themselves can vary significantly depending on the nature of specific instantiations, as well as across cultural contexts. In fact, while several attempts have been made to define core principles of ecomuseums (e.g., Corsane, 2006), in practice these organisations can differ remarkably in terms of stated roles and objectives, funding, geographical scale, and levels of community involvement (Davis, 2011, p. 91). Their global distribution is also uneven: while the vast majority of ecomuseums are located in Europe (especially in Italy, France and Spain), the concept has seen limited uptake in Anglophone countries, possibly due to misconceptions about the term or the existence of similar institutions (e.g., heritage sites, open-air and folk museums) that render the ecomuseum model redundant (Davis, 2011, p. 173).

Adopting a critical discourse studies perspective and using corpus-assisted methods, this paper undertakes to conduct a comparative analysis of institutional and promotional texts from the websites of selected ecomuseums in English-speaking regions (including the UK, Ireland, North America, and Australia) and Europe. The aim is to identify common themes and discursive strategies that contribute to a shared core of ecomuseum discourse, as well as divergences in discursive practices possibly shaped by local socio-political histories and cultural values. By observing how ecomuseums construct and project their identity through discourse, the study may also contribute to a better theorisation of the ecomuseum as a cultural phenomenon.

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Tracing the origins of Italian tourism narratives in the digital age: A human-digital interface for academic research and social awareness

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Within the framework of the PRIN DIETALY project, three research units (Venice, Ferrara, Salento) investigated the evolution of Italian tourism discourse in English, tracing how narratives have developed over time – from the centralised promotional strategies of the 20th century to the complex, multimodal, and digitally-mediated forms of the present. Drawing on a rich body of written, visual, and audiovisual materials, the project highlights tourism communication as a strategic narrative practice that continues to shape the construction of Italy's image as a tourist destination, balancing cultural representation with commercial imperatives (Agorni, 2025).

One of the project's key outcomes is the open-access digital database that brings together metadata on more than 600 tourism texts collected from national and international libraries as well as private collections (Mauro, 2025). Adopting a multimodal and critical discourse approach to tourism promotion, the database classifies materials by editor, translator, publication language, genre, geographical focus, promotional themes, and visual elements such as images and maps. Worthy of note, this database serves both as a historical resource and a dynamic, customisable research tool for academic investigation and for building social awareness about tourism sustainability, or lack thereof. The digital infrastructure not only supports digital humanities methodologies but also enables ethical and reflective engagement with the formation of Italy's image as a tourist destination over time. By offering a digitally-enabled lens on the development of place branding and cultural storytelling, it contributes to broader debates on sustainability (Mattei, 2025; Rodrigues et al., 2022), the digitisation of memory (Mandolessi, 2024), and the construction of cultural identity in tourism discourse.

While not intended as a promotional tool, the database may nonetheless stimulate reflexivity and ethical engagement in tourism discourse (Opgenhaffen, 2022, p. 2). By tracing the origins of standardised visual and verbal tropes used to represent cultural heritage and tradition, it encourages a critical reassessment of the narratives shaping tourism imaginaries. This process provides valuable insights to scholars in tourism studies and related fields, fostering more holistic and contextually-aware approaches to the cultural, social, and ethical aspects of tourism communication.

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Exploring AI-assisted content creation in tourism promotion: insights from a classroom experiment

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This paper discusses the outcomes of a teaching experiment conducted at the University of Udine as part of the Erasmus+ project *Empowering Specialized Language Acquisition with Integrated AI* (ELITE-AI). The project focuses on English for specific purposes (ESP), with a special attention to the language needs of students in specialized fields such as tourism. The experiment began with a workshop led by guest speaker Dr. Elena Mattei, who introduced methods for integrating ChatGPT into tourism content creation, emphasizing multimodal analysis and critical engagement. The workshop was addressed to first-year MA students of Professional English for Tourism, and drew on theoretical frameworks from systemic functional linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), social semiotics (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021) and tourism discourse (Dann, 1996) to provide a foundation for critical analysis and AI-generated tourism communication.

The most stimulating phase of the experiment involved the creation of sustainable tourism content. Students used ChatGPT and DALL·E to generate social media posts and images based on a local tourism company's branding. They then evaluated the outputs for alignment with the company's values and principles of sustainable tourism. In line with findings from prior studies (Cruz, 2024; Jeon, 2024; Silcheva et al., 2023), it was noted that the integration of generative AI tools enhanced student engagement, fostered critical thinking and promoted cultural awareness, while creating an interactive and meaningful learning environment.

The experiment also raised important ethical considerations. Students expressed concerns about AI bias and the need for responsible use of technology in tourism promotion. Their reflections addressed concepts such as sustainability, authenticity, cultural specificity and regenerative tourism, revealing students' perspectives on the interplay between human creativity and artificial intelligence in contemporary tourism communication.

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Tourism goes digital

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As a result of the COVID-19 lockdown, many museums and archaeological sites globally shut their doors to prevent contamination (UNESCO, 2020). In reaction to this situation and to maintain communication with their audiences, several cultural organisations and travel firms augmented their online presence and sought other methods to engage with their tourist audiences via digitalisation. Virtual reality emerged as a facet of digitisation, designed to provide access to original materials. In this regard, the pandemic has shown that sharing experiences and content on digital and social media has become an integral part of the tourist experience, influencing how tourists perceive and behave before, during, and after their trip (Tham et al., 2024).

Among the novel and digital offerings that emerged during the COVID period, the predominant one was the 'virtual tour', which has now been surpassed by the 'live' virtual tour. While a virtual tour is a simulation of a historic location, 'live' virtual tours are live-streaming experiences of online guided tours, particularly requested by people who want to experience the guided visit before a potential in-person tour and who may also be concerned about large crowds at museums and institutions in destinations where overtourism is now a major problem.

In this paper, we will investigate the genre of live virtual tour and examine how it has emerged as a distinctive communicative practice within tourism discourse. Adopting a discourse-analytic approach, this study explores the linguistic and technological characteristics that differentiate live virtual tours from traditional guided tours and pre-recorded virtual tours. Through qualitative analysis of recorded live-stream sessions and interviews with professional tourist guides, we aim to identify the interactive strategies, narrative techniques, and communicative functions that contribute to audience engagement and participation.

Additionally, the paper addresses how live virtual tours challenge traditional notions of authenticity and presence in tourism experiences. Drawing on CDA, we analyse how guides mediate heritage spaces, negotiate the co-presence of physical and digital audiences, and adapt their discourse to a live, mediated environment. Finally, implications for training guides, designing virtual experiences, and theorising tourism communication in digital contexts will be discussed, highlighting both the opportunities and limitations of live virtual tours as an emerging and influential genre in tourism studies.

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‘The making of a global destination’: Narratives of innovation and urban regeneration in the city branding of Milan

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In an increasingly competitive and globalized world, it has become common practice for cities seeking to stand out on the international stage to entrust their promotion to Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), i.e., public-private partnerships that work to attract foreign tourists, talents and investors in order to boost the growth of a city and its surrounding region (Gretzel, 2021). The peculiar nature of these organizations highlights the blurring of boundaries between the public and the private sectors typical of contemporary society whereby the former has become imbued with corporate ideology and discourse, with institutions often appearing to value profit and business over the social needs of the urban community (Koller, 2008). This convergence of the public and private sectors under the overarching principles of business efficiency and profit generation is also reflected in the communication strategies deployed by public institutions, which are often borrowed from the marketing tools traditionally used in the private sector. City branding has in fact become a staple practice that allows public administrations to design city identities in the eyes of local and international audiences (Paganoni, 2012). Branding – and re-branding – has a strong transformative potential and is especially tied to urban regeneration projects (Eshuis & Edwards, 2012).

This study investigates the discourse of selected tourism development organizations with major urban regeneration-related projects in European cities to observe what role innovation, technology, and urban regeneration play in the promotion of such cities. In particular, the social, environmental and digital dimensions of city branding will be evaluated within the framework of regenerative tourism (Paddison & Hall, 2024) to explore what place sustainability occupies in DMOs promotional discourse. Qualitative analysis will be conducted on reports and selected campaigns by Milan’s DMO, YesMilano, within the time period 2019-2024 to identify their promotional strategies and assess how these principles and intentions have been operationalized. Similar campaigns by London and Amsterdam will also be analyzed to provide a comparative outlook on a European level. Linguistic analysis focusing mainly on framing (Jones, 2018) and metaphors (Nientied, 2016), as well as visual semiotics (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021), will provide insight into how regenerated urban areas designed to be innovation hubs may be used in city branding as selling points to attract foreign audiences.

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“Peace is a walk”: Tourism destinations, peacebuilding and the engagement of digital discourse

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This paper forms part of an ongoing research project on peace communication in tourism, conducted within the framework of the 4EU+ University Alliance, of which the University of Milan is a partner. It explores the potential of

digital tools to disseminate peace discourses in tourism contexts, merging technological innovation with cultural and historical narratives in engaging ways. While tourism communication has long embraced digitalisation to expand its offerings, comparable developments in peace-sensitive tourism remain relatively limited (Wohlmuther & Wintersteiner, 2014). This is the case despite the increasing recognition of peace museums, parks and memorials – often dedicated to iconic peace figures – whose visibility has been enhanced through digital media.

Several factors may account for this gap. First, although tourism itineraries frequently incorporate histories of war and conflict, they seldom frame peace as a thematic lens for reflection, possibly to avoid imposing perceived ‘moralisation’ on leisure experiences (Butcher, 2003). Second, because peace is commonly defined in opposition to war and violence, contemporary societies have been argued to lack compelling imaginaries of positive peace (Mazza, 2023). Third, the adoption of digital technology itself should not be assumed to guarantee success. As scholars have noted, digital tools in tourism and heritage settings (King et al., 2016) may generate unintended consequences – such as superficial content, biased representations, or low-quality engagement – raising concerns about trivialisation and the suppression of physical space (Floridi, 2024).

Nonetheless, if destinations are not fixed entities but rather the product of symbolic transformation through discourse, there is room to challenge prevailing reluctance, limited creativity and techno-solutionist thinking. This invites us to imagine innovative forms of peace-oriented, human-digital encounters (Bødker, 2023). Drawing on Hughes’s (2018) integration of positive discourse analysis within critical discourse studies, this paper builds on a preliminary exploration of peace-sensitive tourism (Paganoni, 2023) to examine selected case studies of peace destinations, and specifically peace walks, at the intersection of physical infrastructure and digital affordances. It reflects on how critical design and digital discourse may serve to foster awareness of peace-related themes in tourism, thereby contributing to more thoughtful and socially conscious travel experiences.

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Exploring language in immersive heritage tourism: A discourse-based study of AI-driven mobile storytelling in *Milano Resiste*

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Immersive technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and AI-powered mobile platforms are reshaping how cultural heritage is communicated, experienced, and learned. This study investigates their educational potential in tourism contexts, specifically focusing on language-mediated learning, engagement, and identity. Previous research has shown that escape rooms offer excellent environments for language learning and teaching (e.g., Gómez López, 2019; Nasri et al., 2024; Sntaxi Llumiquinga, 2022). Drawing on this, the study will take *Milano Resiste* – a Milan-based mobile escape room – as its central case study to explore how AI-driven storytelling and digital interactivity (Sykes & Reinhardt, 2012) can support language learning and cultural engagement within heritage tourism. While *Milano Resiste* is not a VR experience, it incorporates key features of immersive learning, like interactive storytelling and real-time player interaction with AI-generated content. To contextualize *Milano Resiste* within a broader continuum of immersive tourism formats, comparative references will be made to VR-based heritage learning projects (e.g., Bekele et al., 2018), to assess how such experiences can support intercultural competence, vocabulary development, and narrative-based learning. Methodologically, a critical discourse analysis (Gee, 2014; Martens, 2022) will be applied to the narrative scripts, chat dialogues, and multimodal materials of the app, focusing on speech, register, and the positioning of the user within the

story. By analyzing how language and discourse function within an AI-enhanced urban escape room, the study aims to contribute to the ongoing debate on the educational role of immersive technologies in tourism, where AI-enhanced and VR-supported settings are not just forms of entertainment (Godwin-Jones, 2016) but rather sites for meaningful, targeted learning through language, narrative, and place.

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SEM37. Tourism and digital communication in online spaces

37A 12 September h. 14:00-16:00, PN 4

37B 12 September h. 16:30-19:00, PN 4

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Abstract

The digital turn has significantly reshaped the tourism industry, with social media, websites, and AI-driven platforms playing central roles in framing how destinations are represented, marketed and experienced. These digital spaces not only facilitate the dissemination of information but also actively influence tourist expectations, decision-making, and experiences, often blurring the lines between reality and digitally constructed narratives (Can et al., 2025).

Web 2.0 has democratized access to information by fostering participation, interactivity, and user-generated content (Herring, 2013). Websites, social media, blogs, and review apps serve multifaceted functions in tourism communication, acting as tools for information retrieval, consumer engagement, and destination promotion (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). These platforms amplify individual voices and potentially challenge traditional destination imageries, allowing tourists to construct, negotiate and challenge the image of a destination (Van Nuenen & Scarles, 2021). At the same time, these platforms shape linguistic and multimodal representations of destinations, influencing perceptions of authenticity, cultural identity and heritage (Federici 2018); and offer new possibilities for accessibility, leveraging multimodal features such as videos, subtitles, and interactive content to reach diverse audiences (Domínguez Vila et al., 2024; Katan & Fina, 2024).

Drawing on this theoretical background, the panel explores how language, multimodal strategies, and translation practices shape digital tourism communication. Specifically, we aim to foster discussion among scholars on key issues related to digital storytelling of tourist destinations (Katan, 2022), tourism discourse in digital media (e.g., social media, websites, blogs, etc.), human interaction with digital platforms, digital humanities approaches to tourism communication, and the role of AI and emerging technologies in tourism communication. As to new insights we will investigate how AI can be used by linguists to analyse tourism discourse, and in particular we will focus on new and evolving technologies to analyse the semiotic interplay between text and image both intra and interlingually.

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SEM37. Papers

37A 12 September h. 14:00-16:00, PN 4

- “Hello, I’m Emma, an AI travel companion!:)” *AI-powered travel assistants and slow tourism discourse* (Silvia Cavalieri, Università degli Studi di Modena e Reggio Emilia / Annalisa Sezzi, Università degli Studi di Modena e Reggio Emilia / Jessica Jane Nocella, Università degli Studi di Modena e Reggio Emilia)
- *What AI can reveal about the tourist gaze* (David Katan, Università del Salento)
- “Be a Guest, not a Tourist”. *Tourism discourse in digital media* (Franca Poppi, Università degli Studi di Modena e Reggio Emilia / Ilaria Iori, Università degli Studi di Ferrara)

37B 12 September h. 16:30-19:00, PN 4

- *Reframing heritage: Multilingual storytelling and translation in UNESCO World Heritage Promotion* (Cinzia Spinzi, Università degli Studi di Bergamo)
- *Building (in/ex)clusion in (un)sustainable tourism: A corpus-supported and multimodal approach to digital human vs. AI-generated tourism discourse* (Federico Zaupa, Università degli Studi di Modena and Reggio Emilia)
- “This is space tourism rather than space exploration”: *Multimodal representations of space tourism in Instagram reels on Blue Origin’s April 2025 Mission* (Valentina Di Francesco, Università degli Studi di Ferrara)

SEM37. Abstracts

“Hello, I’m Emma, an AI travel companion!:)” AI-powered travel assistants and slow tourism discourse

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Artificial intelligence (AI) is significantly reshaping the tourism industry. The increasing adoption of AI technologies “can enhance the overall travel experience, making it more accessible, personalized, and sustainable. This shift can lead to greater inclusivity, allowing more individuals from diverse backgrounds to participate in tourism through easier access to information, tailored services, and reduced costs” (Siddik et al., 2025).

While a substantial body of research has examined AI-generated texts in academic writing and healthcare contexts, the domain of tourism discourse remains comparatively under-researched. Although recent studies have highlighted AI’s potential to deliver personalized and efficient travel-related services (Kırtıl & Aşkun, 2021), empirical analyses of AI-generated tourism discourse are still limited. Moreover, despite the extensive attention to tourism discourse (e.g., Dann, 1996; Maci, 2017), investigations specifically addressing sustainable and inclusive tourism communication are relatively scarce (Malavasi, 2017; Caimotto, 2020; Lazzeretti, 2021; Pato et al., 2021; Pasquini, 2018; Cappelli & Masi, 2019).

This paper aims to fill the existing research gaps by analysing a corpus of tourism-related texts generated by AI-driven travel assistants, such as GuideGeek or Google Gemini AI, among other AI-based tools designed for destination discovery. These systems produce a variety of tourism discourse forms, encompassing both real-time travel assistance and personalized itinerary creation. Based on tourism discourse analysis, this study investigates whether AI-generated prompts in tourist assistance contexts can surpass the “homo narrans” paradigm (Katan, 2022), engaging users in more participatory and multimodal communicative experiences in the attempt “to persuade, lure, woo and seduce millions of human beings, and, in doing so, convert them from potential into actual clients” (Dann, 1996, p. 2).

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“This is space tourism rather than space exploration”: Multimodal representations of space tourism in Instagram reels on Blue Origin’s April 2025 Mission

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The rise of private spaceflight as a form of “space tourism” has reshaped the representation, commercialisation and experience of space. On April 14th 2025, *BBC* correspondent Victoria Gill remarked through the *BBC* Instagram account, just after the *Blue Origin-New Shepard 31* launch: “This is space tourism, rather than space exploration”. ‘Branded’ as the Blue Origin’s first all-women flight crew, the mission involved six female celebrities and raises questions about how space travel communication is framed.

This study investigates how this spaceflight is represented through Instagram reels, short ‘digital video postcards’ for user engagement. Given the highly multimodal content, this analysis focuses on the interplay between language, visuals, sound and narrative modes (i.e., voice-over and captioning) to understand how this mission is communicated and the meanings it constructs.

The main research question explores how space tourism involving celebrities is constructed through multimodal representation. Other connected questions are:

- How is celebrity participation framed linguistically, visually and aurally (i.e., elitism or legitimisation discourses)?
- How do users challenge the authenticity of the mission?
- Is elitism masked by inclusive and inspirational language?
- How do non-professional participants such as celebrities express legitimacy when participating in a space mission?

The analysis follows a Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis approach (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Machin, 2013) and tourism discourse studies. Thematic analysis (Walters, 2016) is used to identify patterns and emergent categories in users’ comments, focusing on reception and resistance. Data are collected through hashtag-based sampling (Zappavigna, 2015) (i.e., #BlueOrigin, #spacetourism, #spacetravel), supplemented with the celebrities’ public accounts (i.e., Katy Perry’s). To ensure relevance, the reels that do not show clear multimodal narration or celebrity participation are excluded from selection. Data collection is conducted using a private window without personal login to minimise potential algorithmic bias; I include reels posted from April 14th 2025, until data saturation is reached. The dataset is further manually screened. As for users’ engagement, users’ comments are considered in the study.

Preliminary observations suggest that space tourism is constructed as a glamorous, risk-free experience; videos show faces with flawless makeup and high-fashion spacesuits. As for users’ reception, while some questioned the authenticity of the mission, public personalities, such as the model Emily Ratajkowski, openly criticised it as an exclusive form of tourism. Instagram reels seem to render space tourism spectacular, consumer-friendly and an object of elite discourse (Thurlow & Jaworski, 2024).

Since it draws on a multimodal analytical perspective, this paper contributes to the critical debate on tourism communication and the digital representation of promotional narratives beyond terrestrial destinations. A future research direction can be the exploration of Italian-language reels and comments to provide preliminary insights into how space tourism is locally and culturally received and perceived, with or without making cross-cultural generalisations or comparisons, according to the perspective adopted.

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What AI can reveal about the tourist gaze

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This paper presents three pilot studies exploring how AI can be used to analyze the concept of the tourist gaze (Urry & Larsen, 2011; Katan & Taibi, 2021) in tourism discourse, with a focus on the semantic interplay between text and image. The studies investigate the effectiveness of prompt-based analysis, compare AI-generated sentiment and topic classifications with those derived from a priori taxonomies, and evaluate the performance of two AI platforms—Claude Anthropic and OpenAI.

The corpus comprises recent (2020s) blog posts about Salento, Puglia, written by two groups: ten prominent local bloggers (writing in Italian, with 27,000 to over 260,000 followers) and ten international bloggers (writing in English, with 16,000 to 78,000 followers). The aim is to assess whether AI can distinguish between insider and outsider perspectives, building on previous research (e.g., D'Egidio, 2009).

All texts and accompanying images were processed using AI-based automatic description tools. Image features were extracted using ResNet50, and both image features and text topics were clustered using k-means to identify dominant thematic groupings. Kernel Density Estimation was then applied to visualize the distribution of image clusters, helping to reveal patterns in the representation of the tourist gaze.

The results showed clear distinctions between insider and outsider perspectives. For example, local bloggers predominantly focused on themes related to 'the beach,' while international bloggers emphasized 'towns,' 'culture,' 'planning,' and 'activities.' Despite these thematic differences, both groups demonstrated similar patterns in aligning text with images. Claude Anthropic generally produced more detailed and coherent image descriptions than OpenAI, though further refinement is needed in cluster generation and interpretation.

These pilot studies demonstrate the potential of AI for scalable, non-subjective analysis of multimodal tourism discourse and support earlier findings on the divergence between insider and outsider gazes.

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“Be a guest, not a tourist”. Tourism discourse in digital media

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The Tuscan-Emilian Apennine, designated a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in June 2015, was once a sought-after skiing destination. However, the region has ever since experienced a decline due to factors such as urbanization, competition from the Alps (Danzi & Figini, 2023), geographical and socio-economic marginalization and agricultural abandonment. Initiatives are being implemented to revitalize the area by leveraging its natural heritage through tourism as a means to stimulate the local economy. However, while mountain tourism has a well-established history (Araújo et al., 2019), there remains a notable lack of research on the linguistic representation of the Emilia-Romagna Apennines within tourism promotion.

This study addresses this gap by analyzing promotional texts with a view to establishing the role of metaphors (Jaworska, 2017) in shaping online tourism narratives. The analysis investigates a corpus of institutional web pages written in English that promote UNESCO-designated Man and the Biosphere (MAB) reserves located in the Apennine regions of Italy, specifically: *Appennino Tosco-Emiliano*, *Collemeluccio-Montedimezzo Alto Molise*, and *Sila*. Language is crucial in tourism promotion: narratives, myths, and metaphors not only create destination images but also influence visitor perceptions (Federici, 2011; Maci, 2018, 2020). However, traditional tourism models often contribute to environmental degradation, emphasizing the need for a transition to sustainable tourism, particularly in marginalized areas like the Apennines (Rocio et al., 2023; Rafiq et al., 2022).

The primary objective of this research is to evaluate whether local stakeholders are successfully meeting the promotional challenge of the digital age, by adopting strategies that prioritize sustainable tourism over mass tourism. Preliminary results show that local stakeholders are increasingly promoting these destinations in accordance with sustainable tourism values. This shift is reflected in both the language and metaphors used in the dataset, which emphasize experiential tourism and authentic experiences closely related to the biodiversity of the place, indicating a potential preference for a more ethical and environmentally conscious model over mass tourism.

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Reframing heritage: Multilingual storytelling and translation in UNESCO World Heritage promotion

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Digital storytelling plays a pivotal role in shaping tourism experiences by constructing destination narratives, enhancing emotional engagement, and fostering visitor participation. As noticed in the literature (Campos & Almeida, 2022), storytelling is positioned not merely as a marketing technique but as a strategic framework for designing immersive and meaningful experiences. In heritage tourism, storytelling bridges tangible and intangible cultural elements, often facilitated by digital tools such as mobile applications, virtual reality, and 3D reconstructions. The co-creative potential of storytelling in enabling tourists and communities to collaboratively construct meaning and identity has also been emphasised (Moscardo, 2020). Furthermore, digital storytelling supports accessibility and inclusion, allowing personalized and multi-sensory engagement across diverse publics.

This paper investigates how storytelling and translation practices intersect in the multilingual promotion of UNESCO World Heritage sites, with particular attention to linguistic shifts and cultural reframing across language versions. UNESCO and affiliated tourism boards often publish heritage narratives in multiple languages, positioning these texts as both cultural representations and promotional tools. By examining parallel descriptions of select Italian World Heritage Sites (e.g., Matera, Cinque Terre, and the Amalfi Coast) in English and Italian, the study explores how translated storytelling reflects and reshapes the semiotic construction of place.

Drawing on critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995) and translation theory (Federici, 2018; Katan, 2022; Maci & Spinzi, 2025), the analysis reveals notable variations in metaphor use, tone, and terminology between source and target texts. For instance, while the Italian versions often emphasize cultural intimacy and historical continuity through evocative metaphors, the English texts tend to adopt a more universalizing and touristic framing. These shifts are not merely

linguistic but ideological, encoding different assumptions about target audiences, narrative authority, and cultural authenticity. Furthermore, the study highlights how translation in heritage storytelling acts as a site of negotiation between global and local imaginaries. Translated narratives do not simply reproduce original meanings; they re-narrate destinations in culturally salient ways, often adapting or omitting references to contested histories, religious symbolism, or regional identities.

This contribution advances current debates on tourism discourse by framing translation as a constitutive element of destination storytelling. It also calls for a more nuanced understanding of multilingual tourism communication as a form of cultural mediation shaped by institutional, commercial, and semiotic dynamics. In doing so, it bridges translation studies, discourse analysis, and heritage tourism research, offering new insights into the discursive production of place across languages and audiences.

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Building (in/ex)clusion in (un)sustainable tourism: a corpus-supported and multimodal approach to digital human vs. AI-generated tourism discourse

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Tourism discourse has emerged as a dynamic field of linguistic research, offering insights into the features of its main genres and the strategies through which destinations and experiences are constructed and communicated. More recently, increasing attention has been paid to the communication of sustainable and inclusive tourism (e.g., Malavasi, 2017; Cappelli & Masi, 2019). In addition, the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) in digital content creation has made it possible to provide personalized travel solutions to diverse users (Kırtıl & Aşkun, 2021). However, little research has explored whether and how AI-generated tourism texts compare to human-authored ones in their capacity to effectively promote inclusion.

This study attempts to fill this gap through a comparative analysis of two sub-corpora of tourism texts: the first comprises human-authored content from institutional websites of local authorities and tour operators, along with social media posts (e.g., Instagram, Facebook); the second includes texts created by AI generators such as ChatGPT and Gemini. The selected texts describe some of Europe's most renowned walking trails. This form of travel was chosen for this study on inclusion due to its environmental sustainability, affordability, and appeal to both secular and religious travellers. Methodologically, the data is analysed relying on the 'framework for integrated corpus-supported and critical analysis to identities' discursive representations' (Zaupa, forthcoming), an ad hoc framework that considers simultaneously the tools of corpus-assisted discourse studies (e.g., Partington & Marchi, 2015) and critical discourse analysis (e.g., Van Leeuwen, 2008). The aim is to explore how tourists and local communities are discursively represented, and consequently the extent to which human- and AI-generated texts employ an inclusive approach for diverse audiences, such as children, elderly, religious, and disabled people. Multimodal resources, such as images, are also examined to assess whether their choice supports the linguistic findings. The study offers recommendations, including prompt strategies for generating tourism texts aligning with sustainable development goals, thereby helping institutions and content creators use AI effectively while ensuring linguistic quality and accessibility for diverse users.

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SEM38. Glossing and translanguaging as conceptualizations about trans-semiotizing practices, identity construction and humane culture

11 September h. 16:00-18:30, PN 14

Convenors

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Abstract

Glossing and translanguaging have long been pivotal in the study of language contact, offering insights into how multilingual speakers negotiate meaning and construct their linguistic identities. From Middle English to the present, glossing has served as an interpretive tool in contexts of linguistic hybridity, mediating between Latin, French, and English in medieval texts such as *Ancrene Wisse* and *Piers Plowman* (Machan, 1994; Burrow & Turville-Petre, 1996).

Glossing has historically enabled EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners to position themselves as active interpreters of meaning, engaging with language as a dynamic and socially embedded phenomenon (Kim, Lee & Lee, 2024). Whereas, translanguaging supports “[...] language users entextualize meaning in situated and embodied interactions, drawing on neural, bodily, and situational resources” (Wei, 2023). In particular, translanguaging challenges the monoglossic view opposing the deterministic one: it entails spontaneous human languaging as a multilingual, multisemiotic, multisensory, and multimodal resource for sense- and meaning-making. Translanguaging pedagogies may empower learners by validating their linguistic resources, challenging rigid language hierarchies, and promoting metalinguistic awareness (García & Wei, 2014).

Two questions arise: 1) Can historical glossing practices prefigure the translanguaging strategies observed in contemporary multilingual contexts? 2) Can glossing and translanguaging be based on common ground in trans-semiotizing practices in multilingual contexts? Glossing and translanguaging foster critical cognitive and identity-building skills and underscore their shared role in shaping multilingual subjectivities to cultivate linguistic flexibility, critical thinking and cross-cultural understanding (Aloni & Weintrob, 2017)

Additionally, digital technology has introduced new spaces for translanguaging, whereas online glossaries, digital annotations, and machine-assisted translation tools function as modern glossing mechanisms favouring multilingual negotiation (Pérez-Llantada, 2020). Digital platforms amplify translanguaging by enabling real-time, multimodal exchanges across linguistic boundaries, reinforcing the interplay between historical and contemporary multilingual practices (Androutsopoulos, 2015). Contributions from linguistic and humane education studies, including ongoing research, are encouraged.

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SEM38. Papers

11 September h. 16:00-18:30, PN 14

- *Scribes, readers and glosses in Medieval language learning texts* (Christine Wallis, University of Sheffield, UK)

- *False friends in glossing and translanguaging: Semiotic shifts, identities and humane culture* (Elisabetta Pavan, Università degli Studi di Padova)
- *Discussing translanguaging in the context of multilingual education: a focus on mediated learning and language planning* (Annalisa Bonomo, Università degli Studi di Enna "Kore")
- *Translanguaging in learning cities: Nurturing linguistic diversity and cultural heritage for inclusive community development* (Raffaella Leproni, Università degli Studi Roma Tre)
- *Translanguaging and the semiotics of translation: Reframing hybridity in film reviews* (Laura Diamanti, Università degli Studi di Enna "Kore")

SEM38. Abstracts

Discussing translanguaging in the context of multilingual education: A focus on mediated learning and language planning

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The global spread of English rethinks language epistemology beyond the geographical terms. This has implied attempts to grasp and unravel the pluricentricity of English in its ongoing characters within and outside the World Englishes and New Englishes frames. The next step of such a process, in Pennycook's words, is "to move away from nation based models of English and to take on board current understandings of translingual practices across communities other than those defined along national criteria." (2008, 30.4). Considering these developments, English teaching and language planning in multilingual education embody new communicative repertoires, moving EFL beyond the grammar and translation label, and rethinking translanguaging as a tool for critical literacies, as texts are never neutral and English Language Learners too may be engaged in critical literacy practices as active learners grappling with conflicting perspectives. However, translanguaging is always affected by a number of factors, such as, "crossborder mobility, shared language proficiencies of speakers, contextual and spatial frames, education and occupation which predefine the linguistic choices and translanguaging patterns." (Halvin, 2022, p. 12). English classes are then 'contact zones' where critical cognitive and identity building skills are called in action, drawing on a multilingual awareness which can gather, process and interpret meaning as a bridge between historical glossing and translanguaging effects in bi/multilinguals. In addition, translanguaging theory and practice dissolve restrictive language boundaries in monolinguals too as all speakers translanguage, "that is, all speakers select features from their linguistic repertoires that seem to be most appropriate for the communicative task at hand" (Garcia & Otheguy, 2021, p. 15).

Thus, relying on "multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds" (García, 2009, p. 45), translanguaging fosters dynamic meaning-making processes, increasing active engagement in class environments. That is, teachers and students should consider it as a "pedagogical strategy" which, as glossing in the past, create "merged spaces" that "utilize translation, code-switching, and any synthesis of multilingual elements" (Song, Howard & Olazabal-Arias, 2022) involved in multilingual language learning.

Though defining translanguaging is far from being straightforward, the present work muses on its "going between different linguistic structures and systems, including different modalities (speaking, writing, signing, listening, reading, remembering) and going beyond them" (Song, Howard & Olazabal-Arias, 2022) with a special focus on how can translanguaging improve specific learning goals, what should teachers or supervisors do in order to use it as an effective pedagogical strategy, and to what extent translanguaging cues can be accepted as steps of "a process of knowledge construction that goes beyond language(s)" (Wei, 2017, p. 12)

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Translanguaging and the semiotics of translation: Reframing hybridity in film reviews

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This paper examines film reviews through the lens of Translanguaging theory, focusing on how linguistic, pragmatic and situated features shape their rhetorical structure. Drawing on the concept of the reconceptualisation of language as a dynamic (García, 2009, p. 93) and integrated semiotic repertoire (García & Wei, 2014, pp. 14–18), the analysis moves beyond monoglossic models to approach the text type of film review as hybrid and situated at the intersection of information, evaluation, and interpretation. Its structure reflects: an informative prose describing the plot summary and the character roles; a persuasive evaluation, attributing positive or negative judgment; a stylistic flair for wordplay, irony, and metaphor (Diamanti, 2025, p. 91). Considering these features, Translanguaging theory allows for an interpretation of hybridity not as interference, but as a resource for making meaning across linguistic and cultural systems.

Two research questions are formulated: (1) How do linguistic, rhetorical, and semiotic facets contribute to the hybridity of film reviews as translatable genres? Investigating how linguistic features (idioms, evaluative lexis), rhetorical strategies (irony, contrast, intensification), and semiotic cues (titles, paratextual markers) interact allows the understanding of the text-specific hybridity of film reviews in translation. The genre analysis framework emphasises the interaction between discourse purpose and textual structure (Hatim & Mason, 1997, pp. 32-33), through a classification of text types based on communicative function (Reiss, 2000, pp. 105–110). (2) What translanguaging-informed strategies best support the translation of hybrid genre elements such as idioms, metaphors, and evaluative tone in film reviews? The exploration of translanguaging-informed strategies emphasises repertoire-based decision-making, context-sensitive reformulation, and genre-aware equivalence. This methodological stance aligns with the pedagogical demand for translation training that prioritises functional and discursive competence (Colina, 2015, pp. 140–149), and the emphasis on critical genre awareness in the translator's education (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014, pp. 81-83).

Ultimately, the paper proposes a translanguaging-based model for teaching translation that positions film reviews as sites of complex, hybrid meaning-making. By reframing translation as a practice of semiotic negotiation, rather than interlingual substitution, the study aims to contribute to current debates in translation pedagogy and applied linguistics regarding how to prepare students to translate culturally and rhetorically layered texts.

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Translanguaging in learning cities: Nurturing linguistic diversity and cultural heritage for inclusive community development

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The UNESCO concept of Learning Cities emphasises inclusive lifelong learning that embraces cultural diversity and promotes social cohesion (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2015). This paper explores how translanguaging practices can serve as powerful pedagogical and social tools within Learning Cities, fostering linguistic diversity while supporting identity construction and community belonging. Drawing on García and Wei's (2014) conceptualisation of translanguaging as going beyond code-switching, the fluid movement between languages emerges as a critical enabler for

citizens to negotiate meaning across cultural boundaries, particularly in contexts of increasing mobility and demographic change (Azara et al., 2023).

The analysis highlights how translanguaging approaches can help overcome communicative challenges identified in the UNESCO Beijing Declaration, particularly for marginalised communities whose linguistic heritage faces erosion (UNESCO, 2013). Translanguaging creates spaces where minority languages can coexist with dominant ones, including English, without perpetuating linguistic hierarchies (Leproni, 2023); rather than positioning English merely as a lingua franca (Jenkins, 2015), it can be conceptualised as one component in a rich multilingual landscape that values all linguistic resources equally, supporting what Norton and Toohey (2011) describe as identity investment in language learning.

The paper connects these theoretical perspectives with practical applications from an ongoing Erasmus+ KA220 project on Audiovisual Translation for Minority Endangered Languages, demonstrating how translanguaging pedagogies can support intergenerational knowledge transmission, community resilience, and inclusive citizenship (Marchetti, 2022). Also, it examines how digital technologies might amplify translanguaging spaces in Learning Cities, creating environments where endangered languages gain new domains of use and transform urban contexts into inclusive communities where linguistic diversity becomes a foundation for social cohesion rather than a barrier to it, aligning with Wei's (2023) vision of critical translanguaging pedagogy as a tool for social transformation.

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False friends in glossing and translanguaging: semiotic shifts, identities and humane culture

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This contribution explores the pedagogical potential of false friends in English as a foreign language (EFL) education, particularly through glossing and translanguaging practices. In the field of English language education, false friends, words that appear similar across languages but differ in meaning, are often seen as linguistic errors and obstacles; nonetheless, they can offer valuable learning moments and become productive learning opportunities. False friends sometimes confuse learners, but they also open to metalinguistic insight. When integrated into teaching strategies, false friends can enhance metalinguistic awareness, support identity formation, and promote culturally sensitive education. Besides, when addressed through glossing and translanguaging, these lexical mismatches help learners develop deeper linguistic awareness, engage with identity formation, and build empathy across cultures (Banks, 2008). False friends should be leveraged, not avoided, in EFL instruction informed by trans-semiotizing theory (Alvarez, 2022; Kress, 2010). False friends interrupt expected patterns, compelling learners to confront the limits of their assumptions and engage in analytical meaning-making (Canagarajah, 2013). This aligns with the lexical approach's emphasis on noticing chunking as essential to vocabulary acquisition: Lewis (1993) argues that learners internalise vocabulary more effectively when it is presented in lexical chunks and real-life contexts where semantic contrasts, such as those arising from false friends, become salient. The translanguaging approach allows learners to use their full linguistic repertoires, which fosters hybrid identities rather than suppressing non-native features (Garcia & Wei, 2014). False friends may also function as sites of identity negotiation where learners evaluate linguistic belonging and difference.

The humane dimension of pedagogy emphasises empathy and intercultural understanding (Banks, 2008): false friends reveal implicit cultural worldviews, prompting learners to question ethnocentric interpretations and engage with difference (Kramsch, 2009). Finally, glossing becomes especially effective when used contrastively with false friends, providing learners with etymological, contextual, and pragmatic insight. Students can be guided to produce reflective glossaries containing not only meanings but also cognitive reflections and cultural annotations (Boers, 2022). In practical terms, false friends can be incorporated into interactive classroom activities, such as language games and roleplays, to enhance retention and engagement. However, they must be handled with care, as improper use may lead to the internalisation of incorrect meanings or cultural misunderstandings.

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Scribes, readers and glosses in Medieval language learning texts

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John of Garland's *Dictionarius* is a text designed to teach Latin vocabulary by taking readers on an imaginary walk through Paris. In addition to the main text, many surviving manuscripts contain a commentary giving grammatical and etymological information and/or vernacular glosses explaining the vocabulary of the original text (Pagan et al., 2023). This supplementary material provides a valuable insight into how the *Dictionarius* was used to teach Latin, and how it was received by its audience.

Investigating glosses from multiple manuscripts of the same text reveals that glossators do not always act in the same way. For example, glosses in Bruges, Public Library MS 536 show signs of translanguaging-like strategies which encourage the use of linguistic resources across languages and sometimes rely on lexis with fuzzy language affiliation to help readers construe the text. These interlinear glosses are added by multiple hands, giving the impression of a community of practice which is deeply involved in using and interacting with the text. The evidence from this manuscript suggests that glossators used translanguaging as 'a deliberate pedagogical strategy to facilitate language acquisition within a multilingual community of practice' (Wallis et al., 2024).

On the other hand, the fourteenth-century manuscript, Berlin Staatsbibliothek lat. fol 607 demonstrates a much weaker understanding of the text and its transmitted glosses. Here the glosses form part of a grammatical and etymological commentary interspersed among the main text. As such, this glossing forms an integral part of the supporting material transmitted alongside the main text, and includes vernacular glosses labelled *gallice* ('French') or *anglice* ('English'). However, the manuscript's text is full of transmission errors: Hunt (1991: 154) states that 'the scribe has misplaced [gloss] items and frequently did not understand what he was copying'. For example, the scribe glosses *peritoneon* with the French *cercle de cul*, but gives *wiulbon* (MED s.v. *whirl-bon*, 'kneecap', which glosses *internodium* in other manuscripts) as the equivalent English term. Elsewhere, for the Latin *gingiva*, the etymologically English *gummu* is labelled *gallice*. Dealing with this material raises questions for modern-day researchers; there are undoubtedly transmission errors which suggest that the scribe may not have understood (or paid attention to) the text in his exemplar, but how certain can we be that the English *gummu* wasn't in fact used by French speakers (c.f. Rothwell, 2004)? This paper, then, explores some of the ways in which we can interpret gloss material for evidence of the linguistic resources of the producers and consumers of medieval grammatical manuscripts.

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

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

Convenors

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Abstract

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

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

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

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SEM39. Papers

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

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

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

SEM39. Abstracts

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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SEM40. Separate opinions: The human and the humane in judicial discourse

11 September h. 11:00-13:00, Gorr 5

Convenors

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Abstract

Judicial reasoning provides fertile ground for exploring the possible human and humane dimensions of legal discourse, especially when attention is given to separate judicial opinions, which allow judges to voice individual perspectives (Goźdz-Roszkowski, 2020). These often diverge from the majority narrative, thus highlighting the human element of judicial deliberation: the values, empathy, and personal convictions that shape legal reasoning and, at least for the time being, seem to elude AI-generated interventions.

Separate opinions represent a form of specialized discourse that embodies the challenges of multilingual communication and cross-cultural understanding. Judges in international courts must navigate the complexities of drafting in non-native languages, most frequently in English. Separate opinions are also human artifacts where the precise language of the law intertwines with the need to reflect the voices, values, and intellectual struggles of their authors. For this reason, they feature rhetorical creativity, polyphony, dialogical argumentation (Garzone, 2016) as well as metadiscursive means such as hedging, boosters, etc. (McKeown, 2021).

This seminar invites proposals exploring the human and humane dimensions of separate judicial opinions as instances of specialized discourse and international communication, with emphasis on human rights discourse (Nikitina, 2025).

Topics may include:

- Empathy, ethics, and humane values
- Pragmatics (e.g., stance, evaluation, politeness)
- The rhetoric of dissent and the human voice
- Representations of sensitive topics (e.g., gender, race, and class) (Peruzzo, 2024)
- Creativity and metaphors in judicial discourse (El-Farahaty, Biel & Seracini, 2026, forthcoming)
- Dialogism and polyphony

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SEM40. Papers

11 September h. 11:00-13:00, Gorr 5

- *Voicing difference, building dialogue: A genre-analytic and metadiscourse study of judicial dissent in the ECtHR and U.S. Supreme Court* (Fabiola Notari, Università degli Studi di Modena and Reggio Emilia)

- *From concurring to dissenting views: The judges' 'self' in separate opinions* (Katia Peruzzo, Università degli Studi di Trieste)
- *Tears, trust and reason: The rhetoric of dissent in ECtHR separate opinions on gender-based violence against women* (Ilaria Giordano, Università di Torino)
- *Identity re-framed: Linguistic perspectives on binary transitions in ECtHR separate opinions* (Jekaterina Nikitina, Università degli Studi di Milano / Letizia Paglialunga, Università degli Studi di Milano)

SEM40. Abstracts

Tears, trust and reason: The rhetoric of dissent in ECtHR separate opinions on gender-based violence against women

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Although often perceived as carrying little authoritative influence, dissenting judicial opinions are nowadays increasingly regarded as pivotal aspects of legal reasoning: by giving judges the possibility to voice their own contrasting points of view, *voti separati* can indeed provide alternative legal interpretations that may become the prevailing view of a future Court (Goźdz-Roszkowski, 2020). However, legal doctrine does not mandate judges to take separate opinions into account, so dissenters must be strategic in their arguments and carefully select the words to maximise their influence on readers and to ensure a lasting impact on the evolution of judicial doctrine (Hinkle & Nelson, 2017). For this reason, I maintain that dissenting opinions embody a form of written persuasion that, although less visible than oral argumentation, plays an equally critical, if not even greater, role. In this light, a critical analysis of these texts through the lens of Aristotle's rhetorical principles, with particular attention to the three *pisteis* – *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* (Rhet. I.2) – offers valuable insights into their persuasive strategies and discursive construction. To achieve this objective, this study undertakes a qualitative textual analysis of a 33,000-word corpus comprising dissenting opinions related to cases of gender-based violence submitted to the European Court of Human Rights between 2012 and 2024, examining the pre- and post-ratification phases of the Istanbul Convention – a critical EU-level instrument aimed at eradicating male violence against women. Through a detailed qualitative rhetorical analysis of the texts, this study seeks to uncover instances of the three Aristotelian proofs that shape the structure and delivery of the arguments. Findings derived from this analysis will not only reveal the presence of specific linguistic items and implicit rhetorical strategies sculpting the transmission of the message, but they will also illustrate how the words of judges, investigated through the lens of Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2003), trigger emotional responses to persuade audiences or manipulate narratives in cases of alleged human rights violations involving domestic and sexual violence against women.

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Identity re-framed: Linguistic perspectives on binary transitions in ECtHR separate opinions

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Far from being neutral, the legal framing of identity can determine whose gender is recognised, how, and under what conditions. This study examines how the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) constructs gender identity in its case-law, with a particular focus on the role of separate opinions in shaping and challenging legal understandings of gender.

Recognising separate opinions as a distinct judicial genre (Nikitina, 2025: 201–203), we analyse them as independent and often dissenting interpretative spaces where judicial reasoning becomes more explicit, ideological tensions surface, and alternative framings of gender identities may emerge.

Using corpus-assisted discourse analysis (Gillings et al., 2023) and framing theory (Entman, 1993), we observed 53 ECtHR judgments and separate opinions concerning Female-to-Male (F-to-M) and Male-to-Female (M-to-F) transitions of gender identity. In this study, separate opinions played a crucial role in revealing the interpretative divergences that are not always visible in judgments. They surface ideological stances behind legal recognition and constructions of gender, exposing how competing views on identity, embodiment, and recognition coexist within the ECtHR's institutional discourse. In more recent cases, our findings have shown how dissenting and/or concurring opinions increasingly adopt framings of gender that may align with contemporary notions of identity as a becoming (Córdoba, 2022), challenging medicalised and bureaucratic constraints.

Furthermore, findings suggested that while majority judgments often reproduce dominant legal and biomedical narratives – framing F-to-M transitions as psychological and M-to-F transitions as surgical or physical – separate opinions frequently depart from these scripts. They can provide a space for contesting essentialist and biologically determined framings and for articulating more dynamic understandings of gender identity, sometimes anticipating broader discursive shifts. Ultimately, our findings suggest that – just like identity – its legal framing in ECtHR discourse is neither neutral nor static. It often reflects and reinforces broader cultural and institutional biases. Yet, it is through separate opinions that some of the most forward-looking framings emerge, signaling a gradual but meaningful transformation in how gender identity is understood and potentially reimaged within European human rights law.

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Voicing difference, building dialogue: A genre-analytic and metadiscourse study of judicial dissent in the ECtHR and U.S. Supreme Court

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Separate judicial opinions provide judges with a unique discursive space to express alternative legal reasoning, revealing individual perspectives that add a distinctly human dimension to the typically collective judicial voice (Garzone, 2016; Etxabe, 2022). This study compares dissenting opinions from the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) and the U.S. Supreme Court, focusing on how judges rhetorically negotiate individuality (highlighting their personal stance and authority) and commonality (maintaining institutional coherence and respect). Specifically, it examines how dissenting judges strategically calibrate “proximity” (establishing closeness and engagement with readers) and “positioning” (clearly signalling personal judgements and commitments) through metadiscursive features as conceptualised by Hyland (2005, 2015). Employing a mixed-method approach, this analysis enriches the genre-based rhetorical-move framework proposed by Goźdź-Roszkowski (2020) by adding two moves identified through careful textual annotation: the ‘Significance move’ (clarifying the broader implications of dissent) and the ‘Justification move’ (providing an explicit rationale for dissent). Corpus-linguistic methods facilitated the quantitative identification and subsequent qualitative validation of interactive markers (e.g., transitions, evidentials) and interactional resources (e.g., hedges, boosters, self-mentions). Findings show that ECtHR dissenters frequently utilise proximity-enhancing devices – particularly engagement markers and interactive metadiscourse – to foster an empathetic stance (pathos) and reinforce institutional credibility (ethos), balancing collective identity with clearly articulated divergence. Conversely, dissenting opinions from the U.S. Supreme Court predominantly employ assertive interactional resources, especially boosters and self-mentions, to foreground individual judicial authority (ethos) and logical coherence (logos), highlighting a more individualistic and assertive rhetorical stance. By refining and expanding existing rhetorical move taxonomies, this study seeks to enhance a context-sensitive understanding of judicial dissent as an interculturally dynamic genre. Ultimately, these subtle yet meaningful rhetorical peculiarities across diverse judicial traditions and individual voices ‘pave the way’ for richer debates on judicial transparency, institutional legitimacy, and the dialogic character of human-rights adjudication.

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From concurring to dissenting views: The judges’ ‘self’ in separate opinions

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The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) does not require unanimity for a verdict to be reached, and ECtHR judges participating in the consideration of a case may annex separate opinions (as well as statements of dissent) to the relevant judgment. Although judgments and separate opinions are published together as a single document, the latter are deemed to constitute a distinct judicial genre (Nikitina, 2025: 201–203), in terms of both content and style. The body of judgments reflects the majority opinion, which constitutes the Court’s ruling, and is drafted by judge rapporteurs assisted by the Registry, following a “prefabricated structure, divided into sections and subsections” (Peruzzo, 2019: 60) and using recurrent, standardised formulas (Peruzzo, 2019: 60–68). Separate opinions, on the other hand, represent the minority view(s) of one judge or a small group of judges and have no bearing on the Court’s decision. Being distinct from the judgment they are annexed to, they allow judges a much more unconstrained and even subjective expression of their arguments and points of view.

By means of a corpus-assisted approach, this paper aims to investigate how the judges’ ‘self’ emerges in separate opinions accompanying a corpus of ECtHR judgments collected using the gender identity labels forming the LGBTIQ+ initialism as keywords (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer). Given that gender identity, gender recognition and sexual orientation are generally seen as sensitive topics, the occurrence of such labels in the so-collected judgments was deemed as an indicator of the possible need for the judges to express diverging – although not necessarily opposite – views. The selection criterion allowed for the collection of 136 separate opinions, which can be placed on a continuum from concurring to dissenting opinions. The aim of the paper is thus to explore how the judges drafting separate opinions verbally manifest themselves in the texts, i.e. how they express their stance and views – in a more or less overt fashion – on the majority opinion. The study thus examines the judges’ use of personal pronouns – which are unsurprisingly much more frequent than in majority opinions – in combination with language expressing evaluation (as defined by Thompson and Hunston, 2000: 5). This may reveal beliefs and values which can go beyond the boundaries of their personal system of beliefs, as they may be shared by the professional community and influenced by the socio-cultural context they belong to.

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SEM41. “It’s personal – it’s (also) business”: Business communication’s interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary

11 September h. 16:00-18:30, PN 19

Convenors

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Abstract

The kaleidoscopic nature of business communication allows corporate actors to interact with a number of expert and non-expert interlocutors through an extensive range of traditional and innovative modes, content and forms of online and offline presence. In contrast with the common perception of business communication as “just business” - and therefore objective, results-driven and “self-less” - it increasingly encompasses the “human” (the identity of a person or representative of an organization), “humane” (inclusivity, ethics, cultural diversity) and “humanities” (studies of interactions and relations within a professional discourse community) (Jameson, 2022; Darics & Koller, 2019).

Research has explored and continues to probe into the human aspects of conducting business, including trust and relationship building, face giving and threatening, brand and professional name, identity and communities, teamwork and collaboration, active listening and power (a)symmetry, customer service and satisfaction, responsibility and sustainability. This increasingly personalized corporate and business culture is reflected in its language and discourse in relation to technological advances and tempers the hype of intense, high-quantity online communication (e.g. spam emails, standardized chatbots and routine automatic phone calls) with a greater focus on quality interaction, customized offers, gestures, understanding of others’ circumstances and word of mouth/mouse about personal experiences and feedback, with the intent of “keeping communication human” and being credible, accountable and trustworthy by any audience.

The seminar endeavours to create the ideal setting for an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary debate, starting from examples of and reflections on the linguistic and discursive aspects of and strategies surrounding the personal and human face of business communication. Such studies involve the boardroom and workplace, the classroom (Doerr, 2023) or the office itself (be it traditional, mobile or shared, Doerr, 2018) and the plethora of multimedia channels and approaches at company’s disposal to productively - but also humanely - interact within and outside of the organization. Possible topics for contributions include, but are not limited to:

- trust and relationship building in in-house and out-house business communication and correspondence (e.g. e-mails, press and news releases, websites)
- brand identity and strategic stance (e.g. CEO letters, institutional and financial communication)
- human presence and personal/professional identity in traditional and multimodal business communication via social media
- marketing communication and promotion (e.g. advertising, sponsorship, crowdfunding, appeals to stakeholders and business angels)
- human and humane storytelling of and by authentic self-made leaders, family businesses and testimonies (e.g. assistants, customers, employees)
- inclusion, diversity and equality in small talk and other instances of interpersonal cooperation and networking
- enforcement and/or violation of traditional politeness standards and etiquette in business and organization communication (e.g. hiring, firing, empowerment, appraisals, reprimands, complaints).

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SEM41. Papers

11 September h. 16:00-18:30, PN 19

- *Building trust & promoting sustainability: A discourse-analytical and ecolinguistic study of major cruise companies CEOs' letters* (Elena Intorcia, Università degli Studi del Sannio Benevento)
- *"Prompting" move structure in post-crisis corporate genres: Human(e)- vs AI-generated apologia* (Gaetano Falco, Università degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro)
- *Relying on the humane face to build trust: Storytelling in the energy companies' web campaigns.* (Maria Antonietta Marongiu, Università degli Studi di Cagliari)
- *Neutrality vs. personal involvement? An exploration of co-constructed affect in interpreter-mediated business negotiations* (Raffaella Merlini, LUMSA Università)
- *Exploring speech for job seeking purposes* (Sabrina Francesconi, Università di Trento)

SEM 41. Abstracts

"Prompting" move structure in post-crisis corporate genres: Human(e)- vs AI-generated apologia

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A significant portion of the research conducted in the field of corporate communication has been dedicated to crisis management (Hearit, 2006; Holladay, 2008; Coombs, 2010). Investigations within this subfield have identified various strategic positions, including counterattack, legal stance, apology, differentiation, and denial (Hearit 1995, 2006), as well as rhetorical appeals to ethos, pathos, and logos, which are characteristic of the company's 'apologia' macrostrategies during and after a crisis. These approaches to corporate crisis management highlight the critical role that human agents play in addressing such situations and the move structure they adhere to in apologetic corporate genres, such as corporate social responsibility reports and letters to shareholders.

As far as the research on corporate genres is concerned, a multitude of studies have emerged, presenting distinct move structures for organisations that vary in the number of moves, ranging from three to twelve (Gillaerts, 1996; Garzone, 2004; Nickerson & de Groot, 2005). Regardless of the stance adopted by the company in an effort to preserve its image and reputation, it is evident that letters to shareholders reflect both humane qualities, including kindness and empathy, as well as the human qualities associated with biological and social authorship.

In light of this context, this paper intends to investigate whether Artificial Intelligence can fulfil the formal requirements associated with the genre structure of such letters while preserving the distinguishing voice inherent in human-authored content (Choudhury, Vanneste, and Zohrehvand, 2024). Specifically, the paper aims to address the following research questions (RQs): RQ1) Although AI demonstrates the capacity to generate contextually relevant content, can it effectively capture the intricate human and humane dimensions of authorship that are prevalent in human writing? RQ2) Is AI capable of producing the same pathos and ethos found in letters to shareholders authored by humans? RQ3) What prompts must be provided to AI to formulate a letter to shareholders that conforms with the prototypical stances required by corporations to defend their actions?

To address these research questions, we will conduct a qualitative analysis of a corpus of authentic letters to shareholders that have been issued by companies in response to an environmental disaster, a health crisis, or an accounting scandal since 2010. This collection will serve as a benchmark for studying shareholder letters generated using Microsoft Co-pilot, OpenAI, and DeepSeek. The analysis will utilize methodological tools from corporate communication (Hearit, 2006) and genre analysis (Garzone, 2004).

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Exploring speech for job seeking purposes

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This presentation seeks to explore the use of speech in a small corpus of 47 video curricula (hereafter video CV), recorded by undergraduate students in a Business English course at the University of Trento, during the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 academic years. The students have a basic C1 level of English-language competence, according to the CEFR, and the ESP course has been integrated with a seminar offered by the university Job Guidance staff. From the perspective of genre analysis (Bhatia, 2017), the video CV can be positioned within the system of business genres that constitute a recruitment process (Waung, Hymes & Beatty 2014), which includes, among others, the cover letter or the job interview. Hence, it interestingly inscribes a personal dimension within business discourse (Darics & Koller, 2019; Doerr, 2018). Following a previous work devoted to multimodal meaning-making in the audiovisual corpus, this presentation devotes specific attention to the behaviour of speech, with an automatic transcription and quantitative and qualitative exploration of verbally-enacted self-presentation and self-promotion. The research question is the following: how do students use speech in a video CV to communicate and promote their prospective professional identities?

A first lexical-grammar level can be observed in the video texts (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004), where grammar and lexical solutions predominantly perform self-identification (i.e., I personal pronoun) and self-description (i.e., qualifying adjectives). Noteworthy are also temporal adverbs and conjunctions, past verb forms, as well as cause-and-effect logical chains, used by potential job applicants as storytelling techniques, to give narrative shape to the information they offer. Meanwhile, speech is adopted with an interpersonal role (through strategies including 'you' personal pronouns, interrogative or imperative forms), especially at the beginning and at the end of the video CV to address the potential recruiter. Speech is then used with a compositional function, to signal and shape a number of recurring genre moves (Bhatia, 2017; Coccetta, 2020), that can be arranged in the following or in similar ways: Introduction, Who we are, Aims, Educational background, Work experience, Soft, linguistic and technological skills, Conclusion. In this vein, the presentation aims to map and discuss verbal strategies in the codification and composition of the video CV, with specific attention to the intersection of personal and interpersonal dimensions in a business discourse genre.

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Building trust & promoting sustainability: A discourse-analytical and ecolinguistic study of major cruise companies CEOs' letters

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Strategic business communication is increasingly aiming at emphasizing the human aspects of conducting business, including trust and relationship building, and is often used to promote corporate sustainable practices, mainly owing to the high demands placed on contemporary businesses and corporations to meet sustainability goals and tackle climate change. Poole (2022), however, noticed how ecolinguistic analysis of corporate discourse has shed light on the greenwashing linguistic practices employed by corporations to obscure their roles and responsibilities for environmental damage.

This paper aims to investigate the strategic communication adopted by the CEOs of five major cruise companies to build trust and promote sustainable brand identity. Regarding identity and corporate strategy, CEO letters represent the most effective documents (Giordano 2019), containing both persuasive and personal elements (Gotti 2018:18). A small specialized corpus of fifty CEO letters opening the major cruise companies' annual Sustainability Reports from 2015 to 2024 was created and examined, through Critical Discourse Studies and Ecolinguistics analysis tools. Although small, the corpus is meaningful in its representativeness of the language employed by the cruise industry to discursively construct a sustainable and trustworthy brand image. The ultimate goal is to identify, through the analysis of quantitative and qualitative characteristics of the corpus, the linguistic devices, along with the communicative and legitimacy strategies applied and to what extent nature is erased from the companies' profit-oriented discourse.

Methodologically, this study mainly relies on Legitimation Theory (Van Leeuwen 2008), Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005), linguistic erasure (Stibbe 2015) and frame semantics (Entman 1993; Fillmore 1982). In particular, the framing potential of recurrent lexical items in CEO statements will be examined, pointing to the implications of lexical choices in constructing, within cruise companies' business communication, a specific discourse attempting to counterbalance and normalise the paradoxical tension between the search for profit and the ethical need for sustainability (Vanvik 2024; Ponton & Asero 2018).

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Relying on the humane face to build trust: Storytelling in the energy companies' web campaigns

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Research on corporate communication has shown that companies build a positive identity through several discourse devices (Urloi & Ruiz-Garrido, 2023; Marongiu, 2024) to earn stakeholders' trust (Giordano, 2024). Discourse is considered the most powerful tool that organisations can use to build reputation (Breeze 2013: 178), however, the hypertextual character of Web-mediated business communication requires to take into account its multimodal nature, with

all affordances simultaneously contributing with semiotic resources into a single communicative act (Campagna *et al.*, 2012: 10).

Accordingly, this study investigates quantitatively and qualitatively a corpus of forty videos currently available on the web pages of five international energy-production companies (i.e., the Italian Enel, the British Shell, the Danish Ørsted, the Chinese SINOPEC, and the American EXXON Mobil). Evaluative language and storytelling strategies are used in the videos to establish the companies' ethical and cultural identity, and altogether, to build a corporate humane face. The research examines how discourse, and precisely the storytelling strategies, contribute to the multimodal communicative act that promotes and nurtures the corporate humane face. Accordingly, the analysis of the corpus takes a *multimodal perspective* to identify the semiotic modes contributing to meaning making (Kress, 2010), and a *qualitative critical-discourse-analysis perspective* (Fairclough, Mulderrring & Wodak, 2011) to establish how language contributes to shape corporate face. The fact that at least some of the videos inspected may be translated or dubbed will be also taken into account.

In some videos, testimonials such as the company's managers and experts present the company itself, their projects in favour of sustainability, or their technological achievements; they provide figures and make statistical projections. In spite of the apparently cold data provided, the multimodal communicative event seems to be emotionally loaded, contributing to present the human character of conducting business, capable of reinforcing the company's relationship with their stakeholders. These traits, which also provide for the humane face of the company, emerge more clearly in the videos where employees and common people, members of the community where the company is active, are called to talk about the company's local achievements, how this has contributed to their wellbeing and to the welfare of their community. These testimonials seem to use positively charged lexis in higher degree. Their accounts go beyond the promotion of a trustworthy company. In their contribution to the multimodal text, they seem to conform to the purposes of engagement and entertainment.

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Neutrality vs. personal involvement? An exploration of co-constructed affect in interpreter-mediated business negotiations

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Inspired by Kaisa Koskinen's (2020) approach to translation, this paper addresses relationship building in one videorecorded interpreter-mediated trade fair encounter between an Italian shoe manufacturer and an English-speaking South African customer from the vantage point of 'affect'. Defined as a "body-mind complex that directs a person towards a desired state of affairs", the theoretical construct involves a process of "thinking-feeling [that] transcends any objective/subjective dichotomy and [...] is fundamentally relational in nature" (*ibid.*, 13). As such, it seems particularly suitable to investigate the human(e) dimension of face-to-face talk in transactional settings, where goal-orientedness has traditionally been the primary focus of attention. While, over the last two decades, studies in dialogue interpreting (Merlini, 2020) have increasingly explored the tension between emotional detachment and empathic involvement in doctor-patient consultations (Merlini, 2015; Mapson & Major, 2021), with few exceptions (Takimoto, 2006; Karanasiou, 2017) the interpreter's contribution to the co-construction of rapport in cross-linguistic/cultural business interactions is still under-researched.

On the premise that neutrality is the affective stance required of interpreters in Western codes of professional ethics, the impact on the outcome of a business transaction of the primary participants' "sticky fear" (Koskinen, 2020, 95) lest the interpreter might ally with one client and betray the other's trust is far from negligible. Since, in the specific context under scrutiny, the professionally trained interpreter is also the Italian manufacturer's daughter, the interactional data are qualitatively analysed to find out whether and in what ways impartiality is nonetheless achieved. Findings highlight the interplay of multimodal resources through which all participants manage to create a relaxed and mirthful atmosphere, with the interpreter's verbal as well as physical involvement contributing to placing primary interlocutors on a footing of equality. The interdisciplinary focus of the paper stems from conjoining the insights yielded by three strands of research: the discourse of business negotiations (Ehlich & Wagner, 1995); the literature on non-verbal communication, from gestures (McNeill, 2016) to positioning in space; and affect theory as a productive framework that foregrounds the "performative" nature of embodied interpreting practice.

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SEM42. A human and humane approach? Metaphor, argumentation and (counter)institutional discourses

12 September h. 16:30-19:00, PN 10

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Abstract

Are the metaphors underlying institutional discourses on current burning issues reliable predictors of the “human and humane” (Panebianco, 2021) approaches they advocate and claim to incorporate in their policy-making processes? Are the metaphors used to criticize the dominant institutional discourse effective in creating counter-discourses that challenge the dominant ones? Do dominant discourses and counter-discourses use the same metaphorical frames (Kövecses, 2009; Burgers, Konijn & Steen, 2016)? If so, what are the different properties selected to build their arguments?

We call for contributions that address these questions –both from the perspective of metaphor theory (Charteris-Black 2011; Musolff & Zinken, 2009; Lakoff, 1993) as well as from the perspective of argumentation theory (van Poppel, 2021, Wagemans, 2016) – and thus investigate the role of metaphors in relation to their argumentative function in both dominant discourses and discourses that produce a resistance to the dominant ones. We especially encourage the submission of papers that explore issues related to sustainability, health and well-being, economic and social policies concerning and influencing the public debate as well as the personal sphere.

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SEM42. Papers

12 September h. 16:30-19:00, PN 10

- *Sustainability at work: Dialogic practices for healing in the face of conflict* (Federica Ferrari, Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna / Anthony Dion Mitzel, Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna)
- *Institutional discourse and online communities: A metaphor analysis of eating-disorder communication* (Francesca Luisa Seracini, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano)
- *Conceptualising the principles of humane experimental technique: Metaphors and argumentation in 3Rs and NAMs discourse* (Ilaria Rizzato, Università di Genova / Daniele Borgogni, Università di Torino)
- *Mapping metaphors in news discourse: The discursive construction of sustainability* (Laura Narisano, Libera Università di Bolzano)
- *Diverging frames: Metaphors of inclusion in special needs education in the United States* (Cecilia Boggio, Università di Torino)

Diverging frames: Metaphors of inclusion in special needs education in the United States

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Abstract

In recent months the topic of inclusive education has taken the spotlight due to the current US administration's intention to move the oversight of special needs education out of the Department of Education (ED) and into the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Given that the history of schooling for students with disabilities in the US has been marked by exclusion, this so-called bureaucratic reorganization would only be its latest manifestation.

The concept of inclusive education is relatively recent. It was only with the United States Congress's enactment of the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act* (commonly referred to as Public Law 94-142) in 1975, which mandated the integration of students with disabilities into public schools across the country, that the word "inclusion" started to enter the discourse of education. Then, in 1990, with the implementation of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (commonly referred to as IDEA), politicians and educators alike started to label their effort to integrate the education of students with special needs into the US public school system as "inclusive education", i.e., an education which is equal and qualitative for all.

My study is a critical analysis of the discourse of inclusive education as it is laid out by both Public Law 94-142 and IDEA. Drawing on Conceptual Metaphor Theory, frame analysis and research on the argumentative potential of metaphors, I demonstrate that the texts of these two laws embed four conventional conceptual metaphors, namely, inclusion as a goal, as a building, as a process and as hospitality. Most importantly, I show that each of these four metaphors advances a particular standpoint on inclusion that may determine the way in which inclusive education is put into practice.

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Sustainability at work: Dialogic practices for healing in the face of conflict

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In times of increasing interpersonal and professional polarization, this presentation proposes a communicative model of sustainability rooted in persuasion and dialogic pragmatics. We contemplate how workplace and interpersonal communication can enhance mutual understanding, emotional independence/safety, and productive collaboration. Drawing on George Lakoff's theories of metaphor, moral framing, and identity, recent communication psychology (e.g., "11 Tips for Talking to Someone You Disagree With"), and Ferrari's (2018) model of "persuasion sustainability", we define sustainable dialogue as that which enables relational symmetry, persuasive balance, and clarity of intent over time. We present a tripartite framework for evaluating dialogic sustainability in accordance with the three sustainability factors for the analysis of persuasion: 1. relationship (symmetrical/asymmetrical); 2. way of persuasion; and 3. goal of persuasion. Using metaphor analysis and multimodal examples, we demonstrate how breakdowns occur linguistically and

emotionally, as well as how sustainability awareness and practices can pre-empt and/or repair these ruptures and fractures in strategic/everyday communication, thus providing guidelines for rebalancing problematic cases to promote more healing from a wider interactional perspective.

Sustainable communication, we argue, is not necessarily conflict-free but conflict-capable, i.e., able to withstand disagreement without resorting to erasure, aggression, or gaslighting. Charisma, listening, and the emotional tenor of a conversation often prove more influential than formal logic. Some examples from media (e.g., *Modern Family* (2009-2020, ABC), *Gaslight* (1944), *Marriage Story* (2019), *Saturday Night Live* (1975-present, NBC) political sketch parodies, and Abbott & Costello's "Who's on First"), illustrate how non sustainability can develop into a climax from misunderstanding to denial, reversal and other non-necessarily fair strategies, operating rhetorically and sometimes comically, making visible the thin line between irony and emotional harm. Sustainability factors analysis can help promoting awareness and practical guidelines for more sustainability and healing. Ultimately, we argue that sustainability at work is not solely about environmental or economic models, but about how people speak, listen, persuade, co-exist, and crucially *heal* through dialogic means. Therefore, communication, when practiced with care, reciprocity, and long-term vision, becomes a renewable resource for mutual recognition and shared purpose.

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Mapping metaphors in news discourse: The discursive construction of sustainability

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Metaphors can facilitate the process of grasping unfamiliar concepts by mapping them onto more familiar ones (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Conventional metaphors, due to their widespread usage, may convey implicit assumptions that are taken for granted; on the other hand, creative metaphors can be utilised more deliberately to challenge prevailing narratives (van Poppel, 2021). This makes metaphor a particularly valuable lens through which to examine how public understanding of complex and multifaceted issues, such as sustainability, is shaped. Although the term has entered mainstream discourse and become widely recognisable, it remains conceptually opaque and open to multiple interpretations (Purvis et al., 2019). Frequently framed as development that allows humanity to meet its current needs without permanently damaging the ability of future generations to do the same, its vagueness and flexibility allow it to function as a "floating signifier" (Catenaccio 2019). The media, by virtue of its role in constructing representations of social issues (Baker et al. 2013), plays a central part in shaping public conceptions of sustainability.

This study investigates how sustainability is metaphorically framed in British and Italian newspapers through a corpus-based analysis. A 2,259-article dataset was compiled from mainstream national outlets over the three months following the release of the EU's 8th Environment Action Programme (European Commission 2022). Metaphors were identified within concordances for *sustainab-* and *sostenib-* using an adapted version of MIPVU (Steen et al. 2010), and analysed through Musolff's (2006) scenario-based framework to investigate their discursive implications.

The JOURNEY metaphor emerged as the dominant frame, typically portraying the implementation of sustainability as a long-term, effortful but worthwhile activity. However, scenario-level analysis revealed less common variants within the JOURNEY domain, depicting the adoption of sustainable measure as a turn or highlighting the need to accelerate this process, implying a shift or urgency in action. Moreover, rare and more creative metaphors were found to offer more critical perspectives on dominant sustainability narratives. Overall, the study shows that while the press generally upholds conventional framings of sustainability that support incremental change, alternative, potentially disruptive discourses, can emerge through more creative metaphors.

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Conceptualising the principles of humane experimental technique: Metaphors and argumentation in 3Rs and NAMs discourse

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This paper will look at metaphors as conceptualising tools in 3Rs and NAMs discourse. The former acronym, standing for Replacement of animals in experimental research, Reduction of the number of laboratory animals and Refinement of experimental techniques involving animals, was coined by Russell and Burch in their seminal *The Principles of Humane Experimental Technique* (1959), posing the problem of the suffering of animals used in medical and pharmaceutical laboratory research aimed at humans for the first time. Ever since then, an increasing number of researchers has called for complete replacement of animals in laboratories, so that the definition of this type of commitment has changed to Non-Animal Methods (NAMs), shifting the focus to the development of research techniques that do not involve animal testing in the first place. Since the standard procedure for institutional approval of therapies and drugs implies a compulsory animal testing phase, the use of animals in medical research is taken for granted both in experimental practices and in discursive practices addressing them. NAMs, on the other hand, have the lower status of alternative methods; to reach the goal of animal replacement they need to prove more reliable and efficient than traditional methods, which makes the question of reconceptualising medical research without animals and spreading this vision across the scientific community and public opinion a very urgent one.

Discursive representations of scientific research heavily rely on metaphoric language to effectively convey complex meanings. For this reason, this paper looks at the metaphors employed by 3Rs and NAMs discourse and analyses their functions in criticising animal research models and constructing solid arguments in favour of non-animal methods and techniques. The study is based on a corpus of articles and book chapters focusing on the promotion and advancement of non-animal methods. The model for metaphor interpretation and analysis that appears more apt to do so is that of conflictual metaphor devised by Prandi (2017), not only because it actively addresses scientific discourse, but also because it distinguishes between conventional metaphors and conflictual metaphors. The former rely on consistent conceptual structures belonging to a shared heritage of everyday expressions emerging from polysemy, as described by Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Conflictual metaphors, on the other hand, are living metaphors challenging our shared conceptual structures and going beyond the boundaries of already shared language use. In this sense, conflictual metaphors represent an important part of the mechanisms of conceptual creativity made possible by linguistic expressions. Such creativity is pivotal both in devising new scientific theories and models and in effectively communicating and discussing existing ones.

This paper will apply this model to 3Rs and NAMs discourse, highlighting the conventional and conflictual metaphorical conceptualisations it adopts to construct argumentative patterns against the use of animals in research and in support of animal-free experimental techniques.

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Institutional discourse and online communities: A metaphor analysis of eating-disorder communication

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Metaphor is a powerful linguistic device that both shapes and reveals how individuals understand and relate to experiences, including those in health contexts. Metaphors can influence how people feel about an illness by shaping their emotions to match the way the illness is described in words (Hendricks et al., 2018, p. 276). In mental health, metaphorical framing plays a pivotal role in constructing public and personal narratives. However, the extent to which institutional health communication aligns with individuals' lived experiences - particularly in digital discourse - raises important questions. This has significant implications for health literacy, which relies on people being able to recognise, understand, and apply health information in ways that resonate with their lived realities (Augustosky et al., 2023). In light of growing calls for clarity, empathy, and inclusiveness in health-related discourse (Shen, 2011; Augustosky et al., 2023), examining how metaphors function across different communicative domains can provide a meaningful contribution to current discussions.

This study examines the metaphorical language used in institutional discourse on eating disorders (EDs) and compares it with that found in Reddit communities. It explores whether the metaphorical frames presented by institutions reinforce or challenge the narratives created by peers online. For the purpose of the study, two English-language corpora were compiled: (1) institutional texts from ED organisations such as Beat and NEDA, and (2) posts from ED-related subreddits (r/EatingDisorders; r/EatingDisordersOver30). Grounded in Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), the analysis employs Metaphorical Pattern Analysis (Stefanowitsch, 2004, 2007) in combination with MIPVU (Steen et al., 2010) to identify dominant metaphor clusters.

Findings indicate that while some metaphorical frames overlap across institutional texts and online community discourse (e.g., ED is a fight; recovery is a journey), they often serve distinct argumentative functions and draw on different source domain properties, reflecting to varying degrees the person-centred - or 'human and humane' - perspective that characterises institutional discourse. Institutional metaphors tend to empower and guide individuals toward help and recovery, whereas community metaphors reveal a more emotionally complex and ambivalent reality, framing recovery as a cyclical rather than linear process. Additionally, some metaphors - e.g., food is a threat - are more specific to the discourse within online communities, thus performing a counter-discursive role by foregrounding concerns that tend to be less visible in institutional narratives.

As Augustosky et al. (2023, pp. 50-51) argue, empathetic communication - rooted in audience-centred metaphorical framing - builds trust and promotes greater engagement with health recommendations. In this light, the findings of the present study can support institutional communicators in better aligning their messages with the lived experiences and concerns of individuals with EDs. Additionally, the study provides valuable insights for students specialising in communication and English for Medical Purposes.

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SEM43. Exploring the interplay between Artificial Intelligence (AI), English-Medium Instruction (EMI) and Integrating Content and Language in Higher Education (ICLHE) settings

11 September h. 16:00-18:30, S5 Moro

Convenors

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Abstract

AI's integration in EMI settings can transform pedagogy, learning processes, and classroom dynamics, particularly in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms. By pushing the boundaries of conventional practices and accelerating trends toward digitization, AI can be used to foster a more dynamic, inclusive, and student-centred learning environment. ChatGPT, for example, can have a transformative role in overcoming language barriers, fostering a confident EMI teacher identity (Tsou et al., 2024) and boosting students' learning progress (Kikuchi, 2024).

AI technologies can help with the introduction of individualized scaled solutions, the improvement of disciplinary content comprehension, and an improvement in academic success. However, these benefits bring along challenges with respect to ethical guidelines, critical evaluation skills, academic integrity of AI-assisted learning and assessment and potential digital inequality (Wanyu Ou & Malmström, 2023). Despite these premises, the interplay between AI and EMI or ICLHE contexts remains significantly underexplored in research studies as highlighted in the only existing systematic review on the topic (Bannister et al., 2023).

This seminar invites contributions that critically explore the intersection between AI and EMI or ICLHE contexts from a wide range of perspectives, including but not limited to:

- the use of generative AI tools by students and educators to enhance learning and teaching outcomes within the EMI/ICLHE framework
- the role of AI in promoting inclusivity and multilingualism in diverse EMI or ICLHE contexts
- the impact of AI on language assessment literacy and ethical considerations in EMI or ICLHE contexts
- the practical applications of AI in adjunct instruction, translanguaging practices, and disciplinary writing.

This seminar aims to open up a discussion on how AI can help in the evolution of EMI and ICLHE in higher education through both opportunities and challenges. We welcome innovative and interdisciplinary proposals that present theoretical insights, empirical findings, or practical strategies regarding the integration of AI into EMI or ICLHE practices.

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- Wanyu Ou, A. & Malmström, H. (2023): 'It becomes increasingly complex to deal with multiple channels': materialised communicative competence and digital inequality in English-medium higher education in the digital era. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 1–19.

SEM 43. Papers

11 September h. 16:00-18:30, S5 Moro

- *Scaffolding strategies in EMI lectures: Annotating pedagogical language with large language models* (Jane Helen Johnson, Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna)
- *EMI and language centres: Implementing teaching strategies and technological innovations to foster inclusive and personalised learning* (Geltrude Daniela Vescio, Università di Verona)
- *From one-size-fits-all to personalized EMI training: The role of AI in supporting EMI trainers*

(Mariangela Picciuolo, Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna)

- *The “Professional Writing Coach”: A GPT-based tool for professional writing in a ICLHE context* (Paola Carbone, Università IULM)
- *Perceptions of AI in academic writing: A qualitative study of doctoral students in a multilingual EMI context in Italy* (Stefania Cicillini, Università di Torino / Francesca Costa, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore / Cristina Mariotti, Università di Pavia)

SEM43. Abstracts

The “Professional Writing Coach”: A GPT-based tool for professional writing in a ICLHE context

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This paper presents an experimental teaching innovation designed at IULM University to explore the potential of generative AI in ICLHE (Integrating Content and Language in Higher Education) settings. The project centers on the development and classroom integration of a custom GPT model — *Professional Writing Coach*— which functions as a digital tutor for students learning how to communicate professionally in English across a variety of real-world formats. Far from being a generic AI chatbot, this GPT has been specifically configured to support higher education students in producing effective workplace texts such as emails, press releases, persuasive letters, blog posts, speeches, and About Us pages. It is equipped with interactive tools like a *Plain English Rewriter*, *Tone Tuner*, and *Professional Synonym Bank*, designed to encourage clearer, more purposeful communication. Students receive real-time, guided feedback on tone, structure, and audience awareness, making the learning experience both highly personalized and practically oriented.

The integration of this GPT into an EMI-based university course represents not only a digital upgrade to traditional writing instruction but also a step toward rethinking pedagogical design. It supports students’ development of essential skills for academic and professional success, such as:

- clear and effective written communication;
- critical thinking and revision strategies;
- awareness of audience and communicative intent;
- self-directed learning with AI-assisted feedback;
- and responsible digital tool use in academic contexts.

By sharing the design process and configuration logic of this GPT, the paper contributes to the emerging conversation on how AI can be purposefully embedded into teaching practice. Rather than positioning AI as a threat to academic integrity, the project embraces it as a catalyst for educational change—enhancing engagement, inclusivity, and readiness for professional life.

The paper offers practical insight into how educators can take an active role in shaping how AI is used in the classroom—balancing innovation with responsibility in an increasingly digital academic landscape.

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Perceptions of AI in academic writing: A qualitative study of doctoral students in a multilingual EMI context in Italy

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The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into higher education is prompting a rethinking of traditional pedagogical practices, particularly in linguistically diverse contexts such as English-Medium Instruction (EMI). AI tools like ChatGPT have shown potential to support students in overcoming linguistic barriers, developing a stronger academic voice, and using English more confidently for disciplinary purposes (Tsou et al., 2024; Kikuchi, 2024). However, their growing use also raises concerns related to academic integrity, the development of critical thinking, and unequal access to digital resources (Wanyu Ou & Malmström, 2023). Although interest in these issues is increasing, empirical research on the role of AI in EMI and ICLHE remains limited, as highlighted in the only available systematic review on the topic (Bannister et al., 2023). In particular, students' perceptions of AI use for academic writing in multilingual settings are still largely unexplored, yet such insights are crucial for shaping responsive and ethically grounded institutional practices.

This qualitative study contributes to this emerging field by exploring the views of 67 doctoral students enrolled in a technical university in Northern Italy during the 2024–2025 academic year. The participants, who come from a range of international backgrounds, shared their experiences and attitudes towards the use of generative AI as a tool to support English academic writing. Data were collected anonymously through open-ended survey questions and analysed using both thematic analysis and sentiment analysis.

Findings suggest a generally cautious and nuanced reception, with ethical and pedagogical concerns surfacing across responses. These findings offer insights for the design of academic writing support in the age of AI. They underscore the importance of fostering critical digital literacy and providing targeted training that acknowledges both the opportunities and the complexities of using AI for scholarly communication in multilingual settings.

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Scaffolding strategies in EMI lectures: Annotating pedagogical language with large language models

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Teachers may provide support for their students in learning new material, including both concepts and terminology, through strategies described as *scaffolding* (Bruner, 1985). While research into scaffolding has focused mainly on second language acquisition, it is also relevant for the teaching of non-linguistic subjects, more specifically in EMI. This broader study aims to harness the potential of Large Language Models (LLMs) to identify, annotate, and analyse scaffolding strategies used in a 200,000-word corpus of lectures by speakers of English as L2, for use in designing and implementing teacher training material.

Previous research into assisting students in knowledge acquisition has focussed on scaffolding devices such as mediation strategies (Molino, 2024), importance marking metadiscourse (Deroey & Taverniers, 2012; Deroey & Johnson, 2025), as well as questioning, and macro-structural lecture organisation (e.g., Ädel, 2010).

This presentation focuses specifically on a pilot study examining the viability of using LLMs such as ChatGPT to identify scaffolding strategies—in particular, importance markers—in a small section of the EMIBO corpus of engineering and social sciences lectures (Johnson & Picciuolo, 2022). This involved comparing ChatGPT's automated annotations with previously conducted human annotations (Deroey & Johnson, 2025). While there is growing interest in

the use of AI for linguistic analysis, limitations for corpus annotation tasks have been noted (Yu et al., 2024; Curry et al., 2024).

Although the wider research project aims to explore a broader range of scaffolding strategies across disciplines and contribute to EMI teacher training resources, this presentation will report exclusively on the methods and findings of the pilot study, thus providing an initial assessment of LLM potential for the task.

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From one-size-fits-all to personalized EMI training: The role of AI in supporting EMI trainers

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As universities worldwide expand English-Medium Instruction (EMI) to support internationalization strategies, professional development initiatives for EMI lecturers have also proliferated. However, these programs are often designed and delivered by language specialists rather than disciplinary experts, frequently following a top-down training model (Macaro, et al., 2020). This disciplinary gap limits the relevance and effectiveness of EMI support for content lecturers. Meanwhile, AI integration into professional development is rapidly evolving, offering personalization, adaptive simulations, and collaborative learning (Tammets & Ley, 2023). In EMI contexts, generative AI tools such as ChatGPT are increasingly used to enhance comprehension, engagement, and inclusivity, while raising concerns about ethics and academic integrity (Bannister, et al., 2023). However, their application to EMI faculty development remains underexplored.

This study explores how EMI trainers can leverage AI to provide personalized, discipline-sensitive faculty development. It presents a case study from the University of Bologna where AI supported the application of the Persona methodology (Cooper, 1999) and individualized task generation. In this context, Personas refer to realistic profiles of EMI lecturers, capturing variations in proficiency, expertise, and classroom demographics. Traditionally based on qualitative research (Picciuolo & Johnson, 2020), Persona creation was enhanced using ChatGPT to simulate discipline-specific needs and generate tailored prompts aligned with lecturers' fields (e.g., Civil Engineering, Materials Science). Building on an andragogical approach (Weissova, et al., 2024), the AI-enhanced workshop engaged participants through multimodal, context-specific tasks reflecting authentic EMI challenges. Structured reflections and feedback were thematically analyzed (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to assess perceived relevance, authenticity, and pedagogical value.

Findings suggest that integrating AI into EMI professional development can compensate for trainers' disciplinary gaps, enhance lecturers' engagement, promote reflective practice, and foster student-centered, context-sensitive pedagogy. This study contributes to ongoing discussions on how AI can support ethical, inclusive innovation in EMI settings.

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EMI and language centres: Implementing teaching strategies and technological innovations to foster inclusive and personalised learning

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EMI (English medium Instruction) is described in literature as ‘the use of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English’ (Macaro, 2018, p. 19). As EMI becomes increasingly prevalent in non-English-speaking regions, it presents both opportunities and challenges for teachers and learners, particularly in terms of language proficiency, academic performance, and inclusivity. This study explores the role of university language centres in the design and implementation of inclusive learning ecologies that facilitate intercultural communication by adopting teaching strategies and technologies to foster classroom interactions and personalised learning (Ruane, 2003). Data collected after administering a questionnaire to EMI course participants in a joint research programme conducted by the University of Verona and the University of Taiwan inspired recommendations on how research conducted within Language Centres on the matter might contribute to catering profitable and engaging EMI learning experiences.

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SEM44. English Medium Instruction (EMI) as a catalyst for humane and equitable education... or not?

11 September h. 11:00-13:00, S5 Moro

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Abstract

While English Medium Instruction (EMI) has become a dominant strategy in higher education globally, there are critical concerns about linguistic equity, implementation policies, teacher professional development and effective language learning (Dearden, 2014; Galloway & Rose, 2021). Often seen as a globalization tool, can EMI be reimagined as a catalyst for promoting linguistic equity, sustainable global dialogue and more positive attitudes towards English and multilingualism (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2009)? This seminar aims to explore EMI's potential to embody human and humane values from a critical perspective. EMI can bridge linguistic and cultural divides, promoting empathy and collaboration. Its implementation may also, however, highlight inequality, privileging those with access to English proficiency while marginalizing others. Indeed, a greater emphasis on student translanguaging and multilingual practices may be beneficial (Dalziel, 2021; Zheng & Qui, 2024). We invite scholars to present contributions to highlight these areas in relation to EMI: the question of equality, multilingualism and multiculturalism, as well as practical issues of internationalization and lecturer professional development.

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SEM44. Papers

11 September h. 11:00-13:00, S5 Moro

- *Framing EMI in higher education policy: Multilingual representations and stakeholder visions in strategic plans* (Nesrine Triki, Università di Torino)
- *Equal partners? English and Indigenous languages in a trilingual university* (Graham Burton, Libera Università di Bolzano)
- *Ensuring quality in EMI: Addressing the needs of medical lecturers* (Elena Borsetto, Università di Verona)
- *Bridging ESP, EAP, and EMI to foster researcher autonomy and professional development in the medical field* (Carlotta Fiammenghi, Università di Verona)
- *Affective factors and epistemic diversity in EMI assessment* (Katherine Ackerley, Università degli Studi di Padova / Fiona Dalziel, Università degli Studi di Padova)

SEM44. Abstracts

Affective factors and epistemic diversity in EMI assessment

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This paper explores the role of affective factors in EMI assessment in Italy, examining the interplay between language use and engagement with local examination systems, including oral assessment. As Serna-Bermejo and Lasagabaster (2025: 185) remind us, “Affective factors such as beliefs cannot be separated from students’ behaviours”. In this regard, Thompson et al. (2025) call for research into the interrelation between affective factors and L2 proficiency in EMI learning outcomes, concluding that students may need more support “related to the language *and* content domains” (Thompson et al. 2025: 113). We investigate how these two domains come together in evaluation procedures and impact on affective factors.

Bowles (2017: 197) observes a “local epistemology” in Italian university exams, made up of “examiners’ expectations of how the oral exam should proceed and how students should construct and express their knowledge”. Not only may international students be unfamiliar with such procedures, but the lecturers may also be “unaware of international students’ expectations regarding assessment practices” (Mair 2021: 111). As Zheng and Qui (2024: 98) argue in their investigation of epistemic (in)justice, “due respect needs to be paid to the epistemic diversity as well as intellectual traditions carried by these teachers and students”. Although their study focuses on language use, evaluation traditions might also negatively affect the success of EMI students from different cultural and academic backgrounds.

We thus administered a survey to students from a range of disciplines, to address the following RQs:

1. How may affective factors concerning EMI evaluation be related to assessment procedures as well as language proficiency?
2. What could be the relationship between these affective factors and possible epistemic (in)justice in EMI assessment?

We conclude by reflecting that EMI does not imply abandoning local academic traditions, but practitioners should encourage students to develop strategies to deal with evaluation procedures while raising lecturers’ awareness of the implications for epistemic (in)justice. Examinations should, therefore, represent inclusive, collaborative dialogue (Serna-Bermejo & Lasagabaster 2025) in which culturally-diverse hermeneutical resources (Zheng & Qui 2024) are recognised and valued.

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Ensuring quality in EMI: Addressing the needs of medical lecturers

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The expansion of English Medium Instruction (EMI) in medical education raises questions about linguistic equity and access to high-quality teaching in internationalised academic contexts (Lasagabaster, 2022). While EMI offers increased global visibility and exchange, it also introduces significant challenges for lecturers who must teach complex content in a non-native language, frequently without adequate institutional support (Galloway & Rose, 2021). This presentation

explores the linguistic and professional challenges that medical faculty members face in EMI settings, drawing on the results of a needs analysis questionnaire administered to lecturers in a medical degree programme.

Findings from the questionnaire reveal specific areas where lecturers feel underprepared, including spontaneous classroom interaction, conference communication, and the use of clear, intelligible English when explaining specialised content. In response to these findings, a 15-hour training programme was developed to offer practical and reflective support in oral communication, effective lecturing techniques, pronunciation, and student engagement strategies. This initiative not only addresses the immediate needs of EMI lecturers but also contributes to long-term educational quality and institutional fairness (Valcke et al., 2022). By offering targeted language and teaching support, the project fosters a more equitable EMI environment—one in which both staff and students can thrive. Beyond the initial training, the project aspires to establish a continuous support service offering EMI lecturers access to tailored language resources and ongoing professional development

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Equal partners? English and Indigenous languages in a trilingual university

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The increase in the use of English within higher education, most obviously in the form of English Medium Instruction (EMI), puts English in contact – and potentially also in competition – with local languages in many institutions around the world. In the words of Lasagabaster (2021, p. 83), the teaching of English “is a heavily loaded endeavour that usually raises feelings of linguistic imposition, identity loss, and cultural occupation.”

This paper reports on how English interacts with two indigenous languages in a somewhat unique sociolinguistic context: the trilingual Free University of Bozen-Bolzano (unibz), which offers teaching in three languages, English, German (a majority language locally, but a minority language nationally) and Italian (the national language). Unlike many other contexts where EMI is employed, English has never been ‘added’ as a teaching language, but has been present as an official teaching language at unibz since its foundation.

Building on two recent studies on the role of English and the sociolinguistic situation at unibz (Burton & Gatti, 2024a; 2024b), this paper presents an analysis of a large quantitative dataset – specifically, responses to a survey administered to students, academic staff and administrative staff (total responses: 1,538, response rate: 31%, completion rate: 93%). It explores how the language policies at unibz, which place English as one of three equal linguistic partners, rather than treating it as a special case, help to create balance between the three languages in what is a complex sociolinguistic environment. Furthermore, it explores how attitudes to English at unibz nonetheless vary, both according to the nature of the attitude measured (the paper will report on four separate constructs relating to the presence of English at unibz), and also to demographic variables, specifically: age, role at the university (student / academic staff / administrative staff) and faculty. While the overall picture to emerge is positive, it is nonetheless nuanced, showing how different stakeholders react to the presence of English in different, sometimes surprising ways.

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Bridging ESP, EAP, and EMI to foster researcher autonomy and professional development in the medical field

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In the context of increasing internationalization and the expansion of English Medium Instruction (EMI) in higher education, supporting non-native English-speaking academics in the production of research articles has become crucial, because it not only enhances publication outcomes but also contributes to linguistic equity and language training (Galloway & Rose, 2021; Wingate & Hakim, 2022; Dearden & Beaumont 2024). This paper proposes a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach to academic writing and language teaching, aimed at fostering continuous learning and sustainable professional development for academic researchers and teachers in the medical field (Huang, Lin & Tsou, 2024).

The project follows a multi-phase approach, including the present study and an EMI course tailored to meet the needs of the Department of Medicine at the University of Verona. In our study, first, medical researchers voluntarily provide drafts of their research papers, which are then analysed by researchers from the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures. The *Markin* software is used (Version 4.3.1.1) to annotate errors, signalling error type without providing overt correction; instances of good language use are also highlighted to stimulate reflection and discussion. Follow-up meetings are held to collaboratively identify corrections or alternative formulations, encouraging active engagement with language issues and genre conventions. The methodology is designed to promote researchers' critical language awareness, enhance their ability to self-edit, and gradually increase their confidence and competence in academic English writing. Furthermore, the approach fosters a dialogic learning environment where linguistic support is tailored to disciplinary conventions and the researchers' individual needs. The transfer of skills from research to teaching in English is possible in all of these areas.

This collaborative model thus attempts to build a bridge between English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English for Academic Purposes (EAP), and EMI. By empowering researchers to engage more effectively with the linguistic demands of global academic communication, it aims to support a more equitable and humane practice of EAP and EMI; the findings will also hopefully contribute to ongoing discussions about multilingualism, professional development, and sustainable internationalization in higher education.

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Framing EMI in higher education policy: Multilingual representations and stakeholder visions in strategic plans

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Although English Medium Instruction (EMI) in Europe often traces its origins to the Bologna Process and the subsequent national internationalisation policies, its evolving nature is deeply enshrined in locally 'intentional' (de Wit et al., 2015) institutional strategies, specifically as expressed in university strategic plan (SP) documents. This study seeks to explain how EMI is strategically planned within Italian universities by focusing on how decision makers directly and indirectly pave the ground for its creation and implementation across the various sections of the SPs and how they conceptualise EMI in relation to the diverse stakeholders. The study takes a discourse perspective which considers SP as a genre of organizational planning and communication (Bhatia, 2004; Cornut et al., 2012) whose macro-level external features lie at the interface between managerial and policy genres and whose micro-level internal features interact with the corporate, academic and educational fields. Such an approach positions EMI policies and implementations within a discourse genre that reflects and enacts meanings, beliefs and policies construed at the micro and macro situational and cultural contexts, which in turn, shape the lexico-grammatical and discursive choices. 16 university SPs written in Italian and their English equivalent versions have been collected from their respective universities' official websites. A first phase in the analysis

focuses on the lexical realisation of EMI. Using Sketch Engine, the texts will be searched for the key lemmas referencing EMI (e.g., Courses taught in a foreign language, Degree Programmes (taught) in English, internationalisation of teaching). This phase shall provide a quantitative description of the preferred lexical choices adopted to explicitly or implicitly construct the themes around EMI across universities and across languages. In a second phase, a random sample of these lexical items will be selected from the English SPs and will be analysed in their situational contexts to explain the textual (information structure), interpersonal (mood and modality) and experiential (clause type and participant roles) meanings and functions (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) associated with the human actors involved in EMI. The analysis of these metafunctions will help uncover how EMI is constructed not just as a policy object, but as a socially and ideologically meaningful practice (Pieczka, 2018; Adriansen et al., 2023). The study will, thus, shed light on the extent to which inward (texts in the local language) and outward (texts in English) orientations of SPs may shape the lexical and grammatical choices used and will contribute to our understanding of how EMI is perceived and valued within institutional discourse.

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SEM45. English language teaching and learning in the digital era: Exploring challenges, opportunities and ethical concerns

12 September h. 16:30-19:00, S4 Moro

13 September h. 8:30-11:00, S4 Moro

Convenors

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Abstract

The “Law of Accelerating Returns” posits that technological progress shows an exponential, rather than linear, growth rate (Kurzweil, 2004). Such an increasingly ‘smart’ world is opening up new horizons for English language teaching (ELT) and learning, blurring the boundaries between what is human(e) and what is not (Kohnke *et al.*, 2023). In this emerging context, language educators and students must develop complex skills such as digital literacy/fluency – combining digital and critical skills to evaluate AI tools for their real benefits and ethical concerns (UNESCO, 2025).

We invite scholars, practitioners and experts to explore with us the complex intersections of Critical Classroom Discourse Analysis (Kumaravadivelu, 1999), educational linguistics, ELT and technological progress, by examining key themes including:

- challenges and opportunities for teachers, learners and institutions in the digital turn of ELT
- best practices resulting from empirical investigations into new digital literacies
- ethical issues concerning brand new technological developments in educational environments and their *fair use*
- the impact of digital tools on quality education, social justice, inclusion and well-being
- metaphorical representations of AI emerging from, e.g., classroom discourse analysis, questionnaires and interviews, which can impact on the way AI is perceived and conceptualized by teachers and/or students.

The seminar will foster collaborative discussions merging theoretical and practical insights with critical perspectives, to increase awareness of the fast-evolving landscape of language education in the digital era.

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SEM45. Papers

45A 12 September h. 16:30-19:00, S4 Moro

- *Rebutting AI: Interacting with GenAI to develop critical digital literacy and critical discourse analysis in classroom practices and beyond* (Paola Giorgis, Independent Scholar / Andrea C. Valente, York University, Canada)
- *Investigating students’ perspectives on the effects of AI-powered multimodal feedback in EFL writing classes* (Antonella Giacosa, Università di Torino)
- *To bot or not to bot: An analysis of young learners’ interactions with AI* (Tatiana Kozlova, Sapienza Università di Roma)
- *Using generative AI to create lesson materials. Preliminary considerations from a pilot study with upper secondary teachers of English* (Laura Ferroglio, Università di Torino / Università di Genova)
- *Exploiting AI potential to enhance English writing skills: A linguistic perspective on Wordtune* (Laura Centonze, Universitas Mercatorum)

45B 13 September h. 8:30-11:00, S4 Moro

- *Local cohesion in EFL students' essays: A comparison between TAACO and human ratings* (Francesca D'Angelo, Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna / Serena Ghiselli, Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna)
- *Automated assessment of L2 English skills with ETET – a tool based on LLMs and speech technologies* (Claudia Roberta Combei, Tor Vergata Università degli Studi di Roma / Francesco Zappulla, Independent scholar)
- *A corpus-based technique in teaching English collocations* (Farideh Amirfarhangi Bonab, Università degli Studi di Napoli Parthenope)
- *Beyond templates: The DiFree repository and Moodle course for digital freelancing* (Anna Romagnuolo, Università degli Studi di Napoli L'Orientale)

SEM45. Abstracts

A corpus-based technique in teaching English collocations

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To use the English language naturally and fluently, language learners must acquire a solid understanding of collocations, particularly when there are notable differences in word order and prepositional usage between English and the learners' native language, as is the case with Persian in this study. As scholars have confirmed (e.g., Smith et al., 2008; Shahzadi et al., 2019), providing learners with direct access to corpora and the use of corpus analysis toolkits facilitates hands-on exploration of authentic language patterns. Adopting an educational linguistics perspective, this study employs the British National Corpus (BNC) to support the learning of collocations aimed at enhancing English language learners' reading and writing skills. While many previous studies (e.g., Adelian et al., 2015; Jeensuk & Sukying, 2021) have assessed learners' collocational knowledge using multiple-choice tests—which are often a source of confusion due to distractor options—this study utilizes multiple-choice cloze tests, as contextual cues can assist learners in applying collocations accurately.

Conducted in an EFL context and following a pre-test, training, and post-test design, the study involves ten Iranian master's students majoring in non-English disciplines, who complete short cloze tests aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The training, delivered over ten sessions, focuses on multi-prepositional verbs and verb + noun collocations, practiced using the Sketch Engine corpus analysis toolkit. The multiple-choice cloze tests are administered again following the training period, and the pre- and post-test results are compared. The findings are expected to confirm the effectiveness of corpus analysis toolkits in teaching and learning English collocations and to highlight common collocational errors among Iranian learners.

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Exploiting AI potential to enhance English writing skills: A linguistic perspective on *Wordtune*

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The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into language education encourages renewed enquiry into the interplay between linguistic competence, writing development, and digital mediation. This paper examines the pedagogical potential of *Wordtune*, an AI-driven writing assistant, in enhancing English writing skills through real-time linguistic feedback. We argue that *Wordtune* operates not merely as a corrective tool but as a site for metalinguistic engagement and syntactic exploration.

Wordtune generates context-sensitive paraphrases and stylistic alternatives, thus enabling users to experiment with varied lexical and syntactic patterns, and fostering awareness of collocations, register variation, and semantic nuance—key dimensions of second language acquisition (SLA). Drawing on the *noticing hypothesis* perspective (Schmidt, 2001; Godfroid, 2020), AI-mediated rewriting creates opportunities for learners to observe and reflect on linguistic choices, reinforcing form-meaning connections through exposure and decision-making.

By means of classroom-based observations and learner feedback from advanced L2 English users, we point to three domains where *Wordtune* has demonstrated pedagogical value: (1) enhancing syntactic diversity and stylistic control in academic writing; (2) encouraging autonomous revision practices guided by responsive feedback; and (3) supporting collaborative writing by scaffolding peer interaction with consistent linguistic input.

The present paper also addresses the risks of algorithmic prescriptivism. While *Wordtune*'s suggestions align with dominant usage norms, they may reinforce standardization and reduce stylistic agency. We therefore advocate a pedagogy that positions AI as a dialogic partner—one that *supports*, rather than dictates, the learner's voice and stance. This study contributes to the current debate on AI in language pedagogy by demonstrating how tools like *Wordtune* can foster metalinguistic implementation and provide linguists with a rich context for examining digital mediation in L2 writing.

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Automated assessment of L2 English skills with ETET – a tool based on LLMs and speech technologies

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Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) has transformed the interaction between teachers and learners, as well as the ways in which learners behave within the language-learning process (Walker & White, 2013). These transformations regard lesson design, classroom management, and the assessment of acquired language skills (Stockwell, 2018). The use of technologies has also given rise to new fields such as the Intelligent Computer-Assisted Language Learning (ICALL, Heift, 2021), aimed at developing tools based on artificial intelligence (AI) and natural language processing (NLP) technologies, including Large Language Models (LLMs) and automatic speech recognition (ASR). Recent studies in ICALL have shown that AI can be successfully applied both in the generation of test items (Donati et al., 2024) and in the automated assessment of language skills (Yavuz et al., 2025), including oral skills (Nebhi & Szaszák, 2023).

Our study goes in the same direction and presents ETET, a web-app for the assessment of English language skills. The tool deploys real-time feedback algorithms, LLMs, and ASR, as well as an AI engine capable of measuring various aspects of oral production such as intelligibility. ETET is designed to evaluate responses to both open- and closed-ended questions, in written and spoken language, assigning weighted scores based on the difficulty and type of task. It assesses skills in oral production and interaction, listening, reading comprehension, and written production on a 0-100 scale. These scores can be mapped to CEFR levels, both overall and by individual language skills.

To evaluate the reliability of the tool we are conducting a case study involving 40 Italian-speaking participants with varying levels of English proficiency. For each participant, we collected data on socio-demographic variables and linguistic background. The ongoing analysis aims to: (1) compare the automated test results with the participants' self-

reported proficiency; (2) evaluate participant feedback on the usability of the web-app; (3) compare the automated results with evaluations by human experts. The preliminary results show that as regards (1) and (3), in at least half of the cases, the system assigns a proficiency level that corresponds exactly to the self-assessed level reported by the participants and the one indicated by the three experts. In the remaining cases, the assessed proficiency level generally falls either one level above or below the self-/human-reported level. As for (2), overall, the feedback provided by the participants was positive and helped us to optimize the graphical user interface and response times.

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Local cohesion in EFL students' essays: A comparison between TAACO and human ratings

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The analysis of cohesive devices is essential in assessing L2 academic writing in EFL. However, the roles these devices play in L1 and L2 writing need to be further examined. In L1 writing, some studies have found a negative correlation between local cohesive devices and writing quality, contrasting with the positive correlation found with global cohesion (Crossley et al., 2011). In this study local cohesion corresponds to cohesion at the sentence level, that is between smaller chunks of text (ex. noun overlap between sentences, use of connectives to link sentences). On the other hand, global cohesion is related to cohesive devices used to connect larger chunks of text (ex. noun overlap between paragraphs) (Crossley et al., 2016b). For L2 writing, other studies (Crossley et al., 2016a; Jiang & Pu, 2024) show a positive relationship between cohesive devices and writing quality over time. More empirical research is needed to better understand how cohesion impacts essay quality in L2 academic contexts.

This study addresses the gap by focusing on local cohesion (sentence-level devices) in essays by 70 first-year undergraduates in 2024—20 in Intercultural Communication and 50 in International Studies. TAACO 2.0.4 (Crossley et al., 2016b, 2019) and SPSS were used for the analysis. The goal was to examine how classic and recently developed cohesion indices relate to human ratings of EFL academic writing quality in participants having a variety of mother tongues and English as a foreign language. A stepwise regression model (Pallant, 2020) used TAACO's connective indices as independent variables (local cohesion) and exam grades as the dependent variable (text quality). Two indices showed significant correlations: temporal connectives positively impacted writing quality, while basic connectives, such as *and* and *so*, had a negative effect. The model accounted for 19% of variance in the ratings.

The findings have implications for EFL writing assessment, highlighting differences between human and automated scoring. Understanding various cohesive devices—local, global, and overall—can better explain L2 writing proficiency and expert raters' expectations. Temporal connectives help organise ideas, a focus in writing classes, whereas overused basic connectives may lead to error-prone long sentences.

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Using generative AI to create lesson materials. Preliminary considerations from a pilot study with upper secondary teachers of English

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Following the release of ChatGPT 3.5 in late 2022, the implications of Generative AI (GenAI) in education have attracted increasing attention. Consequently, research studies addressing advantages and drawbacks of GenAI chatbots have soared (Crompton et al., 2024; Law, 2024): the opportunity to personalize materials, provide authentic texts and reduce teachers' workload (Amonova et al., 2023) appear to be counterbalanced by overreliance, threats to privacy, and bias (Barrot, 2024). One recurring aspect in current research is the importance of training and professional development for effective integration of GenAI in teaching practice (Allehyani & Algamdi, 2023; Crompton et al., 2024). Although teachers' acceptance and use in higher education have been explored, as well as hands-on use by English Language Teachers to create materials or plan lessons (Dornburg & Davin, 2024), few studies have linked educators' existing knowledge to practical applications in the language classroom (Buendgens-Kosten 2024) according to the TPACK framework (Mishra & Koehler, 2006), which advocates the integration of technological, pedagogical and content knowledge for successful teaching and learning outcomes (pp. 1025-1034).

This paper reflects ongoing insights from the author's PhD research, which investigates how Italian upper secondary teachers of English use Generative-AI to create writing materials. A pilot study was conducted in autumn 2024 to introduce ChatGPT for materials design. Participants' perceptions and experiences were gathered through reflective questions, saved interactions with ChatGPT and discussion groups. Key themes from these data will be addressed briefly in the presentation, allowing for question time. Despite the study's limitations, preliminary findings show how teachers have had the opportunity to apply their pedagogical and content knowledge when interacting with the chatbot, and gained insights into the tool's opportunities and awareness of their training needs.

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Investigating students' perspectives on the effects of AI-powered multimodal feedback in EFL writing classes

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Innovation is essential for effective teaching in 21st-century classrooms (Harari, 2018). As AI becomes increasingly prevalent, EFL teachers should enhance their practices by using AI-powered tools (Kohnke et al., 2023). These tools serve as a cross-cultural semiotic system, merging computer-mediated communication with multimodality (Herring, 2025; Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2020). They can improve teachers' communicative competence and assist in crucial tasks like providing feedback, which is vital for successful learning (Steiss et al., 2024). One such tool, Grammarly, adopts a multimodal approach, merging summative feedback—focused on pinpointing errors—with formative feedback that inspires learners (Kerr, 2020). It evaluates student writing by assigning scores and providing colour-coded feedback and visual cues for grammar, spelling, style, and tone. It also offers suggestions for improvement while encouraging users with positive reinforcement.

Given the essential role of feedback and the effectiveness of visual aspects in learning (Hattie, 2009), the impact of AI-powered multimodal feedback on learning is a timely area of research (Jiang and Yu, 2024). This mixed-method study investigates how multimodal feedback influences students' accuracy and motivation in EFL contexts, focusing on two questions: the impact on writing skills and students' perceptions of multimodal versus traditional feedback. Fifty high-school students participated in an activity using Grammarly, providing qualitative and quantitative data through pre- and post-session questionnaires. Findings reveal that students find multimodal feedback motivating and less judgmental compared to traditional feedback. They appreciated the quantitative scores from Grammarly for clearer insights into their progress and valued the opportunity to learn how to improve their writing autonomously. This study demonstrates how integrating AI-powered tools can yield comprehensive, motivating feedback and enhance students' learning experiences.

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Rebutting AI: Interacting with GenAI to develop critical digital literacy and critical discourse analysis in classroom practices and beyond

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This presentation examines the impact of digital technology on pedagogical practices and classroom relationships. On the grounds of dialogic models of classroom communication inspired by Freire (2013), we will examine how generative AI, with its emphasis on mechanistic, efficiency-driven methods (Tuomi, 2024), may challenge collaborative human learning experiences.

We will present three distinct activities carried out in two educational contexts (Canada and Italy), which allowed us to engage in critical approaches to the use of GenAI. Two examples involve classroom activities, and one is a sample guideline on how to write with AI when generating a text for a dictionary entry or an assignment. The first example introduces an undergraduate assignment in which students critically interacted with ChatGPT at a university level for a course in philosophy of education in Canada. The Canadian example showcases a group assignment for an undergraduate course in which students interact with ChatGPT by prompting the role of education in today's world. Each group engages

in turn-taking with the GenAI to develop argumentative thinking supported by course content and documents it in a script format. We will demonstrate how students built their rebuttal arguments through discourse markers and course knowledge.

The activity carried out in an Italian high school classroom engaged students to write the entry *colonialism* for the online dictionary *In Other Words* (IOW), with some students relying on ChatGPT to compose some parts of the entry. The result of their writing, which contained several limitations and gaps, became an opportunity to discuss AI technology. Both activities were therefore used to develop the students' recognition of the way in which AI generates information and to develop their critical digital awareness.

In addition to these two examples, we will end the presentation by sharing a sample guideline for writing an entry for the IOW dictionary when using ChatGPT. Despite the GenAI's apparent efficiency in generating dictionary entries and arguments as seen in the Italian and Canadian examples, the generated text usually needs to undergo a critical revision for language and culture biases, generalizations, and superficiality. The sample guideline can be used in high school and post-secondary classrooms to raise students' language awareness and to support digital literacy based on critical pedagogy.

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To bot or not to bot: An analysis of young learners' interactions with AI

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Despite the important lessons learned about the negative impacts of social media and big tech over the past two decades, there is a growing sense of optimism regarding artificial intelligence (AI) and its potential, especially in the field of education. AI-powered tools, particularly chatbots, present an appealing solution to address longstanding challenges in English language teaching (ELT). These tools offer new opportunities for interactive, personalized learning experiences that can supplement traditional teaching methods. However, the pressure to integrate AI into educational curricula raises important questions about the readiness of both teachers and students to effectively engage with this technology.

When is it the right time to introduce AI to students in a way that ensures they are not only linguistically ready but also cognitively and emotionally prepared to benefit from these interactions? This on-field empirical study investigates the use of AI technology in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) classrooms, focusing on history and art in a bilingual Italian school in Rome. Specifically, it examines the interactions of primary school (Grade 5) and lower secondary school (Grades 6-7) students with AI-powered tutors on the SchoolAI platform. By qualitatively analyzing these interactions, the study explores the dynamics between students and chatbots, highlighting both the potential benefits and challenges associated with AI-mediated learning.

The study aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on AI in education, offering insights into how AI can be effectively implemented in language classrooms while ensuring that it aligns with the developmental needs of young learners. In doing so, this paper addresses the urgent task of separating the hype from the reality of AI-driven education.

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Beyond templates: The DiFree repository and Moodle course for digital freelancing

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Over the past decade – and especially since the COVID19 pandemic – the proliferation of digital technologies, remote-work platforms, and entrepreneurial ecosystems has accelerated the growth of freelance and self-employment careers, particularly in the digital sector. These include established professions such as translation, writing, and web development, as well as a new generation of “portfolio careers” shaped by contract-based, platform-mediated, project-driven work. As of 2023, the number of freelancers in the European Union reached approximately 27.97 million, while in the United States freelancers are projected to constitute over 50% of the workforce by 2027 (Statista, 2024).

Despite this dramatic shift, higher education still centers on preparation for salaried, organizational roles, leaving a growing gap between academic training and the skills needed to thrive in the freelance economy. This gap is particularly evident in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) instruction. While ESP textbooks remain anchored in traditional industries (e.g., business law engineering) and EAP materials focus on academic writing and critical reading, few educational resources address the genre-and-skills demands of freelance work. Consequently, students and recent graduates – especially non-native English speakers – are often unprepared to pursue sustainable self-employment. They lack training in digital self-presentation, proposal writing, and “cold pitching”, all essential for success in the online freelance marketplace.

The purpose of this paper is to present the second intellectual output of the Erasmus + KA project, Digital Freelancing for Higher Education. Originally conceived as a multilingual, multimodal repository of CV résumé and portfolio templates to support aspiring freelancers, it evolved into much more by project's end. To enhance learner engagement – especially for non-native speakers – the repository was complemented by the Moodle-based open-source course From Job Hunting to Cold Pitching. Organized into modular learning units, the course fosters both language competence and digital self-presentation skills essential to freelancing. It addresses a range of scenarios, from conventional job applications to unsolicited “cold” proposals for freelance platforms, guiding learners through interactive vocabulary tests, scaffolded writing tasks, self-assessment tools, and reading-comprehension materials adapted from professional-communication resources and career development sources.

Together, the DiFree Repository and its Moodle course provide learners not only with usable models, but with the linguistic and rhetorical tools to personalize, adapt, and effectively deploy them in real-world contexts. They also illustrate a scalable model for integrating language pedagogy with practical digital-career tools, filling a critical gap in higher education training especially for non-native English-speaking freelancers.

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SEM46. AI and English as a foreign language: Bridging classroom practice and research

46A 11 September h. 11:00-13:00, PN 5

46B 11 September h. 16:00-18:30, PN 5

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Abstract

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly adopted across various fields of education and research, revolutionizing how knowledge is created, shared, and applied (Chen et al., 2020; European Commission, 2023). Within the specific domain of teaching and learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), a growing body of work has shown the potential of tools like ChatGPT and other Large Language Models for diverse applications, including writing assistance, automated assessment and creation of language exercises (Khonke et al., 2023). Existing studies have demonstrated substantial positive effects of AI-based tools in controlled settings, focusing on cognitive and behavioural outcomes such as improvements of students' language competence (Bibauw et al., 2022) and motivation to learn (Fryer et al., 2020). Another line of research has relied on surveys among students and lecturers, shedding light on the pedagogical affordances of these tools (Slamet, 2024). However, significant theoretical and methodological gaps remain to be addressed. These include the need to establish more precise definitions of the very notions of AI and AI-based tools, to conduct empirical studies bridging AI research with practical EFL teaching applications, and to further explore the impact of AI use on learners, educators and the broader contexts in which they are immersed (Hockly, 2023). Against this backdrop, the seminar invites theoretical and empirical contributions that explore topics including, but not limited to:

- Using AI in the EFL classroom: applications of AI and digital technologies to EFL teaching, including (creative) writing; tutoring; time planning
- The human factor: students' and/or teachers' attitudes towards technology in learning/teaching; digital literacy of students and/or teachers
- AI and EFL linguistic data: explorations of learners' language, AI-generated language and learner-AI interactions, e.g. drawing on corpus and/or experimental methods
- AI, EFL, and normative discourses: explorations of normative discourses in AI output, including assumptions about language proficiency, correctness, and underlying biases
- Digital technologies, EFL and sustainability: EFL teaching/learning and ecological issues, e.g. with reference to mobility and distance reduction and/or waste of energy provision.

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SEM46. Papers

46A 11 September h. 11:00-13:00, PN 5

- *Critical digital literacies and learner autonomy: Opportunities and challenges of AI integration* (Cesare Zanca, Università degli Studi di Siena)
- *From errors to empathy: Exploring EFL learners' interactions with LLM-based Chatbots* (Daniele Polizzi, Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna)
- *Universal design meets artificial intelligence: Chatbot accessibility guidelines for inclusive EFL learning* (Francesca Raffi, Università di Macerata)
- *Can LLM-assisted corpus annotations enhance EFL teaching and learning? The case of shell nouns* (Chiara Polli, Università degli Studi di Perugia / Carla Vergaro, Università degli Studi di Perugia)

46B 11 September h. 16:00-18:30, PN 5

- *AI, tasks, and talk: Developing academic spoken collocations with ChatGPT* (Valentina Morgana, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore / Francesca Poli, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore)
- *Prompting genre, prompting ethics: Embedding AI literacy in ESP* (Virginia Vecchiato, Università di Parma)
- *Twee, Cathoven and NoteLab English: A comparison of AI-powered tools for a CEFR-based English Language Teaching* (Rossana Spadaro, Università di Catania)
- *Assessing AI activities and tasks in Communicative ELT* (Salvatore Ciancitto, Università di Catania)
- *Nano open educational resources to enhance English linguistics teaching in Italian higher education: The EFFT_Mod project* (Giulia Staggini, Università di Siena / Lucia La Causa, Università di Catania)

SEM46. Abstracts

Assessing AI activities and tasks in Communicative ELT

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Artificial intelligence (AI) is becoming increasingly pervasive in daily lives and activities, and it is used not only in social network chats and platforms but also in performing professional tasks. This is not a novelty, because early applications of AI were primarily in professional fields of medicine, as well as military operations and chemistry. However, with its diffusion, AI is revolutionizing other areas of work. English Language Teaching (ELT) is one of these areas particularly affected by the use of AI and people commonly believe that AI tutors and chatbots will replace human teachers sooner or later.

Scholars and researchers have been highlighting the potential and the benefits of AI in ELT, focusing their attention on how students' performance and comprehension can be enhanced and how teachers' workload can be reduced (Gyawali & Mehandroo, 2022). When applied to activities for students, AI has been used to improve students' writing quality and confidence (Liang et al., 2021; Zulkarnain & Yunus, 2023), reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition, tailored learning experiences and speaking and pronunciation accuracy (Senowarsito & Ardini, 2023; Kristiawan et al., 2024).

In particular, research on AI chatbots has shown how chatbots can represent a valid speaking practice for students at primary and high levels, as chatbots can relieve anxiety and stress in using a foreign language (Jin et al., 2019; Hapsari & Wu, 2022). Implementing chatbots in English language classes has also provided a higher rate of student engagement and success (Yang et al., 2022).

Despite these advancements, literature shows that the Communicative Approach remains the most effective methodology in teaching English. The foreground idea of such methodology is that learning a foreign language successfully occurs when learners are involved in real communication. For this reason, Communicative Language Teaching promotes authentic material conveyed through communicative activities such as games, role-play, pair work and group work which develop all four skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing.

This paper aims to evaluate AI-based tasks and activities proposed by the British Council under the perspective of the Communicative Approach, assessing the extent to which this methodology can fit into the AI tools.

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AI, tasks, and talk: Developing academic spoken collocations with ChatGPT

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This study compares guided and unguided learning tasks to explore how AI-assisted task-based language teaching (TBLT; Kim & Namkung, 2024) impacts the acquisition of spoken academic collocations (ACs) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). While research has highlighted the potential of Generative AI (GenAI) tools like ChatGPT (Kohnke et al., 2023), little is known about their impact on learners' use of ACs in spoken discourse (Biber et al., 2004; Dang & Webb, 2022).

Two research questions guide this study: (1) Does guided use of ChatGPT through structured prompting enhance the acquisition of academic ACs more than unguided interactions? (2) How does AI-assisted instruction compare to traditional, non-AI-based approaches supporting collocational development?

The study draws on the Academic Spoken Collocation List (Li et al., 2024), 417 two-word ACs, extracted from the British Academic Spoken English (BASE) corpus using a frequency-based approach (Durrant & Schmitt, 2009; Gablasova et al., 2017). These collocations were embedded into AI-generated dialogues and learning tasks to ensure authentic input.

Forty B2-level university students enrolled in foreign language degrees participated in the study. Proficiency was verified using the Oxford Placement Test. Participants were assigned to one of three groups: (1) a guided group completing structured tasks with ChatGPT, (2) an unguided group engaging in open-ended conversations with ChatGPT, and (3) a control group receiving traditional instruction.

A pretest-posttest design with a delayed posttest measured short- and long-term gains. Quantitative analyses included ANOVA and linear mixed-effects models for examining collocational use in AI-mediated dialogues. Preliminary results indicate that both guided and unguided AI-interactions significantly outperform non-AI-based instruction. Unguided learners show more fluent and contextually appropriate use of ACS, whereas guided learners demonstrate greater accuracy and explicit knowledge retention.

Findings highlight the potential of integrating GenAI into EFL instruction, particularly for enhancing spoken competence. This study contributes evidence on how AI-mediated TBLT tasks can support lexical development, offering implications for task design, learner autonomy, and the responsible use of AI in language classrooms.

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From errors to empathy: Exploring EFL learners' interactions with LLM-based chatbots

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Rapid digital advancements are giving rise to a new paradigm in language education, centred around the integration of Generative AI-driven technology (Konke et al., 2023). A key feature of its implementation lies in the models' dynamic ability to assign meaning and context to questions and answers, enabling natural-language exchanges in a chat-like environment (Lorenzoni, 2024). The interactive mechanism underlying this mode of text production becomes especially relevant for dialogue-based Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), where learners are asked to engage in native-like conversations with automated agents known as chatbots. Despite established claims about conversational AI's effectiveness in enhancing competence and motivation (Bibauw et al., 2022), direct observation of students' interactions with these tools remains limited (Han, 2024). To address this issue, the present study offers corpus-based evidence of emerging features and idiosyncrasies in interactions between Generative-AI systems and EFL learners, framed within the context of written, dialogue-based language practice. The corpus employed consists of 326 interactions (722,537 tokens) by as many Italian university students aged 19-25. Participants were enrolled in diverse degree programs and included learners with disabilities and learning disorders, in line with the principle of equal access to learning opportunities (CAST, 2018). Interactions were collected based on a protocol involving two different LLM-based chatbots (ChatGPT and Pi.AI) and two EFL learning scenarios (small talk and role play). Leveraging the corpus data and annotation scheme – which features structural information on turns and contextual information on the chatbot used, the tasks performed and the learner profile – this study explores the potential of AI-mediated learning for language development through both learner and chatbot contributions. First, it provides quantitative and qualitative evidence of errors characterizing learners' inputs, annotated following an adapted version of the Louvain Error Tagging Manual (Granger et al., 2022) that includes extended use cases and new tags tailored to digitally mediated conversation. Second, it highlights the socio-emotional responsiveness of chatbots to these errors, focusing on positive and negative politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987), such as mitigation, hedging, formal address, inclusion and expressions of concern. These are examined in light of two key pedagogical functions that chatbots may serve in L2 development: negotiating meaning as interlocutors and giving feedback as instructional partners.

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Can LLM-assisted corpus annotations enhance EFL teaching and learning? The case of shell nouns

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This contribution presents the early stages of an ongoing project that explores the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), specifically Large Language Models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT and Claude, in annotation tasks within English-language corpus-based pragmatics and discourse analysis with the aim of developing tools that can assist research and education in these fields. The focus of this study is on *shell nouns* – a class of abstract nouns that act as conceptual containers for complex, proposition-like meanings (Schmid, 2000; Vergaro, 2018) and play a key role in structuring a discourse (Flowerdew & Forest, 2014). Despite their functional importance for cohesion and argumentative clarity, shell nouns may pose a significant challenge for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Their interpretation relies on advanced cognitive-pragmatic and discourse-level reasoning, yet they are frequently overlooked in EFL instruction and materials. Shell nouns have typically been investigated through corpus-based methods. However, manual annotation of corpora is time-consuming and demands substantial linguistic expertise.

Building on the methodology proposed by Yu et al. (2024), this project investigates the potential of AI-assisted annotation for both research and didactic purposes. We compared the performance of ChatGPT-4.5, Claude 3.7 Sonnet, and a human coder in identifying shell nouns across a 1,000-text English-language corpus. The aim is twofold: to evaluate the LLMs' ability to carry out complex linguistic tasks that require human-like cognitive-pragmatic skills, and to lay the foundations for a future application as a support in teaching and learning these challenging discourse features by creating a body of materials that can be easily consulted (e.g. types and tokens, lexico-syntactic patterns). The results reveal that LLMs can identify shell nouns with promising accuracy, making their usage patterns more visible and accessible, though some recurring criticalities were identified. Still, this study ultimately discusses how these findings open new avenues for data-driven, AI-informed EFL teaching. By demonstrating how LLMs can be employed in a linguistically principled way and, in particular, how they can support the identification, explanation, and contextualization of shell nouns, this case study aims to respond to recent calls for bridging AI and didactics (Hockly, 2023; Kohnke et al., 2023), reimagining the role of AI as a resource for fostering metalinguistic reflection and discourse awareness.

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Universal design meets artificial intelligence: Chatbot accessibility guidelines for inclusive EFL learning

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This paper presents the development of the *Chatbot Accessibility Guidelines*, a structured set of principles grounded in Universal Design for Learning (UDL), conceived to assess the extent to which chatbots powered by Artificial Intelligence (AI) and used for dialogic interaction promote inclusion in university-level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting. The guidelines are intended to support educators, designers, and researchers in evaluating whether AI-driven conversational agents contribute to equitable, flexible, and learner-responsive digital language learning environments. The study is part of UNITE (*UNiversally Inclusive Technologies to practice English*), a PRIN research project funded by MIUR through NextGenerationEU (<https://site.unibo.it/unite/en>). The project aims to promote the integration of AI tools into university-level EFL instruction and autonomous language learning for all students, including those with disabilities and specific learning disorders (ANVUR & CNUDD, 2020). In response to the growing use of chatbots in educational contexts (Adamopoulou & Moussiades, 2020), considering growing concerns regarding usability, accessibility, and

learner diversity, the guidelines draw on a robust body of literature on chatbot design (Johari & Nohuddin, 2021; Borsci et al., 2022; Silva & Canedo, 2022) and on established accessibility frameworks (Stanley et al., 2022). Rooted in the three core principles of UDL—engagement, representation, and action and expression (CAST, 2024)—the *Chatbot Accessibility Guidelines* include descriptors designed to evaluate multiple dimensions of the user experience, such as adaptability to individual needs, support for emotional and cognitive engagement, clarity of interaction, and the degree of user control offered by the system. While the guidelines have not yet been tested in full, their structure was informed by data from a quasi-experimental study involving university students learning EFL who interacted with two AI-powered chatbots (ChatGPT 3.5 and Pi.AI). Following these interactions, students completed a post-task questionnaire designed to assess perceived levels of engagement, immersion, discomfort, and potential bias or discrimination. The *Chatbot Accessibility Guidelines* were subsequently validated in collaboration with CAST (Center for Applied Special Technology), the internationally recognized organization that originally developed the UDL framework (<https://www.cast.org>). By aligning chatbot evaluation with UDL principles, these guidelines aim to provide a theoretically grounded and pedagogically actionable framework for critically assessing the degree of inclusion offered by AI-mediated learning tools in EFL contexts.

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Twee, Cathoven and NoteLab English: A comparison of AI-powered tools for a CEFR-based English Language Teaching

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The aim of this paper is to assess what the benefits of using Artificial Intelligence (AI) - powered tools for teaching English as a foreign language are, according to the key aspects of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for languages, with particular regard to the updated version of the Companion Volume (Council of Europe, 2020). These include the notions of the user/learner as a social agent; the adoption of an integrated approach to language activity, moving from four skills to four modes of communication, through the addition of interaction and mediation; a positive approach to communication strategies; the action-oriented approach, and plurilingualism (North, 2020).

Since innovative technologies have the potential to significantly enhance CEFR-based English language teaching by providing personalized, interactive, and immersive learning experiences (Gulyamovich, 2025), the impact of “Twee”, an AI-based system to create didactic materials for learning English (Ushkova, 2024), in comparison with “Cathoven” and “NoteLab English” on the design of activities in the EFL classroom will be investigated, in order to assess potential positive outcomes such as improved learning quality and personalized learning plans (Galán-Rodríguez et al., 2025) and to provide EFL teachers with an outline of how these tools can be used at a secondary school level, thus addressing the need for a holistic and applicable set of ethical principles for AI in an educational context (Nguyen et al., 2023).

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Nano open educational resources to enhance English linguistics teaching in Italian higher education: The EFFT_Mod Project

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The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the global transition to online education (Turnbull et al., 2021; García-Morales et al., 2021; Fernández-Batanero et al., 2022; Mospan, 2023; Aristovnik et al., 2023, among others). Within the specific context of Italian higher education, this change has contributed to the introduction of digital educational tools for teaching and learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) (Kohnke, 2023; Sotomayor Cantos et al., 2023). The present proposal lies within the Project of Relevant National Interest (PRIN) for the creation of a good practice Higher Education network through the Eco-Friendly Flexible Teaching Model (EFFT_Mod), aiming at proposing a model for effective, flexible, and transferable teaching practices in EFL across Italian universities. The main research question addressed how Nano Open Educational Resources (NOER) can optimize instructors' time and resources in teaching linguistically related subjects. The research adopts a three-phase methodology. In the first phase, an explorative questionnaire was distributed to EFL university instructors to identify their pedagogical needs, challenges, and expectations regarding digital and hybrid teaching environments. The findings informed the second phase, which involved the design and implementation of NOERs, which are aimed at supporting teachers in adopting more flexible and student-centered approaches. In the third phase, a satisfaction questionnaire was administered to evaluate usability, pedagogical value, and perceived impact on teaching practices. Pilot studies carried out at the University of Siena and the University of Catania will be described to illustrate the application of this methodology in practice. These studies serve as a foundation for scaling the model to a broader network of institutions, ultimately contributing to a more cohesive and innovative EFL teaching landscape in Italian higher education.

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Prompting genre, prompting ethics: Embedding AI literacy in ESP

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This paper aims at exploring English for Specific Purposes (ESP) as a key area for developing AI literacy. The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into educational and professional contexts, particularly through generative technologies, has prompted a substantial re-evaluation of literacy practices, genre conventions, and communicative norms.

Drawing on posthumanist approaches to literacy and current debates in AI ethics (Wang & Wang, 2025), this paper calls for a pedagogical shift from conventional “prompt engineering” to what has been termed “educational promptization” (Haugsbaken & Hagelia, 2024). This new approach encourages learners to engage dynamically with AI-generated texts (Sichen, 2020)—such as research abstracts, business correspondence, and legal documents—through iterative processes like planning, translating and reviewing (Pallotti et al., 2021; Alamargot & Fayol, 2009; Flower & Hayes, 1981), thereby re-conceptualizing AI systems as literacy partners.

The implications for ESP pedagogy are threefold. First, integrating AI tools aligns with the objectives of the White Paper on Artificial Intelligence (2020) and the Digital Education Action Plan 2021–2027, which promote digital competence and critical thinking. Second, incorporating AI into genre-based instruction offers an opportunity to reframe genre theory through the lens of human–AI collaboration, with a focus on audience, purpose, rhetorical stance, and prompt optimization (Henrickson & Meroño-Peñuela, 2023). Third, ethical engagement with AI must address concerns related to algorithmic transparency, surveillance, and data bias (Taddeo & Floridi, 2023).

Set against the broader post-pandemic context of AI-enhanced education (Hockly, 2023; Moorhouse et al., 2023; Bakhtiar, 2022; Munday, 2021), this approach supports the integration of generative AI into ESP curricula. It highlights the need to cultivate attentional literacy (Pegrum, 2021), critical prompting, and genre awareness, preparing learners not only for linguistic proficiency but also for AI literacy that is rhetoric-sensitive (Hart & Burks, 1972), ethically informed, and future-oriented.

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Critical digital literacies and learner autonomy: Opportunities and challenges of AI integration

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The integration of AI-powered tools such as ChatGPT into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and literature education appears likely to reshape both classroom practices and the skills learners are expected to develop. Drawing on preliminary findings from the PRIN project “The Eco-Friendly Flexible Teaching Model” and on a theoretical framework that conceptualizes AI as both an enabler and a disruptor of traditional learning paradigms (Bibauw et al., 2022), this study explores how Italian university lecturers may be approaching the pedagogical challenges and opportunities posed by AI-driven innovation.

While digitalization initiatives such as the European Commission's Digital Education Action Plan (2023) advocate the adoption of innovative technologies to enhance learning, our data reveal a more complex scenario. Instructors recognize AI's potential to support language practice but also express concerns about preserving critical digital literacies, fostering learner autonomy, and promoting effective engagement with technology. Particular attention is given to the risks of uncritical reliance on AI-generated texts, which often encode normative biases and homogenize language use (Hockly, 2023; Chen et al., 2020).

By integrating corpus-based methodologies, the paper illustrates how AI-generated outputs can serve as sites for discourse exploration, encouraging learners to critically reflect on language use, register variation, and genre conventions. The findings suggest that, rather than replacing human judgment, AI should be positioned as a tool to enhance learners' agency, metalinguistic awareness, and sustainable engagement with English as a global language (Ruiz-Mallén & Heras, 2020).

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SEM47. In contact with English: Informal language learning practices and processes in Italy

12 September h. 16:30-19:00, S8 Moro

13 September h. 8:30-11:30, S8 Moro

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Nowadays, technology, globalization, mobility and multilingualism have brought about a scenario in which English language learning is moving beyond the classroom, propelled by informal, uninstructed practices ‘in the wild’ (Dressman & Sadler, 2020; Toffoli et al., 2023). This shift reflects a transformation in the contemporary linguistic landscape, where contact with English is increasingly embedded in real-life experiences, driven by entertainment, social and information-seeking purposes. English-language media and digital tools now serve as linguistic models and sources of authentic input, forming part of the complex web of online and offline interactions that shape present-day communicative practices (Benson, 2021). In these multimodal, immersive and fluid environments, second language acquisition (SLA) develops naturally as a ‘by-product’ of informal contact with English. An up-to-date ecological paradigm is thus needed to explain the dynamic and multifaceted nature of SLA in today’s media-saturated cultures, in which learner-users can attain high levels of proficiency in English without crossing geographical borders or having extensive contact with native speakers.

Inspired by the results of the 2020 PRIN project “The Informalization of English Language Learning through the Media” (Pavesi & Bianchi, 2024), this Seminar explores the evolving, but largely uncharted, patterns of learner-users’ informal contact with English in Italy. It welcomes contributions that investigate how informal exposure to English is reshaping SLA in the contemporary digital age. Topics for discussion include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Types, modes and degrees of media-based exposure to English outside of the classroom;
- Longitudinal studies of media-related/digitally-induced, out-of-class SLA, along such parameters as complexity, accuracy and fluency;
- Emic perspectives on learner-users’ experiences with English in informal contexts;
- Role of media and digital tools in the development of English language proficiency at the level of grammar, lexis, pragmatics, register awareness, etc.;
- Informal and formal English language learning against the background of the digital turn in education.

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SEM47. Papers

47A 12 September h. 16:30-19:00, S8 Moro

- *The English of social media. Investigating the linguistic features of Instagram posts* (Elena Manca, Università del Salento)
- *Informal access to audiovisual media among university students: Attitudes towards English, motivations for engagement and learning profiles* (Maria Pavesi, Università di Pavia / Maicol Formentelli, Università di Pavia / Elisa Ghia, Università di Pavia)
- *An exploratory study of how informal English language learning practices influence aspects of L2 written and spoken production* (Erik Castello, Università degli Studi di Padova)
- *The impact of informal English input on L2 spoken production over time. An exploratory study of lexical complexity* (Camilla De Riso, Università di Pavia / Elena Ballante, Università di Pavia)

47B 13 September h. 8:30-11:30, S8 Moro

- *Mediated fluency: Leveraging digital content to foster spoken English proficiency* (Francesca Machì, Università degli Studi di Palermo)
- *Pragmatic development in digital spaces: A cross-linguistic study of compliment production on social media* (Silvia Bruti, Università di Pisa / Gloria Cappelli, Università di Pisa / Nicoletta Simi, Università di Pisa)
- *Learning to speak, speaking to learn: A corpus-driven study of Italian university students' representations of English language learning* (Fabio Cangerò, Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II)
- *Beyond textbook knowledge of the host country's language: Migrants' language-related tactics when not attending classes* (Marco Santello, Università di Torino)

SEM47. Abstracts

Pragmatic development in digital spaces: A cross-linguistic study of compliment production on social media

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This contribution reports on the second phase of an ongoing study exploring the potential of digital exposure to promote the informal development of L2 pragmatic skills. Building on previous work on the recognition of embedded compliments in conflict-laden online interactions and their role in supporting or defending individuals, this presentation focuses on the production of compliments by Italian learners of English (EFL), both in their L1 (Italian) and L2, and compares their performance with that of L1 English speakers.

Compliments are typically not included in formal language instruction programmes, let alone when they occur in the specific interactional contexts examined here, which often elicit examples involving complex interpersonal positioning. As such, they provide an ideal heuristic vantage point for observing the pragmatic strategies and associated linguistic resources that learners may acquire incidentally through online exposure.

A total of 400 Italian EFL learners of varying proficiency levels and 200 L1 English participants completed an elicitation task in which they responded to highly critical and confrontational comments on social media posts. All the respondents stated that they are regular social media users, but did not specify how much time they devote to this activity. The comments covered five topics: looks, personality, skills, performance, and belongings. Responses were analyzed comparatively using a multidimensional coding scheme designed to capture both linguistic and pragmatic features in the two languages.

The study contributes to our understanding of informal learning in digital environments by gaining insights into how online engagement may foster the development of pragmatic competence beyond the classroom. It discusses implications for L2 pedagogy, particularly with regard to the role of authentic digital contexts in shaping learners' interpersonal communicative repertoires.

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Learning to speak, speaking to learn: A corpus-driven study of Italian university students' representations of English language learning

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This study investigates how Italian university students linguistically represent their experience of learning English as a foreign language, with the aim of uncovering the emotional, cognitive and sociocultural dimensions that underpin their language learning trajectories. Motivated by the need to better understand learners' voices in shaping inclusive and effective pedagogical practices as well as a desire to centre students' voices in discussions about language education, the research combines corpus linguistics (Baker, 2023) with corpus-driven sociolinguistics (Baker, 2010), language psychology (Dörnyei, 2009), and Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) studies (Horwitz et al., 1986; Horwitz, 2017). Specifically, the study seeks to explore how variables such as age, gender, motivation, academic progression and exposure to English shape learners' perceptions, affective responses and discursive representations of English language learning. To address these aims, the study draws on the Your Voice in English Language Learning (YVELL) corpus, which consists of open-ended responses to eight prompts collected from 146 students enrolled at the University of Naples Federico II. The respondents represent a wide range of academic disciplines and demographic backgrounds. The corpus was compiled and annotated using Sketch Engine (Kilgariff, 2014), a leading platform for corpus analysis, and is enriched with metadata including age, gender, degree cycle, motivation, self-assessed proficiency, exposure to English, employment status, and academic progression. Preliminary analyses reveal that demographic and psychological factors, such as age, gender and motivation, shape distinct patterns in learners' language use, reflecting varying emotional and strategic orientations toward English language learning. In line with recent research in applied linguistics and language education (Pavesi, 2024), the study highlights the importance of informal learning environments, including media, digital tools and everyday interactions, in complementing formal instruction. These findings, which contribute to ongoing debates around learner-centred and inclusive language education, point to the need for more emotionally responsive and differentiated pedagogical strategies, capable of engaging diverse student profiles and creating more equitable and empowering language learning environments.

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An exploratory study of how informal English language learning practices influence aspects of L2 written and spoken production

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Recent research on informal English language learning (IELL) has explored effects of informal exposure to English on both L2 English receptive and productive skills (Olsson, 2012). Regarding writing skills, Kaatari et al. (2023) found that the specific type of informal input plays an important role, with reading in English leading to higher adjectival

modification of the noun phrase and conversing in English and watching TV programs positively impacting lexical diversity.

The study presented in this paper contributes to the project “The informalization of English language learning through the media” (Pavesi, 2024), the third phase of which involved carrying out semi-structured interviews with a group of Italian university students and collecting longitudinal data from them in response to two set tasks. These consisted in writing reviews of films, books etc. and in performing monologues in which the students retold the contents of short clips and expressed their opinions/feelings about them. This study explores a corpus of texts produced by 12 students, who contributed 5 written and 5 spoken texts each, over a period of about one year (26,145 and 45,612 tokens, respectively). Before collecting the data, they sat a language test, which placed 2 of them at CEFR level B1, 5 at level B2, and 5 at level C. During the data collection period they kept a weekly diary and annotated the number of hours devoted to various types of IELL activities.

Research on written reviews as a genre (Taboada, 2011) has highlighted the importance of skilfully using adjectives and complex noun phrases for both descriptive and evaluative purposes. For the present study all the instances of adjectives in each text and ‘adjective+noun’ and ‘noun+noun’ combinations in the corpus were retrieved and quantified with the aid of the software Sketchengine. Furthermore, indices of lexical diversity were obtained from the software TAALED 1.4.1. The specific aspects explored are whether and to what extent the initial CEFR level and the frequency of reading/writing and conversation/watching influence the measures calculated for both tasks. Preliminary results show that learners at higher CEFR levels perform better on both lexical diversity and adjective use/noun phrase complexity regarding the written task, while they are better only at lexical diversity in the spoken task. Frequent reading/writing appears to be conducive to better performance on adjective use/noun phrase complexity in the written task but not in the spoken one. Other informal activities seem to be less impactful on the complexity measures that were considered.

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The impact of informal English input on L2 spoken production over time. An exploratory study of lexical complexity

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Studies on informal English language learning (IELL) suggest that prolonged exposure to informal L2 input enhances receptive and productive skills in L2 learners (Toffoli et al., 2023). However, only recently has research begun investigating longitudinal development within IELL, focusing on complexity, accuracy and fluency (CAF) (Kusyk, 2020; De Riso, 2025). In previous studies on CAF, findings have shown that lexical complexity – as lexical diversity and lexical sophistication – tends to increase throughout development, while being a reliable indicator of L2 proficiency. Lexical diversity measures vocabulary range and is calculated as the ratio of unique words (types) to total word count (tokens) (Malvern et al., 2004). Since the probability of introducing new types decreases with text length, measures such as D have been developed to assess lexical diversity independently of text length (McCarthy & Jarvis, 2007). Lexical sophistication reflects the use of less frequent, more advanced vocabulary, operationalized as word frequency lists (Laufer & Nation, 1995; Nation, 2016).

The present study is placed within the national PRIN project “The informalisation of English language learning through the media” (Pavesi, 2024) and aims to assess media-driven longitudinal development among Italian L2 speakers of English. Focusing on lexical complexity as diversity and sophistication, the study will draw on 12 university students’ spoken productions, collected through narrative and interview tasks over a 12-month period. Additionally, it will compare the narrative and interview data to evaluate how different tasks may elicit different degrees of lexical complexity. Results reveal distinct performances between narrative and interview tasks. When narrating a silenced short film, L2 users consistently improved in both diversity and sophistication over time. In turn, across the five interviews, lexical

sophistication consistently increased although diversity did not yield comparable results. These findings suggest that informal language input has a general impact on lexical complexity among L2 users of English. However, increasing task familiarity and repetitiveness through time may favour the use of the same vocabulary items. Findings further highlight that as narrative tasks are more diverse in topics and more creative as a genre, they may provide greater opportunities for complex lexical performance. The paper will further discuss the impact of the type and amount of informal exposure to English at advanced stages of development.

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Mediated fluency: Leveraging digital content to foster spoken English proficiency

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In recent years, the role of media in second and foreign language acquisition has become increasingly prominent, especially in informal learning contexts. For non-native English speakers, media exposure, whether through television series, YouTube videos, podcasts, music, or social media has proven to be a valuable tool in developing communicative competence. This is particularly relevant in environments where spoken interaction is essential and where fluency is often prioritised over grammatical accuracy (Soyoo et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2023). Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE), as it is now frequently termed, allows learners to be constantly in touch with authentic, dynamic, and different uses of the language, outside the traditional boundaries of the classroom (Lee & Sylvén, 2021; Reinders & White, 2022).

What becomes evident in this context is that exposure to a variety of linguistic registers and dialects of English provides learners with rich opportunities to observe, analyse, and emulate real-life language use. This contact with authentic Englishes enables them to develop not only linguistic knowledge, but also pragmatic and sociolinguistic competence, which are essential in modern communication (Zadorozhnyy & Lee, 2023).

This paper reports on a teaching experience carried out within the English courses of students enrolled in the Bachelor's degree in Communication Sciences at the University of Palermo. The course design aimed to bridge formal and informal learning practices, emphasizing oral interaction and media-based exposure. A combination of interactive methodologies and learner-centered strategies was employed, with a particular focus on the use of media content (TV shows, news broadcasts, podcasts, and social media clips and videos) to provide students with real-world examples of English language use across different registers, accents, and cultural contexts.

Through activities such as transcription, role-playing, discussion, and content analysis, students were encouraged to not only consume but critically engage with media, enabling them to improve their speaking skills and deepen their linguistic awareness. The results, assessed through oral exams, peer reviews, and reflective reports, indicated a significant improvement in students' confidence, fluency, and ability to manage various forms of spoken English. Moreover, the study highlights how intentional integration of informal and formal language exposure into structured coursework can enhance learner motivation and foster more meaningful engagement with the target language.

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The English of social media. Investigating the linguistic features of Instagram posts

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In today's digital landscape, adolescents and young adults are exposed to the English language through a wide range of digital media, with social media platforms playing a particularly significant role (Manca, 2024; Pavesi et al., 2023; Pavesi & Bianchi, 2024; Pavesi et al., forthcoming). Whether engaging with short-form videos, memes, tweets, or online discussions, young users interact with English daily, often without the explicit intention of learning the language. However, this frequent exposure for entertainment purposes contributes to an incidental acquisition of English, as users acquire linguistic structures, vocabulary, and communicative norms by interacting with them.

Despite the growing presence of English in digital spaces, questions remain regarding the specific characteristics of the language encountered. What distinctive linguistic features emerge in these contexts? Is the English found in these digital environments more similar to written or spoken varieties? What kind of language do social media users encounter and incidentally learn?

This study seeks to explore these questions through the analysis of three corpora consisting of Instagram posts focused on three main themes: music, travel, and cinema. These topics were selected based on a study conducted by Manca (2024), who investigated the preferences, perceptions, and attitudes of Italian university language students, particularly those enrolled at the University of Salento, towards the role of social media in learning English. Using a questionnaire inspired by the IECOL tool (Pavesi et al., 2023) and administered to 213 language students, Manca's study (2024) explored students' motivations for using social media and their perceptions of how such use may influence their language proficiency. The results indicated that students engage with social media not only for entertainment and cross-cultural interaction but also as a means to practice English and access information in the language. Among the thematic interests most commonly cited by the participants were cinema, music, and travel. Based on these findings, the present study selects these three topics, cinema, music, and travel, as the focus of its linguistic analysis. For each theme, two Instagram pages were chosen according to follower count and posting frequency. All posts published by these pages between February 2024 and February 2025 were collected to construct the three corpora under investigation.

The study adopts a quantitative approach grounded in Biber's (1995; Biber, Conrad 2009) multidimensional analysis, which examines the frequency of specific linguistic markers and associates their distribution with features typical of either spoken or written genres. Additionally, the three corpora are compared with the Spoken and Written Samplers of the British National Corpus (BNC) in order to identify part-of-speech (POS) tags with significantly unusual frequencies in relation to written and spoken genres of English. The quantitative analysis was carried out using the software tools SketchEngine (Kilgarriff et al. 2004) and WMatrix 7 (Rayson 2008), employing wordlists, keyword lists, and concordances as primary analytical instruments. The findings provide insight into the hybrid linguistic nature of English in digital spaces and contribute to a better understanding of incidental language acquisition through social media.

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Informal access to audiovisual media among university students: Attitudes towards English, motivations for engagement and learning profiles

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The increasing informalization of English language use is affecting L2 speakers' attitudes, motivations for exposure and self-perceived identities, while fostering the informal, naturalistic acquisition of the language outside of institutional settings (Sockett, 2014; Arnbjörnsdóttir and Ingvarsdóttir, 2018; Benson, 2021; Toffoli et al., 2023). Italy participates in this evolving scenario, as a result of the growing availability of English through traditional and new media as well as young generations' changes in linguistic behaviours and preferences (Pavesi and Ghia, 2020; Pavesi, 2024; Pavesi et al., 2025). The present study aims to explore the relationships between informal exposure to English, learning outcomes and the linguistic, social and attitudinal factors that may play a role in fostering spontaneous access to English through the media among Italian university students. Following the results of a large-scale investigation on informal contact with English in Italy, we address these research questions: 1) What social, attitudinal and language-related variables correlate positively with students' degree of informal contact with English? 2) What are the reasons for accessing English-language audiovisual media during leisure time? 3) How do these reasons relate to English learning profiles? A 72-item questionnaire (Pavesi et al., 2025) was administered to 4,007 university students enrolled in various degree courses in four Italian universities across the country. While RQ1 draws on the whole sample, RQs 2 and 3 are addressed focusing on the subsample of 2,703 respondents who declared to engage with films, TV series and other TV programmes (e.g., news, documentaries, stand-up comedy, televised interviews, etc.), given students' reported highest engagement with English-language audiovisual media. Data were analysed using correlation, regression and non-parametric tests to identify the relationships between intensity of exposure and non-linguistic factors such as students' educational background and attitudes towards English on the one hand, and reasons for accessing English-language audiovisual products and learning outcomes on the other.

The results reveal that the degree of informal experience with English-language media strongly relates to users' educational history and the liking of the language. As for the reasons behind accessing audiovisuals, the responses to the questionnaire show that improving English is not the only motivation for students to seek informal contact with English in their spare time but goes hand in hand with other frequently reported reasons, such as entertainment, appreciation for original voices, dialogue naturalness and information gathering. The varied factors which are bound to frequent engagement with English and the reasons for accessing audiovisual language in leisure activities will be discussed together with objectively assessed L2 proficiency.

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Beyond textbook knowledge of the host country's language: Migrants' language-related tactics when not attending classes

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This paper explores migrants' language-related tactics when they do not attend classes, focusing specifically on how migrants deal with constraints (Santello, 2022; Santello, 2024) when classes are not provided and/or not taken. Stemming from larger ethnographic research conducted among Gambian migrants in Italy, the study utilises rapport conceived as processual in the interaction between researcher and participant (Goebel 2021; Perrino 2021) and the notion of memory as mobile (Certeau, 1990; Santello, 2025). The data shows that it is not necessarily textbook knowledge of the host country's national language that is a helpful resource in this migratory setting; it is a combination of pre-departure languages, including English, phrases learnt online, and other ways of communicating. These encompass learning from a video platform, asking for the meaning of words, and, more generally, learning languages by interacting with people, which the key participant of this study characterises as personal/familial and shared in the Gambian society where he comes from. In addition, he tells of communication with an English-speaking guardian when he was a minor and being able to speak 'Italian from the street', a streetwise version of Italian that is described as distant from both monolingual standards and textbook knowledge. The results, therefore, shed light on ways of getting things done linguistically that are often overlooked when concentrating solely on classroom teaching and learning. This chimes with Cox's (2024) effort to take learning outside of the classroom but zooms into experiences as remembered and recounted in interaction of what happened when formal instruction was not a given. This may well warrant further discussion about appropriate language standards as well as learning methods for migrants.

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SEM48. Human connections in growing online communities: Redefining English teaching and learning in digital contexts

11 September h. 11:00-13:00, S7 Moro

Convenors

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The use of new technologies, generative AI and digital approaches to online English teaching and learning is constantly evolving, with variable degrees of success and satisfaction for lecturers and students (e.g., Padley, 2020 and Luppi, 2022). Despite enduring stigma and skepticism (Formiconi, 2016), English has been taught and learned through online platforms for several years at Italy's digital universities, offering exclusively distance learning programmes in a variety of subjects to increasing numbers of students, along with recent recruitment of English teaching staff at unprecedented rates (Minerva et al., 2024).

The seminar intends to encourage an open and bias-free debate on the issues, opportunities and challenges involved in teaching and learning English online at Italy's universities, be they traditional or digital. We invite theoretical, methodological, pedagogical and applied contributions, case studies and position papers with a strong research component that examine fully digital, hybrid and blended courses at undergraduate and postgraduate level, including Masters' and doctoral programmes, and those delivered online in English (Campagna and Pulcini, 2014).

Topics of particular interest to be addressed in relation to teaching and learning English online in Italian academia include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Innovative curriculum and syllabus design
- Revisiting methodologies such as peer education, cooperative learning, group work, task-oriented learning, project- and portfolio-based activities, etc.
- Technologies, tools, apps, platforms, virtual environments, immersive and augmented reality
- Gamification approaches
- (Generative) AI, Large (and Small) Language Models, Chatbots
- Standard varieties, world Englishes and ELF/EFL/L2 varieties in relation to speaking (including pronunciation) and writing
- Digital genres, online language use and multimodality
- The role of (audiovisual and multimedia) translation from and/or into English
- Promoting inter- and cross-cultural competence
- Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL)
- Protocols and applications of ELF contextualization
- Optimizing the benefits of synchronous and asynchronous online lectures
- Accessibility and inclusion strategies for students with disabilities and special educational and learning needs
- Developing learners' autonomy, self-assessment skills and reflexivity
- Informal learning outside the (digital) classroom
- Rethinking University Language Centres for digital universities
- Formative and summative evaluation, assessment, testing and feedback
- Monitoring the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning

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SEM48. Papers

11 September h. 11:00-13:00, S7 Moro

- *The (un)reliability of AI in EFL: Examining ChatGPT's role in academic writing* (Vanessa Leonardi, Sapienza Università di Roma)
- *Integrating AI into EMP instruction: Enhancing academic writing and presentation skills* (Roxanne H. Padley, Pegaso Digital University)
- *Extended reality in ESP learning: Insights from the ESP-XR project* (Valeria Giofré, Università degli Studi di Bergamo)
- *Exploring the role of AI in ELFentextualisation to improve the linguistic accessibility of academic and specialised texts* (Liviana Galiano, Università San Raffaele Roma)
- *Promoting students' AI literacy alongside teaching English at University in Italy: A proposal for micro-credentials* (Federico Gaspari, Università Telematica San Raffaele Roma)

SEM48. Abstracts

Exploring the role of AI in ELFentextualisation to improve the linguistic accessibility of academic and specialised texts

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In an increasingly internationalised educational environment, in which universities – particularly in Italy – seek to build or expand their connections with higher education institutions abroad, English is the main language of international academic communication. However, university students often come against language barriers in their attempts to approach texts and audiovisual materials in English regarding the subjects of their studies. After all, the expected minimum level of English for university students in Italy is typically lower-intermediate (B1 of the CEFR) for undergraduate programmes and upper-intermediate (B2) for postgraduate studies.

The present work investigates the possible advantages of ELFentextualising (Iaia & Capone 2020; Iaia 2024) academic and specialised texts written in English to be used as study material within Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) projects. The ELFentextualisation model calls for a detailed analysis of a text (i.e., Antext) in order to produce a retextualisation in English (i.e., Retext) that preserves the core information i.e., gist (Seidlhofer 1995), and communicative purposes (Nord 1997) while making the structure and, where applicable, the lexis (Daelemans et al. 2004) more accessible to lower-proficiency students. As the application of the ELFentextualisation model to extensive texts, such as whole textbooks or scientific papers, is expected to be time-consuming, it is verified whether current AI tools can speed up the process while safeguarding human-like quality. The following research questions are investigated:

- 1) Does ELFentextualisation improve the linguistic accessibility of academic and specialised texts in English?
- 2) Can AI tools be successfully integrated into the ELFentextualisation process?

The study will compare human-created and AI-generated ELFentextualisations of academic and specialised English texts on human nutrition in order to highlight their differences and similarities, and gauge the overall success of applying AI tools to the task. Focusing on linguistically-relevant retextualised materials, form and content analyses will be employed to foreground the decision-making processes underlying changes in terminology and syntactic structures while allowing for the preservation of illocutionary forces. Preliminary results provide insights into recurrent issues related to the linguistic accessibility of academic and specialised texts as well as the strategies used to solve them, being them implemented by humans or AI software.

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Promoting students' AI literacy alongside teaching English at University in Italy: A proposal for micro-credentials Federico Gaspari (Università Telematica San Raffaele Roma) federico.gaspari@uniroma5.it

Teaching English remotely at digital universities in Italy, including to non-specialist undergraduate and postgraduate students in a range of disciplines and programmes, presents a number of challenges and great opportunities, some of which are also common to traditional universities, while others are unique. Digital universities are very focused on innovation and flexibility in teaching and learning, which encourages the design of updated curricula and syllabi that incorporate strong technological components and student-centred resources for self-paced and personalized independent learning via dedicated academic platforms. As language-centric technologies with huge potential particularly for English, (Generative) Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Large Language Models (LLMs) are quickly becoming go-to resources for students that could in principle substantially benefit teaching and learning, particularly in higher education (Pym and Hao, 2025). However, in-depth pedagogical reflection and experimentation are still required to understand how AI-based tools can be best integrated into language education within academic programmes (Gašević et al., 2023).

The paper presents a preliminary proposal for the introduction of micro-credentials (European Commission, 2021) aimed at developing the students' AI literacy (Kit Ng et al., 2021; Cuomo et al., 2022; Lintner, 2024) that is currently being trialled at a digital university in Italy, emphasizing their effectiveness for lifelong learning and their value for the employability of graduates (Kato et al., 2023). The paper argues in favour of developing micro-credentials that supplement and support credit-bearing English language courses and that are aimed at fostering the students' overall AI literacy. The key motivations, main aims, overall design and core components of these micro-credentials are discussed, focusing on the flexibility of their implementation (Ahsan et al., 2023). In addition, their proposed contents are connected to the typical competences and skillsets of university students related to mainstream areas of EFL/ESL teaching and learning in both digital and traditional contexts.

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Extended reality in ESP learning: Insights from the ESP-XR project

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As technological innovations increasingly permeate both society and education, English Language Teaching (ELT) programs and curricula are being reshaped by these developments. Among these innovations, Extended Reality (XR) has emerged as a promising tool to enhance English teaching and learning practices. (Anesa, 2025; Fan et al., 2020; Hockly, 2019; Tegoan et al., 2021).

This study explores the application of XR in a relatively underexplored domain: English for Specific Purpose (ESP). Conducted within the framework of the University of Bergamo project *Enhancing competence in English for Specific Purposes via augmented reality: a prototype platform for educational and professional contexts*, the research led

to the development of an innovative application, called ESP-XR, which integrates XR technology, particularly Augmented Reality (AR), into ESP instruction. When integrated with AR—recognized as a versatile tool for both entertainment and mobile learning (Specht et al., 2011)—innovative ESP instruction reveals considerable potential and a wide range of possible applications. Drawing on principles from ESP course and material design and corpus-based language learning, three modules have been designed - i.e., medical, business, and legal English. Each module opens with an immersive scenario (i.e., a doctor's office, a business meeting room or a lawyer's office), triggered by a marker, overlaying digital elements onto the physical environment. In these environments, learners interact with 3D objects and engage in interactive dialogues that reflect naturally occurring language, thereby simulating real-life communication scenarios. ESP-XR aims to support the development of domain-specific linguistic and communicative skills, while at the same time enhancing learner engagement through gamification and embodiment. This study presents a mixed-methods analysis of university students' experiences with ESP-XR at the B2 proficiency level, with a particular focus on their perceptions of using AR in educational settings.

The outcomes of this research may offer insights into the potential of XR-enhanced tools to support ESP instruction and contribute to the ongoing development of XR-based language learning solutions, helping to advance new and effective approaches to digital instruction.

Acknowledgements: This research was carried out within the framework of the University of Bergamo project ASSEGN2324ESXP – “Enhancing competence in English for Specific Purposes via augmented reality: a prototype platform for educational and professional contexts” (CUP: F53C23000190005).

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The (un)reliability of AI in EFL: Examining ChatGPT's role in academic writing

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The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into university-level academic writing has prompted both enthusiasm and scepticism regarding its reliability and scholarly value (Tili et al., 2023). This study examines ChatGPT's performance across a range of academic writing tasks within the context of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) instruction for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). ChatGPT was integrated into the teaching and learning process through a series of classroom-based activities aimed at supporting the development of academic writing skills. These included guided writing tasks, collaborative editing exercises and evaluations of AI-generated content. This research adopts a qualitative, practitioner-focused approach, drawing on classroom practice, learner engagement and analysis of texts either generated by or assisted with ChatGPT. It explores how AI tools can support both the teaching of academic writing and the development of learners' critical awareness of academic conventions, linguistic accuracy and disciplinary discourse. Findings indicate that while ChatGPT performs well in structural and editorial tasks, such as grammar correction and support with paper structure and organisation, it frequently produces imprecise phrasing, an overly informal tone and logical inconsistencies (Kim, 2023). Recurring issues include factual inaccuracies, unverifiable or fabricated sources, verbosity, repetition and a lack of original insight (Salvagno et al., 2023). In other words, ChatGPT can support formative feedback and early-stage ideation, but it cannot replace human creativity, critical thinking, subject-specific expertise or the careful application of academic conventions (Bhatia and Kulkarni, 2023). Authentic examples of ChatGPT-generated content, collected over three consecutive academic years (2021–2024) during EAP instruction at the Faculty of Economics, demonstrate the model's practical application, strengths and limitations across various academic scenarios.

This study is grounded in the assumption that students learning to write in academic English should engage directly with AI-generated content to critically assess its (un)reliability. First-hand experience with ChatGPT's output enables EFL

learners to develop analytical skills, refine academic judgement and deepen their understanding of disciplinary and linguistic conventions. This research underscores the importance of integrating AI tools with critical human oversight to uphold academic integrity, ensure factual accuracy and foster essential research competencies. While ChatGPT can serve as a valuable supplementary aid, its limitations necessitate clear usage guidelines and a cautious, informed approach within higher education (Kohnke et al., 2023). This study contributes to the ongoing discourse on the (un)reliability of AI in academic contexts and aims to inform best practices for its responsible implementation in the teaching and learning of academic English within EFL settings.

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Integrating AI into EMP instruction: Enhancing academic writing and presentation skills

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Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly reshaping the landscape of language education, particularly in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Medical Purposes (EMP). Despite the widespread integration of AI in general English instruction, its targeted use in discipline-specific contexts such as medicine remains limited (Woo & Choi, 2021; Godwin-Jones, 2024). This study examines how AI-assisted tools can support qualified Italian-speaking doctors pursuing PhDs in developing academic writing and presentation skills essential for scholarly communication.

AI platforms, including chatbots and automated feedback systems, were used to deliver real-time, personalised feedback on learners' spoken and written outputs (Ji et al., 2024). These tools provided corrections, enhanced discourse structuring, and supported the development of logical signposting (Li et al., 2022). A corpus of AI-generated corrections and transcribed student presentations was analysed to identify recurring linguistic issues and assess improvements over time. These results were benchmarked against feedback from experienced educators to compare the effectiveness and accuracy of AI-generated suggestions (Alqudaihi et al., 2023).

The study also involved a questionnaire capturing learners' perceptions of AI's role in their language development. Most respondents valued the immediacy and consistency of AI feedback, highlighting its contribution to autonomy, motivation, and vocabulary acquisition (Li et al., 2022; Chapelle, 2018). Nevertheless, they acknowledged limitations in AI's ability to address nuanced, context-dependent aspects of medical discourse, confirming the ongoing need for expert human guidance (Godwin-Jones, 2024).

Findings suggest that AI can be a highly effective supplementary tool in EMP instruction, particularly in enhancing learners' ability to organise arguments and apply discipline-specific terminology. However, optimal outcomes are achieved when AI is integrated into a blended learning environment with meaningful human feedback. This research adds to the growing body of evidence supporting the use of AI in higher education and specialised language instruction.

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

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

Convenors

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Abstract

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

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SEM49. Papers

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

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

Strategies for conversation as the new frontier of linguistics in professional and academic oral communication

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

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Beyond the disciplines: Embedding equity, diversity and inclusion and empathy in English for medicine

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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SEM50. Language uses and languaging users in video games

50A 12 September 16:30-18:30, S7 Moro

50B 13 Sept h 8:30-11:00, S7 Moro

Convenors

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Abstract

As a uniquely human trait, language plays a fundamental role in human-computer interaction and computer-mediated communication forms like gaming. Indeed, although video games are procedural and interactive media which must be played rather than simply read, watched, or listened to, they are essentially textual in nature, and their underlying rules and features are articulated semiotically, both verbally and non-verbally. To explore the functions and effects of language(s) in this global cultural phenomenon, this seminar welcomes papers discussing theoretically and/or empirically one (or more) of the following themes: the multilayered nature of video game discourse (Ensslin & Balteiro, 2019); natural languages and their varieties in the production, localization, and transmediation of game texts (Bernal-Merino, 2015; Pettini, 2022); the language of gender (Heritage, 2021); gamers' languaging online (Iaia, 2021); automatic/machine translation and gaming (Hansen & Houlmot, 2022); the nature of paratexts (Burwell & Miller, 2016) and constructed languages (Bell & Ryan, 2019) in game worlds.

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SEM50. Papers

50A 12 September 16:30-18:30, S7 Moro

- *Language use and game affordances: "Doing toxicity" in Rocket League gaming interactions* (Federico Corradini, Università degli Studi di Modena e Reggio Emilia)
- *Player titles in online multiplayer video games: Is gender-inclusive localization considered?* (Anna Bevilacqua, Università degli Studi di Bologna)
- *The chivalry (II) of translanguaging: Multimodal communication and ELF uses in online gaming* (Giordano Lisi, Università del Salento)
- *iCivics for the DC Bar: An analysis of users' interactions and paratexts' features in law-related games* (Giuseppina Di Gregorio, Università di Catania)

50B 13 Sept h 8:30-11:00, S7 Moro

- *You are either with us or against us: Manipulating computer-mediated discourse in Orwellian video games* (Paolo D'Indinosante, Sapienza Università di Roma)
- *Translating Italian folklore in soulslike games: The case of Enotria: The Last Song* (Giovanni Raffa, Sapienza Università di Roma)
- *"Wow! Sei un eroe, amico!": A preliminary study on Anglicisms in video game dubbing* (Silvia Pettini, Università degli Studi Roma Tre)
- *Motivated transcreation. The role of critical analysis and media familiarity in game localization* (Pietro Luigi Iaia, Università del Salento)

SEM50. Abstracts**Player titles in online multiplayer video games: Is gender-inclusive localization considered?**

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With 41% of female gamers, it could be argued that, in Italy, the gaming population is extending beyond the usual young male demographic (IIDEA, 2025). The language used in game texts is pivotal to analyze the constructed role of gender (Heritage, 2021), since it can foster women player's inclusion, especially in texts localized in a gendered language such as Italian. Although some game genres with character customization such as RPGs include choices of pronouns and consequent localization with dedicated tags (Pettini, 2021), online multiplayer games such as MOBAs and FPS have traditionally been male-dominated with a community that shows reluctance towards inclusion (Braithwaite, 2014) and sexualized "supporting" female characters. However, publishers and developers have started to take action towards inclusion even in the localization workflow, establishing dedicated teams such as the Gender Inclusive Taskforce for Localization in EA (Dadalto Schettino, 2021) and inclusive localization guidelines. In Italian, one of the preferred strategies used by professionals to avoid the traditional "generic masculine" seems to be gender neutrality (or de-gendering) by using, for example, epicene nouns or neutral periphrasis when gender customization tags are not available (Wabbit Translations, 2022). These solutions are sometimes criticized for making women even more invisible (Giusti, 2022), but still favored in translation technology (Savoldi et al., 2024) and other fields. Player or challenge titles, i.e. decorative texts displayed under a player's username, might be interesting to observe inclusive localization strategies due to the grammatical neutrality of English in epithets such as "Champion" or "Courageous", since in online multiplayer games such as League of Legends (2009), Valorant (2020) and Overwatch 2 (2022) – chosen as case studies for their popularity and longevity – the user gender is never specified or customized. This paper proposes to compare the Italian localization of these elements with the original English text, to survey a potential rise in sensitivity towards inclusive localization from a diachronic perspective.

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Language use and game affordances: “Doing toxicity” in Rocket League gaming interactions

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Gaming culture, especially in online contexts, is regarded as featuring toxic, deviant practices (Paul, 2018) that are typically categorized in terms of sets of verbal and behavioral disruptive actions (Kowert, 2020). These actions can be performed in different settings, such as streams and actual gameplay, and what is considered “toxic” may change depending on the policies/rules of the platforms/games that try to limit inappropriate behavior (e.g. Graham & Dutt, 2019). Regardless of the attempts to curb toxicity, games’ rules and design can also be exploited by players to develop interactional practices, offering perspicuous examples of the interrelation of gamers’ language use and the socio-technical affordances of games to accomplish creative – albeit at times deviant – actions during naturally occurring gameplay (Reeves et al., 2017). This paper focuses on one such example of creative deviant practices: the interactional use of quick chats functions in the online game *Rocket League*, a fast-paced game where players compete in soccer matches using cars. As part of the game interface, *Rocket League* includes a written chat facility where pre-set messages can be sent to other players to communicate quickly, usually to praise game actions (e.g. “Nice shot!”, “What a save!”). However, players can also subvert the intended meaning and function of the game interface and verbal resources by using them repeatedly and ironically to mock and taunt opponents, launching sequences of deviant gameplaying where language, game action and game affordances are mobilized into “toxic” discourse. By applying multimodal conversation analysis to video streams of natural gameplay, the analysis illustrates the temporal, sequential organization of this type of toxic practice, as well as the reactions elicited. The analysis highlights how players creatively exploit the affordances of game design and language use to accomplish “toxicity” as socially organized and situated practice.

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You are either with us or against us: Manipulating computer-mediated discourse in Orwellian video games

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While also shedding light on the literary-ludic representation of totalitarian regimes (D’Indinosante, 2024), this paper primarily seeks to contribute to the study of multimodal textuality in video games (Bogost, 2007; Ensslin, 2012; Hawreliak, 2018) by examining a literary-inspired series which, as I aim to demonstrate, heavily relies on the ideological manipulation of in-game computer-mediated discourse to produce meaning. Developed by a Hamburg-based indie company and clearly influenced by George Orwell’s popular dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Li, 2019), the *Orwell* video game series currently comprises two titles, *Keeping an Eye on You* (Osmotic Studios, 2016) and its midquel *Ignorance Is Strength* (Osmotic Studios, 2018), which may be described as narrative-driven choices-matter drag-and-drop political thrillers. These games, which remediate both synchronous and asynchronous forms of computer-mediated communication, not only thematise but also gamify human-computer (as well as interhuman) interactions. Essentially, the player, who assumes the role of an investigator operating a state-run surveillance system called ‘Orwell’, is tasked with identifying potential threats to the totalitarian regime governing The Nation by scrutinising the digital activities of (at least initially) unsuspecting citizens. My close reading of *Keeping an Eye on You* and *Ignorance Is Strength* intends to investigate how, to what extent and for what purposes player and non-player characters are allowed or expected to manipulate in-game computer-mediated discourse. To assess the aesthetic and ideological implications of the manipulation of linguistic signs by a variety of language users within the two titles in the *Orwell* series, my paper will place special emphasis on the multimodal emulation of features associated with different media, genres and text types and on the significant in-game consequences that the manipulation of computer-mediated discourse has on human characters.

By means of a detailed multimodal analysis of the interrelated verbal and non-verbal rhetorics that are simultaneously at work in *Keeping an Eye on You* and *Ignorance Is Strength*, I will identify and interpret the various ideological uses of in-game computer-mediated discourse, thus highlighting its fundamental role in the meaning-making process of the *Orwell* video games.

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iCivics for the DC Bar: An analysis of users' interactions and paratexts' features in law-related games

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Legal translation entails several challenges when dealing with contexts that are shaped by different legal systems and cultural references, determining a form of inter-epistemic translation (Bennet & Neves, 2024). This is particularly true when entertainment products are taken into account, where translation is needed, in the form of both dubbing and subtitling, to reach foreign audiences. In fact, as argued by Sandrelli (2020), legal drama contributes to the popularisation of legal discourse and legal concepts, favouring the general public's comprehension, thus determining a re-formulation of specialist discourse (Calsamiglia & van Dijk, 2004).

Over the last 20 years, law-related or courtroom videogames have evolved, from elementary graphics and selection of issues to complex role-plays. In fact, it is possible to detect different typologies of products according to characters and contents, users' interaction, and levels of expertise. From the point of view of contents and characters, gamers have the possibility to consider two different groups of courtroom games: the former is represented by products that focus on fictional characters, such as *Devil's Attorney* and the successful series of *Ace Attorney* (that shows anime features); the latter allows users to interpret famous characters, as for example *Law and Order* detectives, since the game is an adaptation of the famous tv series. All these videogames can be played by users with a low level of expertise, who have the opportunity to interpret the role of an attorney or a detective (with few exceptions). A third group of products is represented by educational games, as those provided by *iCivics* platform and advertised by the DC Bar: these games encourage prospective attorneys or prosecutors to test their knowledge and their communicative skills, relying on users' specific competencies. In fact, in *Argument Wars*, students can argue a real Supreme Court case in pairs, while in *Do I Have a Right?* it is possible to run a firm of lawyers that specialize in constitutional law.

Since previous research has focused on the relationship between gaming and education/language learning (Gee & Hayes, 2011; Peterson, 2013), the present paper aims at investigating some *iCivics* products by adopting a multimodal semiotics approach (Hawreliak, 2019), in order to consider different multimodal configurations and users generated content to shed some light on how they contribute to the negotiation of meaning in the players' experiences, highlighting peculiar features of paratexts in terms of accessibility.

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Motivated transcreation. The role of critical analysis and media familiarity in game localization

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This paper enquires into the contribution of the critical analysis of source texts and the familiarity with gaming to the achievement of pragmalinguistic equivalence in game localization. The latter has specific features and constraints, from the tendency to prefer the translators' "interpretative craft" (Bell, 2006) to produce transcreative renderings, to the search for the engagement of players (Schoneau-Fog, 2011) and their immersion in the game world (Bernal Merino, 2015), to the consideration of the software code when planning target texts. The video game *Lollipop Chainsaw* (LC, Warner Bros. Interactive, 2012) represents the case study due to its motivated humorous discourse. The adjective "motivated" entails that LC develops a sarcastic criticism towards the American socio-cultural values by means of medium-specific (Chandler & Deming, 2011) and intertextual references (Mangiron, 2018) to B-movies, horror movies, Pop music, Rock music, and gaming, addressing the experienced players who embody the implied recipients of the video game at issue. Yet, the familiarity with the media that are part of LC's textual world is vital when dealing with the source script as its localizers (Díaz Pérez, 2017), so as to access the complete illocutionary force and perlocutionary effects. This paper will comment on a number of Italian alternative reformulations of the selected corpus of LC's extracts presenting metatextual humour and intertextual references. The objects of investigation are the outcome of critical analyses of the denotative and connotative meanings of the chosen excerpts, which are meant to trigger appropriate inferencing on the part of localizers. The results illustrate that the transcreative renderings improve the balance between the adherence to the implied receivers' expectations, creativity and pragmalinguistic equivalence between source and target scripts when the critical analyses of original versions are integrated by familiarity with gaming.

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The chivalry (II) of translanguaging: Multimodal communication and ELF uses in online gaming

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The linguistic landscape of online gaming communities remains an underexplored and yet rich domain for English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) study. Despite its consideration as a valuable source of empirical data (Pineda and Bosso, 2023), online gaming has often been overlooked in ELF research (Steinkuehler, 2004). In fact, the cooperative and competitive nature of gaming environments provides a fertile ground to investigate the transcultural communication practices (Baker 2022). This presentation focuses on *Chivalry 2*, a multiplayer medieval warfare game, whose player base seems to be part of a transient group using distinct jargon and register choices to interact.

A selected corpus of synchronous exchanges between gamers will be examined, in order to pinpoint the unique communication patterns within the in-game chat, as well as to explore the interactants' translanguaging strategies (Li, 2017). The latter are actualized by stylised expressions, game-specific lexicon, humour, and multimodal communication resources, whereby participants aim to transcend cultural and linguistic barriers (Bawa, 2018; Iaia, 2021). This study shall demonstrate that *Chivalry 2*'s chat can be defined as a dynamic space for linguistic innovation, where players negotiate meaning, construct social identities and foster in-group cohesion through language uses.

By bridging the gap between gaming studies and ELF research, the results will also contribute to a broader understanding of how English functions as a Lingua Franca in the digital spaces inhabited by intercultural players.

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“Wow! Sei un eroe, amico!”: A preliminary study on Anglicisms in video game dubbing

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The cultural and linguistic anglicification of audiovisual production has attracted considerable academic attention in Translation Studies. In the past decades, many scholars have shown that the impact of the English language on the Italian language of dubbed films, tv series and, more recently, animation clearly manifests itself in Italian *dubbese* or *doppiaggese* via more or less identifiable traces of English, comprising both direct and indirect borrowings (Pulcini, 2023), which mostly depend on the technical constraints of this translation modality (see, among others, Minutella, 2021, 2022; Pavesi, 2018; Pavesi & Zanotti, 2023).

This paper aims to contribute to the debate promoted by this long and productive research line concentrating on multimedia interactive entertainment software. Indeed, despite the spread of video games in Italian society, very little scholarly attention has been paid to game dialogue (Domsch, 2017) and to the different constraints and types of synchronies of game dubbing (Mejías-Climent, 2021). Accordingly, this research presents a preliminary investigation into the translation of some of the interjections (ok, okay, wow, yeah), familiarisers (man, mate, buddy, dude, pal), calques, and translational routines examined in the cognate area of animation (Minutella, 2021), by quantitatively and qualitatively analysing a parallel English-Italian corpus of three fully-localised war-themed titles, including *Medal of Honor Warfighter* (Danger Close/Electronic Arts, 2012), *Battlefield 4* (DICE/Electronic Arts, 2013) and *Mass Effect 3* (BioWare/Electronic Arts, 2012), which have been selected to focus on the typical military lingo used by virtual soldiers (Patterson, 2015) in the popular shooting genre.

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Translating Italian folklore in soulslike games: the case of *Enotria: The Last Song*

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The textual configuration of videogames combines interaction in a multimodal setting with segmented and environmental narration, particularly so when a videogame aims to simultaneously tell a story and engage users with fast-paced action. As they feature a semiotically complex mix of narrative and interaction, videogame texts encompass challenges and peculiarities in their translation and localisation, particularly so when culture-specificity is considerably strong in the text. “Soul” games, commonly intended as a subgenre of videogames produced by FromSoftware, have been an inspiration for other publishers to develop their own games based on the “soul” formula, which consequently led to an intertextual web between the original *Soul* series and other original products (soul-like games). While soul games have been localised from Japanese into other languages, soul-like games have been produced in other countries and with diverse cultures as a starting point for development. *Enotria: The Last Song* (2024) is the first soul-like game developed in Italy and in Italian: the game combines the soul formula with Italian folkloristic elements based on *commedia dell’arte*, thus featuring renowned “masked types” from Italian theatre tradition in a dark, mythical setting. Since *Enotria* sees Italian as its original language for translation and localisation purposes, the interpolation of the soul formula with traditional Italian theatre turns the game into an ideal setting to discuss transmedia worldbuilding in the translation and localisation of videogames. The Italian screenplay of the text, which includes rhymed sections, visual-verbal references to the Italian landscape and modernised versions of the *maschere*, has been dubbed in both Italian and English, and subtitled into other languages. This paper therefore inquires into translation practice in videogames by addressing a rare instance: that of Italian being a source language rather than a target language in the translation process. The study addresses the English translation strategies employed in the text, focusing on the one hand on culture-specific elements of the game interface, on the other hand on dubbed narrative segments dubbed into English. Regarding the latter, the analysis focuses on utterances from characters like Pulcinella and Spaventa, which serve as introductions for the player and as a major milestone halfway through the game, respectively.

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SEM51. Memory landscapes and heritage storytelling: Human voices and their digital representations

51A 12 September 16:30-18:30, PN 5

51B 13 September h 8:30-11, PN 9

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Abstract

Commemorating the past and reconnecting it with the present in tourism and cultural heritage branding has become a way of integrating different personal and collective timescales (Lemke 2009, 2023) into digital storytelling. This includes multimodal strategies to create 'memory landscapes' in (cross-)digital genres and texts in English – e.g. promotional videos and institutional websites, travel diaries/blogs, web-based accounts of migration and diaspora, etc. – that reconstruct and relive individual and collective journeys through time and space, exploiting master narratives to navigate the global and local worlds. The seminar will investigate humanity and the humane within multidimensional, transmedial forms of tourism and cultural heritage (e.g. Vasta & Manzella, 2024; Coccetta, 2024), also in a cross-cultural perspective: the focus will thus be on how memory landscapes and cultural heritage are transformed through remediation (Grusin & Bolter, 1999) and resemiotization (Iedema, 2003) in digital texts receptive to such storytelling. Contributions are invited which undertake critical multimodal discourse analyses that (dis-)articulate heritage voices of communities in the English-speaking world, including those using English as a Lingua Franca.

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SEM51. Papers

51A 12 September 16:30-18:30, PN 5

- *Narrating the self. Second-generation immigrants, identity, and the humane* (Cristina Arizzi, Università di Catania)
- *The Stoop as digital theatre* (Anthony Baldry, Università degli Studi di Messina)
- *Narrating European cultures, heritage and history: The case of European capitals of culture promotional videos* (Francesca Coccetta, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia)
- *Ombudsmen/ombudswomen as mediators and managers of cultural heritage in Canada* (Rosalba Rizzo, Università degli Studi di Messina)

51B 13 September h 8:30-11, PN 9

- *Tracing the origins of Italian tourism narratives in the digital age: A database for investigating language, cultural memory and identity construction* (Mirella Agorni, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia)
- *Oral, written and visual memory landscapes: evaluating recordings of personal memories of Ireland* (Deirdre Kantz, Università di Pavia)

- *Cultural preservation and critical multimodal discourse analysis: Interpreting UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (Pietro Manzella, Università degli Studi di Udine)
- *Dress code as a storytelling resource in the preservation of identity* (Mary Ellen Toffle, Università degli Studi di Messina)

SEM51. Abstracts

Tracing the origins of Italian tourism narratives in the digital age: A database for investigating language, cultural memory and identity construction

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Tourism promotion plays a key role in shaping collective memory and national self-representation. This presentation will introduce a digital research tool developed as part of the PRIN DIETALY project, which explores the evolution of Italian tourism discourse in English from the early twentieth century to the present (Agorni, 2025). The database allows users to explore how Italy as a tourist destination has been narrated over the years, highlighting the historical roots of images and themes that continue to shape tourism communication today. It shows how institutional and individual voices have contributed to the construction and circulation of memory landscapes in different periods.

This open-access database brings together metadata on over 600 English-language tourism texts - including brochures, guidebooks and digital media - collected from libraries and private archives. Unlike broader travel-related collections such as *Europeana* (a European digital platform for cultural heritage), the Dietaly archive foregrounds language and mediation: materials are classified by date and language of publication, genre, translator, promotional aspects, visual elements, and geographical and thematic focus. This structure invites researchers to trace the discursive and multimodal strategies through which Italy has been framed as an international tourist destination, and highlights the role of language mediation in shaping cultural heritage through tourist communication.

While the database does not reproduce full texts, it provides detailed metadata to support both qualitative and quantitative research, allowing for customisable exploration. Its multimodal structure facilitates research through a cross-search mode, allowing researchers to retrieve texts and analyse how past promotional materials have been recontextualised in contemporary tourism discourse. Through access to rich metadata, the database lays the foundation for research into the origins and development of narrative patterns that reshape cultural memory and reframe heritage for international audiences (Mandolessi, 2024; Opgenhaffen, 2022; Velhinho, & Almeida, 2023).

By foregrounding the interplay of language, image and translation, the presentation reflects on how digital tools such as this database can recover and reanimate past voices in institutional tourism promotion (Battilani 2023). It thus contributes to broader discussions about how memory landscapes are mediated through language - and how digital archives such as this one can support critical engagement with the past from a transcultural perspective.

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Narrating the self. Second-generation immigrants, identity, and the humane

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By being born in a new country to immigrant parents, second-generation immigrants both embody and shoulder the responsibility of navigating from family histories and experiences to new realities. Drawing on scholarship in narrative identity (Bamberg, 2004; De Fina, 2003; Lundby 2008) and personal and collective timescales (Lemke 2009, 2023), this paper intends to explore how second-generation immigrants in the US discuss their identity through self-narration,

negotiating cultural memory (Vasta & Manzella 2024), belonging and assimilation in transnational contexts. As a preliminary step, a small corpus of 30 TEDx talks delivered by second-generation immigrant speakers with various cultural and linguistic backgrounds has been created and annotated through the affordances of OpenMWS (Taibi 2023). These talks reflect themes of linguistic tension, multicultural adjustment, intergenerational tension and interdependence.

The goal of the analysis is to unveil the discursive rendering of the tension between the personal dimension of growing up and constructing an identity in a new country and the collective dimension of meeting family expectations. Special focus will be placed on the negotiation of language as a means of expression, e.g. code-switching, and as a paradise lost and regained in the construction of personal identities, e.g. onomastics (Amit & Dolberg 2023). The temporal framing of the talks, mediating past, present and future is also taken into account. The analytical model created for the corpus annotation is designed to detect the function of discursive strategies such as agency, intertextuality, emotional stance and irony, interlacing them with the main identity issues discussed, e.g. hybridity, belonging, exclusion, family heritage.

Finally, the analytical model will be examined in relation to the multimodal features pertaining to the performance and the integration of different semiotic systems, e.g. gestures, facial expressions, use of visuals, pauses, as narrative boosters. Overall, these narratives reveal that self-narration functions as an investigating strategy in the deeply human complexities of identity and belonging, and at the same time discloses the humane desire to be seen, heard, and understood across generations and cultures.

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The Stoop as digital theatre

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“Ouch you need some voice coaching” is the final remark that one host makes about the other’s singing in Ep. 6 of *The Stoop* podcast series. This “slip-up”, almost certainly planned, is a strong clue to the true inspiration and professionalism lying behind this acclaimed podcast series. Billed as *Stories from across the Black diaspora* (<https://www.thestoop.org/>), and thus concerned since its inception in July 2017 with reflection on how society has shaped the identities of Black people, especially those of African American women, the series is in reality a demonstration of how soul searching can be achieved in podcasting through the carefully-staged blending of the human voice and music.

The Stoop obviously fathoms African Americans’ yearning, as diasporans, to explore their cultural heritage – hence the many references to Africa (on average ten per episode) and individual African countries throughout the 111 episodes so far broadcast. Indeed, in their “celebration of Black joy in all its diversity”, hosts Leila Day and Hana Baba turn private thoughts into public confessions as they “start conversations and provide professionally-reported stories about what it means to be Black and how we talk about blackness in America, and globally” (<https://www.thestoop.org/aboutthestoop>). But while the series celebrates the struggle for individual and collective freedoms hailing “marginalized groups that [...] fought colonialism and oppression” (Ep. 23), *The Stoop* is far more than a forum for the oppressed.

Named after the stepped entrances to New York condominiums that expressed “the sub-culture which was the creation of children [that had] an impact no less enduring than the school, the church, and perhaps even the family” (Clark 1967:99), the series turns this hybrid private/public space into a digital theatre where people “stoop out”. *The Stoop* is thus

significant not for calls for freedoms and recognition of human rights – many other podcast series do this (Vasta 2022, 2023; Vasta and Baldry, forthcoming) – but rather for *how* it creates digital stooping. The presentation provides a succinct corpus-based critical multimodal discourse analysis (Baldry and Kantz 2022) of the series’ construction of theatrical soundscapes blending together voices and music through recourse to singing, chanting, and skilful control of voice prosodies which – in conjunction with other resources such as remediated clips sourced from other podcast series – create narrative landscapes that are truly memorable and distinctively multimodal.

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Narrating European cultures, heritage and history: The case of European capitals of culture promotional videos

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This presentation will explore cultural heritage in relation to 60 promotional videos for 34 European Capitals of Culture (ECOC) in the 2007-2025 span. How videos capture the cultural uniqueness of the ECOCs and promote cultural diversity, but also memory landscapes will be explored. The presentation will highlight the benefits of using a corpus-assisted Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis (CMDA, Vasta & Baldry, 2020; Coccetta, 2024) in the understanding of the strategies used to evoke the past. The presentation will also consider marketing aspects that use cultural heritage and the memory of the past with the ultimate goal of attracting tourism and investments. In this respect, the award of the title European Capital of Culture made to a city by the European Union represents an opportunity for cities to enhance their brand image in the eyes of their own inhabitants and the whole of Europe; indeed, from a socio-economic standpoint, the title is a catalyst for the city’s cultural development and urban revitalization as well as a boost in tourism (European Commission, 2025). For this reason, it is important for cities aspiring to the ECOC title to make sure that their place identity is well-created in all the ECOC-related materials, including their bid-book and promotional materials, and in line with the expectations of the ECOC calls. The presentation draws on Lemke’s (1995a/b) theory of intertextual thematic formations to support the CMDA approach.

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Oral, written and visual memory landscapes: evaluating recordings of personal memories of Ireland

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An Internet search for “recording personal memories of Ireland” returns many examples of websites that stimulate individual contributions for the creation of oral, written and visual archives forming a collective memory of Ireland, its history and its people (Fox *et al.*, 2021). These projects take different forms. Some are based on submissions of individual contributions sent in as a response to the website invitations. They include:

- a) institutional projects such as the *Memory Book Project* promoted by *The National Museum of Ireland - Country Life* <https://www.museum.ie/en-ie/museums/country-life/projects/memory-book>;
- b) business initiatives such as the *Life Recordings* video-based project by Salthill Media “to preserve your personal journey for future generations” (www.salthillmedia.com/liferecordings) and the oral history archive organised by *Irish Life & Lore*, a family business dealing in antiques and cultural heritage, “capturing thousands of Irish voices from all regions of the country” (www.irishlifeandlore.com).

Others are based on oral records collected by local communities such as the *Bere Island Oral History Recordings* project that brings together individual efforts to preserve their ancestry, cultural heritage and identity, (bereisland.heritagecork.org/people/recording-our-bere-island-stories).

A fourth category includes interview-based research projects undertaken by research organisations: a first example is the project undertaken by the Bodleian Libraries (libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/oralhistory/ireland) entitled *Breaking the Silence: Staying at home in an emigrant society*; a second example is *Oral History Network Ireland* (oralhistorynetworkireland.ie/networking) which references many such projects including the *1913 Alternative Visions Oral History Group* collecting interviews from all around Ireland (1913committee.ie/blog).

A final category includes initiatives from journalism such as *Ireland's Own*, a monthly magazine which publishes *Just a Memory* podcasts and written stories contributed by individual readers and *The Treasure Vox* organised by the journalist Karen Tomkins (www.thetreasurevox.ie). Using a corpus-assisted CMDA (Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis) approach (Baldry & Kantz, 2022; Kantz & Baldry, 2024; Vasta 2020, 2023), the presentation will be concerned with providing a brief description of the diverse genres and their characteristics that the creation of memory landscapes entails.

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Cultural preservation and critical multimodal discourse analysis: Interpreting UNESCO's *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*

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The UNESCO website (<https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>) contains videos and podcasts that interpret intangible cultural heritage, which is defined in the Convention itself as “the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity [...] compatible with existing international human rights instruments as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development”.

After a brief exploration of the notion of safeguarding, defined in the Convention as “measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education”, the presentation will critically examine strategies, genres and semiotic resources used when educating about the links between sustainable development and intangible cultural heritage. These are described in the Convention as “manifested inter alia in the following domains: (a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage; (b) performing arts; (c) social practices, rituals and festive events; (d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; (e) traditional craftsmanship”.

The presentation will focus on domain (a) and explore a series of six animations entitled *Teaching and Learning with Intangible Cultural Heritage in Asia and the Pacific* (UNESCO, 2021) produced in UNESCO-ICHCAP-APCEIU partnership, with additional support from Chengdu Culture and Tourism Development Group L.L.C, and characterised by animation techniques (Baldry & Thibault, 2006, pp. 44-46, 60-61) that focus on integrated visual-verbal strategies (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Vasta & Baldry, 2020) in relation to models of multimodal analysis relevant to the school environment (e.g., Zollo, 2024). The presentation’s main takeaway is to encourage thinking and, above all, to place a greater focus on intangible cultural heritage within the promotion of sustainable tourism (Manzella, 2024), for example in secondary schools for tourist experts.

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Ombudsmen/ombudswomen as mediators and managers of cultural heritage in Canada

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What are the functions of ombuds in Canada? This paper will argue they are mediators between individuals and public institutions and thus play a major role in defending the civil and human rights of vulnerable individuals in Canadian society especially in relation to its indigenous communities. However, in addition to their social functions, ombuds also have a significant discourse role to play in ensuring that the voices of these communities are heard by the general public. The paper uses a corpus of a hundred videos in which Canadian ombuds present their credentials to the public and give voice, often via TV news outlets, to the findings of their case reports. The paper will thus exemplify how these technical ombud reports come to be remediated through videos that enact an expert-to-lay discourse process. The examples shown in the presentation link up with efforts to preserve the indigenous way of life with its memories of a different lifestyle and cultural mindset compared to that entailed by migration to large Canadian cities.

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Dress code as a storytelling resource in the preservation of identity

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Political events create discourse, but discourse, in turn, shapes political events. Bearing in mind that discourse preserves the memory of the past, this presentation examines the discourse surrounding the enforced silence, following the withdrawal of Western forces from Afghanistan in 2021, of Afghan women and their resistance to Taliban efforts to erase their identities (Toffle, 2024). Though shaped by many factors, the close relationship between heritage storytelling and the preservation – through multimodal discourse – of otherness (Staszak, 2008; Thiesmeyer, 2003), diversity (Van Dijk, 2001) and women’s expression of their role and status in society (Tannen, 2014) can be highlighted by investigations which reveal how power can be contextualized, gained, and lost, in relation to cultural constraints affecting dress codes (Tarlo, 2010). The colour, size, shape, degree of cover of what we wear influences how we feel and how others interpret our identity, intentions and social position. Yet we take for granted the unconscious messages we send and receive through our clothing until forcibly reminded of their significance in visual politics. Indeed, Kress & Van Leeuwen – after observing that different modes such as image, speech, gesture, are constituted differently by different social users, who work from “different social cultural-semiotic constitutions” and “inhabit specific socio-political-cultural places” (Kress & Van Leeuwen 2006: xvi) – argue that the starting point of any description involving valuations, uses, etc. should be a result of focusing on the semiotic resources of the social group under scrutiny: image as a mode “will then have its place appropriate to the social and hence semiotic constitution of the group” (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, xvii). In keeping with these observations, frame-based analysis of news reports and documentaries illustrates how the various techniques of self-representation serve, on the one hand, to protect and shield Afghan women, but also to explain their circumstances to Western viewers using the strong metaphorical imagery of dress code to highlight hidden attitudes, prejudices, and stereotypes. As part of the demonstration that dress code impositions designed to repress individual identities are ironically destined to place those affected in the limelight, the presentation will illustrate the use of visual metaphors to underscore that ultimately human voices can never be silenced.

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SEM52. Communicating with migrants: Languages, policies and (human) ethics

12 September h 16:30-19:00, S6 Moro

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Abstract

In the last four decades, Italy has gone from a country of origin to a destination for migrants. As of October 2024, 55,049 migrants arrived in Italy, most of them coming from Africa and the Middle East (Ministero dell'Interno, 2024). The process of refugee status determination for asylum seekers, and of reception and inclusion of migrants in general, involves a large number of people and is fraught with drawbacks. There is an intra-personal variability in assuming (or being given) roles, which highlights the need for more in-depth knowledge of communication mechanisms and dynamics for all participants (Barsky 1994). The same applies to awareness about sociocultural differences, which should not be emphasized nor minimized, but rather drawn near to create a common background for mutual understanding and knowledge (the basis for integration). In particular, cultural differences are seen as barriers to more humane participation in the asylum proceedings, and therefore raise important questions of fair legal outcomes for members of vulnerable groups such as asylum seekers (Blommaert 2001; Maryns, 2006; Pöllabauer, 2004; Sorgoni, 2013; Veglio, 2024).

This seminar aims to explore the issues of cross-cultural and cross-language communication needs of migrants, in their efforts to establish themselves as deserving of protection and well-integrated into society. In particular, we welcome contributions that discuss:

- discourse and representation, such as asylum narratives during the status determination procedure; issues of applicants' agency in interpreter-mediated asylum hearings; ethics, empathy and compassion in public service settings involving migrants
- structural and institutional challenges, such as new forms of enslavements in Italy and in transit countries (including human trafficking, forced labour, debt bondage, exploitation and servitude); activism and new forms of agency of migrants as crisis managers.

Doing justice to language and culture may ultimately lead to social justice, and small actions taken by properly informed and empowered stakeholders may redress the deep-seated imbalances in power relations in this setting.

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SEM52. Papers

12 September h 16:30-19:00, S6 Moro

- *Interpreting and ethics in asylum hearings: Pragmatic implications of mediated communication in Italy* (Amalia Amato, Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna / Fabrizio Gallai, Università IULM)
- *Dialogist interpretation: A new approach to interpreter-mediated communication in asylum procedures* (Hassan Mizori, University of Leeds, UK)

- *Interpreters and cultural mediators as humanitarian bridges: Navigating migration, agency, and activism* (Maura Radicioni, Independent scholar)
- *The role of cultural(ist) assumptions in asylum hearings* (Barbara Sorgoni, Università di Torino)
- *Shadowed by bureaucracy: The latest Italian way to asylum* (Maurizio Veglio, International University College of Turin)

SEM52. Abstracts

Interpreting and ethics in asylum hearings: Pragmatic implications of mediated communication in Italy

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The outcome of refugee status determination (RSD) often hinges on whether asylum seekers can convincingly articulate a well-founded fear of persecution. Yet, this process is far from straightforward. Psychological, linguistic, and cultural dynamics deeply shape how credibility is constructed and assessed (Barsky 1994). This paper explores the pragmatic effects of interpreter-mediated communication in asylum hearings conducted at an Italian Territorial Commission, with a focus on the ethical and communicative challenges embedded in this high-stakes institutional setting.

Drawing on observation and transcription of hearings involving applicants speaking Nigerian Standard or Pidgin English, Italian-speaking officials, and professional interpreters, we conduct a turn-by-turn, discourse-oriented analysis to examine how interpretation practices influence interactional dynamics. Particular attention is paid to the interpreter's role in shaping participant positioning (Mason 2010), managing intercultural nuances, and either mitigating or exacerbating communicative misunderstandings (Jacobsen 2002, 2009).

Our findings suggest that systemic cultural and linguistic asymmetries can undermine mutual understanding, often to the detriment of the asylum seeker. Comparative analysis with studies by Pöllabauer (2004) and Sorgoni (2013) further highlights persistent socio-cultural gaps between applicants, interpreters, and decision-makers. These gaps raise pressing questions about the ethics of communication, interpreter agency, and the fairness of the procedures. We argue that improving interpreter training and institutional protocols is crucial not only for more accurate interpretation, but also for fostering more humane, ethical, and equitable asylum practices.

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Dialogist interpretation: A new approach to interpreter-mediated communication in asylum procedures

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This paper introduces Dialogist Interpretation, a theoretical and ethical framework for interpreter-mediated communication in asylum contexts, as developed in my forthcoming monograph “Interpreting in Asylum Procedures: Dialogist Interpretation” (Mizori, 2025). Grounded in dialogism (Bakhtin, 1981; Linell, 2009), the approach foregrounds the internal, often unspoken cognitive dialogues through which asylum applicants navigate legal discourse under conditions of institutional and linguistic asymmetry. These internal dialogues—shaped by power dynamics, ambiguity, and emotional intensity—can critically influence both the perception of legal information and the applicant's decision-making during pivotal procedural moments.

The study draws on a Dutch asylum case, combining interactional analysis with reflective post-IME interviews. In one instance, a lawyer communicates that the immigration authority (IND) believes the applicant has “no interest” in lodging an appeal. The interpreter renders this as “it is not in your interest”—a phrase which, in Arabic, pragmatically implies a caution or veiled warning. In a subsequent interview, the applicant recounted that he had understood this as discouragement from appealing, evidenced by his response “correct,” despite the lawyer merely referencing the IND’s stance. The interpreter later reflected that it was simply “what he was able to think of at the moment.” This lexical nuance, though subtle, had a profound impact on the applicant’s grasp of his legal options—an interpretive layer illuminated through the lens of Dialogist Interpretation and its commitment to meaning-in-context.

Expanding on interactionist models (e.g. Wadensjö, 1998), Dialogist Interpretation probes not only misalignments in interaction but also the silent, subjective work of meaning-making. It challenges institutional monologism (Maryns, 2013) and argues for a reconceptualisation of interpreters as reflexive, dialogically attuned co-participants. The paper concludes by offering practical recommendations for legal professionals and policymakers to promote communicative practices that account for the ethical and epistemic complexities of asylum interviewing.

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Interpreters and cultural mediators as humanitarian bridges: Navigating migration, agency, and activism

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This contribution builds on a recent PhD project examining cultural mediators working for the Italian NGO Emergency ONG Onlus (Emergency), which provides humanitarian aid in complex migration settings like the Castel Volturno outpatient clinic near Naples, Southern Italy. This qualitative study draws from semi-structured video interviews and ethnographic observations of interpreting and cultural mediation practices at the clinic. Most patients are Nigerian or Ghanaian migrants who fled war-torn African countries, now working in low-paid agricultural or sex work and belonging to the most vulnerable populations.

Emergency’s cultural mediators perform various tasks, including health and social guidance, information dissemination, cultural mediation, and interpreting in dyadic and triadic communicative encounters. While interpreting is only one aspect of their role, it is crucial to the NGO’s humanitarian mission (Tesseur, 2018). Their work falls within crisis translation and communication during emergencies (Federici & O’Brien, 2020), as seen during COVID-19, when clear multilingual communication was vital for safety.

This study highlights the complexities of mediation in migration settings, shaped by overlapping challenges: a high number of undocumented migrants unaware of their rights, mediators’ lack of training in language, intercultural mediation, trauma, and ethics, and their limited understanding of the distinction between interpreting ethics and humanitarian work.

In this scenario, mediators take on multiple roles, shaping new forms of activism based on evolving needs. They act as cultural brokers, bridging communication and managing conflicts, while also seeing themselves as humanitarian workers executing their organization’s mandate. Their role is proactive and visible (Todorova & Ruiz Rosendo, 2021), requiring flexibility as interpreters, brokers, advocates, social workers, fixers, and aid workers. Lacking clear ethical standards, they rely on personal ethics or align with the NGO’s code of ethics to guide their decisions and actions (Delgado Luchner and Kherbiche, 2018).

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The role of cultural(ist) assumptions in asylum hearings

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As the literature in legal anthropology shows, the categorical separation of “migrants” from “refugees” results from “theoretical assumptions about the world that are smuggled in through our cultural model of the individual” (Hayden 2006): a founding principle in refugee law, the conceptual distinction between the economic and the political proves increasingly problematical. Over the last three decades, social and legal critical studies also highlighted the relational nature of the “refugee” category, and how it receives and changes meanings in relation to the changing politics of the state.

In this paper, I focus on some selected cases I encountered during my ethnographic research on asylum hearings, where the non-credibility of the narrative was predicated upon specific cultural ideas about what constitutes an individual, or upon culturally specific interpretations of the political. The selected cases allow me to show how the status determination procedure often says more about states’ preoccupations and “western” interpretations of social phenomena, than about the actual experience encountered and recounted by asylum seekers. Hopefully, they can also provide some reflections on ways to promote more just procedures.

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Shadowed by bureaucracy: The latest Italian way to asylum

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The list of legal instruments employed to defuse the “asylum crisis” in Europe is relentlessly expanding. Anticipating the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, the Italian government developed an unprecedented arsenal of legal provisions and administrative practice within the realm of international protection. They range from the so-called accelerated procedures - a scheme that shortens the deadline for appeals and rules out its suspension effect - to a much longer list of safe countries of origin, whose citizens suffer reduced guarantees throughout the asylum procedure. Additionally, less visible strategies are being implemented namely the appointment of non-professional staff and an even shorter duration of asylum seekers’ hearings.

Over the past two years, the National Asylum Commission issued a remarkable number of instructions addressed to the local Territorial Commissions with the aim of steadily increasing the number of decisions. To achieve this goal, the National Asylum Commission urged the simplification of procedures resorting to preset templates, shorter time devoted to interviews and COI search, and a minimum number of weekly decisions.

Transcripts analyses and individual interviews highlight the case of Bangladeshi asylum seekers, an eloquent testimony to such belittling approach: even if most of them incurred burdensome debts, have been trafficked, kidnapped and tortured in Libya, and then smuggled to Italy, their applications for international protection are often denied as a result of inadequate investigations and interviews (lasting at times not more than 15 minutes).

While presented as a performative improvement, these changes are in fact mainly aimed at quickly deflating the number of pending applications. To do so, asylum requests are dealt with in a bureaucratic manner rather than ensuring protection for applicants, regardless of the serious consequences of denying protection to people at risk of persecution and/or serious harm. Beneath the surface of the right to asylum lies a ground of pain and hopes, struggling against the fierce shadow of propaganda.

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SEM53. Worlds beyond words: Lines of enquiry about language, metaphysics and spirituality.

53A 11 September h. 11:00-13:00, Gorr 9

53B 12 September h. 14:00-16:00, PN 11

Convenors

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Abstract

Technological advances and scientific progress have ensured a high quality of life and an unparalleled level of comfort, especially in the Western world (OECD, 2024) to the extent that our contemporary society seems obsessed with material possessions and physical well-being. However, in contrast to the spread of a consumerist ethos and utilitarian philosophy of mind, recent scholarly studies have shown that new forms of spirituality are taking over, and people's beliefs and sense of religious affiliation still bear considerable social significance (Norris & Inglehart, 2004; Pennarola, 2019 among others). Studies of spirituality are largely based on a Western-centred and Anglophone vantage point (Lomas, 2018), and consequently can benefit from a cross-cultural perspective widening the angle of analysis and showing the differences, commonalities and contaminations between traditions distant in time and space, made available by translations and informative materials (for example, see Marks et al. on the Buddhist origins and evolution of mindfulness in the Western world).

According to the Greek philosophers Heraclitus and Socrates, language (i.e., *logos*) belongs to the metaphysical as a trace and a reflection of the eternal principles shaping the world of all transient things and mortal beings (Colli, 1980). Human understanding, however, fails to grasp the essence of reality and the ideal world contemplated by philosophers, saints and ordinary people alike. In Plato's *Phaedo* the eternal *logos* prophesied remains obscure, while in the Prologue to John's Gospel, the Verb or word of God is embodied, rejected and apparently vilified (John 1:1-11). The tension between different versions of divine and human *logos* has fed a metaphysical discourse that lies deep in mystery, despite the widespread tendency to downplay the area of uncertainty and oversimplify (Ditifeci & Kantzas, 2021). Besides a philosophical approach to *logos*, words can also relieve the feelings of loneliness and nurture other human beings in need of a more rewarding humane identity, as shown by the pioneering experience of the London Alexandra pub (www.swlondoner.co.uk/news/15012018-popular-merton-pub-opens-its-doors-to-offer-companionship-for-the-lonely)

Taking the cue from David Crystal's advocacy of theolinguistics (2018), this seminar aims to shed light on the interrelationships between language, metaphysics and spirituality, and explore how language both reflects and shapes one's metaphysical, spiritual and/or religious identity in a never-ending quest for authenticity and meaningfulness. Lines of enquiry could include but are not limited to the following:

- universal or culture-bound dimensions of spirituality
- individual and collective religious identities
- prayer encoding and the dialogue with the divine
- the representation of the divine
- Western vs Eastern forms of cognition and spirituality
- ethnographic investigations of beliefs and believing communities
- verbal and multimodal representation of mystical/transcendental experiences
- allegiance with and subversion of religious doctrine(s)
- the pragmatics of faith-based social networks
- philosophical and theological approaches to spirituality

In line with the complexity and multifacetedness of this object of study, this seminar aims to encourage a wide variety of empirical and theoretical approaches.

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SEM53. Papers

53A 11 September h. 11:00-13:00, Gorr 9

- *Invisible worlds made visible by words: the evocative power of language in shaping the realms of spirituality in spiritually conscious films* (Silvia Monti, Università di Pavia)
- *Uncovering the devotional tradition of the Veronica in Lombardy and beyond: Popularization perspectives through translation* (Amanda C. Murphy, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore)
- *Words of Hope in Julian of Norwich's Revelations of Divine Love* (Pasquale Pagano, University degli Studi della Campania Luigi Vanvitelli)
- *'a voyce within a voyce': The prophetic discourse of Anna Trapnel* (Donatella Pallotti, Università degli Studi di Firenze)

53B 12 September h. 14:00-16:00, PN11

- *Spirituals beyond discourse: A timeless resonance* (Carmina Meola, Università degli Studi del Sannio)
- *The sound of the sacred: linguistic construction of spirituality in the discourse of jazz musicians* (Mikaela Cordisco, Università degli Studi di Salerno)

SEM53. Abstracts

The sound of the sacred: Linguistic construction of spirituality in the discourse of jazz musicians

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Jazz, as both a musical form and cultural practice, has long been linked to expressions of transcendence, resistance, and the sacred (De Stefano, 2014; Walser, 1999). While the spiritual dimension of jazz music itself has received considerable attention, less explored is the language through which jazz musicians express their spirituality. These musicians construct a worldview in which musical and spiritual identities are co-produced, and language becomes not merely a means of representation but a site of enactment—through which experiences of the divine, the mystical, and the ineffable are negotiated and shared. Beyond identity construction, their discourse also acts as a tool for metaphysical orientation, positioning spirituality as a lived, embodied linguistic practice that dissolves the boundaries between voice, sound, and soul. Adopting a Critical Discourse Analysis framework (Fairclough, 1995; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; van Dijk, 1998), this study applies a Corpus-Assisted Critical Discourse Analysis (Baker, 2006; Machin & Mayr, 2015) to a curated set of interviews, public talks, and autobiographical reflections by contemporary American jazz musicians. The analysis identifies recurring discursive patterns that not only describe spirituality but also construct the speaker as a vessel, seeker, or practitioner—aligning with posthumanist conceptions of subjectivity as porous, relational, and emergent (Braidotti, 2013).

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Spirituals beyond discourse: A timeless resonance

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This study examines the diachronic evolution of Afro-American spirituals by tracing their transformation from early oral traditions among enslaved Africans to their enduring presence in modern Black music. Originating as expressions of faith, coded resistance, and communal consciousness, spirituals blended African rhythmic structures with Christian hymns to create a uniquely hybrid musical form (Rakotsoane, 2010; Diallo, 2013). Enslaved communities, through clandestine gatherings, developed these songs as tools for both spiritual and cultural survival, integrating call-and-response techniques, layered harmonies, and symbolic narratives (American Black Journal, 2022). As Black music evolved, spirituals laid the foundation for gospel, blues, jazz, soul, and hip-hop, preserving themes of resilience, freedom, and transcendence (Seroff, 2016; Ramsey, 2008). This research is guided by two central questions: how Afro-American spirituals have progressed in time while preserving their core themes of faith, resistance, and communal identity, and in what ways these sacred songs continue to influence modern Black musical genres. To address these questions, the study employs historical analysis, thematic exploration, and structural investigation to examine the continuity and transformation of this tradition across musical forms. By analyzing both historical shifts and current interpretations, from the coded messages embedded in early spirituals to their echoes in contemporary gospel and protest music (Benson, 2015; Pitchfork, 2017), this paper underscores the timeless resonance of spirituals as both a form of cultural heritage and powerful vehicle for resistance, demonstrating their ability to transcend time, language, and musical form. Findings reveal that these faith-protest songs retain their emotional depth, communal significance, and layered symbolism through adaptation, remaining central to the aesthetics and ethos of Black musical traditions across time.

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Invisible worlds made visible by words: the evocative power of language in shaping the realms of spirituality in spiritually conscious films

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In the last decades, the notion of spirituality, whose scope extends beyond that of organized religions (cf. Ammerman 2013), has conquered an increasingly central position in society as well as in cultural and academic discourse, as a result of deep sociocultural transformations redefining the sacred in broader terms and reshaping spiritual identities. The cinematic industry has played a crucial role in this spiritual ‘reawakening’ with the release of spiritually conscious films where spirituality acts as a key narrative force and universal spiritual themes (e.g. transcendence, the nature and journey of the soul, death and the afterlife, reincarnation, connection to a higher power, interconnectedness of all beings), drawn from various traditions (e.g. Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Sufism, New Age philosophies), are presented

through specific linguistic devices distinct from those typifying traditional religious discourse (cf. Hammond 2015; Crystal 2018; Pennarola 2020).

Starting from these observations, this paper aims to illustrate the carefully crafted use of language as a powerful portal to the spiritual dimensions in a corpus of 14 successful spiritually themed American films, belonging to different genres (i.e. comedies, dramas, fantasy dramas, animated films) and released between 1989 and 2024. More specifically, the empirical, diachronic linguistic investigation, based on a wide selection of excerpts from the films' dialogues, aims to:

- illustrate how specific lexical items (e.g. metaphysical, mystical, philosophical and religious terminology, spiritually resonant multilingual borrowings, evocative abstract terms), syntactic structures (e.g. short and simple declaratives in the present tense, rhetorical and introspective questions, mantra-like phrases, repetitions and parallelisms), and stylistic devices (e.g. metaphors, similes, personifications, euphemisms, aphorisms) are used to explore and define the realms of spirituality, thus grounding intangible dimensions into tangible language;
- show possible analogies and/or differences in linguistic approach in conceptualizing and communicating spiritual truths according to either film genre or release year, thus also verifying whether the cinematic representations of spirituality have changed during a time span of more than 40 years.

Preliminary results highlight that in spiritually sensitive films the expression of spirituality is always deeply rooted in accurately constructed linguistic markers, functioning as key spiritual signifiers and conveying profound spiritual beliefs through accessible, though poetic, language, straightforward syntax and intensely symbolic storytelling, thus allowing viewers to delve into cross-cultural and cross-linguistic transcendent worlds (cf. Lomas 2018) where they can embark on their own journeys of spiritual growth and finally experience, through language itself, an overall sense of spiritual, cosmic connectedness.

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Uncovering the devotional tradition of the Veronica in Lombardy and beyond: Popularization perspectives through translation

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This paper considers how the tradition of devotion to the Veronica, which echoes throughout European literature (Bossi 2015) and is found in churches all around the world, can be decoded, investigated and translated so as to be comprehensible in the twenty-first century.

The tradition is complex: according to Windeatt (2017: 59) “[o]ne might say there are at least three Veronicas. First, there is Veronica’s existence in narratives, her legend. Second, there is the material relic, in Rome. And thirdly, there is the tradition of replicating the relic.” In religious tradition, “Veronica” is a proper name. Particularly since the fourteenth century (Zardoni and Murphy 2022), Veronica is identified as the woman who wiped Jesus’ face on the way to Calvary and was rewarded with the imprint of his face on her cloth. In all the variants of the character, the woman’s distinguishing element is the precious cloth/sudarium/handkerchief/veil she possesses with a miraculous image.

A veronica, or vernicle/vernicle (Maggioni 2021) is also the name of the cloth itself: when pilgrims went to Rome, their aim was to gain pardon for themselves by venerating the tombs of St Peter and Paul, and gazing on the “veronica” displayed in St Peter’s. Forgiveness for sin could also be gained also by praying in front of a representation of the holy face, and veronicas thus spread around Europe, while always remaining a link to the relic in Rome.

Investigations through an online catalogue of veronicas linked to googlemaps (cf. www.veronicaroute.org) reveal an extraordinary concentration of veronicas in Lombardy. Given the tradition’s connection with Rome and the holy year of 2025, a multi-site exhibition of veronicas was set up by a cultural association in Lombardy to draw attention to this tradition. To attract culturally interested travellers and ramblers, texts describing the veronicas were translated into

English for panels outside 21 churches, and audio descriptions were recorded for the same purpose. The translation into English of artistic and religious history poses issues of terminology and popularization (Levonian 2021): the linguistic and translational challenges of bringing this little-known devotional tradition to an international audience are the object of the paper.

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Words of hope in Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love*

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Amidst the social and political unrest of her times, marked by bloody wars, internal clashes, and plague, Julian of Norwich (1342– ca. 1416) stands out as a prophetic voice of faith and hope. Her exceptionality also resides in the fact that, in contrast to the rigid social and cultural positions of the Middle Ages, which assigned women marginalized roles to be played within the constraints of domestic or religious spaces, Julian of Norwich professed intellectual and spiritual freedom, which made her a forerunner of women's authorship and emancipation.

Most importantly, Julian's *Revelations of Divine Love* represents a source of high mysticism and profound theological thought, whose distinctive trait is her resolute profession of hope and trust in God (Renolds, 1984; Ramelli, 2019). Although the exclamation "All shall be well" is famously recognised as the main formulation of her positions, the anchoress of Norwich conveyed her hopefulness in a variety of expressions, metaphors, and symbols (Caspar, 1981; Yoshikawa, 2008): the analysis of such 'words of hope' will be the central aim of the present research.

Hope is also the major theme of Byung-Chul Han's latest contribution (*Der Geist der Hoffnung*, 2023), which not only outlines the characteristics of authentic hope but insists on the necessity to practice it in times of renovated anguish and anxiety. Hence, the South Korean philosopher's theory on the essence of hope seems to further illuminate Julian's 'shewings' and to nurture the appreciation of her words in the present age.

By reading Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love* from the perspective of theolinguistics (Crystal 2018; Hobbs 2020) and through the lens of Han's reflections about hope, this paper intends to explore the fruitful connections among philosophical speculation, Christian mysticism and linguistic analysis.

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‘a voyce within a voyce’: The prophetic discourse of Anna Trapnel

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The paper explores the construction of prophetic authority in the writings of Anna Trapnel, a prominent seventeenth-century prophetess associated with the radical Fifth Monarchist movement. Framed within the broader context of mid-seventeenth-century England—a period characterized by the collapse of traditional political institutions, the weakening of ecclesiastical authority, and the rise of radical dissenting movements—the study examines how Trapnel’s prophetic voice engages with the complex issues of legitimacy, gender, and dissent. By analyzing her language, use of biblical intertextuality, and charismatic expression, the paper investigates how divine speech was articulated and mediated during a time of intense spiritual turmoil and cultural instability. It also explores how marginalized figures, particularly women, participated in prophetic discourse to claim spiritual agency and political relevance in a volatile sociopolitical landscape, emphasizing how prophetic speech served as a site of resistance against institutional power. Trapnel’s case illustrates prophetic speech as a culturally embedded form of discursive negotiation, wherein personal revelation and collective expectation converge in a dynamic interplay.

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SEM54. English multimodal pragmatics in the digital era

13 September h. 8:30-11:00, PN 15

Convenors

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Abstract

The digital era has revolutionized how we communicate, transforming traditional language use and meaning-making boundaries. In this context, multimodal pragmatics – the study of how meaning is constructed and interpreted through multiple modes (e.g., linguistic, visual, auditory, and spatial) – has gained unprecedented significance, although specific research is still quite scant. English, as a global lingua franca, plays a pivotal role in shaping and being shaped by these multimodal practices in diverse digital landscapes.

This seminar seeks to bring together scholars and practitioners to explore the intersections of English language use, multimodal communication, and digital technologies. We aim to foster a vibrant discussion on how multimodal pragmatics operates in digital contexts, encompassing social media, virtual reality, online gaming, digital storytelling, audiovisual products – and audiovisual translation – and other forms of digital communication.

We invite contributions that address (but are not limited to) the following themes:

- Multimodal meaning-making in English digital communication: How do text, images, emojis, GIFs, memes, and videos work together to create meaning in English-mediated digital spaces?
- Pragmatic strategies in digital English: How are politeness, humour, irony, or persuasion achieved through multimodal means in online interactions?
- Global Englishes and multimodality: How do users from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds employ multimodal resources to adapt and transform English in digital settings?
- Multimodal pragmatics in emerging technologies: What roles do Artificial Intelligence (AI), augmented reality, and virtual reality play in evolving multimodal English communication?
- Pedagogical implications: How can educators address the challenges and opportunities of teaching English multimodal pragmatics in the digital age?
- Ethical and social dimensions: How do issues of accessibility, inclusivity, and power manifest in English multimodal pragmatics online?

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SEM54. Papers

13 September h. 8:30-11:00, PN 15

- *Lexicalisation patterns of punctuation marks in English colon a multimodal perspective* (Marco Bagli, Università per stranieri di Perugia)
- *The hypostatic union of multimodality and pragmatics in Dorothy Sayers' The man born to be king* (Aoife Beville, Università di Napoli L'Orientale)
- *Multimodal pragmatics at its best: A qualitative analysis of ASMR videos on TikTok* (Fabio Ciambella, Sapienza Università di Roma)
- *Do Google searches produce multimodally relevant results? A case study for searches in English* (Carmen Serena Santonocito, Università degli Studi di Messina)
- *Humor and modal interplay in TikTok's POV genre* (Audrey Willoughby, Università degli Studi di Milano)

SEM54. Abstracts

Lexicalisation patterns of punctuation marks in English colon a multimodal perspective

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This paper investigates the patterns of lexicalization and the pragmatic functions of punctuation in oral forms of language. Punctuation marks are written signs that traditionally lack phonetic realization in speech and are therefore not typically verbalized. Under certain circumstances and for specific pragmatic purposes, however, they may be explicitly realized or mentioned in conversation. Examples include the use of *slash* as a spoken conjunction (Curzan 2013; Fiorentini & Miola 2019) and the use of *period* as a marker of finality or affective emphasis. As communication becomes increasingly shaped by digital and hybrid media, the boundaries between writing and speech, and between visual and auditory modalities, are becoming more porous. In particular, computer-mediated communication—through social media, texting, and messaging apps—has amplified exposure to written signs and facilitated their migration into speech, a phenomenon recognized as a leading force in language change (Baron 1984; Crystal 2006). Adopting a multimodal pragmatic perspective (Haryanti et al. 2023), this study presents preliminary findings on how punctuation operates pragmatically in spoken English, focusing on its functions as a resource for meaning-making beyond its original syntactic role. Drawing on corpus data from the TV corpus (Davies 2019), it maps selected instances of punctuation undergoing lexicalization and pragmaticalization, and discusses their emerging roles as discourse markers, coordinators, or stance indicators. Rather than aiming for an exhaustive account, the paper identifies key trends that highlight how written signs are increasingly integrated into spoken language, not merely as symbolic artifacts but as active pragmatic tools. It ultimately argues that a multimodal pragmatic framework is essential to account for the complex interplay of modalities in contemporary, digitally influenced communication.

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The hypostatic union of multimodality and pragmatics in Dorothy Sayers' *The man born to be king*

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The Man Born to Be King is a cycle of 12 radio plays, based on the biblical gospel narratives, written by Dorothy Sayers and first produced by the BBC in 1941-2. While the recordings of the original wartime production have unfortunately

been partially lost, the 1975 BBC Radio production is, however, available in its entirety on the digital platform Audible.com (Sayers, 1975). The present study examines the multimodal and pragmatic features of the 1975 production in terms of characterisation and the construction of overlapping, interconnected meanings and implicatures.

The plays, written for serial radio production, employ verbal and auditory semiotic modes to present the character of Jesus as a captivating, extraordinarily human and divine presence throughout the plays. The disciples, the Pharisees, historical figures such as Pontius Pilate, King Herod, and other characters come to life through the dialogues. Suprasegmental auditory features such as prosody, together with audio effects, music, diatopic, diastratic, and diaphasic variation are employed to communicate both on intra- and extra-diagetic levels (between characters and with the hearer).

The current study aims to combine core concepts in pragmatics, such as Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969) and the Cooperative Principle (Grice, 1989), with foundational studies in multimodality (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2020) to examine the interplay of the verbal and auditory modes in this, hitherto understudied, cycle of radio plays. Preliminary findings point to a sort of “hypostatic union” or symbiosis between the semiotic modes in their construction of the human and the divine.

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Multimodal pragmatics at its best: A qualitative analysis of ASMR videos on TikTok

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This paper examines the multimodal pragmatic techniques employed in Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR) videos on TikTok, demonstrating how creators strategically activate multimodality and multisensoriality to induce relaxation and sleep in viewers (Barrat & Davis 2015; Poerio et al. 2018; Engelbregt et al. 2022). ASMR content relies on a combination of auditory, visual, and tactile cues to trigger tingling sensations and deep calmness. By analyzing a selection of popular TikTok ASMR videos, this study identifies recurring multimodal pragmatic strategies – such as whispered speech, rhythmic tapping, and deliberate hand movements – that enhance sensory engagement.

The research adopts a multimodal discourse analysis framework (see, for instance Wang 2023) to explore how these techniques function synergistically, leveraging TikTok’s short-form video format to maximize immediacy and intimacy (Bhandari & Bim 2020). Particular attention is given to parasocial interaction, where creators simulate personal attention through direct gaze and soft-spoken role-plays, fostering a sense of connection that amplifies relaxation. Additionally, the study investigates how visual aesthetics (lighting, framing) and editing techniques (close-ups, layered sounds) contribute to the overall sensory experience.

Findings will suggest that TikTok ASMR videos exploit multimodal affordances to create an immersive, soothing environment, catering to users seeking stress relief or sleep aid (Zappavigna 2019). This analysis not only expands pragmatic research into digital discourse but also highlights the growing role of multisensorial communication in social media’s therapeutic uses. The study ultimately argues that ASMR content on TikTok exemplifies how digital platforms facilitate new forms of sensory-driven, pragmatic engagement to address contemporary wellness needs.

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Do Google searches produce multimodally relevant results? A case study for searches in English

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The pervasiveness of multimodal meaning-making in digital contexts has created a shift in epistemological processes (Sindoni and Moschini 2021), including the multimodal representation of sensitive groups such as same-sex couples, which have long been subject to various forms of discrimination and violence (Paterson and Turner 2019).

Building upon Sindoni's (2013) concept of the "multimodal relevance maxim", this study integrates multimodal pragmatics (O'Halloran *et al.* 2014) as a novel perspective to investigate meaning-making in digital landscapes through both the interaction of different semiotic modes and contextual factors. The digital landscape from which data are collected is Google Search, here conceived as a "semiotic technology" (Poulsen & Kvåle, 2018), i.e., not merely a neutral information retrieval tool but an active participant in meaning-making processes where the interaction among different modes communicates corporate interests and human bias (Santonocito forthcoming).

Since the notion of conversation in digital landscapes has extended beyond verbal text alone, this study examines how algorithmically curated content on Google Search challenges traditional conversational principles of quality, quantity, relevance and manner (Grice 1975). Employing a multimodal social semiotic framework (Kress 2010), the research analyses the combination of verbal and visual resources in constructing multimodal relevance when querying the term "same-sex couples" within a UK-based digital landscape, with a focus on how Google's algorithmic processes prioritise the multimodal arrangement of search results in response to potentially discriminatory queries.

Building on recent advances in digital-era multimodal pragmatic analysis (Haryanti *et al.* 2023), this study ultimately argues for the integration of algorithmic and multimodal awareness into contemporary pragmatic frameworks to better capture how digital technologies participate in the co-construction of discourse and ideology.

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Humor and modal interplay in TikTok's POV genre

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TikTok is widely recognized for its humor-driven performances, which have become a dominant form of user expression. However, the ways in which humor is constructed through multimodal choices on the platform remain underexplored. This paper presents an exploratory study of English-language humorous point-of-view (POV) videos, investigating how users craft meaning and negotiate shared understanding through modal interplay. The POV format offers a popular means of presenting ironic or exaggerated takes on everyday life. Humor often arises through layered performances and tonal shifts, shaped by TikTok's affordances and grounded in shared references that make them recognizable to in-group audiences (Trillò, 2024).

The study investigates 20 such videos using a multimodal discourse analysis informed by the framework developed by Bateman, Wildfeuer, and Hiippala (2017), which emphasizes the structured interaction of semiotic modes and their functional interdependencies. It asks: What semiotic configurations recur across POV videos, and how do these support comedic framing? Annotation is conducted in ELAN using a tiered coding system to capture sequencing and modal coordination over time. This approach draws on Wildfeuer's (2014) extension of the framework to time-based narrative media, offering tools to analyze how viewer interpretations are guided by shifts in framing, temporal alignment, and modality-based cues.

Special attention is given to the ways in which modes are combined to enhance, contrast, or shift meaning. For instance, a solemn facial expression paired with a cheerful caption may create irony by prompting the viewer to reinterpret the tone of the message as sarcastic or delivered in a deadpan style, rather than sincere. Likewise, a sudden camera zoom timed with a character's expression of realization can amplify the punchline by visually mirroring an emotional shift, aligning the viewer's attention with the intended moment of surprise or emphasis. These examples show how humor may arise not just from what is represented, but from how and when modes are combined.

This study contributes to multimodal pragmatics and humor research by offering a methodologically grounded account of how humorous meaning is realized through the coordinated use of modes in short-form digital video, highlighting the pragmatic work involved in guiding interpretation and negotiating shared understanding in platform-specific genres. In doing so, it demonstrates how humor in digital contexts serves as a socially situated, meaning-making practice shaped by the affordances and expectations inherent to the medium.

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SEM55. Human mediation and linguistic knowledge across centuries: Multilingualism, metalanguage, and multimodal teaching practices

13 September h. 8:30-11:00, S5 Moro

Convenors

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This panel invites contributions that investigate the forms and functions of human mediation in the transmission of linguistic knowledge from the early modern period to the twentieth century. We are particularly interested in how multilingualism (Bennett-Cattaneo 2022), metalinguistic discourse, (McGillivray 2020) and multimodal strategies (Kress 2010; Sindoni 2023) shaped the development, teaching, (Gallagher 2019) and theorization of the English language across different historical and cultural contexts. While early vernaculars—including English—underwent processes of standardization and codification, polyglossia persisted as a vital mode of linguistic and cultural exchange. Translation (both interlingual and intersemiotic), translingual communication, and visual mediation played central roles in the production and dissemination of language knowledge. At the same time, the evolution of linguistic metalanguage (Alston, 1965–2011; Walmsley 2022.)—both as a terminological system and as a reflective discourse—offers insights into how language was conceptualized, taught, and discussed in educational and scholarly contexts from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. We welcome proposals that engage with the following (non-exhaustive) topics:

- Interlingual and intersemiotic translation in pedagogical and specialized texts.
- The development and variation of English linguistic metalanguage over time.
- Multilingual and multimodal strategies in language teaching materials.
- The epistemic role of grammars, dictionaries, conversation manuals, parallel texts, and scientific discourse.
- Metalinguistic awareness and its cultural implications across time periods.
- Methodologies for the digital and philological analysis of historical language sources.
- The role of language in shaping human and humane values in scholarly and didactic texts.

We encourage contributions that focus on non-literary, didactic, or specialized texts and that integrate theoretical, historical, and methodological perspectives—including those grounded in digital humanities.

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SEM55. Papers

13 September h. 8:30-11:00, S5 Moro

- *Early Modern linguistic terminology in the MetaLing Corpus: Computational approaches and methodological challenges* (Vahid Asadi, Università degli Studi di Milano / Daniel Russo, Università dell'Insubria / Angela Andreani, Università degli Studi di Milano)
- *Interlingual strategies and cultural prestige in Early English grammars* (Cristiano Ragni, Università di Verona)
- *The page as a place in Early Modern England: Multimodal strategies in multilingual teaching texts* (Donatella Montini, Sapienza Università di Roma)

- *Exploring the use of English metalanguage in the formation of 19th- century scientific terminology. A methodological reflection on the analysis experts' interactions in historical sources* (Beatrice Ragazzini, Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna)

SEM55. Abstracts

Early Modern linguistic terminology in the *MetaLing Corpus*: Computational approaches and methodological challenges

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In linguistic communication, it is necessary to refer to features of language, such as spelling, vocabulary, grammar, usage, or meaning, and the existence of a disciplinary metalanguage allows speakers to discuss these language-specific elements unambiguously (Audi, 1995, Wilson, 2013). The capacity to use and interpret metalanguage is therefore a fundamental linguistic skill, enabling humans to engage in conversations that transcend specific domains (Anderson et al., 2002). This research explores how metalinguistic concepts were used and evolved in early modern English texts from 1500 to 1700, a period of linguistic and intellectual transformation.

The study investigates how terms related to grammar, syntax, and orthography changed in frequency and usage during this time. The research draws on early modern English corpora using natural language processing (NLP) techniques. Key methods including frequency analysis and collocational studies were used to track the development of metalinguistic terms over time. The findings suggest an increase in both the frequency and depth of metalinguistic discussions from the 1500s to the 1700s, reflecting the intellectual shifts of the early modern period (Andreani & Russo, 2023). As it sheds light onto how language was understood and conceptualised in early modern English by tracing the evolution of metalinguistic phenomena, this study also highlights the potential of computational tools in revealing new perspectives into the history of linguistic thought. The aim of this study is to deepen our understanding of the linguistic discourse of the period and explore the challenges and opportunities of research in historical computational linguistics.

This research is part of the MetaLing Corpus Project, which is creating a corpus of texts including language-related discussions in order to study the development of the English metalanguage used to analyse and compare, appraise and classify, teach and learn the languages of Europe between 1500 and 1700, i.e. in a period predating the establishment of philology and linguistics as academic disciplines.

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The page as a place in Early Modern England: Multimodal strategies in multilingual teaching texts

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‘Early modern print cultures are cultures of translation’ and translation practices were frequently employed in the service of didactic strategies, which, in turn, fostered the emergence of visual representation cultures. While educators engaged with pedagogical concerns, printers and typographers played a crucial role in visually shaping these texts, ensuring that the content could be effectively communicated to readers and learners: polyglot texts, incorporating two, three, or more languages, demanded the printer’s expertise in presenting interlingual translations in a way that made their relationships clear to the reader. Joseph Webbe (d. 1630), an English Roman Catholic linguist and translator, conceived and patented what might be termed a ‘learning by sight’ approach, which integrates interlinguistic and intersemiotic translation. His method for teaching Latin lexicon and syntax to English pupils relied exclusively on visualizations of the two languages,

representing an example of information design that surpassed the traditional synoptic layout of multilingual didactic dialogues. My presentation will reconsider Webbe's *ante-litteram* multimodal experiment, integrating theoretical discussions on the use of visualizations and images for didactic purposes into the broader debate on the teaching of Latin in the seventeenth century, at the heart of which lay the question of whether Latin should be taught as a living language or through formal grammar instruction.

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Exploring the use of English metalanguage in the formation of 19th- century scientific terminology. A methodological reflection on the analysis experts' interactions in historical sources

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This proposal aims to investigate how the English metalanguage was used by experts in the first half of the 19th century (1800 - 1850) to shape scientific terminology in their own field of research through interactions and knowledge exchange with scholars of other disciplines.

At a time in which various scientific disciplines were trying to order their knowledge into nomenclatures and conceptual classifications with the aim of efficient communication and international knowledge exchange, also known as the age of the "professionalisation of science" (Ellis, 2014:777), this study aims to analyse the English metalanguage used for the formation of terminology and knowledge in 19th- century historical sources, by reconstructing the interactions and correspondences among scholars of various disciplines.

With a focus on William Whewell's correspondences with experts of other disciplines, this contribution reflects on the use of English metalanguage in the formation of terms with regard to electrodynamics and astronomy, in which various researchers were involved (Faraday, 1834; Herschel, 1843). In doing this, this study explores the English metalanguage used to describe the creation of scientific language in various areas of research (Whewell, 1840a; 1840b), focusing on the reflections of experts on the formation of terms and their features.

On a methodological front, this contribution presents digital practices to collect historical sources from online archives across various text types such as letters and journal articles to reconstruct interactions among experts through a "social network analysis" (Sigrist & Widmer, 2011:347), with which terms and scientific language were formed. Ultimately, this contribution shall describe the use of English metalanguage of terminology as an instrument for discussing the formation of scientific language and knowledge across fields of research, at a time in which nomenclatures and conceptual classifications in various scientific disciplines were formed (Lightman & Zon, 2014), and before the codification of terminology as an academic discipline (Wüster, 1931).

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Interlingual strategies and cultural prestige in Early English grammars

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This paper investigates the interlingual dynamics of two foundational early modern English grammars: Paul Greaves' *Grammatica Anglicana* (1594) and Thomas Tonkis's *De Analogia Anglicani Sermonis* (1612). Using a comparative and contextual approach, it explores how these texts contributed to broader cultural and linguistic processes of codification, language teaching, and the legitimisation of English during a period marked by both polyglossia and emerging national identity.

Greaves' *Grammatica Anglicana*, written in Latin but focused on English, employs a Ramist structure to articulate a hybrid pedagogical purpose—targeting both native English speakers and Latin-literate foreign learners. It embodies the tension between vernacular autonomy and classical imitation, positioning English within a Latinate intellectual framework.

Tonkis's *De Analogia Anglicani Sermonis*, also written in Latin and largely overlooked by modern scholarship, promotes the status of English through Latin-based grammatical analysis aimed at an educated, transnational audience. Drawing examples from English, Latin, Greek, and Romance languages, the grammar operates both as a multilingual instructional tool and a diplomatic gesture, reinforcing the internal structure of English through morphological analogy and showcasing its value abroad.

By comparing these texts with *Lily's Grammar*—the first and only Latin grammar officially sanctioned for all English schools—this paper reflects on a pivotal moment in the transition from Latin to English as the primary medium of scholarship and national expression. It argues that language teaching in this period extended beyond grammatical instruction, serving as a means of asserting cultural authority and national identity. In this light, Greaves' and Tonkis's grammars are not merely didactic texts but acts of linguistic nationalism and cultural mediation.

SEM56. Spaces of language: Identity, technology, and ideology in linguistic landscapes

56A 12 September h. 14:00-16:00, PN 16

56B 12 September h. 16:30-18:30, PN 16

Convenors

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Abstract

The world is becoming increasingly interconnected and the way language is used by humans in different contexts within diverse *spaces* reflects the deep sociopolitical, cultural, and ideological shifts in human communication. Space may be understood through three distinct orders of spatiality: the physical-material, social, and mental spaces (Britain, 2013). The physical-material order encompasses geodesic surfaces, distances, and various location levels. In contrast, the social order refers to the structures of interactions. Lastly, the mental order involves the attitudes and beliefs that shape how people perceive and interpret their environments and geographical realities. As the physical-material, social, and mental spaces become more multicultural and interconnected, the interaction of various languages is evident at different levels of language production (Britain, 2013; Kim, 2001).

This seminar focuses on how the concept of linguistic landscape intended as “the general language situation or linguistic diversity” (Gorter, 2013: 191) and encompassing the concept of language choices, contact, and variation is rendered, navigated, and developed across time and space in human communication (Labov & Cohen, 1967; Gorter, 2013). With the broad usage of English, digital platforms and physical spaces have become an extension of social and mental spaces, mirroring broader sociocultural transformations and humane values. In such complex composition, language variation reflects the linguistic vitality of English at the macro level, and either 1) contribute in the creation of segregated LLs or 2) enrich melting tendencies at the micro level (Ng & Deng, 2017; Yao & Gruba, 2022).

This seminar invites the scientific community to explore theoretically and empirically language variation and change as fundamental aspects of human and humane practices, where power relations, resilience, and identity formation are reflected. Contributions to the seminar are expected to explore language variation within the physical-material, the social, and the mental orders of spatiality, and/or indicate how language changes maintain/neglect existing dominance in (sexist, ageist, hate) discourses.

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SEM56. Papers

56A 12 September h. 14:00-16:00, PN 16

- *Seeking standard English in multilingual environments: The experience of Italians during study abroad* (Chiara Cigliano, Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II)
- *Speaking walls: A sociolinguistic analysis of the linguistic landscape of the porticos of the city of Bologna* (Lorenzo Petrucci, Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna)
- *Language variation in the linguistic landscape of the Canadian Maritimes: A tale of three cities* (Mirko Casagrande, Università della Calabria)
- *Linguistic landscape and multilingual Dublin: A sociolinguistic exploration of the Italian community* (Valentina de Cristofaro, Università degli Studi di Salerno)

56B 12 September h. 16:30-18:30, PN 16

- *World War One trenches as a linguistic landscape: The use of trench slang for propaganda in The Battle of the Somme* (Alberto Dall'Olio, Sapienza Università di Roma)
- *Language variation in performed language: An exploration of British TV 'accent tropes'* (Luca Valleriani, Sapienza Università di Roma)
- *Communication from outer space: Translating xenolanguage in Denis Villeneuve's Arrival* (Saverio Tomaiuolo, Università degli Studi di Cassino e del Lazio Meridionale)
- *Recalibrating lexical development: Spatial engagement in digital language learning with Appil* (Pasquale Esposito, Università degli Studi di Salerno)

SEM56. Abstracts

Language variation in the linguistic landscape of the Canadian Maritimes: A tale of three cities

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As a semiotic system of written language in public space (Jaworski and Thurlow, 2010) that includes, among others, road signs, street names, advertising billboards, and notices on governmental buildings, the linguistic landscape of multilingual and multicultural urban settings (Gorter, 2006) represents the linguistic diversity and vitality (Landry and Bourhis, 1997; Barni and Bagna, 2010) of their communities of speech and the power relationships between the dominant group(s) and the so-called 'linguistic minorities'. Such a multifaceted variety of textual elements displays language variation as well, which can be analysed from a methodological perspective that takes into account the linguistic features of both institutional (top-down) and private (bottom-up) signs (Backhaus, 2007).

This presentation focuses on the Canadian Maritimes – the provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island – where several languages and cultures have coexisted and influenced each other since the European colonisation of the North American Atlantic coast and the Saint Lawrence Estuary and the foundation of the Canadian confederation. Even though they present their own distinctive features, the three provinces share a similar linguistic background in which, along with the two official languages of Canada, Acadian French, Scottish Gaelic, and Mi'kmaq are spoken.

Data will be collected in the cities of Halifax (Nova Scotia), Charlottetown (PEI) and Caraquet (New Brunswick) in June and July 2025 and analysed adopting Backhaus's qualitative and quantitative approach with the twofold aim of outlining the present configuration of languages in the three linguistic landscapes, on the one hand, and assessing whether and to what extent this results in language variation in Canadian Maritime English (Kieft and Kay-Raining Bird, 2010), on the other. Finally, they will be compared in order to point out the differences – and similarities – in the language dynamics and policies of the three urban spaces.

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Seeking standard English in multilingual environments: The experience of Italians during study abroad

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Since English is recognised as the global lingua franca, and is studied as the main foreign language in Europe (Eurostat, 2019), it comes to no surprise that its presence has been increasingly noticed in the Italian linguistic landscape (e.g. Bagna et al., 2024) and elsewhere in Europe (e.g. Cenoz & Gorter, 2006). However, the use of English alongside local European languages does not guarantee openness to multilingualism and translingual mixing in actual, active language use. Drawing from Ben Said (2011), who suggested that LL research should “include voices from the people as an essential part of the interpretation of the linguistic landscape” (p. 68), and in line with Dannerer and Soukup (2025), this study investigated the language attitudes of Italians studying abroad towards the linguistic soundscape they found themselves in. Semi-structured interviews were employed to explore the participants’ social and mental spaces rather than the physical-material ones (Britain, 2013). 19 students and PhD candidates staying in 7 different countries (2 Anglophone, 5 non-Anglophone) were interviewed to study their attitudes, beliefs and ideologies towards multilingualism, English as a Lingua Franca, and speaking English with a foreign accent. The analysis revealed a strong aversion to language mixing, as it is often taken to signal lack of skills; strongly internalised native-speakerism (Holliday, 2006); and consequently, the belief that a ‘standard’ and ‘true’ English exists and should be used by those who wish to ‘speak good English’, both in terms of grammar and accent (Boonsuk & Fang, 2022). The results of this study shed some light on the power relations underlying the widespread use of English alongside other languages, and reveal a stark contrast between what the linguistic landscapes and soundscapes show – a variety of languages and accents, especially in multilingual and multicultural Study Abroad spaces – and the attitudes and beliefs held by the respondents, who display homogenising, monolingual tendencies.

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World War One trenches as a linguistic landscape: The use of trench slang for propaganda in *The Battle of the Somme*

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The condition created by trench warfare during the First World War (WWI) provided a unique – though dramatic – social and psychological context in which soldiers lived their daily lives for months and years. Language reflected the existence of this peculiar context in various ways. Among these, the swift development of a ‘trench slang’ used by soldiers to identify objects, weapons, persons, and actions that were part of life in the trenches (see Doyle and Walker, 2012), is a noteworthy example. Its creative and multifaceted nature testifies the shift in the perception of the three orders of spatiality (as intended by Britain, 2013), namely the physical, social, and mental spaces, which occurred to soldiers in this ‘trench society’ (Dall’Olio, 2023).

As noted by Walker (2017), trench slang was promptly used in the United Kingdom by propaganda, to foster a sense of proximity and solidarity with men fighting on the frontline. This work aims at presenting one of the earliest

instances of trench slang use for propagandistic reasons through the visual media, namely the silent docufilm *The Battle of the Somme* (1916). By detecting trench slang terms in the film's intertitles and pinpointing their meaning and role in the narration of the war, this analysis aims to outline the role of language in the first (re)presentation of the war landscape of WWI trenches to the civilian public.

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Linguistic landscape and multilingual Dublin: A sociolinguistic exploration of the Italian community

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Over the years, the number of people moving to the Republic of Ireland has grown. According to data from the Central Statistics Office (2024), there were “836,200 non-Irish citizens” in the Republic of Ireland in April 2024, constituting 15.5% of the population. So, people coming from different parts of the world and with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds chose Ireland as a destination, making it culturally and linguistically vibrant. Thus, Ireland can presumably be considered a country with a rich linguistic landscape. Nevertheless, there seems not to be extensive research that investigated human communication with regard to the languages used by im(migrants) in Ireland, including their use of English (Schulte, 2023).

In fact, research concerning (im)migrants' use of English has been a relatively recent undertaking (see, for instance, Diskin, 2017; Migge, 2015). Moreover, unlike the scholarly attention received by Italian communities in countries like the UK (e.g., Guzzo, 2014, 2017, 2023), the sociolinguistic literature on Italians in Dublin and Ireland does not appear to be extensive, leaving room for investigation.

Thus, the present paper, as part of a wider and ongoing project, aims to provide a theoretical overview of previous (socio)linguistic studies on Italian communities in Anglophone countries like the UK and on (im)migrants in Ireland. The paper will also aim to provide a preliminary insight into the Italian presence in Dublin and Ireland in general, and the potential relationship between the concept of linguistic landscape(s) and the manifestation of identity formation, negotiation and maintenance.

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Recalibrating lexical development: Spatial engagement in digital language learning with Appil

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This paper investigates how Appil, a digital application for second-language lexical development, redefines the spatial dynamics of language learning by engaging users across physical, social, and mental spaces (Britain, 2013). The study aims to explore how Appil enhances second-language acquisition by recalibrating cognitive processing of lexical knowledge and optimizing the balance of linguistic input to support effective learning. Positioned within computer-assisted language learning, Appil operates as both a pedagogical resource and a platform that expands traditional learning boundaries.

The application enables learners to overcome geographic and cultural constraints by accessing language materials and interactive experiences in a shared digital environment. Drawing on van Lier's ecology of language learning (2004) and Warschauer's framework for technology-mediated learning (2000), this study examines how digital tools reshape language engagement in interconnected contexts, emphasizing accessibility and learner autonomy.

A central focus of the research is the app's influence on cognitive processing. While non-native speakers often rely on syntagmatic associations—connecting words through sequence and structure (Meara, 1982; Wolter, 2001)—Appil supports a shift toward more semantically organized word relationships, reinforcing deeper lexical connections and improving fluency.

Methodologically, the research adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining cognitive testing with corpus-based, data-driven analysis. Patterns of language use across genres are identified through corpus analysis, alongside user interaction data within the app. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) is employed to reduce the complexity of large datasets, and correlation and distribution analysis are used to examine relationships between language patterns and learner performance. These analyses provide insights into the most effective genres for language learning and guide the development of targeted lexical interventions.

The findings inform personalized content calibration, aiming to determine the optimal amount and depth of linguistic knowledge to be embedded in the input. By fine-tuning this balance, Appil seeks to deliver language input that is neither too limited nor too complex, supporting effective lexical development and sustained learner engagement. The results indicate that Appil enhances vocabulary retention, supports flexible language use, and enables context-sensitive learning experiences. By focusing on genre-specific learning, the paper identifies which genres are most effective in fostering language acquisition. Through corpus-informed analysis, the study reveals content types that facilitate deeper cognitive engagement and help learners internalize vocabulary more effectively. These insights guide the development of tailored interventions, ensuring that the linguistic input matches learners' needs and progress.

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Speaking walls: A sociolinguistic analysis of the linguistic landscape of the porticos of the city of Bologna

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The growing globalization of the world has deeply changed the linguistic landscape of modern cities (Gorter, Cenoz, 2024; Shohamy, Gorter, 2009; Shohamy et al., 2010), which are more and more characterised by linguistic diversity: on this topic, Vertovec (2007) has rightly introduced the term “superdiversity” as a new frame of analysis. This study focuses on the analysis of the linguistic landscape of the famous porticos in Bologna, a very rich and unique context full of stimuli.

By means of a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the writings present under the porticos, the objective of this research is to understand the linguistic, social and cultural dynamics which characterise this urban space. Likewise, this

study would like to contribute to the field of linguistic landscape studies offering a new perspective on the complexity of multilingualism in urban contexts and on the relationships between language, identity and space.

The choice of the porticos as a place of investigation is motivated by their centrality in the social and cultural life of the city and, also, by their capacity to reflect the ongoing sociolinguistic transformation. The analysis of this place will shed light on a) the intra- and interlinguistic diversity inside the city of Bologna, identifying the visible languages (Landry, Bourhis, 1997), their functions, their uses as well as their dynamics of power and prestige; b) on current social dynamics hence studying how language in space is functional to the creation of a shared identity, an idea of community as well as the symbolic demarcation of social and linguistic differences; to conclude, it will allow to reflect c) on the relationship between language and space, therefore focusing on how language inscribed in space helps the construction of it, and viceversa space not only influences the use of language, but also the perception of the language itself (and consequently its discursive construction). The results of this research will offer a significant contribution to the comprehension of urban multilingualism and its social and cultural implications.

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Communication from outer space: Translating xenolanguage in Denis Villeneuve's *Arrival*

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Communication between humans and aliens is at the heart of much science fiction, often based on the contact between terrestrial and non-terrestrial species coming from a linguistically other (and outer) space. An emblematic example is represented by the xenolanguage adopted by the alien creatures in Denis Villeneuve's *Arrival* (2016), whose main character is a linguist/translator named Louise Banks.

Adapted from Ted Chiang's "Story of Your Life" (1998), this movie deals with an extraterrestrial species' "arrival" on planet Earth, which has a profound impact on the human population and in particular on Banks's mental framework. As soon as Banks starts understanding the aliens' strange written language and interacts with them, her perception of time is altered (since she can foresee the future) and, in more general terms, her role as a translator/mediator becomes fundamental in avoiding a total war between humans and aliens. A science fiction existential movie inspired by the much-contested Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis on "linguistic relativity", which argues that language structures have an influence and an impact on the cognitive functions and the world views of individuals (as in Louise Banks's case), *Arrival* also investigates the notion of free will and the importance of communication. Denis Villeneuve's film interrogates Banks's (and our) idea of loss and gain in language, and in life. In this respect, it may be interpreted as a reflection on the translator's task, and on the implications of his/her activity in the space we live in.

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Language variation in performed language: An exploration of British TV 'accent tropes'

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The increasing number of academic studies on the sociolinguistic analysis of fictional audiovisual texts (see, for example, Werner, Cutler & Moody, 2024, 2025) reflects the normalisation of performed language as a legitimate object of sociolinguistic inquiry. A central contribution of this approach lies in its ability to uncover how language functions as a

marker of social positioning and group identity. Fictional audiovisual media often portray characters from diverse backgrounds, enabling researchers to explore how linguistic features intersect with social variables such as class, gender, ethnicity and region. In Britain's (2013) terms, performed language may arguably be understood as a mental space closely tied to representations of spatial and social orders. These texts thus offer a valuable site for examining linguistic indexicality and the mediated construction of identity. This analysis can be situated within various theoretical frameworks in sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology, including stylisation (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005), enregisterment (Agha, 2007), and indexical fields (Eckert, 2008).

Building on these approaches, this study investigates recurring 'personae' in British popular culture – primarily drawn from television shows and advertisements – whose linguistic stylisations are not necessarily congruent with the real-life social categories they represent. Particular attention is paid to phonological features of non-standard British varieties, which contribute to the formation of fixed schemata known as 'accent tropes' (Valleriani, 2024: 736). The study argues that these depictions often rely on pre-existing stereotypes rather than linguistic accuracy, and that their repeated reiteration and exploitation in specific cultural contexts enhances their symbolic and social significance.

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SEM57. Linguistic perspectives on Caribbean Englishes and English-lexified Caribbean creoles

57A 11 September h. 16:00-18:30, PN 15

57B 12 September h. 16:30-19:00, PN 15

Convenors

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Abstract

The varieties of English and the English-lexified creoles spoken across the Caribbean are the outcome of complex creative interplay between the English superstratum and various West African substrata, which have been in contact for over four hundred years within the social vacuum forcibly created by early colonizers. Although the “Afric” (Allsopp, 2004: xiv) component is obviously of paramount importance for their onset, “translanguaging” (García & Wei, 2014: 137) and “polyglossing” (Král, 2019: 836) practices are widespread across speech communities throughout the Anglophone Caribbean.

As a consequence, this part of the Anglosphere stands out as uniquely “fragmented” (Holm, 1986: 1) – historically, geographically, politically and hence linguistically – by the “colonial lag” but concomitantly united by “Pan-Caribbean tendencies” (Gramley, 2001: 82), as shown by the authoritative lexicographic works compiled by Richard Allsopp, that is the *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage* (1996/2003), the *New Register of Caribbean English Usage* (2010) and *A Book of Afric Caribbean Proverbs* (2004).

Accordingly, this seminar aims to bring together scholars interested in exploring language variation and change in such a culturally diverse conglomerate from various linguistic perspectives, namely lexicological, phraseological, paremiological and metaphorical, by also considering attendant representations of identity and ethnicity. Potential topics focusing on Caribbean Englishes and/or English-lexified Caribbean Creoles may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Lexicology and lexicography
- Phraseology/phraseography and Paremiology/paremiography
- Oral traditions
- Translanguaging and multilingual practices
- Decreolization
- Metaphors and conceptual framing
- Digital and audiovisual communication

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SEM57. Papers

57A 11 September h. 16:00-18:30, PN 15

- *Americanizing Barbadian English ten years on: A field study 2015-2025* (Cristiano Furiassi, Università di Torino)
- *Englishes through Caribbean literacy stories* (Roberta Cimarosti, Università della Calabria)
- *“Me gets it, mon”: Jamaican English in animation and in Italian dubbing* (Ilaria Parini, Università del Piemonte Orientale ‘Amedeo Avogadro’)

- *Afrogenesis in translanguaging and Anglophone derivations in proverbs and interjections: wiemen fayah 'n dutty tingdem* (Rosanna Masiola, Università per stranieri di Perugia)

57B 12 September h. 16:30-19:00, PN 15

- *Translanguaging and music: The presence of Jamaican speech forms in Italian reggae* (Renato Tomei, Università per stranieri di Perugia)
- *Reggae heteroglossia: The plurality of language artistically organized* (Elena Barreca, Università degli Studi "G. d'Annunzio" Chieti-Pescara)
- *Decolonising the language: Dread talk and reggae music against black 'downpression'* (Andrea Cifalinò, Università di Catania)

SEM57. Abstracts

Reggae heteroglossia: The plurality of language artistically organized

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In the last few decades, we have witnessed the publication of an increasing number of critical analyses of contemporary creolized fiction and poetry as well as research on the genesis of creole literature (Buzelin & Winer, 2009). However, the use of contact languages in verbal arts other than printed literature – such as in songs – remains a fairly new object of study (Farquharson, Hollington & Jones, 2024).

Stretching the boundaries of literary analysis to include lyrical “texts”, this paper focuses on a corpus of Rastafari-reggae lyrics from 1970s Jamaica and looks at their creative use of language. With its diglossic context, Jamaica offers a fertile case-study for research in verbal arts and multilingualism, as speakers move within a continuum that has Standard English and Jamaican as its two extremes (Devonish, 1986).

This linguistic environment emerges clearly in Rastafari-reggae lyrics, where we find the Jamaican proverb and the newspaper title, the archaism of the King James Bible and the neologism of dread talk, the Rastafari jargon (Pollard, 2000). If the linguistic particularities of Rastafari-reggae have often been noted (Cooper & Devonish, 1995; Farquharson, 2016), no systematic analysis has yet attempted to understand how the interplay of different language varieties affects the lyrical style of the genre.

Based on a systematical analysis of a defined lyrical corpus, this paper examines reggae's use of language and elaborates on its aesthetic value. The discussion is shaped by Bakhtin's (1981) theory of heteroglossia: a concept recently relieved by sociolinguists, heteroglossia points to a stratification of the text into “socio-ideological languages,” which represent “specific points of view on the world” (Hirschkop, 2023). Giving to songs the same in-depth attention usually given to written literature, this paper explores the linguistic creativity of Rastafari-reggae lyrics, where several “socio-ideological languages” are organized in the space of a few verses.

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Decolonising the language: Dread talk and reggae music against black ‘downpression’

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Jamaica has a long history of foreign domination, as since the 16th century the Spanish and the British empires ruled over the island. Such colonial powers brought slaves from West Africa to serve as a labour force, causing a cultural and linguistic mixture that made the island a “crucible of languages” (Lalla & D’Costa, 1990, p. 6). As a result, Jamaican Creole (or Patwa) is nowadays characterised by an English-based superstratum, and a phonological, morphological and syntactic substratum that is largely influenced by West African languages (Durreleman, 2008).

Within this context, Dread Talk emerged as a dialect reflecting the philosophical and political views of Rastafarianism, a religious movement that spread in Jamaica starting from the 1930s. This language is strictly related to the problematic social conditions of the Caribbean island and its former colonial past. As a matter of fact, it originated from the Rastafarians’ social protest against the ‘pigmentocracy’ that characterised Jamaican society for centuries, in which blackness was associated with servitude and inferiority, whereas whiteness represented power, superiority and godliness (Pollard, 1982). Therefore, Dread Talk expresses the need felt by Rastafarians to modify the English superstratum of Patwa in order to reflect their socio-political perspectives through the decreolisation of the lexifier language (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Triffin, 1989). Moreover, the birth of reggae music between the 1960s and the 1970s marked the emergence of a politically sided genre that intertwined with Rastafarian ideals. Hence, many artists made extensive use of Patwa and Dread Talk in their lyrics to indicate further return to an authentic African identity and stress their beliefs of language decolonisation (King, Bays & Foster, 2002).

Drawing on these premises, this work aimed at digging into selected reggae songs to extrapolate examples of Dread Talk and investigate how this resistive language is employed as a form of political protest and language decreolisation. In order to do so, the analysis covers songs that span from the early stages of the reggae movement stretching to the most contemporary scene, comprising influential artists like Peter Tosh, Burning Spear, Bob Marley and the Wailers, Jimmy Cliff, Chronixx, Protoje, Kabaka Pyramid. The songs were analysed by identifying examples of Dread Talk and exploring which socio-political or identitarian meaning they carry by contextualising their use within the lyrics and linking it to Rastafarian ideology. The study revealed how reggae music reflects sufferings that lasted generations, while also representing a way of bringing together the Rastafarian community, allowing its members to self-represent.

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Englishes through Caribbean literacy stories

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Abstract

This paper presents Derek Walcott’s musical plays *Ti-Jean and His Brothers* (1972) and its sequel *Moon-Child* (2012) as an example of the way Creole-based Caribbean literacy stories may be used to learn English in second- and foreign-language contexts based on a theoretical approach that interweaves three long-established research fields: 1) the latest postcolonial orientation to World Englishes (Saraceni, 2015); 2) the translingual, bi- or multilingual nature of the second- and foreign-language English user (Cook, 2010, Kramsch, 2008, Pavlenko, 2011); 3) the structure and use of Creole Englishes and the way they may apply to English acquisition (Lefebvre White & Jourdan, 2006).

By following the Creole folktale about little Ti-Jean who manages to articulate his creolised English while facing and defeating the devil, i.e., the material and psycho-emotional hindrances that fight hard to alienate him and his family from their own homeland, I propose to focus on the way the folktale may speak to today’s translingual English users and learners. Specifically, the story makes us reflect on two linked aspects of the *translational English* that is connatural to

bilinguals: 1) the formation of a new Self as one inhabits and traverses both languages experiencing emotions, relying on certain values as well as on imaginative projections to overcome the inhibiting formalities of the standard languages and/or their socio-cultural associations; 2) the emergence of a hybridised English rooted in one's new identity and world.

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Americanizing Barbadian English ten years on: A field study 2015-2025

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Barbados, independent from the British Crown since November 30th, 1966, and a parliamentary republic since November 30th, 2021, is a speech community where Barbadian English, the local variety of English, coexists with Bajan, an English-lexified “mesolectal” (Gibson, 1996: 41) or “intermediate” (Winford, 2000: 215) creole. Due to the colonial past of the island, which makes it a prototypically diasporic context (Furiassi, 2023b: 48–49), the vocabulary of Barbadian English is inferred to chiefly derive from varieties of Modern English originating in the British Isles, namely British, Irish and Scottish (Furiassi, 2023a: 72; 2023b: 49–51; 2022: 91–92).

In fact, the aim of this piece of research is to highlight how the present-day vocabulary of Barbadian English seems to have moved towards American English, a phenomenon common to other varieties of English spoken in the Caribbean (Stuka, 2023: 92–93, 106). Data are drawn from field research, more specifically from two identical sets of questionnaires distributed ten years apart to Barbadian-only students attending the University of the West Indies at Cave Hill, Barbados: the first set was submitted between November and December 2015 to 200 students; the second set was circulated between March and April 2025 among 100 students. Both the first and the second batch of respondents correspond to about 5% of all Barbadian-born undergraduates respectively in the 2015-2016 and the 2024-2025 academic years.

Despite most of the respondents claiming that they attained and are still receiving formal education in British English, their use of vocabulary, apparent from the answers provided, seems to include an equal proportion of Briticisms and Americanisms (Algeo, 1989: 156), or at least an alternation between them. Hence, the findings recorded within the time frame considered are hoped to shed light on the discrepancy between the traditional notion of Barbadian English, conceived as resembling British English, and the actual use of vocabulary made by younger generations of Barbadians, which appears to be conspicuously closer to American English.

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Afrogenesis in translanguaging and Anglophone derivations in proverbs and interjections: *wiemen fayah 'n dutty tingdem*

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In the context of the “Creole Debate” and the recognition of Jamaican as an Anglophone-based speech form or English-lexified Creole, this presentation examines the Afrogenesis of Jamaican and Caribbean languages. Research on proverbs in lexicography (Allsopp, 2006a, 2006b; Cassidy & Le Page, 2002) uncovers a rich, shared African multilingual heritage that underpins these languages. The structural grammar of African languages significantly influences the translanguaging evident in Jamaican, reflecting a unique rhythm and stress pattern reminiscent of the languages from the Western Coast of Africa (Devonish, 2002). This perspective is crucial for dispelling the negative stigma associated with pidginization and dismantling deeply rooted prejudices against so-called “broken languages” (Allsopp, 2003; Cassidy, 2007).

Proverbs, interjections, ideophones, and mimetics are not just linguistic elements; they are powerful emotional tools and vital markers of identity (Rickford & Rickford, 1999). Moreover, linguistic phenomena such as metathesis, syllepsis, and the reduction to holophrastic forms and ideophones challenge traditional semantic interpretations, allowing for a richer understanding of language. Proverbs vividly illustrate how Afrogenesis continues to thrive through translanguaging and the interjectional continuum hypothesis. The limited examples discussed highlight themes of matriarchal solidarity and the intricate dynamics surrounding procreation. Moreover, interjections, holophrastic phrases, mimetic lexemes, and even vulgar exclamations not only reflect Anglophone influences in Jamaican and Caribbean speech forms but also expose critical issues of sexism and gender stigma related to fertility. This calls for a deeper examination of the social implications woven into the fabric of contact languages, and the colonial importation of cursing and its diffusion (Farquharson, Forrester & Hollington, 2020).

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“Me gets it, mon”: Jamaican English in animation and in Italian dubbing

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The use of accents and language variation in films is a long-established practice that manipulates language as a tool in the construction of characters, so as to convey specific characteristics. This is even more evident in animated films, where language is used as a quick way to build character and reaffirm stereotypes. Linguistic variation can occur on the phonological, as well as the lexical and syntactic levels. Several studies seem to agree that using linguistic stereotypes in animated films (which are aimed at a public mainly composed of children or young adults) is a potentially dangerous practice which may ultimately teach youngsters to discriminate against people speaking a variety with certain specific

features. According to Minutella (2021), Lippi-Green (1997), Dobrow and Gidney (1998), and Ellis (2012), it is not a case that the villains quite often speak with a foreign accent.

Shark Tale is an animated comedy produced in 2004 by DreamWorks Animation, where the characters speak different variations of American English, which are used to attribute different features to them. The villains, in this case, are a group of white sharks who present a series of elements that allows the audience to easily identify them as Italian American Mafiosi. The film caused a lot of debate in the United States, where many associations of Italian Americans were concerned about the above mentioned potential discriminating message conveyed to children, due to the negative features associated with their ethnic group (Parini, 2019). However, the Italian American variety is not the only one spoken in the film. In fact, two minor characters, called Ernie and Bernie, speak a language variety which can be easily recognized as Jamaican English. Being an animated film, their characterization is also reinforced by their visual representation, as they are two jellyfish whose tentacles look like Rastafarian locks. This presentation will focus on the characteristics of these two characters and the strategies used in the Italian dubbed version of the film.

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Translanguaging and music: The presence of Jamaican speech forms in Italian reggae

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Abstract

This paper explores the intersection of language, music, and identity by examining the translanguaging practices observed within the Italian reggae and Rastafari community. Focusing on the dynamic presence and adaptation of Jamaican speech forms, including the Rastafarian lexicon, the study highlights how these linguistic features are appropriated, recontextualized, and re-signified in the Italian sociocultural landscape (Sebba, 2012). Drawing on ethnographic observations, discourse analysis, and interviews with artists and community members, the paper reveals a marked variety of features adopted from Jamaican linguistic and cultural practices, and distinctive speech rhythms typical of Jamaican deejaying and chanting (Cooper, 2004; Alim, 2009; Hollington, Farquharson & Jones Jr, 2022).

These linguistic elements are not isolated but deeply embedded within a broader spectrum of youth cultural practices. The Italian reggae scene exhibits a strong influence from Jamaican cultural aesthetics, ranging from music production and performance styles to pragmatic features, dress codes, hairstyles, and expressions of spiritual identity aligned with Rastafari principles (Hebdige, 1987; King, 2001). These practices collectively contribute to the creation of new translanguistic and transcultural spaces, where meanings are continuously negotiated, and new identities are performed.

The paper argues that these translanguaging processes go far beyond code-switching or cultural imitation; instead, they reflect a complex and creative engagement with global flows of language, culture, and ideology (Pennycook, 2007; García & Wei, 2014). Through the lens of reggae music and Rastafari discourse, Italian youth not only express affinity with Jamaican traditions but also localize and reshape them to fit their own sociopolitical and cultural realities. The result is a dynamic linguistic and cultural repertoire that challenges conventional linguistic boundaries, offering new insights into the role of music and Jamaican speech forms as vehicles for transnational identities.

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