

3rd International Conference of the Slovene Association of LSP Teachers: Languages for Specific Purposes – Opportunities and Challenges of Teaching and Research

From May 18th to 20th, 2023, the third international conference hosted by the Slovene Association of LSP Teachers convened under the theme “Languages for Specific Purposes – Opportunities and Challenges of Teaching and Research”. This event provided a platform for educators and professionals in the realm of Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP) to exchange insights, discuss current issues in applied linguistics, foster existing partnerships, and establish new connections within the global research and teaching community.

Chaired by Mateja Dostal (School for Economic and Business, University of Ljubljana) in charge of the Programme Committee and with Andreja Drašler (Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana) in charge of the Organizing Committee, the conference attracted participants from a diverse array of institutions, including universities and technical secondary schools.

Held at the scenic Rimske terme spa and wellness resort, the conference’s serene setting facilitated productive interactions among attendees and organizers. This ambiance allowed for continuous engagement, both formally during sessions and informally during meals and evening discussions, thereby fostering a distinctive and inspiring atmosphere. This innovative format previously led to research collaborations and the initiation of the “Trails” international project after the first conference in 2017. Despite the transition to an online format for the second conference in 2020 due to pandemic restrictions, the concept’s success continued, evident in the robust participation of this year’s event. The 69 presentations by speakers from 25 countries unfolded over three days, reflecting the conference’s global reach. Presentations were conducted in five languages: English, German, Italian, French, and Slovenian, aligning with the Slovene Association of LSP Teachers’ commitment to promoting various LSPs within Slovenian tertiary education.

Each day commenced with plenary lectures, followed by parallel sessions categorized by content rather than the language of presentation. The thematic diversity encompassed specialized language disciplines (such as medicine, business, law, tourism, engineering, and architecture), various methodologies (problem-based and corpus-based learning, coaching-oriented and multidisciplinary approaches), didactic considerations (LSP teacher profiles and assessment), terminology and translation studies, needs analysis, curriculum design, as well as pressing issues of digitalization, inclusion, inclusivity, and sustainability.

The conference’s appeal was further heightened by the participation of five distinguished plenary speakers: Anna Bocanegra-Valle from Spain, Jan Engberg from Denmark, Peter Franklin from Germany, Ken Hyland from the United Kingdom, and Stefania Maci from Italy. These experts examined distinct aspects of LSPs, collectively exploring the role of language in knowledge exchange within today’s expansive professional, social, and cultural networks. Through their diverse perspectives, attendees were prompted to engage in dynamic discussions, reflecting on their own research methodologies and pedagogical approaches.

Anna Bocanegra-Valle’s presentation, “LSP courses as strategic sites for interculturalisation at home: Exploring opportunities and facing challenges,” delved into the interplay between LSP education and intercultural competence. This topic addressed the contemporary trend of universities internationalizing their programs to equip students for success in the global job market. Bocanegra-Valle assessed the suitability of existing learning tools for integrating intercultural components, emphasizing the role of LSP teachers in this process.

On the second day, Ken Hyland and Jan Engberg contributed their perspectives to the conference. Hyland's presentation, "Innovating English teaching: Getting specific with EAP," spotlighted the evolving landscape of English for Academic Purposes (EAP), which has shifted towards more discipline-specific courses. Hyland explored the importance of this shift and its implications for teaching and learning approaches within LSP, grounded in key theories of academic writing. Jan Engberg's speech, "Specialized discourse and expert knowledge: LSP as a gateway to epistemic and national cultures," centred on the nuanced communication of specialized knowledge in LSP, particularly in the legal domain. Engberg highlighted the broader significance of understanding national and epistemic cultures in which specialized discourse is embedded, urging a holistic approach to LSP competence.

The third day of the conference welcomed Peter Franklin, whose presentation titled "Global fitness: What it isn't, what it is, and why it's useful to LSP," focused on intercultural communication competence in today's culturally diverse world. Franklin advocated for embracing cultural differences as assets, rather than obstacles, suggesting strategies to enhance "global fitness" for effective cross-cultural interactions.

The conference's final plenary lecture was delivered by Stefania M. Maci, who discussed "The LSP curriculum: From theory to practice." Maci's talk elucidated curriculum design as a dynamic process, emphasizing the interwoven nature of curriculum components and the need to balance international trends with local context. Maci exemplified this approach using the "English for Tourism" course, demonstrating challenges and approaches faced by LSP educators.

Alongside the academic sessions, an exhibition showcased LSP-oriented textbooks and monographs, featuring works from renowned publishers and conference speakers alike. The conference concluded with an engaging raffle, offering LSP books as prizes to attendees. The success of this event sets the stage for the fourth conference scheduled in 2026. Notably, selected articles based on presentations from the 2023 conference will be published in the Association's journal, *Scripta Manent*, and included in the conference proceedings as part of the *Inter Alia* series, ensuring the continued dissemination of valuable research and insights.

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