INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this special issue is to take stock of ongoing linguistic research in Europe into forms of specialised discourse in English. The increased interest in the study of the specialist use of language by social groupings "stretching across the academic, the professional, the technical and the occupational areas of knowledge and practice" (Gotti 2008: 24) indicates that the different forms of communication emerging in professional and disciplinary cultures play a key role in the modern world (cf. Mauranen 1993, Bhatia & Bremner 2017). The assumption underlying the work reported on in this special issue is that, on the one hand, professional communities shape their discourse through practice and by sharing a culturally defined kind of group knowledge (Bhatia 2004, van Dijk 2014), and, on the other, the use of English as the international language of professional communication, together with the spread of new communication technologies, can be seen to be exerting a unique influence on how specialised discourses are changing.

The collection of papers included in this special issue stems primarily from work first presented at the event (Seminar 03 *Specialised Discourse: Wherefrom and Whereto?*) held jointly by the editors (Dontcheva-Navratilova and Freddi) at the *14th European Society for the Study of English (ESSE) Conference* held at Masaryk University, Brno (Czech Republic) from 29 August to 2 September 2018. The two adverbs of direction in the title of the seminar aimed at soliciting both diachronic and future perspectives on specialised communication in order to understand its more current manifestations by looking at the history of discourse practices in a variety of subject fields, such as academic, scientific, and legal. This issue also comprises two studies presented at the *8th Brno Conference on Linguistics Studies in English* (12-13 September 2019), also held at Masaryk University: a position paper by Josef Schmied on the limits of discourse and Markéta Malá's study into applicability of corpus-driven methods to the study of phraseology.

Specialised discourse and professional communication are typically explored from three different perspectives: language pedagogy associated with Language for Specific Purposes and English for Specific Purposes research; social constructivism, which underlies register analysis, genre analysis and (critical) discourse analysis; and communication theories, which underpin professional communication studies (cf. Bhatia & Bremner 2017). The studies in this special issue adopt primarily the first two approaches, as they focus on particular linguistic features, rhetorical conventions and discourse practices from the point of view of rhetorical analysis, genre analysis and corpus linguistics.

The papers investigate various registers and genres reflective of different social practices and purposes, including traditional written academic discourse (e.g. Guziurová's study of research articles and Malá's analysis of MA theses), spoken legal communication (trial discourse, scrutinised by Szczyrbak) and new media genres (e.g. Twitter discourse, explored both by Hofmann and Schmied, and personal science blogs, analysed by Freddi). Thus the collection of studies sheds light on the way medium variation, intended audiences and communicative goals shape rhetorical and language choices conventionalised in different professional settings.

All the studies are firmly grounded in data analysis and employ corpus linguistics methodology. The softwares used encompass Mike Scott's Wordsmith Tools, Laurence Anthony's AntConc, the more recent #LancsBox, developed at the University of Lancaster by Vaclav Brezina and colleagues, and the Web as Corpus paradigm, used in Hofmann's study of tweets from the web. Such variety is testimony to ongoing developments in information technology serving the purposes of text processing and linguistic study. The method is contrastive in all studies, and many combine the design and compilation of ad hoc corpora (Freddi, Hofmann, Malá, Szczyrbak) with the use of existing resources which serve the comparative purposes of the research. The analyses of corpus data use both the corpus-based (Guziurová, Szczyrbak and Hofmann) and the corpus-driven approach (Malá, Freddi and Schmied), highlighting the variety of methods that corpus linguistics offers for the study of rhetorical and lexicogrammatical features of specialised discourses.

The following brief overview of the topics investigated by the contributors shows the variety of insights this special issue brings to the study of specialised discourse. The first paper, by Maria Freddi, presents a corpus compilation project and adopts a corpus-driven approach to the study of writer-reader interaction in science blogs. By analysing various linguistics strategies that science bloggers use to achieve audience involvement, such as reader pronouns, questions and conversational features of style, Freddi provides evidence of the blurring and hybridity of genres and audiences as observed in media-generated specialised discourse.

Tereza Guziurová compares the use of code glosses (i.e. elaboration and additional rephrasing markers) in the SciElf corpus representing Lingua Franca English academic discourse and in research articles by native-speaker writers published in international journals. The findings show significant differences in the frequency and functions of several code glosses across the two corpora. Guziurová concludes that while discourse reflexivity plays an important role

in both corpora, ELF writers' academic discourse shows a tendency towards enhanced explicitness, as already indicated by previous research (e.g. Mauranen et al. 2016).

The investigation into Twitter English in Nigeria by Matthias Hofmann sets out to test the hypothesis that this variety identifies the younger generations and displays the influence of American English instead of the inherited British English. After a description of issues associated with compilation of a corpus of data taken from the web, the paper focuses on prepositional usage in grammatical contexts where both British and American alternatives are possible, and on spelling variants from the two regions.

Markéta Malá's paper explores the applicability of corpus-driven methods to the study of phraseology in learner academic English. By carrying out multiple corpus comparisons, contrasting L2 learner-writers of academic English with both L1 learner-writers and experienced writers of published research articles, Malá provides convincing evidence that in her corpora the most significant differences in terms of phraseology (particularly lexical bundles and recurrent sequences containing grammatical keywords) are to be found between novice and expert writers, irrespective of the L1.

Josef Schmied's paper on the "Limits of discourse" offers a wide-angled investigation into novel and changing forms of discourse that challenge the very definition of 'discourse' as conceptualized by recent debate in linguistics, sociology and philosophy of language. By looking critically at effects of social media on political as well as academic discourse, the paper digs deep into the essence of discourse to distil Intentionality and Credibility and their linguistic correlates as qualifying features for automated discourse as in Human-Agent Interaction.

Magdalena Szczyrbak takes courtroom discourse as a case in point to explore the many functions of the epistemic marker *I think*. Drawing from the vast literature on the pragmatic functions of *I think* in conversational data, she studies how the judge and the witness variously deploy it through a detailed corpus study of the Tsarnaev trial. She finds that all functions are represented in the corpus, although the functional specialisation under observation points to differences in discourse and professional roles construed by judge and witness in the courtroom hearing.

The papers included in this special issue are complemented by book reviews discussing two of the most recent collected volumes on themes of professional discourse and communication, published by John Benjamins and Peter Lang respectively. These add to the comprehensive picture this special issue aims to provide of the area of specialised discourse.

To conclude, with this issue we hope to have mapped out at least some of the topics and methods employed in current research into discourse as it unfolds in specialised settings. We also hope to have indicated that specialised discourse is taking us in a direction that is digital, global and dialogically oriented.

Olga Dontcheva-Navratilova
Maria Freddi (Guest editor)

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