

Introduction to multilingual academic and professional communication in a networked world

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This publication offers a selection of papers based on presentations at the AELFE-TAPP 2021 Conference, held in hybrid mode at Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya at Vilanova i la Geltrú (Barcelona, Spain) and online, from 7 to 9 July 2021. This conference, organized during the challenging time of the COVID-19 pandemic, had originally been scheduled in July 2020 and had to be postponed, and redesigned. The joint AELFE-TAPP 2021 Conference, co-siting the 19th Annual Conference of AELFE (*Asociación Europea de Lenguas para Fines Específicos*/European Association of Languages for Specific Purposes) and the 2nd TAPP (Trans-Atlantic and Pacific Project) Conference, brought together scholars from the fields of LSP (Languages for Specific Purposes) and virtual exchange. The common theme “Multilingual academic and professional communication in a networked world” aimed to inspire discussions that are situated at the crossroads between LSP and virtual exchange, which are pervasively present in current contexts where multilingual academic and professional communication takes place. In such increasingly networked workplace contexts and internationalized higher education institutions, professionals that possess a wide range of skills for digital communication are needed more than ever.

Little did we know, when we originally planned to hold the conference in 2020, that over a year our world would become more connected than ever. The pandemic has not only led to a surge of multiple online tools and more intense networking but has also strengthened the potential of telecollaboration, multilingualism and interculturality, leading to the reappraisal of the ways we learn, teach and research specialized

languages and communication. The affordances of all the tools and pedagogic resources that have become more salient in the past year have had an impact on our professions (and our lives), and merit closer examination. Similarly, our academic (and social) networking has also changed, with a rise in online communication. In this context, and focusing on a variety of online communication tools, the AELFE-TAPP 2021 Conference has provided a forum for researchers and practitioners to collaborate, intra- and inter-disciplinarily, to find common ground and to open up new perspectives on this changing field.

Apart from new perspectives and tools, the pandemic has also exposed instructors and researchers to an increased workload, and the necessity of adapting to a multitude of digital tools and procedures almost overnight. The pandemic has also reminded us that humans love to interact face to face, and that technology needs to be really advanced to compensate for face-to-face interaction when communication is shifted to the virtual sphere, with the need to provide rich and varied interactions. This shift has created a momentum for consolidating and promoting virtual exchange, which now appears to become part of the agenda of many educational institutions. Current global challenges, such as the climate crisis, decarbonization, migration and defending liberal democracy, have already set the scene for further opportunities and indeed necessities to bring the world closer together, probably more often in a virtual than a physical way.

Inspired by the principles of knowledge generation and exchange produced by the interaction of scholars coming from different communities and disciplinary fields, this publication seeks to disseminate open knowledge taking advantage of online tools and networks, hence reaching beyond the conference to make it available to participants all around the globe. In line with an increasingly multilingual landscape, the conference theme is exemplified both in the conference (with presentations in English, Spanish, French and German) and in these proceedings, with the presence of Spanish and French in addition to English.

Mirroring the key topics presented and discussed during the conference, these proceedings are organized into different sections that reflect the AELFE-TAPP 2021 conference panels and featured thematic tracks. The first section contains the guest contributions by keynote speakers, setting the scene and discussing essential topics related to the conference theme: online collaboration in translation through TAPP projects by Sonia Vandepitte; a comprehensive map of the status of virtual exchange, drawing on research data from Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange, by Francesca Helm; and the questioning of common assumptions of the role of EMI in the internationalization of universities, by David Block.

Contributions are thus organized in the following sections: (I) Analysis and translation of specialized languages, which includes contributions from the AELFE panels of genre and discourse and translation and terminology; (II) Thematic tracks in LSP, comprising some of the contributions to the featured monographic panels on Multilingualism and EU law, Technical and professional communication, and Health communication; (III) Innovation and digital technologies in LSP; (IV) LSP teaching methodologies and English-medium instruction; and (V) TAPP-Virtual exchange, featuring contributions on virtual exchange from multiple perspectives, from TAPP members as well as from other different networks.

After two decades of AELFE Conferences and TAPP collaborations, and within the consolidated fields of LSP and virtual exchange, we hope that readers of this volume can benefit from a wide range of contributions by scholars from different regions of the world, who are willing to share their expertise, to collaborate and to plant their seed in these growing and intersecting communities. We hope that the multiple approaches to the conference theme from active scholars, expressing a variety of voices, can inspire further debates as well as help practitioners meet the challenges posed by our changing academic and professional world. The contributions in this volume on LSP and virtual exchange, both from the perspectives of teaching and research, are meant as a tool to help scholars to equip future professionals and citizens with the skills needed in a constantly-changing, complex multilingual networked world. The editors of this collection (together with the rest of the AELFE-TAPP 2021 organizing team) are proud to have hosted all participants, on site and virtually, during the conference. May the discussions generated during the conference as well as the contributions to this volume help strengthen the bonds between LSP and virtual exchange scholars - AELFE and TAPP members and beyond - provide mutual feedback, and inspire further joint action and projects to meet present and future challenges in the field. We hope that the efforts put into the organization of the conference and the present publication constitute one step in this direction.

Panel of reviewers

This academic publication has gone through a double-blind peer review process to meet the standards of quality and rigour that can be expected in scholarly publications. This quality process would not have been possible without the insightful input and feedback of the recognized academics that have served as external reviewers:

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Sonia Vandepitte (Ghent University, Belgium)

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