

The Systemic Functional Linguistics Association of Tunisia (SYFLAT), the Laboratory of Approaches to Discourse (LAD) and the Doctoral School of the Faculty of Letters and Humanities of Sfax (EDLAH) jointly organize:

The Third ONLINE Session of SYFLAT Research Methodology Seminars 25/26:

CORPUS-BASED DISCOURSE ANALYSIS IN SFL



 Saturday 24 January, 2026 at 10:00 a.m. (Tunis time)

 <https://meet.google.com/wkr-xnkx-sok>

The Program

Session 1: 10:00 am-11:00 am:

Guest Speaker - Dr. Sabrina Fusari

University of Bologna



Title: A Corpus Linguistic Approach to Analyzing “Empathy”

Session 2: 11:00 am-12:00 pm:



Dr. Nesrine Triki

University of Turin

Title: The Discourse of Higher Education Internationalisation in Strategic Planning

ABSTRACTS

DR. SABRINA FUSARI: A CORPUS LINGUISTIC APPROACH TO ANALYZING “EMPATHY”

This presentation draws on the 36-billion-word English Web 2020 corpus to offer a Systemic Functional Linguistic investigation of how the concept of empathy is construed in English. Methodologically, the study integrates corpus linguistic tools – such as concordances, word sketches, and collocation analysis – with various Systems (Transitivity, Appraisal and lexical Cohesion), to reveal the social semiotic through which empathy is represented, evaluated, and contextualized across domains, especially in disciplinary areas that use “empathy” as a specialized term, such as medicine, psychology and education. The results indicate that empathy is usually represented as a positive attribute and a moral virtue, yet corpus evidence also uncovers ambivalent and even contradictory evaluations, i.e. empathy’s potential “dark side” in contexts such as professional burnout. In addition, the concept of “empathy” does not have a univocal definition, and different scales are used by different professions to measure it, which can lead to complications in its use, especially in clinical settings. This kind of corpus-assisted discourse analysis allows researchers to gain a better understanding of abstract psychological and ethical concepts, integrating quantitative and qualitative functional interpretation. For this reason, the same methodology could be applied to different words identifying abstract concepts in general and emotions in particular.

DR. NESRINE TRIKI: THE DISCOURSE OF HIGHER EDUCATION INTERNATIONALISATION IN STRATEGIC PLANNING

This talk will explore the discourse of higher education internationalisation in strategic planning. While it is a well-established focus in managerial and strategizing research, internationalisation remains under-explored within linguistic and discourse analysis frameworks. The presentation will provide some preliminary findings from an ongoing study that investigates the discourse of internationalisation in university strategic plan genre. Drawing on a specialised corpus (the CUSP corpus) covering 185 universities from 22 countries, the study compares how internationalisation dimensions are lexically constructed and identifies dominant lexical and thematic patterns which will be then analysed across SFL’s three metafunctions. Rather than offering definitive conclusions, the session aims to provoke critical reflections on conceptual and methodological challenges, including corpus compilation and analysis and the interpretation of multi-contextual data.