

Conference review: Simmelweis Medical Linguistics Conference 2024.

Implementation of patient-centred research trends. Budapest: Semmelweis University.
31 May – 1 June 2024. Institute of Languages for Specific Purposes, Semmelweis University

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RESUMEN: Entre los días 31 de mayo y 1 de junio de 2024 se celebró en Budapest la Conferencia de Lingüística Médica Semmelweis sobre el tema «Aplicación de las tendencias de investigación centradas en el paciente», organizada por el Instituto de Lenguas para Fines Específicos de la Universidad Semmelweis. El acto reunió a profesionales de todo el mundo de los campos de la medicina y la lingüística para hablar de qué es la lingüística médica y qué valores y perspectivas aporta a los respectivos campos de los ponentes. Sus exposiciones abarcaron una amplia gama de temas relacionados con la traducción y la interpretación sanitaria, los géneros médicos, la lingüística interaccional, la terminología y las lenguas para fines específicos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: conferencia, interdisciplinar, interprofesional, lingüística médica, Universidad Semmelweis.

ABSTRACT: *The Semmelweis Medical Linguistics Conference on the theme of Implementation of patient-centred research trends took place in Budapest on 31 May and 1 June 2024. The event was organised by the Institute of Languages for Specific Purposes at Semmelweis University and brought together professionals in the fields of Medicine and Linguistics from around the world to discuss what medical linguistics is and what it has to offer in these fields. The presentations covered a wide range of topics related to medical translation and interpreting, medical genres, interactional linguistics, terminology, and languages for specific purposes.*

KEYWORDS: *conference, interdisciplinary, interprofessional, medical linguistics, Semmelweis University.*



Conference Review

The second edition of the Semmelweis Medical Linguistics Conference was held on 31 May and 1 June in Budapest, Hungary. Many scholars from around the world had come to present their work on the topic of 'Implementation of patient-centred research trends' at this interdisciplinary, interprofessional conference organised by the Institute of Languages for Specific Purposes at Semmelweis University. The presentations covered a wide range of topics related to medical translation and interpreting, medical genres, interactional linguistics, discourse analysis, and many other subtopics.

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During the two days of the conference, more than 40 presentations (in-person and online) were delivered and a poster session featuring 13 posters was organised. Although presenters were given the option of presenting online, many decided to attend the event in person to meet, exchange ideas, and spark future cooperation with other presenters and attendees.

The opening ceremony led by Péter Hermann, Vice-Rector for Educational Affairs at Semmelweis University, highlighted the importance of collaboration in research on linguistic and healthcare professionals, the significance of the diversity of communication, the role of English as a lingua franca, and the relevance of Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) courses for professionals across the field of Medicine. In his opening speech, Péter Nyirády, Director of the Department of Urology at Semmelweis University, presented his research on patient and doctor communication in urologic oncology, concluding that supportive, open communication, effective questioning, and shared decision-making with the patient can enhance patients' openness and trust towards their healthcare provider, as well as improve symptom disclosure. Katalin Fogarasi, Conference Chair and Head of the Institute of Languages for Specific Purposes, drew attention to the importance of medical linguistics, emphasising the interdisciplinary, practice-oriented, innovative nature of the field and its close links to medical practice. Medical linguistics lies at the intersection of two fields of science but has no dedicated platform to date. She also presented the institute's work, the wide range of research fields covered, including pragmatics, sociolinguistics, narrative medicine, semantics, and terminology, and the Semmelweis Medical Linguistics Investigations, a new scientific publication that would hopefully become a key platform for medical linguistics.

The first plenary speech of the conference was given by Vicent Montalt from Universitat Jaume I and stressed the complexities faced by translators in patient-centred communication. The presentation highlighted the need to humanise communication in health care. To achieve this, 'chunking' would be needed: this entailed simplifying 'the curse of knowledge' in medical communication through intralingual translation, bringing communication from the level of the healthcare provider to that of the patient. His speech was followed by the plenary round table led by Jerome Tessuto from the University of Campania Luigi Vanvitelli, who unveiled the discourse characteristics of alternative and complementary medicine. He also showed how academic persuasion is present in academic texts relating to complementary or alternative medicine through discourse and linguistic strategies, concluding that language is used to secure readers.

After the first coffee break of the day, the programme continued with three parallel sessions, divided by topic. The options were medical translation and interpreting (chaired by Ágnes Horváth), medical genres (chaired by Lilla Petronella Szabó), and interactional linguistics (chaired by Judit Bóna). The session on medical translation and interpreting covered many important topics. The first presentation by Ágnes Horváth underlined the need to identify vital documents in health care and listed some of these documents, before moving on to

discuss the work of a Hungarian project group called Language Assistance in Hungarian Health Care: Translations for Effective Communication (LAHTEC). The group's aim was to make these documents accessible in multiple languages by producing translation guides, glossaries, and sample translations and giving these tools to medical facilities to mitigate the impact of language barriers on patients and healthcare professionals.

The next presentation by Amy Olen, Melissa Chiu, Andrea Maxwell, W. Hobart Davies, and Charles B. Rothschild covered PICU provider perceptions of alteration in interpreted medical communication and how they can influence communication. Their findings showed that alterations can be perceived through the length of the interpreter's utterance, reactions to the utterance, and comments from bilingual bystanders. Training and support in this area should explain the interpreting process to healthcare providers to enhance their trust in the mediator. Ahmad Khuddro, who was the last presenter in the session, gave a fascinating talk on a case study of English-Arabic translations of pharmaceutical texts, mentioning typical translation errors. He underlined the negative effect of these errors on patient health and the influence of cultural taboos in the deliberate changes made to these texts. The presentations in the session bridged the four corners of the world, covering Spain, the United States of America, Saudi Arabia, and Hungary, showing how medical translation and interpreting face similar problems in different regions.

In the afternoon, the attendees gathered to listen to the plenary speech on challenges and good practices in telemedical neurological consultations by Karin Birkner from Universität Bayreuth. These consultations took place via video conference, with a clinic doctor and a patient admitted with a suspected stroke on one side and a neurologist on the other. She concluded with the importance of considering patients' expectations in these communication events, suggesting that the telemedicine should lead the consultation as their visibility is reduced and they are unable to physically examine the patient. The second plenary speech of the afternoon was by Paul Neumann from Dalhousie University and covered the importance of preparing Latin anatomical terminology for the computer age. He mentioned the relevance of 'the English switch' to the topic, as many anglicised adjectives and terms are used in anatomy and may even become a future lingua franca, and concluded by stressing the need to preserve Latin terminology as the standard international nomenclature.

After the afternoon coffee break, another parallel session was held: this time, the topics were discourse analysis (chaired by Tímea Takács), metaphors (chaired by Gábor Simon), and interactional linguistics (chaired by Irena Aleksić-Hajduković).

The session on interactional linguistics began with a presentation by Dominic Hendricks about meta-communicative constructions with *man* ('one') and their importance for epistemic reasoning in oncological consultations, which highlighted how healthcare providers avoid using a definite subject when giving diagnoses in oncological cases. The next presentation by Katalin Eklícsné Lepénye and Judit Szalai-Szolcsányi examined linguistic strategies and ethical considerations in patient-cen-

tred approaches to delivering bad news and underlined what is effective communication in health care, giving training ideas and presenting a course allowing future healthcare providers to learn assertive communication. They emphasised the importance of empathy, use of layman terms, and dignity in these cases. The presentation by Anna Kuzio on the comprehensive analysis of linguistic dynamics and mitigation strategies to tackle hate speech in online doctor evaluations highlighted the importance of ethics in free speech and of educating doctors for awareness, as opinions expressed anonymously online can create a toxic online environment in which negative feedback is more prominent than positive comments.

The session ended with a presentation by Annamária Marthy, which described a narrative inquiry on communication and relationship dynamics between midwives and women in labour, stressing the importance of communication for women during this life experience. During the session, the attendees were made aware of the importance of using the right wording when talking to patients or even to or about doctors and providers. The first day of the conference ended with a dinner at a Hungarian restaurant.

The second day of the conference began with the plenary round table led by Wolfgang Imo from Universität Hamburg, who talked about agency removal in doctor-patient interactions, highlighting the confusion in doctor-patient communication that may be triggered by hidden agents and the need for patients to ask who they are to have full clarity, making self-advocacy by patients all the more important. Hypothesising as to the identity of the hidden agent might lead to later confusion and could even be dangerous for the patient's wellbeing.

After a short coffee break, the last parallel session of the conference covered the topics of medical translation and interpreting (chaired by Carmen Pena-Díaz), terminology (chaired by Tomáš Hamar), and LSP and terminology (chaired by Danka Sinadinović).

The session on translation and interpreting began with a presentation by Carmen Pena-Díaz, Carmen Merino, and Belén Llopis about the effect of language and cultural discordances on patient safety perception in healthcare, highlighting the importance of translation in the medical field to guarantee autonomy and patient rights. They mentioned the INTERCOMSALUD project in Spain, which delivers specialised courses on language and culture in the medical context. In her presentation, Sofía Antequera-Manzano described how healthcare interpreting training meets or fails to meet the expectations of healthcare providers, highlighting the knowledge gaps between interpreters and healthcare providers on how to work with medical interpreters. The research conducted by the presenter made it clear that there is still a lack of trust in the accuracy and fidelity of interpreters' work among healthcare providers. Ágnes Horváth and Réka Gabányi revealed how public service interpreting and translation (PSIT) operates in Hungary, providing insight into access to health care for refugees and noting the lack of relevant legislation on PSIT prac-

tice. They also highlighted the degree to which the PSIT practitioner's personality can affect patient routes, as advocacy and assertive behaviour are key to enabling refugees to effectively access health care.

The last presentation of the session by Silviya Damyanova Radeva and Carmen Valero Garcés revealed how interpreting in mental health cases was carried out by presenting Spanish professionals' views on the role of the interpreter. They concluded that the practice was still in a pre-professional state and that raising awareness was key to forging trust between professionals. The session concluded with a longer discussion about the topics, which underlined the similarities between Spanish and Hungarian medical interpreting.

After the lunch break, the attendees gathered in the hall of the university building for the parallel poster session, which presented multiple facets of medical communication, ranging from the terminology used to describe the brain to the adaptation of language for Alzheimer's patients. The conference concluded with the final plenary, in which Serge Quéirin from the Université de Montréal discussed the importance of switching from doctors' terms to patients' words and back again, revealing the many pitfalls involved in this switch (e.g. use of euphemisms, regionalisms, and foreign languages). The presentation highlighted the importance of intralingual translation and speech adaptation in health care to ensure that every person in a medical context has a common understanding of the terms in use. Katalin Fogarasi thanked all the plenary speakers, participants, and attendees during the closing ceremony. The second and final day of the conference ended with a scenic tour of the city.

The conference was as much of a success as it was last year, with many ideas and questions raised, contacts exchanged, and hopefully more interprofessional work in the pipeline, thanks to the networking opportunities offered by the Semmelweis Medical Linguistics Conference, which underscores the importance and legitimacy of linguistics in medical care.

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