

PRIN-CLAVIER 2025

*Communicating transparency: New trends and
insights for professional and intercultural settings*

Tropea, Calabria (Italy), May 29-30 2025



BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

We dedicate this conference to the memory of Ida Ruffolo, our dear friend and colleague who recently passed away following a brief and sudden illness. She was a talented researcher, dedicated teacher, and outstanding team player. She is deeply missed by all who had the privilege of knowing and working with her.

Keynote Speakers

Transparency: Deconstructing an ambiguous ideal

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While transparency is considered an unmistakable ideal in most democratic societies, its ultimate value for consumers, organizations and the wider society is less obvious than typically assumed in public and political discourse. As Lessig (2009) formulates it: “How could anyone be against transparency? Its virtues and its utilities seem so crushingly obvious. But I have increasingly come to worry that there is an error at the core of this unquestioned goodness. We are not thinking critically enough about where and when transparency works, and where and when it may lead to confusion, or worse”. The source of error resides in the often unclear understanding of what transparency means and entails. Defined indirectly through a wide variety of proxies such as information, accessibility, openness, accountability, visibility, clarity, knowledge, and surveillance, most invocations and discussions of transparency muddy the waters rather than provide the insight assumed and expected by the modernist ideal. Operating from the assumption that the ultimate form of transparency is one that is aware of its own limitations, this talk provides an interdisciplinary reflection on transparency as a complex construct and practice producing at once light and darkness. Specifically, the talk zooms in on the notions of information, accountability, control, and visibility, discussing in each case how these particular understandings of transparency can increase or reduce insight.

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The impact of a double bind on transparency. The case of financial communication

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Financial analysts write and publish investment recommendations for the financial community, e.g., pension fund managers and retail investors. These recommendations are intended to guide financial market participants and enable them to allocate funds wisely (Finet et al., 2025); (Whitehouse, 2017). On the one hand, given the volatility and unpredictability of financial markets - as we are currently experiencing - reliable forecasts are never possible.

On the other hand, the recommendations of financial analysts can affect other businesses of the bank - for example, if a listed company that is being analysed is also a major debtor of the bank.

Due to this double bind, financial analysts tend to write investment recommendations that are always somehow true (Brown et al., 2015). As a result, their texts products are difficult to understand for the addressees and the reasoning process is often not explained in a profound and transparent way (Whitehouse, 2023). This situation is further complicated by the emergence of AI, as financial analysts increasingly use AI tools to calculate their models and write their investment recommendations (Yaqub, 2025). This raises questions about the role of these new technologies in financial communication in general and, more specifically, the impact of the tools on the comprehensibility and transparency of financial analysts' investment recommendations.

In my presentation, I outline the professional setting of financial analysts (part 1). Based on ethnographic data on financial analysts collected over more than 25 years, a long-term qualitative data corpus consisting of 125 interviews with financial analysts, and a corpus of more than 2100 investment recommendations (part 2), I employ a multi-method approach to explain how the double bind has affected the comprehensibility and the transparency of the reasoning process in financial analysts' text production over time (part 3). The results suggest that the use of AI tools has not (yet) significantly changed the characteristics of investment recommendations (part 4). Finally, I outline measures that can help overcome the effects of the double bind in financial analysts' text products and lead to investment recommendations that are clearer and more transparent (part 5).

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Individual Papers

Promoting institutional transparency via multimodality and extended reality

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Starting with the assumption that the citizens' understanding of law is often hindered by difficulty in processing complex technical information (Engberg et al., 2018), this paper investigates how multimodality and extended reality tools can be employed in order to render specific legal information more accessible to the target readers, represented by laypeople.

Through the analysis of the communicative features of institutional websites, we identify the main problematic aspects and we present possible ways of improving the level of accessibility from a linguistic, discursive and multimodal perspective, also thanks to the use of an extended reality application (ESP-XR) developed at the University of Bergamo, Italy.

This work regards the research area which can be defined as Applied Societal Discourse Analysis (ASDA; Anesa, 2022) intended as an approach to the analysis of language in use which has an applied nature and clear societal implications. This analysis focuses on the Oregon State Bar website and involves the active participation of students at Portland State University and Oregon State Bar professionals, with the aim of defining and implementing new communicative solutions with a collaborative approach (cf. Cowal and Leung, 2021).

The suggestions offered by the actors involved include the recontextualization of the information, the simplification of morpho-syntactical features, the usage of infographics, and the immersion in authentic scenarios, which may help citizens to understand the key terminology and visualize the main procedures described on the website.

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Business glossaries and transparency

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Business definitions of business glossaries insist on their role as facilitators implementing consistency and improved understanding in communicative processes within organisations. The need for a common language fosters the use of business glossaries and connects them to the concept of transparency (Ball 2009).

This paper proposes a reading of business glossaries in light of the conceptual framework of corporate transparency, defined as “forms of information visibility, [...] increased by reducing or eliminating obstacles” (Turilli & Floridi 2009, p. 105). The following research question is addressed:

- To what extent do businesses recognise business glossaries as contributing and pivotal to internal transparency?

The paper consists of three sections: section one is a concise literature review that presents the concepts of business glossaries and transparency (Riediger 2012; Leufkens 2015; Darics & Koller 2018); section two presents the concepts in relation to knowledge management and data management (Chiocchetti 2018); and section three provides evidence from the corporate world (see data) of an increasingly recognized correlation between business glossaries and transparency.

To tackle the research question, a preliminary corpus of business blogs discussing business glossaries was collected. Some of the company blogs include SAP, Capgemini, and InCorp. The definitions and information contained in these blogs were analysed according to ISO 1087:2019(en) and Riediger (2023).

Expected results include the identification of business glossaries as strategic tools in the fields of knowledge management, data governance, and internal organisational communication. In addition, the connection between business glossaries and corporate transparency is highlighted.

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“Transparent” tasting: Embodied language in olive oil narratives

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While the sensory description of wine has received significant scholarly attention (Paradis & Eeg-Olofsson 2013, Caballero et al. 2019), olive oil — another emblematic “Made in Italy” product — remains comparatively underexplored. This paper examines how the flavour of olive oil is described on websites and blogs focusing on tasting narratives as a key concept. The analysis investigates how transparency in language varies along a spectrum, from more to less transparent, depending on the level of embodiment used to convey abstract sensory qualities in ways that feel immediate and accessible to consumers. Through an integrated approach combining semiotics (Fontanille 2011, Greimas & Courtés 2007), cognitive linguistics (Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Langacker 2008), and pragmatics (Lakoff 1973, Grice 1975, Leech 1983, Hennion 2004), this study explores metaphorical and cross-sensory expressions that create a vivid sensory experience, along with the contextual cues and communicative intentions that shape these descriptions. This combined framework highlights the linguistic strategies and sensory markers that produce varying degrees of transparency in the language of taste, presenting olive oil as a complex and evocative subject of sensory discourse. This study aims to deepen the understanding of how transparency and embodiment intertwine in food discourse, highlighting olive oil as a culturally and sensorially significant product. Our findings may be particularly relevant for professionals working in marketing, intercultural communication, and agri-food industry, as they provide insights into how linguistic strategies can craft promotional narratives for diverse cultural audiences.

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The webpage as a platform for digital institutional transparency for sustainability: An overview of UJI's disclosure on the SDGs

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Transparency is essential for effective institutional communication, representing openness in sharing information with the public (Forssbaeck & Oxelheim, 2015). This study examines how Universitat Jaume I (UJI) is committed to transparency in sustainability through its dedicated webpage for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For the sake of institutional openness, the webpage provides, among other resources, a roadmap for SDGs implementation (Scott & Rajabifard, 2019) detailing strategic objectives and actionable initiatives that reflect the university's commitment to transparency.

The analysis highlights how the university, through its webpage, attempts to adhere to transparency by offering clear, accessible and multimodal information on UJI's institutional lines of action and strategies to execute and enhance SDGs. Furthermore, the integration of multiple featured reports and resources is aimed at strengthening the connection between the university and its stakeholders, fostering trust and collaboration. Nonetheless, there is still some room for improvement, particularly when it comes to presenting information in different languages and how that information is disclosed to stakeholders at the university level. Such improvement would contribute to democratising and strengthening connections within the community, reinforcing the idea that the university serves a social role (Price et al., 2021).

This study provides an overall description of how the UJI webpage displays and shares information about SDGs transparently, focusing on its structure and content. It also identifies areas for improvement, particularly in how this information is disclosed to stakeholders within the university and also to the general public. Additionally, it aims to highlight the benefits of fostering transparency and promoting the 2030 Agenda from a pedagogical perspective by exploring the teaching implications and applications of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in English-Medium Instruction (EMI) contexts. In doing so, we discuss how the university could further optimise the transparent disclosure of SDGs to foster a more inclusive and participatory milieu (United Nations, n.d.).

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“We care for every flower, plant and tree”: The construction of ecological commitment in ecotourism discourse

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The aim of this paper is to reflect on the meaning of sustainability in the specialised field of ecotourism communication. Understood as a type of responsible travel to natural areas, ecotourism is centred around the principles of conservation, local participation, and interpretation of the more-than-human world (Fennell, 2022). Specifically, this study addresses issues of transparency in the self-representation of ecotourism operators as they advertise the ecological commitment informing the products and services they offer to responsible travellers.

This research investigates a small specialised corpus (86,341 tokens) comprising 12 websites of operators which have been awarded a certificate of compliance to ecotourism standards. Referring to the theoretical framework of corpus-assisted discourse studies (Baker, 2006/2023), the analysis focusses on person deixis (Yule, 1996) and modality (Halliday, 1970) to observe linguistic strategies employed by operators to construe their identity as conscious actors. Results point to the ‘meta-discursive’ character of ecotourism discourse. Since companies are compelled to legitimise their role in ecological conservation, the texts target not only the individuality of ecotourists, but especially the singularity of operators themselves. Moreover, the frequency and variety of epistemic modality patterns (Hunston & Francis, 2000) suggest that although operators represent themselves as engaged and able to provide valuable opportunities for sustainable travel, they do not go as far as guaranteeing that concrete results will be obtained. In fact, ecotourists are charged with the ultimate responsibility to ensure the sustainability of their holiday.

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Communicating about sustainability on fashion websites: Towards a (hyper-)multimodal analysis

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The present paper concentrates on effective corporate communication (Wehmeier 2018: communicative transparency) about sustainability in the fashion industry. Special attention is devoted to the sustainability pages of companies with average to extremely high scores on the Fashion Transparency Index (2023), e.g. Superdry (<https://www.superdry.com>) and Gap Inc. (<https://www.gapinc.com/en-us/>), H&M (<https://hmgroup.com/sustainability>) and United Colors of Benetton (<https://www.benettongroup.com/en/sustainability/>).

Bringing together insights from multimodal discourse analysis (Bateman, 2014; Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2020) and usability research (NN/g: Nielsen Norman Group), we shall concentrate on the contribution of text and image configurations to co-constructing ideational and interpersonal meanings (Halliday, 1978), with special attention to above the fold content about People and the Planet. As will be seen, images have a decorative-promotional function for user control and engagement: they are especially intended to make a strong impression and make the accompanying text and message more memorable.

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Gendered questioning in diplomatic interviews: Linguistic strategies of male journalists

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This study explores the linguistic strategies employed by male journalists when posing questions during interviews with diplomats, focusing on implicit strategies and discursive characteristics that aim to elicit or avoid eliciting specific content, thus impacting the transparency of the message conveyed. The analysis is based on a corpus of 40 interviews conducted in English, where both journalists and diplomats come from diverse lingua-cultural backgrounds, adding layers of complexity to the communicative exchange.

Drawing on a mixed methodological approach including corpus-assisted discourse analysis and conversation analysis, the research investigates how male journalists structure their questions and the subtle mechanisms they deploy to navigate the interactional dynamics of diplomacy. Particular attention is given to the use of presupposition, hedging and framing as strategic tools to manage face-threatening acts or steer discussions toward preferred topics. By categorizing questions based on their form and communicative function (Cavalieri & Facchinetti forth.; Corrizzato & Franceschi forth.), the study identifies patterns that reflect intentionality and gender influences in discourse.

Our findings suggest that male journalists often tend assert control over the interaction through their questions (Facchinetti, forth.), by employing directness and less mitigated language (Holmes, 2008). The use of implicit strategies seems to be limited in favour of a more aggressive approach leading to overtly confrontational exchanges. Although studies on the socio-cultural norms associated with diplomatic discourse (Nick, 2001) have demonstrated that the journalists' need to balance probing inquiry with respect for their interlocutors, our data show that male journalists often take an adversarial style compromising the neutral stance expected in journalism. This has direct implications for transparency in media discourse, as questioning strategies not only shape public perception of diplomatic affairs but may also obscure journalistic objectivity, influencing how information is framed, filtered, and ultimately conveyed to audiences.

This study contributes to the broader understanding of gendered communication styles in journalistic practices, offering insights into how linguistic strategies are adapted in high-stakes, multicultural contexts. The findings have implications for discourse analysis, media studies, and cross-cultural communication training, particularly in contexts where diplomacy and journalism intersect. Additionally, by highlighting the role of questioning techniques in enhancing or undermining transparency, this research underscores the need for greater awareness of linguistic biases and their impact on public trust in journalistic reporting.

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An opportunity not to be missed: Sustainability messages of outerwear companies on Instagram posts

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Given the high environmental and social costs of the fashion industry, sustainability-related issues have attracted considerable attention from consumers and activists in recent years. Companies have responded by making efforts to disclose their sustainability-related practices through well-established genres such as annual reports and websites. The results of such efforts have been measured annually by the Fashion Transparency Index since 2016.

Fashion scholars have stressed that social media presence is an unmissable opportunity for companies to communicate their sustainability messages to a broad audience (Strähle & Gräff, 2017). This fact has sparked scholarly research on the use of social media by fashion companies (Kim & Kim, 2020).

Relying on a corpus-assisted discourse studies approach (Partington et. al., 2013), the present research aims to investigate whether and how sustainability-related topics are communicated on the 2022 Instagram posts of fashion brands selected from a large corpus of companies listed on the FTI. The investigated data come from six fashion brands in the middle-market sector, all specialising in outerwear, but representing different transparency ranges in the FTI 2022. These selection criteria enable meaningful comparisons, by ensuring uniformity in market positioning and by focusing on a single product category. Preliminary findings suggest that differences among brands in their sustainability messages on Instagram are more nuanced when compared to those which brands exhibit in their annual reports and websites, as measured in the FTI.

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Improving people's lives: Enhancing diversity, equity and inclusion in energy transition

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Disclosing information that stakeholders perceive as transparent and trustworthy has become one of the most important aspects of corporate communication. Transparency is a value of corporate social responsibility communication that improves the relationship between the company and its stakeholders. ESGs on gender equality (5) and decent work and economic growth (8), as well as several GRI indicators, and principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, are key elements in defining companies' social responsibility and long-term commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), a fair working environment, a cohesive and respectful corporate community where people can collectively and individually grow.

This study investigates the websites and the non-financial reports of six energy sector companies, ARAMCO (Saudi Arabia), BP (UK), Chevron (USA), CNPC (China), Edison (Italy) and ONGC (India), trying to shed light on their corporate and cultural approaches to equality, diversity and inclusion. Djonov and Knox' social semiotic framework (2014) will be applied to analyse the main features of the webpages, while quantitatively and qualitatively exploring the cultural parameters of power distance (Hall, 2000; Hofstede, 1980; Zhao et al., 2003), the collocational patterns and the phraseology of the texts selected (Malavasi, 2023).

Findings show how these companies, regardless of their country of origin, carefully focus on EDI goals and performance, in compliance with international standards, both towards internal and external stakeholders, yet with some cultural and linguistic differences.

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Emojis in digital business communication: For marketing and transparency purposes?

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Emojis, as non-linguistic features, have seen a surge of interest in linguistic studies over the past decade, arguably due to their widespread use in digital communications (Logi and Zappavigna, 2021), their rapid evolution in usage, and their high semiotic flexibility (Zappavigna and Logi, 2024, p. 2). In the field of business and marketing communication, this has led to companies adopting (and creating) a variety of meanings and connotations for emojis (Ko et al., 2022), employing them “to humanize brand voice and elicit an emotional response from target audiences” (Mladenović et al., 2023, p. 977).

The analysis employs word embeddings (“collocations-on-steroids” that “offer a degree of precision and power that often supercedes [...] collocational approaches”, Gries et al., 2024, p. 5) to examine the role of emojis in audience communication, drawing on two business-related corpora collected for the PRIN project “Communicating transparency: New trends in English-language corporate and institutional disclosure practices in intercultural settings.” Both corpora, gathered from Instagram, document the digital communication strategies employed by industries in the fashion market and the transport sector between 1st January and 31st December 2022.

The presentation explores the marketing functions that emojis serve in Instagram posts by the fashion and transport industries, highlighting their role in brand communication. It also examines how emojis are used both to encode meaning and as markers of transparency, serving as visual cues to enhance clarity for readers. Technical challenges associated with applying corpus linguistics tools to emoji analysis are also explored, offering practical solutions to ensure the accuracy of digital textual data.

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“Not all popularizations are alike”: Exploring the accessibility of health information in pharmaceutical press releases

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Health information is more and more disseminated to lay media. Both pharmaceutical companies and medical research institutes routinely issue press releases to maintain media presence and facilitate direct engagement with journalists, shareholders, the public, and the medical community (Woloshin & Schwartz, 2002). The accessibility in terms of content and language comprehensibility in pharmaceutical press releases is crucial because a large section of the public uses them and other news channels as the main source of information about medicines and health-related issues (Yavchitz et al., 2012).

Drawing on studies that connect lexical density, lexical variation, and technical terminology to textual complexity and transparency (Ayadi, 2024; Fang et al., 2006; Halliday & Martin, 2003) we compared press releases issued by companies with those issued by medical research centers and institutes to investigate the degree of accessibility of the health information that is disseminated and whether any difference exists between the press releases of these two actors of the medical field. A total of 500 press releases' headlines were compared in terms of textual complexity and transparency to explore their accessibility for the lay public. The findings show that pharmaceutical industry's press releases are considerably more complex, technical and less accessible compared to those of research institutes. In particular, they are less lexically dense, have a lower degree of lexical variation and a comparatively higher number of technical terms.

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Lufthansa and #Makechange-fly: An analysis of website communication and sustainability

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In 2021, The Economist (2021) published a special report, The Future of Travel, in order to assess the main features of the post-pandemic context, focusing on the impact of commercial flights in terms of carbon emissions and potential detrimental effects on the environment. One year later, in May 2022, Lufthansa released a new marketing campaign under the hashtag #MakeChangeFly: an attempt to face criticism and to win back consumers' trust.

As pointed out by Catenaccio (2018), companies try to interact with stakeholders resorting to computer mediated communication. In this case, over the past years, Lufthansa group has tried to enhance web communication based on transparency, highlighting reductions of both costs and carbon emissions, to “closely involve our customers in the transformation process and make our sustainability solutions visible to the general public” (Lufthansa Group, 2022). In fact, according to Giordano (2024, p. 9), “corporate websites and reports serve as the primary interface”, where transparency determines the possibility of establishing and maintaining corporate credibility and trust.

Considering Higgins and Coffey's results (2016), relying on Critical Discourse Analysis and Multimodal Analysis, the present paper seeks to investigate the representational features of Lufthansa's website discourse and related sustainability reports (2020-2023), as well as major booking platforms, with specific attention to green fares, in order to define the role played by transparency and persuasion. Preliminary results show that Lufthansa Group's communication is mainly defined by two different areas of transparency: clarity in communication and a demonstrated commitment to openness (Giordano 2024), as well as a set of persuasive strategies, such as providing reliable and systematic facts, conveying achievements and trust, and appealing to readers' emotions and preferences.

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“Sustainable cruising”: Exploring transparency in cruise and ferry corporate discourse

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The sea transport industry satisfies the growing demand for moving people and products across the globe, as well as providing many opportunities for tourism. But in doing so, it contributes heavily to gas emissions and impacts dramatically both directly and indirectly on the environment. Greater public awareness and concern about environmental issues in recent years means that firms have to take a more proactive stance on their communication about their sustainability policies and practices, providing stakeholders with detailed and accurate information in a clear and transparent manner (Coombs & Holladay, 2013; Higgins et al., 2020; Fuoli & Beelitz, 2024).

This paper aims to explore the linguistic and rhetorical features that may act as indicators of transparency in the relevant sections on the ferry and cruise operators' websites and sustainability reports. The study adopts Schnackenberg and Tomlinson's (2016) framework which identifies the three essential dimensions of transparency, namely disclosure, clarity and accuracy, that “together provide a parsimonious foundation upon which to study transparency” (2016: 1791). The analysis employs a primarily qualitative approach. It explores how specialised and technical knowledge is conveyed from experts to non-experts, shedding light on how information is made comprehensible and thus more transparent, particularly in terms of clarity. The study also analyses the use of vagueness, which can create ambiguity or even opaqueness, counteracting transparency.

While certain rhetorical strategies, such as cognitive techniques, are found to promote transparency, it is also undermined by vagueness and highly evaluative language, typical of corporate discourse. The findings suggest that identifying the lack of transparency is generally more straightforward than pinpointing its presence.

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Women's interviewing style in broadcast interviews: A corpus-assisted analysis

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While there is no universal consensus on whether, why and to what extent men and women use language differently, some studies suggest that women's language in the workplace is characterized by indirectness, a more supportive and collaborative attitude, and an orientation to the person and the process rather than the task or outcome (e.g. Holmes, 1999).

This study aims to investigate the language of women journalists interviewing diplomats on broadcast television, in order to identify the linguistic characteristics of their interviewing styles, with a focus on transparency. Indeed, recent studies have detected overall a higher degree of adversarialism in contemporary news interviews (e.g. Montgomery, 2010; Cavalieri & Facchinetti, in press) independently of the interviewer's gender. More specifically, this study aims to determine whether linguistic elements commonly associated with women's speech may be found in these interviews and how far they affect the degree of transparency when addressing their interviewees.

The study is carried out on a subsection of the InterDiplo JD corpus compiled at the University of Verona, and specifically on the 40 interviews featuring female journalists as interviewers. The use of evaluative language, hedging, and of closed and leading questions will be investigated combining the methods of corpus linguistics with conversation analysis and discourse analysis, while offering a gender studies perspective as well. Preliminary results confirm previous studies pointing to a generalized ongoing change in broadcast journalistic interviews, affecting female interviewers as well.

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“We are in the sweet spot”. Between the rhetoric of Pollyannaism and the strategy of transparency in energy companies’ Sustainable Reports.

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Transparency plays a crucial role in corporate communication. It is essential for organizations as it helps build trust, ensures accountability, and fosters a sustainable and ethical business environment. By prioritizing clear communication, companies can enhance their reputation and strengthen stakeholder engagement. This is particularly relevant for major energy companies that are concerned about environmental issues, especially following recent disasters linked to climate change. Research indicates that, while companies acknowledge the severity of the crisis, they often resort to overly optimistic rhetoric that downplays the urgency and scale of environmental challenges. This positivity bias, also known as Pollyannaism, may conflict with the need for transparency and accountability, which are crucial in fostering trust and resilience (International <IR> Framework 2021: 29). Against this background, this paper tries to answer the following research questions: Does the Pollyanna rhetoric obfuscate the “honesty” and “integrity” of the companies’ messaging? Does it hinder corporate responsibility? Using a methodology that combines corporate crisis communication (Coombs and Holladay 2022), pragmatic studies (Trosborg 2010), metaphor theories (Waymer 2018) and the social semiotic approach to multimodality (Koller 2009), the paper investigates a corpus consisting of the sustainable reports published by twelve international energy companies between 2020 and 2024. The findings reveal that both verbal and non-verbal modes of communication—such as speech acts, verbal metaphors, and visual metaphors—are used to represent conflicting intentions in sustainability reports.

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Climate resilience and transparency in the transport sector: A genre perspective on extreme weather webpages

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Extreme weather refers to unusual meteorological events such as floods, droughts, and heatwaves, that occur in specific locations or times of the year and are primarily caused by human activity, posing serious risks to communities and ecosystems (Radović & Iglesias, 2020). The increasing frequency of these weather events is driving people to adapt their daily habits to cope with the impacts of climate change, including shifts in their use of means of transportation. As a sector that is both emission-intensive and highly vulnerable to climate-related hazards (Mattioli, 2016), transportation has been responding to these challenges with companies increasingly using websites, among other resources, to demonstrate their resilience to the effects of climate change as well as their commitment to sustainability. In light of this, the study presents a twofold analysis of extreme weather-related webpages of transportation companies from English-speaking countries (Australia, Canada, Ireland, the United Kingdom, and the United States). In particular, following a social semiotic framework (Djonov & Knox, 2014), the webpages are analysed first in terms of their distinctive meaning-making features and practices to identify their fundamental characteristics. Subsequently, a genre-based perspective, drawing on Critical Genre Analysis (Bhatia, 2007), is adopted to uncover potential key moves and assess the contribution of these webpages to fostering communicative transparency. Findings emphasize the need for a genre-focused approach, as companies currently address extreme weather differently by transport type, reflecting different priorities. Yet, results indicate that the issue of extreme weather may be expected to become central to the transparent communication of climate issues.

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Enhancing transparency in English communication: Finalised materials for raising awareness and building competence

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Transparency in communication is a cornerstone of professional and intercultural competence, yet it poses unique challenges in English language use and teaching. This presentation introduces the finalised materials developed under the PRIN 2020 project, focusing on cultivating transparency skills in English Language Teaching (ELT). These materials address two key objectives: raising awareness of transparency as a linguistic and communicative principle and building learners' capacity to produce transparent, accessible, and reliable communication.

The talk begins by contextualizing transparency (cfr. Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2016; Tang & Higgins, 2022) within ELT, drawing on frameworks such as the CEFR's action-oriented approach (Council of Europe, 2020) and Harmer's (2015) ESA model. It highlights how the materials integrate receptive and productive skills to foster critical engagement with issues like bias, disinformation, and intercultural dynamics. Through the analysis of examples, attendees will explore modules on analysing transparency in reading, developing inclusive writing skills, and adapting texts for accessibility.

The session underscores the transformative potential of these materials in equipping learners with the tools for effective and transparent communication in diverse professional and intercultural contexts. Attendees will leave with practical insights into how to integrate these resources into their teaching practices.

This initiative paves the way for a future where English communication bridges cultural divides and fosters trust through clarity and inclusivity.

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Transparency in peer review: An ERPP Analysis of the BMJ Open's published peer review reports

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Peer review aims at ensuring the quality of published scientific research and is one cornerstone of contemporary academic writing; therefore, a description of the forms and functions of peer review is frequently included in English for Research Publication Purposes (ERPP) manuals (Flowerdew & Habibie, 2022). Yet systematic studies of reviewers' comments are scarce because reviews are usually an occluded genre only available to editors and authors themselves. Recently, however, open peer review – whereby authors' and reviewers' names are known and reviewers' reports are published alongside research articles – has been proposed and practised by an increasing number of academic journals; one pioneering journal in this sense was the British Medical Journal (BMJ) (Groves & Loder, 2014). This procedure enhances the transparency of the publishing process (Wolfram et al., 2020) and potentially discloses some deeply ingrained mechanisms among academic discourse communities, as illustrated by scholarly works exploring the content and language of peer review reports in general (e.g., O'Brien et al., 2021) and the BMJ in particular (e.g., Delgado et al., 2019).

The present study investigates a corpus of 109 research articles and related peer review histories from the September-October 2024 issue of the BMJ Open. Peer review reports are analysed quantitatively and qualitatively from the perspective of ERPP, focussing especially on content vs. language comments. Preliminary findings suggest that 65% of authors' universities are placed in the expanding circle, whereas 46% of reviewers' universities are in the inner circle. Despite the unquestionable importance of comments related to the manuscripts' discipline-related content, a non-negligible part of reviewers' criticisms and suggestions focuses on English language and academic style, "clarity" and "grammar" being their main concerns. These insights could be fruitfully incorporated into ERPP research and teaching.

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Transparency in environmental news coverage: A pragmatic analysis

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The energy sector faces increasing environmental scrutiny, requiring companies to manage transparency through clear reports and press releases. Transparency is also a core ethical principle for professional journalists (Koliska, 2021). Yet, journalistic transparency often conflicts with extensive reliance on press releases, which “obfuscates both the origin of that material and the vested interests of those promoting it” (Cronin, 2024, p. 1329). Thus, for journalists, transparency requires challenging the content of reports and press releases. Additionally, pragmatic writing choices such as specific terminology, presuppositions, implicatures, and hedging can shape perceptions of neutrality or bias (Bjørge 2001), influencing transparent communication positively or negatively.

Journalistic transparency is context-dependent and tied to translation acts. Recontextualization (Hernandes Guerrero, 2019) involves translating content to create news by synthesizing multiple sources and adding transformative elements. This process is central to gatekeeping and framing, determining which information is shared.

This paper explores recontextualisation processes in environmental and sustainability news about the three most enlisted energy companies – ExxonMobil (United States), TotalEnergies (France), Equinor (Norway), and Chevron (United States) – from January 2022 to October 2024. The articles will be selected from the most trusted brands of Italian and Anglo-American specialised and generalist news outlets cited in the Reuters 2022-2024 Digital News Reports and will include Exxon’s manipulation of data on climate change; Equinor’s involvement with Rosebank; Total Energies and the lawsuit over alleged human rights violations in the EACOP (East African Crude Oil Pipeline) project in Uganda.

The paper has the following research questions:

- 1) Is recontextualisation performed transparently?
- 2) What pragmatic choices promote or obstruct transparency?

It will emerge that online journalism ensures transparent recontextualization, enhanced by the pragmatic use of appositions, invoked evaluation, and strategic quotation use to guide readers’ interpretation.

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“Can you really not detox your body?” A corpus-assisted analysis of non-transparency in detox discourse

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In conventional medicine, the term ‘detox’ refers to a medical procedure for people with life-threatening drug addictions; however, it has been co-opted by alternative medicine to market treatments that purportedly rid the body of toxins (Harvard Health, 2008). This ubiquitous online discourse around detox diets, products, and wellness treatments can be seen as an example of non-transparent communication *par excellence*, making it worth investigating from a reverse perspective—analysing what is missing or absent from the discourse.

This paper draws on Hopp and Fisher’s (2021) psychological model, which sees transparency as a ‘facilitator of perceived learning’ (2021, p. 406), as a foundation. We employ a corpus-assisted discourse analysis (Partington et al., 2013) of web-based detox texts, including blogs and news articles, collected via Sketch Engine and analysed with WMatrix software (Rayson, 2008).

Our analysis reveals that detox discourse prioritises persuasion over true informativeness. Argumentation, particularly through cause-effect patterns and rhetorical questions, emerges as the central engagement strategy, while exemplifications and explanatory speech acts appear less frequently. Moreover, authors adopt a dialogic and other-focused perspective, which can serve as a potential cue for deception, as opposed to self-presentation, which, conversely, tends to convey an impression of sincerity (DePaulo et al., 2003).

These findings suggest that detox discourse not only manipulates audience perceptions but also undermines critical learning processes by framing pseudo-informative content as credible. This underscores the need for transparent, educational health communication to combat misinformation and support informed decision-making.

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Performing transparency: Strategic dynamics in investor relations

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Investor relations as a set of financial communication practices (e.g. Laskin, 2017) connects listed companies with the investor community, and may be considered a professional practice of transparency (Hirsto, Koskela & Jokipii, 2023). This paper discusses the discursive dynamics of investor relations and the performance of transparency (Christensen & Cheney, 2015) from the perspective of strategic communication. Building on previous research on earnings calls, our aim is to explore how various aspects of investor relations manifest through discourse and interaction. Based on Koschmann's (2016) categorizations, we illustrate three types of relationships in a CEO strategy call: *information-focused surveillance relationships* linked to the instrumental view on stakeholder relations, *professional and peer relationships* tied to the interactional view, and *institutional relationships* associated with the normative view. We reflect on these shifting relationships from a constitutive perspective, highlighting their strategic implications for communicating and enacting transparency.

We argue that the strategic significance of investor relations extends beyond information-focused aspects to include relational work that fosters trust and regulates power dynamics among actors. Relationships between analysts, investors, and companies should not be seen as purely economic but as dynamic processes of co-construction, where power, interdependency, influence, and partnership are continually renegotiated (see also Whitehouse, 2017). This paper enhances the understanding of the strategic role of investor relations communication by presenting a communication-centered, relational perspective. Furthermore, we underscore the importance of communicating transparency across professional contexts, showing how transparent communication practices can build trust and credibility, thereby reinforcing the strategic nature of investor relations.

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Communicating transparency in clinical trial reports: The role of uncertainty markers

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The study provides a discursive analysis of how uncertainty is constructed in clinical trial reports in a case study concerning the pharmaceutical industry. More specifically, the focus is on linguistic markers of uncertainty and vagueness and how these affect the communication of transparency and the construction of trust (Koskela and Crawford Camiciottoli 2020). Calls have been increasingly made among healthcare professions for authentic disclosure and greater transparency in clinical trials in order to enhance trust among the many stakeholders, as the inability to communicate uncertainty can lead to an understatement of the risk factors involved and an overstatement of certainty which leads to false claims and distrust (Teigen, 1988).

For this purpose, the aim is to uncover lexical-semantic, pragmatic patterns in the language of probability and certainty, conducted from both a quantitative and qualitative research perspective involving register-oriented and corpus-driven analytical procedures (Biber and Conrad, 2009) with the scope of identifying key vocabulary and phraseology, prototypical of clinical trial/study reports. The reports are taken from the websites of two pharmaceutical companies (Pfizer and Novartis), to form two sub-corpora of approximately 200.000 words each. A third corpus of published clinical study reports in medical journals will be part of a comparative analysis. The overall purpose is to explore the lexico-phraseological profiles and functions of key linguistic features which affect the transparency and veracity of the text types. Results from this sort of language analysis may have implications in teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and for healthcare policy makers.

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Modality and transparency in cruise guest codes of conduct

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Cruises offer a comprehensive tourist experience, combining transportation, accommodation, entertainment, and guided tours. Passengers on cruises often prioritise relaxation over environmentally responsible practices, presenting challenges for cruise operators in aligning passenger behaviour with their sustainability goals (see Kotrikla & Chortatsiani, 2022; Pizzetti et al., 2024). To ensure high-quality tourist experiences and promote corporate responsibility (CR) values onboard, transparent communication with travellers is crucial. Guest codes of conduct serve as ‘soft’ visitor management tools, aiming to educate tourists and mitigate the negative impacts of tourism (Moscardo & Hughes, 2018). These texts provide guidelines on onboard behaviour, safety protocols, and passenger rights, reflecting efforts to balance transparent communication with effective guest management, fostering trust and the perception of transparency (Ball, 2009). This study adopts a corpus-based approach to investigate modal auxiliaries and modality (Palmer, 1990) in a corpus of codes of conduct from major cruise operators’ websites. The main objective is to examine how modal auxiliaries, as key linguistic tools, communicate CR-related guidelines by expressing necessity, possibility, and permission, thereby shaping rules and behaviours (Palmer, 1990). To explore these aspects, collocates and concordance lines are closely analysed to explore how modality is conveyed in the corpus. Preliminary findings suggest that deontic modality, in particular, is frequently used to guide tourist behaviour and ensure compliance with safety and legal requirements. However, challenges persist in aligning guest behaviours with CR objectives, particularly regarding sustainability and waste management.

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Transparency-fostering and transparency-hindering strategies in political discourse: Focus on American presidential debates

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Transparency in modern society is pivotal across different public settings (Koivisto 2022), where it is supposed to enhance democratic processes, effectiveness and the standards of ethics (Ball 2009), thus promoting trust. In politics, transparency is argued to empower citizens to keep power in check and is correlated with three basic dimensions, namely disclosure of information, citizens' active participation in the decision-making process, and accountability, that is, the ability to hold government officials accountable to the legal system or the public opinion (Ball 2009).

Set within the *CommTran* PRIN Project, this contribution investigates transparency in political discourse, focusing on American Presidential debates, a constitutive political discourse subgenre in American elections (Perloff 2017). Although debates offer candidates a chance to clarify their prospective policies in front of the electorate, for time constraints and fear of alienating swing voters, politicians often resort to discourse strategies that do not foster informational transparency but fall within the purview of propaganda and include false statements, omission of information, distortions and suggestion techniques (Smith 1989).

The analysis carried out on a corpus of debates related to the years 2012-2014 according to a quantitative-qualitative methodology grounded on corpus-assisted discourse studies (Partington, Duguid & Taylor 2013) suggests that several variables affect the degree of transparency in candidates' replies, namely gender, political orientation and the topic under discussion. However, while most politicians attempt to adopt detailed replies, lists or storytelling techniques to promote transparency and trust, and there is variation as to overtones adopted, opaque replies are frequent across political divides.

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The importance of communicating transparency in medical settings: Written and spoken discourse

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Transparency in medical communication is crucial for trust, informed consent, and patient autonomy. Written texts such as consent forms often include complex terminology, challenging comprehension for patients with varying health literacy. Indeed, complementing these with patient decision aids (PDAs) is highly recommended (Di Pace & Padley, 2024). Spoken interactions, such as patient-provider conversations, introduce additional challenges through linguistic and non-verbal cues that may impact on patient understanding. Therefore, achieving transparency involves balancing technical precision with accessibility in order to meet diverse patient needs. Linguistic research emphasises the importance of clarity and strategic lexico-grammatical choices in conveying medical information (Candlin & Candlin, 2003; Sarangi & Roberts, 1999; Street, 2013). Hence, the aim of this study is to analyse written texts and spoken communication in medical contexts, exploring strategies to enhance transparency and reduce barriers, ultimately contributing to more equitable and patient-centred healthcare.

This study will make use of corpus linguistic methodologies with discourse analysis (Baker, 2023) in order to examine a corpus of written texts made up of informed consent forms and patient decision aids. The written corpus will be compared to a spoken corpus of recorded medical consultations within an anglophone context in order to investigate the ways in which the written texts are complemented by spoken discourses. The results are expected to reveal the complexities that the legal-medical lexis may create for patients while examining the extent to which PDAs and spoken interaction may linguistically aid comprehension leading to maximising transparency as much as possible.

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Exploring transparency in Dove's brand activism

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Brand activism has emerged as a significant form of corporate advocacy, enabling companies to communicate their values and interact directly with communities (Korschun, 2021). In addition, by leveraging online communication, brands aim to meet transparency standards and successfully showcase their work.

This study investigates how Dove, a personal care brand, employs multimodal strategies – combining visual and textual elements – to convey its dedication to transparency in social inclusivity and sustainability. Despite positioning itself as a champion of these values – featuring diverse body types and challenging traditional beauty standards in its campaigns – over the years, Dove has faced criticism for gaps in inclusivity, such as limited representation of marginalized groups (e.g., individuals with disabilities or non-binary identities) (Heiss, 2011; Gill & Elias, 2014). Similarly, environmental organizations such as Greenpeace have questioned its sustainability claims, particularly regarding plastic waste reduction, highlighting inconsistencies between public commitments and corporate practices.

Using corpus-assisted discourse analysis (Partington, 2010), this research (1) analyzes Dove's official US website and key campaigns, including the *Real Beauty* series and #ShowUs initiative; and (2) evaluates the alignment between Dove's corporate messaging and its advertising practices in diversity and environmental responsibility. The study shows how Dove addresses critiques of its sustainability initiatives and its approach to inclusivity over time.

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Transparency vs. secrecy. The representation of Italian secret societies in 19th-century British Letters to the Editor

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The digitisation of newspaper archives over the past few years has made historical news accessible to a much wider public all around the world. This has enabled a larger multicultural audience to read and study how the events recounted and summarised through history books were first-handedly represented in the news of the time and framed through the ideological stance(s) of the time. In the 19th century British press, the political movements that led to the independence of Italy received considerable international press coverage as events that would promote the social well-being of the Italian population, liberating them from a centuries-long rule that had fragmented their country (Wright, 2008).

The British press showed a consistent interest in the so-called secret revolutionary societies that laid the foundations of the unification of Italy. However, if secret societies should preserve their status of secrecy, why would they be not only mentioned, but sometimes even openly discussed in the press? What was the purpose of transparency (Verschueren, 1995; Hengeveld, 2011) in these pieces of news? To what extent was information on those supposedly secret revolutionary organisations made transparent, and why? Applying the methodological and theoretical tools of discourse analysis and corpus linguistics, with specific reference to historical pragmatics and to the analysis of evaluative language in the news, this contribution attempts to answer these questions by quantitatively and qualitatively examining the linguistic representation of 19th-century Italian secret societies applying a combined corpus-driven and corpus-assisted discourse analysis approach (Partington, 2015) to a corpus of letters to the editor (Torres da Silva, 2012) to the British press, with the aim of identifying evaluative and ideological connotations of recurrent linguistic choices, and the socio-political implications of these “transparent” news.

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**“There has to be a fairness in the air here”.
Climate transparency in the U.S.**

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Immediately after his 2021 inauguration, Joe Biden vowed to bring transparency back to the U.S. government and “share the truth even when it’s hard to hear” (Reuters 2021). He pledged to share accurate information with the American people, whether about the climate crisis or other matters. Starting from the assumption that trust in government increases when citizens perceive their political leaders as honest (Martin *et al.* 2020), in this research we examine what U.S. political leaders have said about climate transparency and how the public has perceived it. Our analysis combines two methodological approaches: linguistic corpus analysis and public opinion data analysis.

We base our project in two basic realities. First, relatively little research has been conducted to date about climate transparency *per se* (Gupta and van Asselt 2019; Weikmans and Gupta 2021). Second, the political divide concerning climate change is especially stark in the United States, and policy varies dramatically depending on who is in the White House. Thus, we compare how the Biden and (first) Trump administrations communicated about climate change. Joe Biden undertook the most substantial climate actions ever in the U.S. history (Lashof 2024), while Trump has claimed that “no one has done more damage to the American oil and gas industry than Joe Biden.” We therefore expect to find that Trump deflected and covered up evidence of climate change, whereas Biden spoke of it openly and transparently. We contextualize our linguistic corpus analysis with analysis of public approval of Trump and Biden as it relates to climate issues.

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The “E” in pharmaceutical ESG reports. Cognitive and linguistic operations framing environmental issues

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Sustainability is generally conceptualised as consisting of three interrelated aspects, or “pillars”, namely environmental, social, and economic dimensions (Elkington 1997; Purvis et al. 2019). This conceptual framework is mirrored in the tripartite structure of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) reports, which pharmaceutical companies use for annual disclosure. This paper focuses specifically on the first “pillar” – the “E” – the environmental aspect of ESG, with a view to exploring the “framing effects” employed in pharmaceutical discourse to construct an image of environmental awareness. The study draws on a corpus of ESG reports from eight pharmaceutical companies listed on the stock exchange. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining quantitative analysis of lexical patterns with qualitative analysis of framing devices specific to the environmental section of the reports. This dual approach allows for a comprehensive examination of how language is used to frame environmental issues across different companies, while maintaining statistical robustness. Grounded in cognitive linguistics (Talmy 1988, 2000; Croft & Cruse 2004; Langacker 2008) and specifically in the analytic concept of frame and the theoretical notion of construal, this paper examines the mental representations stakeholders are prompted to construct in response to specific lexico-grammatical choices (Halliday & Matthiessen 2014). By analysing both lexical frequency and force-dynamic patterns in the ESG corpus, this study elucidates the role of framing devices in shaping stakeholders’ cognitive and emotional responses to environmental concerns within pharmaceutical corporate communication.

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The semiotics of sustainability: A multimodal analysis of corporate ESG discourses

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While law and business scholars have made significant contributions to the study of sustainability, their research has often failed to engage thoroughly with sustainability discourse. Concurrently, applied linguists have focused on discourse analysis, yet many have overlooked the multimodal features that increasingly characterize the framing of sustainability messages across various genres. This study investigates the semiotic construction of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) commitments, efforts, and achievements across various genres and channels. Additionally, it explores how the interplay between transparency and promotional discourse is articulated in customer-oriented genres, particularly on social media. Building on author's previous investigations into the sustainability discourse (Wells et al., 2021), this research employs a corpus-assisted multimodal discourse analysis (Nervino et al., 2025; Bateman et al., 2017; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, 2001) to analyze a dataset that reflects the corporate sustainability-related communication practices of leading luxury conglomerates, Kering and LVMH. The dataset encompasses webpages, press releases, reports, videos, and social media posts that articulate the ESG commitments of the two companies. Preliminary findings reveal the distribution of ESG discourse over time and across themes, illustrating how various semiotic resources are combined to construct narratives in different genres. Additionally, the findings indicate that discourse evolves to meet the demands of different media and audiences. The study promotes the idea that sustainability transformation of businesses, like digital transformation, has led to the emergence of hybrid genres that comply with new regulatory frameworks. Ultimately, this research emphasizes how such discourse empowers individuals and organizations to advocate for, influence, and drive societal change.

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Slow travelling: The promotion of sustainability online

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Over the last years, alternative forms of travelling have become increasingly popular. This is the case of slow tourism: a sustainable and environmentally friendly approach to travel where both tourists and host communities collaboratively strive toward eco-friendly goals. This inevitably leads to "slow mobilities", where alternative travel methods are advocated not only for their environmental benefits, but also for fostering a deeper understanding of geography, distances, and cultures (Howard, 2012).

This study aims to explore how different companies operating in Europe and promoting slow forms of mobility, such as Interrail, frame environmental and green issues with their audiences online. Through a corpus-assisted discourse analysis (Partington et al., 2013) of the websites of tourism slow mobilities' companies operating in Europe, this study examines the role of English in the promotion and openness (i.e., transparency) of environmental issue, highlighting differences and similarities across countries. The analysis focuses on recurring phraseology and its impact on how companies interact with their audiences, with particular attention to the degree of openness in the promotion of this alternative way of travelling. Additionally, the study considers the interplay between textual and visual communication, analyzing both the functional structure of discourse (Janovic & Van Leeuwen, 2018) and how it reinforces environmental issues.

Findings provide insights into how slow tourism discourse is co-constructed through various forms of online interaction and how it contributes to the communication of transparency within environmental issues.

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Transforming written CEO messages into video statements: Enhancing transparency, trust and engagement

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CEO letters in annual reports have long been a key narrative section that organizations have used to communicate with stakeholders about the company's performance, future directions, or social responsibility (Li, 2010), while also promoting their achievements. However, the traditional text-based format has limitations in engaging stakeholders or conveying the CEO's authenticity and transparency. These challenges have caused companies to transition annual reports and executive statements to web-based multimedia formats (Garzone, 2007; Argenti, 2020; Giglioni, 2020).

This study investigates the transformation of CEO letters into video statements, analyzing the process and the benefits of multimodal messages for enhancing transparency, engagement, and accessibility in annual reporting. By examining CEO video messages accompanying written statements, the research examines the strategic shift from text to video, exploring the selection of information, and how different modes ensemble to strengthen message delivery and foster trust (Ciuffani, 2017). Video statements enable CEOs to humanize their leadership and foster a deeper connection with stakeholder.

The study aims to understand how companies adapt their communication strategies to reach a more diverse audience and respond to the rise of digital media and multimodality in business communication. It also emphasizes the relevance of seeking impactful formats that enhance relationships with stakeholders.

Finally, our pedagogical implications focus on helping business students in EMI (English as Medium of Instruction) contexts understand this evolution in business communication and develop skills to create and replicate engaging tools like CEO video statements.

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TraInsparency for children: Transparency and railway companies' online educational resources

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The transport sector, challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic and environmental crises, has implemented innovative communication strategies to regain public trust. Companies like Network Rail have started addressing youngsters through STEM-based educational websites, shifting from traditional corporate communication, which predominantly targets institutional and adult audiences. These initiatives combine education and entertainment (“edutainment”) (Buckingham & Scanlon 2004) to foster inclusivity and address children’s unique role as future stakeholders. Beyond simply engaging young audiences, this approach contributes to shaping corporate identity and advancing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) goals, including sustainability and diversity.

Transparency plays a pivotal role in building trust, enhancing reputation, and fostering public consent. Defined as truthful, substantial, and useful information shared with stakeholders through participation and balanced reporting (Rawlins 2009), transparency strengthens relationships between companies and their stakeholders. Child-focused websites and educational platforms enhance transparency by presenting complex information in visually appealing and age-appropriate formats, building trust among children and their families.

This paper employs a qualitative methodology grounded in discourse analysis, drawing on the explanatory strategies identified by Calsamiglia and van Dijk (2004). These strategies are analysed in the context of child-oriented communication (Bianchi *et al.* 2022). Additionally, the study examines multimodal elements (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996), such as character design. By integrating these approaches, the paper explores how transparency is embedded into these resources, transforming traditional practices into tools for fostering trust and aligning with broader corporate goals.

Preliminary findings show that these educational websites promote transparency and a positive corporate image by effectively addressing themes like sustainability, diversity, and inclusion.

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Making ESG discourse accessible: The case of the pharmaceutical sector

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Major pharmaceutical companies have recently adopted various communication strategies to publicize their products and services while also fostering a transparent image. Among these strategies, non-fiction audiovisual texts —specifically YouTube videos— are used to demonstrate their commitment to ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) criteria to stakeholders. The intended audience of these videos includes individuals with disabilities, such as those who are deaf or visually impaired. However, even anecdotal evidence suggests that very few of these videos are truly accessible. They rarely include subtitles and almost never feature subtitles for the deaf and hard of hearing or audio descriptions. Given that these videos convey meaning and information through a combination of visual and auditory elements, it is crucial to implement new techniques to enhance their accessibility.

A corpus of videos was collected for this study, and data from its multimodal analysis confirm that the creators of these texts use verbal (e.g., dialogue), para-verbal (e.g., intonation), and non-verbal (e.g., gestures, gaze) elements to establish an empathetic connection with viewers. However, this goal cannot be achieved for those who lack access to either the auditory or visual medium. Drawing on scholarly insights into the analysis of visual elements, such as camerawork language (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), along with recent contributions to media accessibility (Bugucki & Deckert, 2020; Fryer, 2016; Zárate, 2021), this study aims to underscore the importance of making all these components accessible to all viewers by proposing practical solutions to achieve this goal.

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(Un)transparently communicating disabilities in the field of transport: A corpus-assisted and multimodal analysis of CSR and ESG disclosures

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In the field of disability studies, research has highlighted how the inaccessibility of means of transport can lead to social exclusion of people with disabilities, recommending that transport operators improve travel information addressed to these individuals (Wilson, 2003). Management studies have highlighted how companies are demonstrating a growing interest in issues of inclusion, which also involve people with disabilities, through the publication of disclosures aimed at showing their socially responsible behaviour (e.g., Singh & Point, 2004). However, there is a lack of linguistic research specifically focused on how companies, particularly those in the transport sector, communicate disability inclusion and whether they promote it in a transparent way.

Set against this background, this paper examines a corpus of non-financial disclosures – including 2018-2023 CSR and ESG reports, as well as web sections – written in English and created by companies operating in various countries and fields of transport (rail, airlines, ferries and cruises, car rental, and ride sharing). Using the tools of corpus-assisted discourse studies (Partington et al., 2013), this research sheds light on the most represented disabilities, as well as the linguistic strategies employed by the companies to communicate their approaches to the inclusion of both passengers and employees with disabilities. A subsequent aim is to assess whether this kind of information is communicated transparently in terms of accuracy and clarity (Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2016) or is vague (Jin, 2022). Moreover, a complementary multimodal analysis of visuals and images is conducted to further explore if their use supports the linguistic results.

Keywords: disabilities; transport; CSR/ESG communication; transparency; corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS)

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