



2024 Annual SLALS Graduate Student Symposium

Friday, April 5, 2024, 3PM-5PM, St. Patrick's 309-306

# CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN LANGUAGE STUDIES

## Program

1. Opening address
  - a. SALaDS Organizing Committee
  - b. Michael Rodgers, SLALS Director
2. Lynne Young Award announcement, Trudy O'Brien
3. Keynote featuring Dr. Marie-Odile Junker
4. Interactive poster session showcasing student research

**Andrea Banicki, PhD ALDS**

## The Legal Status of a Life: A Corpus-Assisted Discourse Study of Amicus Briefs in a Recent U.S. Supreme Court Ruling on Abortion Rights

**Keywords:** corpus linguistics, discourse studies, legal discourse, reproductive rights

This poster presentation shares a corpus-assisted discourse study (CADS) of legal texts, referred to as amicus curiae briefs, which were submitted to the United States Supreme Court regarding a case known as *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Healthcare Organization* (2022). These briefs were submitted by parties holding vested interests in the outcome of the case, with the goal of persuading the nine United States Supreme Court Justices to take their arguments into consideration when ruling whether the U.S. Constitution establishes protections for people seeking an abortion. Using AntConc, a corpus analysis freeware, a corpus of all 147 amicus briefs was constructed, totaling 1,261,997 words. An analysis of word frequencies, collocations, keyness and key words in context was conducted to uncover any meaningful patterns in discursive constructions of both people seeking an abortion and the “result of pregnancy” (Danet, 1980, p. 192). Using an explanatory sequential design, this study contributes to a contemporary understanding of how language is employed in an attempt to influence the legal status of a life. To date, no work has been done that applies corpus linguistics to the study of amicus briefs. Therefore, the research presented here demonstrates a novel application of corpus linguistics to the intersection of law and language.

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**Gaby Gao, MA ALDS**

A Multimodal Perspective on the Research Participant Recruitment  
Poster: An ESP Genre Investigation

**Keywords:** ESP genre analysis; multimodal discourse; research participant recruitment posters; move/step analysis

The research participant recruitment poster plays a crucial role in the academic research process. It serves as the initial point of contact between researchers and potential participants, making its rhetorical structure crucial for effective communication. By integrating the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) genre approach with a multimodal perspective, this study aims to identify the rhetorical organization of these posters and explore the role of visual elements in shaping the genre. Additionally, this study will involve interviewing the creators of these posters to gain insights into the strategies they employ during the poster creation process and their perceptions of how these strategies facilitate achieving the communicative purpose. Using the rhetorical move/step analysis proposed by Swales (1990) and drawing on Kress and van Leeuwen's *The Grammar of Visual Design* (2006) framework, the study aims to address the following research questions: 1) What moves/steps are used in research participant recruitment poster to serve genre-specific communicative functions? 2) How do the multimodal elements help achieve the communicative purposes? 3) What are the regularities in the writing practice used by the discourse community? The research will be conducted using a mini-corpus of research participant recruitment posters collected from various sources at an Ontario university, and interviews will be conducted with poster creators. By focusing on this specific genre within the academic discourse community, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how the combination of visual and textual elements can be used to recruit research participants.

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**Ghazaleh Ghamati Moghaddam, MA ALDS and Nahla Salmani, MA ALDS**

## Unveiling the Revolutionary Impact of Immersive Virtual Reality on Language Education

The course-based project involves a directed study aimed at investigating the potential of immersive virtual reality (iVR) to enhance English language learning. In collaboration with Carleton's Experiential Learning Hub, we are utilizing the immersive digital environment provided by Immerse (<https://www.immerse.com/>) to explore this potential. Our experiences within this environment are being recorded and compiled into a collaborative cuPortfolio. In the environment we use head-mounted displays (HMDs), specifically Meta Quest 2 and 3. The HMD environment is considered fully immersive as it entirely removes the presence of physical reality. Further, head-tracking functionality allows users to fully immerse themselves in virtual environments (Rakowski & Gruber, 2019; Tan et al., 2023). This directed study explores how iVR can revolutionize language education by providing engaging contexts beyond the traditional classroom restrictions, which can make it difficult for students to have real-life social interactions.

According to Lan (2020), iVRs have emerged as powerful tools to support the development of learner engagement in the field of technology-enhanced language learning (TELL). iVRs can simulate real-world situations, facilitating learning in contextualized environments and creating authentic opportunities to observe and practice discourse conventions, which are often challenging to replicate in traditional classroom settings. Physical environments might limit students in terms of opportunities to communicate, highlighting the richness of iVRs for language learning. Dede (2009) claims that iVRs allow learning experiences that draw on users' sensory, actional, and symbolic immersion. Building on this premise, Parmaxi (2023) describes iVRs as creating a 3D simulated digital environment that provides an immersive experience, feeling authentic to the user.

Recent studies have explored the teaching of genre-based writing and shown that complete immersion provided by HMDs is necessary (Tan et al., 2023). According to this study, complete immersion is essential because students require authentic engagement with their discourse community, participating in sociocultural discourse practices within the usual contexts of those interactions as afforded by the iVR technology.

Our poster will showcase our experiences in four areas of the Immerse platform: Tutorials, AI sessions (airport, bar, games), live sessions, and the Commons area. These experiences will provide a more comprehensive view of what is available for language learners (and teachers) considering their target discourse community. Overall, the potential applications of VR for language learning are boundless, limited only by educators' imagination.

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## Elif Once-Buyukerol, PhD ALDS

### Phrasal Verb Acquisition Through Technology-Mediated Instruction, Exercise Procedures and Exercise Formats: Building Upon the Controversial Literature

**Keywords:** Technology-mediated L2 phrasal verb learning; vocabulary exercise formats and procedures, Augmented reality learning applications; Mobile-assisted language learning

Phrasal verbs, which are multiword units with idiomatic and polysemous meanings, can pose a challenge for second language learners. However, their crucial role and frequency in daily and academic language outweigh this challenge. Phrasal verbs are encountered in any language curriculum at any level. Learners require motivation, real-life context, and exposure both inside and outside of the classroom to reduce phrasal verb learning anxiety and solidify their understanding. Limited research has been conducted to determine the most effective strategies for learning phrasal verbs that meet cognitive and pedagogical needs. While there is widespread agreement on the positive impact of technology-mediated instruction on phrasal verb learning, some studies have identified challenges associated with technology integration in the educational context. Exercises play a crucial role in enhancing vocabulary productivity, exposure, and comprehension. Several studies have investigated the impact of specific exercises on multiword

units and provided a comprehensive literature framework. However, there is a lack of research in the field of phrasal verb learning, which is significantly important considering the challenges they pose. Therefore, this literature review aims to examine and expand upon theoretical and empirical studies on the development of three elements of phrasal verbs. It discusses the difficulties of acquiring phrasal verbs and suggests ways to overcome them through the use of specific technologies and exercises. Due to the controversial nature of the topic and the extensive research on multiword units, it is recommended that a systematic review of the literature be conducted, as well as further experimental research on the effects of different technologies and exercises on phrasal verb acquisition.

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**Dima Zaid-Kilani**, PhD ALDS

Resilience and Persistence: Unveiling the Journey of Arabic-Speaking Female Muslim Teachers in Adult ESL Education

**Keywords:** ESL teacher attrition, retention, identity and agency formation

The narrative multi-case pilot study, part of a larger research project, aims to understand the factors influencing Arabic-speaking female Muslim (ASFM) English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers' career decisions post Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) education programs. It highlights the well-documented issue of teacher attrition and addresses gaps in the literature (Bryner, 2021; Clandinin et al., 2015), particularly the challenges ASFM ESL teachers face, including Islamophobia, gender, linguicism, and racial identity tension. The broader study included two participants in a credit ESL course in a post-secondary institution in Ontario, one who left the ESL profession, and another who did not pursue teaching post-TESL. The pilot study focuses on Huda, a veiled Palestinian Muslim immigrant to Canada who left the ESL teaching profession. Her experiences provide insightful data into the complex interplay of religion, gender, and racial discrimination.

Employing a hybrid methodology of case study and narrative research, this study explores how identity and agency, shaped by education and workplace experiences, impact ASFM ESL teachers' career choices. By examining the dynamic relationship between teacher identity (Barkhuizen, 2016) and agency (Kayi-Aydar, 2019), this study contributes to understanding how to retain qualified ESL teachers amid shortages, offering practical recommendations for TESL programs and workplaces. The results indicate five key findings: a tension between racial, religious, gender identities, and teacher's identity, identity and agency are dynamically interrelated, belonging is crucial to feeling valued, and a safe environment allows teachers to feel valued and resilient in facing challenges.

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