

JOSEF SCHMIED

Specialised Discourse with Large Language Models? Beyond ChatGPT in Academic English

This contribution follows the current discussion of Large Language Models, especially ChatGPT, in academic writing and provides examples of how large language models and other agents might be integrated in preparing MA students to write specialised discourse. It explains briefly the linguistic components of Large Language Models, esp. the corpus-principles of the data-base, the probabilistic processing through neural networks, and idiomatic problems in current out-put examples. Despite impressive levels of fluency, the current Models force us to reconsider basic principles of academic discourse. The presentation focusses on the defining features of academic English, like author commitment and author engagement, which are always based on personal judgement and evaluation. It follows the two dimensions of academic writing, the current standardisation of academic genres and the individual creativity of academic authors, who wish to find their individual author identity. The special role of non-native standard English is discussed on the basis of current examples from different writing cultures. Finally, this contribution also looks at future possibilities of integrating a spoken component into academic teaching like a conversational agent speaking non-standard English and the attitudes of Czech and Italian students between warmth and competence. In any case, Large Language Models can be used fruitfully in specialised academic work as long as basic ethic principles are adhered to.

Josef Schmied is Emeritus Professor at Chemnitz University of Technology in Germany, concentrating on his research projects and international teaching on Academic Writing & Publishing, Digital Research Methodologies and Digital Innovation in Language Teaching. He taught at Chemnitz from April 1993 to March 2021. He worked at the Universities at Bamberg (PhD 1985), Bayreuth (Habilitation 1991) and Dresden before coming to Chemnitz to set up a new department here in April 1993. He likes to work with international students, also in Summer Schools and as Guest Professor in Guangzhou/China (DAAD) in 2015 and 2024 and in Modena/Italy in 2019, 2022 and 2024, for example.



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The seminar has been organized by Professor Viviana Gaballo as part of the course “English Specialized Translation 1” for the Master’s Degree in Modern Languages for International Communication and Cooperation, and is open to students from all other Master’s Degree programs.

The seminar is included under “other activities” (internships, placements, seminars) recognized by DiSLL degree courses, in addition to standard classroom instruction, and contributes toward the acquisition of 3 credits.

Università degli Studi di Padova – Dipartimento di Studi Linguistici e Letterari (DiSLL)

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