Simulating a lawyer-client interview: the case of Italian EFL University learners

This paper provides a corpus-based multimodal investigation of spoken learner English produced by Italian mother-tongue university students simulating lawyer-client interviews as part of their in-course assessment tasks. The study examines the features of learner language in this particular area of ESP with respect to the choices that students make both at a verbal and at a wider, non-verbal level.

The analysis was conducted on 17 video-recorded conversations between pairs of first-year students attending the Legal English module of the undergraduate degree course in Law at the University of Pisa. The role-plays were fully annotated for different linguistic and non-linguistic aspects, including facial expressions, hand gestures, head movements and body posture.

The aim here is to cast light on student performance when using spoken legal English in order to propose new techniques for the improvement of didactic materials that are, still today, almost exclusively oriented towards teaching written legal language.