

Think Tank Academy Spring Conference 2026

DISRUPTIONS AND INNOVATIONS IN GLOBAL HIGHER EDUCATION

20-21 APRIL 2026 – KAUNAS UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY (KTU), LITHUANIA



Introducing the
research group
NTES – New
Trends in English
Studies



Aims and future
activities

Language Schools Meetings

New Trends in English Studies: Evolving Paradigms

The first NTES conference, titled “New Trends in English Studies: Evolving Paradigms,” was held on **23–24 April 2024 at the Kore University of Enna (Sicily)**. This event can be seen as the foundational moment of the NTES research initiative, bringing together scholars interested in rethinking the scope and methods of English Studies in light of contemporary global transformations.

The conference was conceived as a space for critical and collective reflection on the current state of the discipline. At its core was the awareness that English Studies is no longer a stable or clearly bounded field. Instead, it is increasingly shaped by what we might call a productive **“instability” of its disciplinary borders**. Linguistics, literary studies, cultural studies, translation, and pedagogy are no longer separate domains, but deeply interconnected areas that respond to shared global challenges.

New Trends in English Studies: Evolving Paradigms

23-24 April, 2024



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI ENNA "KORE"



English as a global medium

In this sense, the conference explicitly addressed **the impact of major societal and cultural shifts**. Issues such as migration, diaspora, identity construction, environmental concerns, and social justice were not treated as external topics, but as central dimensions of how English language and culture are studied today. **English, in this framework, is not just a linguistic system or a literary tradition, but a global medium through which these transformations are articulated and negotiated.**

A significant part of the discussion also focused on the role of education, particularly in higher education contexts. The conference highlighted how English language teaching and learning are evolving, especially within university language centres. There was a clear emphasis on innovation in pedagogy, including English for Specific Purposes, English for Academic contexts, and the need to integrate intercultural competence and digital literacy into curricula. **This reflects a broader shift from purely theoretical knowledge to more applied, skills-oriented approaches.**

CLIK and CLA

Another important dimension was the growing relevance of digital and media environments. Topics such as multimodality, audiovisual translation, and digital discourse analysis illustrated how communication in English is increasingly mediated by technology. This opens new research directions, but also requires new methodological tools and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Overall, the NTES 2024 conference positioned itself not just as an academic event, but as the starting point of an ongoing research network. Its aim was to foster collaboration across institutions and to build a shared platform for scholars working at the intersection of language, culture, and education. In this perspective, initiatives like the collaboration between our centre, **CLIK**, and the **CLA of Catania** can be considered as a natural and strategic continuation of that original vision.

Scientific Coordinator: Annalisa Bonomo

Founding Members:

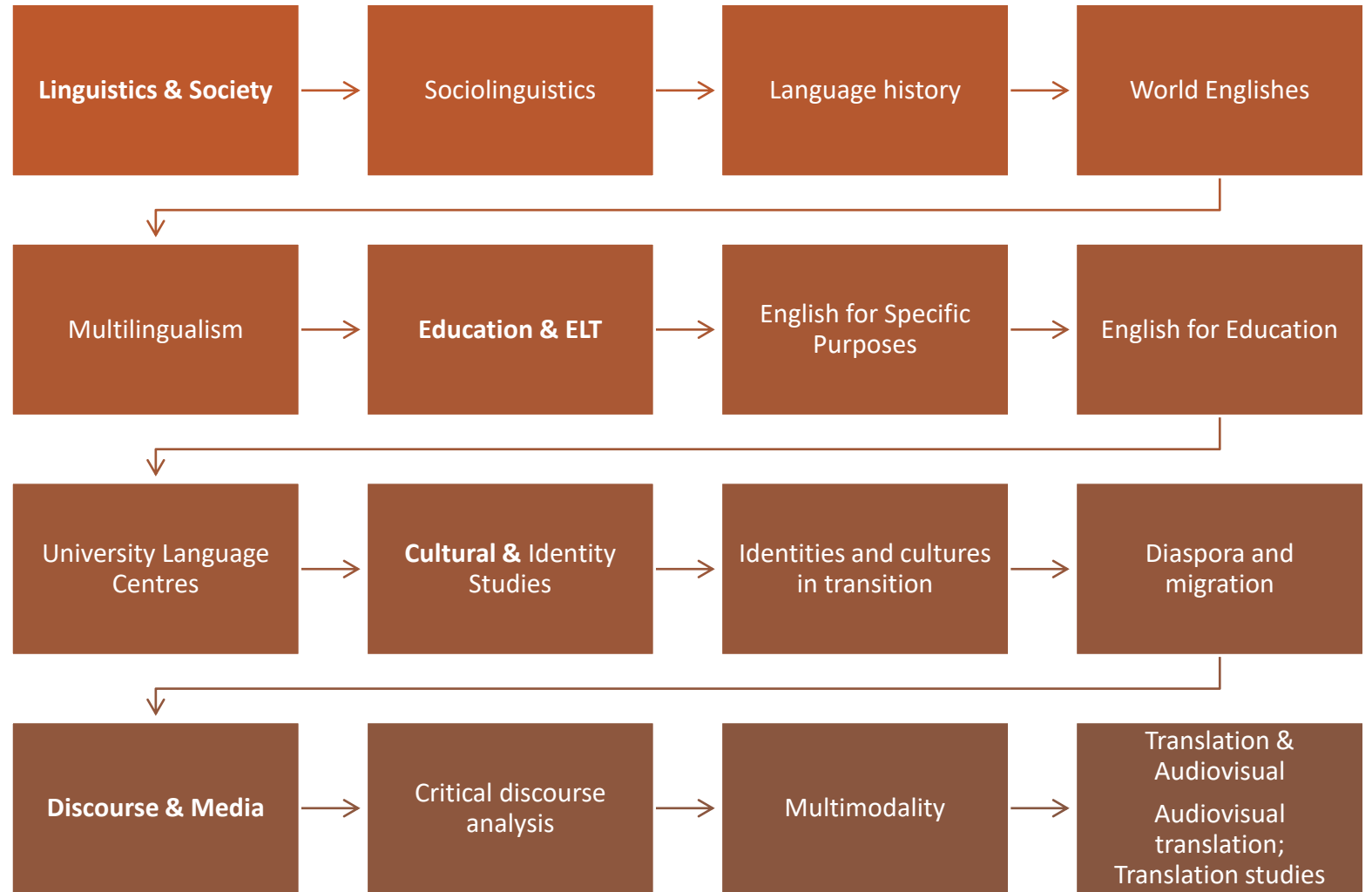
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e University of Enna)Paola Clara Leotta (

NTES Scientific Coordination and Research Network (2024–
Present)

NTES “Research strands”



The role of English Studies within higher education

Moving from research to the broader academic context, NTES places a strong emphasis on the role of English Studies within higher education.

Today, **universities are undergoing significant transformation**. There is a clear shift from purely content-based teaching towards a more integrated model that combines knowledge with transferable skills.

In this context, **English is no longer taught فقط as a subject, but as a key tool for academic, professional, and intercultural communication.**

NTES engages directly with this shift by promoting innovative approaches to English Language Teaching. This includes English for Academic Purposes, English for Specific Purposes, and, more broadly, the integration of intercultural competence and digital literacy into university curricula. The goal is to align teaching practices with the evolving needs of students, who are increasingly operating in international and multilingual environments.

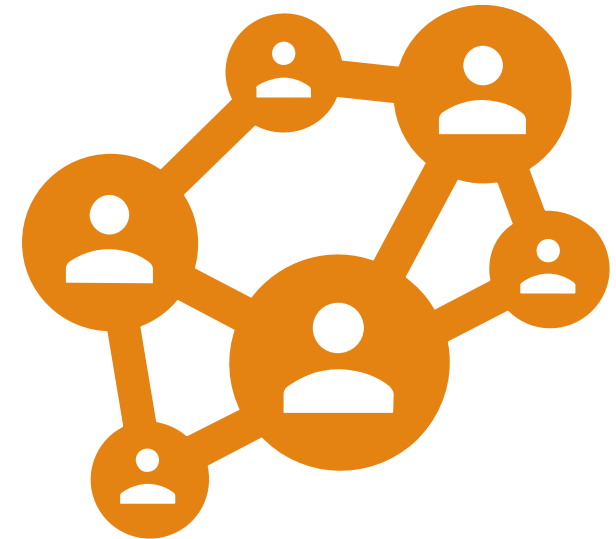


Institutional collaboration

A central element in this process is **institutional collaboration**.

The NTES network is built on strategic partnerships between universities and language centres. In particular, the collaboration between the CLIK – the Interfaculty Language Centre at the Kore University of Enna – and the CLA of the University of Catania represents a concrete example of how research and teaching can be developed jointly across institutions.

This kind of cooperation **allows the sharing of expertise**, the development of joint initiatives, and the creation of a more cohesive academic environment. **It also strengthens the international dimension of the network, opening up opportunities for further collaborations beyond the national context.**



The role of university Language Centres

Within this framework, **university language centres play a crucial and evolving role.**

They are no longer simply service units providing language courses. Instead, they are becoming hubs of pedagogical innovation and research.

Language centres are spaces where new teaching methodologies can be tested, where digital tools are integrated into learning, and where students can develop not only linguistic competence, but also transversal skills such as critical thinking and intercultural awareness.

Moreover, they act as a bridge between the university and the wider society supporting internationalisation, student mobility, and lifelong learning. In this sense, centres like CLIK are not just supporting structures, but active contributors to the transformation of higher education.





CLIK – Centro
Linguistico
Interfacoltà
KORE



The Centro Linguistico Interfacoltà Kore, which I coordinate, and which represents a key operational and research environment within this broader framework.

The CLIK is the university language centre of the Kore University of Enna, and it provides **language education across all degree programmes**. At the same time, it is not only a service unit, but also an **active research space in the field of language teaching and learning**.

Its educational offer is wide and diversified, covering both European languages — such as English, French, and Spanish — and non-European languages, including Arabic and Chinese. This reflects a clear **commitment to multilingualism and global competence, which are essential in contemporary higher education**.

Language Certifications

In terms of courses, the CLIK offers structured language pathways aligned with the **Common European Framework of Reference**. These include language proficiency modules embedded within degree programmes, as well as laboratory-based courses designed to develop communicative skills through interactive and practice-oriented activities.

Alongside these core activities, the centre organises **intensive courses** aimed at preparing students for international language certifications, **including widely recognised qualifications such as Cambridge English exams, IELTS, DELE for Spanish, and DELF/DALF for French.**

Another important dimension is the support provided to internationalisation. **The CLIK offers Italian language courses for incoming Erasmus students**, as well as language training opportunities for outgoing students, contributing to mobility programmes and intercultural exchange.

Language centres in higher education

Beyond formal teaching, the centre promotes a range of complementary activities. Students can participate in seminars and events led by visiting professors from international institutions, and they have access to language laboratories equipped with multimedia resources for autonomous learning.

From a pedagogical perspective, the approach adopted is strongly student-centred and action-oriented, combining classroom instruction, group work, and digital resources to foster both linguistic and transversal skills.

In this sense, the CLIK fully operates at the intersection of teaching, research, and institutional collaboration, and it provides a concrete example of how language centres can actively contribute to the innovation of English Studies and to the broader transformation of higher education.



Kore University currently hosts a **student population of over eight to nine thousand students** across **more than fifty degree programmes**.

Within this context, the CLIK plays a central transversal role, as it supports language education across a wide range of disciplines.

Each year, the centre is involved in delivering language training to a substantial portion of this student population. Its activities are integrated into degree programmes, but also extend beyond them through laboratory work, intensive courses, and certification pathways.

Some figures...

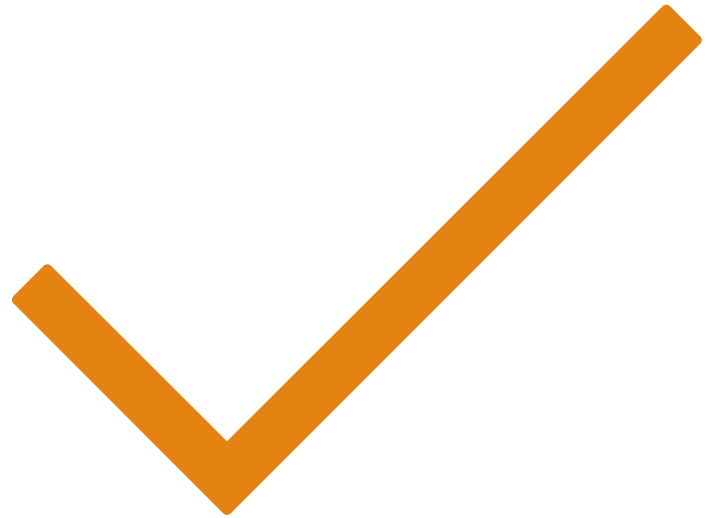


An institution ecosystem

This means that the **CLIK operates at the intersection of multiple academic areas**, contributing not only to language acquisition, but also to the development of key competences required in higher education today — including **intercultural communication, academic literacy, and professional language skills**.

In addition, the centre is part of a wider **institutional ecosystem** that includes more than twenty research centres and laboratories, reinforcing its role not only as a teaching unit, but also as a space for experimentation and innovation in language pedagogy.

From this perspective, the CLIK can be seen as a strategic hub within the university: a structure that connects students, disciplines, and institutions, and that actively contributes to the internationalisation and modernisation of higher education.



Thank you for your attention!