

INTRODUCTION

Where languages for specific purposes meet pop culture

An open-ended conversation about the popularization of science

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1. Introduction

In their introduction to the third edition of the *Routledge Handbook of Public Communication of Science and Technology*, Bucchi & Trench (2021b) note that science communication has, over the past twenty years, developed into a full-blown academic field. They describe the field with the metaphor of “the social conversation about science” (Bucchi & Trench 2021b:1) and, opportunely, recall that “a characteristic of conversation articulated in communication studies and philosophy is that it is unpredictable and open-ended” (Bucchi & Trench 2021b:9). It is such an open-ended, casual, and, indeed, unpredictable conversation that gave way to the papers collected in this special issue. This conversation began in the early days of 2024 among three members of the Faculty of Translation and Interpretation at the Université de Mons in Belgium. Casually discussing their research activities at the time, they wondered whether finding interdisciplinary connections between their respective areas of expertise — the study of language for specific purposes (LSP) and adaptation in American pop culture studies — could create fertile ground for collaboration. About a year later, in May 2025, they hosted an international conference titled *LSP 2025: Language for Specific Purposes and the Popularization of Science in Pop Culture*. Over two days, scholars from Europe, North Africa, North America, and Asia met in Mons to join this open-ended discussion at the crossroads of disciplines as varied as LSP, linguistics, specialized translation, gender and cultural studies, science-fiction and literary studies, film studies, philosophy, animation, comics, popularization practices on social networks, and even Martians, Smurfs, and zombies. During sessions, but perhaps even more meaningfully during the coffee breaks, lunches, and dinners, scholars of all disciplines fueled this open-ended (sometimes impromptu)