

Call for Papers for a Special Issue

**FRAMING NOVELTY: A LINGUISTIC APPROACH TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF
ENTREPRENEURSHIP, CREATIVITY, AND INNOVATION**

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The guest editors for this special issue of the Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal (SEJ) invite papers for publication consideration on the topic of “*Framing Novelty: A Linguistic Approach to The Understanding of Entrepreneurship, Creativity, And Innovation.*”

BACKGROUND

Innovators’ struggle for recognition is a central theme in the literature on entrepreneurship, creativity, and innovation. One way by which innovators can overcome the liability of newness of their nascent projects is through the use of rhetorical devices (e.g., Aldrich & Fiol, 1994; Czarniawska, 1998). A growing body of scholarship now adopts a framing approach (Goffman, 1974) to study entrepreneurship, creativity, and innovation, where framing refers to “the use of rhetorical devices in communication to mobilize support and minimize resistance to a change” (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014: 185). Framing matters for entrepreneurs (Snihur et al., 2022), corporate entrepreneurs (Putra, Pandza, & Khanagha, 2023), and innovators more broadly (Hargadon & Douglas, 2001) to construct meaning around novel endeavors and win over skeptical audiences. Several studies in entrepreneurship, for instance, underscore the importance of framing choices in contextualizing innovation efforts (Garud et al., 2014), shaping the perceived risk of novel entrepreneurial ideas, or motivating capital commitment by relevant stakeholders (Martens et al., 2007). Likewise, organizational scholars have suggested that the frames individuals use, as well as the terms and categories they borrow from dominant discourses are critical to gain access to audiences’ symbolic and/or material resources (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001; Zott & Huy, 2007; Navis & Glynn, 2011; Granqvist et al., 2013).

More recently, some scholars have started to establish a link between the enabling role of language in framing innovation and audience-based evaluative mechanisms (Falchetti et al., 2022). For instance, one important pillar of this link lies in language expectancy theory, which holds that individuals develop normative expectations concerning appropriate communication styles in given situations, and argues that such expectations affect individuals’ attitudes toward message effectiveness (e.g., Burgoon et al., 2002). When those expectations are matched, the persuasiveness of the message increases. Expected patterns of language use have been shown by cognitive studies to exist and operate along multiple communication features including language intensity, complexity, and emotional tone (Averbeck & Miller, 2014; Craig & Blankenship, 2011). Along these lines, past research has linked the frequency with which we use certain word categories with how we are perceived by others, thereby resulting in tangible performance outcomes such as job performance or attainment (Berry et al., 1997). Entrepreneurship scholarship has shown audiences to be sensitive to the entrepreneurial orientation of the rhetoric used in the shareholders’ letters (Wang et al., 2021), or the linguistic styles adopted by entrepreneurs to communicate their ideas on crowdfunding platforms

(Parhankangas & Renko, 2017; Gafni et al., 2019) and digital marketplaces (Cutolo et al., 2020), while related strategy scholarship has demonstrated that subtle changes in the linguistic framing of idea pitches may decisively affect key audiences' disposition to support those ideas (Huang et al., 2021; Falchetti et al., 2022; Contigiani and Young-Hyman, 2022).

SPECIAL ISSUE PURPOSE

Although it “took some time before the linguistic turn in the social sciences found its way into organization studies” (Van Werven et al., 2015: 629), new findings, as well as methodological developments, have opened up exciting research opportunities for scholars interested in the nexus between language and entrepreneurship, creativity, and innovation. In light of these trends, we believe the time is ripe to conduct more in-depth qualitative and quantitative analyses of actual language use, thereby contributing to increasing calls by management scholars for a better “understanding of the links between words and action outcomes” (Lockwood et al., 2017: 27). With the growing availability of computational tools to unravel latent cognitive, semantic, and emotional meanings of large collections of texts (Hannigan et al., 2019), as well as vast online textual databases (e.g., Berger et al., 2020), these research opportunities are even more intriguing.

Novelty detection is one example. Increasingly, scholars use textual descriptions of ideas (Deichmann & Baer, 2023; Kaplan & Vakili, 2015) or the semantic networks in which ideas are embedded (Deichmann et al., 2020), to examine their novelty and impact. New machine learning tools combined with qualitative in-depth discourse approaches (Aranda et al., 2021) allow us to draw connections between topics and yield a fine-grained understanding of broad but theoretically relevant patterns by iteratively zooming in and out of textual data. At the same time, the increasing use of experimental methods to shed light on the audience-candidate interaction interface has helped expose the micro-cognitive foundations of audiences' evaluative responses to language-based stimuli. Continuing to engage with this growing methodological space is crucial to develop reliable and rigorous analytical toolkits for bridging language scholarship on the one hand and entrepreneurship, creativity, and innovation scholarship on the other hand, across a variety of cultural domains (DiMaggio et al., 2013).

Despite continuing progress in uncovering the importance of language in shaping the innovation journey, more research is needed to deepen our understanding of how to decode it and to understand when it hinders or helps people and organizations in generating, recognizing, and legitimating novel ideas, products, business models, projects, or processes (Cattani et al., 2022; Snihur et al., 2022). The purpose of this Special Issue, therefore, is to advance theory by integrating work from a variety of different perspectives and levels of analysis. We look forward to papers whose theoretical perspectives, methodological contributions, and empirical findings significantly advance the scientific debate and allow for comparing practices across different empirical settings. We are especially keen to attract work that aims to challenge received wisdom in the entrepreneurship, creativity, and innovation literature using qualitative and/or quantitative methods to show how the analysis of language in use can inform our understanding of novelty, from the moment it arises to when it takes root and propagates. Below we outline a few themes that scholars may wish to contribute to, although contributions do not have to be limited to these themes.

POSSIBLE RESEARCH TOPICS AND QUESTIONS

1. ***The language of radical vs. incremental ideas.*** A novel idea that marks a significant departure from the status quo and disrupts existing categories is likely to trigger incongruity with audience members' mental models and cognitive schemas (Mandler, 1995; Rindova & Petkova, 2007), thus raising strong resistance to gaining acceptance from relevant audiences (Mueller et al., 2012). The use of linguistic devices has been recognized as critical to deal with this challenge (Aldrich & Fiol, 1994; Czarniawska, 1998; van Werven et al., 2015). It is reasonable to assume that the same framings that may heighten audiences' receptiveness of incremental ideas may not be appropriate for radical ideas. What framing strategies are more appropriate for incremental and radical ideas?

2. ***Tailoring language across multiple audiences.*** Each field typically consists of multiple audiences (e.g., peers, critics, or users) that differ in terms of expectations, evaluative canons, and norms (Pontikes, 2012; Durand & Paoletta, 2013; Cattani et al., 2014), but also their attention space (Cattani et al., 2017). As a result, a novel idea can win the attention and support of one audience but fail to attract those of other audiences – whose members have different expectations, evaluative canons, and norms. It would be interesting to investigate the extent to which the language supporting a particular entrepreneurial endeavor can be strategically modified to resonate with specific audiences (Giorgi, 2017; Falchetti et al., 2022). How can entrepreneurs use language to increase the appeal of their ideas across multiple audiences? And how are the advances in artificial intelligence, such as ChatGPT, offering entrepreneurs novel ways to frame their ventures, for instance, by generating pitches and tailoring this output to different audiences, increasing/decreasing abstractness and complexity, or calibrating storytelling and emotional appeal?
3. ***Language and categorization processes.*** The socio-cultural approach to categorization explores the dynamism in market categories during their emergence, change, and strategic uses (Granqvist & Siltaoja, 2020). Categorization is a symbolic endeavour where symbols and language become collectively shared through articulating and constructing meanings. Studies have investigated, for example, how frames are used to communicate selected meanings (Lee et al., 2017; Lee & Hung, 2014), how market participants adopt and use labels to convey meanings and identities (Granqvist et al., 2013; Vergne, 2012), how they employ analogies and metaphors to induce a sense of familiarity and legitimacy (Navis & Glynn, 2010) as well as develop novel business models (Martins et al., 2015). Studies could further explore the specific instances of language use in market categorization by using real-time and immersive methodologies in addition to textual analyses. How do market actors use language to position their firms and novel offerings in various categories and for different audiences? How does this communicative effort vary temporally and across places and settings? Further, accounting for multimodality in categorization, how do they use visuals and exhibits as part of their symbolic communication about novel ideas?
4. ***Language of the message and characteristics of the messenger.*** In certain situations, especially face-to-face interactions, the characteristics of the storytellers (e.g., their status, gender, or social skills) can be just as influential as the language in which they couch their innovations. By the same token, the extent to which the innovator is a field insider, or outsider can significantly affect the likelihood of attracting and winning the attention and support of relevant audiences as outsiders, by definition, are foreign to the linguistic norms of the field they target for entry. To what extent are the message and the messenger truly distinct, and how does the effectiveness of the same narrative vary with an innovator’s embeddedness (insider vs. outsider), status (high vs. low), and gender (male vs. female), among others?
5. ***Language as rules vs. language as symbols.*** Most language-informed entrepreneurship and innovation studies focus on locating the content of communication within the cultural and symbolic realms of meaning, rooting language in sensemaking processes and symbolic actions. However, while linguists recognize the fundamental symbolic nature of language, they also emphasize that language is “rule-governed behavior,” which means that it is organized into “appropriate” use according to various rules, structures, and conventions (which include grammar, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, to name a few). These principles establish limits around the meaning of words, dictate the relation of words with one another, and reveal mental representations of the speakers (Crilly et al., 2015), thereby playing a critical role in informing audience decisions. What are the “linguistic rules” subsuming entrepreneurs’ and innovators’ communication attempts? What effect do these rules have on their efforts to marshal resources and win audience members’ favor?

6. ***Intertemporal variation of language.*** The effectiveness of a given frame may vary not only across audiences but also over time. This is especially important in the case of entrepreneurial narratives because the goals and type of information assessed by professional investors (e.g., VCs) typically depend on the particular growth stage of a new venture (Pan et al., 2020). Therefore, it is plausible to expect that no single framing strategy will be equally effective across all stages, but a different framing strategy could be devised for each stage. How should language change over time as entrepreneurs start and then scale their ventures, for instance, in the case of new business models (Snihur et al., 2018)? Research looking at how the effectiveness of framing strategies for venturing ideas changes over time could further explore how entrepreneurial frames change, for instance, from more abstract to more concrete, and with what consequences as a venture moves through different stages and might fulfill or miss out on some of the expectations set earlier (Garud et al., 2023).
7. ***Methodological advances for measuring and leveraging language.*** The last decade has seen an unprecedented improvement in the accuracy of statistical natural language processing techniques. Today, we are able to identify linguistic structures and semantic associations that are situation-specific and time-variant, allowing us to study meaning as an embedded social phenomenon (e.g., Deichmann et al., 2020; Kaplan & Vakili, 2015). New machine learning tools allow us to draw connections between topics and their underlying linguistic features that would be unfeasible with traditional methods. Although we welcome traditional qualitative studies (i.e., studies that do not apply machine learning or other computational techniques to large amounts of textual data), we also want to follow the examples in adjacent fields leveraging these new methods to contribute both theoretically and methodologically to the broader discussion about the role of language and its rules in entrepreneurship, creativity, and innovation research. How can we make use of increasingly available computational linguistics tools to understand the emergence and recognition of novelty? How can we combine in-depth qualitative inquiry with new automated methods for the analysis of large textual data to discover patterns of innovation in a way that is in line with either epistemological approach? How can advances in artificial intelligence be used to improve current methodological approaches? How can generative language models be leveraged for the creation of entrepreneurial rhetoric?

PRE-SUBMISSION WORKSHOP

The guest editors and SEJ are offering a unique opportunity for management scholars to develop their work for possible publication in this Special Issue by participating in a pre-submission workshop. The workshop will take place on Crete, July 13-15, 2024. Widely regarded as the cradle of European civilization, Crete has a profound symbolic meaning in the context of this special forum as it is the place that gave birth to the Minoans, who pioneered Linear A&B, one of the world's oldest writing systems, which had an extraordinary impact on trade, culture, and innovation.

Attending the workshop does not guarantee inclusion of the paper into the Special Issue, nor is attendance a prerequisite for publication. However, we expect this collegial forum will provide great guidance, insights, and inspiration to all the participants, maximizing the chances of making it into the Special Issue. There is no workshop fee; however, due to the limited number of available slots, places will be limited to the papers selected by the guest editors.

All meals, local transportation (from and to the airport) as well as pre- and post-workshop reception will be provided by the organizing committee. Participants must, however, cover their own travel and accommodation costs. Financial support is available through the provision of a limited number of *bursaries*. This is a need-based scheme; recognizing that limited financial means can be the result of many factors, we encourage in particular applications from Ph.D. students, early career researchers, and those from under-represented groups (including but not limited to, gender, identity, ethnicity, etc.), and/or geographic areas. Further bursary as well as logistical details, will be made available to

successful applicants. For questions about the application procedure, please contact Simone Ferriani at simone.ferriani@unibo.it.

DEADLINE, SUBMISSION, AND REVIEW PROCESS

Workshop

Authors who wish to participate in the pre-submission workshop on Crete should send an extended abstract through this [link](#) by May 10, 2024. Extended abstracts should be no more than 10 pages double-spaced, excluding tables, figures, and references. We will notify selected authors of their inclusion in the workshop by June 1, 2024.

Special Issue

Please indicate that your submission is for the Special Issue on *Framing Novelty: A Linguistic Approach to the Understanding of Entrepreneurship, Creativity, and Innovation*. Submissions to this Special Issue should be prepared in accordance with *SEJ*'s submission process described at <https://www.strategicmanagement.net/sej/overview/submission>. Submissions can be made via the *SEJ* website at <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/sej>. The deadline for submissions is January 31, 2025. All papers will be reviewed according to the standard policies of *SEJ*. It is anticipated that the Special Issue will be published in autumn 2026.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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