

***Towards an epistemology of professional practice: blending  
expertise with responsibility***

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This presentation is broadly targeted at making sense of the epistemology professional practice. In the context of the present gathering, it more specifically addresses the question of what it means for young (applied) linguists entering the field to both inculcate and sustain a professional ethos.

I begin by looking inward and outward. I first look inwardly at Applied Linguistics as professional practice and, by extension, applied linguists as professional practitioners. Therefore the key attributes – such as functional specificity, autonomy, mutual respect, code of ethical conduct – that characterise professions must apply to applied linguists. I then look outwardly to consider how applied linguists set out to study other professional practices through their linguistic/discursive lens in domains as varied as education, healthcare, law, mediation, social work, businesses etc. My interest is in exploring further the recipe that allows for making informed contributions while also dealing with challenges typical of boundary work across interdisciplinary and interprofessional divides, rooted within different ontological and epistemological orders. I isolate two key traits of professionalism – ‘expertise’ and ‘responsibility’ – and illustrate how these can be (re)configured based on my longstanding research in healthcare communication. I draw attention to minimising the dilemmas that arise in terms of joint problematisation, negotiation of interpretive procedures and provision of hot feedback within a consultative research paradigm as a way of guaranteeing uptake of discourse analytic research findings.