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Welcome to Enago Academy's podcast Research and Beyond. Our guest today is Dr. Emmanuel Tsekleves, a highly accomplished academic who achieved a remarkable feat of becoming a full professor by the age of 40 within just 15 years of completing his PhD.

However, his journey took an unexpected turn in 2021 when he witnessed first hand the struggles faced by his colleagues and PhD students in securing academic jobs or advancing their careers. Driven by the desire to provide guidance and support, Dr. Tsekleves embarked on a mission to demystify the processes of academic career development.

He has since mentored over 50 PhD students and early career researchers, sharing his insights and strategies to help them navigate the challenges of the academic world. With a deep commitment to Prioritizing well being, Dr. Tsekleves’ ultimate goal is to empower lacks of early career researchers, equipping them with tools and knowledge they need to secure their first or next academic job and accelerate their career growth.

Join us as we delve into his inspiring story and invaluable wisdom for those aspiring to thrive in the World of Academia. We do have a lot of ESL researchers. Do you think the storytelling format would be easier for them? How can ESL researchers make it easier for them in the entire writing process? Okay, so let's say that you're doing research and you're exploring how mixed learners work in a specific context for ESL and you're doing research on that.

What you'll be doing is again, first of all, what is the message you want to tell? Do you want to tell that your research shows that having mixed learners for ESL works or it doesn't work? Or it works only if you follow some of the lessons that you learned, divine the mixed learners into different age groups or according to different abilities. And once you've have your theme, then you follow those. It's easy to follow those six key points.

You've got your introduction where you provide the, you know, the opener for, for your paper. The villain is the challenge you're trying to to address your research question. You know, we have a lot of ESL students, but they are of mixed abilities, mixed age groups.

We have limited resources, so how do we deal with that? So your research project was about trying to identify different techniques and different learning approaches. So you use this specific methodology with these groups and you've got your climate, which is your finding. You present your findings and then you've got your resolution.

This is the discussion where you analyze the findings. Actually, we initially thought this was the case, but in fact what we found out is that is A lot better if you've got mixed learners, but they all are of the same age group, irrespective if they're of different language learning abilities. And then you've got the conclusion that discusses the implications and tells what needs to be done.

You know, do we, this was just the first preliminary study and we need more research in this area. So of course I made up a lot of these things, but this was just to put it into the context. How can ESL researchers kill themselves in this area of storytelling and structure the writing? I believe it's would be a lot easier for ASL researchers to do that.

Actually, I'm going to wear my hat as someone who did TESOL. So my first degree was in linguistics and TESOL teaching English as a second language. And although then I've, I've moved to different disciplines and in the end I did a PhD in computer engineering and design.

I always go back to the lessons I've learned when I studied linguistics and TESOL. So you've, you're in a sense a master of the language. So it's easier for you compared to a more technical and science oriented researcher to be able to tell your and present your work as a story.

And I would say if you struggle at the start, just take as you did mentally previously, take a movie you recently worked and break it down and then apply that to your next paper. Right. So in continuation, do you think researchers should create characters or personify elements like how they do in movies for hypothesis or methods, findings, etc.

Yeah, you can certainly do. I would say that that depends also on the discipline and the type of project and research you're doing. So for instance, in design research, where I currently belong to, you know, Personas is, is one of the research methods that we used to classify findings and end users.

So yes, you can certainly create that characters. But remember, like any good story, these characters, they need to be central and they shouldn't be taking you away from the main storyline. So only have the mistake add to the core of your story.

Yeah, that was going to be my next question. To what extent do they personify these characters? Would you like to add anything more about this? Think of these characters as elements that help you communicate better your message and sell your story. If the answer is yes, include them.

If not, if they complicate things or if people think, not sure, why is that here? Then you need to get them. My, my principle is that always less is more. What according to you, in the time span that you have helped researchers, which field did you find more difficult in terms of, you know, modifying the research paper into a story.

Um, it's not the field is working with researchers. It usually is the ones who are the more technical minded, more scientific ones that they struggle to abstract. The very, very niche type of work they're doing to see, you know, how it fits the bigger picture.

So they can tell you how, for instance, the specific work they're doing at the cellular level is innovative because no one has done it and it allows you to identify xyz. But when you tell, okay, so what, what does this mean for medicine, health? They go back to telling you this is the first time someone did that. So, so it is, is, I would say it's those disciplines because it's not part of the training.

They're very, very narrow focused on, on that discipline because of course you need the expertise that I would say is more challenging, but at the same time is more useful because it's those sciences that can really tell you those very technical and amazing things they're doing, can do to contribute to, to society or to the field and why they're doing it, that they're more successful. And it's usually the ones you see actually working also as science communicators, being on TV and talking about, about science, that they've got these skills. And if you, if you see also how they talk about the work, you know, they always tell stories about them.

Right. So as the volume of published research grows exponentially, could you give us some tips for writing an effective discussion section that reveals the significance and implications of the research in a way that resonates with the general audience? Yeah, I mean, first of all, my advice and actually what is happening in the UK and Europe is we focus more on quality rather than quantity. So we want less papers and we want them to be of higher impact.

I know in other parts of the world still institutions and researchers go for quantity, but I can see that that will be changing because this is now we'll be adopting. So that's the first thing. So the discussion is really where you bring everything together.

It shouldn't be just descriptive. You know, I found X, Y, Z. It should be analytical and it should be synthesizing what you found.

It's also where you've gathered some of the main, from your findings. You compare them with the literature because you want to, you want to say, you want to demonstrate that what you've done, how it relates to what other researchers have done, do others agree with what you found or are there any differences and why Is that also you want to talk about what is the wider impact of what you found? So what does it mean for your disciplines? Also, you know, what does it mean beyond your discipline? For instance, let's say that in esl, you know, research, you've, your findings suggest that there needs to be a change in the way we teach ESL at schools. Does this mean that actually we need a change in the policy, in educational policy around that and how do we go about that? So of course your research is not, you know, it was just creating evidence for that.

But you need to be able to talk about it. You need to be able to talk about, you know, what, what does this contribute to beyond, beyond your field then if you do those. So first analyze the main themes of your work, link them to the existing state of the art and how they contribute and third, you know, what is the wider impact and what needs to be done next.

Then you've got a winning discussion. Coming to the storytelling format and plain language summaries. Could you tell us some striking differences or do you think that the storytelling format is more advisable for writing pls or you know, how can the audience keep the two different? Using that format to create the story format, to create a plain language summary actually makes it a lot easier because often as academics we struggle to think, okay, how do I write it? It's about of course removing references and citations from the plain language summary.

And also what it helps is because when we write by default, we train to write in, in this academic language. I would say don't write it, talk about it. Have an audio recording and audio record yourself talking about, you know, you've got those six key elements and talk about each one of them.

Then you know, there's a lot of free tools you can use to transcribe that. And that actually does most of the job of helping you write the plain summary. It's like how you, you tell what you do to, to your mother.

Well, I would say to, to my grandma. If you know, she can understand what you're doing, why you're doing it and why is important, then you've got a great plain summary. What are the special measures that a researcher must take to, to make ensure that the manuscript is specific to the journal? The first thing before even start writing would be to visit the, I mean first of all to identify the journal and I in fact doing a post in a couple of weeks about some of the evaluation criteria that people should be used to ensure that they are publishing in a reputable journal.

None of these, what they called a predatory journal. So the first thing is to use some evaluation criteria to ensure that the journal you are going to publish is a credible one. Once you establish that, the next step is to look at the author submission instructions or criteria that could be listed on the website or in some journals.

It would be a PDF that you can download and go through that. First of all you need to see if they support the type of paper you want to write. Most journal papers they will support either a research paper or review paper, even a case study and some they also do position papers.

Of course you need to make sure that it fits within the remit of the journal. Looking at what they say to publish. I will also go back and use some keywords related to my own research area to see have they published papers in this area before.

And then looking again at the other criteria, what is the word count? Do they have any specific instructions about what sections to have in the paper about referencing use of figures? Nowadays I think quite a lot of papers they've place emphasis on the ethics, you need to have an ethics statement. And a lot of papers or journals nowadays they also starting to have a policy about the use of AI. That was going to be our next segment.

So do you think the rise of AI assisted writing will make the adoption more clear, compelling, story driven, structuring even more critical for research communication? No and yes. So let me explain that currently what a lot of AI tools do we tend to think artificial intelligence, but actually they're not that intelligent yet the basically a great looking vast amount of data sources that we already have available online or in a digital format and to be able to summarize and extract data from them. So think of it like a massive Google search.

So that's what they're great at. So of course if you rely solely on AI, you know, it's not your writing is, you know, pieces from elsewhere. And also this means that it's very easy for journals who have AI detection tool to find out whether you've written the paper someone else has because it will automatically flag it.

However and of course you know, you need to understand what are the key components of a good research paper to be able to write one, you know, you can use an AI tool, but if you don't know whether what it gives you is right or wrong, that's not helpful. I would say it's like using the calculator. You know, we use the calculator for a lot of calculations, but we still have to learn about maths.

So I would say it's the same analogy where some AI tools are helpful, I find is the ones that help you to summarize other papers. So you give you the paper and it summarizes to you. So it helps you reduce the time.

Or some of the tools that basically help identify relevant papers in your area. And those ones that they, you know, you write in your academic language, especially if you're doing a plain summary, and they help you rewrite or restructure sentences in a language, aim, for instance, at, you know, 7, 8, or 9 grade level. But but these are useful only if you use them to learn how to do it as well yourself.

With this, we should conclude today's podcast session. Thank you, Dr. Tsekleves, for sharing your inspiring story and invaluable wisdom.

I'm sure it will help researchers in the world of academia and accelerate their career growth.