

BOOK REVIEW

The Handbook of
English for
Specific
Purposes



Edited by
Brian Paltridge
and Sue Starfield
WILEY-BLACKWELL

MUCH MORE THAN A HANDBOOK

Brian Paltridge and Sue Starfield (Eds.).
THE HANDBOOK OF ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC
PURPOSES (2013), Boston: Wiley-Blackwell.
592 pp., ISBN 978-0-470-65532-0.

139

In today's almost chaotic multitude of publications dealing with the issues of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), it is very difficult to find one which attempts to approach these issues in a multidimensional manner. The Wiley-Blackwell publishing house has continued with the publication of its multi-volume series dedicated to linguistic disciplines in 2013. This time all the undergraduate and graduate students, researchers and teachers interested in ESP, as well as people working in the areas of English language teaching and applied linguistics have been rewarded with a book entitled *The Handbook of English for Specific Purposes*, edited by Brian Paltridge, a former editor of the journal *English for Specific Purposes*, professor at the University of Sydney (Australia), and Sue Starfield, the current editor of *English for Specific Purposes* from the University of New South Wales (Australia).

The book consists of 577 pages divided into 28 chapters, each presenting an account of a particular topic in ESP research. It opens with the *Introduction* to the Handbook (pp. 1-4), where the editors inform the reader about the issues which will be discussed in the volume, explain the meaning of the term ESP and point out some research directions in ESP. In addition, this introductory part of the book contains a chapter written by Ann Johns entitled *The History of English for Specific Purposes Research* (pp. 5-30), dedicated to a historical survey of ESP research. The survey, following Swales, starts in the early 1960s and encompasses three distinct historical periods: (1) the early years (1962-1981), characterised by a shift in

research focus from “text-based counts to rhetorical devices”, (2) the “more recent past” (1981–1990), in which ESP widened its scope and introduced some concepts which have remained central to ESP research to date (genre and rhetorical moves), and (3) “the modern age” (1990–2011), marked by the emergence of new international journals dedicated exclusively to ESP issues, corpora research, intercultural rhetoric, etc. Johns also briefly outlines several directions into which ESP seems to be moving.

The first part of the book, entitled *ESP and Language Skills*, contains five chapters and offers the reader an overview of each of the integrated language skills within the scope of ESP research. Apart from assigning each skill a proper place within ESP pedagogy and research, this part also deals with the issue of vocabulary research within the field of ESP, i.e. the issue of extremely marked registers. After the general introduction of the editors (pp. 31–35), in the chapter called *ESP and Speaking* (pp. 35–54) Christine Feak (USA) delves into the processing of all the specificities which mastering the skill of speaking within ESP requires. She stresses a shift from the need for language accuracy and native-like speaking skills to other considerations, such as cross-cultural awareness, the language of conference presentations, poster presentations, etc.

Christine Goh (Singapore) establishes the connection between ESP and listening (pp. 55–76), pointing out that ESP listening is in many respects quite similar to ESL listening, which is why it “would be useful to adopt an approach in the research and teaching of ESP listening that integrates the best of theory and practice in both learning contexts” (p. 72). Goh emphasises the importance of academic listening skills and the development of teaching materials in English for Academic Purposes, while at the same time claiming that ESP listening in the area of English for Occupational Purposes needs to be based on much more research into the workplace contexts, especially where listening plays an important role.

The relationship between ESP and reading (pp. 77–94) is explained by Alan Hirvela (USA), who highlights the importance of genre analysis and reminds the readers of the gradual shift of ESP research from register analysis towards discourse analysis. It is interesting to mention that the issue of language skills is viewed from two aspects: the author approaches each skill both as a separate entity and as part of the framework of integrated skills. In his conclusion, Hirvela states that “a key notion of reading that has evolved in ESP is its *situated* nature in specialized discourse contexts” (p. 91).

Ken Hyland (Hong Kong) describes the relationship between ESP and writing (pp. 95–114) as a “challenge”, pointing out that “ESP conceptions of writing focus on assisting students towards competence in particular target genres.” Hyland thoroughly explains the basic approaches used in researching writing as a skill, such as textual studies, contextual studies and critical studies, also adding the instructions which can be applied to all of the levels of genre-based text writing.

The first part of the monograph ends with a chapter written by Averil Coxhead (New Zealand) on vocabulary and ESP (pp. 115–132). Coxhead tries to

answer the questions what ESP vocabulary really is and why it is important. The term 'vocabulary' is addressed through its conceptualisation, identification, and its specificities which are to be overcome by developing rating scales, by consultation with experts in a particular field, and by using specialised dictionaries. Another solution to this problem is applying techniques from corpus linguistics as well as using the common core approach a well-known example of which is the "Academic Word List" (p. 120). The author argues that future research should be focused on the nature of complex lexicological units which are inherently specific to ESP vocabulary.

The second part of the monograph, *Areas of ESP Research* (pp. 133–322), gives the reader an account of the many important areas that ESP researchers and practitioners have been and are currently dealing with. Thus, Maggie Charles (UK) writes about English for Academic Purposes (pp. 137–154), Jean Parkinson (New Zealand) focuses on English for Science and Technology (pp. 155–174), Meredith Marra (New Zealand) investigates English in the Workplace (pp. 175–192), while Francesca Bargiela-Chiappini (UK) and Zuocheng Zhang (Australia) discuss Business English (pp. 193–212). The particular sub-disciplines of the ESP research are also covered. Jill Northcott (UK) explains the notion of Legal English (pp. 213–226), Carol Lynn Moder (USA) tries to address the problems in the field of Aviation English (pp. 227–242), Gibson Ferguson (UK) targets English for Medical Purposes (pp. 243–262), whilst Susan Boshier (USA) focuses on English for Nursing (pp. 263–282). This practical part of the monograph is rounded up by subchapters by Paul Thompson (UK), who examines the writing of theses and dissertations (pp. 283–300), and John Flowerdew (Hong Kong), who deals with another interesting topic, that of English as a *lingua franca* of Research Publication (pp. 301–322).

The third part of the monograph, *ESP and Pedagogy* (pp. 323–402), is dedicated to discussing some of the issues that relate specifically to teaching and learning in ESP settings. One of them is need analysis and curriculum development discussed by Lynne Flowerdew (Hong Kong) in chapter 17 (pp. 325–346). Aware of the problem entailed in defining the term "need", Flowerdew offers a comprehensive overview of the different approaches to needs analysis as the first stage in ESP course development in the history of ESP.

Genre and English for Specific Purposes (pp. 347–366), written by Brian Paltridge (Australia), gives an outline of research in this area since 1981, when Elaine Tarone used this term for the first time. Paltridge perceives the term 'genre' through its relationship with discourse, language, multimodality and social action. After an exhaustive theoretical survey of the place and role of genre within ESP research, Paltridge also turns to its practical side, the relationship between teaching and learning ESP genres.

After explaining some theoretical specificities of assessment in ESP, in the chapter entitled *ESP and Assessment* (pp. 367–384) Dan Douglas (USA) discusses English for Academic Purposes and English for Employment Purposes, giving an overview of evaluation and assessment in Aviation English, Business English, Court

Interpreters' English, Health/Medical English and English used for Immigration and Asylum. Such a wide variety of assessment of integrated skills within the framework of English as a foreign language has resulted in the development of ESP assessment as a separate sub-discipline within ELT. For this reason Douglas asserts that this discipline has evolved so much that today it would be difficult to find a test "whose developers did not claim that it was based on an analysis of a target language use situation and reflected the communicative needs of specific groups of learners" (p. 377).

Joel Bloch (USA) claims that technology is insufficiently used in ESP practices. In the chapter entitled *Technology and ESP* (pp. 385–402), he focuses on the use of technology in classes through different tools and communicative spaces. Bloch presents a historical survey of tools used in ESP teaching practices, starting from *MonoCone 2.2* and *Wordsmith* to *MITCASE* and *MIT OpenCourseWare*. At the same time, Bloch argues for the creation of "personal learning environments", which are for him equally important for the teacher and the student alike.

The fourth part of the volume entitled *Research Perspectives and Methodologies in ESP Research* (pp. 403–552) presents an overview of contemporary topics: from those which were dealt with in the early days of ESP to those which have started to emerge as part of intercultural and multidisciplinary research. Hilary Nesi (UK) connects ESP with corpus studies (pp. 407–426), Ulla Connor (USA) and William Rozycki (Japan) establish the connection between ESP and intercultural rhetoric (pp. 427–444), whereas Catherine Nickerson (UAE) draws a parallel between ESP and English as a *lingua franca* (pp. 445–460).

Reviewing various studies in critical discourse analysis, in the chapter entitled *Critical Perspectives on ESP* (pp. 461–479) Sue Starfield (Australia) tries to apply the obtained findings not only to needs analysis, but also to plagiarism and the involvement of the government and politics in publishing activity at the university. Ryuko Kubora (Canada) and Liz T. Chiang (Canada) deal with issues concerning gender and race within ESP research (pp. 481–500), Dacia Dressen-Hammouda (France) connects ESP with ethnography (pp. 501–518), while Paul Prior (USA), in his chapter about multimodality (pp. 519–534), points out that the language system can be viewed as multimodal, and that language and communication are understood as situational sociocultural practical skills. This part ends with a discussion on the future of ESP research (pp. 535–552), where its author Diane Belcher (USA) claims that ESP is in the process of creating a new kind of "knowledge base" (p. 546) which will facilitate pedagogical practice. It will focus not only on pragmatically helping students of English, but also on increasing access to a world of options (pp. 546–547).

The Handbook of English for Specific Purposes gives the reader insight into all the areas of research in the field of ESP. Since it is both an excellent starting point and an important source of ESP-related literature, it may be used by students and researchers whose field of research interest is not necessarily English, but also some other language for specific purposes for the book contains theoretical bases

that can be applied to research of other languages too. The most important fact about the monograph is that it is not intended for ESP researchers only, but for all who work with languages, foreign language didactics, and applied linguistics in general. The book uses clear, accessible language supported by a vast number of examples, tables and guidelines for future research, and it presents a perfect choice for students of graduate, postgraduate and doctoral studies. Without pretending to present a comprehensive diachronic overview of the development of ESP as well (thus changing the focus of the topic it researches), *The Handbook of English for Specific Purposes* provides a vast amount of data and bibliographical units and can be regarded as a full account of the development, current status and future research in ESP. The editors have succeeded in making this book much more than a handbook. It presents an inexhaustible source of topics and answers to basic and specific problems which researchers of ESP as a special applied linguistics discipline encounter.

[Review submitted 19 Oct 2013]

[Revised version accepted for publication 29 Oct 2013]

Reviewed by **ŽELJKA BABIĆ**
University of Banja Luka
Faculty of Philology
zbabic@blic.net

143