
Foreword

Volume 10 of *ESP Across Cultures* is the second issue in the history of the journal to be devoted to a specific theme within the world of English for Specific Purposes, following on from volume 7 of *ESP Across Cultures* where the theme was ‘legal English across cultures’. This time the theme is ‘academic English across cultures’.

Academic discourse certainly constitutes a ‘growth area’ within the sphere of ESP studies, and several of the papers that have appeared in previous issues of *ESP Across Cultures* have dealt with the topic. But it was felt that there was room to dedicate an entire issue to the theme, also because the cross-cultural element when applied to academic discourse can offer new, and sometimes unexpected, insights into what has rapidly become a major source of interest over the last two or three decades to linguists, the vast majority of whom work in academia and hence have a ‘vested interest’ in understanding the phenomenon of academic discourse.

The ten papers constituting this special issue represent a rich mixture of approaches to academic discourse across cultures, some focusing on comparisons between the academic English used by native speakers as opposed to that of non-native speakers, while others are more concerned with finding effective ways of teaching ESP in an academic context and of assessing learners’ needs.

The paper by Siân Alsop, Emma Moreton and Hilary Nesi Mari examines the Engineering Lecture Corpus, comparing English-medium lectures from Malaysia, New Zealand and the UK. The authors argue that even if a common language may be used to present the same kind of syllabus for the same broad purpose, engineering lectures tend to remain both context- and culture-specific. Their analysis looks at the purposes of storytelling in Engineering lectures, and the ways in which various types of stories are realized linguistically.

Marie-Lise Assier investigates how *Fiction à substrat professionnel* (specialized fiction) can be beneficial in terms of language teaching and learning objectives and in motivating students in an ESP context, taking as an example the medical novel *Transplanted Man* by Sanjay Nigam. She suggests that including FASP in a language class helps to give students “more self-confidence in oral participation and a willingness to learn in an open, dynamic and long-term perspective” and can be used to trigger new multicultural awareness.

In their paper Mahmood Reza Atai and Seyyed Asadollah Asadi argue that “needs analysis should lay the foundation for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) programs”. The authors adopt a triangulated approach involving observations, interviews, questionnaires, and course book analysis involving students of Railway Engineering at Iran University of Science and Technology, Teheran, their instructors, language teachers, authorities and graduate railway engineers at the workplace. The results highlight the pressing need to renew the ESP programs and increase the accountability of ESP instruction in higher education.

Shahabaddin Behtary and Mehran Davaribina report on a research project which tries to discover what the effect of genre variation is on reading comprehension for non-native speakers. A reading comprehension test was developed which consisted of two types of texts, a medical English textbook and a general English textbook, and the performance of 93 Iranian medical students was compared. The findings reveal that the participants were more proficient in comprehending general English texts compared to ESP texts. The authors then hypothesize the reasons for the difference in performance.

Donna Bain Butler, Yalun Zhou and Michael Wei analyse writing knowledge in the context of academic culture by exploring graduate student perceptions of academic English writing in China and Thailand. A student-centred approach to teaching and learning English for Specific (and Academic) Purposes emerges from the data that reveal glob-

al issues in writing across academic cultures. Particular attention is paid to the issues of native academic culture, academic English writing, strategies for academic English writing, composing for academic purposes, and student metaphors for academic English writing.

In her paper Oana Carciu looks at the biomedical discourse community to examine the different textual responses of L1 English and L2 English (Spanish) scholars publishing research in international English-medium journals, analysing the linguistic expression of disciplinary identity. The results suggest that the research article is “a negotiated intercultural space which promotes a shared disciplinary identity across cultures to provide a temporarily stable ground for further social action”. However, it would appear that the linguistic expression of identity throughout the different rhetorical sections of a research article “does not completely erase cultural identities”.

Shirley Carter-Thomas and Elizabeth Rowley-Jolivet investigate the citation practices of French researchers publishing in English, using a corpus of the uncorrected pre-publication final versions of their articles in science and linguistics, and two comparable corpora of published RAs in English and French. The analysis highlights the problems of hybrid citing styles, referential ambiguity and the use of reporting structures, and concludes that the writer’s native language and culture affect the management of citation, and that ambiguous inter- and intra-textual reference and the underuse of reporting verbs and nouns “can appreciably diminish the efficacy of citation in the French researchers’ articles written in English”.

Carmel Heah and Sujata S. Kathpalia look at metaphor in the language of economics, especially the way changes and movements in the financial markets are presented in the Singapore press and local forum discussions. The authors suggest ways of improving students’ metaphoric awareness by drawing their attention to the figurative expressions they encounter when reading economics and business texts as well as through classroom activities that promote their metaphorical competence. They argue that understanding the significance of metaphor not only enhances ESL/EFL students’ understanding of economics discourse but also improves “their ability to read critically through a deeper understanding of how metaphors can be used to shape perceptions of financial trends”.

In her paper Maria Grazia Sindoni addresses the question of whether English for Linguistics is a domain of interest for EAP, whether the metalanguage for linguistics is sufficiently taught at university level, and which strategies are most appropriate when developing presentation skills with regard to language competence in the field of linguistics. The author argues that peer-assessment procedures “would seem to be particularly effective at postgraduate level when integrating syllabus content and language skills to negotiate and reflect critically on this aspect of EAP”, illustrating a pilot project carried out at the University of Messina, the ultimate aim of which was to develop students’ reflective, linguistic, metalinguistic and presentation skills.

The papers briefly outlined above were specially chosen out of the many proposals we received, our aim being to provide a varied account of how academic English can be investigated from a cross-cultural perspective. We hope readers will enjoy this selection of contributions. Finally, we wish to express our gratitude to all those scholars who have kindly acted as referees. They will be acknowledged in the next issue of *ESP Across Cultures*.

The Editors of this special issue

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