English for Specific Purposes: Teaching to Perceived Needs and Imagined Futures in Worlds of Work, Study, and Everyday Life

Author(s): Diane D. Belcher

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DIANE D. BELCHER
Georgia State University
Atlanta, Georgia, United States

This overview of the current state of English for specific purposes (ESP) begins by surveying ongoing debates on key topics: needs assessment and its goals, specificity in instructional methods, and the role of subject knowledge in instructor expertise. Two strands of current theory and research are next surveyed, namely, genre theory and corpus-enhanced genre studies, and critical pedagogy and ethnographies, followed by examples of research and theory-informed pedagogical strategies for literacy and spoken discourse. Topics in need of further inquiry are suggested.

The reason we have an English program starting is . . . the hotel's focusing on more guest services . . . and trying to . . . have each employee be a host to each guest rather than Oh it's the front desk job to . . . greet people and if I'm a housekeeper I can just . . . say hello and that's it. . . . The way the company put it to show our Aloha. . . . Sometimes we get . . . ah . . . negative comments cards . . . they say things like . . . I asked for this and I didn't get it but mostly is like and can't you even get staff that speak English?

Hotel human resources perspective

Simple English like go see doctor yeah? then . . . ah . . . meet a friend you know. . . . I just want learn the simple English . . . you know when we go travel we need English. . . .

Hotel housekeeper's perspective (Jasso-Aguilar, 1999, pp. 41–43)

For those who are at all familiar with the approach to English language teaching known as English for specific purposes, or ESP (also known as LSP[1]), the descriptors likely to spring to mind probably include such terms as *needs-based, pragmatic, efficient, cost-effective,* and *functional:* a view of ESP encapsulated by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) in the statement, "Tell me what you need English for and I will tell you the English that you need" (p. 8). For those of a more critical bent, however, ESP may conjure up more critically evaluative terms such as "accommodationist," "assimilationist," "market-driven," and even "colonizing"—suggesting that ESP is too often untroubled by questions of power, by whose needs are served by programs such as that for the hotel housekeepers cited earlier. The mental associations may be somewhat different again, though, for those immersed in ESP practice today, engaged with ESP's growing body of research and theory, and ever-diversifying and expanding range of purposes: from the better known English for academic purposes (EAP) and occupational purposes (EOP), the latter including business, medicine, law, but also such fields as shipbuilding and aviation,[2] to the more specific-mission-oriented ESP that Master (1997) has labeled "English for sociocultural purposes," for example, for AIDS education, family literacy, and citizenship, or for those with highly specialized needs, such as learners who are incarcerated or who have a disability (Johnstone, 1997; Master, 2000). Those familiar with all of these permutations may understandably find ESP increasingly difficult to summarily describe (or dismiss). What once looked to many like a straightforwardly needs-oriented, a- or pan-theoretical (aligned with no particular theory but employing many), and, some would add, ideologically oblivious approach, now, like the constantly changing learning targets it addresses, is itself becoming harder and harder to capture in anything like a single stop-action frame. Contributing to the complexified picture of ESP are more methodologically, technologically, and theoretically enriched assessments of language use and learner needs, and a growing array of means to meet them, in a *glocalized* world (Robertson, 1995), where local and global needs meet and merge, collide and conflict, and new culturally and linguistically hybrid "thirdness[es]" (Mauranen, 2001, p. 51) emerge. ESP can now, for instance, with its multiple analytical

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[1] Teachers of English have no monopoly on specific-purpose instruction, an approach employed for the teaching of many languages other than English, and often referred to, consequently, as *language/s for specific purposes* (see Johnstone, 1997; Swales, 2000). However, because this article focuses on English-language instruction, the narrower term *English for specific purposes* will be used throughout.

[2] The goals of EAP and EOP are not always easily separable. Consider, for example, EALP, *English for academic legal purposes,* for law students; EABP, *English for academic business purposes,* for business students; or EAMP, *English for academic medical purposes,* for students in the health sciences. The specific purposes can generate a seemingly endless string of acronyms.

methods, discern the needs of hotel workers at one particular site (e.g., a Waikiki hotel) in more detail than ever before, yet with awareness of how this picture is alternately enhanced and blurred by the perspectives of multiple stakeholders (e.g., transoceanic tourists, a transnational hotel industry, and the locally situated learners themselves). In the following sections, I look at some of the major challenges ESP specialists face today in attempting to meet the needs of people hoping to more fully participate in school, work, and neighborhood communities; survey how research, theory, and reflective practice can increase awareness of what learners' needs are and how to address them; and consider a number of looming issues on which further inquiry could benefit ESP, but probably everyone in ELT (English language teaching) as well.

PROBLEMATIZING A PURPOSE-DRIVEN, PROBLEM-SOLVING APPROACH

Although hard to pin down, ESP does have some prominent distinguishing features on which many involved in ESP would likely agree. Needs assessment, content-based teaching methods, and content-area informed instructors have long been considered essential to the practice of specific-purpose teaching, yet how these concepts are defined and realized at the teaching site has been and continues to be the subject of much debate.

Reassessing Needs Assessment: Which Needs and Whose Goals?

Like other educational endeavors, ESP assumes there are problems, or lacks, that education can ameliorate, but unlike many other educational practices, ESP assumes that the problems are unique to specific learners in specific contexts and thus must be carefully delineated and addressed with tailored-to-fit instruction. ESP specialists, therefore, are often needs assessors first and foremost, then designers and implementers of specialized curricula in response to identified needs. It is probably no exaggeration to say that needs assessment is seen in ESP as the foundation on which all other decisions are, or should be, made. Because of this emphasis on needs, the dividing lines in ESP between researchers and teachers, or curriculum designers, materials developers, and teachers, are frequently blurred. Since even the earliest days of ESP (the 1960s), practitioners have viewed assessment of specific needs as requiring research skills and creative approaches to novel situations, and needs assessment itself has been seen as in need of continual reassessment.

Among the groundbreaking early insights of ESP practitioners, perhaps most significant was the realization that teacher intuition and knowledge of language systems were insufficient, and that understanding of language use in specific contexts was essential (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Robinson, 1991). Though this "understanding" initially took the form of frequency counts of lexicogrammatical features, or "lexicostatistics" (Swales, 1988, p. 189), this approach was succeeded by consideration of macro-level discourse features and rhetorical motivations. Whole text analysis, with exemplar texts from the learners' fields of study or work, and often informed by the perspectives of subject-area specialists (see Selinker, 1979), not the ESP professional working in isolation, has become common in ESP.

Because target language description alone provides limited direction to classroom practitioners, needs analysis evolved (in the 1970s) to include "deficiency analysis," or assessment of the "learning gap" (West, 1997, p. 71) between target language use and current learner proficiencies. Just as ESP professionals were determined not to decide a priori what language features to teach, they also decided not to make assumptions about individuals' language abilities vis-à-vis specific language varieties or tasks. Though obviously a deficit conceptualization of the learner, deficiency assessment enabled teaching "English to specified people" (Robinson, 1991, p. 5), or specific learners in specific situations rather than a generalized language learner.

Since the 1980s, however, many ESP specialists have questioned whether collecting expert- and data-driven "objective" information about learners is enough (Tudor, 1997). Many wondered whether ESP specialists should also tap into the ongoing subjective needs of learners: their self-knowledge, awareness of target situations, life goals, and instructional expectations (Tudor, 1997). Inspired by the learner-centered movement (Nunan, 1988), ESP became more *learning-centered* (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987), focusing not just on what people do with language but how they learn it and encouraging learner investment and participation.

As helpful as the combined objective and subjective foci on individual learners in specific contexts are, some in ESP have also felt the need to know more about those contexts, or target discourse communities, and not just from a text-linguistic, *language audit* vantage point but from a more social perspective as well (Robinson, 1991). Douglas (2000) sums up this more complex view of context, or "discourse domain," as "dynamic, continually changing . . . constructed by the participants in a communicative situation" (p. 89). Such a view of context requires the kind of emic perspective gained not just through surveys, interviews, and text analysis, but also case studies and community ethnographies (Robinson, 1991).

Although clearly a crucial step forward, acknowledging context as socially constructed has not satisfied everyone. Discourse domains do not, after all, exist in vacuums (Pennycook, 1997). Any community is part of larger socioeconomic and political systems, with members holding multiple race, class, and gender subject positions. Along with this more layered view of context has come greater awareness of the conflicting perspectives of privileged members and novices and of learners as members of many other communities beyond work and study—as parents, consumers, citizens, members of vernacular communities (Canagarajah, 2002), and of communities they dream of joining (cf. Cadman's, 2002, p. 101, reinterpretation of EAP as "English for academic possibilities").

No longer viewed, ideally, as one-shot, presessional data collection, needs assessment is now more often seen as a matter of "agreement and judgment not discovery," negotiated by learners, other community members, and instructors inevitably influenced by "ideological precon- ceptions" (Robinson, 1991, p. 7, citing Lawson, 1979). Equally if not more important has been the more recent recognition that learners, as reflective community members, should be empowered to participate in needs assessment alongside ESP professionals (Benesch, 2001; Johns, 1997).

In Search of Needs-Meeting Methods:
Which Means to What Ends?

If ESP specialists have set and implemented their own needs-clarifying research agendas, they could also be described as methodological free thinkers. Some, such as Hutchinson and Waters (1987), have even claimed that "there is . . . no such thing as an ESP methodology" (p. 18). ESP is often seen as a materials-driven rather than methods-driven enterprise (see, e.g., Master, 1997), with preference given to materials that authentically represent the communities in which learners seek membership. Yet *authenticity* has long been a vexed term: One person's authenticity may not be another's. Widdowson's (1979) observation is commonly invoked: Authenticity resides not in texts but in the interac- tion between texts and intended contexts. According to this reasoning, texts taken out of context are inauthentic as soon as they enter the classroom. Yet, although many ESP specialists may agree that context is important, they may also feel that contexts can be more or less authentic (or simulated), often with the help of so-called authentic tasks (see Bhatia, 1993; Ferguson, 1997, on text/task relationships, but see also Corbett, 2003, p. 42, on authentic target-language materials as valuable

cultural artifacts without need of "simulacrum"). Texts, as classroom materials, can be viewed as exhibiting varying degrees of authenticity: from clearly authentic materials found in the target discourse community, to semi-authentic materials produced by the ESP practitioner, to obviously inauthentic textbooks mass-produced by publishers. Even textbooks, though, can be more or less authentic and specific in their conceptualization of learner-audience needs (see Harwood, 2005, who cites Swales & Feak, 2000, as an exemplar from the more specific end of the textbook spectrum).

It can be argued, however, that still more fundamental decisions drive materials selection than definitions of *authenticity*. Many assert that the overarching approach of ESP is content-based instruction, or CBI (Crandall & Kaufman, 2002; Master, 1997), and that ESP's reach extends beyond its traditional focus on adults to children in CBI programs, with target-language-medium instruction in subject areas (Master, 1997; Robinson, 1991). *Content,* though, like authenticity, is open to interpretation. Does CBI simply mean *theme based,* using any relevant, potentially high-interest topics teachers feel comfortable with (Stoller, 2002)? Or, should *content* be more narrowly defined and CBI more directly related to the target discourse community, for example, business cases as the content in language classes for business students? The one prerequisite of appropriate content on which most CBI/ESP teachers would likely agree is that it not consist of information about language but instead function as a carrier of language (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998), a means of making language use meaningful (Johns, 1997), thus enhancing language acquisition and task performance (Carson, Taylor, & Fredella, 1997).

Yet one might well next ask, what guides the choice of carrier content and related content-based tasks? The choice is likely guided by how the language and task-proficiencies learners need are conceptualized: whether narrowly, as immediately useful domain-specific language and related tasks, or more widely, as common-core language and language-learning strategy for an ever-expanding realm of unpredictable domains and tasks (see Bloor & Bloor, 1986). Arguments frequently advanced for a wide-angle approach, especially for EAP, include recent corpus-linguistic findings that a core of 2,000 basic high frequency words together with 570 reasonably frequent academic words "will give close to 90% coverage of the running words in most academic texts" (Coxhead & Nation, 2001, p. 260). If this is the case, then any subject-area content that the instructor chooses should serve the purposes of most language learners, at least in EAP, and, of course, language-learning strategies, such as intensive and extensive reading, can be taught with any carrier content.

Narrow-anglers, on the other hand, argue that if any content will do, why not choose content that is most relevant to learners' goals and most

likely to motivate learners (see Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001)? Corpus linguists have also pointed out that technical terms, though a small percentage of the total vocabulary of academic texts, can be crucial to task performance, for example, fluent reading and learning through meaning (Coxhead & Nation, 2001). Also in support of the narrow angle approach is the observation that there are many ways for ESP instructors to compensate for their limited field-specific knowledge—a reason often given for avoiding the narrower route. Among the more popular compensatory strategies are team teaching with a content-area specialist (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998), taking a sustained (one subject area per term) content-based approach with lower-grade-level materials (Weigle & Nelson, 2001), and linking language and subject-area classes (Johns, 1997).

To many ESP practitioners, however, the wide versus narrow approach debate is a nonissue because instructional decisions should have more to do with the learners themselves than with instructor preference or beliefs: low–literacy level adults and undergraduates without majors, for instance, may benefit from a wide-gauge approach (Hirvela, 1998, but see also Hyland, 2002), while other learners, such as, graduate students, pilots, or nurses, may gain most from a narrower approach. Also, as Murray and McPherson (2004) have found, instructors are not always good judges of what will interest and motivate their own students. At the very least, such findings support an argument for allowing learners a voice in content selection.

Rescripting Instructional Roles: Who Teaches Whom?

If there were a television reality show called *The ESP Apprentice,* with prizes in the form of ESP faculty appointments, it seems unlikely that multitudes of ELT professionals would vie to appear on it, especially considering the ESP ideal: combined needs assessor, specialized syllabus designer, authentic materials developer, and content-knowledgeable instructor, capable of coping with a revolving door of content areas relevant to learners' communities. Few graduate programs prepare students for the challenges of ESP (especially in the United States), and as humanities majors more often than not, many language teachers may find the technical content areas of such ESP learners as chemical engineers or air traffic controllers unfamiliar, uninteresting, and even intimidating. Abbott (1983) no doubt spoke for many when wondering in how many content areas, realistically speaking, any instructor could acquire even a "layman's outline knowledge" (p. 35).

How much subject knowledge is enough for ESP instructors, especially when taking a narrow-angled approach, is still very much an open

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question. Some have argued that it is enough to know about an area, its values, epistemological bases, and preferred genres (Ferguson, 1997). In a similar vein, Dudley-Evans (1997) and Robinson (1991) have suggested that, rather than deep content knowledge, the most critical qualifications to cultivate are respect for learner knowledge and perspectives, intellectual curiosity and flexibility, and enjoyment of improvisational problem-solving. Others have noted, however, that since outsiders can only approximate what community insiders know and do, and perhaps not very successfully (White, 1981; Zuck & Zuck, 1984), they may actually do more harm than good in attempting a narrow-gauge approach. Robinson (1991) and Crofts (1981) argue that ESP specialists should not attempt to be "pseudoteacher[s] of subject matter," (Robinson, p. 87) but teachers "of things not learned as part of courses in . . . specialisms" (Crofts, p. 149). It is, of course, concern with limited content knowledge that often drives the urge to collaborate, the team teaching and linked classes referred to earlier. Yet some view even this solution (i.e., collaboration) as far from perfect (Goldstein, Campbell, & Cummings, 1997), and institutional constraints and unwillingness of would-be collaborators can be major obstacles to teaching partnerships. Dual professionalism, training in both the target subject area, for example, law or medicine, and applied linguistics (Feak & Reinhart, 2002) would seem to provide the best of both worlds but requires a breadth and depth of commitment to two fields that few are willing to make.

A learner-centered solution to the content knowledge dilemma has been offered by Dudley-Evans (1997), who feels it essential for ESP teachers to learn how to learn from and with their students, engaging with them in genuinely participatory explorations of discourse domains. Benesch (2001), at the same time, warns of being overly respectful of subject knowledge, especially that of content experts, whose handling of content may fail to factor in the needs of second language learners or of such so-called minorities as female students. Snow (1997), likewise, suggests that ESP/EAP professionals can be valuable resources to subject specialists, who may not know how to help L2 learners even when they want to. Perhaps even more than others in ELT, ESP practitioners, because of their work with field-specific discourse, need to remind themselves that they are far from lacking a content area of their own.

WHAT THEORY AND RESEARCH HAVE TO OFFER

Though ESP has a reputation for being eclectic in its use of theory and has long valued practitioner research, this does not mean that ESP professionals have not been informed by research and theoretical developments beyond their own immediate instructional contexts. Cur-

rent ESP curriculum and materials design owes much to genre theory, especially as enhanced by corpus linguistics, and ESP's conceptualizations of both the learners' goals and its own as a field owe much to recent contributions from critical pedagogy and ethnography.

Genre Theory and Corpus Data

Although ESP is itself considered a school of genre studies, it has willingly embraced, in its usual eclectically pragmatic way, the insights of two other schools of genre theory known as the Sydney School and New Rhetoric (see Belcher, 2004; Hyland, 2004; Johns, 2002). Both the Sydney School and New Rhetoric, along with influential ESP genre theorists such as Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993), have been instrumental in moving ESP toward a more sociorhetorical view of genre, or as Bawarshi (2003) says, away from a "container view of genre" as "only transparent and innocent conduits that individuals use to package their communicative goals" (p. 23).

The Sydney School has contributed arguably the most systematically theoretical grounding of all the major approaches to genre (Hyland, 2004), informed as it is by Hallidayan systemic functional linguistics (SFL, see Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004), that is, interested in context as well as text, and field and tenor, or ideational and interpersonal discourse dimensions, as well as mode, or generic channel. Also noteworthy about the Sydney School is its commitment to bringing *genres of power*, or literacies of the privileged, to children and low-literacy adult immigrants, populations ESP had not traditionally focused on (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; but see also Pennycook, 1997). Sydney School pedagogy addresses these populations' needs with Vygotskian scaffolding, or staged, SFL-informed instruction that moves from the assistance of more knowledgeable others to gradually more independent text generation (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Feez, 2002).

The New Rhetoric School, in contrast, has been still more interested in context and greatly inspired by theories of situated cognition and cognitive apprenticeship (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Miller's (1984) New Rhetorical redefinition of genre as "typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations" (p. 159) has been especially influential in encouraging an appreciation of how people "enact and are enacted by [genres]" (Bawarshi, 2003, p. 22). Perhaps not surprisingly, New Rhetoric puts relatively little faith in explicit instruction, seeing immersion in target situations as essential for genuine acquisition of genres (Freedman, 1993). While the Sydney School has had much to offer genre-based ESP pedagogy, especially in EAP, New Rhetoric has shed more light on the genred spaces EOP focuses on, the "stabilized-for-now" (Schryer, 1993, p.

200) shapes, uses, and acquisition processes of genres in a multitude of professional sites (Hyland, 2004; Swales, 2004).

Genre scholars, thus, tend today to view genre as more contextual than simply textual, dynamic than static, varied than monolithic, and interesting in its shaping of and being shaped by people (Bawarshi, 2003; Bhatia, 2004). Mindful of these recent developments, Swales (2004) argues that the concept of genre serves us most productively as metaphor. Genres can be seen as "*frames* for social action" (Bazerman, 1997, p. 19; italics added), *chains* of sequential communicative events, *sets* of related occupational and institutional practices, *networks* of intertextuality, and purposeful activity *systems,* or *spheres* of communication, that human actors engage in, affected by and affecting countless other systems (Bawarshi, 2003; Swales, 2004). This increasingly complex conceptualization of genre, and of life as genrefied (Swales, 2004), clearly affords a far fuller view of the world in which learners must function than the templates and taxonomies that many may still too readily think of when they think of *genre.*

Considering genre theory's top-down, contextualized, sociorhetorical view of discourse, it might seem that the more bottom-up, relatively decontextualized, and lexicogrammatically "atomized" (L. Flowerdew, 2005b, p. 324) view of language use offered by computer-enabled corpus linguistics would be at odds with genre theory's more macro-level perspective. Flowerdew (2005b; see also Swales, 2004), however, has pointed out, that the two approaches, in fact, have much to offer each other. Especially promising, Flowerdew (2004, 2005b) and others (e.g., Connor & Upton, 2004) note, are small corpus studies of academic and professional genres, of whole (not partial) expert and learner texts, compiled, hand-tagged for *move structure* (rhetorical stages) and qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed by ESP specialists familiar with the texts' contexts, producers, and intended audiences. The speed with which corpus data can now be compiled and analyzed pushes ESP still farther in directions it has valued—away from "intuitive laundry lists of common core features" (Hyland, 2002, p. 392) and toward empirically based understanding of language used for specific purposes.

Critical Pedagogy and Ethnography

Just as genre theory and corpus studies may at first glance seem an unusual pairing, critical pedagogy may also initially appear the polar opposite of ESP itself, considering the pragmatic efforts of ESP to help learners succeed in established, often exclusionary and hierarchical, communities. Although many ESP professionals may see meeting learn-

ers' needs as empowering, in a world where English opens doors to technology, research findings, and educational and job opportunities, critical pedagogists (e.g., Canagarajah, 2002; Pennycook, 1997; Phillipson, 1992) may see such efforts as a form of domination, supporting the spread of English, and thus strengthening, in EFL settings, the hold of the developed world on the less developed (but see also Seidlhofer, 2004), and in ESL settings, aiding and abetting a too pervasive melting-pot process that effaces cultural identity. In fact, however, some EAP-experienced critical pedagogists, perhaps most notably Pennycook (1997) and Benesch (2001), have constructed conceptual bridges between critical and pragmatically needs-based perspectives on pedagogy.

Pennycook (1997) offers the concept of *critical pragmatism* as a much-needed change of course, or in Morgan and Ramanathan's (2005) terms, *invigoration* (p. 156), for ESP/EAP, turning it away from its superficially neutral, norms-reinforcing *vulgar pragmatism*, ideologically naïve in its service to the status quo. More than a utilitarian approach to language, critical pragmatism requires awareness of the role of English in "the spread of particular forms of culture and knowledge" (Pennycook, 1997, p. 258). The critically aware practitioner neither simply abandons language teaching nor continues trusting that ELT will open doors without closing any, but instead gives priority to helping learners appropriate English for their own purposes—to accept, resist, and even push back, to glocalize the global, asserting ownership of English in forms useful in users' own communities.

Benesch (2001), similarly, suggests that a more critical approach requires expansion of needs analysis to include *rights analysis*, which is much more than a reactive determination of learner needs based on institutional or expert expectations. Acknowledging that learners and their instructors should not completely ignore target situation needs, Benesch encourages a language curriculum enriched by "a framework for understanding and responding to power relations" that instills learners with confidence in their right and ability to challenge "unreasonable and inequitable arrangements" (p. 108). Such a learning outcome is only likely, Benesch observes, if instructors themselves "discover what is possible, desirable, and beneficial at a certain moment with a particular group of students" (p. 109), that is, if instructors engage in rights analysis.

Critically aware qualitative research, or ethnographic *thick description* (Geertz, 1983), often for the sake of needs assessment, is also heightening awareness of the need for a more critically pragmatic ESP conscious of what Brandt and Clinton (2002) call the "limits of the local" (p. 337), that is, of a perspective so focused on the local context that "tensions among different immediate and remote forces at play" are ignored

(Reder & Davila, 2005, p. 174).[3] For example, in her study of hotel maids' language needs, Jasso-Aguilar (1998) used critically-aware methodology, which included working alongside the hotel maids in her study, and discovered a mismatch between the language actually needed to perform the usual hotel housekeeping duties and the welcoming "aloha" language that the hotel corporation felt the maids needed. The increased language skills desired by hotel management clearly had more to do with wanting to increase business than with meeting either the actual immediate work-related needs or long-term goals of the hotel housekeepers.

In another ethnographic account, Storer (1999) too identified conflicting perspectives on the needs of learners, in this case, Thai bar-based sex workers. One morally righteous perspective would deny the bar workers language instruction that might encourage them to stay in the bars. The business-minded bar managers had another view, discouraging the workers from using language to negotiate safer interactions with foreigners. The workers themselves were only too aware of the risks, to life and livelihood, of being unable to establish ground rules with their clients. Storer, like Jasso-Aguilar (1998), emphasizes the value of seeing learners' needs emically, from their vantage point, which includes gaining an understanding of the pressures that others' demands place on them.

The ESP class itself can also be a site of ongoing critical qualitative exploration of more and less transparent contexts. Bosher and Smalkoski (2002), for example, found that discussing language needs in class with immigrant nursing students and reading their journals placed their language learning needs in a larger context, a culturally influenced gendered space, where, as one student put it, "there are things the female won't talk about as it is ok with the male" (p. 70), all of which underscored a need for assertiveness training. Similarly, qualitative research methods, including ongoing evaluation by the students themselves of their own strengths and weaknesses, and the author's own close observation of his students' struggles with assignments helped Holmes (2004) understand why an imported genre-based EAP curriculum was so ineffective at a school in Eritrea. Accessible, relevant, engaging materials and tasks were developed only after local needs and interests, as well as the impact of years of deprivation, were taken into account.

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[3] We should note that ethnography has also been very productively used, especially in combination with textual analysis, in genre studies (Corbett, 2003), and genre analysis has proven to be a powerful tool for critical discourse analysts (Fairclough, 1995). Corpus linguistics, too, in the service of critical discourse analysis (see, e.g., Sotillo & Wang-Gempp, 2004), holds enormous potential for increasing critical awareness of the needs of ESP learners and the means of empowering them.

THEORY- AND RESEARCH-INFORMED ESP PEDAGOGY

Although I have separately surveyed genre theory and corpus-enhanced genre studies, and critical pedagogy and ethnographies, they need not be seen as mutually exclusive, especially with respect to pedagogical implications. Genre theorists (e.g., Bawarshi, 2003; Devitt, 2004; Hyland, 2004; Swales, 2004) have more recently expounded on the critical consciousness-raising capability of genre-based pedagogies. It is not uncommon for contemporary genre theorists to speak of ethical responsibility to, in Bawarshi's (2003) words, "make . . . 'genred' discursive spaces . . . visible . . . for the sake of enabling students to participate in these spaces more meaningfully and critically" (p. 18). Critical pedagogists, at the same time, have pointed to the need for learner empowerment and agency not just in literacy practices, the primary focus of much genre study, but in face-to-face (or virtually face-to-face) communication as well (see Auerbach, 2000; Benesch, 2001).

Academic Literacies: Promoting
Learner Autonomy and Decentered Authority

Given the multitude of genres that confront learners just in academia alone, not to mention their careers and other avenues of life, the pedagogical task of deciding which genres to focus on is a daunting one. Devitt (2004) has suggested one reasoned way to cope with this situation: Rather than attempting to teach specific genres, we teach "critical awareness of how genres operate so that they [students] . . . learn the new genres they encounter with rhetorical and ideological understanding" (p. 194). Devitt reasons that focusing learners' attention first on "antecedent genres" (p. 202), or familiar genres such as personal letters or wedding announcements, will equip them with a learning strategy, a meta-awareness of the benefits and constraints of genre, which can be applied to all new genres they meet.

Although concurring with Devitt (2004) on the advantages of introducing "homely" genres first, Johns (1997, p. 38) is interested in promoting more than critical awareness. Focused primarily on the needs of at-risk undergraduates, Johns aims at jump-starting acquisition of literacy genres required for academic survival. Although again like Devitt, Johns urges equipping students with genre-learning strategies, she also encourages broader and deeper ethnographies of classroom and authentic genres, with students compiling reading and writing portfolios comprised of genre samples and their own genre performances and analyses. A primary goal, Johns (2001) argues, should be to

"destabilize the students' rather limited theories of genres" by revealing that "there is a very large world beyond the academic essay" (pp. 70–71).

Johns' and others' use of academic literacy portfolios for undergraduates in EAP classes has a still more basic motivation: the realization that reading and writing are similar and synergistic sociocognitive processes, both involving the construction of meaning, and that it makes little sense to approach them pedagogically as discrete modalities. Literacy portfolios and reading-to-write tasks in general have been further encouraged by observations such as Carson and Leki's (1993) that "reading can be, and in academic settings nearly always is, the basis for writing" (p. 1). More recently, Hirvela (2004) has called attention to the impact that writing can have on reading, noting that activities such as summarizing, synthesizing, and responding, not only can tell us much about students as L2 readers but can also help the students themselves become more aware of what they learn as they read and be more likely to read and reread texts purposefully, analytically, and critically.

For L2 graduate students, Hirvela (1997) advises an approach similar to Johns' strategy with EAP undergraduates: compilation of disciplinary portfolios, for which students follow Swales and Feak's (1994; see also 2004) advice to "examine and report back" (p. 87) on genres in their own fields of study, where they, not their EAP instructor, are the content experts. Hyland (2002) points out that if classes in which such ethnographic work is done are disciplinarily heterogeneous, "the specificity of their circumstances" can be exploited through the opportunity to compare various disciplinary observations, thus nudging the students toward the realization "that communication does not entail adherence to a set of universal rules but involves making rational choices based on the ways texts work in specific contexts" (p. 393). Lee and Swales (2006) have taken the learner-as-disciplinary-ethnographer model into more high tech realms by helping L2 graduate students produce what, in effect, are electronic portfolios. After compiling their own corpora of electronically retrieved professional texts and self-authored texts, the students were taught to concordance and analyze them, thus gaining both technical and discourse analytical skills likely to benefit them throughout their school and professional careers. Lee and Swales argue that use of such learner-produced corpora effectively decenters language standards away from the authority of the native speaker, teacher, grammar text, and stylistic conventions by facilitating students' discoveries about language use with texts, written and spoken, generated by professionals in their fields, "not all of whom are necessarily native speakers" (p. 71). In another pilot concordancing course for L2 graduate students, Starfield (2004) likewise concluded, after observing her students' use of the course's software, that this *technicist* learning strategy can be empowering:

What I found exciting was that she [one of Starfield's students] was using the concordancing strategy to develop her ability to insert herself into the text she was writing. There was a sense that she was lessening the very unequal relations of power that positioned her as a foreign student with poor English skills and was beginning to occupy her research space as someone who has a history with its own discourses to bring to the Australian academy. (pp. 152–153)

SPEECH GENRES AND OTHER DIALOGIC FUNCTIONALITIES: REAL TIME, REAL LIFE NEGOTIATION

While written (and hence read) genres may be the chief currency of academia, the means by which the greatest amounts of knowledge are communicated and assessed, more immediately dialogic genres, or *speech genres*, to use Bakhtin's (1986) term to underscore their interactional quality, also have significant roles to play inside and outside of academia. Many of the means of negotiating with more powerful others that Benesch (2001) fostered in her own linked EAP classes can, in fact, be seen as speech genres: raising questions in class, querying faculty during office hours, questioning the rationale of a syllabus or assignments. No longer the relatively neglected area it once was in ESP, spoken discourse now has a wealth of new technology-enhanced resources. One especially noteworthy example of these is the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE; English Language Institute, 2002), a public database of over 150 speech events, including such interactions as dissertation defenses, advising sessions, and seminar discussions. Such resources (see also Biber, Conrad, Reppen, Byrd, & Helt, 2002) offer new ways of studying and teaching spoken genres—and understanding how less powerful initiates can negotiate them.

Not all of the new resources for teaching spoken discourse involve technology. Face-to-face human interaction itself becomes a resource when authentic interaction opportunities are built into curricula in the form of community-based service learning, or "participatory learning communities," in which learners actively participate in making their own lives and worlds better (Auerbach, 2000, p. 146). As Johns (2001) remarks, community-based projects can offer students a chance to assume a mentoring role with less proficient others that encourages articulation of subject matter and literacy knowledge for the benefit of both the mentees and the mentors themselves. Johns observes that such projects at her own university have proved to be powerful metacognition and confidence builders, especially noticeable in the student-mentors'

poised oral presentations on university life to large audiences of both faculty and younger students. Flowerdew (2005a) tells of another approach in Hong Kong for tertiary EAP students, who chose a real-world university problem to investigate, address, and report on orally. The in-class presentation project was often a report on real world action, with students feeling empowered by having taken their suggestions, for example, for more Mandarin instruction for business-inclined biology students, to the university authorities. Starfield (2001) has called for more instructional practices of this kind, focused on the "strategies of students' discursive empowerment," in order "to help our students develop . . . the linguistic and critical abilities to negotiate the complex sociopolitical learning environments in which they find themselves" (p. 146).

Outside of academia, technology facilitates ESP learners' participation in their communities in some unexpected ways. Garcia (2002) reports on a union-sponsored English program for immigrant textile workers in Chicago that focused on more than their factory-floor oral communication needs by "target[ing] the gaps" in other areas of their work and nonwork lives, such as the need for training in computer use, which learners identified as important for "professional mobility and personal growth" (p. 170). Computer training proved a potent motivator for language learning. Outcomes of this program, interestingly, however, were measured not by increased phonological or grammatical control, although shop-floor communication breakdowns decreased, but in increased union solidarity, participation in union meetings and contract negotiations, and use of union services. Boudin (1993) reports a very different connection between technology and community involvement in her account of a course for incarcerated women that used a Freirean problem-posing approach and AIDS awareness as the content. The students wrote, produced, and videotaped a play, which not only motivated their own critical reflection and language and literacy learning, but also became a "community-building" tool (Auerbach, 2000, pp. 145), a means of reaching out to and dialoguing with the entire prison community. The discursive strategies and communication skills development supported by such approaches as just discussed are clearly aimed at producing more than linguistically proficient workers (or inmates): They serve as gateways to more confident, able, and likely participation in discourse communities both narrow and wide.

FURTHER INQUIRY

Considering the already extensive scope of ESP—its numerous and varied sites all over the world of EAP and EOP practice based on teacher

research (see Johns & Dudley-Evans, 1991, on the international appeal and practice of ESP)—it may appear odd to call for more diversity in ESP research, but a case can be made for certain research areas as having received far less attention than they deserve. The reasons for this neglect probably have more to do with resource distribution than with any prioritization based on research needs (see Canagarajah, 1996).

Although there have been numerous studies of academic and professional genres, the ESP gaze has been focused more often on written than spoken genres and on products rather than processes. Perhaps because of ESP's traditional interest in materials development and literacy (Johns & Dudley-Evans, 1991), textual description has remained popular and useful among ESP specialists. The time sensitive nature of most ESP needs analysis, curriculum development, and the very real-world needs of learners, may have militated against the more time-consuming investigations of processes and contexts, and of more ephemeral spoken interactions, which are difficult to capture. However, technology, such as digitized video and audio-streaming, is now helping address the latter gap in particular, by facilitating recording, archiving, and analysis of speech events (Murray, 2005). We should note too that computer-mediated communication, with its hosts of new hybrid written/spoken genres, such as blogs and vlogs (Web logs and video logs), is also providing increasingly varied, appealing, and accessible but still largely underexamined means of motivating both oral and literate L2 proficiencies. It remains to be seen (and researched) to what extent specific-purpose language learning, particularly in areas where learners have few opportunities for exposure to target language use, can be catalyzed by Internet access and involvement in such interactive e-forums as subject-specific discussion groups, chatrooms, and *live journals* (see Six Apart, 2005). Warschauer (2003) argues for the need to consider a very complex matrix of resources—physical and digital as well as human and social—when examining technology use for any educational purposes (see, e.g., his analysis of the "Hole-in-the-Wall" experiment in New Delhi, 2003, p. 1).

Another reason that texts and literacy have so often been the object of ESP research attention has to do with the dominance of EAP (see Johns & Dudley-Evans, 1991, and the *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, especially its premiere issue, Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002). EAP professionals, often situated in higher education, are likely to be better positioned than EOP professionals to do research (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001). Thus, though EOP spans an enormous number of domains, much less evidence of EOP than EAP knowledge construction appears in print, and when it does, the focus is often on business, law, and medicine, among the most lucrative professions. The move toward more informal publication on personal or community Web pages, with less gate keeping

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and demand for formal research genres, may make a difference, but the visibility of such sites may remain limited in the foreseeable future.

Resources also help explain the continuing influence of the center countries (e.g., the United Kingdom, United States, Australia, Canada), where most so-called international journals are published. Although published ESP research is among the most diverse in origin and consumption in ELT—with issues of *English for Specific Purposes* now often dominated by contributions from noncenter countries, and more readers of the journal outside the center than in it—the opportunities for sharing ESP knowledge and practices in refereed forums are still limited. As others have noted, when "many of the superior, but localized, ESP projects are not discussed in international publications, [it is] a great loss for teachers and materials designers everywhere" (Johns & Dudley-Evans, 1991, p. 303; see also Swales, 1988). Projects such as Muangsamai's (2003) use of Internet resources to revitalize an EAP curriculum for premedical students in Thailand have the potential, with greater visibility, to benefit many, perhaps especially those in noncenter communities where material resources may be meager. A promising development, however, is the start-up of new journals based in noncenter countries, such as the *Review of Applied Linguistics in China* and *ESP in Taiwan,* which will be especially appreciative of local perspectives but not limited to local audiences, given the possibility of electronic distribution. Certainly having more refereed publication opportunities available beyond a limited number of prestigious center journals will be a welcome development.

Thus it is not surprising that the center influences not only who but what gets published. ESP prides itself on investigating a broad range of specific varieties of English, but these varieties are related mainly to domain not "linguacultural background" (Seidlhofer, 2004, p. 230). *Variety* seldom refers to World Englishes in published ESP research. Seidlhofer (2001), who is herself addressing the need for more attention to lingua franca English through a corpus project, observes that there has been "very little empirical work [anywhere in ELT] . . . on the most extensive contemporary use of English worldwide . . . among 'non-native' speakers" (p. 133). Nickerson (2005), with ESP and especially business purposes in mind, adds to this agenda the need for research that is not exclusively focused on English but that examines its use as one of a number of languages in contexts where being multilingual is the norm.

Further attention to varieties of English as an international language may help ESP rethink its conceptualization of *expertise,* or proficient specialist language use, long the target of ESP research efforts. How often are domain experts and native or native-like speakers synonymous in ESP studies? Again with multilingual international business contexts in mind, Nickerson (2005) calls attention to another needed develop-

ment, a shift in focus away from proficiency to strategic communication—strategies that are communicatively effective "regardless of whether the speaker/writer is a native or non-native speaker" (p. 369). Perhaps with this shift would come more attention to the strategic competence needs, or deficiencies, of center English speakers communicating with noncenter-English-speaking interlocutors. In an interesting turning of the tables, global English is now returning to the center morphed into new glocalized forms spoken by those in positions of power. At a Japanese-owned auto plant in the Midwestern United States, for example, on-site ESP classes have been offered for the English-speaking Japanese managers, but, to my knowledge, no one has demanded classes on communication strategies useful for American workers conversing with Japanese English-speaking managers. As Seidlhofer (2001) has trenchantly remarked, "uncoupling" English from its native speakers "holds the exciting, if uncomfortable, prospect of bringing up for reappraisal just about *every* issue and tenet in language teaching which the profession has been traditionally concerned with" (p. 152). Accustomed as they are to addressing newly identified learner needs and their own needs in new pedagogical contexts, ESP professionals should be able to face the prospect of reappraising the role of English language teaching in a rapidly glocalizing world with a ready array of professional resources.

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THE AUTHOR

Diane Belcher is associate professor and director of graduate studies in the Department of Applied Linguistics/ESL at Georgia State University. She currently co-edits the journal *English for Specific Purposes* and a teacher reference series titled Michigan Series on Teaching Multilingual Writers. She has also guest-edited several issues of the *Journal of Second Language Writing*.

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