CHAPTER 26

ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES:

Some Influences and Impacts

KEN HYLAND

Institute of Education, The University of London, UK

ABSTRACT

The field of English for specific purposes (ESP), which addresses the communicative needs and practices of particular professional or occupational groups, has developed rapidly in the past forty years to become a major force in English language teaching and research. ESP draws its strength from an eclectic theoretical foundation and a commitment to research-based language education which seeks to reveal the constraints of social contexts on language use and the ways learners can gain control over these. In this chapter, I will briefly point to some of the major ideas and practices that currently influence ESP, focusing on needs analysis, ethnography, critical approaches, contrastive rhetoric, social constructionism, and discourse analysis. I then go on to look briefly at some of the effects ESP has had on language teaching and research, arguing that it has encouraged teachers to highlight communication rather than language, to adopt a research orientation to their work, to employ collaborative pedagogies, to be aware of discourse variation, and to consider the wider political implications of their role. Together these features of ESP practice emphasize a situated view of literacy and underline the applied nature of the field.

INTRODUCTION

English for specific purposes (ESP) refers to language research and instruction that focuses on the specific communicative needs and practices of particular social groups. Emerging out of Halliday, MacIntosh, and Strevens' (1964) groundbreaking work nearly 40 years ago, ESP started life as a branch of English language teaching, promising a stronger descriptive foundation for pedagogic materials. In the years since, ESP has consistently been at the cutting-edge of both theory development and innovative practice in applied linguistics, making a significant contribution to our understanding of the varied ways language is used in particular communities. Drawing on a range of interdisciplinary influences for its research methods, theory, and practices, ESP has consistently provided grounded insights into the structures and meanings of texts, the demands placed by academic or workplace contexts on communicative behaviors, and the pedagogic practices by which these behaviors can be developed. In this chapter I will sketch out what I see as some of the major ideas which currently influence work in ESP, and briefly comment on some of the effects it has had on language teaching and research.

SOME INFLUENCES ON ESP

It is its interdisciplinarity, an openness to the approaches and insights of other fields, which helps distinguish ESP and underlies its understandings and practices. Its closest connections, of course, are to applied linguistics and particularly to discourse analysis. We can, however, also see strong links between ESP and pragmatics, communicative language teaching, corporate communications, writing across the curriculum, rhetoric, critical literacy, sociocognitive theory, and the sociology of scientific knowledge. This willingness to embrace and unite different disciplinary perspectives gives ESP its distinctiveness and helps to identify what it stands for. In this chapter I want to briefly introduce six of the most salient aspects of these perspectives as key influences: (a) needs analysis, (b) ethnography, (c) critical perspectives, (d) contrastive rhetoric, (e) social constructionism, and (f) discourse analysis.

This is perhaps an idiosyncratic list, but these are the core ideas which define what ESP seeks to do and the ways it currently chooses to do it, assisting practitioners to interpret how aspects of the real communicative world work and to translate these understandings into practical classroom applications.

Needs Analysis

While not unique to ESP, needs analysis is a defining element of its practices and a major source of its interdisciplinarity (e.g., Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). The use of systematic means to define the specific sets of skills, texts, linguistic forms, and communicative practices that a particular group of learners must acquire is central to ESP, informing its curricula and materials and underlining its pragmatic engagement with occupational, academic, and professional realities. It is a crucial link between perception and practice, helping ESP to keep its feet on the ground by tempering any excesses of academic theory-building with practical applications.

Analysis presupposes an understanding of what must be analyzed and a theoretical framework for describing it. Both have changed over time. Early needs analyses focused on the lexical and syntactic features of texts of particular registers, or domains with discernible linguistic features, by establishing the distinctiveness of scientific and technical varieties of English. Interest then moved to the rhetorical macro-structure of specialist texts (Trimble, 1985) to describe expository writing as nested patterns of functional units. In Europe this approach was informed by functional-notional syllabi and attempts to specify, in functional terms, the competence levels students needed for particular activities (Munby, 1978). This interest in locating texts more deeply in their social contexts has continued through to the present as work has increasingly sought to develop an understanding of the social processes in which academic and workplace writing is sited. The use of genre analysis pioneered by Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993), for instance, has provided a useful tool for understanding community situated language use and describing specific target texts required by learners.

Both pragmatic and rhetorical analyses have become more sophisticated and diverse, but simultaneously, the concept of *need* has been expanded beyond the linguistic skills and knowledge required to perform competently in a target situation. On one hand, it has moved to include *learner needs*, or what the learner must do in order to learn, incorporating both the learner's starting point and his/her perceptions

of need (Hutchison & Waters, 1987). Most recently, the question of 'who's needs?' has been asked more critically, raising questions about target goals and the interests they serve rather than assuming they should exclusively guide instruction. The term *rights analysis* has been introduced to refer to a framework for studying power relations in classrooms and institutions and for organizing students and teachers to bring about greater equality (Benesch, 2001). Clearly however, the imperative of need, to understand learners, target contexts, discourses, and socio-political context, means that the starting point for any ESP activity must be a strong research base.

Ethnography

The second major influence on ESP has emerged more recently but has begun to make a significant impact on the ways we understand both language use and language learning. The movement away from an exclusive focus on texts to the practices that surround their use has been enormously facilitated by ethnographic studies. *Ethnography* is a type of research that undertakes to give a participant-oriented description of individuals' cultural practices. The term remains fuzzy and is often used loosely to refer to any qualitative method, but essentially it focuses on a holistic explanation of communicative behavior by drawing on the conceptual frameworks of insiders themselves. Members of discourse communities and the physical settings in which they work thus become the primary focus of study, with detailed observations of behaviors together with interviews and the analysis of texts, to provide a fuller picture of what is happening.

Ethnography has been important in ESP in three main ways. First, it has begun to provide valuable insights into target contexts, helping to identify the discursive practices involved in the production, distribution, and consumption of texts. So, for example, this approach was used by Gollin (1999) to analyze a collaborative writing project in a professional Australian workplace, and by Flowerdew and Miller (1995) to study L2 academic listening in Hong Kong. Second, ethnographic techniques have also been useful in exploring student practices, revealing how they participate in their learning, engage with their teachers, and experience their engagement as peripheral members of new communities. An excellent example of this kind of work is provided in Prior's (1998) studies of the disciplinary enculturation of graduate students through writing and their interactions with peers and professors. Third, ethnography has been used to argue for pedagogic appropriacy in contexts where overseas students study in Anglo countries or where Anglo teachers and curricula are employed in overseas settings. Holliday's (1994) ethnographic study of a large scale English for academic purposes (EAP) project in Egypt, for instance, underlines the need for sensitivity to local teaching models and expectations.

Critical Perspectives

Critical perspectives have only recently begun to have much of an influence on ESP, but they are now having an increasing impact on the ways teachers see and practice their profession. I noted above that, in its early years, ESP was largely concerned with identifying and describing formal, quantifiable text features without a great deal of social awareness. The growth of a more socially informed approach, however, has also brought a greater willingness to interrogate the assumptions on

which theory and practice are based. This is apparent in various ways, but I think it is important to mention two.

First, it has helped to develop a growing sense in ESP that a social-theoretical stance is needed to fully understand what happens in institutions to make discourses the way they are. Increasingly, studies have turned to examine the ideological impact of expert discourses, the social distribution of valued literacies, access to prestigious genres, and the ways control of specialized discourses are related to status and credibility (Hyland, 2000). The values, beliefs, and ideologies of speakers and writers are seen in the distribution of particular features in texts and the ways texts are used, and are taken into account to understand and explain discourse practices. Issues such as individual competitiveness, alliances among particular groups, the role of gatekeepers, and vested interests in institutional reward systems have therefore become legitimate areas of ESP research.

Second, critical perspectives remind us that ESP teaching itself is not a politically neutral activity. Phillipson (1992), for instance, argues that marketing English as a global commodity is essentially ideological as it not only threatens local languages but also works to maintain socio-political elites. More directly, Pennycook (1997) believes that ESP should not simply accept the demands of global business and the academy. Instead, it should question the status quo and help students to develop a critical awareness of how language works to support institutional hierarchies and inequalities. More recently, Benesch (2001) has argued that ESP in universities can achieve its aims more effectively by engaging with issues of power, describing a teaching approach that tries to modify target context arrangements rather than reinforcing conformity. The main view here then is that our teaching practices should be less *accommodationist* to dominant political and institutional orders, helping students to perform the best they can while "encouraging them to question and shape the education they are getting" (Benesch, p. xvii).

Contrastive Rhetoric

The influence of *contrastive rhetoric*, the ways that first language and culture affect second language writing, has been particularly significant in EAP. Contrastive rhetoric has contributed a great deal to our understanding of the preferred patterns of writing of different cultural groups (Connor, 1996) and has also influenced the study of academic and professional cultures.

Only in the last 10 years has the field of Academic English taken the issue of students' culture seriously. This is partly because early formulations of contrastive rhetoric were seen as rather ethnocentric and prescriptive, and partly because of a well-established attitude that, in the fields of science and technology, there is an independent scientific culture expressed by a universal rhetoric. There are still reservations about contrastive rhetoric as it is often difficult to establish equivalent writing tasks across cultures and to distinguish the effects of first language from those of limited proficiency on the writing of non-native learners (Hyland & Milton, 1997). However, a growing number of studies has provided considerable evidence for cultural-specificity in preferred structures of exposition and argumentation across a large number of languages. These cultural preferences include different organizational patterns, different persuasive appeals, different ways of incorporating material, different uses of cohesion and metadiscourse, and different uses of

linguistic features (Connor, 1996; Hinkel, 1999). It seems reasonable to assume that such differences may influence how students write in English.

The view that discoursal and rhetorical features of writing might reflect the cultural experiences of individuals has been enthusiastically taken up by ESP in other areas, revealing the discursive homogeneity of social and professional communities. Each discipline or profession can be seen as constituting a separate culture with its particular norms, nomenclature, bodies of knowledge, sets of conventions, and modes of inquiry (Bartholomae, 1986; Swales, 1990). Within each culture, individuals acquire specialized discourse competencies that allow them to participate as group members. These cultures differ along both social and cognitive dimensions, offering contrasts not only in their fields of knowledge, but in their aims, social behaviors, power relations, political interests, ways of talking, and structures of argument. Contrastive rhetoric also draws attention to the fact that we are members of several such cultures simultaneously and critically highlights the conflicts inherent in these multiple memberships. In particular it emphasizes the potential clashes between the discourse conventions of professional and ethnic cultures. The question of who establishes the linguistic conventions of professional communities and whose norms are used to judge them is a central issue in ESP, and researchers have questioned the traditional view that those familiar with other conventions need to conform to Anglo-American norms when engaging in professional and particularly academic genres (e.g., Ventola, 1992). Many post-colonial countries have developed thriving indigenous varieties of English, which are widely used and accepted locally but which diverge from international standards. ESP teachers now take the issue of appropriate models for EAP and English for occupational purposes (EOP) seriously, exploring how far the professions, corporations, and disciplines in which they work tolerate differences in rhetorical styles.

Social Constructionist Theory

Originating in the symbolic interactionism of Mead (1934) and developed within social psychology and post-modern philosophy, *social constructionism* is probably the mainstream theoretical perspective in ESP and EAP research today. The perspective mainly gained prominence in ESP through research on scientists' lab activities by those working in the sociology of scientific knowledge (e.g., Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984; Latour & Woolgar, 1979) and the rhetorical analyses of scientific texts by Bazerman (1988), Myers (1990), and Swales (1990).

Basically social constructivism suggests that knowledge and social reality are created through daily interactions between people and particularly through their discourse. It takes a critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge and, in opposition to positivism and empiricism in traditional science, questions the idea of an objective reality. It says that everything we see and believe is actually filtered through our theories and our language, sustained by social processes, which are culturally and historically specific. Discourse is therefore central to relationships, knowledge, and scientific facts as all are rhetorically constructed by individuals acting as members of social communities. The goal of ESP is therefore to discover how people use discourse to create, sustain, and change these communities; how they signal their membership; how they persuade others to accept their ideas; and so on. Stubbs (1996) succinctly combines these issues into a single question:

> The major intellectual puzzle in the social sciences is the relation between the micro and the macro. How is it that routine everyday behavior, from moment to moment, can create and maintain social institutions over long periods of time? (p. 21)

Social construction has thus become a central theoretical underpinning of work in ESP. It sets a research agenda focused on revealing the genres and communicative conventions that display membership of academic and professional communities, and a pedagogic agenda focused on employing this awareness to best help learners critique and participate in such communities. Swales (2001) points out that social constructionism is attractive to those working in ESP as it gives them "an enhanced place in the study of academic tribes and territories" (p. 48), putting discourse at the center of human endeavor and elevating the role of those who study it. The fact that this view makes truth relative to the discourses of social groups has not, however, always endeared ESP practitioners to those who prefer a less tenuous connection between reality and accounts of it, not least the scientists, academics, and professionals they study.

Nor have constructionists yet managed to agree on precisely what the term *community* means, despite its importance in this approach. Harris (1989), for example, argues we should restrict the term to specific local groups, and labels other uses as "discursive utopias" (p.18). Clearly if communities are regarded as real, stable groups conforming to certain shared and agreed upon values and conventions, there is a risk of representing them as static, abstract, and deterministic. Discourse communities, however, are not monolithic and unitary structures but involve interactions between individuals with diverse experiences, commitments, and influence. As a result, Porter (1992) understands a community in terms of its *forums* or approved channels of discourse, and Swales (1998) sees them as groups constituted by their typical genres, of how they get things done, rather than existing through physical membership. For the most part, recent research has sought to capture the explanatory and predictive authority of the concept by replacing the idea of an overarching force that determines behavior with that of systems in which multiple beliefs and practices overlap and intersect (Hyland, 2000).

Discourse Analysis

Finally, discourse analysis, probably the most important item in the ESP toolbox is discussed. *Discourse analysis* takes a variety of different forms, but in ESP it has traditionally involved attention to features of texts and their rhetorical purposes as a basis for pedagogical materials. This approach has been strongly influenced by *Systemic Functional Linguistics* (e.g., Halliday, 1994), a sophisticated theory of language concerned with the relationship between language and the functions it uses to perform in social contexts. In this view, language consists of a set of systems from which users make choices to most effectively express their intended meanings, and this fits neatly with ESP's aims to demystify the academic and professional genres that will enhance or determine learners' career opportunities. Genre analysis has thus become the principal form of discourse analysis in ESP, providing a very focused methodology and enabling researchers to identify the structural and rhetorical features that distinguish the texts most relevant to particular communities and contexts.

Genres are abstract, socially recognized ways of using language that we draw on to respond to perceived repeated situations. In ESP a fruitful line of research has been to explore and identify the characteristic lexico-grammatical features and rhetorical patterns of particular genres. This has helped to reveal how texts are typically constructed and how they relate to their contexts of use through specific social purposes, as well as providing valuable input for genre-based teaching. Genre analyses also characterize the processes by which texts and events are mediated through relationships with other texts, drawing on the concept of *intertextuality* (Bakhtin, 1986). The idea that any instance of discourse is partly created from previous discourses and reflected in subsequent ones is an important way of conceptualizing cultures. It also helps us to understand the ways that texts cluster to constitute particular social and cultural practices, networked in a linear sequence, as in the case of a formal job offer for instance, or more loosely cohering as a repertoire of options, say in the choice of a press advertisement, poster campaign, or mail shot to announce a product launch. Analyses have been greatly facilitated in recent years by the use of large text corpora and computer concordancing programs, which make reliable quantitative analysis more feasible. Researchers can now collect representative samples of texts differentiated by both genre and field and, with frequency counts and collocational analyses, produce more targeted and more plausible linguistic descriptions.

This is not the only way to see genre however, and analyses have broadened in recent years beyond the study of discoursal features to investigate the contexts in which they are produced and used. This involves studying genre "as the motivated, functional relationship between text type and rhetorical situation" (Coe, 2001, p. 195) and aims to extend text analyses to uncover something of the attitudes, values, and beliefs of the communities of text users that genres imply and construct.

In addition to being a valuable research tool, discourse analysis has also become a central teaching method in ESP, with a commitment to exploiting relevant and authentic texts in the classroom through tasks which increase awareness of their purpose and their linguistic and rhetorical features. More generally, providing students with an explicit knowledge of relevant genres is seen as a means of helping learners gain access to ways of communicating that have accrued cultural capital in particular communities. Genre approaches, in fact, also seem to offer the most effective means for learners to critique cultural and linguistic resources (Hyland, 2002b). The provision of a rhetorical understanding of texts and a metalanguage to analyze them allows students to see texts as artifacts that can be explicitly questioned, compared, and deconstructed, so revealing the assumptions and ideologies that underlie them.

SOME IMPACTS OF ESP

By way of balance, I would like to complete this chapter with a brief consideration of what all this amounts to and where these influences have taken ESP by looking at some of the effects ESP has had on language teaching. Basically, ESP coheres around a general acceptance that institutional practices and understandings strongly influence the language and communicative behaviors of individuals. It also stresses that it is important to identify these factors in designing teaching tasks and materials to give students access to valued discourses and the means to see them critically. I want to draw attention to five aspects of this characterization: (a) the study of

communication rather than language, (b) the role of teacher as researcher, (c) the importance of collaborative pedagogies, (d) the centrality of language variation, and (e) the view that language represents broader social practices.

The Study of Communication not Language

Clearly ESP has moved some way from its original exclusive focus on text features. In the past, materials were often based solely on the lexical and grammatical characteristics of scientific and business discourses in isolation from their social contexts. Today these materials have largely been replaced by those that acknowledge wider interactional and semiotic contexts, where language and tasks are more closely related to the situations in which they are used. ESP practitioners now address wider communicative skills in their teaching. In the area of research, ESP attempts to go beyond texts to understand how they work in particular disciplines or professions, seeing genres, for instance, as recognizable kinds of social activity embedded in particular kinds of interaction rather than just arrangements of forms.

To understand language and the functions it performs for people, we have to appreciate how it is used within particular contexts, identifying the purposes and participants that are integral to the construction of particular communicative processes and products. We need, for instance, to understand the interpersonal conventions a sales manager might observe when giving a client presentation or the knowledge a chemist assumes of his or her audience when writing up a lab report. In the classroom, these concerns translate into finding ways of preparing students to participate in a range of activities and to see ESP as concerned with communicative practices rather than more narrowly with specific aspects of language.

The Teacher as Researcher

ESP is, fundamentally, research-based language education: a pedagogy for learners with identifiable professional, academic, and occupational communicative needs. This means that teachers cannot simply be the consumers of materials and research findings but must follow the imperative of specificity. They must consider the relevance of studies to their own learners and conduct their own target situation analyses and their own research into local contexts. While ESP textbooks and so called "English for General Academic Purposes" or "English for General Business Purposes" courses are still widespread, there is a growing awareness in the field of the limited transferability of skills, forms, and discourses across situations (Hyland, 2002a). In addition, teachers have not only become researchers of the genres and communicative practices of target situations, but also of their classrooms. As I mentioned above, teachers have used qualitative techniques such as observations and interviews to discover students' reactions to assignments, the ways they learn, and content instructors' reactions to learners' participation and performance. This information then feeds back into the design of ESP courses in the materials, tasks, and problems that are employed in the classroom.

Collaborative Pedagogies

A third major impact is the distinctive methodological approach that ESP has developed as a result of its view of specificity. ESP necessarily works in tandem with the specialist fields it seeks to describe, explain, and teach, bringing an expertise in communicative practices to the subject specific skills and knowledge of those working in particular target areas. It is a central tenet of ESP that professional communities possess their own distinguishing discoursal practices, genres, and communicative conventions, which arise from different ways of carrying out their work and of seeing the world. Because ESP learners need to acquire competence in particular genres and specific communicative skills along with the knowledge and tradecraft of their professions, this knowledge becomes the context for learning. The topics, content, and practices of the profession thus act as vehicles for teaching particular discourses and communicative skills. The fact that the ESP practitioner is generally a novice in these areas means that collaboration with both students and subject specialists is essential.

Students bring to their ESP classes some knowledge of their specialist fields and the kinds of communication that go on within them, and this latent communication knowledge is important in a number of ways. Importantly, it means that ESP teachers need to negotiate their courses with learners drawing on their specialist expertise to promote relevant communicative activities in the classroom. An imperative of ESP has always been a reliance on tasks and materials that display authenticity or faithfulness to real-world texts and purposes, and learners themselves are among the best arbiters of this kind of appropriacy. Another way that teachers often collaborate with learners is to employ this specialist knowledge as a learning resource. Much current ESP is strongly focused on rhetorical consciousness-raising, helping students to become more aware of the language, discourses, and communicative practices in their fields. This means the teacher is closely involved in assisting learners to activate and build on their latent understandings perhaps harnessing the methods of their fields to explore the ways that communicative intentions are expressed (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998).

Teachers also often need to collaborate with subject experts, and there are a number of ways this can operate. The specialist can assist as an informant, providing teachers, or students, with background and insights into the kinds of practices that experts engage in and their understandings of the texts they use (Johns, 1997). Alternatively such collaboration can involve the specialist acting as a consultant, assisting the ESP teacher to select authentic texts and tasks. More centrally, ESP courses often involve the direct collaboration of subject specialists, either through team teaching or by *linked courses*, integrating an ESP course with the activities of a specialist course by jointly planning tasks and coordinating instruction (e.g., Haas, Smoke, & Hernandez, 1991).

The Importance of Discourse Variation

While the argument for a "common core" of generic skills and linguistic forms is still occasionally made, ESP research has strongly reinforced the view that professional and academic discourses represent a variety of specific literacies. A recurring theme through this chapter has been that each community has different purposes and ways of seeing the world, which are closely related to distinct

practices, genres, and communicative conventions. As a result, investigating and teaching the communicative practices of those disciplines inevitably takes us to greater specificity. The idea of linguistic variation has been central to ESP since its inception and owes its origins to Michael Halliday's work on register in the 1970s, but it has gathered momentum as a result of a number of factors.

One contributing factor has been a growing awareness of the complexities of community literacies and the training that leads to professional membership. In universities a large body of survey research carried out during the 1980s and early 1990s revealed the considerable variation of discourses across the curriculum (e.g., Horowitz, 1986). This work showed that not only did different disciplines employ different genres but that the structure of common genres, such as the experimental lab report, differed completely across disciplines (Braine, 1995). The growth of modular degrees and interdisciplinary courses has made matters even more linguistically demanding for students, and recent case studies of individual students and courses reinforce this picture revealing marked diversities of task and texts in different fields (e.g., Candlin & Plum, 1999; Prior, 1998). In the workplace, discursive competence is increasingly recognized as a marker of professional expertise. References to specific communicative abilities are now often seen in the professional competency statements of nursing, law, and accountancy while caregivers, therapists, doctors, and other professionals are often judged in terms of their ability to gather and give information effectively in their particular contexts.

As I have noted, the idea of multiple literacies is supported by text analysis research. Successful communication depends on the projection of a shared context. Communication is effective to the extent that participants draw on knowledge of prior texts to frame messages in ways that appeal to appropriate cultural and institutional relationships. This directs us to the ways professional texts vary not only in their content but also in different appeals to background knowledge, different means of persuasion, and different ways of engaging with readers. In sum, this research shows that professional discourses are not uniform and monolithic differentiated only by specialist topics and vocabularies. It also undermines the idea that there is a single literacy that can be taught as a set of discrete, value-free technical skills across all situations. This helps teachers to see that weaknesses in English has little to do with a deficit of literacy skills which can be topped up in a few English classes and leads ESP to find ways of integrating the teaching and learning of language with the teaching and learning of disciplines and professions.

Language and Institutional Practices: Replication or Contestation?

Together with work in New Literacy Studies (e.g., Barton & Hamilton, 1998), ESP has begun to provide textual evidence for the view that language use is always socially situated and indicative of broader social practices. With the emergence of critical pedagogies, it has also raised questions about whether the teacher's responsibility lies in replicating and reproducing existing forms of discourse (and thus power relations) or of developing these in principled ways.

ESP's previous lack of engagement with critical issues was partly a result of its pragmatic origins in the 1970s oil boom and its tendency to "follow the dollar" through a global migration of teachers and students. While promoting an international outlook, this background may have encouraged a certain complacency or unquestioning acceptance of the value of this enterprise and the ways it was

carried out. Practitioners rarely gave much thought to, and almost never sought to challenge, the power structures that erected and supported the prestigious literacy practices they taught. There is now greater awareness of critical issues and of the relationships between language and power, but the discipline has still to seriously confront these issues. This is partly a factor of the institutional constraints acting on ESP contexts themselves. In universities, ESP staff are frequently employed as vulnerable, short-term instructors in marginalized "service units." In the private sector, their status is normally greater, but here they are often contracted to provide a commercially evaluated product such as a course or materials for a paying client. Ways of facilitating change in such environments remain to be explored.

CONCLUSIONS

This brief overview has been necessarily selective, as limitations of space prevent a fuller coverage of the disciplines and theories that have influenced the growth of ESP and of the influences it has itself had on applied linguistics. Nor has it been possible to do justice to those areas that have been included, and the key ideas and contributors mentioned are worth following up in the literature.

There are, however, two clear ideas that emerge from this survey and which might stand for a synopsis of the field. First is the fact that ESP is clearly founded on the idea that we use language as members of social groups. This in turn means that it is concerned with communication rather than language and with the ways texts are created and used, rejecting an autonomous view of literacy to look at the practices of real people communicating in real contexts. The second point is that ESP is unashamedly applied. It should be clear that the term *applied* does not mean lacking a theory. It means gathering strength by drawing on those disciplines and ideas that offer the most for understanding and for classroom practice. Not only is there an interdisciplinary research base at the heart of ESP, but this eclecticism results in a clear theoretical stance that distils down to three main commitments: to linguistic analysis, to the principle of contextual relevance, and to the classroom replication of community-specific communicative events.

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