

**Towards diversity in language education through
“Teaching and researching English for Specific Purposes” – a book review**

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Monika Kusiak-Pisowacka
Jagiellonian University, Poland; monika.kusiak@interia.pl

This is a review of *Teaching and researching English for Specific Purposes* by Elżbieta Lesiak-Bielawska published in 2018 by Księgarnia Akademicka in Kraków. Elżbieta Lesiak-Bielawska holds a PhD degree in linguistics and works in Fryderyk Chopin University of Music in Warsaw and Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, where she conducts English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses for music students and future doctors. Her research interests focus on foreign language learning and teaching, in particular investigating individual differences, blended instruction and the specificity of teaching ESP, the issue that she pursues in the book reviewed here.

The publication is directed to foreign language teachers. Its main goal is to present an overview of theoretical perspectives and empirical studies that have influenced the development of ESP teaching practices. It is crucial to emphasize that teaching languages for specific purposes, with priority given to English, seems particularly important nowadays; a dominant position of English in a globalized world of academia and business makes this kind of language instruction extremely useful. In relation to the ERL framework, the book addresses the research issues discussed in the Language and Schooling strand as well as the Language and Culture strand. When studying English for Specific Purposes, e.g. English for Medical Purposes or English for Business Purposes, be it in a formal setting or in a more natural context, a learner prepares him/herself to enter new social communities, which will involve experiencing new cultures. In this way, learning ESP becomes a socio-cognitive phenomenon. I believe that any new contribution to theoretical and empirical debates on the complex nature of ESP teaching will be of interest to those involved in this foreign language instruction.

The monograph consists of eight chapters, most of which are devoted to the most important aspects of ESP education, such as needs analysis, syllabus development, didactic materials and evaluation. The book also familiarizes the reader with the history of ESP teaching and elucidates a specific character of ESP contexts.

Chapter One defines ESP teaching practice and discusses the dominance of English in the world of science, technology, and commerce. Subsequently, it presents historical developments in the area of ESP. The discussion of recent trends is limited to Western and Eastern Europe, the United States, Asia, and Australasia. It is worth noting that this overview does not omit Poland. The author presents how ESP research developed in Poland, emphasizing the role of the Institute of Applied Linguistics at the University of Warsaw and other academic institutions. Because of its thorough discussion and up to date information, I consider the first chapter to be a very good introduction to the next sections of the book.

Chapter Two focusses on the main principles of ESP instruction. Two types of teaching are discussed: English for General Purposes (EGP) teaching and ESP instruction; the relationship between them is explained as well. Considerable attention is devoted to the approaches applied in both EGP and ESP teaching, such as the activity-oriented approach, skill-oriented approach, genre-oriented approach and task-oriented approach. The chapter winds up with a discussion on a complex nature of ESP teacher's work. To elucidate the multiple roles that an ESP teacher can perform in the process of ESP instruction. An interesting taxonomy (p. 78) is suggested.

Chapter Three discusses the concept of needs analysis, which Lesiak-Bielawska (p. 83) considers as “the first step in ESP course development which provides validity and relevance for all subsequent course design activities.” Having read this sentence, the reader of this chapter would expect clear guidelines concerning this important stage in the ESP program. Instead, what follows is an overview of theoretical perspectives, e.g. text analysis, corpus linguistics, that influence ESP studies. Even if we assume that ESP practitioners should familiarize themselves with a handful of ESP research, this part of discussion, although without any doubt interesting, can appear a little confusing for potential readers. I think a more direct explanation of the usefulness of the presented theories in the task of designing an ESP course would be appreciated.

Chapter Four presents a series of issues related to ESP curriculum and syllabus development. By referring to the previous chapter, the author demonstrates that to make teaching successful, an ESP course should draw on the findings of the needs analysis conducted at an earlier stage in syllabus design. The first thing that I noticed when reading this chapter was an unclear way of distinguishing the two terms: “curriculum” and “syllabus”. The title of the chapter implies that the two terms mean something different; however, the definitions of “curriculum” and “syllabus” provided by the author suggest that the two terms mean the same. It seems to be the only inconsistency in this part of the book. The rest of the text is an interesting discussion illustrated with examples taken from an ESP class for musicians; the transcripts of the lecture for instrumentalists are provided to show that: “The content functions as a carrier of language rather than a means of providing information about the language” (p. 109).

Chapter Five focuses on ESP materials selection and design. The author offers an extensive discussion of the following issues related to this stage in ESP teaching: the main functions of ESP materials, methods of selecting and collecting materials, specificity and authenticity of ESP materials. Due attention is paid to ESP textbooks, their features, selection and evaluation. Examples of ESP programs and training materials are useful illustrations of the arguments presented in this part of the book.

Chapter Six is an overview of the key issues related to ESP learner assessment and course evaluation such as low-stakes tests versus high-stakes tests and selection of evaluators (insiders versus outsiders). The author analyses a selection of contemporary high-stakes tests and organizations that conduct such tests, e.g., the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Educational Testing Service. Problems connected with constructing lists of criteria for low-stakes tests are also discussed.

Chapter Seven explores the use of technology in ESP research and instruction. Taking into account an unquestionable role that technology plays in today’s education and research, I view this chapter as a valuable source of information. Lesiak-Bielawska discusses multiple functions that technology can serve in language instruction: as a collection of authentic ESP materials, a collection of teaching / learning tools and a communicative space. Numerous examples of Internet-based materials are provided, which makes the discussion more interesting. As regards the use of technology in ESP research, the benefits of language corpora are underlined; exploring language corpora “facilitates ESP research work and enables researchers to gain new insights into the language and genres of different disciplines” (14).

In the last chapter, a relatively short one, the author draws conclusions and presents implications for future studies.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of the book? An undeniable advantage of this publication is the topic, which still can be regarded as under investigated. Although most EFL teachers would consider themselves as teachers of English for General Purposes (EGP), the number of classes that focus on ESP is rapidly increasing. It becomes evident that in many professions the skills to use English are required. Thus, it can be assumed that nowadays teaching English as a FL, an L2 or an additional language should include elements of ESP. Unfortunately, most teacher training courses do not

provide their students with sufficient preparation and as a result, ESP instruction is still a challenge for language educators. In this situation, publications as the one reviewed can offer unquestionable help.

Another merit of the publication is an extensive coverage of the topic of ESP. This comprehensive discussion of various aspects of ESP instruction and research can be of interest to those who would like to systematize their knowledge of ESP teaching. It can be also appreciated by academics and practitioners who plan to embark on their own ESP study. The rich bibliography, in which also Polish scholars are included, can be an inspiration for their research efforts. The names index placed at the end of the book will facilitate reading; I wish the author had included also a subject index.

There are some aspects of the book that the author could have treated in a slightly different manner. The author claims that the publication is dedicated mainly to ESP practitioners. However, there are not many direct recommendations for practicing teachers. It is a pity that the author did not decide to share with readers some of her rich experience as an ESP teacher.

In summary, the publication is successful as it contributes to our understanding of ESP instruction and problems that teachers can encounter. It also familiarizes readers with a history of ESP development and most recent studies in ESP trends. I hope that it will encourage the members of the Educational Role of Language research network to re-examine their teaching practices and launch new studies in the ESP area.