

Karen BARTO

# Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language

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FOURTH EDITION

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**EDITORS**



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## Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language, Fourth Edition

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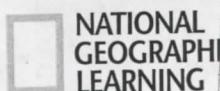
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# English for Specific Purposes: International in Scope, Specific in Purpose

ANN M. JOHNS AND DONNA PRICE

## KEY QUESTIONS

- How is English for specific purposes different from other approaches to second or foreign language teaching and curriculum design? What are its distinguishing characteristics?
- How has English for specific purposes evolved? What is its history?
- What happens in the English for specific purposes classroom?

## EXPERIENCE

Antoine is from Haiti and has been living in the United States with his wife and children for nine months. He is getting financial assistance from the government, which will last for six more months. He began his program in the United States by studying in an intermediate English as a second language (ESL) class in a noncredit adult education program. However, he is worried that the topics and skills he is learning are too general, and he needs to get a job as soon as possible.

Antoine sits with a counselor, and they examine the class schedule together. The counselor presents one possibility—to enroll in a job skills class. However, for this path, Antoine needs to finish his intermediate ESL class and continue with two more semesters in advanced ESL. Then he can enroll in a career technical education (CTE) class, such as auto mechanics, welding, or nursing assistant. He looks at the counselor in desperation and says, “I don’t have time to study for two more years before I get job training! My financial assistance will be cut in six months. What can I do?” The counselor suggests a second possibility—a vocational ESL (VESL) class, where students learn English for their career goals. In addition to the VESL class, he can enroll in a reading class that he can complete online in the computer lab. In the semester-long VESL class,

he will continue learning English, but it will be in the context of the career field he chooses, and this will prepare him for the CTE class, which will require 6–12 months. After completing the VESL class, Antoine will be more prepared to go into the CTE class of his choice. The VESL pathway reduces the amount of time for Antoine to meet his goal of obtaining job skills within one year; and in addition, with the language and vocabulary Antoine learns in this class, he can apply for a job and, if he’s fortunate, be given on-the-job training.

## WHAT IS ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES?

English for specific purposes (ESP) is a pedagogical movement in applied linguistics devoted to creating research-based English language materials and instruction for (mostly adult) students with specific language learning goals directly related to their current or future academic, professional, or vocational lives and contexts. Before designing a course for a group of students—and while the course is being given—ESP practitioners conduct research into the students’ language needs, their wants, and their academic and professional goals (needs assessment) as well as into the discourses and cultures where

the students will be working or studying (target situation analysis). This intensive initial and reoccurring attention to a specific group of students' needs and language proficiencies and the contexts in which they will be using the language is "the cornerstone of ESP—and it leads to a very focused course" (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998, p. 122). As a result of this focused research and the resulting focused curricula, ESP is often contrasted with teaching English for no apparent reason (TENAR) or general English instruction that is not based on a careful assessment of a particular group's specific language learning needs and target situation but instead is intended to cover the presumed fundamentals of the language.

ESP experts are in considerable agreement about its core characteristics. Strevens's (1988) list, later revised by Dudley-Evans and St John (1998), identifies the absolute and variable features of ESP curricula and teaching.

*Absolute characteristics:* ESP consists of English language teaching which is:

- Designed to meet the *specified* needs of the learner;
- Related in content (i.e., in its themes and topics) to particular disciplines, occupations and activities (and contexts);
- Centered on the language (and behaviors) appropriate to those activities in syntax, lexis, discourse, semantics (etc.) and analysis of this discourse;
- In contrast with General English.

*Variable characteristics:* ESP may be, but is not necessarily:

- Restricted as to the language skills to be learned (e.g., reading only);
- Not taught according to any *pre-ordained* methodology. (p. 2)

It can be seen, then, that ESP is a practitioners' movement based on the proposition that language teaching methodologies should be well researched and carefully focused—tailored to the specific learning and language use needs and goals of identified groups of students—and that curricula should be sensitive to the sociocultural and discourse contexts in which these students will use the language.

## CONCEPTUAL UNDERPINNINGS

### History of ESP

The creation of materials for and instruction in languages for specific purposes (LSP) have a long history, initiated in ancient times as people traveled and came into contact with speakers of other languages but had a limited amount of time to develop the competence needed to communicate, conduct their business, or study in their new contexts. In the twentieth century, as English became the predominant global language, the LSP for the world increasingly became ESP. According to Uber Grosse (1988), the modern ESP movement began in England in the 1920s and has continued apace, especially in the British colonies and, now, throughout the world.

John Swales, arguably the most prominent ESP scholar of the late twentieth century, has written a history of the modern movement, *Episodes in ESP* (1988). In this volume, he marks the beginning of the post-World War II, post-colonial ESP period with a research article by Barber (1962/1985) entitled "Some Measurable Characteristics of Modern Scientific Prose." He then proceeds to demonstrate, through other entries, the connections between the evolution of ESP research and pedagogical approaches. The close relationship among research into student needs and goals, their discourses of use, and the resulting pedagogy has continued throughout ESP's modern history. What has changed over the years is the diversity of approaches to research and pedagogies, paralleling similar developments in applied linguistics (Belcher, Johns, & Paltridge, 2011; Long, 2005).

The early years of ESP can be divided into at least five stages (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987):

1. *Register analysis.* In the 1960s and 1970s, the aim was to identify the grammatical and lexical features of the target discipline (e.g., electrical engineering) and then develop teaching materials around the linguistic features identified.
2. *Discourse analysis.* This stage moved beyond the sentence level as ESP practitioners used discourse analysis to examine the textual patterns in the targeted discipline. They were interested, for example, in how a biology text might be organized in terms of description, definition, classification, causality, and so on.

3. *Target situation analysis.* This stage was characterized by the use of target situation analysis and needs assessment to identify and elucidate learners' needs and wants. By the 1980s, the focus expanded to include not only the language that ESP learners needed for a particular target situation but also the thinking processes that underlie language use.
4. *Skills and strategies.* An emphasis on skills and strategies led to the development of materials that assisted learners to acquire strategic reading skills, such as guessing the meaning of unknown vocabulary from context and looking at how meaning is produced in spoken discourse.
5. *Learning-centered approach.* This stage moved beyond the different conceptualizations of language use in the earlier stages by offering a broader focus on understanding the processes of language learning.

As indicated in a study of the most prominent ESP publication, *English for Specific Purposes: An International Journal*, established in 1981, much of the published needs assessment and target situation research has dealt with the written discourse important to students' academic success, particularly in the sciences (Hewings, 2001). Since John Swales's ground-breaking work on written language, *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings* (1990), ESP researchers have increasingly turned to the term *genre* for their discourse analyses to acknowledge that written and spoken discourses should be viewed as situated, purposeful, contextualized, communicative actions taken by a speaker or writer. Thus, for example, there are purposeful academic genres (e.g., research articles, proposals, abstracts, and lab reports), professional genres (e.g., legal briefs, business letters, and resumes), and vocational genres (e.g., application forms, accident reports, and work schedules), all of which can be researched to tease out their functions, discourse structures, grammar, vocabulary, and visual features as practitioners develop curricula and pedagogies for a particular group of students and a specified context (Paltridge, 2001).

The *English for Specific Purposes* journal continues to be the major research arm of the ESP movement; however, since ESP is an international initiative developed to meet the specific needs of students in local situations, research about ESP is also published

in regional journals and publications throughout the world, and there are many unpublished studies and curricula as well (A. M. Johns, 2013).

## Instructional settings

An increasing number of ESP practitioners live and work in English-speaking/medium countries, preparing curricula for VESL or English for occupational purposes (EOP) programs for new immigrant and refugee populations or in classrooms emphasizing English for academic purposes (EAP) or English for business purposes for students and professionals. However, ESP also continues to be common in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts, where an increasing number of individuals are eager to learn business or academic English to pursue their careers or studies in English or in English-medium contexts. One remarkable example of the explosion of ESP programs in EFL contexts has taken place in China, but ESP continues to be strong in the Middle East and Latin America, as well.

## ESP categories and instructional models

The main curricular areas of the ESP movement can be categorized in a number of ways (Dudley-Evans & St John 1998, p. 6). Figure 1 provides one possible classification.

It is important to note, however, that this figure is far from exhaustive, for there is a remarkable array of ESP courses offered throughout the world. In various cities in Italy, for example, there are project-oriented curricula for workers in the tourist industry (English for tourism). In Morocco, Hasan II University devotes its EAP courses to specific graduate majors, such as agronomy (e.g., advanced English for agronomy). There are also a considerable number of programs in various parts of Latin America (EAP, English for business, etc.). Even in French-medium universities, such as Antonine in Lebanon, the need for English in medicine, engineering, and business has become urgent, and focused materials have been developed by ESP experts to meet these needs (e.g., see Eid & Johns, 2011). In some countries, learning English to contribute to the development of a community or region is a central goal (Gueye, 1990). There are ESP courses in computer repair and other

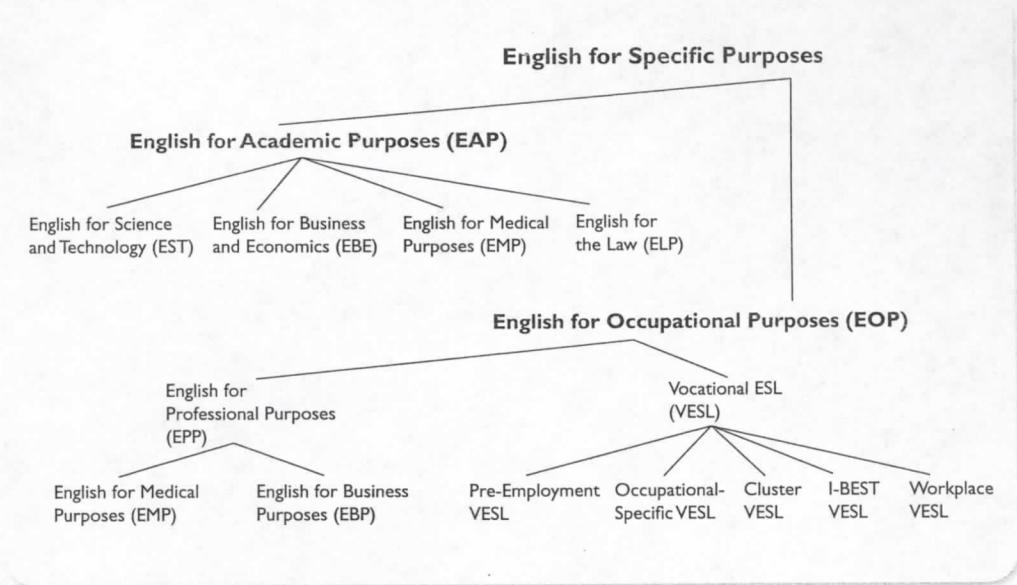


Figure 1. Classification of ESP categories.

areas of computer language and technology for the incarcerated in the United States. This extraordinary diversity of situations and curricula highlights the virtues and challenges of ESP. Programs are designed or adapted to the contexts and language learning needs of specific groups of students; therefore, each group may need a new or revised curriculum since each of these groups may be different in a variety of ways.

Despite this diversity, English for business and economics (EBE) and English for professional purposes (EPP) programs are the most popular ESP areas in the EFL world and in much of the ESL world, as well. Business professionals and students require instruction in negotiation, correspondence, proposal and report writing, uses of technology, and in supervising bilingual and ESL/EFL workers. Business students in academic programs need preparation to pass examinations, such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), the Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT), or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS); and later, they may need support in their coursework or assistance in understanding the cultures of business English classrooms. Not surprisingly, EBE and EPP program design comes in many shapes and sizes, depending on the contexts and students served.<sup>1</sup>

With student and situational diversity and varied needs comes a variety of ESP instructional models. In this section, we describe models within two broad categories, EAP and VESL.

**EAP models.** Among these models are:

**Stand-alone EAP.** This is the most common format. Stand-alone courses are reading and writing courses, most frequently taught at the undergraduate level, that enroll students from all academic disciplines. Typically, these courses are based on the research into common text types that cross disciplines (e.g., the summary and abstract) or on texts and writers in specified academic contexts (Wardle & Downs, 2011). Stand-alone courses are also offered at the graduate level. Many of the courses use a text like Swales and Feak (2012), written specifically for students in graduate stand-alone courses.

**Adjunct EAP.** A model that is closely related to a single-content course (e.g., biology or sociology) is the adjunct or linked model. In this model, the same group of students is enrolled in both an EAP literacy course and a content course. (See also Snow, this volume.) Instructors of the two linked courses often share objectives and topics for readings or collaborate on one or more of the assignments (A. M. Johns, 2001). For some EAP adjunct

classes, students are encouraged to be researchers into the content course, viewing it as a microcosm for the study of college or university cultures and disciplines (A. M. Johns, 1997).

**Team teaching.** In this model, the content and language instructors team-teach a group of students, often within the same classroom. This is the ideal, though difficult to accomplish, because it enables the students, with the assistance of their EAP teacher, to reflect on their experiences with content, language, strategies, and assessments within the content classroom (T. Johns & Dudley-Evans, 1980).

**VESL models.** One of the best articulated and diverse sets of ESP models falls under the VESL rubric. This ESP area includes both *narrow-angled courses*, those focused on one type of job, and *wide-angled courses*, with a more general, comprehensive curriculum (Basturkmen, 2006). The most common VESL models are:

**Pre-employment VESL.** This is a modified version of a general English or wide-angled ESL model; the content is broadly defined and relates to a number of EOP areas. Instruction is devoted to job readiness and general “soft” job skills, as outlined in the SCANS Report (The Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, 1999). This report was written after a major data-gathering effort (that included analyzing information from employers, supervisors, and employees) to find a clear pattern of what it takes to be successful in the workplace. The commission concluded that a high-performance workplace demands workers who have a solid foundation in the traditional basic academic skills, in the thinking skills necessary to put knowledge to work, and in the personal characteristics that make a worker confident, trustworthy, and responsible. This list is called the “foundation” of workplace know-how. In addition, researchers found that high-performance workplaces also require the ability, or “competency,” to manage resources, to work amicably and productively with others, to acquire and use information, to understand complex systems, and to work comfortably with a variety of technologies. In pre-employment VESL classes, students practice the language and pragmatics of general job functions such as responding to complaints, making requests, and answering the phone. They may also prepare

for job interviews and other skills for gaining employment. Technology integration is key to pre-employment VESL because the application process generally takes place online.

**Occupation-specific VESL.** This is a narrow-angled curriculum focusing on one particular job, such as nursing assistant or welder, and as such, it is closer to the ideal in ESP. The language, discourses, and pragmatics are often clearly and narrowly identified after the completion of a thorough needs assessment and target situation analysis. The course can be taught either as preparation for or concurrently with a vocational program. In most cases, there is frequent communication between the VESL and vocational instructors before the class is offered and while the students are enrolled.

**Integrated basic education and skills training VESL.** The integrated basic education and skills training (I-BEST) approach is an adjunct or sometimes a team-teaching model in which the ESL instructor is paired with the professional-technical instructor in the classroom to concurrently provide students with literacy education and workforce skills. An example of this model is a personal care assistant/caregiver class that is team-taught by an ESL instructor and a registered nurse. The ESL instructor teaches the language for personal care assistants/caregivers, and the registered nurse teaches the hands-on skills necessary for the job.

**Cluster VESL.** This popular model combines wide-angled and narrow-angled approaches. Initially, students from different vocations are in one classroom. They study all four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), often in a theme-based program (e.g., *The World of Work*). In one class, for example, students read about how to meet people and make small talk in the workplace. Later, in a more narrow-angled approach, students work on individualized modules devoted to their chosen professions or vocations and are assessed on their progress in these specialized areas. This model is an example of the kind of class in which Antoine (from the Experience section at the beginning of this chapter) would enroll to expedite his entry into a career technical education class.

**Workplace VESL.** In this model, ESP classes are offered to employees at the job site. Often, the employer pays for some or all of the course,

and employees are excused during their workday to attend. The goals of workplace instruction are often higher productivity on the job, improved safety, and increased use of English. Unfortunately, employers do not offer this training at worksites as much as in the past because of scheduling issues, cost, and a belief that teaching their employees English is not their responsibility (Burt, 2004).

## Rationale and responsibilities of ESP practitioners

As has already been noted, the primary responsibilities of ESP practitioners are to develop, contextualize, evaluate, and/or revise ESL/EFL language curricula, classroom pedagogies, and assessments, making them appropriate for a *specific* group of students in a *specific* language learning environments by administering thorough and ongoing needs assessments and target situation analyses of the language, discourses, and contexts in which students will be using the language. This means that ideal ESP curricula are always in process as practitioner research continues and classroom pedagogies are made increasingly appropriate for a group of students with whom the instructor becomes more familiar. The specific tasks of ESP practitioners are discussed next.

**Working closely with individuals in the target situation.** No matter what the students' goals may be, the ESP practitioner's close, continuous interaction with the experts and stakeholders in the target situation in which students will work or study is ideal for at least two reasons: students have more authentic practice, and they often are able to experience and reflect upon their immediate successes and roadblocks. Here are two examples:

Donna Price, in her VESL work with ESL for personal care assistants, team-teaches with a nurse in a classroom, using the I-BEST approach. Students are exposed to, and practice with, the texts, grammar, vocabulary, and communicative contexts of caregiving. As a result, students not only have immediate success in the jobs they plan to apply for but they also are prepared to move up to careers in the health field that go beyond the entry level, such as certified nursing

assistants, medical assistants, licensed vocational nurses, and registered nurses (Price, Carvajal, & McGee, 2010).

Ann M. Johns, whose focus is EAP, has been teaching and developing curricula for first-year university students at San Diego State University and at other universities for more than 35 years. She has been collaborating with instructors across disciplines who teach geography, history, biology, psychology, political science, business, and anthropology in an adjunct model approach. Her students are enrolled concurrently in her EAP class and a linked first-year class offered by a disciplinary instructor (A. M. Johns, 2001). In the EAP class, her students research the disciplinary class as an academic microcosm (A. M. Johns, 1997). In addition, they attempt to transfer their learning to other academic classes in which they are enrolled.

**Conducting effective needs assessment and target situation research.** First, and often, practitioners must determine as best they can the students' goals and their language and cultural needs as well as the nature of the language and genres of the context in which they will be using English. This careful pre-and ongoing research into students' needs, goals, and the discourses and contexts in which they will be using the language is what distinguishes ESP from other language teaching approaches. For this reason, the content (or topics) of a course is often not central to ESP instruction; instead, language and language learning strategies are the focus.

For some contexts and student populations, where the students are fairly homogeneous (e.g., all students are, or will be, lab technicians or electrical engineers) and narrow-angled courses can therefore be offered, this research may be fairly straightforward. It may involve interviews with the experts (instructors and managers), observation of classes or job shadowing in the workplace, collection of data and analysis of the language (vocabulary, grammar, and genres) and skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) that seem to predominate. For example, when teaching nursing assistants, VESL practitioners find it invaluable to shadow the students while they are doing their clinical training at a convalescent hospital to see what language skills they need. In addition, collecting charts and graphs that nursing assistants fill out on the job connects the classroom instruction to the workplace. Of course, the students must be

directly involved as well, so part of the research may include a questionnaire distributed to the students so they can state their goals and assess their linguistic strengths and weaknesses.

On the other hand, ESP courses in many parts of the world must be wide-angled. These include English for (academic) business courses that enroll students in management, marketing, accounting, business ethics, or other fields. As in all needs assessments, those for wide-angled classes may produce some interesting results. For example, when planning an English for business professionals course in a Korean context, Huh (2006) found that there were tasks beyond the typical business correspondence (e.g., email) and genres (e.g., proposals, reports, and contracts) that should be included in a curriculum. Some of these involved understanding the language and culture of business meetings; the language of overseas travel, especially when visiting companies; attending to foreign guests; interpretation/translation; and gathering information on a foreign market. The results of Huh's needs assessment make clear how important *situating* an ESP course becomes.

Even broader are the EAP courses that abound, particularly in first-year programs in colleges and universities across the world. For these courses, practitioners need to concentrate on language that crosses disciplinary boundaries. Fortunately, corpus linguists have provided the EAP teacher with an academic word list (Coxhead, 2000),<sup>2</sup> and there is other research into the grammar and syntax that cross academic disciplines and registers (e.g., see Biber & Conrad, 1999; Conrad & Biber, 2004; Coxhead, 2000). (See also chapters by Snow and Zimmerman, this volume.) Interdisciplinary academic tasks have also been studied extensively. One of the most cited and respected of these studies was completed in 1986 by Horowitz. In his cross-disciplinary research, he found that the following tasks were common on his campus: summary/reaction to a reading, annotated bibliography, report on a participatory experience, making connections between theory and data, case study, synthesis of sources, and research project. The notion of research project has been further refined by M. Carter (2007), who found that research has four possible purposes, resulting in macro-genre responses within an academic context: to problem-solve (e.g., in business or social work), to report on empirical

inquiry (e.g., in the sciences), to investigate and discuss written or visual sources (e.g., in English or the humanities), and to review a performance (e.g., in the arts). Additional extensive research on EAP writing assignments has been completed by Melzer (2009) and research on reading by Grabe and Stoller (2011). After reviewing this research, those preparing an EAP curriculum can survey the courses on their own campus to situate the linguistic, discourse, and strategic features that cross disciplines in their specific context.

**Adapting and developing methods and curricula.** Experienced ESP teachers do not work solely with predetermined curricula or pedagogies. Instead, they assess their students, the context, and stakeholders to determine what is most appropriate. For example, when assisting teachers to develop EAP curricula for college students in China in the early 1980s, Johns studied not only the EAP demands on the students but the methods by which they had been taught English in the past. One method was intensive reading, a word-by-word approach to reading texts. As she and the teachers developed the materials, the approaches to intensive reading were incorporated—and then slowly revised within the curriculum—to ensure that students did not have to make too rapid a transition from the way they had been learning to newer, alternative approaches to teaching reading comprehension. (See chapters by Anderson, Ediger, and Grabe, & Stoller, this volume.)

More recently, Johns prepared a semester-long reading, writing, and critical thinking curriculum for students in a South African university. There, a drill-and-practice approach to writing had been in place since the early 1970s, and the students found this to be both easy and supportive of their high school literacy experiences. The university faculty, who were required to teach EAP but were much more interested in teaching literature, were also satisfied with the approach. Again, a consideration of the students' past experiences and faculty preferences was made to ensure a smooth transition to other types of instruction (Johns & Makalela, 2011).

It is not that ESP practitioners cannot introduce different classroom approaches; such changes must be made in a way, however, that considers the local contexts, the students' prior learning, and the stakeholders' interests and backgrounds.

Experienced ESP practitioners are not purists in terms of linguistic theories, research, curricula, or classroom pedagogy. They do not need to draw from one theory, one pedagogy, or one research tradition that happens to be in vogue. Instead, they are guided in their work by approaches that can assist them in determining their students' backgrounds, goals, and needs, and these findings determine the focus of the curriculum.

How do ESP practitioners proceed? What are the steps in ESP needs assessment and target situation research, curriculum design, and teaching? The topics presented by Swales in *Episodes in ESP* (1985) continue to be the principal focus of most ESP research—gaining a full understanding of the language features and discourses of a context and the roles that these will play in the lives of ESP students. In recent years, corpus linguistics has provided opportunities for researchers to study vast collections of authentic spoken and written discourse to use in curriculum design for a variety of ESP areas, and this has been a boon to ESP curriculum design (see Belcher, 2009b; Gavioli, 2005; Hyland, 2004a; Hyland & Tse, 2004; Paltridge, 2009). (See also McCarthy & O'Keeffe, this volume.)

As noted, ESP practitioners have adopted *genre* as a concept central to ESP research, conflating the context and language of a discourse community (Paltridge, 2001; Swales, 1990); like corpus linguistics, this concept and its implications should be integral to any ESP practitioner's repertoire. Once identified as "text types" by their structures and purposes, genres are now viewed as social actions realized in spoken or written discourses within occupational, academic, or social communities (Bawarshi, 2003; Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010; Belcher, 2006). What does this mean? The focus of genre is on the action that is being carried out within a context rather than, initially, on the features of the text itself. Devitt (2004) speaks of genre as "the nexus between individual actions and a socially defined context" (p. 163).

ESP practitioners conduct research into the contexts, functions ("moves"), and language of genres, noting what their findings imply about interactions between oral and written texts, communities, and writers (Hyland, 2000, 2005; Samraj, 2002; Swales, 1990). In this way, they can prepare students to not only employ appropriately the linguistic elements (e.g., vocabulary and grammar)

of their chosen occupation or academic field but to understand and exploit the genres that are valued in the context in this field as well.

**Teaching skills and strategies for far transfer.** A central goal for ESP programs should be to prepare students with skills and strategies that can be used in the future in different contexts (see Belcher, 2006; James, 2010). In the literature, this ability to adapt previously learned skills to new future tasks and contexts is called *far transfer*. Daniel Willingham (2009), a cognitive psychologist, notes that "when successful [far] transfer occurs, students can apply what they learn to different contexts, and recognize and extend that learning to a context which draws from prior experience but may appear to be completely new" (p. 212).

How can the skills for far transfer be enhanced in an ESP class? One way is to introduce students to learning with real-world situations and challenges, as practitioners do when they co-teach with experts. Ideally, students in these real-world situations can practice sorting out what they need to carry over and apply from the old learning to the new authentic situations and tasks (Svinicki, 2004). If working directly with experts is not possible, students in the ESP classroom can be presented with authentic materials and activities. Purcell-Gates, Degener, Jacobson, and Soler (2001) note that students who attend classes where real-world literacy activities and texts are used tend to increase their appropriate use of reading and writing skills outside the classroom. Based on their findings, these researchers recommend that VESL teachers include real-life activities and texts, such as job applications, work manuals, and newspapers in their instruction.

According to Willingham (2009), repeated practice of the types of strategies that transfer to a variety of situations is central to student success in the future. One EAP example of this approach is found in LeMaster's *Critical Reading* (2010), where students and teachers are first introduced to deep reading strategies (e.g., marking the text), and are then provided with opportunities to use the strategy repeatedly with different texts in several content areas (e.g., science, social science, and mathematics).<sup>3</sup> For students to recall the strategies they used, they are encouraged to reflect, assessing how they approached a task and how the strategy had to be adapted as new tasks arose (A. M. Johns, 1997).

Far transfer can also be enhanced through *problem-based learning* (PBL), an approach that assists students in solving the types of problems that they may have to face in their future careers (Barron, 2002; L. Flowerdew, 2005). One area where PBL has been particularly successful is nursing. Belcher (2009a) discusses how PBL is used in this field and advocates its adoption in other areas of ESP teaching. An example of PBL in a VESL personal care assistant class is the following hypothetical scenario:

You have a client with dementia. She gives you \$20 as a tip for helping her. You accept the money. When your client's daughter gets home, you show her the money that her mother had given you. Your client accuses you of stealing. What should you do?

Students work in groups to come up with options for resolving the problem. They practice problem solving, critical thinking, and negotiation skills at the same time that they are developing content knowledge.

## CLASSROOM APPLICATIONS

What happens in the classroom after the needs assessment is completed and the curriculum is designed? Much depends on the results of the needs assessment and target situation analysis research, the students' backgrounds, the teaching context and teachers' abilities, and the administrative constraints and resources in which the teaching is taking place. The classroom-tested examples here are from EAP programs in different contexts and VESL/EOP programs. Other examples can be found in teacher guides (e.g., Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998).

### EAP examples

**Example 1.** In 2007, the English Department at Limpopo University in northern South Africa was charged with creating a motivating first-year literacy course for students from all academic disciplines, that is, a wide-angled EAP program. One author of this chapter (Ann Johns) was invited to conduct a needs assessment on site and to develop a year-long curriculum. Johns and the English Department chair, Leketi Makalela, using ESP needs assessment and target situation analysis

#### Lesson 1: Proud to be South African

**Reading:** "Proud to be South African" from the *Mail & Guardian* online.

#### Objectives: Students will be able to

- Read and complete a short questionnaire relating to their experience as South Africans.
- Scan a text to answer comprehension questions.
- Identify, with a group, the methodology used and the results obtained in a paper discussing research.
- Accurately identify simple past, simple present, and present perfect tenses in a reading; and in a cloze passage, apply their knowledge by inserting the correct tense forms.
- With partners, identify the terms related to research in a short reading discussing a study.
- Given the introduction, methodology, results, and discussion (IMRD) model, convert the study discussed in a short reading into a research summary.
- Given questions about their learning, write at least four sentences about what they have learned during the lesson.

#### Lesson components:

- Pre-reading: Completing a short questionnaire
- Silent reading: Scanning to answer questions
- Group reading: Identifying methodology and results
- Grammar activities: Using verbs in past and present tenses
- Vocabulary activities: Finding words for discussing research
- Writing activity: Writing a research summary
- Reflecting upon learning: Brainstorming goals achieved

Figure 2. EAP lesson organization.

approaches, developed a 15-lesson course that was then tested (and eventually revised) by instructors, based on the interests and current proficiency levels of the students. Figure 2 illustrates the lesson objectives and recurring lesson components, though the activities in each lesson varied.

An extensive guide for teachers and suggestions for organizing each activity accompanied the curriculum. One example of the activities comes from the Group Reading section in Lesson 1, based on three findings in the needs assessment: (1) that students enjoyed working in groups; (2) that the classes were large, and thus group activity was considered to be essential to student interaction and participation; and, (3) that many of the students were majoring in the sciences, so methodology and results sections were central to their scientific papers. Figure 3 illustrates the group activity, followed by a related out-of-class writing activity and reflection questions.

**Group reading: Identifying methodology and results**  
(in-class, 20 minutes)

**Task:** In academic departments, experts conduct research. They pose a research question, which they study in depth. The method(s) used to conduct research is very important. In your groups, scan the reading for this information:

- 1) Who conducted this study?
- 2) How many people were surveyed?
- 3) What ethnic groups did the people belong to?
- 4) What were the most important results of the research?

As you answer these questions by working through the reading, ask one person to take notes. Each group will report answers to one of the questions.

**Writing activity: Writing a research summary** (out-of-class)

**Task:** Write up a summary of the research reported in this article. As a guide, below you are given the functions of each sentence in the summary and an example. Read the article and follow the directions:

Sentence 1: Tell what the study was about, the methods, and who conducted it.

*Example:* In order to find out whether people like cheese and what kind, interviews were conducted at Woolworths by students from University of Limpopo.

Sentence 2: Tell who was involved in the research and what questions were asked.

*Example:* The students asked 500 shoppers on a busy Saturday if they liked cheese and, if so, what type they were buying, who ate cheese in their families, and how much cheese they bought each week.

Sentence 3: Explain the results.

*Example:* The researchers found that 100% of the shoppers questioned liked cheese. They prefer cheddar to the other kinds. The men in the family were the principal cheese eaters, and the average amount of cheese purchased each week was 2 kilos.

Sentence 4: Summarize what you, or the researchers, concluded from the study.

*Example:* It can be concluded from this study of cheese preferences that South African shoppers are big cheese buyers and that men, rather than women, are the ones who eat most of the cheese.

Figure 3. Sample group reading and writing activity for an EAP lesson.

When the students completed these reading and the writing activities, they were asked to reflect on their learning with follow-up questions designed to promote transfer of learning (Figure 4).

**Example 2.** A second EAP example comes from a wide-angled, advanced course for international

**Reflecting upon learning** (in-class, 10 minutes)

**Task:** In your notebooks, reflect upon what you have learned in this lesson. Answer one or more of these questions:

- 1) What did you learn about South African people by reading this article? Were you surprised about what you learned?
- 2) What did you learn about research methods? How is a discussion of research organized in a summary?
- 3) What academic words that you learned have you seen elsewhere?
- 4) If you were going to conduct a survey of students on the Limpopo campus, what questions would you ask? Why?

Figure 4. Sample reflection activity from an EAP course.

graduate and undergraduate students offered by an intensive language institute in the United States. The needs assessment for this course was based on the types of tasks that the students were assigned in their university graduate classes, as determined by the syllabi for those classes and previous surveys of instructors across the disciplines. What the EAP instructor, Ann Johns, and her colleagues discovered was that in all the students' classes take-home, process-based papers were required; however, students had difficulty analyzing the prompts for these papers, that is, understanding what the required responses to the prompts were. Thus, throughout the class, students practiced prompt analysis. Figure 5 presents a sample activity.

## VESL examples

**Example 1: Contextualized instruction.** One way to prepare adult learners for the workplace is by using contextualized instruction at all levels of adult education, including employment-related tasks as a large part of the context (Chisman, 2009). *Contextualized instruction* is defined as the development of skills, knowledge, and attitudes drawn from the context in which they will be used, based on real-life materials and situations from that context (National Institute for Literacy Workforce Education, 2005). In her VESL classes, Donna Price often asks her students to bring materials from their workplace that they have to read or write.

The following lesson is appropriate for beginning to intermediate adult education students in

### Analyzing and Responding to a Take-Home Prompt

**To the student:** When you are given a writing prompt, you will need to carefully analyze the task at hand. What are you to do when writing? What is the important content? How should your writing be organized? Answer the questions below before beginning your reading or drafting your text.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_

#### Write the prompt from your class below: (a sample is provided here.)

You have recently read “Prison vs. education spending reveals California’s priorities,” and, as someone who has several incarcerated friends, you have become quite upset. Write a letter to the editor of the *San Francisco Chronicle* expressing your opinion of the priorities of the State of California. Follow the rules for a “letter to the editor” genre. Since you want this letter to be published, be sure that you understand the reading well—and that your writing is carefully edited.

**With a partner, answer these questions about the above prompt (then individually, answer the same questions about the prompt from your own class).**

1. What are you supposed to do as a writer when you are responding to this prompt? Are you asked to make an argument? To inform? To describe or list? If your “doing” word is vague, like discuss or describe, what do you think it means? If you don’t know, how can you find out?
2. What content are you supposed to discuss in this prompt? Is the content related in some way?
3. Are you told anything about the language register or style you are to use? Can you guess?
4. Who are you supposed to be as a writer in this prompt? An ordinary student or someone else? (Some prompts tell writers to “speak” in the voice of an editorial writer, a leader, or . . .)
5. Is your audience specified? If so, who is your audience? What will this mean in terms of the language you use or the content you include?
6. Are you told the genre of the text? Does this help you with how the text is supposed to be structured? For example, does the prompt indicate the order in which you are to discuss the content?
7. How are you to use sources, if at all? How many sources should you use? What kinds? Does the prompt specify whether the sources should be primary or secondary? What genres are appropriate? (Magazine or journal articles? Online sources? Textbooks? Newspapers? Full-length books?)
8. How long should your paper be? What other specifications are given? (The referencing style? The font size? The margin width?)
9. How will you be graded on this paper? What criteria will the instructor be using?
10. How will you organize your writing? On the back of this paper, write a draft plan for your response.

Figure 5. Sample activity for analyzing writing prompts in an EAP course.

pre-employment or cluster VESL classes, as well as general ESL classes. The objective of this lesson is for students to: (1) be able to read and interpret information from a chart in their textbook (the classroom inventory list in Figure 6); and (2) apply this skill to the authentic workplace task of reading a hotel worker’s weekly maintenance schedule (Figure 7).

Figure 6 provides students with practice in interpreting information from a chart in their textbook. To connect school to work, an instructor first uses the chart to do chart reading and interpreting activities with the textbook material, asking, for example: “Where are the pens? What item is there only one of? What do they need to get more of?” The teacher actually teaches students how to read the chart by saying, “Put your finger on the eraser.” Then the teacher asks, “How many erasers do we have?” The

teacher has students move their fingers across to the number of erasers. These kinds of questions and the accompanying scaffolding are important when dealing with students who have low literacy skills because they develop the students’ skills in reading and interpreting information, which can then be transferred to the workplace.

The form from a local hotel (Figure 7) lists a hotel maintenance worker’s daily job responsibilities. The worker is required to read and interpret the instructions and to perform certain specified tasks on a daily basis. To prepare students for this type of real-world task, the VESL teacher brings this type of form into the classroom and asks students, for example, “Which days does the worker have to clean the pool? Which days does he have to dust the cobwebs off the ceiling? What does he do on Mondays?” and so on. Skills that we teach in

## Classroom Inventory List

Item		Number	Location
calculators		15	in the drawer
computers		1	on the desk
books		5	on the cabinet
erasers		20	in the box
pencils		20	on the table
pens		20	on the table
rulers		25	in the cabinet

Figure 6. Classroom inventory list (based on Bitterlin, Johnson, Price, Ramirez, & Savage, 2008a, p. 28.)

DUTIES	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	S	Notes
Help housekeepers move carts up & down stairs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Clean the entire pool area	X		X		X	X	X	
Clean the entire front lobby area & driveway	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Do a walk-thru of entire building and groups (am & pm)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Clean all parking lots	X		X		X	X		
Clean entire lower level	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Clean entire upper level	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Clean laundry room	X		X		X			
All high dusting for cobwebs				X				
Put away linen delivery	X		X		X		X	
Clean BBQ grills	X		X		X	X	X	
Check & put away cots	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Clean all dirty stove pans and rims						X	X	

Figure 7. Hotel maintenance worker's weekly job inventory.

the classroom (e.g., such as reading the inventory chart) should transfer to the workplace (e.g., reading the hotel maintenance job chart).

**Example 2: Problem-solving lesson—What should Yolanda do?** Problem solving is a skill that is required in many jobs and is listed in workplace frameworks (Partnership for the 21st Century Skills, 2004; The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, 1999). This lesson is appropriate for intermediate-advanced level adult education students (Bitterlin, Johnson, Price, Ramirez, & Savage, 2008b). It would be appropriate in a pre-employment VESL class or general ESL class.

The objectives of this lesson are for students to be able to:

- Identify solutions to and consequences of a workplace problem.
- Come to a consensus in their groups about the best solution.
- Use appropriate language for agreeing and disagreeing (i.e., *I agree*, *I don't agree*, *You're right*; *I think so, too*).

- Use appropriate language for giving suggestions (i.e., *She should*; *She ought to*; *I think it would be a good idea if she . . .*).

Teachers follow these procedures:

- Seat students in small groups of three to five students each.
- Ask students to number off within their groups.
- Designate Student 1 in each group as the group leader. This person will facilitate the group by asking group members' opinions.
- Designate Student 2 in each group as the reporter. This student will summarize the group's solution and the reasons why the group came to that decision to the whole class.
- Explain that all group members will write on the Problem-Solving Worksheet (Figure 8).
- Project the pictures (in Figure 9), and ask questions, for example:
  - How many pictures are there? (Answer: 3)
  - Where are they? (Answer: in a donut shop)
  - What is similar about all the pictures? (Answer: Yolanda is in all of them).

#### Problem-Solving Worksheet

**Problem:** David keeps leaving work early; Yolanda is tired of doing his share of the work.

**Task:**

- a) What can Yolanda do?
- b) What are the good and bad consequences of her actions?

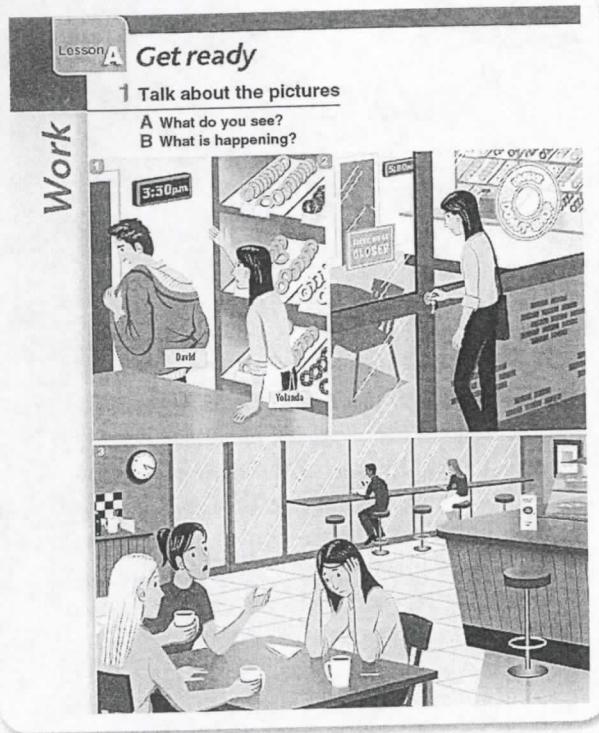
1. Suggestion \_\_\_\_\_  
Good consequence \_\_\_\_\_  
Bad consequence \_\_\_\_\_
2. Suggestion \_\_\_\_\_  
Good consequence \_\_\_\_\_  
Bad consequence \_\_\_\_\_
3. Suggestion \_\_\_\_\_  
Good consequence \_\_\_\_\_  
Bad consequence \_\_\_\_\_

**Solution:** What will she do? Why?

1. Come to a consensus in your group.
2. Explain your decision to the class.

Yolanda will \_\_\_\_\_  
because \_\_\_\_\_

Figure 8. Problem-solving worksheet.



**Figure 9.** Pictures to accompany the problem-solving lesson (based on Bitterlin, Johnson, Price, Ramirez, & Savage, 2008b, p. 96).

- (Pointing to picture 1) What is Yolanda doing here? (Answer: She's talking to David, who is leaving.)
- (Pointing to picture 2) What's Yolanda doing here? (Answer: She's leaving work after closing the shop.)

**Table 1.** Possible Solutions to the Problem-Solving Worksheet

Solutions	Good consequences	Bad consequences
1. She could quit.	She won't have to deal with David anymore.	She'll have to look for another job, which isn't easy. She might have the same problem in another job.
2. She should talk to her boss.	Her boss might help her solve the problem. He might talk to David in a nice way.	Her boss might tell her to solve this problem herself. He might tell David, and then David could make her life miserable at work.
3. She could talk to David.	He might listen to Yolanda and make some changes.	He might get mad at her and treat her badly at work.
4. She could make a checklist of duties. (This is a true story and this is actually what she did.)	A checklist of duties where each employee initials when the work is done would keep everyone accountable. There would be a record of who did what job.	The other employees might not take the checklist seriously. The boss might not enforce it.

- (Pointing to picture 3) What is Yolanda doing here? (Answer: She's talking to her friends. She's upset.)

Students work in groups to discuss solutions and consequences to the problem. They then fill out the Problem-Solving Worksheet (Figure 8). The group must come to a consensus before reporting back. Table 1 presents some possible solutions and consequences that students might come up with and present to the class as a whole.

## FUTURE TRENDS

ESP programs are developed because teachers, supervisors, government agencies, professionals, or students see a need for focused language courses in which certain skills, genres, motivations, processes, and/or values are identified and integrated into specialized, often short-term classes. As the world becomes more connected, this demand will undoubtedly grow; and as it does, practitioners need to be prepared. Concluding her 2006 survey article, Belcher notes that “ESP professionals should be able to face the prospect of reappraising the role of English language in a rapidly globalizing world with a ready array of professional resources” (p. 151).

## Rethinking approaches to foundational ESP elements

The foundational elements of ESP—needs assessment, target situation analysis, pedagogical practices, reflection, and course and program

assessment—will undoubtedly become increasingly complex and comprehensive in the future. In the case of needs assessments, for example, methodologies will be deeper and more triangulated<sup>4</sup> and critical (Jasso-Aguilar, 2005; Starfield, 2011); technology will be more thoroughly exploited; and spoken language will, in many cases, become more prominent in research in all ESP areas (Holmes, 2005; Long, 2005).

### Incorporating digital literacies

Due to the rapid development and centrality of digital literacies, research and pedagogies will be increasingly devoted to this revolution in the ways that people communicate. The language and use of Internet sites, YouTube, blogs, and Twitter, or whatever succeeds these particular platforms and genres, will be an essential part of ESP research and ESP teaching for student success in a global context. One obvious area for research is in business English, for example, studying how social networking is exploited to brand a product (or person) or how advertising reaches certain target groups. Corpus linguistics, a well-established research methodology, will have an expanded use in ESP classrooms as the students themselves determine the predominant features of spoken or written text and how these features are employed in specific contexts.<sup>5</sup> As computers become the norm in ESP classrooms and labs, this trend will continue.

### Re-orientating skill instruction

With the influence of the digital revolution on communication, we will need to reconsider the traditional skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing for many ESP contexts. For instance, what does writing in the students' digital world require? What is involved in reading or writing a Twitter message, and who are the audiences? How do certain populations process a particular YouTube segment? What is encouraged in ESP literacies by the use of classroom management systems, such as Blackboard, WebCT, and PBWorks (Kolko, Regan, & Romano, 2001)?

### Revising instructional models

Models for instruction may also require revision. One example, transition programs, comes from VESL. According to the National Center on Education and the Economy Workforce

Development Strategies Group (2009), adult education should be redesigned to promote post-secondary and workplace readiness for all learners.

Thus, in today's educational and economic environment, program leaders need to prepare students to move quickly beyond intermediate ESL and into a higher level of ESL, ultimately transitioning into mainstream programs. For example, there is a trend in ESP to implement career pathways as systems of learning that move low-skilled adults rapidly through work-oriented adult education programs or into post-secondary programs. Some programs have described this effort as an educational transit system that must be collaboratively created by academic, administrative, and workforce education departments (National Institute for Literacy Workforce Education, 2005).

### Expanding lingua franca studies

As additional native speakers of other languages use English as a lingua franca, or language of wider communication, more research and pedagogies will focus on those situations in which none of the participants in the ESP enterprise is a native speaker of English. This will provide opportunities to examine how ESP as a second (third, fourth) language is researched, produced, and taught by L2 speakers (Mauranen, 2011).

## CONCLUSION

ESP requires of the practitioner an open mind; a willingness to conduct appropriate needs assessment and target situation research; knowledge of language and linguistics, corpus studies, and genres; and a broad understanding of curricular models and pedagogies, as well as new technologies. It requires that future researchers look beyond text products and consider more seriously learner processes, cognition, and target contexts and that they investigate the complexity and challenges that the online environment and other contexts present (Belcher, 2006). The future of ESP requires practitioners who will be true to the foundational principles but who will view their course design as ever more challenging as technologies, language use, and research practices become more complex.

## SUMMARY

- ESP programs are designed for a specific group of ESL/EFL students, usually adults, who have limited time to develop the competence needed to work or study in identified contexts.
- ESP is distinguished not by a particular linguistic theory or teaching methodology but by its needs assessments and target situation analyses, which determine the focus of the curricula and pedagogy for a specific group of students in an identified context.
- Successful ESP teachers do not need to be content experts; however, they do need to have a solid linguistics background; to be skilled at various approaches to needs assessment and target situation analysis; to be adept at working with a variety of stakeholders in a variety of cultures; and to be open, observant, and flexible as their curriculum and instruction evolves.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What questions do you have about ESP that have not been answered in this chapter? Where can you find the answers?
2. What do you feel is particularly appealing about ESP?
3. What are the challenges that an ESP practitioner faces as he or she designs and teaches courses?
4. What do you think the advantages and disadvantages are of teaching each one of the following classes: cluster VESL, I-BEST, and workplace VESL?

## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Observe an ESP class. What category (EAP, EBE, or VESL) does the class represent? What instructional model is in place? What ESP activities appear to be particularly useful for far transfer? Why?
2. Imagine that you are teaching a wide-angled EAP class for students who are also enrolled in college courses. Collect four or five syllabi from classes in different disciplines. Using the

descriptions of assignments, examinations, and readings in these, prepare at least five tasks (e.g., summarizing/abstracting) that will be appropriate for all the classes in the disciplines and thus for your wide-angled EAP class.

3. Consider the strategies for critical thinking that might be taught in secondary or post-secondary classes. Develop one or more activities that assist students to practice critical thinking skills. Or find activities in EAP textbooks that you believe will help students develop strategies for far transfer. Share them with the class.
4. You have been asked to teach a class for students who will be accountants and have recently completed their business degrees. What methods will you use to conduct a needs assessment and target situation analysis?
5. Imagine that you are teaching a pre-employment VESL class. You know from the SCANS Report and from what employers tell us that teamwork, sociability, and self-esteem are essential workplace skills. Develop several classroom activities that integrate these transferable skills.
6. In cluster VESL class, students have a variety of career goals. There are people who want to be auto techs, clerical workers, nurses, hotel managers, and so on. Make a list of transferable work skills that are necessary in all jobs (e.g., following directions). How would you integrate these skills into your teaching?

## FURTHER READING

Basturkmen, H. (2006). *Ideas and options in English for specific purposes*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Taking a language acquisition approach, this author discusses how ESP relates to the conditions and processes of learning as well as teaching methods (e.g., input- and output-based strategies), and suggests a framework for curriculum analysis and development.

Bawarshi, A. S., & Reiff, M. J. (2010). *Genre: An introduction to history, theory, research, and pedagogy*. West Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press.

This volume presents a carefully explained and balanced overview of genre theories and their applications to pedagogical practices.

Belcher, D. (Ed.). (2009). *English for specific purposes in theory and practice*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

This is a useful introductory collection, with chapters relating to English for academic purposes (EAP), English for occupational purposes (EOP), and, a relatively new area, English for sociocultural purposes.

Belcher, D., Johns, A. M., & Paltridge, B. (Eds.). (2011). *New directions in ESP research*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

This volume includes chapters in which new approaches to needs assessment and target situation research are presented. New topics in research, such as critical ethnography, are also integral to this text.

Bitterlin, G., Johnson, D., Price, D., Ramirez, S., & Savage, K. L. (2010). *Ventures transitions*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

This VESL textbook offers integrated-skills material to help prepare adult students for success at work or in academic settings.

*English for Specific Purposes: An International Journal.*  
Available from <http://www.sciencedirect.com/>

Founded in 1980, this Elsevier publication continues to lead the research field. Article topics include second language acquisition in specific

contexts, needs assessment, curriculum development and evaluation, materials preparation, teaching and testing techniques, and the training and retraining of teachers for ESP.

*Journal of English for Academic Purposes*. Available from <http://www.sciencedirect.com/>

Also published by Elsevier, this journal was founded in 2001 to encourage continuing research and discussion among EAP practitioners. It encourages articles on a wide range of subjects, including classroom language, teaching methods, teacher education, language assessment, needs assessment, materials development and evaluation, and the sociopolitics of English uses and language planning.

Long, M. H. (Ed.). (2005). *Second language needs analysis*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

This book contains discussions of a variety of approaches to needs assessment research in the public, occupational, and academic sectors.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> For a more thorough treatment of this issue, see Nickerson and Planken (2009); Rogerson-Revell (2007).

<sup>2</sup> See the Academic Word List, <http://www.uefap.com/vocab/select/awl.htm>

<sup>3</sup> See the Literacy TA site, <http://www.literacyta.com>

<sup>4</sup> Triangulation refers to the use of at least three different types of data to support research findings (e.g., proficiency test scores, questionnaires, and classroom observations).

<sup>5</sup> See "Using Corpus Linguistics to Teach ESL," at <http://www.catesol.org/Fagan.pdf>