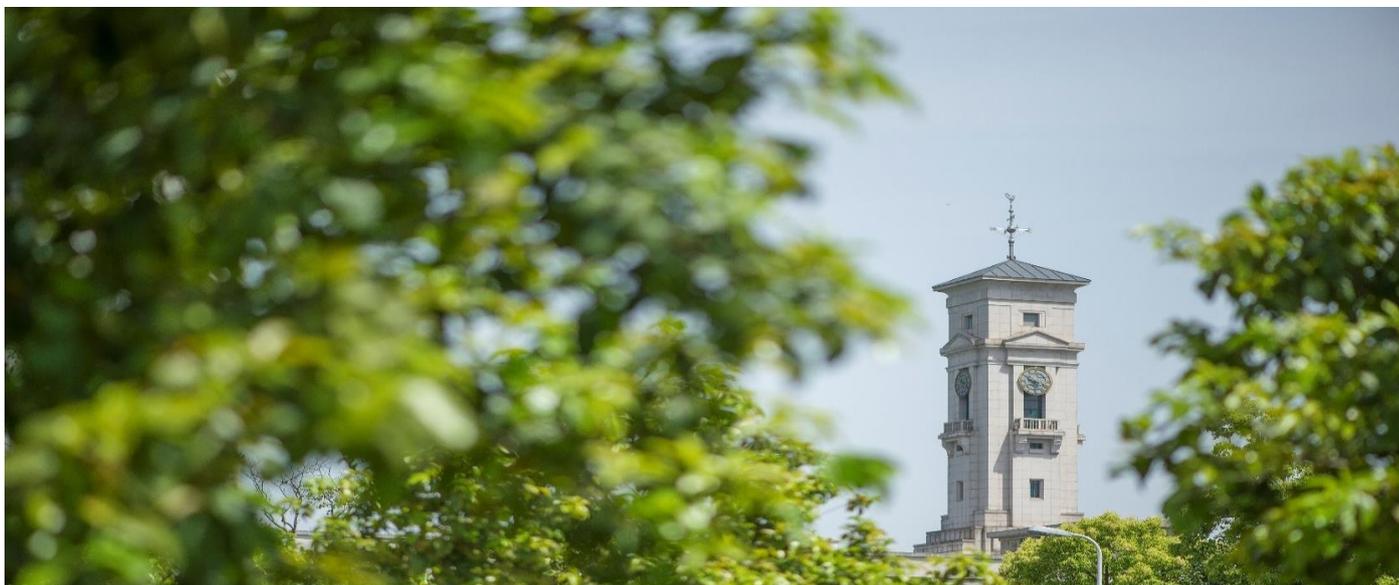


A review of 'Introducing English for Specific Purposes'

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As with other titles in the Routledge Introductions series, the aim of *Introducing English for Specific Purposes* is to provide readers with an overview of the key concepts and practices in its designated topic area.

The book consists of three broad sections: “Contextualizing ESP,” “Understanding the four pillars of ESP,” and “Applying ESP in real-world settings.” These are then divided into a series of individual chapters, each of which sets out to introduce both theoretical and practical elements of ESP. In every chapter, Anthony also raises awareness of what he sees as contentious issues in ESP and invites readers’ critical reflection via a series of task-based activities and questions. Newcomers to the field, or those studying ESP as part of an academic course (e.g., MA TESOL) are likely to find these particularly thought-provoking and useful.

In Section 1, the focus is on situating ESP first within a wider ELT context, then within the world at large. Anthony begins by providing some useful definitions and a synopsis of ESP’s early history, initially by referencing the work of ESP stalwarts such as Hutchinson and Waters (1987) and Strevens (1988), then by drawing on later authors such as Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998). Also in these opening chapters, there is an extended discussion around some of the ways in which ESP differs from mainstream ELT, and Anthony invites his readers to consider how ESP may be differentiated from more recent approaches such as content-based instruction (CBI), content and language integrated learning (CLIL), problem-based instruction (PBI) and English-medium instruction (EMI). Drawing the readers’ attention to these practices arguably adds a new dimension to the more typical and well-trod definitions of ESP found in earlier texts and marks an awareness of how both ESP and ELT in general have continued to develop. The closing chapter of Section 1 then sets the context for Section 2 by identifying what Anthony contends are the four main pillars of ESP: *needs analysis, learning objectives, materials and methods, and evaluation*.

The opening chapter of Section 2, “Identifying needs in the design of ESP courses and programs,” begins by drawing on some recent work on needs analysis by Brown (2016) and suggests that needs can be seen as reflecting four different viewpoints: a *diagnostic view*, a *discrepancy view*, a *democratic view*, and an *analytic view*. As Anthony acknowledges, the first three of these viewpoints owe much to the earlier research by Hutchinson and Waters (1987). In discussing the ground covered by these authors, however, there is no real mention of their concept of “learning needs” (p. 54; pp. 60-64). One might argue that this notion of what ESP learners need to do to learn was the main contribution from Hutchinson and Waters to the debates on needs analysis at that time. For a chapter in which readers are assured they will “learn all about needs analysis” (p. 63), this omission seemed rather conspicuous. While the references to recent authors such as Flowerdew (2013) are to be applauded, it was a pity not to see more detailed mention of the work of John Munby (1978), as his Communication Needs Processor has long been cited as one of the important historical milestones in the development of needs analysis. In this regard, a little more acknowledgement of some of the earlier research would not go amiss.

Chapter 5 deals with what Anthony sees as the second pillar of ESP, learning objectives. The structure of this chapter appears to borrow quite heavily from Hutchinson and Waters (1987) in identifying register analysis, rhetorical analysis, genre analysis, and metacognitive skills as key historical stages and principles in course design, although a new and most welcome addition here was Anthony’s brief discussion of the role played by corpora. The contentious issue for Chapter 5 questions to what extent practitioners should have specialist subject knowledge. In proposing a solution for dealing with unfamiliar lexis, Anthony makes a credible case for the applications of concordancing tools as a practical means of capturing authentic ESP language in use.

In Chapter 6, Anthony turns his attention to the third pillar of ESP, materials and methods. The discussion of methods here is limited to just two pages, possibly leaving the impression that more could have been said. For anyone familiar with the existing ESP literature, there is a strong sense of déjà vu in Anthony’s discussion of the role that materials play, how to evaluate an ESP course book, and whether or not to adopt, adapt, or create materials from scratch. Some new and very useful contributions however are evident in the sections on using technology in the adaptation and creation of ESP materials, and it is here that Anthony’s obvious expertise in the practical applications of text analysis software fully comes into its own. Teachers new to ESP material design are likely to find the practical exercises on how to use AntConc (Anthony, 2017)

illuminating, and the discussion of data-driven learning (DDL) segues nicely into the chosen contentious issue for Chapter 6, the matter of authenticity.

The final chapter of Section 2 addresses the fourth pillar of ESP by covering evaluation of learners, instructors, and courses or programs. As in the preceding chapters, Anthony opens with some definitions, and then discusses issues common to evaluation such as reliability, validity, and practicality. The main focus here is more on EAP contexts and Anthony rightfully acknowledges that the research on ESP evaluation in occupational settings remains relatively sparse. Nonetheless, there is some helpful discussion of diagnostic assessment in workplace contexts and readers are provided with a practical task on assessing learners in an English for Business Purposes setting. The contentious issue for this chapter introduces the notion of stakeholder deception and suggests that ESP learners, instructors, and administrators may all on occasion find themselves being economical with the truth. As with any other human endeavor, there can be little doubt that deceptions do sometimes take place, but readers may rightfully question whether or not this topic deserves to be positioned as a contentious issue in ESP. With the exception of plagiarism cases in EAP, deception is yet to appear as a key concern in any of the mainstream ESP literature.

The last section of the book, Section 3, deals with the application of ESP in real-world settings and the final three chapters here focus on practical concerns, such as the implementation of ESP in different contexts, the inherent challenges in ESP, and the future of ESP as a discipline.

In Chapter 8, Anthony makes a welcome distinction between ESP in what he terms *ideal*, *opportunistic*, and *just-in-time* settings, and readers already working in the field are likely to recognize many of the scenarios he presents. For newcomers to ESP, a series of tasks asks them to imagine themselves in these situations and reflect on what they themselves might do. This very useful, hands-on dimension of real-world ESP practice is then extended in Chapter 9 with a selection of specific challenges that ESP practitioners might face. The challenges themselves are highly credible (e.g., how to make ESP evaluation procedures authentic) and may ultimately serve as a personal checklist and reference point for readers.

The book concludes with a discussion in Chapter 10 of what the future holds for ESP under four main headings: globalization, curriculum design, materials and methods, and ESP research. Across each of these domains, Anthony confidently predicts continued disciplinary growth. Readers are invited to formulate their own proposals for ESP's future, and the book closes with one final contentious issue, the matter of critical ESP. Anthony questions whether ESP learners should also

be encouraged to challenge how their particular discourse communities operate, rather than simply accepting the status quo.

In conclusion, *Introducing English for Specific Purposes* provides an interesting overview of contemporary ESP. It is likely to be of particular value to those not yet familiar with some of the more canonical ESP works and may well serve as an encouragement for such readers to access some of those earlier texts.

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