

INTRODUCTION

Over the last 50 years, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has grown into a diverse and expanding discipline encompassing two main strands – English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Professional Purposes (EPP). Rooted in the functional approach to the study of language in specific contexts of use, the importance ESP has been steadily increasing in the modern world where English is used as the medium of instruction and the lingua franca of academic, business and workplace communication. Current ESP research has focused primarily on describing different registers and genres to reveal disciplinary and intercultural variation in the use of specialised English. The findings of these studies have informed explorations aiming at realising the second important goal of ESP – the support of the teaching and learning of specialised registers. In the last decade, with the transition of a substantial part of academic and professional communication online, ESP research has embraced new directions related to the study of new digital genres which use the multimodal affordances of online communication to reach wider and more diversified audiences.

The purpose of this Special Issue is to highlight the growing interest in the study of specialised discourses in English and to provide a modest insight into the current research trends in this area. The idea for this Special issue emerged during *The Tenth Brno Conference on Linguistics Studies in English*, which was held at the Faculty of Education, Masaryk University in September 2023. The diversity of the research projects presented at the conference confirmed the importance of studying specialized discourses with a focus on the communication, discourse strategies and disciplinary nuances, and also indicated some new trends in academic research.

The papers included in this Special Issue explore different types of academic and professional discourse by means of genre-analysis, corpus-based analysis and (multimodal) discourse analysis within the field of both expert and learner discourse. They represent most current directions in ESP research by exploring professional and learner academic discourse, multimodal digital communication and the teaching and learning of professional discourse.

The genre of the research article is explored in two papers seeking to reveal the generic structure of its part-genres and the discipline-specific expression of stance. *Safnil Arsyad* examines the methods sections of research articles in English language education to determine how scholars present and justify their research methods, which is essential for the positive reception of their research and its findings. The novelty and importance of this corpus analysis stems mainly from the fact that existing studies into the methods sections of research

articles have traditionally focused on their structure, while the area of research methodology itself can be considered rather under-researched. Arsyad has found out that in his corpus of sixty articles taken from six high-impact international journals the qualitative method is adopted most frequently, while the quantitative and mixed methods are equally common. Scholars focus on providing sufficient information about data analysis, data collection, the participants and research tools. Although they explain their research methods, they usually do not justify them openly. On the other hand, Arsyad notes that there is a lot of variation between journals.

Another paper dealing with research articles is the study by *Zahra Nasirizadeh* and *Shamala Paramasivam* that investigates stance markers in forty forestry research articles across the research article sections (Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion). Hedges and self-mentions have been identified as the most frequent stance markers, with the former being employed mainly in Introductions and the latter mainly in the Methods sections. In the Results section, boosters and attitude markers were found prevalent, while in the Discussion sections it was boosters and self-mentions.

Research into learner discourse is represented by two studies on the genre of abstracts. *Cita Nuary Ishak*, *Yazid Basthomi* and *Nurenzia Yannuar* investigate hypes in theses abstracts by Indonesian students. Hypes have been found across all the theses abstracts moves, although they were most prominent primarily in the introduction, where they were used to point to the importance of the research. Since the corpus included theses abstracts written between 2011 and 2020, the authors were also able to identify some changes within this period concerning the use of hypes by students and found out that hypes in theses abstracts are on the increase, which the authors explain as a manifestation of students' increasing awareness of the need to justify their research.

Kingsley Cyril Mintah's paper studies rhetorical structural patterns within a corpus of ninety postgraduate theses abstracts written by students at the University of Ghana within three different fields – Language studies, Linguistics studies and Literature studies. The analysis has shown differences between the disciplines, the theses abstracts within the first two disciplines being informative compared to abstracts in Literature studies being typically indicative and also rather distinct in terms of structuring of the moves compared to the other two disciplines. The value of the study lies in revealing the discipline-specific practises that might be particularly useful for enhancing the authors' ability to present their research effectively.

The impact of the rapid development of digital technologies on the ways academic discourse is presented and disseminated to wider audiences is explored

in the study of *Pilar Mur-Dueñas*. Her paper offers an interesting investigation into the recontextualization processes taking place in online academic communication with a focus on the use of explanatory strategies in digital discourse to show that verbal explanatory strategies are used more frequently than the non-verbal ones. The corpus includes three types of digital texts, i.e. author-generated, writer-mediated and research digests, each represented by ten texts. Within these, the author-generated digital texts have been found to include more non-verbal explanatory strategies than the other two types of texts analysed.

The last paper in the volume addresses the process of teaching and learning of specialised discourse. *Veronika Dvořáčková's* study provides an insight into the area of clinical communication between doctors and patients focusing on the genre of delivering bad news. The paper presents an action research conducted in a number of ESP classes at the Faculty of Medicine, Masaryk university, Brno with the aim of providing medical students with the linguistic tools and experience necessary for successful communication with patients who are to receive bad news about their medical condition. The author designed several ESP tasks for medical students in order to raise the students' awareness of the need for effective and sensitive doctor-patient communication, which plays a crucial role in the therapeutic process. The feedback received confirmed that such tuition aimed at equipping medical students with the linguistic tools to deliver bad news to patients is absolutely essential and that the focus should be equally on the factual information about the patient's condition and the character and manner of this communication.

The papers in this Special Issue are complemented by a review of the book *Digital Scientific Communication: Identity and Visibility in Research Dissemination* edited by Ramón Plo-Alastrué and Isabel Corona and published in 2023 by Palgrave Macmillan, which conveniently relates to the study on digital dissemination practices by Pilar Mur-Dueñas. Aiming to reveal emerging trends in science communication, the book comprises studies on practices contributing to the construction of digital identity and enhancing researcher visibility, potential conflicts stemming from the public availability and appropriation of scientific culture, and various ways of disseminating scientific knowledge through new digital genres in different context of academic and professional communication.

In conclusion, we hope that this Special Issue has succeeded in illustrating, at least to some extent, the diversity of topics, genres and methods in current research on specialised discourses and that it might provide readers with inspiring ideas for further research.

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