E. S. P.: Fact or Fiction?

Winifred Crombie
University of Waikato Language Institute

Powhiri Rika-Heke
Hamilton Teachers' College

ABSTRACT

The term ESP (English for Specific or Specifiable Purposes) has been used in a general sense to refer to a wide range of very different courses—from the very specific, formulaic or semi-formulaic occupationally-oriented course (for which we use here the label RRE, Restricted Repertoire English), to the very general, open-ended academically related course (generally referred to as EAP, English for Academic Purposes). The fact that the designation ESP is used for both of these suggests that they have more in common than either has with what are sometimes referred to as GPE (General Purpose English) courses. A close examination of many EAP courses, however, reveals that they are very similar indeed to a number of higher level GPE courses and, indeed, to many courses designed for native speakers. We suggest here that, except in the case of RRE, labels suggesting that courses relate directly to specific or specifiable purposes are misleading and should be abandoned.

Our main aim here is to consider how far ESP (English for Specific or Specifiable Purposes) as a concept and as a set of classroom practices can be sustained in the light of developments in linguistic research. We shall, therefore, be looking at ESP not only from the point of view of the practicing language teacher, but also from that of the linguist.

There is a growing demand for ESP courses. Employers and education authorities seem convinced of their potential value and language schools cannot afford to ignore the demands of the market place. Unfortunately, however, the results achieved are often disappointing. They are less likely to be disappointing where the needs of learners can be very clearly defined as is the case where the requirement is for short, very specific language courses—courses involving what we shall refer to as RRE (Restricted Repertoire English). There is a genuine need for such courses and they can be extremely effective in achieving their objectives. These objectives are, however, necessarily very limited ones.

Courses which come under the heading of RRE are genuinely specific. They are generally occupation-related. They may, for example, involve the specific requirements of certain categories of airline personnel or aim to provide the sort of linguistic «topping-up» or reorientation required by medical students who need to be made aware of particular, stereotypical interaction—types associated with doctor-patient interviews or who simply require a knowledge of non-technical terms for body parts or bodily functions. What characterizes courses of this type is that they offer almost no basis for further development: the skills they provide are non-transferrable. The aim of such courses is generally to give learners a restricted code of formulaic utterances or, at least, a set of utterances which, in the specific context in which the learners are likely to function, operate in a formulaic or semi-formulaic way. Courses of this type are not really language courses in the full sense at all in that they do not aim to provide access to the language system. As far as learners following such courses are concerned, the language system is, in a very real sense, irrelevant. Such courses are non-generative. As Professor Widdowson reminds us in *Learning Purpose and Language Use*, what we have here is not education but training.

There is, of course, nothing wrong with training where it is appropriate. As far as language learning is concerned, however, training is rarely appropriate. What language learners usually require is flexibility. Like native speakers, they will need to adapt their linguistic resources to the demands of a range of situations. They will require appropriate vocabulary for the range of contexts and situations in which they find themselves. They may need, in addition, to extend their awareness of a range of formulaic and semi-formulaic interaction-types as they extend the range of contexts in which they need to operate linguistically. However, just as is the case with native speakers, their success in communicating in a range of situations is likely to relate more to their general linguistic competence than to any other factor. What is most needed is the ability to *transfer* linguistic skills from one area to another. This ability is more likely to be acquired when the focus in the language class is on education rather than training. In other words, as in other areas of education, language education—as opposed to language training—involves transferrable skills (Widdowson *Learning Purpose*).

In discussing RRE courses, we claimed that there *are* circumstances in which it *is* possible to specify the linguistic needs of learners fairly accurately and to relate these functional needs to linguistic exponents. This, however, is the exception. And it is only in such exceptional circumstances that the label ESP has any real force. It is a label which has been, we believe, applied much too widely and one which is, for this reason, best abandoned in favour of a label such as RRE—a label which more accurately characterizes such courses.

Ronald Mackay has defined ESP as the «teaching of English, not as an end in itself; but as an essential means to a clearly identifiable goal» (Mackay *English for Specific Purposes*). A definition such as this is applicable to RRE courses. It is not, however, applicable to other types of course which are often included under the general heading of ESP.

Ronald Mackay's definition of ESP alerts us to the danger of applying the term as a generic label for courses which aim to provide learners with a range of quite different skills from those associated with RRE. As Pauline Robinson notes, given that all language teaching is, in a sense, need or want-driven, ESP may not be essentially different from ELT (English Language Teaching) in general. Looked at from this point

of view, terms such as GPE (General Purpose English), EST (English for Science and Technology) and EAP (English for Academic Purposes) are potentially extremely misleading. Looked at from a purely linguistic point of view, they are not only potentially misleading, but also conceptually suspect. This becomes particularly evident when they are placed in the context of concepts such as «register» and «needs analysis» which generally provide the underpinning of content specification in relation to what have been referred to as ESP courses. For this reason, it is worth looking closely at what is implied by the use of such concepts.

Underlying much early work in ESP was the assumption that there was a «common core» English onto which additional linguistic items had to be grafted in order for learners to realize specific linguistic goals. This is the view expressed by Dr. Noss, Ford Foundation Advisor to the Central Institute of the English Language in Thailand:

> Common core English can be defined as that part of English which has a vocabulary, perhaps limited to as few as 2,000 words, and an inventory of basic structures which are common to all forms of English, written or spoken. . . . Special purpose English is any kind of English which is associated with a specific occupational or academic objective. (Noss, quoted by Sitachitta and Sagarik)

There are a number of problems here. First, it is assumed that there is a lexical and syntactic correspondence between spoken and written English. As soon, however, as this assumption is questioned, the claim being made is significantly weakened. It is further weakened as soon as we note that lexical items are not unidimensional: they may have a variety of senses associated with different situations of use. This being the case, to talk of lexical items, rather than of particular senses of lexical items, as part of the so-called «common core» would clearly be unjustifiable. But, in any case, however intuitively appealing an argument for «common core» English might be, it must ultimately rest on statistical analyses of a range of different samples from a range of different corpora. And analyses of this type reveal very complex patterning which is far from straightforward in interpretative terms. What *is* clear is that no simple conception of «common core» English is supportable. Depending on your choice of corpus and your method of analysis, almost any syntactic structure might be considered to be part of a «common core» and the range of lexical items and senses which might be included is vast.

The assumption that there are different «kinds» of English associated with different «kinds» of objective and that these kinds of English can be content-specified is an assumption that relates to those early quantitative studies out of which the concept of «register» emerged. Some of these studies were based on the assumption that you could take a selection of materials from a particular very broadly defined domain (the physical sciences, for example), analyze it quantitatively and discover the areas of language that you needed to concentrate on in your course. Later register-based studies were, however, more sophisticated in conception.

The initial stages of register analysis were based on the belief that a specifiable purpose implied a specifiable language. It is this assumption that has strongly influenced the research of Halliday, McIntosh and Strevens and Catford. All of these studies were essentially quantitative in nature. The first attempt to apply the results of this type of research to course specification was made by Ewer and Latorre in *A Course in Basic*

Scientific English. Ewer and Latorre attempted to divide scientific writing into various task-types such as «abstract» and «summary.» Amongst these, however, there are categories such as «instruction,» «description» and «explanation» which relate more to a particular type of functional orientation than to task specification. At the heart of the work of Ewer and Latorre there is, then, a basic categorial problem. Although Ewer and Latorre did not claim that the features they isolated were *unique* to particular tasks or functions within an overall domain, they did claim that there was a *preponderance* of such features in specific text-types. In fact, however, as Tickoo notes, Ewer and Latorre were clearly unable to substantiate such claims as they related to the area of syntax. It is lexis rather than syntax that is given the main focus in their work. Thus, although Ewer and Latorre claim that specific text-types are marked by syntactic correspondences similar in type to the lexical ones to which they make reference, they provide no real evidence for this—a problem which becomes even more apparent when we consider that whereas, for example, Swales in «Writing Scientific English» concentrates on the present simple form of main verbs, Close, in *The English We Use for Science* concentrates on continuous aspect. Presumably this difference is directly attributable to a difference in corpus. And there are further problems which relate to the fact that so many studies have looked at isolated forms rather than combinations of forms.

In line with the linguistic focus of the time, early register studies concentrated on the sentence unit. Very little attention was paid to the text as a whole or to the discourse (that is, the text *plus* all those implicatures etc. derivable from the text). There have, of course, been efforts to correct this, one example being Porter's focus on sentence connectives. In general, however, such efforts are limited in scope with, as Spencer points out, discoursal features continuing to be largely ignored. An additional problem, one which has been referred to by both Widdowson («ESP in Theory and Practice») and White («Communicative Competence,» «The Language»), is that register studies have continued to be largely quantitative rather than qualitative.

Attempts have, of course, been made not only to look at interacting structural patterns in register-type studies, but also to examine the possibility of relating structural encodings to functional orientation. As early as 1966, Halliday proposed a model in which «behaviour potential» (what an individual «can do») interrelates with «meaning potential» (what an individual «can mean») and in which grammatical choice is seen in the context of both of these («Categories»). A well-known development of this work was published as «Towards a Sociological Semantics» in *Explorations in the Functions of Language* in 1973. The important things about this work in relation to our concerns here are that (a) it anticipates the later work on speech act theory that underpins much recent debate within language teaching circles on language functions, (b) it provides a basis for distinguishing between non-stereotypical open sets and marginal, stereotypical closed sets such as greetings (where semantic networks lead directly into formal items), and (c) it illustrates that there *are* occasions when form and function have a high degree of co-incidence in the absence of an essentially stereotypically patterned framework. For all of these reasons, it could be said that Halliday's work provides just the sort of basis necessary for the type of analysis of corpora that must be conducted in advance of any firm claims being made about the relationship between lexical/sentential/textual/discoursal structure and general or specific discourse functions.

In arguing that grammatical choice relates to rhetorical choice, a number of writers have, we believe, ignored the complexity of the situation as outlined by Halliday. It is, as one of us has argued elsewhere, also characteristic of the designers of so-called «functional» language courses that they ignore this sort of complexity (Crombie). As Widdowson reminds us, «no simple equation can be made between linguistic forms and communicative functions» («The Teaching of English»). In that he does take account of this, the work of Ron White is interesting («Communicative Competence» «The Language»).

Although White does want to demonstrate that there may be forms which *typically* relate to certain functions, he is also concerned to point out that our main concern should be with feature groupings or constellations rather than with individual features and he avoids making a direct connection between syntactic structure and illocutionary force. Instead, he looks at what he refers to as «discourse functions» (for example, reporting sequences of past actions) and attempts to relate these to particular construction-types. He then seeks relationships between these discourse function/syntactic construction correspondences and particular «situational purposes» or illocutionary forces such as, for example, persuasion. Thus White proposes an indirect relationship between illocutionary force and syntactic structure with discourse function mediating between the two and with all of these being related to the field, mode and tenor of a discourse. This goes some way towards accommodating the sorts of criticism that can be made of early work on register analysis. It does not, however, go far enough and it raises further problems which relate to (a) lack of specificity in White's use of terms such as «discourse function» and «situational purpose,» and (b) the inherent non-specificity of terms such as «field,» «mode» and «tenor.» Where such work as this is particularly useful, however, is in highlighting the essential problem involved in using as a starting point a concept such as «register.» If we use the term in a broad sense and talk, for example, about a «scientific register,» we will be at a loss to know what to include in language courses based upon it: analyses of different corpora involving texts from different areas of discourse in the general domain of the physical sciences will reveal very few, if any, commonalities. Certainly, this will not reveal anything significant on the basis of which we can design a language course. In seeking for linguistic correspondences, we will need to be very much more specific in our text-area designation. It is sometimes argued that this is because there is a proliferation of sub-registers. It could, perhaps more realistically, be argued that this is because the concept of register is itself a misleading one. Certainly, if we examine two texts which are very similar indeed in topic and function (which, for example, both provide a step-by-step guide to a particular technique for making beer in a domestic setting), it is likely that there will be syntactic and lexical correspondences between them. And it may be that we will encounter a group of language learners whose only linguistic goal is to be able to read guides to home brewing. This, however, is unlikely.

Whatever attempts are made to improve approaches, one thing is clear: lists of lexical items and of syntactic structures derived from quantitative studies of corpora collected on the basis of simplistic criteria derived from poorly defined concepts such as «register» cannot provide a valid basis for course construction. What characterizes RRE courses, however, is that they do not, in general, rely on the concept of register.

We referred above to the fact that it is necessary to be very specific indeed if one is to find genuine textual correspondences and we claimed that, except in the case of

RRE, specificity of this order is unlikely to provide a useful basis for the construction of language courses. An objection which could be raised as far as this position is concerned is one that relates to lexis. It is often claimed that it is both possible and desirable to construct a useful lexical syllabus for science and technology students on the basis of a survey of texts within the general domain of science and technology. There are, however, good reasons for doubting this.

It is often topic and vocabulary that make a course *appear* specific. However, there must be some doubt as to how far it is sensible or necessary for a language teacher to attempt to teach technically specific lexical items or senses. Talking about science, Tickoo has claimed that «the vast majority of terms . . . belong to the themes and concepts of science and can be taught by teachers of science rather than English.» But, he adds, «teachers of English can—and should—teach 'sandwich words' (e.g. *substance, reaction, validity* etc.) which are in some of their meanings part of objective writing.» Although Tickoo's use of «vast majority» and «objective» in this context is open to question, the point he is making remains an important one, one which might usefully be considered in conjunction with a point made by Michael Smithies in a paper included in the same collection:

> The same group of Thai students which could handle with accuracy and ease *photosynthesis* and *cardio-vascular* did not recognize . . . the value of such simple terms as «at last,» «even though,» «but» and «however.»

That category of words referred to by Tickoo as «sandwich words» must include a large number that are used widely in situations involving some degree of formality. As Carter notes, words in this category are frequently less inflectionally and derivationally complex than words that we might be tempted to call «core» in a more general sense. They are not, however, specific to a particular domain of discourse: that is the whole point about them. Equally, connectives of the type referred to by Smithies are not specific. Control of these cohesive devices has a direct bearing on inter-sentential cohesion, just as control of sentence structure has a direct bearing on intra-sentential cohesion. Even so, it is important to ensure, in teaching such words and expressions, that there *is* genuine understanding for it is sometimes the case that textual cohesion can be used as a substitute for discoursal coherence.

Many language teachers—both those who teach language to native speakers and those who teach language to non-native speakers—agree that it is important that we teach «sandwich words» and cohesive signals. However, neither of these is specific to a particular discourse domain any more than are construction-types such as the passive or functions such as explanation.

We have said that particular function-types such as explanation are not domain-specific. As it has often been argued that function-types could provide an adequate basis for the construction of general ESP courses, this claim may require some additional support.

In a paper published in 1976, Alan Mountford identifies a number of speech acts as being «typical» of scientific discourse. He claims that «in the universe of scientific discourse, the illocutionary acts of defining, classifying, describing, explaining, reporting, asserting, hypothesizing, predicting etc. can be identified as having particular importance.» Because so many writers have identified these same speech acts as being

typical of scientific discourse, it is tempting to suppose that they must be. However, an examination of, for example, spontaneous, informal conversation or of seventeenth century metaphysical sermons reveals that this cannot be the case: the speech acts outlined above occur very frequently in almost any corpus of whatever type. We might wonder then why it has so often been assumed that they are particularly common in the domain of science-related discourse. The answer, or at least part of the answer, may be contained in another work by Mountford (in collaboration with Mackay) in which it is noted that these speech acts are *explicit* more often in certain types of text than they are in others:

> Scientific language data . . . particularly lends itself to examination in such terms [i.e, in terms of «rhetorical functions»] since the scientist is constantly involved in performing fairly explicit acts of defining, identifying, comparing, differentiating, classifying etc. . . . I am not suggesting that the scientist is the only one who performs these acts—we all perform them in everyday life—but the scientist is more explicitly conscious of the proceedings he is engaging in. («A Programme»)

What this suggests to us is that there may, in fact, be less rather than more need for language teachers to concentrate, in teaching students of science, on making illocutionary acts explicit. In fact, Selinker, Trimble and Trimble have drawn particular attention to the problems language learners may have in dealing with situations where illocutionary force is not explicit. They claim that it may be the case that «even advanced learners do not possess those abilities that would allow them to recognize the existence of certain types of presuppositional rhetorical information, abilities that the experienced native speaker posesses.» What is interesting to note in this context is Pauline Robinson's observation that although Trimble and his colleagues devote attention to EST, their discoveries may be valid for *academic* English in general (Robinson 22). This is an interesting observation. However, there is a logical extension to the point made by Pauline Robinson: implicit speech acts may create interpretative difficulties in *all* situations—particularly, perhaps, in informal, conversational English where illocutionary force is so often unsignposted. Indeed, where they are dealing with texts in an unfamiliar discourse domain, native speakers clearly have problems in coping with implicit speech acts. After all, Selinker, Trimble and Trimble do not claim that *all* native speakers have an equal ability to process what they refer to as «presuppositional rhetorical information,» merely that *experienced* native speakers do. Presumably, that experience to which reference is made relates either to familiarity with the relevant discourse domain or general experience in moving from one area of complex information processing to another. Where does this experience come from? Presumably, it need not, and generally will not, come from explicit teaching although, of course, this is not necessarily an argument against explicit teaching. Indeed, where native speakers do lack this ability, it is likely that they can be helped towards achieving it in a variety of different ways in English Studies classes.

There are, in fact, many areas of overlap between the teaching of English to native and to non-native speakers. Teachers of English to native speakers often do concern themselves with code-based work in an attempt to extend the range and variety of structures used by students in their writing in much the same way as do teachers of English to non-native speakers. And, of course, they will also concentrate from time to

time on vocabulary extension. Although he or she may avoid encroaching too directly on specialist work in other areas of the curriculum, the contemporary English teacher is likely to introduce into the English class a wide range of different texts dealing with a wide range of different topics. He or she is likely also to encourage students to engage in a wide range of different language activities some of which will be similar in type to the activities required of students in other areas of the curriculum. In this way, teachers not only encourage students to extend their linguistic repertoire, they also encourage them towards proficiency in adapting the linguistic resources and communicative strategies they already have to a range of new situations. In this sense, the strategies involved in the teaching of English to native speakers will have a great deal in common with the strategies involved in the teaching of English to non-native speakers, particulary where the non-native speakers already have a reasonable degree of competence in English. In particular, it is worth noting that the focus in the native speaker classroom is often on language-related skills such as note taking or report writing just as it often is in the EAP (English for Academic Purposes) classroom. The main differences are likely to be that the EAP teacher will concentrate from time to time on system repair and may focus more directly on the students' main area of academic interest than will the teacher of English to native speakers in most circumstances. In fact, however, any marked focus on students' main area of academic interest may have more to do with motivation and face validity than with a genuine conviction that the language involved will be significantly more relevant to the students' ultimate needs.

There is some recognition now in the U.K. of the fact that native speakers of English in higher education are likely to benefit from courses whose main focus is on the use of English in an academic context. Such courses may concentrate on specific skills such as note-taking or report writing. These skills are extremely useful for students in higher education. They are not, however, skills which are restricted to the higher education situation and the fact that they are more often referred to as courses in communication skills than as EAP courses is an implicit recognition of this. Such courses are, however, not necessarily very different in orientation from those courses for non-native speakers in higher education to which the label EAP is so often attached.

The connection between the teaching of language skills to native and non-native speakers is attested by the growing tendency to transfer materials between areas. Many books which appear to have been prepared with the non-native speaker in mind, particularly at advanced stages of learning, seem equally appropriate for native speakers. Indeed, they are sometimes presented by publishers as being intended for either market. Pauline Robinson notes that «in some cases . . . ESP books have also been thought suitable for the native speaker, and *vice versa*. . . . The use of such joint materials could perhaps be usefully further exploited» (73). What is interesting about this is that it points to the fact that what are often referred to as EAP courses may be neither specifically academic nor, except in so far as system repair and extension is the focus of attention, specifically appropriate for language learners rather than native speakers. It may even be that the lower the level of general linguistic competence non-native speakers have, the less likely they are to benefit from courses of this type. And yet, where resources are limited, such courses are often reserved for those students whose general levels of linguistic competence are the lowest. Short pre-sessional skills-based,

discipline-related courses may not be the answer in the case of those students whose academic performance is most likely to be negatively affected by language difficulties.

At the beginning of this paper, reference was made to Ronald Mackay's definition of ESP. It is useful to consider at this point Mackay's more general explication of the term «specific purpose» as it is used in the context of language courses: «it is generally used to refer to the teaching/learning of foreign languages for a clearly utilitarian purpose of which there is no doubt» («Languages for Specific Purposes»).

The concentration here is on «purpose» rather than on actual language choice: no necessary connection is made between a specific purpose and a specific language. This bears out the observations we have been making throughout this paper, observations which can be summed up in the words of Perren:

> There are ... considerable theoretical difficulties in attempting to isolate any «language of specialisms.» The notion, for example, that a distinctive «special» register (appropriate to a specialist subject) can be identified by contrast with a «general register» is fraught with confusion. (Introductory Essay)

Writing in 1977, Strevens argues that the label EST should be dispensed with on the grounds that (a) there is no special language, only a principle of selection from the language to meet the purposes defined, and (b) it is subject-specific rather than activity-specific. He goes on, however, to argue for the maintenance of a distinction between EAP and EOP (English for Occupational Purposes) on the grounds that such a distinction *is* activity-specific. Activities, he argues, relate to needs, and needs relate to skills, themes, topics and functions, syntax and vocabulary. This approach to the specification of course content is different from the approach we examined earlier: the one is based on register analysis, the other on needs analysis. The difference, however, is not as profound as it might initially appear. A register analysis approach starts from an examination of texts (written and/or spoken); a needs analysis starts from an examination of activity-types. However, basing linguistic specification on activity-types involves the assumption that activity-types correlate with textual and discoursal preponderances. Beyond the realm of RRE, there is no evidence that this is the case. Needs analysis does not provide a way of retaining broadly-based distinctions such as those between EOP and EAP.

There is one further possibility. Perhaps a broadly based distinction such as that referred to above could be maintained on the basis of methodological specification. In an article published in 1979, Keith Johnson discussed the possibility that two different approaches to the problem of «communicative incompetence» may be emerging. The first of these involves the attempted *rigorous specification of needs* typical of much ESP work, the second involves *methodological procedures*. Johnson notes that since we cannot possibly «work through» all possible uses, the recent shift in focus in language teaching from code to use has meant that new criteria of selection have had to be developed. It is this, he argues, that has led to the tendency to concentrate on usefulness rather than exhaustive inclusiveness in constructing needs-based inventories. The problem with this approach is that it still presupposes a correlation between use and exponent: it has all the appearance of consideredness but is much of the time *ad hoc*.

Professor Widdowson has also distinguished between different approaches to course specification for ESP (Widdowson «English for Specific Purposes»). His distinction is

specifically between *goal-oriented* and *process-oriented* approaches, the latter referring
to the *means* of learning rather than the course *content.* Clearly, Professor Widdowson
does not believe that course content is irrelevant, but he *does* believe that content
should be selected in relation to the requirements of the learning process rather than, as
in most cases, in relation to what the learner might need or want to do with the
language.

The first stage in Professor Widdowson's argument relates to his suggestion that
people may differ in terms of, for example, their preference for *holist* or *serialist*
approaches to problems. This he relates to divergent versus convergent thinking, seeing
serialist approaches as essentially convergent and as possibly typical of the physical
scientist, holist approaches as essentially divergent and possibly typical of the social
scientist. This distinction is clearly a questionable one. The further suggestion that
disciplines or subjects of study may reflect, in their characteristic discourse, preferred
ways of thinking is equally questionable. In any case, if we are to argue for course
design based on methodological principles originating in distinctions of this kind, we
will have to provide detailed support for them. No such support is currently available.
In its absence, no adequate methodologically-based rationale for the retention of
subject-related language courses can be constructed.

This does not mean, of course, that learning strategies are unimportant. Clearly,
learning strategies must impose constraints on teaching strategies. Equally, if we are not
to confine learners by and to what we teach, we must take self-direction seriously.
Indeed, both Pauline Robinson and Bernard Coffey draw attention to the fact that
increasing emphasis on self-direction in language learning has inevitably led to a further
questioning of the usefulness of the concept of ESP.

Within English language teaching, there is increasing emphasis on the development
of what are referred to as «communicative methodologies»—methodologies which
concentrate less on content as defined in strictly analytical terms and more on the
development of effective strategies for communication. Such communicative
methodologies are often, but not inevitably, associated with an essentially humanistic
approach to teaching, with self-directed learning and with learner training. Thus, in
humanistic terms, there is likely to be an emphasis on the centrality of the learner,
rather than the supremacy of the teacher (Stevick). And, since humanistic approaches
require a recognition that students are not the passive recipients of teaching, there is
also an emphasis on learner training which is «defined as a learning situation in which
the teacher plays an instrumental role in helping the learners discover how to learn
effectively» (Ellis and Sinclair 1). This, in turn, implies some degree of self-instruction,
which will involve setting up «situations in which a learner, with others, or alone, is
working without the direct control of a teacher» (Dickinson 5). It is important to
distinguish here, however, between learner-centred and materials-centred self-instruction
in that the first is «characterized by modes which place responsibility on the learner,»
whereas the second «builds the teacher's role into the language materials»
(Dickinson 5).

Self-directed learning inevitably creates a situation in which the teacher cannot
specify in advance the linguistic content of a session. In other situations, however,
linguistic content is specifiable (whether or not it is actually specified). However,
although topics and situations may be chosen with a specific communicative purpose in
mind, the linguistic content—except in the case of some RRE courses—can be used by

students in a wide range of situations. It is precisely because of this that there is less danger of constraint in so-called ESP courses than might be supposed. After all, whatever criteria are used, language courses are by definition linguistically selective. Encouraging students to take more control of their own learning is one way of overcoming some of the problems inherent in this.

Works Cited

Carter, R. *Vocabulary: Applied Linguistic Perspectives.* 1978. London: Allen and Unwin, 1987.

Catford, J. C. *A Linguistic Theory of Translation: An Essay in Applied Linguistics.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1965.

Close, R. A. *The English We Use for Science.* London: Longman, 1965.

Coffey, B. «ESP: English for Specific Purposes.» *Cambridge Language Teaching Surveys* 3. Ed. V. Kinsella. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985.

Crombie, W. «Syllabus and Method: System or Licence?» *System* 27.3 (1988).

Dickinson, L. *Self-Instruction in Language Learning.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987.

Ellis, G. and B. Sinclair. *Learning to Learn English: A Course in Learner Training.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985.

Ewer, J. R. and G. Latorre. *A Course in Basic Scientific English.* London: Longman, 1969.

Halliday, M. A. K. «Categories of the Theory of Grammar.» *Word* 17.3 (1966).

Halliday, M. A. K. «Towards a Sociological Semantics.» *Explorations in the Functions of Language.* London: Edward Arnold, 1973.

Halliday, M. A. K., A. McIntosh and P. Strevens. *The Linguistic Sciences and Language Teaching.* London: Longman, 1964.

Johnson, K. «Communicative Approaches and Communicative Processes.» *The Communicative Approach to Language Teaching.* Eds. C. J. Brumfit and K. Johnson. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1979.

Mackay, R. «Languages for special Purposes.» *Edutec* 3 (1975).

Mackay, R. and A. Mountford, eds. *English for Specific Purposes.* London: Longman, 1978.

———. «A Programme for Postgraduate Soil Scientists at the University of Newcastle.» *English for Specific Purposes.* Eds. Mackay and Mountford.

Mountford, A. «The notion of simplification and its relevance to materials preparation in English for Science and Technology.» Ed. Jack Richards.

Perren, G. Introductory Essay. *Teaching Languages to Adults for Special Purposes.* Ed. G. Perren.

———, ed. *Teaching Languages to Adults for Special Purposes.* CILT Reports and Papers, no. 11, 1974.

Porter, D. «Scientific English: An Oversight in Stylistics?» *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia* 8 (1976).

Richards, J. C., ed. *Teaching English for Science and Technology.* Singapore: Singapore UP, 1976.

Robinson, P. *ESP (English for Specific Purposes): The Present Position.* Oxford: Pergamon, 1980.

Selinker, L., R. M. Trimble and L. Trimble. «On Reading English for Science and Technology: Presuppositional Rhetorical Information in the Discourse.» Ed. Jack Richards.

Sitachitta, K. and P. Sagarik. «Problems and Attempts at Solutions in the Teaching of ESP at the Tertiary Level in Thailand.» Ed. Jack Richards.

Smithies, M. «Weighing the Four Skills in a Tertiary EST Programme.» Ed. Jack Richards.

Spencer, J. «Languages for Special Purposes: Teaching Rules or Learning Roles?» *Modern Language Teaching to Adults: Language for Special Purposes.* Ed. M. de Greve *et al.* Paris: Didier, 1973.

Stevick, E. W. *Teaching Languages: A Way and Ways.* Rowley, Mass.: Newbury, 1980.

Swales, J. «Writing Scientific English.» Eds. Mackay and Mountford.

Tickoo, M.L. «Theories and Materials in EST: A View from Hyderbad.» Ed. Jack Richards.

White, R. V. «Communicative Competence, Register and Second Language Learning.» *IRAL* 12.2 (1974).

White, R. V. «The language, the Learner and the Syllabus.» *RELC Journal* 6.1 (1975).

Widdowson, H. G. «The Teaching of English as Communication.» *ELT Journal* 27.1 (1972).

_____. «EST in Theory and Practice.» 1975. *Explorations in Applied Linguistics.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1979.

_____. «English for Specific Purposes: Criteria for Course Design.» *English for Acadamic and Technical Purposes*, Eds. L. Selinker, E. Tarone and V. Hanzeli Rowley. Mass.: Newbury, 1981.

_____. *Learning Purpose and Language Use.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1983.