

ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC AND
TECHNICAL PURPOSESLarry Selinker, Elaine Tarone
and Victor Hanzeli editorsNewbury House Publishers,
Rowley, Mass. 1981

The editors of this book, along with Luis Trimble, in whose honor it was written, are well known in the field of ESP for their work on the rhetorical structures of EST discourse. The book is dedicated to Louis Trimble in recognition of his pioneering efforts in the field. According to the editors, the different chapter/articles are divided into two main areas. The first section deals with theoretical and descriptive papers on the rhetoric and grammar of EST/EAP discourse. The second section deals with practical applications, although the difference is not always clear. Editorial comments follow each chapter, supposedly to draw attention to unifying themes.

Coming at the beginning of the book, one would expect Henry Widdowson's article to set the stage for later discussion. Unfortunately this discussion never takes place and the chapter itself sticks out like a sore thumb. Widdowson readdresses himself to the question of learner needs, but from a different point of view, that of a student in an on going process of learning. To describe this process, Widdowson defines two interpretations of learner needs as seen in course design. A goal oriented approach which is interested in the formal properties of the English text in ESP and the "communicative functioning" of language is opposed to a process oriented approach which is interested in cognitive styles and learning strategies. Widdowson claims the goal oriented approach is mistaken and that course content should be selected on the basis of its likeliness to activate learning strategies. This opinion is based on the early writings of Pask and Scott on the different types of learners.

The dichotomy proposed by Widdowson is interesting and deserves greater attention, but is not mentioned again.

In fact the rest of the book is dedicated exclusively to aspects of the goal oriented approach. In other words, what is considered a mistaken approach is given ample coverage. Nonetheless there are many worthwhile articles for those concerned with goal oriented points of view. Included among these are papers by Candlin, et al, Ronald Mackay and J. N. Crofts.

Candlin, et al, present their work on designing modular materials for doctor-patient communicative skills. The materials are designed for foreign doctors in the UK and the US for whom the English language could be a barrier. The course is based on a large number of consultations, observed in the casualty departments of 20 hospitals in different parts of the UK. The modules are built on functions of language that aim to improve doctor-patient relationships. A variety of intensive and self programming techniques are used that allow flexibility in catering to doctors who wish to improve specific skills. Excellent examples are provided, giving clear insights into the intricate nature of course design.

Ron Mackay describes his work involved with developing a reading curriculum for ESP students at the beginning level. Interest in the article is enhanced by the fact that the project was carried out at the School of Veterinary Medicine, UNAM. Mackay reports on a project carried out as a result of a cooperative link between the CELE, UNAM and the Dept. of Linguistics, Edinburgh University.

Crofts, in a timely article, questions some of the basic assumptions of ESP textbooks. He notes that these textbooks are typically lacking in two areas, "excessive familiarity" of subject matter or "unforeseen ignorance" on the part of the students or the teacher. The first of these difficulties is common to simplified texts while the latter is common to authentic texts. Crofts includes some suggestions for surmounting these obstacles.

Other chapter/articles worth mentioning are those of Swales, Lackstrom and Urquhart. Swales draws attention to the fact that sensitivity to the structures of discourse does not necessarily mean sensitivity to the use of the language. Neither does the identification of the forms of the language indicate an appreciation of why such forms have been chosen.

Lackstrom shows how logical argumentation is related to discussion problems. Empirical EST arguments are said to follow closely the generally accepted descriptions of the scientific method while discussion problems are said to make use of a greater number of idiomatic and culture bound forms. Urquhart presents a classification of some types of inferences and logical "operations" as they appear in learning texts.

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