ESP: Current Practices and Emerging Issues from Recent Research

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Most of the traditional models of ESP have become inadequate to meet the challenges of the present-day interdisciplinary demands and practices of the academy and the workplace. These challenges have emerged as a result of several developments, some of which include, the growing tensions between the world of work and that of the academy, the complexities of the modern multi-media, encouraging creative forms of information design and presentation, the increasing interdisciplinary nature of most university academic programmes, and the overwhelming colonization and appropriation of generic resources within and across disciplines. These developments seriously question some of the models and practices prevalent in ESP. Recent research in discourse and genre analysis clearly favours a model of ESP teaching and learning which focuses on the acquisition of specialist expertise, which is not only distinct, but also complex and dynamic. Drawing on evidence from recent research in discourse and genre analysis, I would like to raise some of the crucial issues, arguing for a major shift in the teaching and learning of ESP, keeping in mind the subtle but significant variations in the socio-political, multilingual and multicultural patterns of communication in increasingly global contexts.

Teaching Additional Languages in New Zealand:
Finding Our Place and Facing the Challenges

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The release of The New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007), gave the learning of an additional language (additional to the language of instruction) more status than ever before when Learning Languages became one of eight Learning Areas in its own right in this new national curriculum document. The New Zealand Curriculum specifies the progressive learning outcomes which all students are expected to have the opportunity to achieve from year 1-13 of the New Zealand school system. This document is a guide for planning rather than a set of rules which dictate the content, and is flexible enough for teachers to select, adapt, develop and create appropriate learning materials to meet the needs of their students.

So what does this mean for teachers of languages in instructed settings? Given that not many primary schools teachers have knowledge of an additional language, how will languages be taught? Indeed, how are they taught now? While many people had fought long and hard for languages to have a place in the new curriculum, there is little available data on what is happening in languages classrooms. In order to find out what teachers’ perceptions of their own skills and knowledge are in regard to teaching languages and to determine the nature of language teaching in New Zealand, a national online language teacher survey was conducted. This presentation will briefly outline the creation of the survey items as well as reflecting on some of the new challenges faced by teachers with little or no knowledge of and/or proficiency in the language they seek to teach. The impact of the Learning Languages learning area on pre-service teacher education programmes will also be discussed.