

A Report From The
5th International Congress of Applied Linguistics
Section 4: Languages for Special Purposes

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Twenty-one papers were presented in the Languages for Special Purposes section at the 1978 Congress. Eskey's presentation, the first in the section, provided a broad overview of the fields of human behaviour which are being drawn upon by those concerned with providing solutions to some of the problems posed in the field of languages for specific purposes. In drawing upon the findings and techniques of sociology, philosophy, anthropology, ethnology, and psychology, as well as those of education, the study of languages for specific purposes may be giving one of the principal impetuses to the broadening of the foundations and scope of applied linguistics. The score of papers which followed amply illustrated the variety of fields drawn upon in addition to linguistics. The papers covered every aspect of the elements making up the schema presented by Mackay et.al. illustrating the unified nature of the creation phase of the total ESP operation and extended into the administrative and policy sphere in Yap Soon Hock's paper dealing with ESP in Malaysia. There, ESP projects are accompanying a policy of introducing the national language - Bahasa Malaysia - as the sole medium of education. Several papers dealt with descriptions of languages used in specific scientific, technical, academic or professional areas. Reports of Corpus-based quantitative descriptions of the French of international diplomacy, the English of Chemistry and the German of Economics were offered. Descriptions of the discourse patterns of English in the field of banking, management and doctor-patient communication illustrated the application of more or less rigorous models of analysis and indicated that discourse analysis is still in its infancy. Models of language analysis were linked to procedures for materials development, syllabus planning and curriculum construction in several papers. Pedagogic techniques and exercise types successfully used in various institutions: King

Abdulaziz University, The University of Malaysia, Kuwait University, and The Brazilian Cultural Society were explained in detail.

Two papers related special purpose language teaching to instruction in the mother tongue. Rogers explored the ideas behind the "languages across the curriculum" projects in the U.K. and suggested that more research was needed to determine the peculiar characteristics if any, which typify different school subjects. That some such research has already been carried out was attested to by Laborde's excellent account of the problems encountered by French-speaking children in coping with mathematics instruction in their mother tongue. Prof. Laborde's work has shown that dealing with language interspersed with mathematical conventions and symbols poses difficulties unlike those faced when dealing with language alone. A report was presented, of research carried out in Israel, on the effect of awareness of the semantic patterning in texts on students' compositions and the effect of students' attention to syntactic structure on their subsequent reading of scientific texts.

Discussion centred round several recurring issues - one of which was brought up by Palmer's paper on the first day viz. if authentic texts are used for LSP instruction then are not quantitative register analyses made obsolete? Also discussed were the issues of what kind of materials and pedagogy are appropriate for what levels of specific purpose learner; whether LSP should be taught by language specialists or by subject specialists; whether emphasis upon linguistic competence and accuracy is of equal value to a study skills approach; whether the recent concentration on discourse analysis produces results of as much use to the learner as it affords interest and amusement to the applied linguist, and whether the kinds of exercises we use in ESP classes merely train the student to perform these exercises well or develop the higher level skills they are intended to.

The papers, as well as the questions and discussion in the workshops at the end of each day, were lively, informed and stimulating.

The first meeting of the newly-formed AILA Scientific Commission on Languages for Special Purposes (previously LSP was a sub-commission of Adult Language Teaching) was held on 25th August and attended by some sixty interested parties. The

meeting was chaired by the Convener, Prof. Max Gorosch who has contributed greatly to the development of work in LSP and who edits the ALSED-LSP Newsletter, the official organ of the new Commission. Initial steps towards the extending of the ALSED information network for LSP activities were taken.

It is evident that the new Commission on LSP will have an interesting and dynamic future.

Editor's Correction:

Page 40 of Miss Janet McAlpin article, 'The Overhead Projector in the Advanced Reading Class,' which appeared in the last issue of the Mextesol Journal should read as follows:

Eg: The nuclear family is generally a conjugal unit. By this is meant that, in most societies, the family grows out of the union of a man and a woman who have entered into a marriage partnership. It consists primarily of father, mother and offspring. The consanguine family, by way of contrast, comprises a nucleus of blood relations plus associated spouses. When someone marries, he or she is incorporated into the parental families and potentially is able to share a common life with all blood relatives. The former family type is a concentrated culture pattern; the latter is a diffused one.