

According to Johns (2013) research into ESP specialised discourse/genres evolved out of three periods:

The Early Years 1962–1981 (From Text-based Counts to “Rhetorical Devices”)

Early (post WWII) research interest in ESP was directed towards EST in academic contexts. Though research into EST is vibrant until the present time, the 1960s research was limited to descriptive counts at the sentence level as illustrated in Barber’s (1962) manual counting of grammatical features that distinguished the genres of textbooks and journal articles. The 1970s witnessed a shift of interest into the relationship between EST lexico-grammar and the author’s rhetorical purposes (the main focus of ESP Discourse analysis until now). The goal of ESP rhetorical theory was to “*establish a correspondence of purpose with ...the linguistic means through which the author achieves his end*” (Trimble, 1978, in Johns, 2013: 8). Unlike Barber, narrower research into EST later led by Tarone and her colleagues (Tarone et al., 1981) combined the views of disciplinary experts or ‘subject-specialist informants’ with their rhetorical-grammatical analyses of specific EST research articles (in astrophysics).

The More Recent Past: 1981–1990 (Broadening the Scope/Introducing Central Concepts)

The narrow scope of ESP research shifted away from focussing only on EST to researching other areas of EAP and EOP as well. Needs analysis research did not limit itself to learners’ language/grammatical/discourse needs but transcended to strategic competence. Technology was not largely used in the period of 1980s-1990s. Nevertheless, research involving computers began to appear. Interest in combining the verbal with the visual took form via examining features telex (word omission/abbreviation) for application in BE class, use of slides in biomedical speeches. In this period however, ESP research continued to focus on EST in EAP in particular and ‘*written discourse continued to be the preferred data for analysis*’ (Johns, 2013: 12). This period witnessed the appearance of ‘genre analysis’ with its central concepts ‘*genre*’ and rhetorical ‘*moves*’. However, the use of software/computers to store and analyse corpus data from different ESP areas was still missing.

The Modern Age: 1990–2011 (predominance of Genre, and Corpus Studies)

Genre keeps dominating the 21st century ESP research. Studies of advanced academic genres continues to predominate such as studies of rhetorical structure of biochemistry articles (Kanoksilapathan, 2005), the structure and theme of research article abstracts (Lorés, 2004); discussion section in three disciplines (Holmes, 1997); medical research papers (Nwogu, 1997); and statement of purpose in graduate student application (Samraj and Monk, 2008). However, Bhatia’s (2004, 2008) work showed that specific purpose genre analysis should also focus on professional genres. Corpus based research into EAP corpus also emerged as corpus methodologies increasingly combined with Research into academic genres. Hyland’s (2007) publication in Genre pedagogy, learner genre awareness announced a shift of focus into genre applications to teaching second

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language academic writing. Other issues in genre analysis consisted of Paltridge's (2008) study of occluded genres in the academy and triangulated genre analysis to study the interaction of text and context using written texts, observation and interviews. Multi-methods genre analyses in ESP studies have considered contextual aspects of specific purpose genres to highlight 'why genres are shaped as they are, and how they achieve their particular goals' (Johns, 2013: 3). Hyland's publications in ESP corpus studies triangulated text-based analyses with specialist informants' interviews; and how language use varies in hard and soft disciplines. Finally, this modern period is marked by the dominant use of corpus research based on written academic genres but also on oral language the University of Michigan's corpus of spoken academic English (MICASE).