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Language for Specific Purposes –
Changing Perspectives and New Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) has moved into a new phase which is both independent, and multi-perspective; independent as a discipline in itself, with its own research agenda, methodology and applications, and multi-perspective as it draws upon insights from other related disciplines, such as communication studies, ethnography of communication, sociology of workplace communication, psycho-linguistics, particularly cognitive psychology and, above all, a number of other academic disciplines and professional disciplines and cultures that LSP tends to serve. One significant consequence of this development has been a much greater awareness of the need to integrate LSP with the academic and professional contexts that it serves. On the part of the LSP community, this has also resulted in increased interest in the discursive practices of disciplinary communities. LSP analytical frameworks have also responded to such developments and have changed from text-based linguistic models to increasingly multi-dimensional and multi-perspective models of genre analysis, which have made LSP analysis more centrally grounded in disciplinary cultures, and hence more responsive to the concerns of relevant professional communities. These developments thus have raised interesting challenges for the LSP community, especially in the light of the need to handle complexities of professional genres, to develop appropriate assessment procedures, and above all to understand the role of discursive practices in the acquisition of professional expertise. In this paper I will discuss some of these challenges that have strong implications for the future development of LSP theory and practice.

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