

ELAD-SILDA

ISSN : 2609-6609

Éditeur : Université Jean Moulin Lyon 3

12 | 2025

English for Specific Purposes at the Interfaces

Introduction

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🔗 <https://publications-prairial.fr/elad-silda/index.php?id=1805>

DOI : 10.35562/elad-silda.1805

Référence électronique

Mary Catherine Lavissière et Marion Del Bove, « Introduction », *ELAD-SILDA* [En ligne], 12 | 2025, mis en ligne le 17 décembre 2025, consulté le 03 février 2026.

URL : <https://publications-prairial.fr/elad-silda/index.php?id=1805>

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Introduction

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TEXTE

- 1 Genre-based approaches in Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP) play a crucial role in deepening our understanding of specialized and professional communities, as genres provide valuable insights into their discursive practices. In his seminal work on the structure of research article introductions, John Swales defines a genre as “a class of communicative events” characterized by a shared communicative purpose and subject to constraints and variations in content, positioning, and form (Swales, 1990). Genres are not fixed entities; rather, they are diverse, complex and multifaceted objects of study whose in-depth analysis requires the mobilization of multiple approaches and theoretical frameworks.
- 2 Genres can be examined from a linguistic perspective - focusing on their terminological, lexical, grammatical, structural (Biber et al., 2007) and rhetorical (Swales, 1990) traits. They can also be analyzed from an extralinguistic, and more specifically sociolinguistic, perspective (Giltrow & Stein, 2009; Martin, 1985), when focusing on genre as social action (Miller, 1984) and on the interplay between human interaction and language. Consequently, Bhatia (2016) underscores the essentially multidimensional nature of genres and advocates for a multiperspective approach drawing on textual, ethnographic, sociocognitive, institutional and other types of analytical data.
- 3 A central concept in the study of specialized genres is that of interfaces, which may arise in various forms. Numerous LSP scholars have shown that genres are strongly interconnected, as “the use of one genre assumes, or depends on, the use of a number of other related genres [...] of which the text is a part” (Paltridge & Starfield, 2013: 348). Several terms have been put forward to describe this interrelatedness – such as “systems of genres,” “genre mixing,” “genre sets,” “genre constellations,” “genre chains,” “genre networks,” and

“repertoires of genres” (Bazerman, 1994; Devitt, 2004; Hyland, 2002; Swales, 2004; Tardy, 2003).

- 4 In her contribution, “Discourse interrelations in English for Police Purposes: Typology, genre networks and textual travels,” Audrey Cartron investigates the multiple interrelations characterizing discourse produced by British and American police officers. Her study shows that police texts and genres form a network of interrelated discourse productions that can be called the “police sequence” – what is termed as the “police sequence.” Throughout this sequence, which unfolds in several stages, the narrative of events is shaped according to shared professional objectives and future procedural requirements. Cartron convincingly uses English and American police discourse to illustrate the process of “textual travels” (Garner & Johnson, 2013), that is, how information circulates from one communicative event to another and is filtered through the prism of specializedness to serve professional purposes effectively.
- 5 These interdiscursive relations may be explicit and deliberate, or implicit and unconscious when shaped, for example, by underlying assumptions, hidden influence or institutional constraints. The notion of interface also proves valuable for examining the nature of the intended audience, as interactions may involve members of the same discourse community, occur with professionals from related specialized domains, or with a non-specialist lay audience.
- 6 In “Professional vs. consumer discourse communities: Comparative genre analysis of online music reviews,” Karolina Ryker analyzes digital genres emerging in participatory online spaces where both professional and consumer communities produce texts. She focuses on 100 non-academic online music reviews published on two prominent platforms – Pitchfork (professional reviewers) and Rate Your Music (consumer reviewers). Through a comparative move-step genre analysis, Ryker highlights both similarities (a shared communicative purpose) and differences (balanced informative evaluations vs. word-of-mouth recommendations), showing how these two discourse communities may also influence one another’s generic conventions.
- 7 In their contribution “Shaping knowledge in health communication: Information structure and editorial strategy in EuroHealthNet

magazine,” Jacqueline Aiello and Rita Calabrese explore health communication and emerging genres of scientific popularization, based on a comparative study of 140 articles and editorials published before and after Covid-19 across 14 issues of a non-profit organization’s magazine. Their analysis of information-structuring features reveals how this discourse community constructs, interprets, and mobilizes sub-genres to achieve its communicative goals. While articles and editorials share common patterns (notably a similar sequence of moves), they also display distinct structural traits. Aiello and Calabrese ultimately show that the magazine maintains a high level of specialization while developing evolving and distinctive communication strategies. The precise knowledge of such strategies constitutes a vital tool for mastering specialized genres and discourses, and a key skill for entering and evolving within the communities that produce them.

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