

GERAS 35th International Conference
 LERMA–MIRREL – Aix-Marseille Université
 Aix-en-Provence, France, 20-22 March 2014

Call for papers

**Intersections – ESP as a multidomain crucible:
 scientific, didactic, translational and pedagogical implications**

In French-speaking contexts, English for specific purposes (ESP) goes under the name of “*anglais de spécialité*” and, notably in France, it refers to two distinct phenomena. On the one hand, the name is applied to the specialised varieties of the English language which are defined as “the expressions of specialised domains in English”. On the other hand, ESP is an academic branch of English studies in France.¹ These phenomena can be compared to crucibles wherein different elements melt and mix to produce new realities endowed with their own characteristics. The specialised varieties of English lie at intersections between specialised domains and the English language and generate, among others, legal English, medical English, economic English and English for engineers. In order to study and teach these varieties, ESP as a discipline resorts to different domains of knowledge such as linguistics, discourse analysis, social sciences and didactics and combines them into specific approaches. As a result, the notion of “intersection” is crucial to make sense of specialised languages though it may come under different names such as crossroads, interdisciplinarity or transversality, depending on what is studied.

The GERAS 35th International Conference is co-hosted in Aix-Marseille University by the research team *Linguistique, Traduction et Recherches Transversales* (LTRT) – a subgroup of the LERMA² laboratory which studies the English-speaking world – and by the MIRREL, the university’s Language Resource and Research Centre. ESP scholars are invited to study the notion of intersection in their specific fields and in their disciplines in order to explore its scientific, didactic, translational and pedagogical implications.

From a scientific point of view, the research interest may focus on the interdisciplinary collaborative approaches which are needed to characterise the expression of specialised domains in English. In themselves, interdisciplinary issues are not an academic novelty, as attested by such mature transdisciplinary sciences as psycholinguistics or sociolinguistics. However, interdisciplinary insights are still recent in ESP and the domain’s booming expansion calls for a determined research effort in that direction. Specialised domains express themselves in the English language with striking diversity: through the specialised use of phonemes and lexical items, terminologies, phraseologies, discourse genres, and domain-specific fiction (*fiction à substrat professionnel* or FASP), stylistic forms such as metaphors and specialised cultures which are conveyed by language. Exploring such a wide array of specialised linguistic phenomena requires the collaboration of many branches of knowledge. The resulting dialogue may eventually achieve a synthetic characterisation of all specialised varieties of English as coherent language objects.

As regards the specialised varieties of English, they result from a wide diversity of intersections between specialised domains and the language. In some cases, in legal English for instance, the specialised domain cannot be separated from the language and their intersection comprises the domain in its entirety. This remarkable feature is exemplified by the opening words of David Mellinkoff’s classic work on the language of English law: “The law is a profession of words”.³ These specialised varieties of English pose highly complex problems for translators since the specialised language phenomena only achieve their full meaning in the

¹ See the definitions of specialised languages and of ESP which were adopted in 2011 by the *Commission formation* of the SAES (the French Society for the Study of English in Higher Education): “Évolutions et enjeux des formations et de la recherche dans le secteur LANSAD”, 28th January 2011. <<http://sha.univ-poitiers.fr/saesfrance/spip.php?article262>>.

² LERMA: Laboratoire d’Étude et de Recherche sur le Monde Anglophone, EA 853.

³ Mellinkoff, David. 1963. *Language and the Law*. Boston: Little, Brown, vi.

language in which their existence is grounded. Conversely, other domains, such as hard and natural sciences, largely develop outside any particular language, so much so that their specialised languages play a lesser part in fostering the identities of individual domains. These may even be grounded in artificial language substitutes (e.g., formal or symbolic language systems) which keep the domains relatively independent of natural languages. In such cases, translational difficulties are partly facilitated by the universal nature of these specific formulations. As a practice, the recent boom in specialised and/or professional translation has been fuelled by the globalisation of human activity. Nevertheless, translation theories must adapt to increasingly complex language combinations such as the multidomain intersections generated by specialised languages.

Researchers are also encouraged to examine the didactic implications of the intersective nature of specialised varieties of English, both as language matter and as a field of study. Which didactic strategies may be designed in order to optimise the learning and teaching of structurally composite language phenomena? How can didacticians take into account the sheer diversity of the intersections in specialised languages?

Answers to these questions are also crucial for the linguists engaged in teaching ESP to students majoring in subjects other than languages. They are invited to submit contributions exploring how pedagogical approaches may be adapted to the “crucibles” of specialised languages where language and specialist content are inextricably mixed. Which macro- and micro-tasks may be proposed to students to facilitate the acquisition of such complex language objects?

Contributions are accepted in English and in French. Please send a 300-word abstract and a short bibliography to Isabelle Richard and Michel Van der Yeught.

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Contributions accepted until 12th January 2014

Notification: 2nd February 2014