

# Focus on LSP Teaching: Developments and Issues

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# Genre and Discourse-based Approaches to ESP Teaching in Italian *Lingua Inglese* Courses: A Survey and Discussion

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*Keywords:* ESP teaching, discourse, genre, English language courses.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The main concern of this chapter is to gather insights and to survey the current practices of genre and or discourse-based approaches used in *Lingua Inglese* Courses in the curriculum at Italian universities in various departments and degree programmes. It considers questions of: *What gets taught? How are Course content and objectives related to degree programmes? Why is this approach used? And, how are genre and discourse-based approaches to ESP seen as being relevant and justified in terms of institutional practices, student needs and career pathways?*

The information on current practices was gathered from questionnaires distributed to 25 academics that research, teach or supervise teaching of ESP in 14 Italian universities. Ten of these participant-colleagues generously agreed to furnish input relevant to their teaching and programme. Participants were approached based on their long-term engagement with teaching and researching professional discourse in Italian higher education.

A second motive for this study was to discuss the rationale for including genre or discourse-informed ESP language awareness components in Course content. The discussion includes comments on survey findings based on the Course descriptions, views regarding theory versus practice, institutional offerings versus student needs, as well as the role of genre or

discourse-based studies (under the category of ‘Applied Linguistics’) in the curriculum, and of higher education’s role in identifying and teaching employable skills as a product of reflective learning.

### 1.1. *Definitional issues: Lettorato (EFL/ESP) vs. Corso (Course)*

In scope, this study does not take into consideration the teaching and testing of EFL/ESP communicative skills as found in the *Lettorato* – which is part of each department’s defined EFL/ESP language teaching programme – instead, it focuses exclusively on the theory-driven *Corso*, which as a subject heading, is generally referred to in Italian as *Lingua Inglese* or *English Language* (herein referred to as the ‘Course’).

In many Italian university curriculums, the Course content, which usually varies between three and nine credits towards degree completion, typically covers theoretical foundations based on linguistic theories that are meant to encourage reflection on and awareness of communicative practices in professional and institutional discourse, while, at the same time, they strive to promote generic and pragmatic awareness of language choices, as might be seen in degree Courses labelled ‘Applied Linguistics’ or ‘Communication in Professions and Organisations’ in non-Italian universities. The texts, dialogues, theories and types of specialised discourse studied vary to suit the degree programme teaching as well as the research interests of the professor and the department. These official credit Courses deal primarily with ESP language analysis and evaluation in terms of genre or discourse features, rather than teaching purely testable ESP language proficiency skills presented in the *Lettorato*.

ESP is here regarded as an umbrella term for subcategories of EFL teaching and learning, which, more narrowly defined, orients the teaching and testing activities to reflect language performances specifically needed or thought to be relevant by a defined occupational context or role; some examples include: English for Academic Purposes (EAP) covering study skills, Business English (BE), English for Science or for Engineering, English for Nursing or Tourism, etc. When discussing ESP in Italian universities, a distinction has to be made between the status and role of the *Lettorato* and of the credit Course.

The *Lettorato*, which deals in teaching and testing language prerequisites, is ideally aimed at developing this command of sector-specific vocabulary as well as reading, writing, listening or speaking skills which are tied to the perceived communicative competencies and performances

thought essential for successful engagement in a particular role, occupation or profession. The *Lettorato* content, in terms of language and skills taught, is often related to or formally integrated with the *Lingua Inglese* Course content and objectives. For example, a CEFR B1 level *Lettorato* aimed at future primary school teachers might focus on learning and using classroom language, or reading textbook activity instruction, then subsequently test reading, speaking and vocabulary skills that were taught. The Course content might follow by concentrating on theory-informed teaching methodologies, activity types, lesson planning, and evaluation, relating the language performance, or bottom up approach of the *Lettorato*, to the theory-driven or top-down approach that the Course takes.

The *Lettorato* teaching and testing at Italian universities, however, are not in all cases designed to specifically address the perceived language needs of the particular Course of study or career orientation. The extent to which the *Lettorato* does account for specific language purposes depends on the policies, which are often administered by a *Centro Linguistico di Ateneo* or an intra-university language-learning centre. Whether the teaching addresses general EFL or specific ESP orientation often depends on the status given to English in that degree programme's curriculum. The *Lettorato* in degree programmes where English is an auxiliary subject, may rank as a low credit EFL pass/fail exam which measures exit level performance closely benchmarked to Common European Framework (CEFR) exit levels (B1, B2, C1), and requires no further Course work. In other departments, where English is given greater academic importance, as for example in Applied Economics, Communications or Foreign Languages degree course, the ESP *Lettorato* is a non-credit pre-exam test, which when passed, allows access to the theory-based ESP Course (*Lingua Inglese*) for graded evaluation and for a higher number of credits.

With this distinction made between related yet separate functions and identities of the *Lettorato* and Course modules, the remainder of this chapter will address exclusively the Course part of the curriculum.

## 2. THE SURVEY

Seven open-ended questions were addressed to 25 participants who held Courses in *Lingua Inglese* at 14 Italian universities, of which 10 responses are considered here. Those solicited were Tenured Researchers, Associ-

ate or Full Professors who supervised the *Lettorato* and whose Course teaching and research reflected genre or discourse-related approaches. This survey does not claim to be a comprehensive, nor even statistically representative list of those engaged in this kind of teaching – but for the purposes of initial engagement – was considered valuable in revealing a variety of current practices as outlined in Course descriptions and teaching objectives.

Listed below are the survey questions:

1. Describe briefly any ESP oriented Courses/teaching, which engage(s) Genre Theory (including Discourse Analysis Applied Linguistics, Critical Genre Analysis and Corpus-assisted Discourse Analysis) including learning objectives and outcomes. A sample of the Course Syllabus would be appreciated, if possible.
- \*2. Provide examples of teaching/learning: materials and methods used (e.g. lecture, *lettorato*, blended, etc.); explain how lessons are organized (e.g. lecture, slides, assigned readings, task learning, blended learning, distance learning, etc.).
- \*3. Explain testing and evaluation methods (including times allowed). A sample exam would be appreciated.
4. Provide personal perspectives or rationale for this genre or discourse-based approach (e.g. how relevant to student needs, etc.).
5. Comment on how you would improve or change current practice.
6. Provide titles of genre-related theses you have supervised.
- \*7. List suggested/essential/important genre-based reading you would recommend to colleagues or students and which inform your perspectives and teaching.

The responses to question 1 (listed below) are general Course descriptions of current practices and have been paraphrased, summarised or edited for space and relevancy purposes. They represent nine distinct Course sub-titles (labelled 1.1-1.9). Responses to questions 2\*, 3\* and 7\* were not included due to space restrictions or incompleteness. The responses to questions 4, 5 and 6 are summarized collectively.

## 2.1. Survey responses

*Question 1. Describe briefly any ESP Courses, which are informed by Genre Theory, or Genre or Discourse related perspectives. Include Course objectives and a sample syllabus if possible.*

1.1. Web-mediated Communication (C1 level, upper division, degree in Language)

This Course addresses the two main properties that directly affect the nature of genres on the web: *multi-medianess* and *hypertext/hyper-reading*. It also examines a two-dimensional genre model revision of Swales's (1990) concept of genre, where communicative purpose is realised by move structures from Askehave and Nielsen (2005). Attention is given to Crowstons and Williams' (2000) proposed classification of web-genres including: reproduced genres, adapted genres and novel genres (which are exclusive to the web), and unclassified genres, which are still emerging and not fully formed. Also studied is Shepherd and Watters' (1998) model for web-genres classification (extant, replicated and variant) or novel (emergent and spontaneous).

1.2. Language and Professional Communication (C1 level, upper division, degree in Communications Management)

The programme topics include the areas of textuality, language and culture, features of spoken discourse, conversation analysis and pragmatics. The notions of genre, and of context of situation (field, tenor and mode) are used to describe the text types. Genre is introduced with reference to Bhatia's (1993) sales promotion letters and job application letters. The concepts are then applied to the study of FYI letters, meetings, negotiations, business telephone calls and websites.

1.3. Discourse Analysis (B2+ level, upper division, degree in Modern Languages)

The Course includes work with genre theory, argumentation in editorials, academic essays and political speeches. The Course encourages genre awareness by introducing basic notions of genre analysis and provides elementary tools for the analysis of moves and evaluation in primarily argumentative texts. The exploration, however, of more conventionalised genres is a necessary step in constituting a more effective introduction to the dynamics of genre development and use.

1.4. Workshops on English for Research Purposes (all level Phd students, interdepartmental)

This Course in EAP speaking and writing skills, provides no theoretical input nor expects analytical output, but is thought to be a useful approach which goes beyond the grammar and vocabulary of the *Lettorato*. Workshop 3 in particular touches on genre-sensitive macrostructural elements, not presented as 'moves' but as sections. The approach draws from Swales

and Feak (2000, 2004) and mirrors the American college composition or college rhetoric tradition.

Workshop 1 - *General Introduction to Academic English*: Writing Abstracts, Oral Presentations (slide preparation, delivery), Oral Presentations by participants with feedback from workshop tutor.

Workshop 2 - *Writing Skills*: Word Order, Sentence and Paragraph Structure, Strategies for Clear and Effective Writing.

Workshop 3 - *The Research Paper in English*: Parts of the Research Paper, Introduction and Method Sections, Results and Discussion Sections.

1.5. English for Tourism / Tourism Management (B2-C1 level, upper division, Business students)

This ESP Course is aimed to provide students with a basic knowledge of the main linguistic features of tourist brochures, tourist guides, websites, etc. which they, in turn apply to materials of the same genres. In terms of theoretical issues, the Course draws extensively from the work of Cappelli (2006) and Dann (1996) and makes reference to Fairclough (2001). It critically examines the discourse of tourism from pre-trip promotional material in advertising, brochures, websites and travel articles, as well as post-trip informational materials.

1.6. English for Political Science / International Relations / International Development (B1-B2 level, graduate Political Science students)

This undergraduate Course is based loosely on the textbook *Persuasion in Politics* (Partington and Taylor 2010). It covers introduction to evaluation, persuasion strategies and the structure of argumentative texts. There is no explicit inclusion of genre theory, since this post-graduate Course is mostly topic-based for political science students – who are not specializing in languages. Set readings, lectures on topical issues, and TED talks are used, from which oblique reference to languages can be made (e.g. EU debates, Scottish referendum, etc.).

1.7. English for Law (B2-C1 level, under and post-graduate Law students using English for study in both academic and legal contexts)

This Course combines the traditional approach to formulaic legal English patterns with genre-based English legal language learning. The purpose is to enable students to appreciate the generic conventions and rhetorical strategies in specific texts while also giving information about the necessary linguistic resources available and how they are appropriated in context. Reading legal judgments or statutes, writing lawyer-client letters or legal

problem question-answers, are presented as productive areas of genre learning where the typical organisational structure of the genre serves a particular 'communicative purpose'. The genre-based view of teaching and learning provides a link between the concerns about text and discourse analysis and ESP needs.

1.8. English Legal Writing in Academic and Professional Settings (Law Department graduates and researchers)

The Course is designed to provide students with the tools to make a critical analysis of legal texts used in academic and professional settings, to create an awareness in assessing their own writing strengths and weaknesses, and to build up an array of technical devices to successfully negotiate the highly competitive world of academic/professional legal writing in English. Seminars and workshops focus on several aspects of disciplinary writing, including discourse and genre, degree of formality and complexity, cohesion and coherence, hedging, analysing data and trends, summarising and paraphrasing, citing sources and plagiarism.

1.9. English for Business Sciences (Applied Economics) (Business Sciences or Business Studies undergraduates)

The Course is based on an assigned Coursebook, *English in Context: Explorations in a Grammar of Discourse* (Salvi 2004) containing a wide range of texts and text types in four key fields in the Social Sciences, Economics, Business, Technology and Media Studies, and European Studies, the generic features and pragmatic patterns are presented as consciousness-raising tasks and activities. The discourse and genre focus, then, goes beyond any explicit academic exposition and are instead task-based language activities. Students are helped to discover the linguistic resources at work and how texts achieve their meaning and fulfil their communicative purposes. Narrative, descriptive, expository, persuasive texts are treated in the various topic fields and over a variety of genres (articles from the popular press, the specialist media and journals, online texts, academic textbook extracts, legislation and legal documents at various levels of specialisation, financial reporting and other reporting genres, political speeches and interviews). Reading strategies central to EAP and ESP are developed through the skills of deduction, connection, synthesis, comparison and hypothesis. The design of the materials and the implications for an ESP methodology, then, incorporate theoretical insights which derive from the salient work done in genre and discourse analysis: the textual structuring and rhetorical functioning of specific genres of Swales (1990) and Bhatia

(1993); the interactional and meta-linguistic features intrinsic to academic (and not only) texts of Hyland (2002), and much more. The Course, which integrates EAP and ESP skills work moves from text-based teaching to practice and from terminology-based teaching to communication, where pedagogic concerns dictate much of what goes on in the classroom in ESP teaching.

*Question 4. Provide personal perspectives or rationale for this genre-based approach (e.g. how relevant to student needs, etc.).*

In departments with curricula that deal specifically with languages, communications or the humanities, it appeared to be taken for granted that students would benefit from analytical, evaluative or reflective study 'about' language in addition to studying productive skills of the language itself. However, in responses from Business, Economics, Political Science departments, it was felt that the content emphasis should perhaps be less theory-orientated and focus less on discourse or genre analysis. Instead, these respondents propose including more engaging, student-friendly topics to present relevant and useful language and skills practice. For students in these departments there was no vested interest seen in studying 'about' language for its own sake. At the same time, genre and discourse approaches by some were considered useful in going beyond the usual treatment of vocabulary and grammar and valuable in themselves.

A major factor in justifying choice of Course content was determining whether it can become operative in work contexts, and whether it addresses identifiable language needs for specific situations. For example, *hybridization of genres* (where genres coalesce over time) and *language variation* within a particular subject (genre uses which renew over time) were considered valid areas of the reflective processes which influence editing, revision and language choices in general. An example adjusting Course content might be addressed in exploring how professional or formal writing registers – routinely taught in ESP business emails – may be discouraged, and that these e-mail registers undergo 'unpacking', which adjusts writing to a more semi-formal or even informal register. Students would be required to recognise and perform shifts from using a formal register between expert-to-expert, to registers reflecting peer-to-peer features of social chat, and vice versa, depending on context, audience and purpose.

A common impression found throughout the survey was that structural elements (the textual ingredients) are overlooked in the general ESP *Lettorato*, while an introduction to new genres, to the regularities that can be predicted, and the recognition of how genres vary across cultures was

thought to be an excellent rationale for genre or discourse-based studies, and justifies their inclusion in the curriculum.

*Question 5. Comment on how you would improve or change current practice.*

Several comments addressed changing classroom practices to encourage more group-work, to eliminate lecture-only formatted lessons, and to provide exercises, which require less theory and are more task-based to address realistic communicative situations and needs. A suggestion was made to look at more *conventionalised* genres (e.g. curriculum vitae, menu, 'About us' sections of homepages, etc.). Comments suggest updating materials and testing methods, given the ongoing and rapid changes taking place in scientific and professional practices as seen in the rise in new modes of communication, new technologies and newly introduced conventions found in social media use and collaborative writing. This would require using texts taken directly from the community of practice, where at the moment, a wide gap is perceived between how linguists see and analyse professional discourse and how practitioners produce and use texts.

Corrective measures were provided and suggested using more contemporary technology, which could meet student expectations and increase participation, in a move to supplement or replace the *PowerPoint*-slide lecture format, which was considered over-used. Another suggestion was to share best practices from subject specialists (who lecture in English) and to aim teaching more towards an international student audience, rather than as a homogenous group of Italian speakers. Finally, more sharing of experiments and projects with other EU universities was thought to be needed, along with the promotion of task-based activities and study of real life case studies, in order to learn to make sense of non-prototypical cases and genres. A unanimously held opinion was to renovate and vary current teaching methodologies.

*Question 6. Titles of genre related theses you have supervised.*

A representative selection of paraphrased theses titles is listed below; chosen on the basis of those that included the most obvious references to and incorporation of genre or discourse frameworks. The titles reflect the degree programme orientation, but they also reveal the jointly decided area of interest between the student and the thesis advisor, which should be assumed to reflect in some way the Course content or methodologies studied along with the material on which the students were examined. What has to be assumed is that each thesis incorporates an acquired working-knowledge of patterns, descriptions, conventions, communicative

purposes and readership of the genre or text-type involved, which goes beyond the kind of teaching which addresses reading for topic-interest or to test comprehension as practiced in the *Lettorato*. Here, the student has become researcher, and the resulting argumentation is thought to provide analytical expertise, both academic and field-operative, for decision taking regarding language choices. Some thesis titles (listed below 6.1- 6.6) are vaguely worded while others take on a specifically task-orientated evaluative and critical approach to solving textual problems through learned textual insights.

- 6.1. Websites as a communication strategy: the case of organic food producers.
- 6.2. “Dear shareholders and stakeholders...”: a linguistic analysis of CEO’s letters.
- 6.3. Package leaflets and EU norms: a comparative analysis.
- 6.4. The press release as genre: international corporate vs. Italian versions.
- 6.5. Communication problems in the public sector: the case of mediating medical information for the immigrant community.
- 6.6. Web-based communicative strategies: a comparison between the municipalities.
- 6.7. Genre and discourse analysis of journalist-friendly webpages.

### 3. FINDINGS

Three generalised categories emerge as classifications for the described Courses: Group A: Theory based or driven; Group B: Skills or topic based; and Group C: A hybrid of the first two approaches.

Courses 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, and 1.7 belong to Group A, and introduce students to criteria for classifying, analysing and evaluating situated professional discourse in linguistic terms, such as looking at generic moves or lexico-grammatical features, while commenting on producers, receivers and communicative purpose. These theory-driven descriptions focus on identifying linguistic usage in terms of theory, as contributing to formative knowledge about future language choices. Other Courses, which are in Group B, such as 1.4, 1.5, 1.6 and 1.8, distance themselves somewhat from purely linguistic analysis and focus on reading or writing strategies or specific ESP skills such as presentation. These descriptions build on previously acquired language abilities and direct them towards more specific contexts and purposes, focussing on skills practice and performance, and

not depending entirely on introducing meta-language or analyses. This approach extends EFL/ESP insights about formulaic use of language and skills to a discourse level. The third category, Group C, which includes Course 1.9, appears to be more a hybrid of genre theory incorporated into an ESP methodology, mixing skills practice with theory-informed language awareness exercises.

Many of the choices made about Course content and learning objectives in the descriptions have been influenced by institutional limitations or contextual impositions (e.g. student numbers, credits, degree programme, the professor, etc.), while other choices might appear to align within a spectrum of enquiry, theory and practice outlined in Cook and Seidlhofer's (1995, 1) discussion of disciplinary separatism, where, for example, Course content in the first group may "kowtow to an all-encompassing theory... often associated with an individual name". As can be seen, the first group Courses largely accommodate the genre or critical frameworks of enquiry of well-known linguists, such as Bhatia (1993) Swales (1990) or Fairclough (2001). Here, the study of these all-encompassing theoretical frameworks is seen as educationally valuable in itself by accounting for language choices in professional communication practices. These investigative frameworks are considered worth studying on their own, even when operating within a vaguely or non-defined context of application. This top-down/theory-driven approach, where a widely-accepted theory and its formulae are studied, was generally used in Group A, but used less or perhaps differently in Group B Courses, where a more bottom-up approach was considered, moving from skills practice or topics to theory, and where explicit recourse to theory is made only if relevant to departmental and student needs.

Other questions, which surfaced from the survey, included how best to address perceived student needs and expectations and how best to identify and cultivate abilities that prove useful and applicable in future work contexts in order to engage employable skills. In Group B, Course contents and objectives appear more student-driven, market-driven or career-driven, with students' language needs defining what is studied. In all cases, Course content choices appear to reflect the professor's research interests, the degree programme's orientations as well as limitations of space, student numbers and more. A final reflection was the desire to provide a more student-centred learning environment, using more modern teaching methods and addressing career pathways more specifically and effectively.

### 3.1. *Discussion*

The two dominant approaches found in the Course descriptions, whether theory-driven (by abstractions) or skills-based (as reflected in real world needs), appear to lie within a larger problematic discussion and ongoing debate common to defining the inclusion of applied linguistics in inter-departmental curricula (Murray and Crichton 2010). The Course descriptions mirror the objectives of applied linguistics as both problem solving and as mediating between theory as can be seen in this oft-quoted definition proposed in Kaplan and Widdowson (1992, 76).

Whenever knowledge about language is used to solve a basic language-related problem, one may say that applied linguistics is being practised. Applied linguistics is a technology which makes abstract ideas and research findings accessible and relevant to the real world; it mediates between theory and practice.

Relevant also to the Course descriptions is Wilkin's principles versus practice view on the goal of applied linguistics:

Increasing understanding of the role of language in human affairs and thereby with providing the knowledge necessary for those who are responsible for taking language-related decisions, whether the need for these arises in the classroom, the workplace, the law court, or the laboratory. (Wilkins 1999, 6)

The Courses from both groupings reflect similar elements of polarity as were seen in these applied linguistics definitions. Discourse-based analyses in Courses also attempt to mediate between theory and practice. Like applied linguistics, groupings closely observe specific discursive practices and provide descriptive classifications on which to model or evaluate other examples, and in that sense are both prescriptive and normative, tending to judge whether use is in conformance to pre-established norms, or resolving discrepancies in terms of these norms. In case of the two Course description groupings, perhaps this unanswered question still remains (where genre or discourse-based approaches can easily substitute the reference to applied linguistics):

Whether applied linguistics should be viewed as serving the particular theoretical interests of linguistics, or those practical, real-world applications for which it has relevance and on which insights from the discipline can be brought to bear?(Murray and Crichton 2010, 15.1)

In considering both of these definitions of applied linguistics as relevant to the Course descriptions, it remains problematic as to whether Courses

should start by illustrating and explaining theoretical concepts belonging to established schools of thought for their own sake (e.g. studying Bhatia's move structure in sales letters or curricula vitae to compare with other examples), or whether they should rather start by recognizing practical communication problems, specific to the discursive practices and mutually agreed needs of the professional community; to which suggested solutions can be cherry-picked from existing theories to provide insights and operative solutions (e.g. recognizing elements of Bhatia's, Swales' and of other intercultural perspectives that are relevant and which might provide corrective measures to editing company homepages in English from two different countries, in order to reflect localised generic norms). In the second case, by recognizing, addressing and correcting ESP communication problems, and extending to EFL/ESP language issues addressed in the *Lettorato* with choices that are required by real world performance, theory can become operative, if even at only a reflective level, and contribute to develop useable skills that may help pave career pathways and employability.

### *3.2. Problems and suggestions*

The current Course content and teaching, as described, may lead to two considerations: The first is whether the first grouping of Courses, where theory-based teaching and testing prevail, may potentially be considered by students as being less relevant to their degree programme, career pathways, and foreign to their preconceived ideas and expectations of studying English. Studying 'about' ESP communications, especially with students who have had little or no work experience, can make little sense and can appear discouraging and off-topic. Instead, students' primary goal, it seems, is to earn the highest language performance possible measured in CEF levels (a task usually dealt with in the *Lettorato*) – equating the role of university teaching with that of private language schools, namely, to validate previously acquired and newly learnt skills according to external, internationally recognised standards. The Course may often be mistakenly interpreted by students as an “outdated ‘corso monografico’, consisting of a set-piece representative of no particular genre other than professor-constructed information” (Bowker 2010, 83), following a ‘transmission’ model of learning instead of a transformational methodological model (*ibidem*). This in turn creates a second potential confusion, in the second category of descriptions, in differentiating the Course from the accompanying non-credit *Lettorato* itself.

A more incisive and relevant Course in *Lingua Inglese* in any department or degree programme engaging in genre or discourse-based ESP Courses will need to better identify the specific contexts of application in targeted professional communities, medical, legal, business or other, with the help of practicing professionals. The Course should also clearly reflect researched ESP practitioner communication problems, while at the same time address the needs of students who read Course descriptions, follow Courses, sit examinations, and who expect Course content to be transparent and perceptively relevant to their career pathways. Practical suggestions should consider basing Course content on promoting reflective learning, and professional communication as situated problem-solving, relying on theory as found in applied linguistics, intercultural communications, contrastive rhetorics, genre and register analysis as well as including new modes, technologies and conventions in digital discourse (Darics 2015), to inform practice and language choices. What is meant by reflective learning here is echoed by Bazerman (2002, 80):

We think about what we write and speak; we think about our situations, goals, audiences and available means of expression. Such thought is the foundation of rhetoric, which provides tools for examining communicative situations, for making choices about what we speak and write for making deeper sense of what others speak and write.

In a practical sense, what reflective learning suggests is starting with communication problems from the practitioner's context of application (e.g. miscommunication, non-communication, editing cognitively challenging wordy presentation slides; editing webpages that contain information which is considered irrelevant to the target readership or target culture; editing e-mail correspondence written in an overly-formal register; editing or adapting voice-over scripts or instructions which are intended to be listened to and read aloud, but which were copied and pasted from sources written to be read silently; editing public health notices which are lost in literal translations since they were written to satisfy legal obligations only and not to serve patient-readership, etc.).

These situations can be described as faulty, or failing to effectively communicate and are and can rely on a combination of professional expertise, input from theoretical frameworks, acquired and learned language skills, combined with reflective editing to adjust and improve communications. A combination of evaluative reading exercises, lectures outlining genre or discourse-based approaches to analysis, coupled with problem-solving and task-based corrective measures will help translate the outdated top-down

transmission model of teaching into a transformational model of learning, where skills for communication problem-solving compliment institutional goals and compliment career pathways for students.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

An overview of the Course descriptions places the rationale of ESP-linked *Courses* as attempting to build genre knowledge of the professional sector in which the degree programme is situated. Cultivating reflective knowledge approaches can prove to be important in developing professional, institutional and critical literacies. Acquiring these analytical and evaluative skills about purposes, contexts, readership, along with macrostructural and lexicogrammatical insights, are thought to encourage successful participation in discursive practices across professional disciplines. The formal study of textuality, register and genre, and pragmatic implications will cultivate awareness and the necessary reflective skills to gain needed insights into communicative processes and remedy communication problems faced by practitioners. Existing practices of simply identifying genre moves or lexicogrammatical features, perhaps need further extending to real-world contexts which call for applying genre knowledge to solve problems in text-production or editing (e.g. writing for the web, translation, or public service notices).

Finally, Course teaching at Italian universities might benefit from being categorised under the umbrella term of *Applied Linguistics in English*, regardless of department, degree programme or career orientation. As discussed, Courses are subject to the same debates surrounding the definition of and the application of Applied Linguistics in academic programmes, including the relationship between theory and practice. Questions regarding relevance of theory to ESP student needs and job market language needs, and the role of higher education as introducing notions, culture and critical methods, in addition to furnishing students with employable, applicable skills all remain part of an ongoing debate.

A second part to this study is planned which will investigate concrete applications for curriculum design and classroom use. It will hope to take genres, defined as “abstract, socially recognised ways of using language” (Hyland 2002, 114) and to explore how that definition can be made “operational in ESP lecturing, learning and teaching contexts” (Nesi and Gardner 2012, 21) and more importantly how they become operational, on the job, with better defined communicative contexts of professional practice.

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