Scholarship and Teaching on Languages for Specific Purposes

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Continuing Theoretical Cartography in the Language for Specific Purposes Era

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Abstract: This chapter uses the First International Symposium on Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) keynote address titled “Theory and Method in Translation Studies (TS) and Business Language Studies (BLS): Illustrative Considerations for LSP in American Higher Education and Beyond” as a springboard to continue the theoretical BLS cartography initiated in “Business Language Studies in the United States: On Nomenclature, Context, Theory, and Method.” It does so with a triple purpose: (1) to begin to fill in what was omitted from the original BLS mapping, (2) to extend the nomenclature proposal and disciplinary coverage, as manifested within a general theoretical framework, beyond that of the initial BLS content domain, and (3) to encourage the formation of post-UAB symposium LSP Theory Development Working Groups to further develop the theoretical cartographies and narratives, which the gathering era of global LSP will require in American higher education. The overarching goal is to encourage collaboration to devise a useful, informative, and adaptable general Non-English Language for Specific Purposes (NE-LSP) theoretical model that accounts for (1) what is already being done while (2) serving as a catalyst and predictor for future NE-LSP developments. It is not at all far-fetched to say in 2012 that US foreign language programs, departments, and institutions that do not embrace non-English LSP will be on the wrong side of curricular and pedagogical history in secondary and higher education as we go deeper into the LSP era of the 21st century. This affirmation presupposes the basic and applied research—intrinsic and extrinsic—that underlies, informs, and is derived from how NE-LSP is used or intended to be used, a general theory of which will more firmly anchor LSP in higher education as a crucial field of scholarly inquiry.

Keywords: Business Language Studies (BLS), BLS cartography, Language for Specific Purposes (LSP), method, nomenclature, theory (intrinsic and extrinsic), theory development working groups

Introduction

A prolegomenal theory of non-English Business Language Studies (NE-BLS) has been outlined in “Business Language Studies in the United States: On Nomenclature, Context, Theory, and Method,” in which an initial mapping provided a general theoretical overview of the BLS interdisciplinary topography that requires further exploration and ongoing development in order “to anchor the field more adequately in American higher education” (Doyle, 2012a, p. 105). At the groundbreaking First International Symposium on Language for Specific Purposes (LSP), hosted by the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) on April 13–14, 2012,¹ a reminder was issued that pressing aspects of this preliminary cartography include its momentary omissions and blind spots in regards to other discourse domains and related features that remain to be adequately addressed within a general theory of LSP and NE-LSP, which itself must become more fully developed. This provisionality is similar to the future-oriented reminder in Alvord
Branan’s (1998) “Preface: Part I” in the paradigmatic volume sponsored by the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP), Spanish and Portuguese for Business and the Professions, when, scaffolding his forecast on the pioneering work of Grosse (1985) and Grosse and Voght (1990), he predicted that the development of the yet-to-be-named BLS “movement will spread, as it has already begun to do, to all the professions: medical and health care, social work, law, science, and technology” (p. 5). Branan’s prediction has recently been corroborated in “Evolution of Languages for Specific Programs in the United States: 1990–2011” by Long and Uscinski (2012), whose most recent findings, an update of Grosse and Voght (1990), show that “the sophistication and variety of [LSP] offerings have become deeper and more focused in response to broader needs” (p. 173), and that, while “business language [BL] courses remain the most common type of LSP courses,” non-English “LSP courses are now more widely distributed across different professions” and languages (175–176). They confirm that LSP is now “solidly established as another curricular option, beside literature, cultural studies, and linguistics, in institutions where students demand it” (173). Indeed, within NE-LSP-BL, Spanish for business and international trade, for example, “has evolved from curricular margin to mainstay” and “has moved from being an occasional, boutique or exotic course offering to a new status as an established, regular, and even core SSP [Spanish for Specific Purposes] feature in many Spanish programs today” (Doyle, forthcoming).

Within this general NE-LSP context in American higher education, this follow-up article uses the UAB First International Symposium keynote address titled “Theory and Method in Translation Studies (TS) and Business Language Studies (BLS): Illustrative Considerations for LSP in American Higher Education and Beyond” as a springboard to continue the provisional theoretical BLS cartography initiated in Doyle’s (2012a) “Business Language Studies in the United States” with a triple purpose in mind: (1) to begin to fill in what was omitted from the original BLS mapping, (2) to extend the nomenclature proposal and disciplinary coverage, as manifested within a general theoretical framework, beyond that of the initial BLS content domain, and (3) to encourage the formation of post-UAB symposium LSP Theory Development Working Groups to further develop the theoretical cartographies and narratives that the gathering era of global LSP will require in American higher education. The mapping remains provisional and awaits ongoing refinement by content- and situation-based instruction NE-LSP specialists in “more complex sites of engagement” (to adapt Bowles’s phrase) of the various subject matter domains themselves (Bowles 2012, p. 48). Taking BLS theory as a starting point, this article proposes that the original cartography of this particular LSP subdiscipline, itself based on LSP-Translation (Doyle, 2012a, p. 105), be extended to include mappings of other prominent NE-LSP domains in the United States, such as LSP-Medical and Health Care, LSP-Education, LSP-Legal (Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice), LSP-Engineering, LSP-Science, LSP-Technology, and LSP-Agriculture, among others that may currently exist or be in various developmental or anticipatory stages.

As the theoretical cartography broadens to cover an array of LSP domains, a distinct and desirable possibility is that eventually, taken together, the domain mappings, developed and regulated by specialists in the various subdisciplinary regions, can serve as the aggregate basis from which to extract, extrapolate, and confirm a more general map for NE-LSP itself as it undergoes its fuller maturation process within American higher
education. This maturation will surely continue, as all language usage can be defined as LSP one way or another, either narrowly (e.g., for specific disciplines, professions, or communicative work situations) or more broadly and less traditionally (e.g., LSP-Literature; i.e., the specific use of language for literary studies and criticism, or even the supposedly more general LSP of being able to engage in tourism or to socialize and “hang out” informally in a language, which in itself undoubtedly constitutes a specific cultural, ethnographic, pragmatic, and sociodialectal use of language). Any university program of study, for example, may be considered as a cognate specialization in the LSP of that particular content domain (e.g., to major or specialize in business, medicine, law, engineering, education, psychology, or philosophy is to engage in mastering the specific languages and discourses of those fields). It is anticipated that a belated, general (and perhaps generally accepted) theory may emerge from a distillation of the sum of its LSP domain parts. Both intellectual and pedagogical outcomes promise a more rigorous and thicker articulation of a general NE-LSP intrinsic theory that draws from and renourishes extrinsic, applied theory. In this manner, pedagogy and praxis become overtly theory based by definition and methodological DNA—that is what they are in essence—in their responsiveness to the need for continuous development as LSP domains evolve to meet the demands of society. Bowles (2012) reminds us that a key challenge to research informing pedagogy and praxis (and, it is understood, reciprocally and symbiotically to pedagogy and praxis informing theory-based research: see Figure 1)—in sum, to intrinsic and basic research that extend themselves into extrinsic and applied LSP—resides in the fact that LSP practitioners must resolve issues of translating the increase in LSP “analytical insights and research data into instructable materials” (p. 44). Theoretical considerations are crucial to LSP because they more firmly anchor this recently emerging field of scholarly inquiry and pedagogical methodology in higher education, a locus characterized by the ongoing development, analysis, and refinement of core theory and method.

![Figure 1](image.png)

*Figure 1. LSP theory informs pedagogy and praxis, and LSP pedagogy and praxis inform theory, as well as each other.*

**Continuing the Provisional Theoretical Cartography of LSP-BLS**

The definition offered previously for the NE-LSP subfield of BLS is that it is “a major empirical sub-discipline of LSP whose objective is to examine and predict how languages are, may, or should be used to conduct business in various communicative situations and cultural contexts” (Doyle, 2012a, p. 109). This core definition encompasses the crucial ethnographic and multimethod considerations identified by Bowles (2012) “as a way of narrowing the product/process gap” (i.e., the LSP researcher “who views discourse as a
product” vs. the practitioner/user for whom such discourse “is an ongoing process”) (p. 52). The prolegomenal mapping of BLS’s theoretical terrain, as BLS has been and is currently being developed in the United States, can now be continued. In Figure 2, the original Provisional Map of Business Language Studies (Doyle, 2012a, Figure 2, p. 111) is revisited, now within a general NE-LSP paradigm, with a dividing line heuristically separating intrinsic and extrinsic theory, although these nourish each other and together they feed into a general theory of BLS. This separation will allow for additional cartographic detail, which appeared originally only in the narrative for the “Descriptive Theory” and “Provisional or Partial Theory” regions of the map (Doyle, 2012a, p. 110), to be provided for each theoretical side. That is, the earlier core description, which now needs to become more granular and thicker both in terms of narrative and cartographic representation, is included in Figures 3 and 4.

![Figure 2](image.jpg)

**Figure 2.** Provisional Map of Business Language Studies (LSP-BLS) within a general NE-LSP-XYZ theoretical paradigm and with heuristic dividing line between intrinsic and extrinsic theory. (XYZ = any given LSP content domain) (Doyle, 2012a, p. 111).

Figure 3, which addresses the pure or intrinsic theory aspect of BLS, now incorporates graphically the core explanation of (1) the descriptive theory considerations identified in the earlier narrative as product, function, or process oriented, and (2) the provisional or partial general theory considerations identified in the same earlier narrative as medium-, area-, rank-, discourse type-, time-, and problem-restricted elements (Doyle, 2012a, p. 110).
Figure 4, which addresses the applied or extrinsic theory aspect of BLS, now incorporates and further develops the formerly separate graphic depicting methods and methodology in business language (BL) pedagogy as well as sources of information and research for other applied theory considerations, such as course and curriculum development, assessment of learner outcomes, faculty training, and BLS policy. Applied theory represents the area of BLS where most of the theory-based research to date has taken place (Doyle, 2012a, pp. 105, 111).

With this, an ongoing theoretical mapping of NE-BLS in the United States continues to fill in what was not covered or dealt with earlier in as integrative a manner. The goal of providing a useful, general BLS theoretical cartography can benefit only from the forthcoming insights of additional researchers who are interested in contributing to the overall BLS objective: “to examine and predict how languages are, may, or should be used to conduct business in various communicative situations and cultural contexts” (Doyle, 2012a, p. 109). Such a collective benefit is also potentially the case as the NE-LSP theoretical mapping project extends its disciplinary coverage in the US beyond that of the point-of-departure focus on the BLS content domain.
Figure 4. Provisional Map of Business Language Studies including BL methods and methodology as well as other applied theory considerations.

Extending Nomenclature and Provisional Theoretical Cartography from BLS to Other NE-LSP Domains

The nomenclature Business Language Studies (BLS) has been proposed as a “more serviceable and academically communal name—a more rigorous toponymic identity—by which to identify itself as a theory-based field of scholarship” within LSP (Doyle, 2012a, p. 105). This has been done because, for academic and political reasons in higher education, nomenclature “encapsulates and stimulates further articulation and validation of the intellectual foundations—theory, method, and methodology—upon which a discipline or subdiscipline builds itself through a pragmatic and constructivist (shared and learner-centered) epistemology” (Doyle, 2012a, p. 106). Furthermore, nomenclature “identifies a scholarly forum in which to explore further and refine underlying intellectual assumptions (metarelfection) as well as principles (derived from fundamental, basic, pure, or intrinsic research) that inform and upon which pedagogy and praxis (applied or extrinsic research) may subsequently be based” (Doyle, 2012a, p. 106). BLS may prove useful as a model for more broadly theorizing NE-LSP, such that the “studies” nomenclature may be applied productively to other content domains, which addresses the critical intercultural communication needs of our representative professional schools in the United States via a movement from Business Language Studies (NE-BLS) to, for example, Medical and Health Care Language Studies (NE-MHCLS), Legal Language Studies (NE-LLS), Education Language Studies (NE-EDLS: e.g., the rising importance of using Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, etc., administratively and pedagogically in K–16 settings),
Engineering Language Studies (NE-EGLS), Scientific Language Studies (NE-SCLS), Technical Language Studies (NE-TLS), and Agriculture Language Studies (NE-AGLS), among others. The point is that NE-LSP domains such as these constitute essential areas for effective cross-cultural communication in today’s global economy, in which the vast majority of the world does not do its daily living and work in English, and in the increasingly multicultural and multilingual US itself. The word “studies,” a rubric broadly adopted in US higher education for interdisciplinary areas of investigation and pedagogy, seems custom-made for LSP and its XYZ content domains. As Laﬀord (2012) elaborates, “studies” indicates “a ﬁeld that calls on the expertise of many disciplines for its realization” (p. 6).

The deﬁnition of BLS, which represents an example of any NE-LSP domain (XYZ), may be extended and adapted to serve as a suitable vehicle for other NE-LSP domains such as those listed above. Figure 5 demonstrates the slight adjustments required initially, but always in need of ongoing (and deﬁnitive) regulation and reﬁnement by specialists within the respective content domains. As seen previously, the NE-LSP subﬁeld of BLS is “a major empirical sub-discipline of LSP whose objective is to examine and predict how languages are, may, or should be used to conduct business in various communicative situations and cultural contexts.” Deﬁnitional adaptations would replace the phrasing “to conduct business” with wording apposite to each NE-LSP-XYZ discourse domain, as in “for medical, health care, and nursing purposes,” “for legal and criminal justice purposes,” or “for engineering purposes.” Figure 5 provides a deﬁnitional template that may be useful for the NE-LSP nomenclature and theory agenda.

Figure 5. Prolegomenal, deﬁnitional template for various (XYZ) NE-LSP studies (S) domains.

Within the LSP mapping of a general theory of NE-LSP-XYZ (XYZ = Medical, Legal, etc.), the Descriptive and Provisional content of the Pure Theory (Intrinsic) terrain presented for BLS in Figure 3 would need to be shifted to the different domains being considered, that is, from BLS to MHCLS, LLS, EDLS, EGLS, etc. For example, the business language (BL) in Pure Theory → Descriptive → Product Oriented in the wording “[d]escribes or compares diachronically and synchronically existing and past BL texts and scenarios” would be modified accordingly to any other XYZ content domain (e.g., MHCL, medical and health care language; LL, legal language; etc.) under consideration, as indicated in Figure 6:
Similar adaptations would be LSP domain-matched throughout as warranted for other descriptive paradigm components (e.g., Function Oriented, Process Oriented, as well as in the Provisional cartography sections of Medium-Restricted, Area-Restricted, etc.).

A corresponding LSP-XYZ adaptation would apply as well to other components of the theoretical modeling, as in the case of the Applied Theory → Pedagogy → Methods/Methodology consideration. Figure 7 anticipates what this particular adaptation might look like initially, with the expectation that LSP domain specialists will refine and regulate the mapping.

The overarching goal is to collaboratively devise a useful, informative, and adaptable general NE-LSP theoretical model that accounts for (1) what is already being done (e.g., initially in NE-LSP-BLS) while (2) serving as a catalyst and predictor for future NE-LSP developments. A goal is also to more solidly secure the NE-LSP field theoretically in US higher education, an anchoring project that remains a continuing priority (Doyle, 2012A; Fryer, 2012; Lafford, 2012).
The Potential of Post-UAB Symposium LSP Theory Development Working Groups and Beyond

The third purpose of this article is to propose for consideration the opportune formation of post-UAB First International Symposium theory development working groups to collaborate on the further development of the theoretical cartographies and narratives that the gathering era of global LSP—a new curricular and research status quo—will require in US higher education and beyond. The synergetic work of these LSP Theory Development Working Groups (TDWG), at (although not restricted to) future UAB-initiated symposia on Language for Specific Purposes, with a near-term focus on shoring up pure and intrinsic LSP theory, will cooperate with the more developed and ongoing research in applied theory, new directions for which can also be proposed and pursued by the symbiotic TDWGs (in intrinsic and extrinsic theory). Ideally, the TDWGs would complement the parallel creation of additional symbiotic working groups, such as an LSP Content Development Working Group (CDWG) and an LSP Methodology Development Working Group (MDWG), among others that might be identified as essential to a better understanding and advancement of LSP. The UAB-initiated theory, content, and methodology working groups could also meet to pursue and share their ongoing research and development at other professional meetings, such as the annual conference of the federally-funded Centers of International Business Education and Research (CIBERs), annual gatherings of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), the AATs (American Associations of Teachers of French, German, and Spanish and Portuguese), the Chinese Language Teachers Association (CLTA), the Modern Language Association of America (MLA), and the American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL), among others, as well as extending their efforts internationally in a global LSP dialogue and collaboration that should be pursued more vigorously and purposefully than ever before. The formation of such LSP working groups in core developmental areas—theory, content, and methodology—represents a consequential opportunity for UAB to extend its LSP leadership beyond the groundbreaking First International Symposium. As Symposium Director Lourdes Sánchez-López (2012) has written in her colloquium epilogue, “Because of the discussions that took place during and after the symposium, we believe that we may have prepared a solid ground for something larger, collaborative and long-lasting with strong national and international repercussions” and “[c]ollaboration, integration and unity are key elements for the success of our growing field” (no pagination). The UAB Symposium could serve as a prelude to an International Year of LSP, to be coordinated globally among scholars and to herald a concerted and sustained International Decade of LSP. This would serve to galvanize an integrative, long-term commitment to LSP development during which “the field of LSP can truly ‘come of age’” (Lafford, 2012, p. 22). In this promising context, the UAB Symposium may even help trigger the creation of an American Association of Languages for Specific Purposes (AALSP), along the lines of the European Association of Languages for Specific Purposes, or even a more global International Association of Languages for Specific Purposes (IALSP). In any event, as a result of ongoing interest forums, such as the UAB Symposium, future surveys of the “Evolution of Languages for Specific Programs in the United States” will have the greatest potential ever to confirm LSP as a curricular status quo and mainstay.
Conclusion

In 2012, it is not at all far-fetched to say that US foreign language programs, departments, and institutions that do not embrace non-English LSP will be on the wrong side of curricular and pedagogical history in secondary and higher education as we advance further into the LSP era of the 21st century. This affirmation presupposes the basic and applied research (intrinsic and extrinsic) that underlies, informs, and is derived from how NE-LSP is used or intended to be used. Ongoing fruitful work in theory and method, which should contribute to improved curricula, pedagogy, and teaching materials, must be pursued as essential to the maturation of the field.

Notes

1 The conference theme was “Scholarship of Teaching and Learning” and featured inter-national presenters in a broad array of LSP sessions (see http://www.uab.edu/languages/symposium). Conference Director, Lourdes Sánchez-López, and the Organizing Committee (Brock Cochran, Malinda Blaire O’Leary, Yahui Anita Huang, John Moore, Sheri Spezzini, Rebekah Ranew Trinh, and Mike Perez) are to be commended for planning and hosting the informative event.


3 See “Table I: Types of Languages in the United States Currently Offered Across Languages and Professions During the 2010–2011 Academic Year” (Long and Uscinski, 2012, p. 176). The Grosse and Voght (1990) survey showed that LSP was already well-established in the national curriculum and pedagogy at “all sizes and types of four-year institutions. . .at private and public institutions. . .fairly evenly distributed among small, medium and large institutions” (p. 38).

4 Delivered by Doyle on April 14, 2012, the keynote address focused on two theoretical considerations: (1) that those engaged with LSP-Translation, especially its pedagogy, be “good utopians” who are well grounded in the extensive bibliography on translation theory (descriptive, prescriptive and speculative) and method, and (2) that those engaged in LSP-Business Language Studies (BLS) further articulate and develop its intrinsic theoretical aspects in order to complement the extensive work already done in extrinsic and applied BLS, given that the development of methods and methodology has far outstripped theoretical considerations per se, the latter of which are now warranted to more adequately anchor the field in American higher education. These are bookend theoretical concerns in that the first, in the field of translation, deals with an abundance of theory, dating back several millennia, which should not be ignored when praxis and pedagogy occur; the second, in the field of BLS, considers the lack of articulated theory upon which praxis and pedagogy are based.

5 Regarding this maturation process, Lafford (1991) has written that “the field of (non-English) LSP in the United States needs to follow the lead of the fields of CALL [computer-assisted language learning], Translation Studies, and ESP/EAP [English for Specific Purposes/English for Academic Purposes] all over the globe in order to become recognized as a valuable subfield of applied linguistics and to take its rightful place in the
academy. At that point, the field of LSP can truly ‘come of age’ and Grosse and Voght’s (1991) initial optimism over the position of LSP in the FL [foreign language] curriculum finally will be realized” (22). Long and Uscinski (2012) also conclude that the maturation is ongoing, as the Grosse and Voght “optimistic, almost euphoric hopes for the reenergizing and internationalization of the US education system (and LSP’s role in that process) have yet to be fully realized” (188). Long and Uscinski “predict a continued steady presence [“maturation”] of LSP in university curricula for years to come” (188).

Doyle (2012a) reminds us that “methods and methodology, of course, presuppose a theory, regardless of whether it is fully developed and articulated” (108–109).

Created in 1992, it is an “association of European University professors specialised in languages for specific purposes” whose “objective is that of fostering and promoting both the research into and teaching of modern languages as regards their applications to science and technology” (http://www.aelfe.org/?l=en&s=origen).

References


