

# Languages for Specific Purposes in History



# Languages for Specific Purposes in History

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Nolwena Monnier

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## PREFACE

The present publication finds its origin in intensive discussions within the LAIRDIL<sup>1</sup> centred on the epistemology of Language for Special Purposes, English for Specialists and Anglais de Spécialité, the French version of English for Specialists.<sup>2</sup> The discussions eventually concluded that one of the reasons for unremitting terminological disputes among specialists of the field partly stemmed from the fact that little attention had been brought to its historical roots, to its genesis. This need for clarification is now supported by GERAS,<sup>3</sup> the French research association on ESP as shown by Whyte in a recent paper which provides a seminal description of epistemological intersections:

In some ways describing the relations between these three different perspectives on language education is like a children's playground hand game where each player aims to place their own hand on top, dominating the others. MFL specialists view their approach to language and culture as the high road of language study, compared to which LSP and SLA perspectives are lacking an essential cultural component (Whyte, 2016).<sup>4</sup>

For her part, Nolwena Monnier – both a researcher in medieval history and in English for Specific Purposes – was investigating the potential origin of LsSPs in the manuscripts of the twelfth Century and found it a stimulating and necessary endeavour to bridge the gap between researchers of both field and it was natural for her to have taken on the task of organising a conference focussed on LsSPS in history.

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<sup>1</sup> LAIRDIL: Inter-University Research Laboratory in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning

<sup>2</sup> I shall broadly refer to the field under the acronym LsSPs: Languages for Specialists/Special Purposes

<sup>3</sup> GERAS: Groupe d'Etudes et de Recherches en Anglais de Spécialité

<sup>4</sup> WHYTE S., "Who are the Specialists? Teaching and Learning Specialised Language in French Educational Contexts", *Recherche et pratiques pédagogiques en langues de spécialité* [Online], Vol. 35 N° spécial 1 | 2016, Online since 29 November 2016, connection on 19 December 2017. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/apliut/5487>; DOI: 10.4000/apliut.5487

In the wake of that effervescence, it was thus decided to bring together scholars sharing the same concern for a historical or diachronic approach to LsSPs in a conference entitled *LsSPs in history: from antiquity to present ... and future times*. Owing to the number of received proposals, the one day seminar became a two days' one and brought together people in all walks of academic life with a diversity of countries, languages and specialities...For my part, I was slightly sceptical in front of such a diversity: to what extent would these highly specialised scholars be able to actually understand each other and discuss? But my doubts were immediately proved unfounded and the conference will remain in most participants' memory as a cornerstone of scientific encounters in LsSPs history.

The present volume is a tentative testimony of those historical and epistemological reflections. In this initial attempt, authors could not anticipate other author's descriptions and analysis, neither the fruitful discussions which followed each contribution. Therefore, through chapters, it remains the task of the readers to decipher unwritten links – similitudes, oppositions, evidence and to track the genesis of LsSPs by themselves. My own journey was guided by Foucault's foreword to the English edition of *The order of Things* when he writes:

This book must be read as a comparative, and not a symptomato-logical, study. It was not my intention, on the basis of a particular type of knowledge or body of ideas, to draw up a picture of a period, or to reconstitute the spirit of a century. What I wished to do was to present, side by side, a definite number of elements: the knowledge of living beings, the knowledge of the laws of language, and the knowledge of economic facts, and to relate them to the philosophical discourse that was contemporary with them during a period extending from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century and to relate them to the philosophical discourse that was contemporary with them during a period extending from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century (Foucault, 1970: X).<sup>5</sup>

Indeed "LsSPs in History" presents the reader with a "definite number of elements": the different disciplines, countries, historical periods, related through specific discourses which made it possible for academics and professionals to communicate and act within and across different countries and tongues. Each contribution calls our attention to specific questions related to a specific country, discipline and language, but also to the modernity of the questions at stake. It is this link with present epistemological preoccupations that I would like to briefly outline in the continuation of this presentation.

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<sup>5</sup> FOUCAULT M. (1970), *The order of Things*, New York: Pantheon books.

The first leg of the journey will greatly help the readers. In his seminal introduction to the conference *Charting the diachronic dimension of specialised languages: epistemological challenges and pedagogical relevance*, Michel Van Der Yeught, a recognised specialist of ESP epistemology, explains why specialists languages have largely been ignored up to this point, and finds a potential epistemological foundation in Searle's theory of collective intentionality before insisting on the pedagogical relevance of such reflections to enlarge and support SL teachers "specialised encyclopaedic knowledge". Michel Van Der Yeught calls our attention to the fact that as early as 4,000 B.C. Sumerian clay tablets might have contained a sort of medical "lexicon" used to prepare pharmacopeia and that Greek and Roman discourses in the area of knowledge included architecture, geometry, law... a diversity of specialised languages. The present volume will provide numerous other examples. Michel Van Der Yeught highlights the present debate on LsSPs in two essential ways. First of all, he examines the ancient and long lasting "disregard for practical and specialised activities" which pervaded the writings of many western philosophers' writings until recent times giving some evidence of such writings and putting forward a well-known explanation: LsSPs discourses being related to practical activities are seen by many scholars as debased - not sophisticated, and local - not universal which limits their scope and nobility. Then, John Searle's intentionality theory (1995: 23-26) is proposed as a framework for establishing LsSPs epistemological foundations. This framework seems particularly appropriate on two accounts. First, it bridges the gap between individual and social realities; second, it stresses the symbolic aspect of constitutive institutional rules in specialised activities.

Following this seminal introduction, the book content follows a chronological order ranging from antiquity and the middle-ages up to the present times. Through the chapters, a polyphonic dialogue (Ducrot, 1988) emerges around three questions: LsSPs as instruments of power, LsSPs and the free movement of knowledge, the didactic dimension of LsSPs.

## **1. LsSPs as instruments of power**

In *The use of Greek in Judaea: new linguistic habits for individuals and the roman administration* M. Girardin opens the discussion on how a foreign specialised language could be used as an instrument of power. Using the example of early manuscripts he analyses how the Greek lexicon used by the Byzantine imperial power gradually invaded Hebrew and Aramaic in ancient Judaea in the fields of administration, finance and

tax collection showing that LsSPs may serve as symbolic instruments of power. The argument further unfolds in the writing of C. Simoncini in *Italian Legal Language from literature to society*, who invites us to reflect on the function of the legal discourse by virtue of its strangeness and difficulty. Faced with cryptic law discourses laymen and women find themselves at a disadvantage and the understanding of legal rules, procedures and decisions is clearly compromised putting them in a position of inferiority.

## 2. LsSPs and the free movement of knowledge

In modern times, reaching a wider public became an essential LsSPs goal. The still crucial question of how to translate, transfer or communicate a specialised content without undermining the clarity and exactness of a specific content is illuminated by several authors emphasizing the importance of procedures, instruments and techniques. This is highlighted by V. Di Clemente in *Linguistic interference and vocabulary for special purposes in twelfth century German medical text* and C. Benati in *Foreign language for specific purposes in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century*. The decision of maintaining Latin, Greek or High German terminology for lack of a lexicon in the target language echoes the current issue of lexicon translations in contemporary specialised texts. In *Latin as a language for specific purposes in medieval and renaissance Britain*, L. Carruthers goes further than this in his analysis of publishing policies from English to Latin and Latin in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. The paper clearly illustrates the debate on how a specialised content best reaches the scientific community and potentially a non-specialised community, a debate which still remains the object of many heated discussions as pointed out by C. Chaplier (2017) or J. Napoli (2017).<sup>6</sup> The cultural dimension of the debate best figures in I. Lord's *Aleut for Specific Purposes: An ethnographic and linguistic study of the discourse of the Christian orthodox mission in the nineteenth century Alaska*. The Gospels were seen as a specialised language by Veniaminov, a Russian missionary, who gradually found out that to translate them did not make sense since and what was needed by the Aleut was not a transfer of knowledge but the actual construction of a new world in their own language.

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<sup>6</sup> CHAPLIER C. (2017), *L'anglais des sciences: un objet didactique hybride*, Paris: L'Harmattan, coll Langue et Parole; NAPOLI J. (2017), *Vers une formation efficiente en langue anglaise appliquée aux secteurs du transport aérien et du tourisme*, Saint Denis: Connaissance et Savoires.

### 3. The didactic dimension of LsSPs

The didactic dimension of LsSPs in foreign languages history is brought to the forefront by V. M. Gianninoto in *Learning Chinese for specific purposes in the late Qing period*. From early sixteenth century through the nineteenth century, a number of specialized courses in the scientific or technical fields are produced on behalf of foreign diplomats, missionaries, militaries, while in parallel many western treaties are translated in Chinese integrating their terminology in less than a century. Concerning the current period, K. Millon-Fauré et C. Mendonça-Dias in *French as an additional language for mathematics' purposes* investigate the pedagogical relations between language and mathematical contents while M. Stasilo in *Communicative project based activities: Teaching Russian and French to the military and customs officers in Lithuania* questions the professional training in a foreign language of would-be custom officers. We are lastly taken on a modern route in the literal meaning of the term by L. Perez Ruiz in *Always take the scenic route: Designing activities for teaching English for Heritage Purpose*. The author explains how foreign students are enabled to come to grip with the Spanish culture and heritage thanks to the modern instruments attached to folk culture transmitted by museums, festivals or historical recreations.

To conclude the journey, let us go back to the middle-ages with N. Monnier's *Gerald of Wales' books: first ethnological dictionaries?* This paper occupies a unique place in the volume since it doesn't fall in any of the three categories mentioned above. However it clearly participates in the dialogue since it implicitly shows the paramount role of the researcher *versus* that of the "researched". Revisiting Gerald of Wales, she explains that he freely drew from history, geography, sociology, myths, and reports... even from ecclesiastical miracles. This is in no way "science" in the modern science of the term and yet one might think that in that dictionary lurked the modern tenets of triangulation or emergence. Indeed, the current question of pluri, inter, cross-disciplinary methods emerges in an embryonic, proto-manner.

At the term of this brief introduction, I hope to have shown the readers that *LsSPs in history* successfully achieves an ambitious undertaking which ought to be prolonged in future scientific conferences.

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INTRODUCTION  
CHARTING THE DIACHRONIC DIMENSION  
OF SPECIALISED LANGUAGES:  
EPISTEMOLOGICAL CHALLENGES  
AND PEDAGOGICAL RELEVANCE

MICHEL VAN DER YEUGHT

The study of specialised languages (SLs) – e.g. financial English, medical German or legal Spanish – as they develop in time is still in its infancy and faces numerous and considerable obstacles. One of the main challenges in the diachronic approach to SLs lies in the fact that the research community is deeply divided on the subject. Indeed, many proponents of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) share Hutchinson and Waters' view that:

ESP is *not* a matter of teaching 'specialised varieties' of English. The fact that language is used for a specific purpose does *not* imply that it is a special form of the language different in kind from other forms. (1987: 18)

This position means that specialised varieties of English (SVEs) do not exist, which implies that their temporal dimension is a moot point for ESP authors. Furthermore, ESP's insistence on teaching purposes and learners' needs focuses attention on present or near-future pedagogical interests, and rules out extending teaching or investigating ventures into the past of SLs.

In this paper, I take a differing view by starting from the European approach to SLs as it develops on the Continent and especially in France. The French notion of "*anglais de spécialité*" (ASP), as distinct from ESP, suggests that SLs stem from underlying specialised domains. This diverges neatly from ESP because specialised domains are very different from specific purposes. Purposes are fleeting realities that depend on learners' circumstantial needs whereas specialties – such as law or medicine – are more stable institutional realities that have existed for a long time. As a result, there is a widely shared consensus in the French

ASP community that language and domain culture should not be considered separately and that studying one SL also comprises taking into account the related culture of the domain and of its community. In the ASP view, "specialised languages" exist as distinct objects and the idea that they develop in time, and especially that their past is worth exploring, is gradually gaining ground among French scholars.

However, this position is recent and still lacks firm theoretical grounding. This paper may be one of the first endeavours to open and chart the new diachronic territory of SLs and its main purpose is to outline a rationale and establish epistemological foundations for the study of SLs in time. To that effect, I propose to proceed in three stages. First, I think it necessary to survey the diachronic landscape of SLs in an extensive and comprehensive way covering past centuries. My aim here is to show empirically that specialised languages exist in time and that some of them are very old. I also intend to highlight that studying their temporality has attracted little or no interest from linguists so far although a diachronic posture is justified on scientific grounds. The second section is devoted to providing this line of research with robust epistemological foundations by resorting to John Searle's theory of collective intentionality. Third, I discuss the pedagogical relevance of engaging in this type of research. I try to show that it contributes to a more holistic approach to SLs and that it meets the specific needs of future SL teachers. The paper concludes that taking the diachronic dimension into account in SL descriptions helps to build the specialised encyclopaedic knowledge SL teachers need to meet the needs of learners.

## **1. The temporal dimension of specialised languages and the indifference of linguists on the subject**

### **1.1. Exploring the temporality of specialised languages**

It is generally believed that specialised languages are the offspring of recent modernity. To a certain extent, that is a valid assertion since our modern times increasingly generate new professional activities and disciplinary studies that require linguistic specialisation. However, anecdotal evidence and historical observation indicate that language specialisation is presumably as old as human civilisation. For example, one of Oscar Wilde's tutors at Oxford once wanted to teach his arrogant student a lesson and gave him an obscure passage of the Acts of Apostles to translate. The text he chose was full of complex nautical terms which no one could be expected to know unless they had studied them before. Wilde

translated it perfectly and when the disgruntled examiner told him to stop, Wilde replied: "Please may I go on? I want to see what happened..." (Morris, 1987 [1978]: 278). The anecdote illustrates Wilde's brilliant erudition, but it also shows that a religious text as venerable as the Bible contains forms of language specialisation.

In 1997, John Swales, a renowned ESP scholar, identified even earlier evidence of linguistic specialisation in a brief note on reproductions of Sumerian clay tablets dating back some 4,000 B.C. They contain descriptions of how to prepare medicines following the pharmacopoeia of that time and they feature specific abbreviations that were presumably only understood by the community's insiders. Swales concludes that these descriptions may well be the world's earliest-known technical texts that have come to our knowledge (Swales, 1997). Similarly, we know that the ancient Greeks and Romans developed sophisticated discourse for areas of knowledge such as architecture (cf. Vitruvius), medicine (cf. Hippocrates and Galenus), astronomy (cf. Eratosthenes), geometry (cf. Thales and Euclides) or law (especially Roman Law), and many of our modern terms have Greek and Latin origins.

## **1.2. The long-lasting indifference of linguists towards specialised languages**

Yet, these cases of linguistic specialisation have not aroused much interest among language thinkers in past centuries. Although some forms of specialised glossaries existed in their days, classical authors, such as Aristotle and Cicero who devoted much attention to linguistic expression, are mute on the subject. The reason for the Ancients' indifference to SLs may be offered by Hannah Arendt in her seminal book *The Human Condition*. She explains that most practical occupations in antique times were carried out by slaves (1998 [1958]: 81–82). So, all the strenuous labour required to satisfy the bare necessities of life was considered servile and unworthy of free men, especially of the citizens of the *polis*. As a consequence, linguistic interests then focused on the logos dimension of the language, i.e. on the general forms that could be understood by all free citizens, for example eloquence, rhetoric and poetics. Conversely, no interest developed in the forms of language that served common praxis for they could only be shared by small groups of despised labourers.

This tradition of disregard for practical and specialised activities was to last a very long time. In the seventeenth century, Blaise Pascal, a French philosopher and scientist, disliked people who posed as specialists. Only "universal men" appealed to him and he professed that it was more

beautiful to know something about everything than to know everything about something (1954: 1098–99). Two centuries later, Charles Baudelaire, a French poet, thought the same: "Which is the superior man?", he asked, and his answer was: "It is not the specialist. It is the man of leisure and of general education" (1986 [1980]: 413). I argue that this tradition is far from dead today, even in our very academic circles. Some colleagues feel that they belong to branches of English studies that are more dignified than others. They tend to regard ESP or ASP as ancillary practices compared to the nobler and more speculative domains of literature, linguistics or cultural studies. This could be called the "Berlitz stigma" since we sometimes hear that teaching SLs is not that different from what is offered in the Berlitz schools of languages. In many countries, ESP/ASP practitioners still strive to inspire the type of recognition from their peers that scholars in literature or cultural studies take for granted.

In my research, I only found one historical exception to the widespread contempt for practical activities and their languages. Joachim du Bellay, a French Renaissance poet, wrote a "Defence and Illustration of the French Language" in 1549 in which he clearly understood that specialised languages serve the purpose of practical activities. He also encouraged his fellow men of letters to use the words of labourers, craftsmen and tradesmen to enrich and embellish the French language. Here is my rendering of his advice in English:

Workers and even labourers, and all sorts of mechanical people could not pursue their trades if they did not resort to words which are usual to them and unknown to us. [...] And I want to advise you to mix not only with people of knowledge, but also with all sorts of workers and mechanical people such as mariners, painters, engravers and others to know their inventions, the names of the materials and of the tools and such terms as are used in their arts and trades, in order to draw from this fine comparisons and vivid descriptions of all things (2003 [1549]).

The openness of Du Bellay is remarkable and typical of the enthusiasm of Renaissance men for all discoveries whether generated in ancient or modern times. In the subsequent age of reason in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, thinkers were more obsessed with the "purity" of the language and they proved less eager adopters of any technical jargon likely to debase good language as used by people of quality, members of the royal courts, ladies and gentlemen. The famous eighteenth-century English lexicographer, Samuel Johnson, explained in the preface of his dictionary why he chose not to include terms generated by trade, crafts and other practical activities. One reason was the sheer practical impossibility

of collecting innumerable and elusive data, but another was that these words belonged to the oral tongue and could not be defined in a very stable way (Johnson, 1755: §78, §80).

Modern interest for specialised languages emerged much later, after the Second World War, when the United States stood as the leading nation of the developed world and gave English its predominance as the *lingua franca* of science, technology and business. These combined factors account for the international development of ESP from the 1960s and of ASP from the 1970s. Yet, the proponents of these functional approaches to language teaching strove to distinguish themselves from traditional philology and literature which are mainly based on historical grammar and criticism. Instead, they chose to focus on learners' current pressing needs and they ignored past temporality as irrelevant and cumbersome for their new pedagogical ventures. *The Handbook of English for Specific Purposes*, a standard reference book in ESP published in 2013, clearly illustrates this position: its index contains no entry for diachrony and the "history" entry only concerns the history of ESP and not the past of SLs.

### **1.3. The emerging awareness of the diachronic dimension in SLs**

At the turn of the millennium, French ASP scholars – especially Michel Petit (2002: 2-3) – started to approach SLs as combinations of language, discourse and culture and this new perception paved the way for interest in the culture and history of specialised domains and communities. For example, authors studied SLs in relation to the culture of British engineers (Laffont, 2006), American mountain guides (Wozniak, 2011), Wall Street and City financiers (Van der Yeught, 2012), economists (Resche, 2013). Then, papers were published containing explicit assertions that SLs have a diachronic dimension that is worth studying (Van der Yeught, 2012: 17–19; 2016: 54). However, in spite of these advances, exploring the diachronic dimension of SLs has never been theorised and even the proposition that SLs exist as language objects and develop in time has not been given basic epistemological grounding. These are the issues I propose to address in the following section.

## **2. Two proposals to establish epistemological foundations for the diachronic study of specialised languages**

Simply put, the question is: how can we give evidence that SLs exist in time? To answer the question, I put forward two distinct yet complementary

proposals. The first one is based on historical evidence and the other stems from theoretical arguments related to the nature of SLs.

## 2.1. Historical epistemological foundations

As has been shown in Section 1, it is possible to establish as facts that language specialisation has existed over centuries in major specialised domains such as law, medicine, science or business. Swales's note on Sumerian tablets suggests as much and Du Bellay's quotation testifies that, in Renaissance France, workers, labourer, tradesmen and "mechanical people" used specialised language ("...words which are usual to them and unknown to us"). At the same period, throughout Europe, domains like law, medicine, science, etc., started to produce increasingly specialised varieties of English, French, Spanish, German... to serve their domains' purposes: these were the ancestors of our modern SLs. Following common historical observation, it comes as obvious that SLs, as all human productions, exist in time and that ignoring their diachronic nature would lead to unscientific positions.

Still, this approach contains further questions that need to be addressed. For example, historical data may well indicate that SLs develop in time, but how can we identify when they begin? As far as I know, the question was first asked and a tentative answer proposed in 2009 (Van der Yeught, 2009: 29–36). My suggestion was, and still is, to select one criterion that is easy to identify and to date in history, the process of specialised dictionarisation, because it signals the emergence of specialised languages. My argument unfolds as follows. When a language specialises, it gradually develops lexical and phraseological characteristics that are only accessible to the related community's insiders. When the gap between the general language and the specialised variety widens, it may thwart the desirable insertion of outsiders in the community. Bridging solutions are then deployed and generally take the form of same-language wordbooks, glossaries, lexicons and dictionaries that enable outsiders to access the language, the milieu and the domain. Specialised dictionaries do not generate SLs, because the latter generally precede the former, but they clearly indicate that an SL is in the making since it has sufficiently branched out of the general language to justify a bridging tool between the two. Because explicit publication dates have come as standard in most European countries since the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries, specialised dictionaries offer robust historical evidence of the emergence of SLs. Conversely, before declaring that an SL exists, it may be worth examining if a related specialised dictionary attests that the variety has branched out

of the general language. Additionally, specialised dictionaries also help SLs to gain in structure, accuracy and richness thanks to the lexicographic efforts of the authors in research, spelling and semantics. Thus, they contribute to their development.

To date, studies on specialised dictionarisation in the French ASP context have been carried out in two domains: medicine and finance. Charpy (2011) shows how medical dictionaries appeared in England in the seventeenth century, first following French models, then developing fully fledged English compilations. Van der Yeught (2012: 42–44) explains how financial dictionarisation took nearly two hundred years of trial and error to reach the publication of the first English language financial dictionaries in the early twentieth century: in 1902 in the City of London and in 1908 in Wall Street.

The publication of specialised dictionaries is also historically meaningful. They generally multiply in times of large-scale social, economic and intellectual disruptions. In these changeful periods, professional and disciplinary groups are deeply reshuffled by innovation and paradigmatic shifts; they have to welcome newcomers who are to master new SLs. The Renaissance, the seventeenth century and the Industrial Revolution were cases in point. All these phases of fast-paced historical evolutions spawned specialised dictionaries. Our modern marketing-driven and digital consumer society is also witness to the emergence of countless new SLs and related dictionaries. Within their historical contexts, specialised dictionaries offer valuable insights about the evolutions shaping specialised domains and communities and they provide illuminating snapshots of SLs at given periods of time.

Thus, historical observation offers sound evidence that SLs have a diachronic dimension. Still, demonstrations of this type rely on social and historical data that largely lie outside linguistic reality: they do not derive from the SLs themselves. As such, they do not provide satisfactory answers to Hutchinson and Waters' objection mentioned in the introduction. Assuming that SLs have a diachronic dimension presupposes that they exist as distinct enduring language phenomena, which Hutchinson and Waters and many other ESP authors deny. That is why the diachronic issue poses also, and above all, an epistemological problem that concerns the very existence of SLs. In other words, the historical approach is crucial for our argument, but it has to be complemented by a theoretical approach bearing on the nature of SLs and offering evidence that their diachronic character necessarily derives from what they are. This is the subject I propose to deal with in the following section.

## 2.2. Theoretical epistemological foundations

In a previous paper (Van der Yeught, 2016), I tried to analyse the nature of SLs by resorting to the theory of intentionality developed by John Searle, an American philosopher. For Searle, "intentionality" is individual and collective (1995: 23–26), but social reality mainly stems from collective intentionality because it has the power of "making the social world" (Searle, 2010) through constitutive rules of the form "X counts as Y in C" (1995: 43–51; 2010: 96–97). The role of these constitutive rules is to assign a symbolic function Y to an object X in a context C so that X may be accepted by a given community's members as an "institution" that generates their collective reality. For example, a piece of paper marked \$10 (X) counts as money (Y) in the United States (C), which means that U.S. citizens accept to use notes that meet certain specific standards as institutional money in their national context (Searle, 1995: 45–46). Searle explains that countless human institutional realities are created by such constitutive rules in government (e.g. legislature, executive, police...), sports (teams, clubs...), civil life (marriage, divorce...), economic activity (money, corporations, real estate agencies...). His list also includes specialised and professional activities such as science, law medicine, academia... that contain institutions (2010: 91–92).

Indeed, specialised domains generate many types of institutional realities thanks to constitutive rules. Examples include specialised communities such as colleges of physician and surgeons, the bar, university committees, accounting professional bodies, etc., which are formed by virtue of "X-counts-as-Y-in-C" rules. For example, the Bar Council of England and Wales typically generate its social reality by such rule:

The General Council of the Bar, known as the Bar Council [X], is the Approved Regulator of the Bar [Y] of England and Wales [C].  
([barcouncil.org.uk](http://barcouncil.org.uk))

The expression "is the approved" is a variation of "counts as" and clearly indicates the underlying constitutive rule accepted by the members of the Bar Council that makes it an "institution" in Searle's acceptance. Similarly, the qualifier "accepted" in U.S. GAAP (Generally Accepted Accounting Principles) shows that American accountants agree to use the "institution" of these principles in their professional missions.

By the same token, SLs may be regarded as social "institutions" since many of their terms, symbols, phraseology and genres derive from similar constitutive rules that make their use accepted in the related communities.

Table 1 below presents how constitutive rules assign symbolic or semantic functions on a sample of specialised terms, sign and genre in given contexts.

**Table 1: How constitutive rule "X counts as Y in C" generates language specialisation**

X term/sign	counts as Y	in C
Cloud computing	Outsourcing data to third party entities	Anglo-American computing (from 1997)
Bear/Bull	Pessimistic/Optimistic investor	Anglo-American stockmarket finance (from early eighteenth century)
(Rod of Asclepius) 	Professional symbol	Medical communities
Felis sylvestris catus	Cat	Zoology (since 1755)
Big Four	Four largest British banks	Finance (UK banking, since 1970s)
Big Four	Four largest global accounting firms	Finance (accounting, since 2002)
Big Five	Five largest global accounting firms	Finance (accounting, 1998-2002)
GAAP	Accounting regulations	United States
IMRAD	Standard formatting genre for scientific publication	(originally) United States

The "in C" column clearly shows that geographical or historical contexts can change the accepted meaning of strictly similar terms. Depending on context, "Big Four" may refer to UK banks or global accounting firms. The largest global accounting firms were referred to as the "Big Five" before 2002 and as the "Big Four" since the demise of Arthur Andersen in

2002. SLs number countless instances of that kind where context determines meaning.

In that perspective, SLs may be regarded as the results of a very large number of constitutive rules that turn linguistic specialisation into institutional forms of social reality that are collectively accepted by specialised communities. Specialised dictionaries are implicit compilations of these rules as they simply spell out the final lexical output of the X-Y equivalences expressed by the rules. On top of that, dictionaries situate these rules in dated historical contexts. When terms become obsolete or when new terms appear, new rules make the language evolve. Then, new dictionaries appear or amended versions are published.

Obviously, in the context of this paper, the crucial part of the "X-counts-as-Y-in-C" rule is the C component. Searle's constitutive rules only operate in given contexts and contexts modify the output of the rules. The notion of context is extremely diverse and extensive and may include an infinite number of criteria such as social, geographic and political elements (countries, societies, communities, areas...). Yet, in human environments, they necessarily also involve temporal dimensions. We may conclude this section by stating that SLs indeed have a diachronic dimension, not only because they may be observed as existing in history, but also because it is part of their very structure since a contextual component is an indispensable part of the constitutive rules that give them their social reality. It also follows that, contrary to Hutchinson and Waters' view, SLs exist as enduring language objects as long as their constitutive rules operate effectively. Because common scientific procedures call for the methodical descriptions of objects of study, SLs have to be methodically described, including their historical origins and evolution.

At this stage of the argument, we have to address a new question: what is the relevance of studying the diachronic dimension of SLs for pedagogical purposes?

### **3. Discussing the pedagogical relevance of the diachronic dimension of specialised languages**

#### **3.1. The diverging needs of SL students and future teachers**

Establishing the diachronic dimension of SLs does not make it necessarily useful for teaching purposes. Needs analysis generally reveals that the language requirements of learners concern the present or the very near future and that SL students have little time to consider the past. So even if the history of SLs is culturally interesting, teaching purposes and

constrained learning conditions may make it appear as a form of irrelevant and time-wasting erudition. Nevertheless, the issue will be seen as slightly more complex if we take into consideration that in non-anglophone contexts SL teaching and learning is second-language acquisition and that SL teachers are in very short supply. In France as in most European countries, thousands of new SL academics are needed every year to teach students in law, engineering, medical and business schools. So, future SL teachers are learners too and the question may be asked whether *they* need training in the diachronic dimension of SLs.

My position is that they do indeed. The specific competence of SL teachers is to understand and to interpret specialised discourse and to distinguish it clearly from general language. To carry out their teaching mission properly, their knowledge of SLs cannot be diachronically shallow and limited to contemporary discourse. They need what Vijay Bhatia calls "pre-knowledge", "existing knowledge", "specific disciplinary cultures", "prior knowledge of disciplinary or institutional conventions" (Bhatia, 2004: 186-188). Bhatia's reference to "institutional conventions" is surprisingly close to Searle's constitutive rules. As I see it, his descriptions of specialised "pre-knowledge" intuitively point to the knowledge of the underlying constitutive rules that generate language specialisation. These rules, or Bhatia's culture and conventions, all require an acute awareness of language diachronic contexts which should therefore be part of the training curricula of future SL educators. I now intend to further the argument by showing that this form of knowledge even plays a central role in the training of future teachers.

### **3.2. Specialised interpretive capacity as "encyclopaedic knowledge"**

In a previous paper (Van der Yeught, 2016: 56-57), I proposed that the capacity to interpret specialised discourse in relevant contexts is akin to the notion of "encyclopaedic knowledge" as defined by Umberto Eco:

In the interpretive process, encyclopaedic knowledge operates as a set of instructions that properly insert textual elements in their relevant contexts and achieve the correct disambiguation of terms. (1986: 68)

Referring to Eco's definition at this stage of the argument makes sense because its "set of instructions that properly insert textual elements in their relevant contexts" is strikingly reminiscent of Searle's constitutive rules. Actually, rules are "sets of instructions" and Searle's "X-counts-as-Y-in-C" rule can be put in place of "set of instructions" in Eco's definition

without changing its meaning. As a result, although Eco uses the notion of "encyclopaedic knowledge" in general philosophical contexts, it may be applied to specialised contexts with similar effectiveness. For example, competent teachers in financial English will understand that in a text on the Subprime crisis, a "bear sale" is not an auction where plantigrades are sold, but a speculative move to make money on a depressed stockmarket. Similarly, they will disambiguate "Big Four" as banks or accounting firms depending on context. Their correct interpretation of specialised discourse shows that they master the constitutive rules that generate the domain's language specialisation, i.e. its "specialised encyclopaedic knowledge".

To conclude on the relevance of diachrony for pedagogical purposes, I do not advocate teaching SL history to students, for that would be needless erudition. However, I think that studying the diachronic dimension of SLs is a vital line of research for future SL teachers. The robust specialised encyclopaedic knowledge they need to interpret specialised discourse requires contextual awareness, and a large part of it is temporal in nature. In the following section, I will suggest that this result may also provide a valuable answer to a long-standing issue in ESP/ASP.

### **3.3. Addressing the question of the specialised knowledge of SL teachers**

For years, the members of the ESP and ASP communities have been debating on the desirable degree of specialisation in SL teachers' knowledge. Should teachers mainly be language practitioners with little specialised knowledge; or should they invest time and effort in domain content? In the former option, they run the risk of limiting their professional competence; in the latter, they may appear as pretending to be engineers, lawyers or doctors which they are not. In 2004, Bhatia summarised this uncomfortable position as follows: "ESP practitioners still get nervous about having to deal with disciplinary knowledge as part of linguistic training" (*ibid.*: 204). In 2013, in *The Handbook of English for Specific Purposes*, Diane Belcher also remarked that "[o]ne of the most vexing issues for ESP praxis is the need for at least some specialist knowledge" (Belcher, 2013: 545). Basically, the debate pits linguistic knowledge against specialised knowledge as if no other choice existed outside this narrow alternative. The approach developed in this paper may suggest a third option.

My proposal is that beyond the opposition between linguistic and specialised knowledge, "specialised encyclopaedic knowledge" is *par excellence* the specific domain of competence of SL teachers. Our

professional mission is neither to teach general language, nor pass judgement, design bridges or establish diagnoses as magistrates, civil engineers and doctors do. In between, our task is to acquire our domains' encyclopaedic knowledge, i.e. the capacity to understand and interpret correctly specialised discourse and to convey that competence to our learners. To that effect, we need to understand the constitutive rules that generate language specialisation and that includes a good grasp of their determining contexts. SL teachers are not plain language teachers, nor do they have to mimick expert knowledge. The specialised encyclopaedic knowledge of their pedagogical mission is their specific area of competence.

### **Conclusion: studying diachrony as a contribution to holistic descriptions of SLs**

This paper shows that SLs have accompanied human history for centuries. Historical observation attests that they exist and evolve in time as enduring language object and that their origins can be identified thanks to the process of specialised dictionarisation. Furthermore, by resorting to Searle's theory of collective intentionality, the paper shows that language specialisation is a social institution that is generated by "X-counts-as-Y-in-C" constitutive rules. "Context" is factored in these rules and appears to be a structural component of specialisation. The context component may incorporate countless criteria, but temporal ones are necessarily inherent in all human affairs and cannot be ignored if SL are to be approached in a holistic way.

When academic disciplines identify, define and/or construct their objects of research, scientific investigation invariably starts with descriptive studies of these objects. Similarly, SLs are enduring language objects and have to be methodically described not only to further knowledge and to improve student training, but above all to provide future teachers with the encyclopaedic knowledge they need. Encyclopaedic knowledge requires a holistic approach to SLs, and this cannot be achieved without studying their diachronic dimension.

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### **Webography**

<http://www.barcouncil.org.uk/about-us/what-is-the-bar-council/>



**PART I:**  
**ANTIQUITY AND MEDIEVAL TIMES**

# THE USE OF GREEK IN JUDAEA: NEW LINGUISTIC HABITS FOR INDIVIDUALS AND THE ROMAN ADMINISTRATION

MICHAËL GIRARDIN

This paper tackles a brand new approach to languages. First, the idea to comprehend ancient languages as "speciality languages" instead of vernacular ones has rarely been suggested.<sup>1</sup> Historians and philologists usually prefer to question what the spoken language in Judaea was in the first century and to mention the grammatical, orthographical, syntactical, and typographical errors.<sup>2</sup> This approach is interesting and it would have been

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<sup>1</sup> This project has already been considered. See, for example, FINKIELSZTEJN G rard, "L' conomie et le roi au Levant Sud d'apr s les sources arch ologiques et textuelles", in CHANKOWSKI V. & DUYRAT F. ( ds), *Le roi et l' conomie*, 2004 (Topoi, suppl. 6), pp. 241-265 (pp. 252-253), about the uses of Phoenician and Greek in Tyre.

<sup>2</sup> SPOLSKY Bernard, "Jewish Multilingualism in the First Century: An Essay in Historical Sociolinguistics", in FISHMAN J.A. (ed.), *Readings in the Sociology of Jewish Languages*, Leiden: Brill, 1985, pp. 35-50; HADAS-LEBEL Mireille, *L'h breu : 3000 ans d'histoire*, Paris: Albin Michel, 1992, pp. 60-62; SCHWARTZ Seth, "Language, Power and Identity in Ancient Palestine", In *Past and Present* 148, 1995, pp. 3-47 (pp. 12-15). Recently, WISE Michael O., *Language and Literacy in Roman Judaea. A Study of the Bar Kokhba Documents*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015. On p. 296, he estimates that, according to these documents, 65% to 80% of the population spoke Hebrew, which was thus "plainly still alive and well". On the contrary, GZELLA Holger, *A Cultural History of Aramaic*, Leiden - Boston: Brill, 2015, pp. 193 and 226-227, thinks that Aramaic replaced Hebrew as the vernacular language much earlier, perhaps as soon as the eighth century BCE. This was contested by BALTES Guido, "The Use of Hebrew and Aramaic in Epigraphic Sources of the New Testament Era", in BUTH R. & NOTLEY R.S. (eds), *The Language Environment of First Century Judaea*, Leiden - Boston: Brill, 2014, pp. 35-65 (p. 53) following the analysis of 3819 texts from the Roman period found in the Judean desert. Finally, ONG Hughson T., *The Multilingual Jesus and the Sociolinguistic World of the New Testament*, Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2016, pp. 36-37 and 256-257, thinks that Hebrew disappeared after