1 Introduction

Specialised languages usually refer to the specific discourse used by professionals and specialists to communicate and transfer information and knowledge. There are as many specialised languages as there are professions. This is what has usually been known as Languages for Specific Purposes or, when applied to English, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), i.e., the special discourse used in specific settings by people sharing common purposes. It is not our aim to define the term or to carry out a historical review of the topic, as many authors have already done so in the last 50 years (e.g., Gunnarson, 1994; Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998; Engberg, 2006). Neither do we want to get involved in the debate over whether English for Academic Purposes (EAP) should be considered a subfield of ESP or if they are now two different areas of teaching and research within Applied Linguistics. That is the reason why we are continuing with the term English for Professional and Academic Purposes (EPAP) introduced by Alcaraz-Varó (2000) (the original term in Spanish being Inglés Profesional y Académico (IPA)), one of the most prestigious and prolific scholars in Spain. He rested his view on the opinion of Widdowson (1998: 4), who stated that “All language use is specific in a sense”, so that language serves a specific purpose wherever it is used. Therefore, we agree with Alcaraz-Varó (2000) in the sense that the term EPAP is much clearer and more specific to cover the domain we are dealing with here.

The relevance of English in academic and professional settings began some decades ago, in the 1960s, and it has not decreased. Orr (2002: 1) said that ESP “is an exciting movement in English language education that is opening up rich opportunities for English teachers and researchers in new professional domains”. The spread of science and technology all over the world, together with the globalisation of the economy and the fact that the university world is becoming more international, has all helped to make the English language the current lingua franca of international communication. Despite the research carried out so far in the field, we still believe that much more ought to be conducted. As Orr (2002: 3) also points out:
If systematic attention to actual needs continues to be its hallmark, ESP will clearly advance further in its study of specialized English discourse and in its development of effective methodologies to teach it.

From the title of the book it can easily be inferred that our volume is concerned with two main areas: Academic Purposes and Professional Purposes. Following Ypsilantis and Kantaridou (2007: 69), EAP “refers mainly to the academic needs of students and of future professionals who would seek a career in the academic environment” and English for Professional Purposes (EPP) refers to “the actual needs of (future) professionals at work”. As this distinction is currently widely accepted by many scholars, it is also true that those two broad fields or categories also involve many different areas and fields of interest and research.

EPAP can cover hundreds of research topics as well as put them into practice in hundreds of academic and professional settings. For example, Hewings (2002) showed that EAP, including EST (English for Science and Technology), was the most common field of research in the *ESP Journal* and, at the same time, he found that text and discourse analysis was the most common topic scholars wrote about in the period of time observed. Hewings (2002) concluded by highlighting some new trends for the future, such as geographical internationalisation of authorship, analysis of more specific contexts, continued influence of genre analysis or corpus analysis, and the effect of English as an international language. A few years later, in an editorial of the ESPj, Paltridge (2009: 1) stated that:

> ESP research is clearly not the property of the English-speaking world, nor is it taking place solely in English-speaking countries. In ESP, English is the property of its users, native and non-native speakers alike, something that was called for some years ago by Larry Smith (1987) in his discussions of the use of English as an international language.

The present volume is a clear example of this international language and the geographical variation of authorship. Contributors are currently based in Europe, America and Asia, and they are a mixture of native and non-native speakers of English (if we can still maintain such a difference).

Some years earlier, Dudley-Evans and St John (1998: 19) said that “ESP is essentially a materials- and teaching-led movement” closely interlinked with Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching. When looking deeper into the research trends or approaches in ESP, they refer especially to register analysis, rhetorical and discourse analysis, analysis of study skills, and analysis of learning needs. Similarly, and complementing Dudley-Evans and St John’s ideas, Ferguson (2007: 9) pointed out that:

> a key motif in ESP/EAP research has been “difference”: difference between academic disciplines, between professions, between genres and registers, between discursive practices; differences that, quite justifiably, have been explored in ever finer detail.