

**MERILĂ, ISABELA (ed). 2020. *Romanian Contributions to English for Specific Purposes*.
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Book review

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The cross-cultural prevalence and increasingly privileged status of the English language across most European states have both led to several far-reaching consequences over the last decades (particularly following the overthrow of the totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe). Considerably enhanced by the phenomenon of globalization as by the accelerated technological advances, the English language has maintained its status as *lingua franca*, carrying major social and educational implications in the process such as the proper linguistic training of non-native professionals in the prospective field(s) of activity (other than those traditionally related to Humanities).

In this respect, Isabela Merilă's *Romanian Contributions to English for Specific Purposes* is a valuable addition to the collection of volumes researching the emergence and development of the ESP field around the world as it provides the readership with an extensive diachronic overview that not only features the highlights in the origin and transition of ESP in Romania, but also the approaches adopted by Romanian authors in order to equip the 'would-be professionals' with the necessary linguistic skills. It also illustrates the prolonged period of adjustment the ESP-oriented framework had been subject to prior to the 1990s and that ultimately climaxed with the arduous task of changing the pattern from one fitting into the communist Romania to a counterpart appropriate for a resurgent country.

Acutely aware of the overriding importance reflected in the international context corresponding to the latter half of the twentieth century, the auctorial team draws several

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parallels between the Eastern and Western European background, uncovering the major reasons for the initially less effective ESP-oriented curricula designed in Romania. In this regard, the research unveils three main directions that are smoothly intertwined: the diachronic evolution of the Romanian academia starting from the latter half of the nineteenth century up to the marking of the centenary in 2018 (analysing the academic offer in terms of bachelor, master and doctoral programmes), the emergence and staging of the ESP branch in Romania (targeting the curricular peculiarities, thematic structure and materials available on the market), and the role played by *Dunărea de Jos University of Galați* (DJUG) in the consolidation of the ESP phenomenon in Romania.

Structure-wise, the volume comprises four main chapters, which are further subdivided into three or two subchapters each. On a particular note, the first chapter historically contextualizes the factors contributing to the foundation of the Romanian academia, pinpointing as highlights a range of documents including the *Law of Public Instruction* issued in 1864 (2020: 50) and the sequence of certain events such as the foundation of the universities of Iași (1860) and Bucharest (1864). In hindsight, the chapter's narrative depicts the connections across the spacetime axis (e.g. the staging of the Romanian academia according to the regime under which the country had been ruled, the specific region(s) where universities were founded) which eventually determined the university's profile (technical or Humanities-related), the foreign languages to be studied and the need for particular linguistic training targeting several categories of professionals (e.g. economists, engineers, doctors, etc.). Furthermore, the authors' joint endeavours to produce a thoroughly-documented research tool are also highlighted by the analysis of an extensive corpus consisting of several (pre-)ESP-oriented coursebooks and detailed comments on content.

Considering that ESP has gradually developed into an independent field of research in the aftermath of World War II particularly due to the "expansion in scientific, technical and economic activity on an international scale" (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987: 6-8), the analyses performed by the auctorial team in the first chapter are extremely useful. For instance, they draw attention to the category of target trainees/professionals (economists, engineers), the methodology adopted, and to the theoretical input provided in the textbooks and coursebooks published in communist Romania. The analysis performed highlights the phased transition from EGP-reminiscent coursebooks to more appropriate teaching resources for the linguistic training of specialists. An illustrative example in this regard features the content-based comparison between several coursebooks/textbooks belonging to the "pre-EP" stage (metaphorically denominated "the Garden of Eden" in the volume) and coursebooks/textbooks pertaining to the "pre-ESP" phase (figuratively denominated "the Road which was taken") and the ESP period proper (2020: 57). The comparative approach consists of macro and micro-level analyses indicating EGP-related features such as phonetics, morphology and syntax, SL/TL (BrE and AmE) literary and cultural elements, and ESP-based components including field-specific excerpts, glossaries and semantic equivalences. By scrutinising part of the materials published in each of the aforementioned periods, the auctorial team unveils the enormous contribution made by *Dunărea de Jos University of Galați* (DJUG) towards

the evolution of ESP-based curriculum and availability of subsequent teaching materials in Romania.

Chapters II and III gather precise information on volumes that have (long) been used in the process of teaching English for specific purposes (ESP) at DJUG as well as at other universities in Romania. The pioneering works are rigorously classified according to multiple criteria: core study/research field (engineering, economics, computer science), subdomains (e.g. English for Metallurgy, English for Refrigeration Technology, English for Ship Building, Business English, English for Marketing, English for Public Administration, English for Automation), and material typology (e.g. coursebooks, textbooks, bilingual or multilingual dictionaries). It is to be noted that the vast majority of didactic materials pertaining to the corpus under scrutiny display an impressive array of interests, ranging from field-related receptive and productive skill acquisition (reading comprehension and “guided” writing) and use of English (grammar-oriented), to the translation of pragmatic excerpts and the inclusion of specialised glossaries.

The final chapter (IV) comprises essential details with regard to the key terminographic contributions made by academic staff formerly or currently working at DJUG. The presentation references multilingual (e.g. “A Multilingual Dictionary of Food Industry – in Romanian, English, Russian, German and French”) and bilingual (e.g. “An English-Romanian Dictionary of Economic Terms”, “English-Romanian Dictionary for Mechanical Engineering”) dictionaries aimed at helping field specialists, translators of pragmatic textual typologies and genres (technical and scientific), and academic staff conducting ESP-oriented classes. In addition to the ESP teaching process addressing non-philological faculties, this chapter also illustrates the peculiarities of such endeavour when the target trainees are students majoring in English Language and Literature. Further instrumental references such as “A Reader of Translation Texts” (Merilă, 2020: 227) are provided in order to support the complementary ESP direction (philological and non-philological) followed by DJUG researchers.

Considering the year it effectively came out (2020), *Romanian Contributions to English for Specific Purposes* provides a comprehensive overview both of the background the ESP phenomenon emerged and developed in and of the accelerating trends following the overthrow of the communist regime in Romania. The research directions undertaken could therefore be of major interest to philological and non-philological students and graduates alike, academic staff keen on conducting ESP-oriented classes, translators and interpreters (particularly given the terminographic work referenced).

References

1. Hutchinson T. & A. Waters, *English for Specific Purposes. A learning-centred approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
2. Merilă, I. (ed), *Romanian Contributions to English for Specific Purposes*. Mauritius: LAP Lambert Academic Publishing, 2020.