

Foreword by John M. Swales

Thirty years ago I was asked to give a paper on ESP at a small, invitational conference held at the University of London to celebrate the first half-century of The British Council. Those invited to speak were requested “to take a bold stand with regard to future developments.” The eventual title of my paper was “ESP: The Heart of the Matter or the End of the Affair.” As readers may recognize, this title invokes two famous novels by Graham Greene, partly because Greene’s published career began at about the same time as the founding of the council. As for that “bold stand,” I put forward two main proposals. The first was that English for Academic Purposes (EAP) should move beyond its traditional focus on service courses for undergraduates (with a concomitant attention to genres such as textbooks, lectures and lab reports) and become more involved in graduate education and research English. This, I argued, would provide both a reinvigorating challenge and also help to raise the status of EAP units within their university settings. Second, I suggested that a narrow focus on texts—on attention to purely textual matter—should be widened to include more study on the processes by means of which those texts are conceived, generated, and negotiated. In effect, a plea for case studies of an ethnographical character. This second proposal led me to conclude:

As for my title and its original disjunctive question, readers who have followed me so far will recognize that what I should have written was: ESP—The End of the Matter but the Heart of the Affair.

I have not mentioned this 1985 paper in order to revive the embers of a moribund fire—it appears to have received a single citation in the last six years! Rather, it serves to show that the first of my suggestions has been validated and widely implemented by later developments, while the second has been only partly so. Although there have been important contributions to our understanding of how graduate students and junior researchers become acculturated into their disciplinary matrices by the likes of Christine Pearson Casanave, John Flowerdew, Roz Ivanič, Theresa Lillis, Paul Prior, and Christine Tardy, there is still a perception in some quarters that EAP remains “too textual” in its orientation, particularly with regard to published articles (Lillis & Scott, 2007). Further, most of these studies have targeted, in diverse ways, success and failure in academic writing.

In her new book entitled *Before the Dissertation*, Christine Pearson Casanave explores a rather different set of educational circumstances and does so by deliberately shifting the emphasis away from writing to thinking, reading, and feeling. The book is designed for doctoral students as they attempt to transition from taking courses to beginning to conduct independent research. This can indeed be a perilous time that tends to involve different cognitive, emotional and interpersonal demands and pressures from those of coursework; indeed, according to the available studies, as many as 40-50 percent of entering doctoral students fail to finish—a statistic that universities do not typically shout from the rooftops. The primary audience consists of students in the social sciences, broadly conceived to include education and intercultural studies, and wears its scholarship lightly (despite an impressive bibliography). The style is personal, uncluttered, and informal; as a result, the book is highly readable.

Before the Dissertation consists of an introduction followed by nine chapters. All these chapters start with a myth, such as “Theory plays an essential and elevated role in doctoral work,”

which is then deconstructed, followed by various kinds of advice and suggestion much enlivened by rich case study extracts. Some of these stories recount episodes from Dr. Casanave's own experiences as a doctoral student, but most are drawn from her own graduate students and from published narratives. Although the volume will prove very useful for all doctoral students in their early and middle years in social science programs, students who have English as an additional language and/or who have earned their first degrees outside the United States may perhaps benefit the most. For a single example, Chapter 7, "Finding Advisers-Supervisors and Mentors," addresses many of the misunderstandings that can arise between the parties, including those that occur because international students are not always as proactive as they might be. While my own experience as an adviser certainly contains instances of international students who over-relied on being told what to do, I vividly remember one exception. After our meetings, a student from South Asia always used to write me a memo outlining what we had agreed needed to be done, but also including a section stating what *she did not need to do*. Later, if I suggested she that might look at something else, she would produce the relevant memo and say "Look, you said I needn't do this." She got her PhD in under five years and is now Dean of Graduate Studies at a leading private university in her home country.

Although the volume will help many students avoid becoming isolated from their departments or alienated from their programs, it will also be valuable for advisers as well. Out of many instances of things that I have insufficiently thought about was this one: "I know I have learned a great deal from my own doctoral students, but I fear I have not let them know often enough how much they have taught me" (p. 109). So, for all these reasons, I am sure that *Before the Dissertation* will and should be widely adopted.

References

Lillis, T., & Scott, M. (2007). Defining academic literacies research: Issues of epistemology, ideology and strategy. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 4, 5–32.

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