

Exploring Reading English for Specific Purposes (ESP) via Communities of Practice

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This study aims to explore reading English for Specific Purposes (ESP). It was guided by (1) Lave and Wenger's (1991) Communities of Practice (COP), and (2) Wenger's (1998) conceptualization of non-participation and boundary. Six experienced Taiwanese adult ESP readers were invited to be interviewed on the basis of on narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). During the interviews, the informants were asked to provide metaphors about their initial and recent ESP reading experiences. Ellis's (2001) metaphor analysis was adopted to understand (1) whether ESP readers' metaphorical usage varies along their long-term professional development, and (2) what the significance of the changes is, if there are any. The results indicated that the ESP readers' metaphors about their early ESP reading experiences and those about the latest ones were remarkably different. While their recent experiences demonstrated full participation, their beginning ESP reading revolves around struggles resulting from boundary crossing. The findings verified the variation of ESP readers' metaphorical usage along their professional development. As for the significance of the changes, three themes emerge: (1) The boundary is a critical site/stage for beginning ESP readers; (2) ESP reading is a social process of becoming, in which investment plays an important role; and (3) full participation of ESP reading manifests the features of familiarity, harmony, and agency. The results inform us of a social view of ESP reading.