AN EVALUATION OF ESP/EFL/ESL RESEARCH (1980-89)
BASED ON INVESTIGATING SOME COMPLETE MASTERS/DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS/THESIS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE JORDANIAN SITUATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in the Teaching of English for Special Purposes

TO

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By

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November, 1990
ABSTRACT

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NOVEMBER 1990
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English has become the language which is almost indispensable for education, business, medicine, communication among foreigners, etc. It has secured for itself the top position among the world's eight most important international languages, namely: English, Chinese, Spanish, Russian, French, Arabic, Portuguese and German. Today English is used by about two billion speakers.

In Jordan, Arabic is the official language. However, English is the only official foreign language that is taught as a compulsory subject from the fifth grade and up to the end of high school. It is also an important subject at colleges and universities.

However, Jordanian teachers, researchers and educators have, time and again, expressed their profound dissatisfaction with Jordanian students' poor performance in English, at all levels, namely, schools, community colleges, universities and even at English departments at universities and colleges.

In an attempt to contribute to the solution of this problem, Jordanian ESP/EFL/ESL researchers have written, in the 1980s only, about 901 dissertations covering at least 25 topics which fell within the range of the current trends and issues in our field. However, it seems that there have been no attempts to stop for some time so as to look back to investigate the theses/dissertations produced by our researchers.

The purpose of this study was to make an attempt to investigate this important, but apparently neglected area in ESP/EFL/ESL programme research. In other words, this study aimed at investigating one aspect of the ESP/EFL/ESL/ programmes, namely, the thesis/dissertation.
To achieve this purpose, four research questions were formulated as follows:

1. What topic areas of Jordanian ESP/EFL/ESL dissertations/theses are: over researched, satisfactorily researched, over researched or need more research?
2. How can the findings from answering the first question be compared to/contrasted with the findings obtained from investigating another related area, i.e., the area of ESP/EFL/ESL journal article topics?
3. Where does our field of study, the ESP, fit in this kind of research?
4. How, in the final analysis, can this research serve the teaching/learning process in the classroom?

Concerning these questions, an attempt was made to answer them as follows: Data were collected from different sources by using different research instruments. Data were obtained by using a comprehensive questionnaire prepared especially for this study. Two corpora were collected from English Language journal articles and dissertation materials. From these two corpora, data necessary for this study, were obtained and handled by using some research instruments. A major instrument used for this purpose was 'the outline' for dissertation/article topic categorization. Another instrument was 'the scale' also used for categorizing dissertation/article topics. All the necessary measures for validating and piloting the instruments, were taken.

As for the major findings obtained from analysing this study's data, they were as follows: it seems that Jordanian researchers have avoided certain important research areas perhaps because they considered them difficult. Some of these avoided areas are: 'course and syllabus design', 'materials analysis and production', and 'testing'. Another finding is related to ESP. It has been found that ESP is a new development in Jordan. ESP has been introduced, at least at the university level, in the early 1980s. Many of the questionnaire's respondents believed that the introduction of ESP courses into the Jordanian teaching/learning process was 'a necessity'. Another finding is related to answering the fourth research question. It has been found as I have mentioned above, that Jordanian researchers have done their share to contribute to the solution of the problem related to our students' poor performance in English classrooms. Jordanians have written at least (90) dissertations covering (24) topics which fall within the range of the topics produced by an international English language journal, namely, the TESOL Quarterly.

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Finally, this researcher recommends that necessary measures should be taken by concerned departments and people as follows: This researcher feels that there is an urgent need for a national policy that can provide our researchers with better guidance and that can also introduce better means and ways to make a better use of the research produced. Also, it is recommended that concerned departments should encourage researchers to write on these important areas which are avoided by our researchers. It is also recommended that Jordan should explore ways and means that can enable us to make a better use of ESP and content-based syllabuses which teach language and subject matter together. And last but not the least, Jordanian concerned departments should try to bridge the gap found between our classrooms and the research produced for these classrooms. In other words, necessary measures should be taken, to see to it, that the research produced is made use of and benefited from.