

# RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT WITHIN ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES STUDIES

**Jelena Zaščerinska**  
**Riga Teacher Training and Educational Management Academy**  
Imantas 7. līnija 1, Rīga, LV-1083  
e-mail: [yelenazascerinska@hotmail.com](mailto:yelenazascerinska@hotmail.com)  
telephone number: +371 29435142

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**Abstract.** *In order to become “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion” the European Union realizes its people as the most important asset. Moreover, every human becomes a value for the whole society. It makes significant to take into consideration one of the principal elements recommended by the Commission Memorandum for a coherent strategy in order to succeed that is to allow people to acquire or refresh the skills needed for sustained participation in the knowledge-based society. The greatest importance of the continuing professional learning that is a kind of research process is the use of 3-5 languages, with at least 2-3 on the level of native/first language in order to form varied cooperative networks for the creation of new knowledge. Thus, the novelty of the present study is in a new outlook on English for Academic Purposes studies as an integral part of professional learning.*

**Keywords:** *research; English for Academic Purposes studies*

### **1. Introduction**

The concern of the European Union is to become “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion” (European Commission, 2004, p. 2).

In order to achieve this ambitious aim people are realized as its most important asset (Commission Memorandum, 2000, p. 1). Moreover, every human becomes a value for the whole society in Europe (Maslo I., 2006, p. 15).

It makes significant to take into consideration one of the principal elements recommended by the Commission Memorandum (Commission Memorandum, 2000, p. 1) for a coherent strategy in order to succeed that is to allow people to acquire or refresh the skills needed for sustained participation in the knowledge-based society.

Also, European Commission (2004, p. 1) underlines that continuing professional learning that is a kind of research process (Maslo E., 2007, p. 41) provides the cornerstone for the development of a high quality knowledge-based economy.

In accordance with the findings of I. Maslo (Maslo I., 2006, p. 16), for the development of humans, institutions, society and mankind, of the greatest importance are:

- independent and responsible, original in terms of viewpoints and opinions, general view of life and action;
- the use of 3-5 languages, with at least 2-3 on the level of native/first language in order to form varied cooperative networks for the creation of new knowledge.

The tertiary level of education where English for Academic Purposes is an innovative activity (Ilyinska, 2004, p. 18) that is a key sector of the knowledge-based economy and society and is at the heart of the “knowledge triangle“ of education, innovation and research (European Commission, 2006, p.7) is important for enabling new specialists to act in a multilingual environment (Druviete, 2007, p. 12).

## **2. Aim of the study**

To offer a definition of English for Academic Purposes studies on the prevailing pedagogical discourse.

## **3. Materials and methods**

The search for a definition of English for Academic Purposes studies involves a process of analyzing the meaning of key concepts *research*, *English for Academic Purposes in English Language Teaching/Learning*, *English for Academic Purposes Studies*. Moreover, the study demonstrates how the key concepts are related to the idea of *professional development*. The study would show a potential model for development indicating how the steps of the process are related following a logical chain: professional learning as a potential for professional development → foreign language learning → English language learning → English for Academic Purposes studying → content and language integrated studying.

## **4. Research within Foreign Language Learning**

Research is an integral part of professional development and academic university education.

According to Karapetjana (Karapetjana, 2001, p. 279), doing research is to seek out facts and opinions; to identify, locate, and read relevant literature; to hypothesise; to gather data, to interpret and to analyse gathered data for the purpose of answering a question, solving a problem.

Researchers (Wright, 1998, p. 2; Kramina, 2000, p. 40; Karapetjana, 2005, p. 1) outline the key activities of doing research:

- attending lectures, seminars and conferences;
- reading professional journals, books, etc.;
- participating in projects;
- preparing written work (essays, applications, letters, e-mails, reports, papers, etc);
- presenting research papers, etc.

Today the provisions for a European Qualifications Framework, European Research Council, programmes such as Comenius and Erasmus contribute to use English as a learning/teaching language (Druviete, 2007, p. 12-13) within the research activities where English is a foreign language.

Thus, foreign language learning where English for Academic Purposes is an innovative activity (Ilyinska, 2004, p. 18) is an integral part of research.

According to E. Maslo (Maslo E., 2007, p. 38), all learning is part of a single process, an on-going process. This finding suggests that researching and/or foreign language learning are part of a single learning process in professional development.

Thus, foreign language learning is a possibility for doing research.

### **5. Defining Foreign Language Learning**

I. Maslo (Maslo I., 2006, p.16) indicates that experience in the use of 3-5 languages and cooperative skills allows for everyone to become more mobile and to learn from the experience of others altogether with compensation of certain elements of experience which are not typical for his/her own country. It makes every job better and more understandable not only for one country but for the whole wider world.

Realizing the use of 3-5 languages Robbins (Robbins, 2007, p. 52) points out that First Language, Second Language, Third Language, Fourth Language are linked, united in various ways, forming a whole.

The task of the European educational systems is to raise linguistic personalities being able to communicate in foreign languages (to understand, express and interpret thoughts, feelings and facts in both oral and written form in an appropriate range of societal contexts – work, home, leisure, education and training according to one's wants and needs) (European Commission, 2004, p. 10). Communication in foreign languages also calls for skills such as mediation and intercultural understanding. An individual's level of proficiency will vary between the four dimensions (listening, reading, writing, speaking) and between the different languages, and according to that individual's social and cultural background environment, needs and/or interests.

The area of interest of the Foreign Language Pedagogy as the process of foreign language learning determined by E. Maslo (Maslo E., 2007, p.41) is focused not on the neurolinguistic process of language acquisition but on the pedagogical process that promotes any learning.

Moreover, E. Maslo determines that learning and studying are kinds of research process (Maslo E., 2007, p. 41) that is a systematic process of inquiry consisting of three elements:

- a question, problem, or hypothesis;
- data, and analysis;
- interpretation of data (Nunan, 1992, p. 3).

It puts the emphasis on research within foreign language learning as potential for professional development.

### **6. English for Academic Purposes in English Language Teaching/Learning**

First it is necessary to establish how English for Academic Purposes relates to English Language Teaching/Learning. Hutchinson and Waters (Hutchinson and Waters, 1994, p. 16-18) represent it in the form of a tree: the tree of English Language Teaching/Learning is nourished by its roots which are learning and communication. As we go up the tree, we can see three branches of English Language Teaching/Learning. One of them is called English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It is divided into two branches:

- General English (GE) and
- English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

Thus, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a separate branch of English Language Teaching/Learning.

The branch of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has three branches, too. This division depends on the purpose of studying English:

- English for Science and Technology (EST);
- English for Business and Economics (EBE);
- English for Social Science (ESS).

Every of these branches is divided into two: for work and for academic study which have their own branches and show the level that is needed by learners. The field of our concern is English for Academic Purposes.

The classification of English for Specific Purposes offered by Robinson (quoted by Dudley-Evans and John, 1998, p. 6) depends on the experience of students: English for Specific Purposes is divided into two parts:

- English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) and
- English for Academic Purposes (EAP).

According to the experience of the students, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) can be divided into two divisions:

- for study in a specific discipline and
- as a school subject.

English for Academic Purposes for study in a specific discipline is presented as

- pre-study;
- in-study;
- post-study.

English for Academic Purposes as a school subject is independent and/or integrated.

There is one more classification by professional area (quoted by Dudley-Evans and John, 1998, p. 6): English for Specific Purposes is divided into

- English for Academic Purposes and
- English for Occupational Purposes.

English for Academic Purposes has four divisions according to the field of study:

- English for (Academic) Science and Technology;
- English for (Academic) Medical Purposes;
- English for (Academic) Legal Purposes;
- English for Management, Finance and Economics.

Thus, English for Academic Purposes is a branch of English for Specific Purposes in English language learning.

## **7. Defining English for Specific Purposes**

The study of languages for specific purposes has had a long and interesting story going back as far as Roman and Greek Empires. Although, English for Specific Purposes has just become an important and innovative activity within the English language teaching over the last 40 years (Ilyinska, 2004, p. 18).

Dudley-Evans and John (Dudley-Evans and John, 1998, p. 3) use absolute and variable characteristics defining English for Specific Purposes. Their definition is:

Absolute characteristics:

- English for Specific Purposes is designed to meet specific needs of the learner;
- English for Specific Purposes makes use of the underlying methodology and activities of the disciplines it serves;
- English for Specific Purposes is centred on the language (grammar, lexis, register), skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities.

Variable characteristics:

- English for Specific Purposes may be related to or designed for specific disciplines;
- English for Specific Purposes may use, in specific teaching situations, a different methodology from that of general English;
- English for Specific Purposes is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation. It could, however, be used for learners at secondary school level;
- English for Specific Purposes is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students. Most ESP courses assume basic knowledge of the language system, but it can be used with beginners.

Thus, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) are the branches of one tree, they are nourished by the same roots: learning and communication. Therefore English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) have both similarities and differences.

### 8. Defining English for Academic Purposes

Study skills were coming increasingly to the fore in the 1970s in practice material for students of English.

The first recorded use of the term “*English for Academic Purposes*” appears to be in 1974 (Johns, T. E., 1981) in order to describe the need of English students in study skills; by 1975 it was in more general use.

A provisional, rather general, working definition of English for Academic Purposes is that “English for Academic Purposes is concerned with those communication skills in English which are required for study purposes in formal education systems” (ETIC 1975 by Jordan, 1997, p. 1).

English for Academic Purposes in Latvia relates to Level 7 among 8 educational stages of the European Qualification Framework (Martyniuk, 2006, p. 16). Level 7 is defined by a set of descriptors indicating the learning outcomes relevant to qualifications at that level in any system of qualification (European Qualification Framework, 2006, p. 19):

- **knowledge:** highly specialized knowledge, some of which is at the forefront of knowledge in a field of work or study, as the basis for original thinking; critical awareness of knowledge issues in a field and at the interface between different fields;
- **skills:** specialized problem-solving skills required in research and/or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields;
- **competence:** manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches; take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams.

According to Coffey (quoted by Jordan, 1997, p.4), English for Academic Purposes has two divisions: common core or subject –specific.

These two divisions have been described by Blue (quoted by Jordan, 1997, p. 4) as *English for General Academic Purposes* (EGAP) and *English for Specific Academic Purposes* (ESAP).

Regarding a possible conflict of interests between English for General Academic Purposes and English for Specific Academic Purposes, Johns' observation (quoted by Jordan, 1997, p. 249) is relevant: the difference between the skills and conventions needed in the academia may be greater than similarities; for discipline, audience and context significantly influence the language required. Students must therefore readjust somewhat to each academic discipline they encounter.

A large proportion of the common core element is more usually known as "study skills", e. g. listening and note-taking (Jordan, 1997, p. 4). When the development of student's study skills to an appropriate level for the subject(s) to be studied is achieved, he/she then has to "learn the academic code" that involves a number of elements, depending on the level of education being pursued, i. e. undergraduate, post-graduate, research (Jordan, 1997, p. 6). Learning the academic code may include adapting to a new academic system, within a different cultural environment, which has its own conventions; observing the nature of the relationship between academic staff and students, and among students themselves. In turn, these relationships involve attitudes and expectations, some of which are expressed through language (Jordan, 1997:6).

Also, the point is crucial that more than often academic activities bear a research character and thus the use of English for academic purposes cannot be strictly separated from the use of English for research purposes (Kramina, 2000, p. 40).

Subject-specific English is the language needed for a particular academic subject, e.g. economics, together with its disciplinary culture. It includes the language structure, vocabulary, the particular skills needed for the subject, and the appropriate academic conventions (Jordan, 1997, p.4-5).

Jordan (Jordan, 1997, p.249-250) tries to find out what distinguishes one discipline from another: the subject content; rhetorical organization; the underlying conceptual approach to the subject. This is part of the difference that is expressed through the disciplinary culture, of which specific expectations and conventions are an integral part.

Thus, it is possible to define English for Academic Purposes as follows:

- the subject content and
- language research skills.

### **9. Defining English for Academic Purposes Studies**

Researchers (Robbins, 2007, p. 52; Maslo E., 2007, p. 38) in the field of language learning recognise that all language learning is placed within a single continuum, with varying capacities where foreign language learning and studying are kind of research process (Maslo E., 2006, p. 59; 2007, p. 38-39).

Thus, the definition of English for Academic Purposes such as the subject content and language research skills allows define English for Academic Purposes studies on the prevailing pedagogical discourse as content and research integrated studying.

### **10. Results**

The study presents a potential model for development indicating how the steps of the process are related following a logical chain: research as a potential for professional development → foreign language learning → English language learning → English for Academic Purposes studying → content and research integrated studying.

## 11. Conclusion

English for Academic Purposes studies offer many interesting opportunities for doing a research.

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**Mg. Phil. Jeļena Zaščerinska**  
**Lecturer**  
**Language Department**  
**Riga Teacher Training and Educational Management Academy**  
**Imantas 7. līnija 1**  
**LV-1083 Rīga**  
**Tel.: +371 7808010**  
**e-mail : yelenazascerinska@hotmail.com**