

Languages for Specific Purposes in Higher Education 2017

Oxford University, 8th September 2017

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| 09:30 - 10:00 | Arrival and registrations, tea & coffee | |
| 10:00 - 10:15 | Welcome and introduction | |
| 10:15 - 11:15 | <i>'Bristling Brushstrokes': Using Do-It-Yourself Corpora to teach LSP</i> Dr Maggie Charles | |
| 11:15 - 11:45 | <i>Discussion boards: a constructivist approach and a means of consolidating writing skills for advanced learners of business Russian</i> Olga Helly | <i>Revisiting the foundations of communicative LSP. All quiet on the teaching front?</i> Dr Felicitas Starr-Egger |
| 11:45 - 12:15 | <i>Discussion boards as a teaching and assessment tool in content based language teaching</i> Dr Neil Hughes | <i>Teaching Scientists the Idiom of Their Science—What Do We as Language Experts Need to Know About Engineering, Medicine or Chemistry?</i> Dr Martin G. Kantus |
| 12:15 - 13:15 | Lunch | |
| 13:15 - 14:15 | Workshop: <i>Designing and scoring tasks for LSP assessment</i> Prof. Christian Krekeler | |
| 14:15 - 14:45 | <i>Reflections on LSP for engineers</i> Alexander Bleistein and David Tual | <i>'Cultural Awareness for Specific Purposes' A reaction to international objectives</i> Thomas Smith |
| 14:45 - 15:15 | Tea & coffee | |
| 15:15 - 15:45 | <i>Assessing undergraduates through presentations in ESP</i> Nalan Kenny & Dr Nadezda Stojkovic | <i>The communicative approach in an academic Chinese course</i> Dr Hongfen Zhou |
| 15:45 - 16:30 | <i>Tailoring language courses: flexible syllabus, task chaining, life skills and cognitive processes</i> Dr Alena Hradilová, Dr Kateřina Sedláčková, Jitka Žváčková and Radim Herout | |
| 16:30 | Closing remarks | |

LSPHE 2017 organisation committee:

Tania Batelli-Kneale, University of Oxford
Alexander Bleistein, University of Cambridge
Esmeralda Frances-Martinez, University of Oxford
Benoît Guilbaud, University of Sussex
David Tual, University of Cambridge

Venue:

Green Templeton College
43 Woodstock Rd, Oxford OX2 6HG

ABSTRACTS

Keynote plenary address

'Bristling brushstrokes': Using do-it-yourself corpora to teach LSP

Dr Maggie Charles, Oxford University Language Centre

Corpora (large computer-searchable data-bases of texts) have often been used for materials design and teaching in LSP. In this talk, however, I will focus specifically on the use of do-it-yourself (DIY) corpora, which are corpora compiled by users for their own teaching and learning purposes. I will seek to demystify the process of building a corpus, showing that it is well within the technical competence of LSP teachers and their students. I will further argue that such corpora are likely to be particularly valuable for LSP instruction. Given that users themselves select the texts for inclusion in the corpus, the language available can be precisely targeted to their own needs. The benefits of such DIY corpora will be illustrated by showcasing some of the work carried out on an advanced English for Academic Purposes course, in which students built DIY corpora in their own field. The talk will conclude by presenting student evaluation data on DIY corpus work, which indicate that attitudes to the approach were generally positive.

Plenary workshop

Designing and scoring tasks for LSP assessment

Dr Christian Krekeler, Konstanz University of Applied Sciences, Germany

The workshop deals with teacher-made assessment rather than standardized assessment procedures. We will be investigating two central stages of the testing cycle, test design and the rating process. With regard to test design, I will argue that LSP tasks that are suitable for assessment are different from tasks for teaching purposes. We will work with different formats and discuss their suitability for assessment purposes. The second part of the workshop will deal with the rating process. We will work with different scoring procedures and consider their suitability for LSP assessment. Participants in this introductory workshop to LSP assessment will be given an opportunity to contribute their ideas and share their experiences. It is aimed at both colleagues with little background in language testing and those with more experience.

Closing plenary session

Tailoring language courses: flexible syllabus, task chaining, life skills and cognitive processes

Dr Alena Hradilová, Dr Kateřina, Sedláčková, Jitka Žváčková and Radim Herout, Masaryk University Language Centre, Brno, Czech Republic

The talk describes the journey of teachers who decided to abandon the traditional topic based syllabus to focus on life skills. We crossed the border between pedagogy and andragogy and moved from atomized language skills practice to task chaining. We will share such examples from courses of Legal English, and our experience with a Spanish course on current social and political issues and its flexible syllabus development, with various stakeholders' objectives in mind. We will analyze activities from courses of Legal French, based on navigation in an online database of legal texts and legislation, and link them to cognitive processes necessary for legal practitioners. We will discuss approaches to enhancing students' critical thinking and media literacy based on text analysis from courses of German for academic purposes. Finally, we will illustrate how students perceive the variety of teaching methods and types of learning, and how students' complaints on mixed ability classes miraculously disappeared.

Parallel sessions

Paper session 1 (11:15 - 11:45)

Discussion boards: a constructivist approach and a means of consolidating writing skills for advanced learners of business Russian

Olga Helly, Regent's University London

My paper will address the ways in which Discussion Boards can improve writing skills and encourage autonomous learning. I will also examine the intended outcomes for advanced level language modules and analyse the gap between these outcomes and the students' actual achievements, suggesting possible reasons for underperformance.

Drawing on my experience of using Discussion Boards in teaching Russian at advanced level at Regent's University London, I intend to explore issues around their use and propose ways to make this tool more effective in a mixed class environment. I will present concrete examples of the Discussion Boards created by my students, analyse students' attitudes toward this VLE tool and address the question as to why Discussion Boards sometimes fail to produce the desired result. I will, therefore, conclude my paper by addressing this problem and suggesting ways of raising the students' interest in this highly beneficial online activity.

Revisiting the foundations of communicative LSP. All quiet on the teaching front?

Dr Felicitas Starr-Egger, Imperial College London

This paper reflects on the interaction between the theoretical background of communicative LSP and the reality of implementing this in the classroom today. Following a very brief summary and discussion of definitions and concepts (including Douglas 2000, Weir 1990, Bachman and Palmer 1996), the paper then takes a critical look at a range of examples from several UK universities. This will involve a selection of languages, courses, levels, specialisms and will attempt to map theory on to practice with a view to assessing the current situation. Along the way, it investigates the question of the role and place of LSP within the modern higher education environment.

Paper session 2 (11:45 - 12:15)

Discussion boards as a teaching and assessment tool in content based language teaching

Dr Neil Hughes, University of Nottingham

For several years now there has been a significant buzz about the learning benefits of asynchronous discussion tools in language learning contexts. Whilst many, not least Warschauer (1996), have pointed to the positive impact on language skills, Zeiss and Isabelli (2005) highlight the role they can play in enhancing cultural knowledge and understanding. Despite these impressive claims, academics motivated to experiment with discussion boards in language learning point to disappointing results characterised by infrequent student participation and engagement.

This presentation will explore ways of avoiding these pitfalls and reaping the benefits of this valuable learning tool in LSPHE contexts by:

- Integrating discussion boards into their module assessment diets on the grounds that students will be better motivated to participate if their efforts contribute to their final module grade.
- Providing students with clear criteria, including both qualitative and quantitative performance measures, against which the quality of their work is assessed.
- Including as part of the syllabus, a writing workshop on the craft of discussion board writing.
- Providing students with exemplars of best practice.

- Offering opportunities for feedback on draft discussion board contributions outside the classroom.

The paper will provide concrete examples of how these issues are addressed in a module entitled Business and Society in Spain. This module, which is delivered and assessed in Spanish, is offered to final year students studying Spanish at the University of Nottingham.

Teaching Scientists the Idiom of Their Science—What Do We as Language Experts Need to Know About Engineering, Medicine or Chemistry?

Dr Martin G. Kantus, Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich

The LSP instructor's role is based on his/her expertise of the language, while participants are experts of the scientific discipline. This constellation seems to be conducive to a symbiotic interchange between learners and the (SP) Language teacher. Data from a research project on the formation of subject-specific formulaic language (including, but not confined to, terminology) will be transferred into suggestions for a task-based LSP lesson. The idea is to describe how the subject-related idiom of a scientific/academic discipline is formed in communication between scientists/academics and how this is reflected in (task-based) LSP class activities.

Paper session 3 (14:15 - 14:45)

Reflections on LSP for engineers

Alexander Bleistein and David Tual, University of Cambridge

The Language Unit hosted by the Department of Engineering at Cambridge University focuses on language courses aimed at future engineers as well as students from other STEM disciplines. After briefly presenting the current provision of its Language Programme for Engineers (LPE), we will share the results of a recent survey carried out amongst our students, looking into their motivation for learning a foreign language. We will then share some reflections stemming from our interpretation of these results and from other work carried out alongside a network of engineering schools across Europe. We will specifically look into some of the challenges attached to such a specific provision, both from a pedagogical and practical point of view. We will conclude by presenting some ideas to be explored in the near future in order to better prepare our students to become “global engineers”.

‘Cultural Awareness for Specific Purposes’ A reaction to international objectives

Thomas Smith, Queen’s University Belfast

At Queen’s University Belfast there are a number of ways in which the Language Centre is charged with ‘internationalising’ the University offer to students and facilitating the development of an increasingly global skillset in order to support the development of graduates that can thrive and compete internationally.

There are many established ways in which this is achieved; The provision of Language for non-specialists training in over 20 languages at a range of levels, facilitating language modules within degree course pathways and, more recently, the provision of discipline specific cultural awareness training to students.

In this session, I would like to discuss the idea of a field of ‘Cultural Awareness for Specific Purposes.’ I would also like to look at examples of how such training has been developed at QUB for students, specifically in the fields of Engineering, Medicine, Nursing and Midwifery and Psychology.

Key issues that I intend to address include:

- How and why is this need growing and how do we support, inform and guide this growth in HEIs?
- Diversifying the offer of Cultural Awareness training in Higher Education
- How does the ‘SP’ element inform the content of a Cultural Awareness session?

- The role of Cultural Awareness in the Curriculum – recognising its impact whilst maintain an understanding of this which is flexible enough to be fit for purpose
- Looking forward:
 - o Facilitating growth and diversification of CA offer
 - o Potential Steps towards standardising content?
 - o Accreditation – approaches to content development and assessment

The goal of CA training is to promote and encourage curiosity in students, enabling them to perceive cultural difference more objectively and therefore engage more effectively with an increasingly culturally diverse society, as well as upskilling graduates to more effectively penetrate an increasingly global jobs market. In addition to sharing details of QUB progress in this field, I also hope to facilitate a discussion in which ideas and experience can be shared and considered by delegates and colleagues at this year's conference.

Paper session 4 (15:15 - 15:45)

Assessing undergraduates through presentations in ESP

Nalan Kenny EAL Teacher, King's Leadership Academy, and PhD candidate, Sofia University, Serbia & Dr Nadezda Stojkovic, Associate Professor, University of Nis, Serbia

Assessment in English for Specific Purposes is different from other language assessment. Firstly, it is taken by graduates who need English for Specific Purposes as they study English towards for their field. Although assessment is summarised as summative and formative, there are many methods such as preparing portfolio, projects, quizzes and so on. This paper focuses on assessment through presentations of graduates from the faculty of Electronic Engineering at Nis University. Graduates have ESP lessons with their core subjects and have been assessed their communication skills through presentations.

Douglas (2010) states that assessment in ESP is needed as in other language assessment. But How effective are presentations to assess the language proficiency of graduates?

The crucial difference between General English and ESP assessment is that the latter is dependent on subject terminology and grammar structure accordingly. Therefore, should ESP teacher assess the content? I believe it depends on teacher's prior knowledge. However, it can be done by co-operating with content teacher.

Assessments are done to find out the progress of learners or issues in learning and teaching methods. Harrison and McCann (1994) state that assessment should be done constructively, focusing on achievement not failure.

The communicative approach in an academic Chinese course

Dr Hongfen Zhou, King's College London

Communicative approach in language teaching has been brought under focus by many linguistics and researchers, and it has been widely used in English language teaching since 1980. However, this approach has not adequately addressed in Chinese language teaching for foreigners, and there is little discussion about this approach on specific purpose Chinese language course.

This paper is aiming to analyse the effect of communicative approach in Chinese language teaching based on the case study of an academic Chinese course. This paper will explain the effects of communication approach on this specific purpose Chinese language course and will analyse what academic skills have been gained by students, and to what extent the communicative approach helped students' language learning. To help understand the effect of the communicative approach on students' language skills, the interview, and qualitative research method will be used in this project.

The work presented in this paper should be of value to researchers on the communicative approach in language teaching and to researchers on the specific purpose language course.