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## ESP/EMP: ARE STUDENTS PREPARED FOR IT?

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**Abstract.** *ESP is considered the best choice in tertiary education context as it meets the students' needs and consequently boosts motivation. However, the results of needs analysis applied while designing the course and the students' awareness of their needs when using the language in professional communication may differ. The survey of 1<sup>st</sup> year students conducted at Sechenov University (Moscow, Russia) between 2014 and 2019 revealed only partial awareness of the needs. The possible solution may be either creating 'first-hand' experience (students' exposure to the situations where they have to use respective ESP skills), or 'second-hand' experience (students' exposure to communication with professionals in their prospective sphere of employment who are regularly using ESP skills).*

**Key words:** *medical education, professional communication, ESP, motivation*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Students' motivation as a factor of successful second language acquisition is receiving perpetual attention worldwide. Inspired by Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert, who developed basic classification of motives for second language learning back in 1959, motivation research in the perspective of SLA has extended to English for Specific Purposes. Researchers look at a variety of aspects of motivation, some theoretical, some more practically oriented, such as motivational evolution (Dörnyei 2005), specificity of academic content and motivation (Dudley-Evans, St. John 1998), motivation and learning environment (Bier 2013, Lavinal, Décuré, Blois 2006), students' emotions during the lesson (Waninge 2015), students' orientations and incentives while taking an ESP course (Katsara 2008), motivational aspect of methodology (Viana 2014), insufficient motivation (Houbad 2016), etc.

The authors generally agree that students' motivation while doing an ESP course is mostly extrinsic, in R. Gardner's terms, or instrumental, which basically means that they are goal-oriented and see foreign language skills as a useful tool to perform extra-linguistic tasks ranging from getting a better-paid job to going abroad to learn, to tourism surprisingly (Katsara 2008). ESP course is beneficial both for the students, as unnecessary parts are not included into the course, and for the university, as it adds efficiency to teaching and learning and makes the course cost-effective.

However, the aspect that stays beyond consideration is how aware the students are of their own needs. It comes to the forefront when the students are relatively young, have no

experience in the specialist area they have chosen, have an EGP background and have to quickly switch to ESP. The discrepancy between their expectations about the course and the real classroom situation may have long-term implications for their interest in the subject.

## 2. SETTING

Sechenov University has a long tradition of educating healthcare specialists in a variety of spheres ranging from General Medicine, Nursing and Stomatology to related spheres, such as Clinical Psychology, Pharmacy, Biotechnology, etc. For any of the degree programmes, Foreign Language is compulsory and forms an integral part of training. It is strictly aimed at professional communication and not bound to any level of reference. Vast majority of students in Russia choose to learn English bearing in mind its undoubtedly leading role in international communication.

Unlike similar programs in European Union universities, learning a foreign language in Russia is an absolute must. In terms of the curriculum, it is an indispensable part of future qualification. In terms of actual needs, it fills the gap left over from secondary education, where the attention to the subject is insufficient. Although Foreign Language is a compulsory subject at school, the exam in it is taken only if required by the university the applicant is joining, i.e. if they apply for a course in Philology or Modern Languages. As a result, first-year students of a medical university make up a group with skills in foreign language ranging from zero to Intermediate.

First introduced as a single 2-year-long module, Foreign Language has developed in time together with the National Curriculum. Until recently, oral communication has not been recognized as a major goal of training and the course was restricted to basic grammar, text comprehension, summarizing, and translating it into Russian. It built on the issues studied in Human Anatomy, Physiology and Pathology – the courses taken in Year 1 and Year 2.

The current version of National Curriculum requires that graduates should be able to communicate orally and in writing in Russian and a foreign language while tackling professional tasks. This requirement has stimulated a rethinking of the syllabus and introduction of a number of elective courses, such as Oral and Written Professional Communication, Professional Competences in Non-Russian-Speaking Environment, Business Communication in Foreign Language and Foreign Language for Academic Purposes, which are to accommodate for the needs inspired by international academic environment: taking an internship abroad, participating in academic events and international research projects, publishing articles in international journals, teaching international students etc.

Thus, the list of “communication formats” taught at Sechenov University includes:

- *communication in academic setting* (listening to a lecture, reading a textbook, note-taking, identifying, understanding and expressing the main idea, supporting details, comparison and contrast, stance, arguments, references, cause and effect, applying for participation in a research conference, writing and submitting research articles, reading and summarizing articles in a foreign language,) – 70 per cent of instruction time;
- *clinical communication, which includes: doctor-doctor communication* (participating in clinical and research conferences, understanding and completing hospital charts,



understanding and writing letters of reference, discharge letters, etc.) – 20 per cent of instruction time; *doctor-patient communication* (taking a history, examining the patient, discussing diagnosis, explaining investigations, treatment, effects of medication, etc.) – 10 per cent of instruction time.

Time allocation is based on the probability of the graduates' future involvement in retrieving (most probable) or sharing (less probable) professionally relevant information from foreign language sources or providing care for non-Russian-speaking patients (the least probable). The probability was drawn from the results of an anonymous survey of 348 respondents (faculty members, medical practitioners at university and municipal hospitals, dispensaries and out-patient clinics, pharmacists based at community or hospital pharmacies and pharmaceutical companies) performed in 2011-2012 as part of needs analysis for a new ESP/ EMP course for graduates (Марковина, Ширинян 2012). In the survey, 47 per cent of respondents admitted the need for a foreign language to read professional publications, 20 per cent – to take part in academic conferences, and 11 per cent – to go on a short-term assignment abroad.

### 3. AIM

The logical chain adopted from numerous works on motivation seems to lack an important final link overlooked in the majority of cases - that *the students know what exactly they need*. Without this awareness, needs analysis, however carefully performed it might be, does not serve the purpose of motivation.

**ESP is motivating because of its relevance for the students**



**It is relevant for the students because it is based on students' needs,**

Therefore, the aim of this study is to reveal students' awareness of professionally relevant goals at the beginning of an ESP course.

### 4. MATERIALS AND METHODS

To obtain the data required, we developed a questionnaire for the students of Year 1 of Sechenov University, which, alongside with the questions about age, gender, and the degree programme they were taking, included the questions "Why did you decide to join Sechenov University?" and "How do you see the role of the English language in your professional career?" We surveyed the students enrolled for General Medicine, Stomatology, Pharmacy, Paediatrics, and Clinical Psychology programmes. The students were asked to complete the questionnaire in their first class of the English language. The questionnaires were completed in Russian (the students' mother tongue). Between 2014 and 2019, 1561 completed questionnaires were returned. We grouped them according to the leading reason for joining Sechenov University verbalized by the students surveyed. The descriptions of the role of the English language in the professional career offered by the students were analyzed using content analysis method.

## 5. RESULTS

We grouped the students into 5 categories according to the reason for entering Sechenov University they stated in the questionnaire:

**‘Altruists’** – 561 (36 per cent) – wrote that they chose career in medicine, psychology or pharmacy “to help people/sick children/patients”.

**‘Enthusiasts’** – 493 (31 per cent) – named a particular field of study (cardiology, oncology, radiography, etc.) or a sphere of application (I want to open a pharmacy/to produce new-generation prostheses).

**‘Dreamers’** – 251 (16 per cent) – answered that being a doctor was “the dream of their childhood”.

**‘Professionally oriented’** – 168 (11 per cent) – admitted following a family tradition or continuing professional development (had already worked as nurses).

**‘Fatalists’** – 88 (6 per cent) – answered that they “had been led here by God/fate/life trajectory”.

The students surveyed named the following six goals of learning the English language. In general, they focus on:

- immediate communication (communicating with foreign colleagues, communicating with foreign patients and communicating with foreign citizens) – here the students write “I need the English language to talk to...” and name the counterpart. In goals focusing on participation, education and employment communication is only implied or indirect, i.e. ‘reading’ is communication but it is mediated; ‘sharing knowledge’ is definitely communication, but its form and the counterpart are not specified;
- participation (participating in conferences, sharing practices);
- education (taking an internship, reading publications, getting education, learning abroad, sharing knowledge, improving the quality of knowledge, acquainting with foreign equipment);
- employment (getting a job abroad);
- personal development (self-improvement, having new opportunities, widening one’s horizons) .

These goals are unevenly distributed among the groups (Table 1).

**Table 1** Distribution of stated goals among student groups

Goals stated in questionnaires	Altruists	Enthusiasts	Dreamers	Professionally oriented	Fatalists
communicating with foreign colleagues	+				
communicating with foreign patients				+	
communicating with foreign citizens			+		
taking an internship		+		+	
participating in conferences		+		+	
reading publications	+			+	
sharing practices	+	+			
getting a job abroad	+	+			
getting education	+				
learning abroad			+	+	
sharing knowledge			+		
improving quality of knowledge			+		
acquainting with foreign equipment				+	
self-improvement					+
having new opportunities					+
widening one's horizons	+				

As we can see from the table, when asked about the role of a foreign language in their career, **altruists** specify that it is necessary “to get a job abroad”, “to communicate with foreign colleagues”, “to read publications”, “to share practices”, “to widen one’s horizons”, “to get education”.

**Enthusiasts** mention “getting a job abroad”, “taking an internship”, “taking part in conferences” and “sharing practices”. In this group, in contrast to the altruists, there are also stand-alone answers like “every educated person has to master a foreign language”.

**Dreamers** see the goal of learning a foreign language at the university as “learning abroad”, “sharing knowledge”, “improving the quality of knowledge”, “communicating with foreign citizens”.

**Professionally oriented ones** state that learning a foreign language will help them “read medical publications”, “go abroad to learn”, “take an internship abroad”, “take part in conferences”, “talk to non-Russian-speaking patients”, “acquaint themselves with equipment produced outside Russia”.

**Fatalists** name “self-improvement” as the main goal of learning a foreign language and hope “it will give new opportunities” without specifying which ones.

## 6. DISCUSSION

### 6.1. Is language really a means of communication?

The phrase ‘language is a means of communication’ has become a truism of Linguistics. However, its habitual character does not downgrade the truth of it. The ultimate goal of learning a language is using it in communication. From this viewpoint we looked at the ways in which communication is mentioned in the students’ answers and who they refer to as their probable counterparts. Here, we did not take into account such answers as “get a job abroad”, “take an internship abroad”, “go abroad to learn,” as they are related to communication in an indirect way: to become a candidate for University sponsorship the student needs a certificate rather than skills.

**Altruists** name three spheres of communication: communicate with foreign colleagues, read publications and share practices.

**Enthusiasts** – take part in conferences, and share practices.

**Dreamers** – share knowledge, communicate with foreign citizens.

**Professionally Oriented students** – read publications, take part in conferences, talk to non-Russian-speaking patients, acquaint themselves with equipment produced outside Russia.

**Fatalists** – communication is not mentioned.

As probable counterpart in communication Altruists and Enthusiasts see **colleagues**, Dreamers – foreign **citizens** or **co-eds** (share knowledge) - which does not necessarily imply professional communication, and Professionally Oriented – **patients**.

Thus 94 per cent of students surveyed show awareness of at least one sphere of professional communication they will be involved in. The majority – 78 per cent – are aware of future involvement in communication with colleagues, 16 per cent are aware of involvement in communication in educational settings, but do not mention communication with colleagues, 11 per cent mention doctor-patient communication alongside with communication with colleagues, 6 per cent do not show awareness of formats of professional communication. Furthermore, the same 6 per cent of respondents do not name or even imply communication as the goal of learning the language either. Not a single respondent named all formats of communication. Nor could we find the full list of formats when analyzing the answers through the groups. Professionally oriented students show the best understanding of using foreign language skills in professional setting: their answers are usually longer than in other groups and include no less than 3 items. This may be explained by a better perception of the future sphere of employment due to their educational, professional or family background. This means that they have first- or at least second-hand experience in the professional sphere.

### 6.2. What are you?

Content analysis of the students’ questionnaires gives exciting information of their L2 self image, i.e. learners’ visions “of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming” (Dörnyei, 2009: 11). Seventy eight per cent of the respondents – **altruists**, **enthusiasts** and **professionally oriented** see themselves as future professionals regularly updating their skills through reading, sharing practices, taking internships, familiarization with new technologies and equipment, involved in research, building a business, seeking a job abroad, looking after patients. This is a self image of an adult, independent, career-oriented person. Sixteen per cent of the respondents – **dreamers** – see themselves as people who ‘learn’, gain and share

'knowledge', i.e. they verbalize the self image of a student. Their answers never go beyond this point to what they are going to do after they have completed the course. Learning for the sake of learning can be associated with intrinsic motivation, where knowledge or a particular skill is acquired because the student loves the subject or finds the process of learning exciting. Being in itself a powerful instrument in learning, purely intrinsic motivation is more associated with the attitude of a secondary school student than a career-driven university student. The reference to 'childhood' and 'dream' made by this group when naming the reason why they joined Sechenov University suggests that they may see tertiary education in general as prolonged childhood with its absence of responsibility and the necessity to think about the material aspects of life. Still another L2 self image is evident from the questionnaires of **fatalists** (6 per cent of respondents). The students in this group identify with 'people of culture' with 'broad opportunities', which rather refers to a social group than professional environment. Their motivation may be described as integrative since self-improvement can hardly be considered a professional goal.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Learning a foreign language makes up an indispensable part of education in General Medicine, Pharmacy and related professional spheres. ESP/EMP facilitates students' cognitive skills necessary to familiarize with and utilize professionally relevant information, provides for self-education, participation in research, develops communication and intercultural skills, and improves employment opportunities. Moreover, it is one of the few humanities left on the curriculum in the medical university. Given its importance combined with the limited amount of instruction time, we need the students to stay focused on every single skill and every single portion of the language they are going to learn, which is unavailable without a clear understanding of how and where they are going to use it.

The survey showed that the first-year Russian medical students (Sechenov University taken as an example) are not quite aware of the skills they need to acquire while doing an ESP/EMP course. Twenty two per cent of the students are unaware of their needs in ESP/EMP, 78 per cent of the students show partial awareness of the needs. The best awareness of needs comes from first- or at least second-hand experience in the professional sphere. First-hand experience can be obtained either through workplace learning, which starts when the ESP course is already over and usually does not involve communication with non-Russian-speaking colleagues or patients, or through previous employment in the sphere of healthcare. Second-hand experience means having family or friends employed in healthcare. This is true about only 16 per cent of students surveyed.

With this in mind, the professionally relevant goals of ESP/ EMP course need careful explanation. It can be provided in a number of settings, e.g. introduction of a special module into career education programme in subject-oriented education classes in secondary high school, or an orientation session before the start of the ESP/EMP course at university arranged by language teachers in collaboration with healthcare professionals speaking to emphasize the role of the English language in their career. In a broader context, the study of students' expectations about a language course at university can have implications not only for the practice of teaching, focusing and motivating the group. Their expectations may be culture-specific, specialty-specific, they may change with time, and these aspects need further research that would be inter-university and international.

Search engine results give links to a wealth of ESP information ranging from journal articles, books, research papers, to teacher's resources and online language lessons, but to our knowledge do not reveal a platform for communication aimed at university ESP teachers. Such platform could help resolve organizational issues of international ESP teacher collaboration and could be used not only to inspire and design ESP research but also to facilitate online communication among teachers, sharing best practices and learning from others. It would be also beneficial for university ESP students who would share their experience at using the English language as a *lingua franca* in their professional sphere. There, they could come across 'first-hand experience' which gives a focus to language learning and definitely fosters motivation.

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## PRAGMATIC ASPECTS OF ACADEMIC WRITING IN HEALTH CARE

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**Abstract.** *A clear delineation is obvious to understand specific aspects regarding the use of academic writing in health care. Thus, more pragmatic and less general aspects of academic writing for medical purposes will be taken into account. Due to solid experience in students' education of LSP at medical faculties, we are delighted to share our academic experience primarily with students as well as with our colleagues. The paper will be focused on emphasizing the critical points of structuring medical texts. Namely, it will present the path of text structuring to help readers understand the specific aspects of high relevance for medical authors. Also, it will draw attention to the role of health care practitioners as well as how they should evaluate this aspect in their professional communication. Furthermore, we would like to pay attention to approaching fundamental problems in academic writing in health care.*

**Key words:** *academic writing, health care, pragmatic approach*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The paper is aimed to give an insight into several issues. In the first part, we would like to point out the differences between general and technical language as well as to define the characteristics of formal and informal communication. This brief reference is important to review the basic facts on using a formal style in academic writing to write correctly and appropriately. In the second, that is the core part, we shall be focused on the pragmatic aspects of academic writing, i.e. how to structure a text to help readers understand the specific aspects of high relevance for medical authors and to draw attention to the role of health care practitioners.

Academic writing refers to a style of expression that researchers use to define the research results of any type in their specific areas of expertise. In writing an academic paper, both in pharmacy and other medical areas, we use many written forms, such as scientific papers, scientific articles, data presentations, case studies, abstracts, summaries, etc. They are formulated differently due to their specific purposes, but they include the same logical and structural components. All these various types of written forms must entail a brief introduction, methods used to obtain results, discussion on the case or study results and a logical conclusion. This approach will indispensably lead to a new concept of communication in a more structured formal style that will include a clear focus on the research problem in

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question, i.e. the use of more precise words and phrases focused on the matter of research and technical vocabulary. In academic writing, the use of technical vocabulary is also of substantial importance. General language is defined as a language with thematic variety, and multipurpose usage focused on developing general competences of oral and written communication, while technical language or the language for specific purposes (LSP) is aimed at developing the specific competences of oral and written communication in a professional context. The characteristics of technical language are important both for students and graduate health care practitioners, as the common practice of the English language use for students and health care professionals includes mostly general language used in informal style.

Regarding the characteristics of informal and formal styles in written communication, informal style is certainly more common in casual communication as it includes less rigid style directly addressing those whom we know very well or who are our peers. Due to this fact, it certainly implies less formal sentence constructions, no introductory phrases and less emphasis on grammar, spelling and punctuation.

Formal written communication entails more rigidly structured sentences, more formal tone and more standard language, i.e. more emphasis on grammar and spelling as well as an appropriate style that implies addressing people whom we do not know very well and who are not our peers. The point of formal communication, especially in a written form is not exclusively to send information but to apply the appropriate style of addressing to fulfil the objectives of communication. Formal professional academic communication is more specific compared to the characteristics mentioned above because it additionally includes technical language. Furthermore, scholarly communication in the professional use of health care practitioners is quite specific because it has an interdisciplinary deep pragmatic context that will be discussed concerning technical terms use.

Academic writing for both general and professional purposes includes five steps: prewriting, writing, rewriting, finalising and proofreading. Prewriting is focused on making a writing concept by logical organisation of basic ideas that will follow research aims. It comprises two steps: 1. defining a topic, i.e. knowing very well the specifics and aims of the topic 2. specifying the basic ideas that will be developed in the paper. In writing, we have to write freely about main ideas taking into account our professional experience and scientific relevance. This process often includes many grammar and spelling mistakes of non-native speakers. Rewriting is focused on reading and correction of grammar, orthographic and spelling mistakes. In the final step, a text will be checked for its readability. This final part of writing will include a text overview from a pragmatic point of view. This means to refer back to the specifics. Furthermore, this will also include a profound writer's capacity to convey the essential information given previously as well as to be focused on the crucial aspects of the matter in view.

As mentioned in Faber P. at all (2012: 177) "pragmatics deals with meaning arising from language in context, in other words, the meaning intended by the speaker or text sender and understood by the listener or text receiver... As such, pragmatics focuses on the effect of context on communicative behavior as well as on how inferences are made by the receiver in order to arrive at the final interpretation of an utterance." Thus in writing academic medical texts, health care practitioners are recommended to take into account this approach.

When considering the technical criteria of pragmatic review, the use of connecting phrases to improve text readability is of vital importance. Furthermore, the most appropriate polite introductory or argumentative connecting phrases will help readers to understand and



reconsider facts, results and conclusions, and to identify objectives in the light of their pragmatic context. Finally, a proofreader may check appropriateness from the technical point of view, but before we leave a text to a proofreader, all aspects mentioned above, especially technical and pragmatic elements must be perfectly agreed upon. Proofreading means to intervene in a paper with minimal corrections.

## 2. METHODS AND AIMS

The theoretical background of academic writing for medical purposes will be considered through a practical demonstration of gradual writing process designed to develop writing abilities of health care practitioners bearing in mind their pragmatic overview.

As there are specific aspects of writing academically in pharmacy besides general ones, they will be analysed based on a characteristic excerpt taken from a scientific paper on patients' rights. The text that will be further reviewed was presented by a lecturer in the second step of writing. The lecturer's purpose was to give an outline of the most specific mistakes noticed in practical exercising with pharmacy students. The omissions range from general spelling and grammar mistakes to the incorrect use of terminology and academic style.

Before starting the review, the lecturer presented the specifics of the topic and gave appropriate instructions regarding the step of text review. The students were invited to review the text in order to analyse further their inserts and changes. In each step, the most important remarks were made afterwards in the corrections in the text. Also, a few suggestions of the lecturer were presented before students' review that should be taken into account in the course of review.

## 3. RESULTS

In the first step of prewriting, the lecturer gave the title of the topic, its specifics and the text. The students were asked to check the text for grammar and spelling mistakes. The errors that were intentionally made in the text were the most common in academic writing of non-native speakers.

### **I The given pattern with the title and specifics:**

Governments involved in the organization of health care service and new systems created laws. They have clearly defined roles for all health team members took care on receiving an adequate therapy for a patient. The patients Bill of Rights require that patients have be treated with respect. Some violations against patient rights are assault, negligence, invasion of privacy, abuse of verbal communication. Assault are verbal or physical treat that cause harm, injury or fear. Failure to give proper care to patients is called negligence. Discussing informations about patients without their consent is unlawfully. Failure to obey these areas makes you non-liable or legally irresponsible.

The title: Patients' Rights in Health Care

The specifics and aims: *prevention, liability, patients' rights, violation, health care, health care law.*

## II The student's results after their first review in writing:

► Governments involved in the organization of health care service and new systems created laws. They have clearly defined roles for all health team members who take care on receiving an adequate therapy for a patient. The patients Bill of Rights / Patients bill of rights require that patients have to be treated with respect. Some violations against patient rights are assault, negligence, invasion of privacy, abuse of verbal communication. Assault is verbal or physical treat that cause harm, injury or fear. Failure to give proper care to patients is called negligence. Discussing informations about patients without their consent is unlawful. Failure to obey these areas makes you non-liable or legally irresponsible.

The grammar and spelling mistakes that they did not catch in the pattern were as follows (will be reconsidered in the discussion):

III The student's results after their rewriting and teachers' instructions (changes were marked):

► The governments involved in the organization of health care service and new systems created laws. They have clearly defined roles for all health team members who take care on receiving an adequate therapy for a patient. The Patients' Bill of Rights requires that patients have to be treated with respect. Some violations against patients' rights are assault, negligence, invasion of privacy, abuse of verble communication. Assault is verbal or physical treat that cause harm, injury or fear. Failure to give proper care to patients is called neglegenge. Discussing information about patients without their consent is unlawful. Failure to obey these areas makes you non-liable or legally irresponsible.

IV The student's sample before finalysing (designed to be proceeded in two steps):

► The governments involved in the organization of health care service and new systems created laws. They have clearly defined roles for all health team members who take care on receiving an adequate therapy for a patient. The Patients' Bill of Rights requires that patients have to be treated with respect. Some violations against patients' rights are assault, negligence, invasion of privacy, abuse of verbal communication. Assault is a verbal or physical treat that cause injury or fear. Failure to give proper care to patients is called negligence. Discussing information about patients without their consent is unlawful. Failure to obey these areas makes you non-liable or legally irresponsible.

Before proceeding to finalise, students wereaddressed a few underlined remarks that should be reconsidered in order to meet the specifics of the topic. Namely, they had to avoid using relative pronouns in order to summarize the text. They were advised to make these changes to improve text readability, i.e. to work more on the technical functionality of thetext. The underlined phrases were the focus of students' review:

The students' sample after the first step of finalising:

► The governments involved in the organization of health care service and new systems created laws. They have clearly defined roles for all health team members taking care on receiving an adequate therapy for a patient. The Patients' Bill of Rights requires that patients must be treated with respect and dignity. Some violations against patients' rights are assault, negligence, invasion of privacy and verbal communication abuse. Assault is a verbal or physical treat causingan injury or fear. Failure of giving proper care to patients is called negligence. Discussing information about patients without their consent is unlawful. Failure to obey these laws makes one non-liable and legally irresponsible.

In the second step of finalising, the lecturer invited the students to use appropriate linking phrases in order to work on pragmatic aspects of the topic. They were also allowed

to make necessary changes in words or phrases to meet the specifics. The final purpose of this step was to reshape the idea of health care law in an argumentative text. They were challenged to point out the most important pragmatic aspects of the topic.

The students' sample after the second step of finalising (without lecturers' comments or suggestions):

► The governments involved in the organization of health care service and new systems created laws **having** clearly defined roles for all health team members taking care on receiving an adequate therapy for a patient. The Patients' Bill of Rights requires that patients must be treated with respect and dignity. Some violations against patients' rights are assault, negligence, invasion of privacy and verbal communication abuse. Assault is **in fact** a verbal or physical treat causingan injury or fear. Failure of giving proper care to patients is called negligence. **Also**, discussing information about patients without their consent is unlawful. **Accordingly / Therefore / Thus**, failure to obey these laws makes one non-liable and legally irresponsible.

As the final version did not attain the objectives of the pragmatic view discussed in the introductory part, the lecturer re-evaluated the specifics and gave the last version. He drew students' attention to the following key aspects of health care (underlined below):  
Patients' Rights in Health Care

The specifics and aims: *prevention, liability, patients' rights, violation, health care, health care law.*

Health care is one of the fundamental aspects in respecting human rights. In protecting patients' rights, as the most sensible aspect of human rights, many instruments of law took part.

Goverments involved in the organization of health care service / managing health legislation and new systems created laws having / **with** clearly defined roles for all health team members taking care on receiving an adequate therapy. The Patients' Bill of Rights, as one of the crucial documents in view of patients' care, requires that patients **must** be treated with **dignity**. Accordingly, some violations against patients' rights shall be considered in view of four criteria: assault, negligence, invasion of privacy and verbal communication abuse. Assault is a verbal or physical treat **causing** an injury or fear. Failure **of giving** proper care to patients is called negligence. Discussing information about patients without their consent, i.e. invasion of privacy or verbal communication abuse is unlawful.

Consequently, failing to obey these criteria will **certainly** make **one** non-liable and legally irresponsible, due to one's legal irresponsibility will certainly further break / violate the fundamental human rights of protecting people in need of health care at its different levels.

## 5. DISCUSSION

We compared the results of students' reviews, including partial corrections to the suggested versions including the entirely corrected text. As the prewriting concept was given in advance, the analysis will elucidate the facts from the second phase.

The results of the second phase of writing show that students did not correct all the mistakes from the pattern. The use of only small letters in writing a phrase denoting the law in pharmaceutical legislation shows that no one realised the figurative sense of this

noun phrase, possibly because they did not perceive it as a specific technical term. In the other review they gave, they perhaps used a capital letter only at the beginning of the phrase by the analogy with Serbian orthographic rules, although they probably did not understand its technical meaning. Furthermore, they missed to put an apostrophe in genitive construction *patients right*; thus, it did not agree as a compound subject with the predicate *require*. Consequently, they did not identify the noun phrase as a subject and incorrectly made concord with the noun *patients* and not the noun *bill*. Therefore, they used the verb *require* in a plural and not a singular form.

However, the majority of students corrected the verbal construction *took care* used in the pattern in the past tense to *take care* in the first sentence and added the relative pronoun *who*, which made a logical connection between the first and the second subordinate clause. Also, the majority of students changed the infinitive construction *have be treated* that was incorrect to *have been treated*. They also realised the mistake made in the fourth sentence referred to the lack of agreement between the subject and the predicate (assault are > assault is). They noticed the spelling mistakes in the pattern (asault > assault, verble > verbal, negligense > negligence). Furthermore, they recognised the subject of this sentence as a noun phrase, correctly treating *discussing information about patients without their consent* as a noun construction. Accordingly, they used an adverb to describe a situation instead of using an adjective, and they also harmonized a demonstrative pronoun with a plural noun (this areas > these areas). All the clarifications above in the text indicate that students perceive mainly grammar and spelling mistakes and that functional and pragmatic views of their attention have not been yet developed.

In this view, the students were instructed to read the text once more trying to pay closer attention to the logical sections in the text, especially to the second sentence, where they had to find the subject. The majority of students identified the noun *patient* as the subject, not the entire phrase *The Patients' Bill of Rights*, probably because they do not know that subjects occur in a sentence both as simple or compound, i.e. that compound subjects may include phrases or syntagmas, but only the noun in nominative case is the logical subject that may interfere with other nouns or other types of words building a phrase. Furthermore, even if they perceive it as a phrase when talking about legislation, they mostly associate it with the noun *law*, not the noun *bill*, bearing in mind that they usually have in mind words literal meaning although the noun *bill* is used with a figurative meaning. Therefore, the students did not recognise it as a phrase and did not succeed to make a concord between the subject and the predicate (*The Patients' Bill of Rights require* > *The Patients' Bill of Rights requires*). Also, they did not add the apostrophe to the plural noun in the construction *patient bill* > *patients'bill* in the first sentence, because they did not realise which of the words is the logical subject. Finally, referring to a group of people having some rights, we usually do not think about the importance of this matter in the singular. Thus, it would be better to use the noun in the plural as *patients*, not *patient*, bearing in mind that *Bill of Rights* is referred to all patients. Also, as we refer to the law, it will be written in English in capital letters.

Hereafter, we can see the students' mistakes with suggested corrections (Table 1). Consequently, we may conclude that the majority of mistakes that students made in writing are grammar mistakes (8 – 1.04%), then spelling (4 – 0.52%) and orthographic mistakes (1 – 0.13%).

Table 1 Students' mistakes in the first review with suggested corrections

<b>Orthographic mistakes with suggested corrections:</b>	1
1. patients bill of rights / Patients bill of rights>The Patients' <u>Bill</u> of Rights	(0.13%)
<b>Spelling mistakes:</b>	4
2. assault>assault; verble> verbal; negligense > negligence; legaly > legally	(0.52%)
<b>Grammar mistakes:</b>	
1. took care > take care	
2. The Patients' Bill of Rights require > The Patients' <u>Bill</u> of Rights requires	
3. assault are> assault is verbal	
4. patients right > patients' rights	
5. have be treated > have to be treated	
6. discussing information about patients without their consent is <u>unlawfully</u> > discussing information about patients without their consent is unlawful	
7. informations > information	
8. this areas >these areas	
	8 (1.04%)

Finalising the text, the students were asked to return to the specifics of the topic in order to improve text readability and meet the pragmatic points. They were also assisted with fundamental remarks of the lecturers that are discussed hereafter.

Bearing in mind that patients' rights are one of the main specifics of this topic, the students were advised to use more argumentative modal verb *must* instead of the modal verb *have to* in order to draw attention to adequate patient treatment. In addition, the noun *respect* was considered with students in the light of the comprehensive relationship between patients and health care practitioners and consequently, it was replaced with a noun *dignity*. In order to reconsider readability, the students were invited to notice that the last two examples in the fourth sentence were represented with the longer genitive form of analytic or Norman (French) genitive. To summarize the end of the sentence, they were suggested to change it with synthetic (Saxon) genitive in the last example (*abuse of verbal communication > verbal communication abuse*). In the fifth sentence, the students had to find the relative pronoun. They were suggested to avoid relative pronoun *that* and to use gerund form (*Assault is a verbal or physical treat that cause injury or fear > Assault is a verbal or physical treat causing injury and fear*). In the sixth sentence, the infinitive construction *failure to obey these areas* would be better to be replaced with gerund instead of infinitive construction (*Failure to give proper care to > Failure of giving proper care.... is called negligence*). In the last sentence, in order to generalise the conclusion leading to more formal tone, we should change the personal pronoun *you* with *one/people* (*Failure to obey these areas makes you > Failure to obey these areas makes one / makes people non-liable or legally irresponsible*).

In the second phase of finalising, as the students were invited to do it by themselves, their text reformulation met only the technical requirements of readability. The students' final version has only the body, but not the introductory part despite being advisable to introduce readers to general points. Given that an argumentative text focused on health care and patients' rights is relating to law implementation, we have to define the connection between health care and human rights and the role of legislation in managing health care requirements and health policy. It has to be explained in a simple but very sound way to point out the importance of liability of the health care system. This

correlation was mentioned in the body of the text by using the phrase *managing health care legislation* instead of using *the organisation of health care service*, that sounds completely awkward and wrong both to professionals and people less introduced into the matter. Consequently, this change made in the last review will define clearly that as governments regulate or manage laws, health professionals will further manage health care and the attitude of every health care practitioner will be managed by implementing and respecting the rules that were established by governments.

There were also other changes introduced in the last review:

- The connection in the students' review made between the second and the third sentence with gerund construction was replaced with a preposition (having > with) in the last review. The preposition was suggested to highlight the meaning of the adverb *clearly*, referred to defining roles for all health team members, that is the key aspect for efficient health care.
- In order to draw attention to crucial laws regarding patients' rights and their health care, an apposition was added in the fourth sentence.
- As the fifth sentence is logically connected with the previous sentence, a connective phrase was used.
- The categories of violations were classified as criteria, not only as randomised types of breaches that indicated the determiner *some*.
- In order to make a substantial conclusion, we had to connect the body of the text with the last sentence using a more appropriate connective phrase that will announce to readers that significant arguments will follow. Therefore, *consequently* was used as one of the solutions.
- To attain more formal tone and to generalise the conclusion, instead of using the singular noun *failer*, we used the gerund construction *failing*.
- Also, the present tense construction was replaced with future tense construction in order to draw attention to the consequences of failing to obey these criteria. Also, the verb *make* was associated with the adverb *certainly*.
- Furthermore, as the conclusion may include the crucial aspects regarding the patients' rights, the last paragraph will be completed by using the subordinate preposition *due to*, instead of the less formal *because of*. This change will point out the importance of respecting the higher standards of human rights as well as of not breaking them and furthermore profound consequences due to their disobedience.

According to the students' reviews, we may conclude further that even the students made a few logical connections by using connectives, they did not realise the pragmatic aspects of the matters, their real significance and interactiveness in modern health care practice. Consequently, they made no review of the specifics by considering them in a more argumentative way, i.e. they inserted no argumentative text or supportive linkers in order to re-evaluate the facts (e.g. we do not see the connection between the government's role and health care practitioners in practice, and while reading, it seems that all facts and definitions were given at random). Eventually, their review has no argumentative conclusion that will help the readers in understanding it more pragmatically. Undoubtedly that even the students were on the third and fourth year studying the matters of health care management, they did not evaluate essential target points that must be underlined as very important in managing health care.

## 6. CONCLUSION

As this paper evaluated the level of proficiency in academic writing of the third and the fourth year students of medical sciences, with a special attention on their capacity to pragmatically review their written communication, we may conclude that for improving their pragmatic approach in any content, especially in medical aspects, health care practitioners have to be directed to several points: 1. an evaluation of the importance of moral and ethical values and their complexity in providing health care, as they lead to the real outcomes of health care; 2. teaching students how to highlight them in academic communication, especially in written communication.

Pointing out the importance of moral and ethical values in medical sciences is extremely important due to a lot of unethical interests that nowadays often prevail in medical care. Therefore, the specific approaches of modern health care in the light of its comprehensiveness have to be explained to be applied in academic and professional communication in health care. Communication as an instrument in the treatment of the patient is an indispensable key segment in this holistic, comprehensive approach. Consequently, this significant foundation will undoubtedly help the health care practitioner to communicate verbally or in writing in an adequate manner. Exactly as stated in Naughton C. A. when refers to pharmacists (2019: 4, 6): "Some patient-centred improvements have been made in health care services, but optimal health has not been fully realized. Only when pharmacists have a *holistic* understanding of an individual patient, including their experience of illness and medication, can they effectively assess appropriateness, safety, efficacy, and adherence to medications and develop realistic treatment plans. (...) In other words, *"the pharmacists must maintain a high level of humility about their scientific knowledge so that the knowledge of the patient can be recognized."*

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## TEACHING SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP THROUGH PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING: PEDAGOGY AND PRACTICE IN THE BUSINESS ENGLISH CLASSROOM

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**Abstract.** *This paper introduces the social entrepreneurship project currently incorporated in English for Business course offered by the Centre for Preparatory Studies at Sultan Qaboos University, Oman, in which students identify real world ill-structured problems and acquire knowledge by working together in groups to develop, fund (both through grants/donations and through selling goods and services) and implement solutions to social, cultural, or environmental issues. In more detail, in addition to discussing the concept of social entrepreneurship and its application in student project work and English learning practice, it also explores the effectiveness of a problem based learning approach that relies on the constructive learning principle when teaching social entrepreneurship. Practical recommendations on anchoring social entrepreneurship teaching in problem-based learning and constructing social entrepreneurship projects are also considered.*

**Key words:** *social entrepreneurship, Business English classroom, problem-based learning, Sultan Qaboos University, Oman*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The main objective of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has always been to “prepare students to use English in scholarly, professional, or working environments” (Basturkmen, 2006, p.17). However, ESP has also appeared to be at the cutting edge of research related to discovering more effective ways and methods for teaching, learning and determining student and community needs (Tarnopolsky & Vyssenko, 2014).

The Sultanate of Oman is currently undergoing substantial economic changes as its government recognizes that its economy must diversify away from reliance on oil revenues. Over the past several decades, non-renewable oil revenues have funded key projects in infrastructure, education, healthcare and other national sectors. This has benefitted the country greatly and allowed the opportunity for more Omani youth to access post-secondary education; however, past over-reliance on oil revenues has led to a situation in which there are not enough meaningful career opportunities for recent graduates. Attempting to absorb these graduates into the public sector economy is not a viable long-term solution (Magd & McCoy, 2014). Accordingly, the country’s government is increasingly looking to economic diversification through the growth of the private sector as a means of addressing the shortage of meaningful work and the issue of job creation.

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Going forward, the government of Oman has laid out policy directives in the field of education as it realizes that future prosperity will be found in a knowledge-based, diversified economy. Here, let us take the Oman 2040 Moving Forward with Confidence policy document (2020), by way of illustration. This document has specified in the educational sector that future “graduates are acquainted with competitive qualifications and employability skills to enter the local and international labor market” (p. 21). Focusing on the need to nurture entrepreneurial potential, talent and creativity of young Omanis, it also states the ideal of “maximizing national capabilities through a national system” (ibid.). Aside from educational objectives, this theme is again stressed in the vision for a more diversified economic structure in which entrepreneurial activities are actively promoted (Oman 2040 Vision, 2020).

Entrepreneurship is not limited to for-profit activities, and in recent years governments around the world have recognized the value of fostering social entrepreneurship. Whereas traditional commercial entrepreneurship encompasses the creation of new for-profit businesses by passionate individuals, social entrepreneurship has as its focus the creation of profit which can then be used to further the greater social good. Roberts and Woods (2005) speak of social entrepreneurship as an opportunity for transformative social change. For the social entrepreneur, the profits that are generated through business activities are re-invested in the venture itself rather than being passed on to shareholders (Harding, 2004). Betts, Laud and Kretinin (2018) provide a workable definition of social entrepreneurship, while defining it as “using profit making enterprises to address social, environmental and other problems that were traditionally entrusted to governmental and non-profit organizations” (p. 32). Although the concept of social entrepreneurship is not widely known in Oman, business owners are starting to speak out. According to a jointly-organized gathering of Omani and British entrepreneurs, there is huge potential for social entrepreneurship in Oman’s future (Prins, 2016, n.p.). As well, due to the increasingly difficult economic situation and the lack of sufficient job opportunities for Omani youth, there is a growing interest among young people for the idea of starting their own business according to the founder of Youth Vision, an organization that fosters youth empowerment (ibid.). Two organizations in Oman that are concerned with economic development, The Public Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (Riyada) and Knowledge Oman, recently established an initiative to promote social entrepreneurship (Riyada, 2016). These initiatives clearly demonstrate that social enterprises not only contribute to the betterment of society, but also aid in job creation and social inclusion. Consequently, more effective preparedness of youth for changing business, social and professional practices is an urgent need in the Sultanate of Oman, and the country is eager to be at the forefront in training young Omani entrepreneurs who are able to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs, pursue new applications and be extremely passionate about their work. As a result, there have been adaptations and changes in the country’s educational policies, community initiatives, classroom methodologies, teaching methods and instructional approaches to support students’ learning and their development as individuals who are able to pursue innovative ideas with the potential to benefit the community. These were added by curriculum developments to help students get engaged in activities that suggest societal and individual obligations and enthusiasm, and start to develop as social entrepreneurs who can recognize social problems, achieve social change by employing entrepreneurial principles, processes and operations, and demonstrate ethical and sensitive behavior at earlier stages of their careers, and it could not be agreed more that the ESP curriculum is no exception in such endeavors.

## 2. TEACHING SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP THROUGH PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING

### **Problem-Based learning model**

University graduates today require more than simply the possession of knowledge in a field of discipline. Wingspread (1994, cited in Duch, Groh & Allen, 2001) elucidates the following core competencies that are required to be successful in the working world: (1) high level skills in communication, (2) technological literacy and competence, (3) the ability to make informed judgments based on the evaluation of information, (4) the ability to function in team settings, and (5) the ability to devise solutions for complex, ill-defined, real-world problems. Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is an educational approach that aims to develop and hone these crucial skills. The essence of PBL involves the use of complex, real-world problems in which students work together in teams to acquire, communicate and integrate information, and thereby in that process, come up with workable solutions. PBL addresses many of the learning outcomes that are widely used in post-secondary education, for example, the ability to think critically and analyze problems, the ability to find and evaluate information, the ability to work in a team setting and communicate effectively with that team, and the development of intellectual skills to become lifelong learners (Duch, Groh & Allen, 2001).

For PBL to be at its most effective as an instructional tool, problems utilized in the setting of a university course should satisfy the following criteria (Duch, 2001). The problem should engage students and motivate them to devise a solution. Real-world problems are deemed more useful than superficial ones as students will more likely perceive themselves to be possible stakeholders. Problems should require students to seek out practical information, and decide what information is useful and what is superfluous. Students should also be encouraged to question their own assumptions since complex real-world problems do not have prescribed solutions. Ideally, the problem is complicated enough so that students must work in groups to effectively find solutions. Cooperative learning is fostered when students synthesize information from a variety of sources and build a knowledge framework together based on principles that they are exposed to in the course. The problem must be open-ended enough so that it does not resemble “end of chapter” questions that could be easily divided up among the group members. Finally, the problem task should be structured so that it challenges students to engage in higher order thinking skills, moving them into Bloom’s (1956, cited in Duch, 2001) cognitive skills of analyzing, synthesizing and evaluating.

### **Social entrepreneurship competencies**

It has been argued that social entrepreneurs deal with similar issues that commercial entrepreneurs deal with, namely in the areas of mobilizing resources, recognizing opportunities and building organizations (Tracey & Philips, 2007, cited in Pache & Chowdhury, 2012). Successful resolution of these issues necessitates the possession of a range of competencies by the social entrepreneur. Miller, Wesley and Williams (2012) identified a number of needed competencies through a survey of 150 social entrepreneurship practitioners, including top managers, founders and funders of social enterprises. Among the identified competencies were the following: (1) ability to challenge traditional ways of thinking, (2) interpersonal communication skills, (3) innovativeness and creativity (4) ability to communicate with stakeholders, (5) management of financial

capital, (6) ability to lead and develop others, (7) capacity to measure outcomes, (8) manage strategy development, (9) ability to problem solve, and (10) ability to develop collaborative relationships (Miller, Wesley & Williams, 2012). Upon further examination, the majority of these competencies fall under the groupings of critical thinking skills that are not subject-specific but rather, transferable (Halpern, 1998, cited in Butterworth & Thwaites, 2013), communicative and collaborative skills, creative thinking skills and analytical skills. The Problem-Based Learning framework, when thoughtfully devised, can lend itself to the fostering of these skill areas.

### **Constructivist learning and PBL**

The theory that student learning takes place when they are actively engaged in the construction of mental representations has long been advocated by such thinkers as Vygotsky, Dewey and Piaget (Hunter, 2015; Olusegun, 2015). Constructivist learning theory espouses an approach in which students actively engage in their own learning and knowledge construction (Fernando & Marikar, 2017). Sjoberg (2007, cited in Fernando & Marikar, 2017) sees learning as knowledge that is actively constructed by the learners themselves, making it more than simply the transmission of knowledge. Since learning is not imposed, but is actively constructed by the learner, participatory learning is essential. Problem identification, the sourcing of information and problem solving require learning to be an active experience on the part of the learner, resulting in experiential learning. Cunningham, Duffy and Knuth (1993, cited in Hunter, 2015) have identified the characteristics of a constructivist learning environment. Key aspects include: (1) knowledge construction must be experiential; (2) information must be actively sought, organized, analyzed, and interpreted; (3) learning must be embedded in realistic contexts involving social experience; (4) learner self-awareness must be encouraged; and (5) learners must be given the chance to express their voice, giving them agency. The operationalization of a constructivist learning environment advocates group collaboration in the solving of problems (Hunter, 2015). As well, constructivist learning calls for the instructor to play the role of facilitator; aiding students to become active learners in their own learning, through the meaningful connection of prior knowledge with new knowledge as they construct their own mental representations of the world around them, is characteristic of the constructivist learning classroom (Olusegun, 2015). Problem- Based Learning, as a teaching and learning approach, has been recognized by many theorists and practitioners as one of the ways in which a constructivist learning environment can be utilized (Hunter, 2015). Such a learning environment as elucidated in research by Lobler (2006) “supports and explains a lot of the requested changes in the entrepreneurial education” (p.19).

### **PBL and higher order thinking skills**

Critical thinking is seen as an indispensable skill in the field of higher education (Kek & Huijser, 2011). Precise definitions are elusive, but critical thinking is generally described as the ability to use higher order thinking skills, such as the analysis, synthesis and evaluation of information, particularly in the area of problem solving. Paul and Elder (2006, cited in Kek & Huijser, 2011) see critical thinking as self-directed, self-monitored, self-disciplined and self-corrective. Bloom’s taxonomy of learning (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001, cited in Blundell & Berardi 2016) denotes learning according to a hierarchy of lower and higher order processes. Remembering and understanding are

mental processes that belong to lower levels, whereas analyzing, evaluating, and creating are categorized as higher-order learning processes. Accordingly, in order for critical thinking to take place in tertiary education classrooms, students must move beyond the lower level processes of remembering and understanding, and engage in analytical, evaluative and creative tasks.

In practical terms, the inclusion and operationalization of critical thinking as a skill into tertiary education curricula has not been without its challenges. Theorists have argued for some time that real critical thinking must go beyond the typical “end of chapter” questions found in many college and university textbooks. According to a study carried out by Marshall and Carson (2008) that examined the end of chapter questions in eight leading textbooks in business schools, almost 90% of the questions did not go beyond Levels 1 and 2 (Knowledge and Comprehension) on Bloom’s (1956, cited in Marshall & Carson, 2008) Taxonomy Scale. This is a situation in which “correct” answers to questions are immediately available within the chapter itself. Students are rarely challenged by textbook questions to go beyond the chapter, or indeed beyond the course material (Marshall & Carson, 2008). To move students’ thinking processes beyond the lower levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy is an area of concern among theorists and practitioners, especially in an era of increasing automation and digitization of traditionally knowledge-based career fields. 21<sup>st</sup> century employers want graduates who can think critically and solve problems (Alshare, 2018; Tuzlukova & Singh, 2018).

Problem-Based Learning has been advocated as an approach to fostering and developing students’ critical thinking skills (Kek & Huijser, 2011; Kurniawati, 2019; Marshall & Carson, 2008). It has been found useful in creating an environment in which higher order thinking skills are nurtured and stimulated (Raiyn & Tilchin, 2015). The literature is rich in the advantages that are conferred on student learning when a PBL approach is adopted. Among the abilities that have a chance to flourish are (Nilson, 2016): critical thinking and analysis, conceptual understanding and deep learning, application of metacognitive strategies, decision making and problem solving. To exemplify, Albanese and Dast (2014, cited in Vandenhouten, Groessl, & Levintova, 2017) compiled two decades’ worth of PBL research and found that students in the health sciences exhibited enhanced retention of knowledge, increased confidence in finding solutions to problems and greater comfort when working in teams.

In the future, the nurturing of critical thinking in educational environments will not only be desirable from the standpoint of promoting critical thinking, it will become an economic necessity. According to the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in 2018, by the year 2030, robots could replace 800 million jobs (n.p.). Relying solely on a “knowledge-based approach” to education would be shortchanging future graduates who increasingly will not be able to compete with automation. Rather, education needs to focus more on a skills-based model, where teamwork and independent, critical and creative thinking is encouraged and developed (*World Economic Forum*, 2018).

### 3. ANALYSIS OF CURRENT PRACTICE: SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP COMPONENT OF ENGLISH FOR BUSINESS COURSE AT SULTAN QABOOS UNIVERSITY

The English for Business III course is a compulsory course for all students registered in the College of Economics and Political Science at Sultan Qaboos University. It is part

of the degree plan for the following majors: accounting, information systems, economics, finance, management, marketing, operations management and business statistics.

The vast majority of students are Omani nationals; classes occasionally have an international student. There is an equal mix of male and female students. Most of the students are in their third year of university study, with the average age being 20 years old. They come from all parts of Oman - both urban and rural. Average English proficiency would likely be in the IELTS 5.0 to 6.0 range, with the occasional student being a band 7.0 or above. Students are admitted to the course only after the successful completion of the English for Business II course. In their third year of study, at the same time they are taking the English for Business III course, students take common business and economics courses. In their fourth year, in their respective degree plans, students choose their business specializations.

The English for Business III course is divided into three components: academic reading skills, academic writing skills and Problem-Based Learning. The reading and writing skills component utilizes business case studies to supply content that is meaningful and relevant both in the context of Oman and overseas. Both global and local business and economic issues are discussed. Through the course of class discussions, reading and writing tasks, and visual media clips, students have the opportunity to identify, analyze and evaluate a range of issues that for-profit and non-profit organizations face in the world today while enhancing their competency in business language skills.

The case studies make use of such business themes as strategy formulation and implementation, vision and mission statements, marketing in the context of different industries and locales, as well as cross-cultural advertising, human resources, corporate culture and social media branding and communication. It is in the Problem-Based Learning component of the course where social entrepreneurship is the focus. In student-led teams of three or four members, students begin by identifying humanitarian issues of importance to them. These issues along with social problems, also focus on environmental problems and their solutions to bring a positive change in society. They then begin the process of information collection, analysis and evaluation to determine an optimal way in which their social enterprise could operate in the alleviation of social ills brought about by the impact of such causes as poverty, natural or manmade disasters, discrimination, ineffective state policy or societal ignorance.

After having performed PEST and SWOT analysis, students then formulate a proposal for a non-profit organization, through the crafting of vision and mission statements, the design of their organizational structure, a proposed budget - taking revenue generation and expenses into account, the creation of a website and the design of an overall organizational strategy that focuses on sustainability, both in the environmental and financial sense.

Student interaction with digital platforms is a key component of teaching and learning in the English for Business course. Course materials are available for students to access on a Moodle course page. The course Moodle website includes such components as course learning outcomes, a course outline, suggested timelines for the completion of the stages of the project, a discussion forum, academic vocabulary quizzes, links to web-based resources to assist in the design of their non-profit organization proposal, videos that illustrate course content, assessment rubrics, and reflection assignments related to the process and outcomes of group work. Students find the Moodle discussion forum useful, as it provides an opportunity every week to interact with the instructor and each other on issues related to common business themes, such as the elements of corporate strategy,

how to formulate and write vision and mission statements, business terminology and academic vocabulary, and other issues of importance. As for language input, students develop and expand their vocabulary and enhance their business-related knowledge and skills. To illustrate, students share their ideas and opinions about the key course business concepts and report on their self-perceived acquisition of these concepts. This also appears, according to studies by Pace (1990) and Rovai and Barnum (2003), to be a valid measure of learning as students' decisions about learning are often based on their perceptions (Rovai & Barnum, 2003). For example, for one assignment students create a post on Moodle discussion forum in response to the questions on what they know about social entrepreneurship, how it is differentiated from 'regular' or commercial entrepreneurship, and practical aspects of entrepreneurial development in Oman including reasons and possible perspectives. The questions are meant to probe student impressions of social entrepreneurship's likely future and impact on Oman. For students to successfully respond to the questions, they first watch some suggested videos posted on Moodle to explain the key factors concerning the rise of social entrepreneurship as a phenomenon, and how it differs from commercial entrepreneurship. As elucidated by Tracey and Phillips (2007), the videos explain the three unique challenges faced by social entrepreneurs, namely, the management of accountability, the double bottom line and the management of identity. Whereas commercial enterprises are accountable to their owners and shareholders, social entrepreneurs aim to be accountable to the beneficiaries of their social mission. The only way they can build legitimacy is through having a positive relationship with their non-profit stakeholders. The double bottom line refers to the necessity of having both social and commercial interests maintain financial viability. Non-profit financing may come through personal, commercial and governmental donations. Additionally, many social enterprises engage in for-profit commercial activities to fund their social mission. Finally, there is the issue of managing identity since there is often an overlap between the for-profit and non-profit dimensions of the social enterprise. Tension may result due to these dual identities, however "regardless of their commitment to their social vision, only by operating profitably can social entrepreneurs engender sustainable social change" (Tracey & Phillips, 2007, p. 267).

English for Business students' understanding of social entrepreneurship, according to their posts on Moodle discussion forum, relates to "finding new solutions for social problems by creating businesses, social engagement and social services," "developing, funding and implementing" such solutions and, consequently, "achieving a benefit to society and serving its members before achieving the financial benefit." Though the ideas of social engagement, social services and community benefit are present in students' responses, when asked about the reasons behind an individual choice to be a social entrepreneur, they describe them in relation to both community and their personal lives. For example, one of the students reported that "social entrepreneurship is not just about business but also a lifestyle." Another student, in the same vein, noted that social entrepreneurship "makes me able to find that support quicker to help people." The related ideas are clearly seen in students' posts that explain the reasons for considering social entrepreneurship as an opportunity "for providing immense benefit for the society and its residents," individual choice of a citizen who wants to "help change the environment and find solutions to everyday problems," and "have a good impact on people's lives, meet humanity interest goals, and have people to support each other as one," and action that has positive effects "on society and can change people's lifestyle to the better." In their posts, students are mostly optimistic about the perspectives of social entrepreneurship

growth in Oman in the future and its possible benefits to Omani society. They relate the concept of social entrepreneurship to the individual attributes that can make them able to gain and maintain employment. To quote one student, “social entrepreneurship will grow in Oman in the future: it will benefit the society by creating job opportunities and increasing employability, and help develop health awareness and education.” Similarly, another student responds that “the community needs this service as it contributes to the reduction in unemployment.” Students recognize the existing potential of social entrepreneurship in Oman as “a response to community needs”, that include, for example, a “need to reduce many problems, whether in the economic, educational or health sectors.” According to students’ views, social entrepreneurship “will be very beneficial for a lot of people in need when it comes to their education and finances, and also the environment; we will prosper in a more positive way.” It is noteworthy to mention that besides social issues related to social entrepreneurship, as well as social value creation through entrepreneurial activities (Leadbeater, 2006), when explaining the concept, students also make connections of social entrepreneurship with the Omani culture and cultural values and traditions. To illustrate, according to one student, “social entrepreneurship has high opportunities to grow in Oman in the future because of our traditional values not to mention that we are a kind nature society that may have already took supportive actions toward each other but in different ways. Furthermore, managing these kinds of businesses will reduce unemployment rates and raise awareness as well as skills about the environmental problems.” Such perspective of viewing social responsibility through cultural dimensions is emphasized, for example, in a study by Volero, Siano, Palazzo and Amabile (2019) who have examined how organizations are influenced by cultural dimensions in communicating their social responsibility efforts.

#### 4. IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP TEACHING IN OMAN

Incorporating social entrepreneurship through Problem-Based Learning in the tertiary business English classroom fulfills several functions. First, it is more closely aligned to the ‘21<sup>st</sup> century skills’ paradigm of teaching and learning. As our world becomes increasingly borderless and globalized, people from different cultures and contexts will have more opportunity to interact. This requires tertiary education to be more than the simple transmission of factual information; it requires higher order thinking skills so that citizens have the tools to identify, evaluate and create knowledge as it is needed so that they function successfully in the workplace and beyond (Teo, 2019). Stated another way, students must learn how to learn not just what to learn. Due to the ubiquitous nature of smart phones and internet connections, locating factual information has never been easier. Indeed, the mere possession of publicly available information is unlikely to confer any unique workplace advantage to the average person. According to Internet Live Stats (2020), on a typical day there are now over 4.4 billion internet users and 3.6 billion Google searches. In the year 2020, according to World Economic Forum website post, the internet hosts 44 zettabytes of information, which is equivalent to 44 trillion gigabytes (*How much data*, 2020). Information paucity is not the main issue. Rather, it is the evaluation, synthesis and application of information that is the essential skill since this results in the creation of new knowledge. Stated more plainly, it is not the information that one possesses that matters, but what is done with that information. The Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills (2006, cited in Teo, 2019) elucidates three broad skill areas needed for citizens to function



effectively: critical and inventive thinking, information and communication adeptness, and civic literacy and global awareness. The social entrepreneurship project contains elements of all these three broad skill areas.

Second, the teaching and learning of social entrepreneurship is interdisciplinary in nature. There is also a built-in interdisciplinary nature in Problem Based Learning approach (Shirokikh et al., 2017) that positively impacts students' language learning and development of their higher order thinking skills. This not only hones higher order thinking skills; it also provides opportunities to engage in the type of complex problem solving skills that are valued in the workplace. Ivanitskaya, Clark, Montgomery, and Primeau (2002) argue that interdisciplinary learning gives students greater skills at dealing with complex fields of knowledge that are lacking in structure. Further, interdisciplinary education compels students to find connections among seemingly unrelated domains. This higher order thinking process results in a personalized process in constructing and organizing knowledge (Ivanitskaya, Clark, Montgomery, & Primeau, 2002). Lim, Wyatt, Mariotz, and Browning-Samoni (2012) contend that going through the experience of interdisciplinary learning results in improved thinking skills that are transferable across academic and professional domains. Thus, graduates with these skills are more likely to thrive in the globalized workplace.

Finally, the teaching and learning of social entrepreneurship holds long term benefits for the Sultanate of Oman. Social entrepreneurs as described by Howaldt, Domanski and Schwarz (2015) are "actors which invent, develop and achieve a new frame of reference of entrepreneurial action and thereby a new social practice in the society (p.96). Therefore, entrepreneurs can be key drivers of employment in 21<sup>st</sup> century economies (Bakheet, 2018). As well, there appears to be keen interest among Omani university students to learn about and listen to success stories regarding entrepreneurship. According to a study by Belwal, Al Balushi and Belwal (2015) conducted at Sohar University, the majority of students not only expressed interest in one day starting a business, but also felt that the university classroom was the proper place in which to learn about entrepreneurship. The students also stated that they wanted to see university courses enhance the level of, and opportunities for, learning about starting up a business. In addition to providing job opportunities, social entrepreneurs can also play a vital role in overcoming social problems in society at large. In the area of providing assistance to disabled people for example, social entrepreneurship has been playing an active role in the past several years (Prins, 2016). By promoting the concept of social entrepreneurship, especially to small and medium enterprises, some societal ills may have a chance to be alleviated.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This paper looked into social entrepreneurship teaching and learning currently integrated in the Business English course offered by the Centre for Preparatory Studies at Sultan Qaboos University in Oman while considering some pedagogical approaches and giving some practical illustrations of these processes. The examination revealed some meaningful perspectives and pedagogical orientations; a Problem-Based Learning approach could stimulate students to view the problem from a different point of view and enable them to look for solutions that are both innovative and creative, thus teaching them how to transfer knowledge in new ways and develop life-long learning skills. Additionally, it can be effectively used to prepare Omani students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century needs of employment and

empower them as responsible and accountable citizens in the future by way of the professionally oriented context of learning and academic advancement of ESP.

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## STUDY OF MOTIVATION TYPES OF ENGLISH-MAJORING STUDENTS AND DEMOTIVATING FACTORS - IN THE CONTEXT OF NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MONGOLIA, ERDENET SCHOOL

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**Abstract.** *A decline in number of credit hours of English courses for English-majoring students at National University of Mongolia is forcing teachers and students to focus on how to learn English more effectively and what factors would affect that process within credit hours allowed at the university. However, the English teaching class hours in Mongolian secondary schools have been increasing for the last few years, due to the interest in learning English as a foreign language, and resulting in a growth in the demand for English teachers. This study has a goal to investigate into motivation of English-majoring students towards learning English and the factors affecting them to be demotivated. Twenty students studying English as a major at National University of Mongolia, Erdenet School completed the research questionnaire which intended to discover English learning motivation through 12 items and attended focus group interview with 5 questions to find internal and external demotivating factors in 2019-2020 academic year. The students had instrumental orientation and demonstrated a strong desire to learn English. Furthermore, they were demotivated by their teachers' and classmates' attitudes and living conditions. The researchers suggested some recommendations based on the study findings.*

**Key words:** *learning motivation, instrumental motivation, integrative motivation, demotivation, internal factors, external factors*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Nesta report (Bakhshi, et al. 2017) estimated that English knowledge is listed at 21<sup>st</sup> (US) and 34<sup>th</sup> (UK) of the 120 skills, knowledge and ability, which is high in rank and shows that development of science, technology, and social areas will be done and delivered or introduced in English.

Landlocked between Russian Federation and People's Republic of China, Mongolia, a former socialist country before 1990, had a democratic revolution shifting it to a democratic country. This political and social situation brought people of Mongolia to develop foreign relations and communication, which was an essential reason of paying attention to the second foreign language, after Russian, nationwide. English has been among the most important subjects in Mongolian schools since its teaching began in the 1992-1993 academic year. A further change to English language education was implemented with the

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victory of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP) in the national election of 2000 (Cohen 2004). The newly elected parliament drafted a white paper stating that English should receive further emphasis in the education system due to Mongolia's integration with the world economy, the rise of tourism and the overall benefits of studying the primary international language. The Mongolian government mandated that whenever possible, students should begin studying English in the fourth grade, and that all English students should continue studying in the newly added eleventh grade in the 2005-2006 academic year (Shagdarsuren and Davaasuren 2017).

Shagdarsuren and Davaasuren (2017) estimated that English class hours in secondary school level have been increasing from 655 to 700 for 6-7 years and reaching 840 hours of English lesson in 2008. Furthermore, Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sports declared an increase in English class hours in secondary schools including 99 academic hours for 5<sup>th</sup> graders (MES 2014), from 6<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade – 420 hours, (MECSS 2015), for upper-secondary level or 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grades – 387 hours, which totals up to 906 hours of English classes, which are compulsory and can be added by 387 academic hours or 9 credit hour as elective lesson (MECSS 2016). In secondary schools, normative workload of English teachers, determined by the corresponding ministry is 19 hours per week and academic year continues for 33 weeks which makes 627 hours for per English teacher. All these pre-conditions and the situation in Mongolia brought up new perspective at English as a new foreign language and a great demand of English teachers in the job market, influencing secondary school students to choose English teacher programs as their future majors.

National University of Mongolia (NUM), and Mongolian State University of Education are state universities which prepare English teachers, except private colleges and universities in Mongolia. NUM, Erdenet School, operating in a rural area, is the sole state university, offering Teacher, Foreign language Education (English) in Khangai Region. Students enrolled at this program are from the Khangai region and Central region of Mongolia inclusive 11 aimags. Approximately 22 students graduate every year and they become the major workforce of the same regions.

The study plan of English teacher's program at NUM, Erdenet School before 2014, consisted of 80 credit hour of English courses, which is 64% of 125 credit hours in total. In 2014, the Minister of the Education, Culture and Science (2014) passed a decree that states students graduating with a bachelor's degree from universities need to pass an upper-intermediate level of English. In the same decree, it declares the total credit hours to be accomplished must be at least 120 credit hours in 4 years of bachelor degree program. The requirement of minimum 120 credit hours includes 30% of compulsory courses of general basic programs 6 credit hours of English within, and professional basis and professional subjects be 70% (Mongolian Ministry of Education 2014), which was a huge decline in the number of courses and credit hours of English. Since the corresponding ministry made the decision, it applied to NUM and required to change the all program study plans (Ministry of Education 2019), including that of English teachers' program. As a result, the credit hours of English courses for English teacher's program dropped to 51 and it is calculated to be 42.5% of 120 credit hours.

In this contrastive condition where English teachers demand is high, but English course hours at universities is decreasing, it is essential to focus on what motivation students who are majoring as English teachers have and find out factors demotivate them.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Maslow (1943) made an attempt to define motivation theory and offered hierarchy of needs including self-actualization, esteem, love and belonging, safety needs and physiological needs. Gray and Klapper (2009) offered that understanding the role of affective factors emphasizing motivation is among the most important of four essential elements of understanding how languages are learnt, identifying preferred learning style, understanding the role of affective factors, and being involved in shaping the course, to learn and teach English. Gardner (2007) explained that motivation affects the process of learning a second language, as specific motivation exists toward language classes or other language learning situations. Student motivation is the element that leads students' attitudes towards the learning process (Afzal, et al. 2010). William and Burden (1997) proposed definition of motivation construed as a state of cognitive and emotional arousal which leads to a conscious decision to act and which gives rise to a period of sustained intellectual and/or physical effort in order to attain a previously set goal (or goals).

Gardner and Lambert (1972) divided the motivation type into two categories, and Gardner defined them as integrative and instrumental motivation. There is a relationship between motivation and orientation, which he stated to be a collection of reasons that reflect common or conceptually similar goals (Gardner 2001). Instrumental orientation is the purpose of language study that reflects the more utilitarian value of linguistic achievement, such as getting ahead in one's occupation (Gardner and Lambert 1972). In contrast, integrative orientation encompasses students' wishes to learn more about another cultural community because of their interests in a more open-minded way, to the point of eventually being accepted as a member of that group (Gardner and Lambert 1972).

Motivation is a base factor affecting students' academic performance at the university level (Chen, 2014; Klimova, 2011; Ozuturk & Hursen, 2014). Motivation to do something is influenced by a range of factors, some of which are internal to the learner and some external (William and Burden 1997). Zangbar (2012), who studied undergraduate Libyan students majoring in English had unusual findings. Students had both high instrumental and integrative motivations, the integrative motivation appeared slightly higher than instrumental one, and the students' motivations had no relationship with their academic achievement. William and Burden (1997) offered a motivation model which reflects the dynamic interaction between the different internal and external variables leading to the decision to act as it is the way learners make sense of the factors surrounding by them.

On other hand, Dorneyi and Ushioda (2011) defined factors affecting motivation and demotivation. They defined demotivating factors as "specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioral intention or an ongoing action" (Dorneyi and Ushioda 2011). In other words, demotivation encompasses when students have no interest or intention to learn.

Ali and Pathan (2017) aimed to find factors of demotivation in students and listed grammar-based teaching, classroom environment, effect of low test scores, teachers' behavior, course contents and teaching materials, lack of self-confidence and interest. Dorneyi (2001) revealed factors affecting demotivation among 50 students, by interviewing for 10-30 minutes. Factors were teachers, reduced self-confidence, inadequate school facilities, negative attitudes toward L2, the compulsory nature of L2, interference of another language, negative attitudes towards the L2 community, attitudes of group members, and the course book. According to Chambers (1993), teachers could be among the most

demotivating factors for students to learn English. Kikuchi and Sakai (2009) surveyed 112 learners of English from universities in Japan. The scholars identified demotivating factors such as (a) course books, (b) inadequate school facilities, (c) test scores, (d) non-communicative methods, and (e) teachers' competence and teaching styles in their questionnaire. Jung (2011) conducted a survey among Korean college students about the demotivating factors and found out that, in general, external factors were more involved in the demotivation process for the students.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Research questions

The researchers aimed to find answers to following questions:

1. Is the motivation orientation of students who are English-majoring integrative or instrumental?
2. What are the motivating and demotivating factors affecting students learning English?

#### 3.2. Research sample

Twenty undergraduate students studying to be English teachers at National University of Mongolia, Erdenet School, the Department of Humanities, participated. There were sixteen were sophomores, and four were seniors, aged 18-24.

Table 1 Age and gender distribution of participants

		Gender		N
		Male	Female	
Age	18	0	6	6
	19	1	6	7
	20	1	1	2
	21	1	1	2
	22	1	0	1
	23	0	1	1
	24	0	1	1
N		4	16	20

### 4. INSTRUMENT AND PROCEDURE

#### 4.1. Questionnaire

We surveyed students at the end of first term of the 2019-2020 academic year. Researchers used MINI-AMTB, an adapted version of the questionnaire Attitude Motivation Test Battery, developed by Gardner (2004) as a research instrument. Although the study participants were students of English teacher's class, we translated the questionnaire into Mongolian, considering the relevance and convenience for the students whose first language is Mongolian. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part was constructed to collect demographic information such as age, gender, academic level, and the second part



consisted of 12 items dedicated to find out interest in foreign language, motivational intensity, English class anxiety, English teacher evaluation, attitudes toward learning English, attitudes toward English-speaking people, desire to learn English, English course evaluation, English use anxiety, integrative and instrumental orientation of the students.

Each question, students had to rate on a scale 1-7; 1 is weak, unfavorable, very little and low, whereas 7 stands for strong, favorable, very much and high (Table 2). Before students started answering, they were reminded not to worry and to feel relaxed to deliver their answers based on their opinion and evaluation.

Table 2 Content of the Questionnaire

Question to discover	Items in the questionnaire	Rating
Integrative orientation	My motivation to learn English in order to communicate with English speaking people is:	Weak ___1: ___2: ___3: ___4: ___5: ___6: ___7 Strong
Attitudes toward English-speaking people	My attitude toward English speaking people is	Unfavorable ___1: ___2: ___3: ___4: ___5: ___6: ___7 Favorable
Interest in foreign language	My interest in foreign languages is	Very low ___1: ___2: ___3: ___4: ___5: ___6: ___7 Very high
Desire to learn English	My desire to learn English is	Weak ___1: ___2: ___3: ___4: ___5: ___6: ___7 Strong
Attitudes toward Learning English	My attitude toward learning English is	Unfavorable ___1: ___2: ___3: ___4: ___5: ___6: ___7 Favorable
English Teacher Evaluation	My attitude toward my English teacher is	Unfavorable ___1: ___2: ___3: ___4: ___5: ___6: ___7 Favorable
Instrumental orientation	My motivation to learn English for practical purposes (e.g., to get a good job) is	Weak ___1: ___2: ___3: ___4: ___5: ___6: ___7 Strong
English use Anxiety	I worry about speaking English outside of class	Very little ___1: ___2: ___3: ___4: ___5: ___6: ___7 Very much
English course evaluation	My attitude toward my English course is	Unfavorable ___1: ___2: ___3: ___4: ___5: ___6: ___7 Favorable
English class anxiety	I worry about speaking in my English class	Very little ___1: ___2: ___3: ___4: ___5: ___6: ___7 Very much
Motivational intensity	My motivation to learn English is	Very low ___1: ___2: ___3: ___4: ___5: ___6: ___7 Very high
Parental encouragement	My parents encourage me to learn English	Very little ___1: ___2: ___3: ___4: ___5: ___6: ___7 Very much

### 4.2. Focus group interview

As the second part of the study after the questionnaire, researchers conducted a focus group interview in Mongolian among the same sample size of 20 students, 4 male and 15 female students, on the same day as the questionnaire. The interview aimed to find out students’ opinion on the significance of English, the reasons of studying English, common factors affecting motivation and demotivation in learning English and if any changes would occur if English is acquired in advanced level, with following question items:

1. What is the significance of English?
2. Why are you studying English?
3. What are your internal and external demotivating factors toward learning English?
4. What outcomes do you expect after learning English?
5. Do you believe the attitudes from other people would change if you learnt English well?

The first two question items were warm-up questions for participants, to make them ready for the important items. The third was the key item from the interview, whereas the items 4 and 5 were the follow-up questions.

Two of researchers, who are Mongolians, conducted the focus group as moderators. We prepared the classroom and seats in advance (Krueger and Casey 2015). In order to create warm and relaxed atmosphere, one of the researchers explained the interview goal and asked students to feel free to express their opinions, thoughts and real conditions they encounter in school. One moderator conducted the interview and started with warm-up questions to lead to the follow-up questions about demotivating factors. The other moderator took notes and recorded the interview. The focus group interview continued for 60 minutes.

## 5. RESULTS

### 5.1. Questionnaire

We conducted the questionnaire reliability analysis using IBM SPSS v.23 program and calculated means and standard deviations among other analytics.

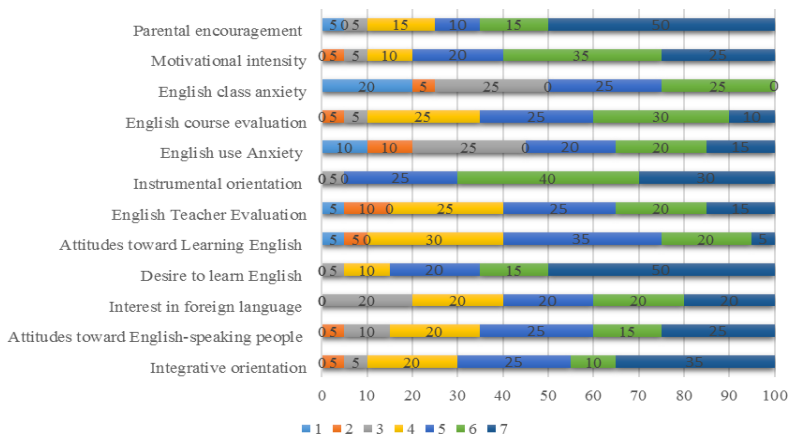


Chart 1 Questionnaire results percentage

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
Integrative orientation	20	5.00	2.00	7.00	5.3500	.34240	1.53125
Attitudes toward English-speaking people	20	5.00	2.00	7.00	5.1000	.33950	1.51831
Interest in foreign language	20	4.00	3.00	7.00	5.0000	.32444	1.45095
Desire to learn English	20	4.00	3.00	7.00	5.9500	.28539	1.27630
Attitudes toward Learning English	20	6.00	1.00	7.00	4.6500	.31014	1.38697
English teacher Evaluation	20	6.00	1.00	7.00	4.7500	.37609	1.68195
Instrumental orientation	20	4.00	3.00	7.00	5.9000	.22827	1.02084
English use Anxiety	20	6.00	1.00	7.00	4.3000	.44780	2.00263
English course evaluation	20	5.00	2.00	7.00	5.0000	.29019	1.29777
English class Anxiety	20	5.00	1.00	6.00	3.8000	.42674	1.90843
Motivational intensity	20	5.00	2.00	7.00	5.5000	.31204	1.39548
Parental encouragement	20	6.00	1.00	7.00	5.7000	.38457	1.71985

The table 3 shows students' instrumental orientation (5.900) and integrative orientation (5.300) are high. But the difference between the two orientations is 0.600. In other words, students have higher instrumental motivation that integrative orientation. The 'Desire to learn English' item mean is the highest, at 5.9500. The lowest items scored were English use anxiety (4.3000) and English class anxiety (3.8000). Furthermore, parental encouragement and motivational intensity are rather high.

## 5.2. Focus group interview

Researchers asked participants to respond to the questions one by one and take turns and the interview result was explained below, in accordance with the focus group interview items list. For the first question, students commented on English being an important language and means of communication to receive information, to travel and live abroad, to learn and get educated, and to socialize. The second question was "Why are you studying English?" and the participants responded they are learning English since it is their major, they take compulsory courses, it is a global language, and because their parents demanded them to study English. They added that most scientific and professional documents and materials are written in English. For the key item of the interview, students gave answers related to teachers' and other students' attitudes. We translated these from Mongolian into English.

*The teacher's attitude makes me stop studying English. Sometimes they say you cannot graduate as English teachers.*

*Sometimes teachers get frustrated when we don't get the lesson.*

*When I read or pronounce some words wrong, some students giggle, and I feel uncomfortable.*

Moreover, students replied that they get demotivated because of the school and other environments.

*We are not allowed to stay at school after six o'clock in the evening.*

*The period for checking out course books [from the library] is not long enough. We have to return them quickly. And this demotivates me.*

*I have a family, and my baby is young. Thus, when I get home, I have no time and place to study.*

*I stay at my relatives'. Thus, it is difficult to study because I am the one who is responsible to do the chores at home.*

The internal factors participants declared are following.

*I have different wishes. For example, I prefer playing basketball rather than practicing English.*

*I think I don't have good time management.*

*I feel lazy and inactive.*

*I feel ashamed when other students speak English fluently and do well in English.*

For the follow-up item 4, students answered they will be able to reach their goals of travelling, studying abroad, getting a better job, working abroad, and being self-confident and sociable.

For question item 5, interview participants they will be respected and other people's attention would change if they learned English well.

*When I work as an English teacher at secondary school, I will get respected more by pupils.*

*I will be a role model for other people because I have perfect English.*

*I will work and live in a great atmosphere and have a good surrounding of better people.*

## 6. DISCUSSION

We investigated students' motivations toward learning English and the factors demotivating them, particularly to determine whether English-majoring students have instrumental or integrative orientation. The questionnaire results showed students' motivations are more instrumentally oriented than integrated. In other words, pragmatic reasons to learn English seem common among students.

In Mongolia, the demand for English teachers in the labor market has been increasing lately because the total hours of English classes in secondary education level have been increased on a national level. Furthermore, private schools have opened that offer and teach English as a foreign language from the 1<sup>st</sup> grade. Thus, we interpret these findings on parental encouragement towards learning English, students' interests in foreign language and desires to learn English being high might be related to the social circumstances above. Likewise, since students have decided on their future profession as an English teacher, their desires and interests in English as instrumental orientations relates to their goals.

Additionally, one of the lowest mean items of the questionnaire was English class anxiety, which means they are rather confident when speaking English in class, but the students' English use anxiety is higher, which shows students worry about their use of English outside

the class. Mongolia lacks English speaking situations and students struggle to find real-life situations in which to speak English daily, outside community and school clubs and events that offer English practice.

The focus group interview revealed factors demotivating students can be internal and external. We divide external factors affecting the motivation of learning English into teachers' attitudes and the school and classroom environment. The previous studies showed teachers factor as one of the important factors demotivating students (Ali and Pathan 2017). As for the school and classroom environment, as Ali and Pathan, Dorneyi, Kikuchi and Sakai mentioned, school or classroom environments affect students, as well.

Significant differences from the related studies include that students did not give answers related to teaching materials (Ali and Pathan 2017) or course books (Dorneyi 2001). We observed from the interview that living conditions were one of the special demotivating factors for students we interviewed. It is common for students not only staying at the university dormitory or renting a flat with other students but also staying at their relatives during their university years because students usually enroll from different aimags in Mongolia. When students stay at their relatives, they feel uncomfortable which prevents them from achieving in English and decreases their motivation toward learning English. Most of the students at NUM Erdenet School are female. There were female students who got married and have children who participated the focus group interview. From their perspective and replies, it is clear that if a female student is married and has child(ren), this prevents them from practicing and studying English. Moreover, other students' attitudes seemed to be important demotivating factors for students. For instance, students hesitate to speak or practice English when other students correct their mistakes and giggle when they make mistakes.

For internal factors, we consider some accounts. These are students' wishes, goal settings, learning and cognitive styles, formation of character and upbringing, self-confidence, and psychological conditions. Students mentioned internal motivating factor of being accepted, respected and appreciated is rather important to them because there is an intention of society that thus acquired social stand or position is favored more. The students who are English-majoring have high needs of esteem (Maslow 1943), where we explain this could be resulting from high appreciation and respect toward teachers as a profession and people with advanced knowledge of English.

## 7. LIMITATION

There were some limitations to this research, though it provided some results of motivation of English-majoring students towards learning English and factors affecting them demotivated. Firstly, only students at NUM, Erdenet, were surveyed. Therefore, the result may not be generalized to other university students who are English-majoring in Mongolia. Second, the number of study sample was small and thus the study scope is rather limited.

## 8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We aimed to determine the motivation orientation toward learning English among English-majoring students at National University of Mongolia, Erdenet School. We also intended to reveal the factors leading to demotivational attitude towards learning English.

Our findings from the questionnaire and focus group interview showed that English-majoring students have a higher instrumental orientation than integrative orientation toward learning English, both because they have already chosen the program as their future profession and English teachers demand in Mongolia is increasing. Moreover, their parental encouragement and desire to learn English results were strong.

Some demotivating factors include their teachers' attitudes and their school environment. Students also responded with significantly different factors which effect their learning English motivations, including living conditions and classmates' attitudes.

We recommend English teachers to pay attention to their attitudes toward students, classroom behavior, atmosphere and organization of the lessons. Teachers must provide real-life situations in class, where students can practice English more. We suggest school administrations to consider making library services more flexible. Clubs, trainings and seminars designed to develop the students personally and academically should be run and organized more often at the university.

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## TOP-DOWN OR BOTTOM-UP? EMPLOYING A MIDDLE-GROUND APPROACH IN DESIGNING A UK ACADEMIC WRITING COURSE FOR ADVANCED CHINESE GRADUATES

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**Abstract.** *This article documents the academic writing course design process for advanced Chinese learners aiming to pursue postgraduate degrees in business-related fields at their respective target universities in the UK. Four holders of BA degrees in the social sciences from second tier universities in Beijing were tested, surveyed and observed in detail to design a non-terminal twenty-hour pre-sessional writing course (ten two-hour sessions) to assist in their preparation for postgraduate study. All students held offers from Russell Group universities in the UK and had covered the IELTS requirement (6.5-7.0) for admission there prior to signing up for the EAP course discussed in this paper. The aim of the course is to enhance the students' academic skills and improve their performance in the following year when they attend UK universities. The course design process is informed by two sets of principles, incorporating both a top-down and a bottom-up perspective. The former is framed within an understanding of EAP as academic, rather than language training. The latter is based on needs analysis of student-specific weaknesses explored through the use of a questionnaire, a diagnostic writing test and in-class observations. Both perspectives feed into the course goals and objectives which serve as a basis for the course rationale. Aiming to bridge the gap between Chinese undergraduate and UK postgraduate study, the course combines textbooks with authentic materials and formative with summative assessment. Reflections on major constraints and limitations are provided throughout the process. This documented case of academic writing course design aims to reveal challenges faced by EAP practitioners working with UK and Chinese institutions, and to present a middle ground approach to resolving tensions between top-down and bottom-up pressures in the context of course design for advanced Chinese graduates.*

**Key words:** *EAP, UK, China, course development, needs analysis, writing*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is often defined as “the linguistic, sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic description of English as it occurs in the contexts of academic study and scholarly exchange itself” (Hamp-Lyons, 2005: 89). This embodies the dual nature of EAP as: a) a gateway to tertiary study and academia at English-language institutions; and b) a subdomain of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The former is shaped by long-standing academic traditions sustained by a top-down hierarchy where academics implicitly impose

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writing structure, expressions and terminology on younger scholars through the dissemination of their publications and through practices that form part of their teaching. Learning to follow these practices has high stakes for incoming students on English-language programmes and for aspiring academics in non-English speaking countries, creating a stable trend towards the global expansion of EAP. Academic courses welcome students from a variety of backgrounds and thus, must be designed in response to their specific needs. This creates a tension between academic standards which are imposed top-down and student needs which are identified bottom-up, posing challenges to course design.

In the first part of this article, I present salient characteristics of EAP in contrast with General English, using a top-down approach to derive course design principles as a general framework based on established academic practices and requirements in a UK context. Then, I analyse the specific needs of students who are preparing to pursue graduate degrees in the UK, adopting a bottom-up approach to inform course design. Combining top-down and bottom-up approaches, I present a case of resolving tension between the two by documenting the course design process for a group of four advanced Chinese graduates preparing to study in the UK. Given the steady yearly increase of Chinese students coming to the UK, this case presents a record of practical challenges faced frequently by EAP practitioners in the UK and China, and of potential solutions.

### **1.1. Discourse community**

Academia is a classic example of a discourse community. Swales (1990: 21-32) identifies six characteristics of this concept as “common public goals,” “mechanisms of intercommunication among its members,” “participatory mechanisms [for] feedback,” specific genres, specific lexis and a “threshold level of... expertise [of its members]”. All six are embodied in university marking criteria, and in the peer review process of academic journals. Some note that the use of English as an academic lingua franca, e.g. in science, carries political implications and places some students at a disadvantage (Tardy, 2004: 264-5). In practice, EAP courses are the closest that academia comes to mitigating this; they aim to ensure students are able to engage within their subject-specific discourse communities and efficiently participate in academic debates, especially at the graduate level. This enables students to: a) perform to the best of their abilities on their degree programme and receive appropriate recognition for that through their grades; b) impactfully present potentially innovative research findings, contributing to existing literature in their fields. Well-prepared incoming EAP students often rightly mention both as course expectations. EAP tutors may not have the subject-specific expertise to initiate students into their respective discourse communities (Spack, 1988); hence, strong course design needs to include elements of: a) linguistic and technical ability to engage in academic debates; b) psycholinguistic understanding of collective knowledge building.

### **1.2. Materials**

There are three common views on textbook use in academic literature on EAP: a) strong anti-textbook; b) weak anti-textbook; and c) pro-textbook (Harwood, 2005: 154). While this typology is a broadly accurate reflection of popular views among many scholars, it omits a fourth possibility, namely a weak pro-textbook stance. As Swales (1995: 6) rightly points out, it is tutors who “orchestrate the use of textbooks in classes.” Textbook-style teach-test activities are only intended as a foundation for developing academic skills which different groups require

to varying extents. Academic debates indicate that while it does not offer a strong advantage in any one particular aspect, this often neglected middle-ground position presents an optimal solution for balancing between the expectations of institutions, tutors and learners. It provides universities with a foundation for an accreditable curriculum design, tutors with a bank of ideas, and students with a written guide to their course. Meanwhile, selectively incorporating level-appropriate “authentic” materials (full-length, unedited and in their original format) can supplement a coursebook-based curriculum.

Adopting corpus-based learning activities addresses potential criticisms of subjectivity in material selection and presents a practical resource to the tutor. McEnery et al. (2006: 4) define a corpus as “a collection of (1) machine-readable (2) authentic texts [...] (3) sampled to be (4) representative of a particular language or language variety”. Older EAP coursebooks are based on unsubstantiated, subjective perceptions of content relevance (Lockett, 1999: 50); for instance, Coxhead’s (2000) Academic Word List inspired textbooks such as Schmitt and Schmitt (2005). This was followed by the rise of corpora which revealed great diversity in academic English; prominent examples include the British Corpus of Written Academic English (BAWE; Nesi, 2008), the English as an Academic Lingua Franca Project (ELFA; Mauranen, 2006) and the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE) which study different registers varying from UK written to international to US spoken English. Enabling students to use corpora empowers students, alleviating frequent language accuracy errors and stimulating self-study by enabling the verification of collocations, prepositions and set phrases.

### **1.3 Autonomy**

Assuming responsibility for one’s own learning is crucial for university study and a key element of progressive EAP. Lynch’s (2013) research at the University of Edinburgh suggests a very strong correlation between self-perceived progress on EAP courses and the amount of self-study hours students spend on their preparation; he argues for encouraging students to engage more actively in conversations and discussions. Inside the classroom, peer evaluation (Lynch, 1988) and group-project-based learning (Grant, 2017) offer incentives for engagement. Employing traditional e-learning platforms, e.g. Blackboard and Moodle, as well as newer mobile applications, e.g. Schoology (Ardi, 2017) can also offer access to additional resources and file sharing support while decreasing the traditional teacher-student and strong-weak student power imbalance; online learning rarely presents technical difficulties to students. Finally, the complexity of factors influencing feedback makes it “multidirectional” (Unlu and Wharton, 2015: 35) as writing norms, tutor input and student needs influence the process. Recent research demonstrates students are more likely to engage with and respond efficiently to feedback which is learner-driven (still provided by a tutor but ‘directed’ by the student; Maas, 2017).

### **1.4. Implications for course design**

This section has identified four main challenges for designing an EAP course curriculum; each of them stems from top-down pressures which are rooted in the nature of academia as a discourse community. Alongside each challenge, a potential conceptual solution was presented to inform my course design proposal outlined later in this article. First, I will adopt a weak pro-textbook approach to balance the interests of institutions, tutors and students, not rejecting the benefits of textbooks but selectively exploiting and supplementing them. Next, I

will encourage the students' psycholinguistic understanding of discourse communities, partly by developing their language skills at the text level to understand essay structure and its relationship to text purpose. Third, I will encourage learner autonomy through stimulating greater use of English outside of the classroom, online and through project-based assignments which require continuous, critical engagement with authentic sources. Providing tutor feedback and holding in-class discussions on draft elements of the project will enable students to engage critically with literature and use expert sources appropriately in their own writing to avoid possible plagiarism. Finally, corpus-based classroom activities and self-exploring will have a supplementary role in my course design.

## 2. NEEDS ANALYSIS

Having previously taught the students my course will be designed for (see Table 1 for group profile), I had informal conversations with them and their past tutors at a language centre affiliated with Beijing Union University. My group contains four advanced students holding BA degrees in the social sciences from different second tier universities in Beijing. I was asked to design a pre-sessional course focused on academic writing; the course would be non-compulsory for the students and includes twenty contact hours split into ten sessions of two hours each. Prior to taking the course, my students had obtained admission offers from their respective target UK universities (all of which are Russell Group members) and had covered their respective IELTS requirements (6.5-7.0). In the process of executing needs analysis (NA), the students were tested, surveyed and observed in detail; the methodology and data summary are presented below.

The students demonstrated strong academic potential in their respective fields. They self-identified their aim as improving academic skills in order to perform as well as possible on UK degree programmes in the following year. My group exhibits both intrinsic ('[which] comes within the individual') and extrinsic ('caused by any number of outside factors') motivation (Harmer, 2001: 51). While student performance will be quantified in the next academic year and acts as an extrinsic factor, their strong track records and determination suggests that they obtain enjoyment from learning. The fact that the surveyed students signed up to take my non-compulsory course prior to their departure to the UK was an act of making visible effort in their studies.

Table 1 Learner Group Profile

Previous Education	BA graduates, second-tier universities in Beijing		
Number of Students	4	Age Range	22-24
Male / Female Ratio	2:2	Country of Origin	China
First Language	Mandarin	Years of English Study	15-17 (2-3 hrs/wk)
Target Institutions	Russell Group UK universities (all students are offer holders)		
Target Degrees	Masters-level degrees in business-related fields		
Start Date	Sep. '18	IELTS Scores	6.5-7.0 (obtained)

### 2.1. Genre focus: argumentative essay

Prior to conducting NA, it was important to identify the types of texts that students will be required to produce on business studies graduate courses in the UK and correlate that

with my students' previous experience in order to gear the NA process toward focusing on the writing genre(s) that students need most assistance with. Business studies tutors in the UK set two types of assignments; the first one is reports. Occasionally, modules with a strong element of social science input such as marketing and organisational behaviour include assessment in the form of individual or group reports on case studies. However, reports are already a widely popular genre in the Chinese university system; moreover, they are factual accounts and content structure does not differ significantly across cultures. Hence, this course will not focus on reports.

The second type of texts business students are often required to produce in the UK are argumentative essays. The understanding of this genre differs vastly across Chinese and British culture and these differences have been explored extensively by the EAP community. For instance, Xu (2015) rightly notes that indirectness in Chinese rhetoric makes it difficult for students to understand the concept of placing a topic sentence at the beginning of a paragraph. Mattison (2007) rightly notes China has a 'high context' culture and the author's intended meaning is often expected to be assumed by the reader; moreover, Chinese students frequently adopt a wholistic view of a problem and think in terms of 'both-and', rather than the 'either-or' framework characteristic of Western academia. These and other cultural differences, such as the relatively frequent use of literary devices in Chinese academic writing, translate poorly into a Western academic context. UK universities expect students to write non-ambiguously and state their arguments directly. Hence, the focus of this course will be building up the students' skillset to prepare them for writing an argumentative essay.

## **2.2. Methodology: needs analysis and diagnostic test**

Needs analysis (NA) is both subjective and objective (West, 1994: 4). It includes elements such as purpose of study, personal motivation and past experiences. Gardner and Winslow (1983:76) rightly view NA as necessary for the production of "information which when acted upon makes courses better adapted to students' needs." The course discussed in this article is non-terminal and builds on previous knowledge of English to prepare students for university degrees. It is taught in Beijing prior to the departure of the students for the UK where they will be completing masters-level degrees in business-related fields at Russell Group universities.

To complement the EAP principles imposed through top-down academic practices (identified in Section 1), I choose to rely on NA as a foundation for 'developing tests, materials, teaching activities, and evaluation strategies' for my EAP course (Brown 1995: 35). To minimize error probability, I triangulated (Denzin, 1978) information on learner preferences and styles as identified by: a) students through a questionnaire (Appendix 3, Part 1); b) myself through impressions of students in class (Appendix 3, Part 5). The questionnaire is purposefully designed to be broad as its primary aim is not to inform content, but types of activities. My students have previously struggled to pinpoint their specific weaknesses in writing. Hence, I relied on a diagnostic writing test (Appendix 3, Part 2), assessed through the increasingly popular MASUS (Measuring the Academic Skills of University Students; Bonanno and Jones, 2007) criteria (Appendix 3, Part 4). This produced quantitative data of weakness analysis and decreased the element of subjectivity in NA to improve test validity. My in-class observations to date (Appendix 3, Part 5) combined with my knowledge of target situation for the learners (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987: 55-6) informed my findings to a lesser but still relatively significant extent.

### 2.3. Findings

Some recent EAP publications argue against the neurolinguistic argument for the validity of visual, auditory and kinaesthetic (VAK) analysis implied in my questionnaire in Appendix 3, Part 1 (Lethaby and Harries, 2015). However, such positions do not dispute that: a) students' prior knowledge is important to the achievement of learning outcomes – and VAK preferences are likely influenced by prior knowledge; b) VAK questionnaires (Fleming and Mils, 1992) are a time-efficient method of gaining information about a group of learners. Thus, to inform my choice of activities, I employed a VAK questionnaire (Appendix 3, Part 1) to discover that my students seem to be mostly visual and kinaesthetic learners. All of them enjoy collaborative activities and 'strongly agree' that 'understanding an idea helps [them] learn better'.

My students prioritize improving their writing. The two main forms of argumentative writing on graduate UK programmes in business studies are exam papers and written coursework; both require students to defend a stance through building arguments. To focus on improving specific aspects of such tasks, I administered a diagnostic test (DT) to reveal the individual strengths and weaknesses of each student (Hughes, 2003: 50).

Designing appropriately linguistic input for my course required the accurate identification of student strengths and weaknesses; thus, it was important to ensure that the writing produced by students during the DT was original and authentic. Some of my students had previously memorised a number of business-related phrases in English and their repeated use concealed the ways of expression that they would use when conveying original thoughts. To avoid reliance on memorized expressions, the writing topic was not business-specific – instead, students were asked to write a 250-word argumentative paragraph defending a stance of their choice on changes in Chinese marriage practices, a topic they had previously shown interest in.

When writing argumentative essays at UK universities, students have access to a wide variety of sources and to electronic dictionaries/translators. However, allowing the use of either could severely distort the authenticity of the students' language in the DT essay. Besides, Chinese students tend to have frequent problems with plagiarism (James et al., 2019) and the capability of detection service such as Turnitin to identify it remains somewhat limited (Bensal et al., 2013). Hence, I ensured that students would not use electronic devices so as to avoid them copying text produced by native speakers or using automated translations of their own ideas (originally conceived in Chinese). The DT took place in a controlled environment allowing only limited access to excerpts from authentic materials as a substitute for an online search for academic source texts and the use of paper dictionaries as opposed to digital software.

This mirrored the conditions in which UK university students solve exam papers and simulated closely conditions under which they produce other writing assignments. My students were allowed ample time (up to three hours) for one short paragraph since they would normally have several days or weeks to complete lengthy coursework. The simulated environment would have arguably been more realistic if source text excerpts were provided in digital format alongside electronic dictionaries and typing was completed on a computer but this was logistically impossible without allowing access to the internet at the DT location; therefore, writing was handwritten and completed in class.

The DT environment produced a highly accurate reflection of student strengths and weaknesses in exam conditions at a UK university. It mildly differed from the usually freer environment allowed when producing long argumentative essays and this could have possibly led to minor distortions in the collected data. These include, for instance concealing the

potential inability of students to identify relevant sources or over-emphasizing the need for ensuring spelling accuracy as minor errors could have been amended with a spell-checker. While potentially present, such issues do not undermine the overall validity of the collected data as a reflection of the students' writing skills.

DT results demonstrated that students' main issues fall in ten areas as shown in Table 2 (below). This data was confirmed by incorporating concept checking questions in a follow-up teaching session to verify whether students indeed struggle with these language areas; some of the questions I used include:

- Is a reference included in the text or after the text? (Referencing)
- What is another way to say [X; or] that sentence? (Efficient Paraphrasing)
- Is there a way to indicate that [X] happens only 30% of the time? (Hedging)

Table 2 Weakest Academic Skills Demonstrated in the DT Results

Academic Skill	Student Percentage*
▪ referencing	100%
▪ efficient paraphrasing	100%
▪ hedging	100%
▪ critical evaluation of evidence	75%
▪ appropriate choice of lexis	75%
▪ appropriate choice of register	75%
▪ academic style (as opposed to IELTS)	75%
▪ appropriate use of data / arguments	50%
▪ paragraph structure	50%
▪ clear topic sentence	50%

\*Percentage of students who demonstrated insufficient ability to meet UK academic standards

## 2.4 Priorities

Through involving students in course design, I engaged them to assume greater responsibility for their learning (Tudor, 1996). Based on informal conversations, perceived learner needs, target situation analysis and DT results, I identified the following priorities:

- achieving greater autonomy in research under guided supervision;
- developing greater self-awareness in the writing process;
- appropriately engaging with and referring to others' academic work;
- improving lexis accuracy and choosing more appropriate sentence structure.

NA revealed that students are at an upper-intermediate-to-advanced level. Prioritising their needs in my course design will allow them to proceed to a terminal EAP course where they will receive further training in writing longer research papers.

## 3. COURSE PROPOSAL

Students of ESP have 'external' aims to complete non-linguistic goals in the 'real world' (Basturkmen, 2010: 8). This means my students will need to complete academic work on their degree programmes after taking EAP courses. Graves (2000: 75-6) rightly contrasts between goals ('main purposes and intended outcomes') and objectives (which 'describe how the goals will be achieved'); the former are more general than the latter.

### 3.1. Goals and objectives

The overall aim of my course is to prepare students for writing an argumentative essay at the graduate level. Course design will follow Nunan's (1988: 27) product-oriented approach seeking to equip students with relevant skills to improve their performance in the target situation. Goals and objectives (as summarised in Table 3 below) identified in this section are based on this target outcome and shaped by learning priorities determined in Section 2.4. Goals (coded G1 – G3) frame the overall purpose of the designed 20-hour course, while objectives (O1 – O8) formulate input and practice.

Table 3 Goals (coded G) and objectives (coded O)

Code	By the end of the course, students will have:
G1	▪ become more autonomous learners;
G2	▪ demonstrated (in writing) engagement in an academic debate (Business Studies);
G3	▪ conveyed ideas in a structured and accurate manner (in an argumentative essay);
O1	▪ mastered Harvard Referencing Style and understood the purpose of referencing;
O2	▪ produced argumentative paragraphs where each sentence has a relevant purpose;
O3	▪ reflected on their own work and on that of others according to given criteria;
O4	▪ selected a topic of their choice and conducted some form of research on it;
O5	▪ used appropriate structure to complete one full short academic essay;
O6	▪ used new subject-specific lexis in their work;
O7	▪ used less redundant phrases (no substantial meaning) than in the DT;
O8	▪ tested preliminary versions of their arguments against colleagues and constructed improved versions in their final writing assignment.

### 3.2. Course design: outline

In line with Thornbury's (2013) recommendations and recent quantitative research (Kashef et al., 2014), I will adopt a student-centred approach to increase engagement, provoke critical thinking and foster self-assessment habits. As all students have already covered entry language requirements for their target universities and are relatively advanced learners, the course will aim at fostering comprehensive (rather than purely linguistic) skills. Stoller (1999) identifies three general areas for EAP skills: language (e.g. reading, writing,

Table 4 Rationale for syllabus structure

EAP Area	Goals / Objectives	Rationale
Technical	O1, O3, O7	▪ to ensure presentation is clear and avoid losing marks for technical inaccuracies of failures to comply with formal criteria;
Language Academic	G3: O2, O6 G1: O4, O8	▪ to increase efficiency of expression; ▪ to develop independence in understanding given criteria and in completing academic assignments;
Acculturation	G2: O5	▪ to gain conceptual understanding about the purpose of academia as collective knowledge-building body.



vocabulary), academic skills (e.g. critical thinking, research, note taking) and acculturation (e.g. understanding academic culture and expectations). These three aspects will form parts of the syllabus, along with a fourth, technical one (e.g. genre, structure, referencing). The rationale for focusing on these four areas of EAP is presented in Table 4 below.

### 3.3. Approaches, activities and sequencing

Goals and objectives should be central to the organising principles of a course (Graves, 2000: 125-7). I strive to foster skills for autonomous work to meet the goals set in 3.1. As already discussed above in 2.2, the final aim of my students will be to produce an argumentative essay; given their lack of previous experience in producing pieces of over 1,000 words and the relatively small number of sessions on the course, the length of their final essay will be limited to 1,500 words. Over the course, tasks will spiral from a paragraph to an essay.

Students will be allowed creative freedom in choosing their research topic and formulating a research question to develop autonomy and critical thinking (Alexander et al., 2008) – but they will receive peer feedback and tutor guidance on both in the process. Semi-structured seminar-style discussions in class will encourage self-reflection on the purposes of this course and of academic debates. The Socratic method will be employed to guide discussions when necessary.

Writing will be a mix of product and process approaches (Badger and White, 1993: 158). Peer editing will be based on pre-designed criteria (see Appendix 4, Parts 5 and 6), simulating a university environment and enabling students to discover and understand – on their own terms – the purposes of sentences in paragraphs and of paragraphs in a text. Product-based learning will occasionally be adopted through in-class analysis of authentic or student-produced texts.

### 3.4. Materials

Textbooks will be adapted and combined with authentic materials; through striving to understand ideas in a text, students actively seek ways of understanding its language (Block, 1991). Material types and example sources are presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5 Materials: types and example sources

Type	Rationale	Objectives	Example
Textbooks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ can be adapted; provide structured language/grammar points.</li> </ul>	O1, O2, O6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Hewings (2012);</li> <li>▪ Zemach and Rumisek (2005).</li> </ul>
Student Drafts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ can be peer edited; topical.</li> </ul>	O1, O7, O8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ from students.</li> </ul>
Grading Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ students learn to self-correct.</li> </ul>	O3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ see Appendix 4, Parts 5 and 6.</li> </ul>
Journal Articles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ authentic texts; can match students' topics.</li> </ul>	O4, O5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Braakmann (2016).</li> </ul>
Online Videos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ fosters research through multimedia resources.</li> </ul>	O4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ London School of Economics and Political Science (2017)</li> </ul>

### 3.5. Constraints and limitations

Time and space constraints do not allow me to actively monitor students during the research process. I will alleviate this issue through an in-class session on identification and selection of appropriate source materials; while this solution limits the extent to which I can identify potential problems, it simulates a university environment and adds authenticity to the writing process.

The values implicitly promoted by this course stand in contrast to those of some critical EAP (CEAP) scholars who believe that by strictly complying with established academic practices, students ‘surrender their own language and modes of thought to the requirements of the target community’ (Johns, 1990: 33). Benesch’s (2001) elaborate study argues that through imposing stern academic expectations based largely on tradition, most EAP practitioners sustain the power dynamics of reinforcing dominant thought frameworks on students. However, Benesch also believes that students should be allowed to shape their own academic goals, thus creating a potential internal contradiction between a desire for pushing teaching innovation through CEAP and possibly conservative learner demands and expectations for a traditional approach.

In the process of designing this course, I was faced with this exact paradox and employed a pragmatic solution typical for practitioners of traditional EAP. This decision was underpinned by three practical considerations, rather than assumptions about the philosophy of knowledge production. First, my students explicitly stated to me that they primary aim to maximize improvement in their future marks at university – to achieve this, I was (somewhat ironically) incentivised to respond to student demands by maintaining considerable top-down control in terms of the writing standards I imposed.

Second, prior to this course my students had produced neither an argumentative essay, nor an extended piece of writing beyond 1,000 words in English; meanwhile my contact time with the students was limited to only ten three-hour sessions. Although my group was relatively advanced compared to general English learners, the students still faced considerable difficulties to engage in depth with academic debates on subject-specific topics. In this context, potential concerns about the effects of institutional power dynamics remained beyond my immediate priorities. Finally, the cultural background and previous experiences of my students revealed a strong inclination to favour, rather than question hierarchies (Zhu et al., 2016). Ensuring that students would produce substantial arguments for the summative writing assignment on this course was a key aim that had already produced one major conceptual clash with my students’ cultural assumptions – adding another one by pursuing a CEAP approach would have likely resulted in setting unachievable goals and objectives, given the short timeframe of my EAP course.

## 4. ASSESSMENT

EAP courses in the UK contain two forms of assessment: formative, ‘for learning;’ and summative, ‘for certification’ (Seviour, 2015: 84). The former is aimed at providing feedback for further improvement, while the latter takes place at the end of courses and aims to assess student performance. I will monitor progress and provide guidance through three formative assessments by offering feedback on: a) one argumentative paragraph (Day 3/4), coded F1; b) one introductory paragraph (Day 6/7), coded F2; c) one group discussion (Day 7/8), coded F3, all of which will be on topics selected freely by each student, subject to my approval. The purpose of each formative assessment is listed in Table 6.

Table 6 Purpose of each formative assessment

F1 will:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ familiarize students with academic marking procedures;</li> <li>▪ check whether students are developing arguments;</li> <li>▪ enable students to start brainstorming ideas for the topic of their summative assessment;</li> <li>▪ present me with feedback on the efficiency of the first third of the course;</li> <li>▪ allow me to make timely adjustments to the course, if necessary.</li> </ul>
F2 will:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ provide practice for the structure of essay introductions;</li> <li>▪ evaluate a draft of the students' thesis statements;</li> <li>▪ serve as guidance for the summative assessment.</li> </ul>
F3 will:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ enable students to engage in critical discussions on their research topics;</li> <li>▪ help students to refine their arguments.</li> </ul>

This process will build up to a fourth, summative assessment (coded S) at the end of the course. This will be a 1,500-word argumentative essay; through evaluating it, I will determine the extent: a) to which students are ready to produce university-level work with some guidance; b) of student progress towards course objectives listed in section 3.1. Students may change or adjust their final writing topic at any point prior to week 4, conditional on my approval; however, it is desirable for all three formative assessments to cover topics/themes similar to that of their research area and their summative assignment.

#### 4.1. Task choice: rationale

A project contains more than one task and spreads over a longer time frame than one class (Bülent and Stoller, 2005). A sequence of formative and summative assessments on one or similar topics thus constitutes a project. Project-based learning (PBL) increases autonomy, enhances motivation and engages the student in the learning process (Egbert, 2003; Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011). PBL has been successfully implemented in mainland China (Grant, 2017) and it forms a core part of new services offered by educational start-ups in Beijing (e.g. ViaX); hence, I chose to employ it as a course-guiding principle.

Assessment (F1, F2, F3, S) is sequenced as shown in Appendix 6. Paragraphing comes first as: a) students have more experience writing paragraphs, rather than essays; b) it encourages argument building. Providing feedback on an essay introduction midway through the course allows sufficient time for making and/or adjusting topic choice and for refining ideas. Student-led critical discussions in F3 are based on individual research and on draft writings – they take place on Day 7 and provide an opportunity to test ideas in front of fellow colleagues and to also receive tutor feedback on the following day. Summative assessment requirements are designed to simulate a short UK university essay assignment, aiming to create positive washback (Harris and McCann, 1994). The course mainly aims to improve writing skills for university essays; hence, all assessment apart from the discussion is on take-home assignments. Student work will be submitted via e-mail and feedback will follow within seven days of submission.

## 4.2 Criteria: rationale

Based on Hyland's (1990: 69) three stage analysis of academic writing (thesis, argument, conclusion), this course focuses on the development of argument-based writing and on improving the students' ability to formulate a concise, critical thesis statement which maps out the essay. All criteria (Appendix 4, Parts 1-4) are designed with reference to student weaknesses (Section 2) and course objectives (Section 3). Appendix 4, Part 1 is an open-ended version of the DT criteria to allow for flexible feedback with specific examples. Appendix 4, Part 2 evaluates the elements of an introduction. Appendix 4, Part 3 focuses on critical thinking. These three sets of criteria are designed to measure student progress, to create a positive spin off on students and to allow for timely adjustments to the course, if necessary. Appendix 4, Part 4 is identical to the DT criteria – grading students against the same set of requirements before and after the course provides a clear and quantifiable measure of their progress. All marking contains a subjective element to mirror university essay feedback and grading.

## 4.3. Course evaluation

The course will be evaluated both by me and by the students. I will collate data to produce: a) comparative analysis DT and summative assessment evaluation against the adapted version of the MASUS criteria (Appendix 4, Part 4); b) personal observations. Students will provide: c) group feedback; d) individual feedback. Combining the evaluations of tutors and students is crucial because as Nunan (1993: 139) rightly notes, there might be 'disparities between what teachers believe happens in class and what actually happens'.

The final hour of the course (hour two in session 10) will be a reflective discussion with the students about their experience. In a focus group setting, students can influence each other's responses and thus, the data collected through this discussion will be supplemented by a course feedback questionnaire (Klimova, 2015: 637), handed out to students after the final class and collected electronically by the end of the day. This will aim to identify whether: a) student input from the discussion can be confirmed; b) students make any new suggestions.

## 4.3. Constraints

Time constraints do not allow for one-on-one tutorials – this will, to an extent, be mitigated through active monitoring and in-class feedback, but still remains as a missing feature of the course. Theoretically, take-home assignments could undermine assessment validity as students may reach out for external help or attempt to plagiarize. However, the former is unlikely as students: a) are sufficiently motivated to receive additional feedback; b) have not had access to EAP guidance at their Chinese universities. I will identify plagiarism through: checking student work through my academic account on Turnitin; b) comparing writing styles against samples from DT. These limitations do not impede me from achieving my course aims and objectives.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This course differs fundamentally from general English courses. It incorporates a psycholinguistic introduction to the idea of a discourse community and various critical elements (e.g. self-reflection; peer editing; student-led discussions). In line with such practices,

authentic materials are used in class and students are required to locate, evaluate and incorporate their own secondary research into formative and summative assessment writing.

While providing guidance as a tutor, I treat students as independent, young academics and provide them with high levels of freedom to choose their research topic. Regardless of the level of work they produce for the summative project, the experience will allow stronger students to excel and weaker ones will learn through assuming greater responsibility for their studies.

### **5.1. Course limitations**

The course is limited by design as it does not provide training in key areas of EAP, such as writing for exams, assessed presentations and grammar – students are expected to receive such training on a subsequent pre-sessional course. Time and space constraints do not allow me to monitor students during the research process and to hold one-on-one tutorials; therefore, a substantial amount of self-discovery is required.

Creativity in essay presentation is omitted from the curriculum; it is neither encouraged, nor discouraged but rather ignored in order to avoid detracting from the course's main goals. The curriculum assumes strong student motivation and ample time for preparation at home. Lack or misjudgement of either may result in partial achievement of course objectives (3.1); however, it is unlikely to devalue the strengths of the course.

### **5.2. Course strengths**

The course has a practical focus and it purposefully emphasises main priorities which will have a lasting impact on the academic careers of students, rather than simply resolving minor, purely linguistic (e.g. grammar inaccuracy) issues. The course's target outcome (producing a short argumentative essay to a UK university standard) closely mirrors the target situation, creating a learning experience.

Priorities (2.4), goals and objectives (3.1) are derived from NA. Tailoring the course to learner needs has resulted in addressing writing features which students already struggle with and thus, they will inevitably improve.

Finally, incorporating standard university practices (written feedback; formative / summative assessment) teaches a practical skillset to bridge the cultural gap between university systems in the UK and China. Navigating through formative assignment feedback trains students to simultaneously attend to pivotal parts of the writing process and to the assessment criteria which will be used to evaluate the final product. Asking students to identify their own research topics while providing individual guidance in the process means the course can tailor to different levels of critical and language abilities. This makes the course targeted to the needs of all learners identified in Section 2.

### **5.3 Broader implications**

This article documents the academic writing course design process for advanced Chinese graduates aiming to pursue postgraduate study in business-related fields in the UK. It identifies areas of course design which are often approached differently by EAP practitioners who might choose to place a greater focus on institutional expectations as opposed to those who prioritise student needs. This tension fundamentally stems from a clash between top-down expectations imposed through established practices within academic communities

and bottom-up needs specific to different student groups. The article presents a middle-ground approach to resolving these tensions through making a case for balanced course design by combining key EAP principles with needs analysis. The course design offers practical solutions to problems faced frequently by EAP practitioners, offering middle-ground solutions which simultaneously incorporate institutional and student expectations while minimising limitations.

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## APPENDICES 1-6

Supplementary data is available online via the following URL:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1MuphS8NbtnLlp3UORhIAIXlpUKXNKbQH>



## EFFECT OF CAPTION TYPE IN PICTURE PROMPTS ON EFL WRITING QUALITY

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**Abstract.** *To explore the validity of picture-prompt writing assessment, the study investigated the influence of caption type (i.e. narrative, abstract, and zero) in the picture prompt on EFL writing quality of Chinese college students in terms of holistic scores and functional dimensions (i.e. Dimensions of Involvement, Narration, Elaborated reference, Persuasion, Abstractness, and On-line informational elaboration). ANOVA, MANOVA, and linear regression analysis were conducted and results showed that (a) participants performed significantly better with the abstract caption; (b) Dimensions of Involvement and Abstractness significantly distinguished essays with the abstract caption from those with other types; (c) Dimension of Persuasion significantly predicted ratings of essays with the narrative caption, while Dimension of Narration significantly predicted ratings of essays with the abstract caption. Finally, implications for picture-prompt writing assessment and instruction were discussed.*

**Key word:** *caption, picture prompt, writing quality, functional dimension, holistic ratings*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Writing tasks and their interaction with test takers have been perennial topics in writing assessment research (Hamp-Lyons 2011). Given the more prevalent use of visuals of various kinds in communication in the modern digital age on the one hand and on the other the great value of picture prompts for teaching and assessing writing (Bae & Lee 2010; Olshansky 2018), performance assessment has involved visuals (e.g. pictures, graphs) as prompts to elicit speaking or writing performance, as shown in a number of language tests ranging from large-scale (e.g. IELTS, TOEFL, GSEEE<sup>1</sup>, CET<sup>2</sup>) to in-house ones. However, while most studies in the field deal with graph-prompt speaking tasks (e.g. Xi 2010) and writing tasks (e.g. Yang 2016), writing tasks with picture prompts have been inadequately addressed (e.g. Bae & Lee 2010; Li 2018).

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<sup>1</sup> Graduate School Entrance English Examination (GSEEE) is administered annually by the National Education Examinations Authority of the Ministry of Education of China. It is high-stakes in nature as passing it is a prerequisite for the entrance into various master programs.

<sup>2</sup> College English Test (CET), administered by the National College English Testing Committee on behalf of the Ministry of Education of China, is a large-scale English test to examine the English proficiency of undergraduates in terms of whether they reach the required English levels specified in the National College English Teaching Syllabuses (Zheng & Cheng 2008).

Thus, in order to explore the validity of picture-prompt writing assessment, as well as to inform development of writing tasks with picture prompts, it is necessary to investigate the influence of picture prompts on writing performance and to identify any possible construct-irrelevant factors.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section presents a review of previous studies on the effect of picture prompts on writing performance, and also introduces the role of caption in picture prompts and multi-dimensional analysis.

### 2.1. Previous studies on the effect of picture prompts

There are several studies on the effect of picture prompts on writing performance, which display the following three features. First, the picture prompt was usually treated intuitively in terms of the number of frames of pictures (a single picture vs. comic strip) (Bae & Lee 2010), the content of pictures (Jung & Bae 2013; Li 2018), or the order of pictures (ordered vs. disordered) (Kormos 2011). Second, the effect of visual prompts on the quality of written products was mainly examined in terms of ratings (Bae & Lee 2010; Li 2018) or individual linguistic and discourse characteristics, such as lexical complexity, lexical diversity, syntactic complexity, accuracy, cohesive features, and word count (Kormos 2011; Jung & Bae 2013). No significant effect was revealed, except in Kormos (2011)'s study where a series of ordered pictures elicited essays with significantly greater word concreteness and use of connectives. Third, most studies were conducted among EFL learners on primary and secondary levels (Bae & Lee 2010; Kormos 2011; Jung & Bae 2013).

To sum up, previous studies have provided a limited view of the effect of picture prompts on writing performance, both in terms of the independent (i.e., features of the picture prompt) and dependent variables (i.e., quality of writing products). To broaden the view, the following two sections will address these limitations by focusing on the caption in picture prompts and multi-dimensional analysis.

### 2.2. The caption in picture prompts

The picture prompt in writing tasks is one type of stimulus which refers to "the material that forms the basis for generating writing content" (Weigle 2002: 62). Compared with verbal language, pictures embody distinctive characteristics which pose both benefits and challenges in communication. Specifically, pictures render the conveyed idea more salient owing to their "semantic thickness and sense of presence" (Kjeldsen 2015), yet at the same time, they lead to vagueness and ambiguity of meaning expressed due to their analogical quality and lack of an explicit propositional syntax (Messaris & Abraham 2001). Given these functional and structural differences, pictures should be treated in a different way from verbal language.

To comprehend picture prompts, two levels of processing are involved: the identification of elements in the image and the interpretation of what all these elements are constructed to convey. To facilitate the interpreting process, verbal input is often added, which acts as (a) providing a context to enable a more specific and concrete understanding, (b) facilitating content analysis of images, and (c) stabilizing the broad interpretations of images through

disambiguation or clarification of the meaning (Hagan 2007; Roque 2012). Therefore, with a view to nailing down the exact meaning conveyed by the picture, it is necessary to pay attention to the verbal input (caption) accompanying it, if present.

As to the cognitive processing of the picture prompt with captions, there are two approaches. One is from the angle of cognitive load. According to Cognitive load theory (Sweller et al. 1998), working memory capacity is limited in itself and further constrained by different cognitive loads, one of which is the extraneous cognitive load. It is generated by the manner in which information is presented and thus is under the control of design. During the writing process, writers' working memory could be overburdened, which would lead to failures in any of the stages—planning of ideas, translation of ideas into written sentences, and reviewing the ideas and text already produced (Kellogg 1996). To reduce the overload of working memory, it is necessary to facilitate efficient or even automatic retrieval of relevant content, lexical, grammatical, and discourse knowledge from long-term memory, so that writers can creatively apply what is retrieved to decide what to write and how to write it (Kellogg et al. 2013). In this case, the caption in the picture could function as a means to manipulate the extrinsic cognitive load of the task.

The other is from the angle of cognitive representation. Specifically, in the Conceptual Structuring System (Evans & Green 2006: 526), there is an Attentional System governing the distribution of attention. It is controlled by, among others, how patterns of attention are organized. One of the attention patterns is the Figure-Ground organization, dictating what is fore-grounded and what is back-grounded in cognitive processing, and further determining lexical-grammatical use. In this case, the caption in the picture could act as a means to manipulate the figure-ground attention pattern in processing the prompt.

To find out whether caption in the picture prompt plays a role in writing performance and what role it plays if present, two types of caption were designed for this study together with the zero caption type. One was narrative caption, projecting the thoughts of characters in the picture; the other was abstract caption, adding qualifying information about the meaning of the picture.

### **2.3. Multi-dimensional analysis (MD analysis)**

As mentioned in Section 2.1, previous studies often examined the effect of picture prompts in terms of individual linguistic features of writing products. However, Jarvis et al. (2003) found that writing quality may depend more on linguistic features used together than on individual features. Despite some of the features (e.g. syntactic complexity, lexical diversity, and word frequency) were found significantly predictive of essay quality (e.g. McNamara et al. 2010; Taguchi et al. 2013), these features only revealed the degree rather than the manner of variation among essays, given the fact that the distribution and interrelationship among them were not taken into consideration.

To explore linguistic features used together, MD analysis provides an approach. It is a corpus-driven methodological approach that identifies the frequent linguistic co-occurrence patterns in a language, relying on inductive empirical analysis (Biber 2010: 179). The original Biber's MD analysis (1988) investigated the frequency and distribution of 67 linguistic features of 481 spoken and written texts from 23 sub-registers of the London-Oslo-Bergen Corpus and London-Lund Corpus. Then the normalized frequency counts for each feature (per 1000 words) were obtained and further exposed to factor analysis to reduce the linguistic features to six linguistic co-occurrence patterns (i.e. Dimensions of Involvement, Narration, Elaborated

reference, Persuasion, Abstractness, and On-line informational elaboration), which were interpreted as underlying functional dimensions based on the situational, social, and cognitive functions shared by these co-occurring features. Since these dimensions have both linguistic and functional content, MD analysis has an advantage over the analysis based on individual linguistic features alone.

There have been two orientations for the application of Biber's MD analysis. One is its application to the study of the linguistic characteristics of more specialized registers and discourse domains, such as the university spoken and written registers (Biber et al. 2004; Deroey & Biber 2007), female and male conversational style (Biber & Burges 2000), etc. The other is its application to the investigation of microscopic linguistic variation in (a) L2 writing across such parameters as task types and test-taker proficiency levels (Biber & Gray 2013; Biber et al. 2016), text types and first language groups (Weigle & Friginal 2015), time of writing and essay scores (Friginal & Weigle 2014), as well as contexts of writing (writing in tests vs. in disciplinary learning) (Staples et al. 2018); or (b) in L1 argumentative writing across such parameters as prompts, grade levels, geographical areas, etc. (Crossley et al. 2014). Results of these studies suggested that linguistic co-occurrence data could be used to further characterize students' writing across different parameters. Arguing for the use of MD analysis in language assessment, Biber et al. (2016) held that the dimensions resulted "provide a potentially useful set of holistic measures for testing applications" and these measures are "linguistically well motivated and interpretable". Thus, more MDA of L2 writing products across different parameters (e.g. the prompt) are called for (Friginal & Weigle 2014).

As regards how to conduct MD analysis, there are generally two approaches. One is a full MD analysis that runs an independent exploratory factor analysis to produce new dimensions for a previously unstudied register, and the other makes use of previously established dimensions that have been produced (Conrad & Biber 2001). This study, instead of conducting a new EFA, intends to utilize the six functional dimensions derived from Biber's MD study (1988) for two reasons. First, these dimensions have been treated as general dimensions of variation which are used to characterize various registers. Second, a new MD analysis would be less useful for an analysis of a single register (Biber et al. 2004).

#### **2.4. Research questions**

Taken together, this study aims to investigate the influence of caption type (i.e. narrative, abstract, and zero) in the picture prompt on EFL writing quality, as shown by functional dimensions (i.e. linguistic co-occurrence patterns) as well as holistic scores. Specifically, the study addresses the following three research questions:

1. Does the writing quality vary significantly across three types of captions in terms of holistic ratings?
2. Does the writing quality vary significantly across caption types in terms of functional dimensions?
3. What is the possible relationship between functional dimensions and holistic ratings across caption types?

### 3. METHODS

#### 3.1. Participants and materials

Participants in this study were 154 juniors from three parallel classes of the education major in a Chinese college. The original picture-prompt writing task<sup>3</sup> consists of the instruction and a picture as the prompt without any verbal input in it. Students are asked to write an essay of 160-200 words within 35 minutes in which they need to describe the picture briefly, explain the intended meaning, and give comments. The picture prompt depicts a football match in which a goal keeper is standing in front of a goal, ready to protect it, while a striker is trying to kick the ball in. The goal keeper is imagining in his mind that he is so tiny compared with the size of the goal, while the striker is visualizing in his mind that the goalkeeper is so giant as almost to intercept the goal. The picture prompt intends to convey such an idea that self-confidence is essential for people to achieve success.

There were three types of caption in the picture prompt for this study: the narrative caption, the abstract caption, and the zero caption (see Appendix 1). Specifically, the narrative caption projected the thoughts of both the goalkeeper and the striker in the verbal mode by means of two bubbles with words in the picture, thus providing test takers with a clear knowledge of the two characters' mental activities; the abstract caption "*the psychology on the football field*" went beyond what is presented explicitly in the picture and revealed in a general way the implied meaning of the picture; the zero caption meant that no verbal input was added to the original picture prompt, so test takers had to make their own interpretations based on the picture alone. In all, they varied in the amount of aid for test takers to interpret the picture.

#### 3.2. Data collection

The picture-prompt writing task was administered during regular class period. The between-subjects design was used in that the participants of the three classes were randomly assigned one of the three versions of the writing task. It was found by ANOVA that there was no significant difference in writing scores of the final examination of English last semester among the three groups ( $F(2,151) = .016, p = .984 > .05$ ), suggesting that any possible difference in writing quality could not result from writing proficiency. Table 1 presents the number of participants, the total word count, as well as the word count per essay for each caption type.

Table 1 Distribution of participants across different captions

Caption type	Narrative caption	Abstract caption	Zero caption
Num. of participants	52	55	47
Total words	8404	10099	7948
words per essay	162	184	169

As to essay rating, two trained raters scored each essay based on a 0-20 holistic scoring rubric (see Appendix 2). The Pearson correlation between the two raters' ratings was .83. The averages of the two ratings were used as final marks of participants' writing. If the

<sup>3</sup> It is selected from picture-prompt writing tasks of GSEEE.

scores given by two raters were over 2 points away from each other, another rater would be involved as an adjudicator, and then the average of the two closer scores among the three would be used as the final mark.

### 3.3. Data analysis

First, to explore whether writing quality varied significantly across caption types in terms of holistic ratings (RQ1), one-way ANOVA was used. Second, to answer RQ2 (i.e. whether writing quality varied significantly across caption types in terms of functional dimensions), first of all, Multidimensional Analysis Tagger<sup>4</sup> (MAT) 1.3 (Nini 2015) was used to calculate the normalized frequency of 67 linguistic features and the scores on six functional dimensions. Next, MANOVA was used to check whether these six dimension scores varied significantly. If there was a significant effect, then six univariate ANOVA would be conducted for each dimension with the alpha level adjusted by Bonferroni correction (i.e.  $.05/6 = .008$ ). And for post-hoc comparisons in each ANOVA, the alpha level would be further adjusted (i.e.  $.008/3 = .003$ ). Finally, to find out what was the possible relationship between functional dimensions and holistic ratings across caption types (RQ 3), linear regression analysis was conducted to calculate the predictive power of six dimension scores for the ratings across caption types.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. Influence of caption type on writing quality in terms of holistic ratings

As to the effect of different caption types on scores, it was shown by ANOVA that different caption types significantly influenced writing scores ( $F(2,151) = 7.705, p = .001, R^2 = .093$ ). Post-hoc LSD results revealed that performance with the abstract caption ( $M = 10.2, SD = 3.951$ ) was significantly higher than that with the narrative caption ( $M = 7.692, SD = 3.444$ ) ( $p = .002$ ) and the zero caption ( $M = 7.723, SD = 3.916$ ) ( $p = .006$ ) respectively. But the performance with the narrative caption and the zero caption did not differ from each other significantly.

### 4.2. Influence of caption type on writing quality in terms of functional dimensions

Table 2 presents both descriptive and inferential statistics of six dimension scores across three caption types.

In terms of central tendency, scores for Dimensions of Involvement, Narration, and On-line informational elaboration were the highest in essays with the narrative caption than in those with the other two captions, while scores for Dimensions of Elaborated reference, Persuasion, and Abstractness were the highest in essays with the abstract caption than in those with the other two captions. As regards dispersion, scores for Dimensions of Involvement, Narration, and On-line informational elaboration spread most widely in essays with the narrative caption than in those with the other two dimensions; for essays with the

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<sup>4</sup> MAT is a computer program that replicates Biber's (1988) tagger for the MD analysis of English texts. It not only generates a grammatically annotated version of the texts together with the statistics needed to perform MD analysis but also plots the texts on Biber's (1988) six dimensions.

zero caption, scores of Dimensions of Persuasion and Abstractness spread most widely than for essays with the other two captions; scores of the Dimension of Elaborated reference spread most widely in essays with the abstract caption than in those with the other two captions.

Table 2 Functional dimension scores across three types of captions

Dimension	Caption						ANOVA		
	Narrative		Abstract		Zero		F	p	R <sup>2</sup>
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
1 Involvement	12.50	9.42	3.60	6.46	11.43	8.87	18.296	<b>.000</b>	.195
2 Narration	-2.39	2.98	-3.74	2.36	-3.40	2.73	3.577	.030	.045
3 Elaborated reference	1.64	3.21	3.34	3.71	1.89	3.47	3.731	.026	.047
4 Persuasion	2.74	4.59	2.90	4.77	2.32	5.37	.185	.832	.002
5 Abstractness	-0.64	3.23	3.87	2.99	0.22	3.65	28.333	<b>.000</b>	.273
6 On-line informational elaboration	0.55	2.88	0.50	2.58	0.05	2.25	.553	.576	.007

MANOVA results indicated that using Wilks's lambda, there was a significant effect of caption type on scores of six functional dimensions ( $L = 0.577$ ,  $F(12, 292) = 7.687$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $R^2 = .240$ ). The follow-up ANOVA results revealed that the caption only significantly influenced scores of Dimensions of Involvement ( $F(2, 151) = 18.296$ ,  $p = .000 < .008$ ,  $R^2 = .195$ ) and Abstractness ( $F(2, 151) = 28.333$ ,  $p = .000 < .008$ ,  $R^2 = .273$ ), as shown by the number in bold print in Table 3.

Post-hoc LSD results showed that scores for the Dimension of Involvement (Dimension 1) with the abstract caption were significantly lower than that with the narrative caption ( $p = .000 < .003$ ) and the zero caption ( $p = .000 < .003$ ) respectively. To be specific, essays with the abstract caption exhibited relatively more prominent co-occurring use of linguistic features with negative loadings on Dimension 1, such as attributive adjective and nouns. In contrast, essays with the narrative caption had relatively more prominent co-occurring use of linguistic features with positive loadings on Dimension 1, such as emphatics (e.g. just, such a, really, so, a lot, for sure), second person pronouns (e.g. you, your, yours), and *be* as main verb (e.g. is, are, am). And essays with the zero caption had relatively more prominent co-occurring use of such positive features on Dimension 1 as first person pronouns (e.g. I, me, we, our, ourselves, us), private verbs (e.g. think, believe, find, feel, fear, guess, show, realize), and subordinator *that*-deletion. To interpret the linguistic difference, essays with the narrative caption and the zero caption were more interactional and affectively involved, whereas those with the abstract caption were less interactional with some prominent information-oriented features.

On the other hand, scores for the Dimension of Abstractness (Dimension 5) with the abstract caption were significantly higher than that with the narrative caption ( $p = .000 < .003$ ) and the zero caption ( $p = .000 < .003$ ) respectively. Specifically, such linguistic features as conjuncts (e.g., furthermore, thus, however, for example, in other words, as a result), adverbial subordinators (e.g., because, if, unless, though, while, as long as), and *by*-passives were comparatively more frequently used in essays with the abstract caption. Put another way, essays with the abstract caption were relatively more abstract and thus more impersonal and formal than those with the other two captions. To sum up this section, the

picture prompt with the abstract caption elicited significantly less interactional but more abstract essays than that with either narrative or zero caption.

### **4.3. Relationship between functional dimensions and holistic ratings across caption types**

As to how six functional dimension scores and holistic scores were related, only two significant correlations were revealed by Pearson correlation analysis. Specifically, one was the positive correlation between Persuasion Dimension (Dimension 4) scores and scores of essays with the narrative caption ( $r = .278, p = .046 < .05$ ), suggesting that the more frequently such features as infinitives, prediction modals, persuasive verbs, conditional subordination, necessity modals, split auxiliaries, and possibility modals were used together in an essay, the more highly it would be rated. The other was the positive correlation between Narration Dimension (Dimension 2) scores and scores of essays with the abstract caption ( $r = .340, p = .011 < .05$ ), suggesting the more frequently such features as past tense verbs, third person pronouns, perfect aspect verbs, public verbs, synthetic negation, and present participial clauses were used together in an essay, the more highly it would be rated.

Further analysis through multiple linear regression of these two significant correlations generated two significant results. On the one hand, for essays with the narrative caption, scores of the Persuasion Dimension (Dimension 4) significantly predicted scores ( $\beta = 0.278, t = 2.046, p = .046$ ), accounting for 7.9% of their variance ( $F(1, 50) = 4.272, p < .05, r^2 = .079$ ). On the other, for essays with the abstract caption, scores of the Narration Dimension (Dimension 2) significantly predicted scores ( $\beta = 0.340, t = 2.630, p = .011$ ), accounting for 11.5% of their variance ( $F(1, 53) = 6.921, p < .05, r^2 = .115$ ).

## **5. DISCUSSION**

### **5.1. Influence of caption type on writing quality in terms of holistic ratings**

It was found that participants performed significantly better with the abstract caption than with either the narrative or the zero caption respectively. There are both contrary and similar findings in previous studies. For instance, it was found that such factors as the number of frames and the content of the picture prompt did not exert a significant effect on writing performance (e.g. Bae & Lee 2010; Li 2018). Yet, a series of disordered pictures was found to generate significantly poorer quality in terms of word concreteness and cohesion than a series of ordered pictures (Kormos 2010), which was attributed to the differential cognitive complexity of the tasks. Likewise, the findings in this case could be related with the cognitive load (Sweller et al. 1998) involved in processing the picture prompt with different types of captions. Specifically, in the case of picture-prompt writing tasks, test takers are asked to describe the picture, interpret its meaning, and then to give comments. All three interactive sub-tasks must be processed in the working memory for the fulfillment of the requirement of the whole writing task, resulting in a high intrinsic cognitive load, especially the sub-task of interpreting the meaning of the picture. In terms of efficient retrieval from long-term memory of the relevant content and linguistic knowledge for the generation of ideas and sentences, the abstract caption could possibly play a relatively more facilitative role. Specifically, it provided a direct bridge to the implied meaning of the picture, thus more readily activating test-takers' schemas and



reducing the working memory demand of composing online especially in the time-constrained testing situation. In contrast, the narrative caption only re-represented the explicit meaning of the picture, whereas the picture prompt without caption provided no clue to its implied meaning. In these two cases, much of the working memory capacity would be devoted to hesitating about the theme or composing. As found by Kellogg et al. (2013), lack of accessibility of relevant knowledge in working memory contributes significantly to problems in coherence, grammar, and spelling. Therefore, with the help of the liberated working memory capacity for formulation, translation, and reviewing, it could be possible that essays with the abstract caption displayed relatively better quality in general.

### **5.2. Influence of caption on writing quality in terms of functional dimensions**

It was found that Dimensions of Involvement and Abstractness significantly distinguished essays with the abstract caption from those with the other two caption types, suggesting essays with the abstract caption were more information-oriented and abstract. This could be related with the Figure-Ground attention pattern (Evans & Green 2006). In this case, as the abstract caption provided the clue to the implied meaning of the picture, it would most probably be fore-grounded in cognitive processing, whereas the picture itself would most probably be back-grounded. As a result, test takers would concentrate on the abstract caption and elaborate on the implied meaning of the picture in a logical and objective way; and correspondingly more linguistic features (e.g. by-passives, conjuncts, and adverbial subordinators) would be used together, which would add to the abstractness and information-orientation of essays. In contrast, with the narrative or the zero caption, the picture prompt (together with the narrative caption) would possibly be fore-grounded, and test takers would possibly focus on describing the mental activities of the characters in the picture or the picture itself, which would lead to more narrative and less abstract essays in either case. This may suggest that the picture prompt with the caption stating the explicit meaning of the picture (i.e. the narrative caption) would be no more useful than that without caption in eliciting information-loaded and abstract essays. Yet, the above tentative explanation requires verification by test-takers' think-aloud protocols about the writing process.

In all, the findings in this regard corroborate to some extent the argument that patterns of linguistic co-occurrence compensate for the limitation of individual linguistic features and can be used to further analyze writing quality (e.g. Jarvis et al. 2003; Friginal et al. 2014). Specifically, the results echo the previous findings that functional dimensions can reflect the variations in writing products by different task features (e.g. Crossley et al. 2014; Biber & Gray 2013; Weigle & Friginal 2015; Biber et al. 2016; Staples et al. 2018).

### **5.3. Relationship between functional dimensions and holistic ratings across caption types**

Functional dimensions were found to be significantly predictive of essay ratings. Specifically, with the narrative caption, the more overly persuasive the essays were, the higher their ratings were; with the abstract caption, the more narration-oriented the essays were, the higher their ratings were. However, it was the functional dimension concerning the difference between written and spoken language (i.e. formal vs. informal register) that was found in previous studies to significantly distinguish highly-rated essays from lowly-rated ones (e.g. Friginal & Weigle 2014; Biber et al. 2016).

Nevertheless, the results are generally in line with earlier findings that linguistic features used together better captured writing quality than separate features (e.g. Jarvis et al. 2003; Biber & Gray 2013; Biber et al. 2016). Therefore, the findings of this study add further proof to the “linguistically motivated” and “parsimonious” nature of functional dimensions (Biber et al. 2016) and their applicability to the analysis of task-induced variation in essay quality.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The present study was the first attempt to investigate the influence of caption type in the picture prompt on writing quality. The study revealed that caption types resulted in significant variation in holistic ratings and functional dimensions. And it further indicated the significantly predictive power of two functional dimensions (i.e. Dimensions of Narration and Persuasion) for holistic ratings of essays with two different caption types (i.e. abstract and narrative ones).

In the light of the findings, there are two implications for picture-prompt writing assessment and instruction as follows. First, for assessment, given the significant influence of caption type on picture-prompt writing quality, it is necessary to control for this factor in test design. For example, test developers could optimize the cognitive load of picture interpretation by providing the abstract caption which gives the clue to the implied meaning of the picture prompt. Therefore, the full play of writing proficiency would be neither hindered by the difficulty in picture comprehension nor disturbed by the caption which only re-represents the explicit content of the picture.

Second, for instruction, instead of leaving students reciting writing templates to cope with the test, it is much more beneficial to train students how to flexibly allocate working memory capacity and coordinate three processes of writing based on the cognitive load of picture-prompt writing tasks. For example, to reduce working memory overload in writing, it is necessary to develop students’ prewriting strategies such as writing outlines. Besides, in learning from model essays, teachers could remind students to note co-occurring linguistic features instead of separate features and to reflect on their possible communicative functions. More importantly, students should be made aware that the key to good writing lies in how to coordinate linguistic material of various types for specific writing purposes.

Finally, the findings of this study must be treated with caution. The current study is limited in its focus on one kind of picture and topic area in the prompt as well as a limited number of participants from one college. Future studies could examine other picture types or topic areas and involve participants of a wider range in different contexts, so as to further explore how writing quality is conditioned by caption type in picture-prompt writing tasks and to accumulate more validity evidence for picture-prompt writing assessment.

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## PRINCIPLED PRAGMATISM AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING: TWO FACETS OF CONSTRUCTIVISM IN ESP

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**Abstract.** *The article discusses two approaches that are considered to be the most promising ones in today's teaching of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The two approaches in question are Kumaravadivelu's principled pragmatic approach and the experiential learning approach. It is shown that they both help to unify into one single new paradigm the three leading paradigms in modern ESP teaching: content-based instruction, English immersion, and culture-specific target language learning. After defining each of the two approaches in ESP courses at tertiary schools, the paper proceeds to prove the authors' leading idea that both principled pragmatism and experiential learning are a perfect match embodying two facets of a broader pedagogical approach that is applicable not only when teaching ESP (and teaching foreign languages in general) but also when teaching other disciplines, especially at the tertiary school level. This broader pedagogical approach is constructivism, which provides students with opportunities for 'constructing' their own knowledge and skills through practical experience in real-life or modeled activities. In this case, students acquire their knowledge and skills (including skills of communicating in the target language) as a by-product of their real-life or modeled activities, thus internalizing (appropriating) the knowledge and skills and not just learning them. The peculiarities of constructivism in ESP courses are discussed, and the guidelines are given for the practical implementation of the principled pragmatic approach through experiential learning activities in the framework of the fully constructivist ESP course (in what concerns its theoretical and methodological foundations).*

**Key words:** *tertiary professional education, paradigms in ESP teaching and learning, principled pragmatic approach, experiential learning approach, constructivism in language teaching, content-based instruction, English immersion, culture-specific target language learning.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) – embraces all cases of teaching that language as a second/foreign one when it is taught and learned for professional communication (Robinson, 1991). A great variety of specific professional sublanguages are included into ESP: from English for Science and Technology, English for Medicine, etc. to Business English. All these varieties are united by common approaches to teaching them in such educational contexts as professional tertiary educational institutions, commercial ESP courses, and some other organizational forms of instruction. Such common approaches can be classified into three principal paradigms that are prevalent in today's ESP training at tertiary professional (non-linguistic) schools in Ukraine.

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Before speaking about the three paradigms, it should be noted that in fact there are many more than three. For instance, the traditional foreign language teaching approach based on the obsolete grammar-translation method is also a paradigm, sometimes used even now and even in ESP courses (when learning is mostly reduced to memorizing terminology, analyzing professional texts from the point of view of their grammar, logical structure, and translating those texts as a means of checking their understanding by students). But these types of paradigm will be neither considered nor even mentioned in this article because, being mostly obsolete and mostly proven to be ineffective in teaching practice, they have become marginal and are used only by those ESP teachers who 'know no better'. The three paradigms that were mentioned in the preceding paragraph are not only the cutting-edge ones in today's ESP teaching; they are also the mainstream ones, i.e. those that are considered to be the most efficient and, therefore the most frequently used by practical ESP teachers who strive to achieve the highest possible level of efficiency in their teaching. These three paradigms include:

1. Content-based instruction;
2. English immersion in courses of professional disciplines;
2. Culture-specific ESP teaching, or the intercultural approach.

As we begin to consider the three indicated paradigms, it should be remarked that all three of them have their roots in the communicative approach to language teaching and learning Communicative Language Learning (CLL) but with a strong *professional bias* in the CLL environment because ESP is taught for being used in *professional* communication, learned through that *professional* communication, and acquired using the means of *professional* communication. Such a CLL foundation exists even in the last, intercultural, or culture-specific, paradigm, though its adherents sometimes deny that – the issue that will be analyzed further. It should also be noted that the three language teaching paradigms above are meant for teaching target language professional communication only when the students have already reached B1+/B2 level (Council of Europe, 2001) in their command of General English.

*Content-based instruction* (Brinton, Snow, Wesche, 1989; Stoller, 2007) is a way of integrating teaching the language for professional communication with professional subject matter, e.g. the subject matter of professional disciplines taught to tertiary students of Science and Technology, Medicine, Economics and Business, or any other non-linguistic major. As a result, in the course of ESP, students are learning the basics of their future profession through the medium of the target language, with their attention mostly focused on the professional content supplied to them (in a somewhat simplified form) in the language to be acquired for professional use. Thanks to that, the language acquisition is frequently involuntary, or subconscious, – achieved in the process of focused learning of the content matter material taught in the target language. This subconscious language acquisition greatly facilitates achieving the desired *linguistic and communicative* learning outcomes of the ESP teaching (Tarnopolsky, 2012). What is no less important is the fact that in the content-based ESP course at tertiary educational institutions the gap between the language studies and the studies of the learners' majoring disciplines is eliminated, so that the students' entire professional tuition is harmoniously 'welded' into sustained professional training that includes an organic language constituent. Such a constituent ensures opportunities for using the acquired professional knowledge and skills not only locally (in the students' home country) but internationally – thus making the international labor market accessible to university graduates.

*Immersion programs* in English or other languages (Johnson, Swain, 1997) are programs of teaching non-linguistic disciplines, like history, physics, or any professional disciplines from the secondary or tertiary school curriculum in the target language instead of the learners' mother tongue (L1). Immersion programs may be of different levels of difficulty depending on how much attention in them is paid to the target language. If some language focusing or even help from L1 is possible in *preliminary* or *partial* immersion, in *total* immersion the target language is used as a tool only – with minimal (only rarely applicable) focusing on it while the students' L1 is totally excluded (Tarnopolsky, Momot, Kozhushko, et al., 2008). Thus, when English immersion is introduced into tertiary professional education, it is the highest form of involuntary target language learning when students' attention is almost completely focused on the subject matter of their majoring disciplines taught in English, while the language is being acquired mostly subconsciously through sustained communication in that language in the teaching/learning process.

*Culture-specific language teaching or the intercultural approach* (Byram, 1997) entered ESP several decades ago with the realization of the fact that adequate and successful *intercultural* professional communication depends not only, and even not so much, on the command of the language used for that communication (in most cases English) as on the communicators' abilities to avoid and prevent *cultural clashes and incompatibilities* in their intercourse. Such incompatibilities are much more harmful for professional communication than some of the communicators' deficiencies in the command of the international language used for that intercourse (Ferradas, 2010). This is especially true of international and intercultural business communication; so the intercultural approach has spread more widely in Business English teaching and learning than in other kinds of ESP. The spread and popularity of the intercultural approach has even led to statements that this approach is bound to replace the CLL approach as a new paradigm replaces the obsolete one (Burkert, Mumford, & Lackman, 2010). In reality, such beliefs are a result of simple misunderstanding because intercultural teaching/learning is in charge of the teaching/learning content (what to teach and learn) while CLL is in charge of the teaching and learning methods (how to teach and learn the content to be taught). Moreover, the intercultural approach and CLL are ideally compatible since both the language and the culture in ESP (like in any other English course) are taught for better professional communication in English (there is no other reason to teach them), and this is the area of responsibility of CLL, while such communication can become fully adequate only if students master all its cultural peculiarities, and that is the area of responsibility of the intercultural approach (Tarnopolsky, 2011). Thus, the intercultural approach is absolutely indispensable in today's ESP teaching and learning but it can 'work' efficiently only if it is implemented through the CLL approach.

In general, it can be safely asserted that all the three paradigms discussed above are necessary for effective ESP teaching and learning but only if used in unison and without opposing and contradicting each other. But this requires a new paradigm which harmoniously unites the first three. Theoretically and practically substantiating that paradigm is *the goal* of this article, and the foundation of the new paradigm is seen as being rooted in *principled pragmatism*, while its practical implementation is seen to lie within the framework of *experiential learning* – both approaches embodying the innovative *constructivist paradigm* in ESP.

## 2. PRINCIPLED PRAGMATISM IN ESP AS THE BASIS OF A NEW UNIFIED PARADIGM IN ITS TEACHING AND LEARNING

*Principled pragmatism*, whose theory has been developed by Kumaravadivelu (2001; 2003), this theory being proclaimed by the author as heralding the new *post-method era* in teaching English as a second or foreign language, is probably the best “construction site” on which to erect the new unified ESP teaching and learning paradigm in question. The reason is due to the fact that principled pragmatism is based on the assumption that there is no best single method of language teaching and such a universal method is in principle impossible. However, all the existing methods can be used together by uniting those of their features that are best suited to some specific conditions of language teaching and learning. Which of those features to unite and how to unite them is for the practical teacher (who must, according to Kumaravadivelu, become a *teacher-researcher*) to decide. Thus, the principled pragmatic theory of language teaching and learning is from its very inception aimed at the *pragmatic unification* of different approaches, taking the best and the most suitable from each of them – which is exactly what is required for creating the new ESP paradigm spoken about in the *Introduction* to this article.

It may be said that Kumaravadivelu’s theory advocates *eclecticism* in language teaching and learning, but that eclecticism is *well-grounded* (Tarnopolsky, 2018) since, uniting different approaches into one single whole, the teacher-researcher has no choice but to follow several principles because the new unified whole is required to incorporate each of them in order to be recognized as adequate and suitable for pedagogical practice. These principles developed by Kumaravadivelu include:

1. Maximizing learning opportunities;
2. Minimizing perceptual mismatches;
3. Facilitating negotiated interaction;
4. Promoting learner autonomy;
5. Fostering language awareness;
6. Activating intuitive heuristics;
7. Contextualizing linguistic input;
8. Integrating language skills;
9. Ensuring social relevance;
10. Raising cultural consciousness.

There is nothing in content-based instruction, English immersion, or culture-specific language teaching paradigms that would oppose or contradict the ten principles listed above. All of them were specifically designed to maximize ESP learning opportunities and are to a great extent built on students’ autonomous in and out of class learning activities (such as autonomous search for professional or cultural information in the target language). This autonomy also minimizes perceptual mismatches, i.e. misunderstandings between the teacher, on the one hand, and the students, on the other. The fact that all three approaches by their very nature presuppose that learners mostly work in collaboration with each other negotiating in the target language in the process of their interaction (see the third principle above) and are largely autonomous in their learning activities turns the teacher into a *facilitator* (Rogers, 1987), not so much teaching as facilitating learning – which leaves few chances for the emergence of perceptual mismatches.

None of the three paradigms is averse either to fostering language awareness or to promoting intercultural consciousness (the 5<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of Kumaravadivelu’s principles).



Content-based ESP instruction is always used in an ESP language course, and in any such course some kind of language focusing to raise learners' consciousness of language phenomena is inevitable (Fotos, 1994; Rutherford, 1987). The same concerns the early forms of English immersion (preliminary and partially – see Tarnopolsky, Momot, Kozhushko, et al., 2008). Even in total immersion this may sometimes be required, although only episodically, due to the high level of students' command of the language when such an immersion is introduced in the final stages of learners' university studies – see the *Introduction*. In the intercultural approach, language focusing is also inevitable when dealing with culture-specific *verbal* forms of communication (e.g., how to object politely to other participants in some professional discussion). As to promoting intercultural consciousness, the intercultural approach is totally devoted to it, while both in content-based instruction and in English immersion teaching the culture-specific norms of professional communication is an absolute requirement (e.g., teaching the cultural norms of conducting business negotiations in English in intercultural environments).

By the very fact that all three paradigms under discussion are ESP teaching and learning oriented, they cannot fail to contextualize the linguistic input (place it in the context of students' future profession) and provide for its social relevance (teaching the language for the needs of learners' future professional activities). Thus, the requirements of Kumaravadivelu's 7<sup>th</sup> and the 9<sup>th</sup> principles are fully satisfied.

In the same way, content-based instruction, English immersion, and culture-specific language learning are and have always been aimed at teaching all four basic language/communication skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing, since they are all in equal demand when using English for professional purposes. For instance, when being taught ESP using the intercultural approach, students should be required to learn not only to speak and write following the cultural norms dominant in the target lingua-socio-cultural community, they should also distinguish those norms when listening and reading and act accordingly in response to what was heard or read. This means designing the tuition process in full accordance with Kumaravadivelu's 8<sup>th</sup> principle, the integration of language skills.

Finally, the 6<sup>th</sup> principle of Kumaravadivelu, activation of intuitive heuristics is naturally and even automatically followed in all three approaches under consideration because all three of them, as has already been said, are rooted in the communicative approach, so that students constantly take part in communication practice. And communication practice cannot fail to activate intuitive heuristics required for solving all the non-algorithmic communicative tasks.

Therefore, it can be safely concluded that principled pragmatism is an excellent foundation for combining all three paradigms in question into a single, organically 'welded' new paradigm because they fully meet each of the 10 principled pragmatic principles. It remains to find the practical ways and means of such 'welding' which can be found in *experiential learning*.

### 3. EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AS A PRACTICAL WAY OF DEVELOPING A NEW UNIFIED PARADIGM OF ESP TEACHING AND LEARNING

*Experiential learning*, or learning from practical experience (Kolb, 1984), came to the field of language teaching much later than it did in the teaching of other disciplines, especially at tertiary educational institutions. In teaching foreign languages for

professional communication (ESP), experiential learning means such an organization of the teaching/learning process which gives opportunities for continuously modeling the future specialists' professional activities in their language acquisition activities, so that the latter model professional communication. The most important issue is that students communicate on professional matters in the target language and not in their L1, and it is in the process of that communication that the target language is acquired practically involuntarily and often even subconsciously (Kohonen, Jaatinen, Kaikkonen, Lehtovaara, 2014; Tarnopolsky, 2012). For instance, if students of Business and Economics in their class of English model, or simulate, a Board meeting of a company in English, it is an experiential learning activity in the course of which, if the activity is organized correctly, they subconsciously acquire different language material, communication formulas, and cultural norms of communicative behavior in the situations of business intercourse.

From the definition in the preceding paragraph it is clear that in ESP conditions experiential learning is always content-based and cannot be anything else but content-based because experiential learning activities, as has been said, model professional activities performed in the framework of professional target language communication. The example given above also shows how well-adapted experiential learning is to including cultural information into its activities with their implicit aim of ESP acquisition. In what concerns English immersion, all immersion teaching and learning is one non-stop experiential learning activity because it not only models the experience of acquiring professional knowledge and skills in the courses of tertiary students' majoring disciplines, it is such real acquisition itself, only achieved through the target language and not through learners' L1. Therefore, the experiential learning approach naturally and effortlessly combines in teaching and learning practice the three paradigms of modern ESP training discussed in this article: content-based instruction, English immersion, and culture-specific ESP teaching. That makes it an ideal approach to achieving the practical unification of the three paradigms into one single paradigm – the new (innovative) paradigm to substantiate which is the goal of this article.

However, the substantiation of such a paradigm needs to be not only practical but also theoretical, and since principled pragmatism was defined in the preceding part of the article as the theoretical foundation of the new unified paradigm, it should be proven that experiential learning practice fully meets (on the theoretical plane) the requirements of the principled pragmatic approach embodied in its 10 principles (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). For proving this, it should primarily be defined which kinds of learning activities are included into experiential learning.

In our preceding publications (Tarnopolsky, 2012; 2018) it was shown that experiential learning activities employed in teaching English for professional communication at non-linguistic tertiary educational institutions include:

- role play and simulations,
- students' brainstorming, case studies, discussions,
- presentations,
- workshops,
- learning projects,
- writing professional essays, abstracts, summaries, etc. in the target language.

All those activities always require learners' autonomous search in- and out-of-class for information in the target language (mostly on professional Internet sites in English) and their processing of the information found through reading and listening with the aim of

providing sufficient professional data required for doing all the profession-oriented creative learning tasks mentioned above. Therefore, this search and processing should also be included into the list of experiential learning activities as those which ensure the availability of the information potential for all the other activities. Besides, as it has already been said, English immersion can be considered as one multi-faceted experiential learning activity.

All such activities have a number of advantages that make them fully meet the 10 principles of principled pragmatism. First, these activities with no exceptions are quite intensive, highly varied, and require very active student participation. By this very fact they maximize learning opportunities (the 1<sup>st</sup> of Kumaravadivelu's principles). Second, they are all interactive, since the absolute majority of them are performed in cooperation between students (for cooperative learning see Kessler, 1992), and learners working in such close cooperation have no choice but to negotiate while interacting to complete their learning tasks successfully (the 3<sup>rd</sup> principle). Even the experiential writing activities, like composing professional essays, abstracts, summaries, etc., are interactive and cooperative because they are done by way of *process* writing (White, Arndt, 1991) – every piece to be written is first outlined in small group discussions (team writing) and every individual writing draft is peer-reviewed and peer-commented. The only more or less individual tasks are information search and information processing through reading and listening (though pair and small group work is quite possible in this case too), but they serve to collect the information required for more creative and totally interactive tasks. In what concerns English immersion as an experiential learning activity, this cannot avoid being interactive and cooperative because learning majoring subjects through the target language is more difficult than doing it by means of learners' L1. So, to compensate for additional difficulties, much closer negotiated interaction and cooperation among students and between the students and the teacher is required. All these forms of negotiated interaction and cooperation not only help to minimize perceptual mismatches (the 2<sup>nd</sup> principle) but they also foster learners' autonomy (the 4<sup>th</sup> principle) since students learn not so much from the teacher, as from their joint collaborative efforts in negotiated interaction required by experiential learning activities.

Actually, everything said in the preceding paragraph reproduces almost word-for-word what was discussed in the previous section of the article concerning the compatibility of Kumaravadivelu's first four principles with content-based instruction, English immersion, and culture-specific ESP teaching. Absolutely the same may be said about the last six principles – they are just as compatible with experiential learning as they are with the three already analyzed approaches – and for the same reasons as explained in the preceding section.

This compatibility means that experiential learning, as a practical methodology unifying into one single entity the three paradigms indicated above, may be just as safely considered to be based on the principles of the principled pragmatic approach as that approach was shown to make a sound foundation for those three paradigms taken separately.

However, this does not mean that principled pragmatism, as the theoretical base for the new unified paradigm of ESP teaching, and experiential learning, as the practical implementation of that paradigm, are simply the sum of the three former ESP paradigms: content-based instruction, English immersion, and culture-specific ESP teaching. If the constituent parts (the three paradigms in our case) joined together really make a new system/new paradigm, this system/paradigm will always be something more than the sum of its parts – which is a basic postulate of the General System Theory (Bertalanffy, 1968).

We see this new system/new paradigm in *constructivism in ESP teaching and learning* – with principled pragmatism as its theoretical foundation and experiential learning as its practical implementation.

#### 4. CONSTRUCTIVISM AS A NEW PARADIGM IN ESP TEACHING AND LEARNING

*Constructivism* in pedagogy (Glaserfeld, 1995; Richardson, 2003), just the same as experiential learning, was not initially designed for teaching foreign languages and entered that field and made some ‘niche’ for itself in ESP not earlier than the last decade (Tarnopolsky, 2012). In the constructivist approach to ESP acquisition students acquire the language and communication skills mostly by involuntarily ‘self-constructing’ them in real-life activities, or activities faithfully modeling a real life situation and conducted in the target language. In this case, students gain command of their language knowledge and communication skills as a by-product of performing their real-life or modeled activities, thus internalizing (appropriating) the knowledge and skills and not consciously learning them or memorizing the language forms. Because of this, we can speak of involuntary/subconscious language acquisition which is much more efficient than conscious learning (Tarnopolsky, 2012). For instance, such an activity as roleplaying in the target language a psychological consultation (a professional psychologist consulting a client) in a class of ESP for students of psychology is a typical constructivist learning activity modeling a real-life professional situation. Students’ attention is focused on the subject matter of the situation (psychological consultation) and the language and communication aspects are acquired involuntarily thanks to the fact that the subject matter is processed in the target language and not in the learners’ L1.

From the above description and example, it can be clearly seen that the constructivist learning activities and experiential learning activities are identical. So, both of them include content-based instruction, intercultural training, and have target language immersion as their highest point. Just as in experiential learning, constructivist instruction is rooted in principled pragmatism because students’ self-constructing of their language knowledge and communication skills requires well-grounded eclectic (principled pragmatic) combination of achievements of different approaches in language teaching if the elements from those diverse approaches are to help learners in self-constructing their target language communication system. For instance, constructivism in language teaching, though being predominately communicative in its orientation, does not preclude using language-focused exercises when they can help involuntary language acquisition (see Tarnopolsky, 2018), though the most extreme forms of the communicative approach do not allow them to be used (Krashen, 1982).

Everything said above allows us to draw the conclusion that *constructivism* is the most appropriate cover name for the new ESP teaching paradigm that is based on principled pragmatism, implemented in pedagogical practice through experiential learning, and which has as its indispensable components content-based instruction, English immersion, and culture-specific ESP teaching.

However, the paradigm in question is not just the sum of its above-mentioned parts. It is something more than that because, as follows from the definition and description of constructivism at the beginning of this section of the article, none of the separate constituent parts accentuate the most prominent feature of the paradigm as a whole: *self-constructing*

by students of their own ESP language and communication system, i.e. developing that system for themselves mostly autonomously (Benson, Voller, 1997; Dam, 2002). None of those separate constituent parts makes this feature prominent, it is only their harmonious unification in one constructivist paradigm that brings it to the forefront, making the paradigm itself unique and innovative.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The new, and even innovative, *constructivist* paradigm of ESP teaching and learning at tertiary non-linguistic schools has been presented and substantiated in the article. This paradigm unifies into one organic and harmonious whole the three most advanced and cutting-edge of today's ESP teaching and learning paradigms: content-based instruction, English immersion, and culture-specific target language learning.

It is demonstrated that such a unification and even *integration* of the three paradigms is feasible on the theoretical basis of principled pragmatism with its 10 underlying principles, which, when used in unison, make the presented language teaching approach adequate from the point of view of the latest achievements in developing the most efficient means of target language acquisition. And when those principles are applied for 'welding' together several different approaches, they help avoid discrepancies and achieve their harmonious and 'seamless' unification. As the practical implementation of the new paradigm rooted in principled pragmatism, experiential learning with the kinds of learning activities typical for this methodology is suggested.

It is shown that such a paradigm represents constructivism in ESP teaching and learning and may be called the constructivist paradigm. The constructivist paradigm is not simply the sum of its constituent parts: content-based instruction, English immersion, and culture-specific target language learning joined together by the principled pragmatic approach and experiential learning methodology. As a result of such fusion, a new quality of the novel integrated entity emerges. That quality of the new ESP teaching and learning paradigm, which makes it innovative, is learners' self-construction of their language knowledge and communication skills through mostly autonomous and highly varied learning activities.

The new paradigm has been substantiated not only theoretically. Experimental studies (Tarnopolsky, Momot, Kozhushko, et al., 2008; Tarnopolsky, Kozhushko, Degtiaryova, et al., 2011) have proved that, if practical ESP teaching at tertiary schools is organized on the basis of the new paradigm as described in this article, the students attain far higher learning outcomes, sometimes even surprisingly high, in comparison with the more traditional approaches to ESP teaching and learning. This gave an opportunity to develop a series of constructivist ESP coursebooks for teaching English for professional communication to students of different majors: future economists and business people, psychologists, pedagogues, managers of tourism, students of technology. The list of those coursebooks, which have become widely used and popular in ESP courses at Ukrainian tertiary educational institutions, is given in the *Addendum*. There is an ample scope for further studies in the direction discussed in the article through spreading and adapting the elaborated constructivist paradigm to different ESP courses taught to university students of various majors.

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#### ADDENDUM

The list of ESP coursebooks designed on the basis of the constructivist paradigm:

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## LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PERFORMANCE IN MAJOR SPEAKING ACTIVITIES AT TERTIARY LEVEL

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**Abstract.** *The objective of the research is to explore learners' attitudes to their performance in oral class activities at tertiary level. The research method employed the survey on key speaking issues such as spontaneous speaking, short talks, participation in discussions or debates, and delivering PPPs on professional topics. The learners were asked to assess their performance in speaking on the 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'very difficult' to 'very easy' and reflect on the difficulties they faced while speaking in front of the audience. The respondents are 145 full-time students of two specializations who study at the VGTU, Vilnius. Different methods of statistical treatment of students' responses by a means of the SPSS procedures have been analyzed with the aim of selecting the appropriate one for the obtained data. Computations of the Student's t-test yield critical t-values that indicate that the obtained data are significant at the probability of 95%. Learners' reflections on speaking difficulties indicate fear of making mistakes, lack of self-confidence, shortage of ideas, and complexity of topics.*

**Key words:** *English speaking skills, perceptions of difficulties, oral performance*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Speaking is a productive skill which is considered to be difficult to master. It is one of the most important skills that are needed to be learnt as a means of effective communication. Many language learners find it difficult to express themselves in formal spoken English. There might be a number of reasons that deter speaking competence such as a poor vocabulary, insufficient knowledge of grammar, fear of making mistakes, lack of self-confidence, fear of losing face in front of the audience. The English language instructors are aware of the fact that English proficiency of undergraduates is much to be desired despite the advantages of computerization and multimedia resources in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In spite of the learners' mastery of spoken English in communication, the necessity for teaching fluency and accuracy are essential if language practitioners expect learners to perform adequately in using English for professional purposes.

This paper aims at researching learners' perceptions of difficulties in using spoken English for professional purposes. The results have been obtained from a survey that was completed by the full-time students of two specializations, who studied English for Specific

Purposes (ESP) in 2019 at Vilnius Gediminas Technology University (VGTU), and students' written self-reflections on classroom speaking activities. Statistical processing using the SPSS software has been conducted. The comparison of the samples' means involved computations of the student's critical t-values and evaluation of the significance level.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Learning a language and being able to speak it do not go hand in hand. S. Thornbury (2005) provides both structured activities to get students speaking and ideas for developing confidence in using English outside the classroom. He examines the different approaches and activities that can be used for teaching speaking as articulation, fluency and register, and analyzes classroom techniques of drilling, discussions, drama, dialogues and conversation.

The ability to speak fluently in a foreign language implies knowledge of language features and the ability to process information 'here and now'. A success in spoken production depends on rapid mental and social processing skills (Harmer, 2001). Language processing involves retrieval of lexis from memory. Communication involves interaction with other speakers, appropriate vocabulary, understanding how to take turns and how others feel about the topic under consideration. Information processing on the spot requires the ability to respond immediately and being aware of unwritten cultural rules.

According to T. Gregersen & E. Horwitz (2009), EFL students might encounter various problems in the way of the development of their speaking skills. Evidence was gathered suggesting that anxious and non-anxious learners differ in their personal performance standards, procrastination, fear of evaluation, and concern over errors. Anxiety negatively affects learners' oral performance.

M. Senel (2012) conducted a study on 32 Turkish EFL students to investigate their oral communication problems. The findings of the study revealed that the students believed that such factors as instructors' interruption and error correction, lack of native instructors, instructors' methods and techniques of teaching, insufficient number of English courses and their inadequate content, and insufficient use of English outside the classroom hindered their progress in oral communication skills.

The relationship between spoken language research and ELT practice over the last 20 years was examined by I. Timmis (2012), who showed that the majority of students prefer native speaker norms on a general level. It is argued, however, that more classroom research is needed in order to determine how explicit the treatment of spoken language should be and what activities are beneficial.

G. Kavaliauskienė (2013) explored the students' attitudes to developing speaking skills in ESP classes. Her research employed the questionnaire on learner attitudes to different speaking activities in the classroom. The students were asked to indicate the degree of difficulty they had with the various speaking activities on the Likert scale ranging from 'very difficult' (1) to 'very easy' (5). The results included the students' responses obtained in three academic years of 2010, 2011 and 2012. The attitudes of students to different activities vary: they are more positive to short talks and discussions than to spontaneous speaking.

The study of how language is used in interactions is called *pragmatics*, and while appropriate interactions come naturally to native speakers of English, language learners need to be aware of the many linguistic and strategic options available to them in certain situations (Siegel, 2016). The ability to account for and adjust to these options when speaking English defines one's pragmatic competence. J. Siegel argues that the teaching of

pragmatics is often overlooked in the classroom and underrepresented in teaching materials and teacher education courses. Reasons include insufficient class time, lack of interest, or inadequate recognition of its importance in interpersonal communication. While teachers may recognize the importance of pragmatics and want to use it in their lessons, many are unsure how to select and incorporate pragmatic teaching activities in EFL classes. J. Siegel (2016) suggested a number of classroom activities that can be incorporated into speaking lessons to target pragmatic development and prepare students to interact with a range of interlocutors and within varying contextual factors.

H. S. Afshar & A. Asakereh (2016) investigated the speaking skills problems faced by Iranian EFL freshmen and seniors. Total of 238 Iranian EFL students (138 freshmen and 100 seniors) and 30 English instructors from various universities participated in the study by completing a questionnaire, which consisted of 35 items. It covers socially-related, instructor-related, linguistically-related and facility-related items. Various SPSS procedures of score analysis were conducted. According to the researchers, the t-test results and Chi-square analyses showed that there was no significant difference between the freshmen and the seniors' perceptions of their speaking skills problems. However, the researchers seemed to have failed to check the validity of assumptions for statistical processing. Therefore, their computation of t-test yielded the significance level  $0.718 > 0.05$ , which means that the obtained probability is 68%, but only 95% should be valid.

The cooperative principle describes how people achieve effective conversational communication in common social situations, in other words, how listeners and speakers act and mutually accept each other. P. Grice (1975) introduced the cooperative principle in his theory and formulated communication maxims as follows: 1) maxim of quantity (quantity of information): give the most helpful amount of information; 2) maxim of quality (quality of information): do not say what you believe to be false; 3) maxim of relation (be relevant); 4) maxim of manner: put what you say in the clearest, briefest, and most orderly manner.

Despite being formulated a long time ago, these maxims are relevant for developing speaking skills, and learners must be aware of them. The recent paper by J. Siegel' team (2019) practically applies key components of Grice's maxims and the use of speech acts for consciousness raising and instruction. The authors encourage learners to assess and reflect on their pragmatic abilities. Some examples demonstrate how to enhance learners' spoken pragmatic ability.

The willingness of the students to engage in spontaneous communication with the teacher was described by the Hungarian and Turkish teachers (Illes and Akcan, 2017). Their findings confirm that, when allowed, students show a desire to engage in off-topic conversation and playful talk in the language class. The authors believe that teachers should create and exploit opportunities for naturally occurring interaction in English classes. S. Hanson (2017) suggests using a pair counting technique that is a quick, easy, interactive, and motivating way to help students work on spoken fluency.

### 3. THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This article aims at researching the undergraduates' perceptions of using their speaking skills for key activities in English classes and self-reflections on their performance.

The results were obtained from two sources: 1) a survey completed by the full-time students of two specializations, who studied ESP in 2019 at Vilnius Gediminas Technology University (VGTU), and 2) students' written self-reflections on classroom speaking activities.

To gain insights into the students' experience of learning ESP at a university in Lithuania, a quantitative research was conducted and students' perception was analysed. The data were collected through the structured feedback questionnaires that were filled in by the students at the end of the course of ESP and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 22).

### **3.1. The context of the study**

A total of 145 Lithuanian 1<sup>st</sup> year undergraduate students of VGTU participated in this study. There were 95 students, who studied the course of IT program, and 50 students who selected the program of Creative Industry (CI) program. The students' ages ranged from 19 to 21. The majority of students were male due to the fact that study programs appeal to males more than to females.

The questionnaire employed for the data collection consisted of closed questions. It was the same one that was used in the research performed previously by G. Kavaliauskiene in 2013. This survey was designed in accordance with the accepted standards of constructing surveys (Dörnyei, 2003). All the statements of the survey are presented on a Likertscale ranging from 1 (very difficult) to 5 (very easy).

The limitation of the study is that it was conducted in one Lithuanian university where ESP is a mandatory study subject in all undergraduate study programmes, which does not allow for generalisations on the scale of Lithuanian higher education.

### **3.2. Data analysis**

The data collected through the structured feedback questionnaires were analysed using Likert five-point scale ranging from "very difficult" to "very easy" and statistical data analyses, including the analysis of variance (ANOVA), the statistical analysis for the estimation of correlation between variables (Pearson and Spearman correlation), t-test.

Various SPSS procedures of score analysis were conducted. According to the researchers, the t-test results and Chi-square analyses showed that there was no significant difference between the freshmen and the seniors' perceptions of their speaking skills problems.

## **4. RESEARCH RESULTS**

This part of the article presents the data obtained from the survey. There are 4 Charts here that show the frequencies of learners' responses.

Chart 1 displays learners' perceptions of their performance in short talks. The data are presented in percentage in order to reveal the possible differences between two samples of unequal sizes. The blue bars refer to the IT group (sample 1, consisting of 95 respondents), and the red bars refer to the CI group (sample 2, consisting of 50 respondents). It is obvious that the majority of the students (79%) of IT group find short talks easy or very easy, while 62% of CI group are not sure of their performance.

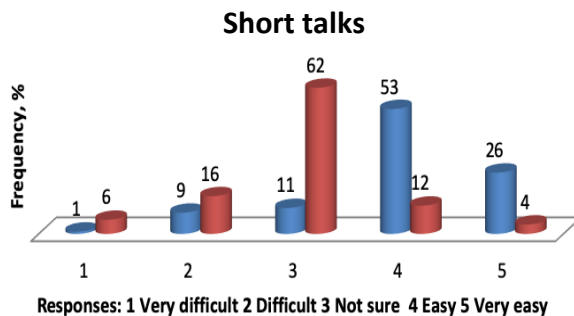


Chart 1 Frequency of responses of IT and CI groups to the short talk activity. Blue bars show responses of IT group (sample 1), and red bars show the responses of CI group (sample 2).

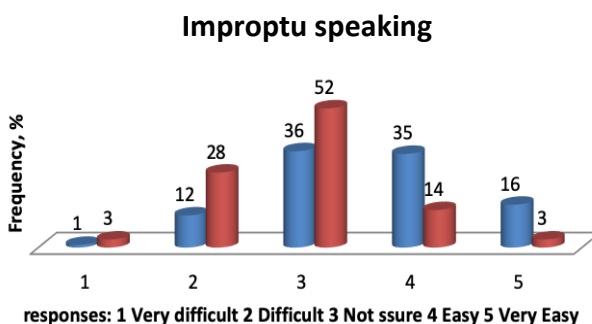


Chart 2 Frequency of responses of IT and CI groups to the impromptu speaking activity. Blue bars show responses of IT group (sample 1), and red bars show the responses of CI group (sample 2).

Impromptu speaking means speaking without prior preparation. The results of students' perceptions of their class activities on speaking impromptu are shown in Chart 2. It may be seen that 36% of IT group learners are not sure of their abilities of speaking without being prepared, and 52% of CI group are also uncertain. The third of the sample 2 believes it difficult or very difficult. However, 51% of IT group find this activity easy or very easy.

Chart 3 displays the frequencies of respondents' perceptions of participating in either discussions or debates. It is apparent that 60% of IT group favour these activities, while only 18% of CI group enjoy them. Approximately, the third of both groups (28% and 30%, respectively) are not sure, and over a half (52%) of CI group finds them either very difficult or difficult.

### Discussions / Debates

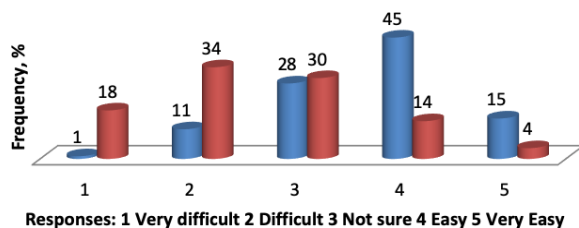


Chart 3 Frequency of responses of IT and CI groups to participating in discussions or debates activities. Blue bars show responses of IT group (sample 1), and red bars show the responses of CI group (sample 2).

PPPs belong to the activities prepared in advance of classroom performance. This simplifies their delivery. As it can be seen in Chart 4, 73% of IT group and 65% of CI group find PPP delivery either easy or very easy. Only a small minority of 15% and 14%, respectively, are not sure, and some (11% and 16%, respectively) think them difficult.

### Power Point Presentations

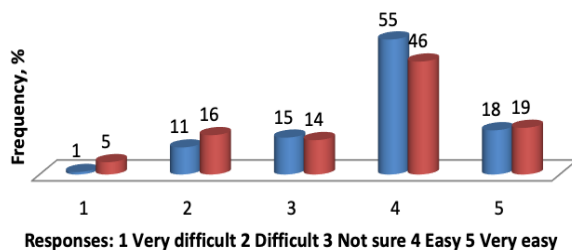


Chart 4 Frequency of responses of IT and CI groups to preparing and delivering PPPs. Blue bars show responses of IT group (sample 1), and red bars show the responses of CI group (sample 2).

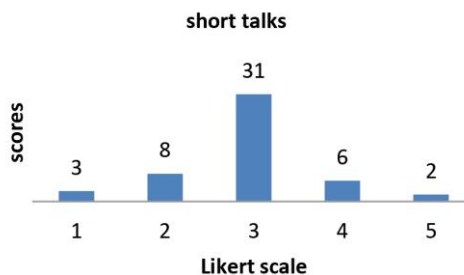
The summary of the respondents' brief reflections on speaking problems is shown in Table 1 below. The key difficulties include fear of making mistakes (68%, IT group), lack of confidence and fear of audience (39%, IT group), difficult topics (28% and 24%, respectively), lack of ideas (35%, IT group). Other ideas in Table are less relevant. The important one is basically stressing difficulties of being unprepared (24% vs 36%).

Table 1 Brief reflection by the respondents of both specializations

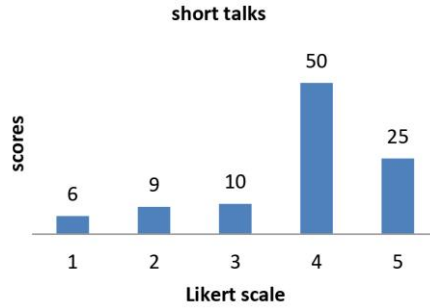
Statements	Frequency of responses by IT group, %	Frequency of responses by CI group, %
Fear of making mistakes	68	14
Fear of audience, lack of confidence	39	10
Poor vocabulary	11	28
Difficult topics	28	24
No ideas sometimes	35	2
Impromptu speaking is problematic	45	24
Not difficult to speak if you are prepared	61	82
Interesting topics make it easier to speak	19	30
No difficulties in expressing myself	15	26
I love speaking and public speaking is not difficult at all	7	28
Making and delivering PPPs is easy, because you can prepare	70	62
Difficult to talk if you are not prepared	24	36
None of the speaking activities are enjoyable	1	-
Sometimes it is difficult to pronounce words	2	-
Giving prepared speech is more difficult as you are not allowed to make mistakes, have to use proper vocabulary and express yourself clearly	4	-

For the application of the appropriate statistical treatment to the survey results it is necessary to examine histograms, i.e. the distribution of responses in the studied samples. The key assumption of the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) procedures is a normal, a bell-shaped distribution of data. For the sake of brevity, four simplified histograms are shown below.

Histogram 1 refers to the sample 2 (50 respondents) and displays the normal, bell-shaped distribution of responses (scores). The maximum score of this histogram is at the point 3 of Likert scale. For comparison, Histogram 2 shows the responses on the same issue of short talks for the sample 1 (95 respondents). Its maximum score is at the point 4 of Likert scale. This distribution is negatively skewed, i.e. a negative skewness indicates that the size of the left-handed tail is larger than the right-handed tail (McNeese, 2016).

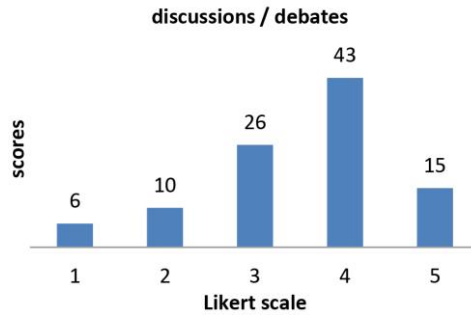


Histogram 1 Scores for the sample 2 (50 respondents)



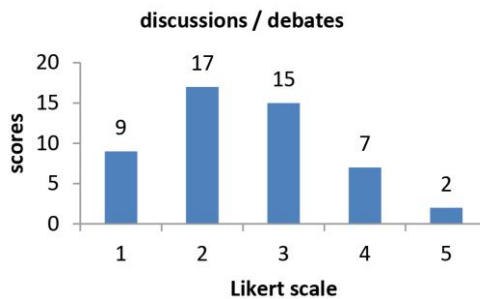
Histogram 2 Scores for the sample 1 (95 respondents)

Histogram 3 shows the distribution of responses on discussions/debates issue by the students of IT specialization. This distribution is negatively skewed but differs by its scores values in the tail from the results shown in Histogram 2.



Histogram 3 Scores for the sample 1 (95 respondents)

The data in Histogram 4 refer to the sample 2 (50 respondents). It may be seen that the distribution of scores in Histogram 4 is positively skewed: its maximum is at the point 2 of Likert scale.



Histogram 4 Scores for the sample 2 (50 respondents)



As it has already been mentioned, the skewness describes the shape of the distribution and is called 'shape' statistics. Having analyzed all the histograms, which are not shown for the sake of brevity, we present the detailed information in Table 2. It may be seen that *normal distribution* is found for impromptu speaking in both samples and for short talks in the sample 2. The rest of analyzed histograms reveal either a *negatively or positively skewed distribution*.

Table 2 Shapes of histograms for speaking activities in both samples

Speaking activity	Histogram shape Sample 1	Skewness value Sample 1	Histogram shape Sample 2	Skewness value Sample 2
Short talks	Negatively skewed	-0.346	normal	0
Impromptu	normal	0	normal	0
Discussions/debates	Negatively skewed	-0.346	Positively skewed	-0.169
PPPs	Negatively skewed	-0.346	Negatively skewed	-0.169

It is necessary to emphasize that the values of skewness are dependent on the shape and sample size. Skewness for normal distribution is equal to 0. According to B. McNeese (2016), the computed values of the skewness for the sample of 50 respondents is equal to -0.169, while for the sample of 95 respondents it is equal to -0.346. These distributions might be considered fairly symmetrical since their skewness is between -0.5 and 0.5 (McNeese, 2016). Another difficulty for selecting an appropriate SPSS procedure in this research is the unequal sizes of the samples, which might create problems for the interpretation of data (Glen, 2015) if not dealt with. Thus, having analyzed the possible statistical procedures for the computation of the scores in this research, the selection of the student's t-test seems to be appropriate.

### Computation of the student's t-test

The results of the SPSS computations of the student's t-test are presented in Table 3. The group sizes have been adjusted by degrees of freedom  $df$ . The value of  $df_1$  for sample 1 is 94 (one is subtracted from the number of respondents), and the value of  $df_2$  for sample 2 is equal to 49 (one is subtracted from the number of respondents). Adjusting for unequal group sizes, the resulting degree of freedom  $df = df_1 + df_2$  is equal to their sum 143 (94 + 49). The 1<sup>st</sup> column of Table 3 lists the statements; the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> columns display the values of the Means (1<sup>st</sup> number in the column) and Standard Deviations (2<sup>nd</sup> number in the column). The 3<sup>rd</sup> (middle) column presents the computed critical t-values at the Significance level  $P=0.05$ , i.e. the probability of 95%. A t-test analysis of the differences between the Means yielded a t-value that is equal to 1.645 for all statements. Since the experimental values of the Means are greater than a computed critical t-value it may be concluded that results are significant and comparable.

Table 3 The results of t-test computations

Statement	Sample 1 $df_1 = 94$ Means & Standard Deviations	Critical t-values at $P=0.05$ (95%) $df = 143$	Sample 2 $df_2 = 49$ Means & Standard Deviations
Giving short talks	3.99 1.36	1.645	2.92 0.99
Impromptu speaking	3.59 1.22	1.645	2.74 0.93
Participation in discussions / debates	3.69 1.25	1.645	2.52 0.86
Making and delivering PPPs	3.93 1.34	1.645	3.54 1.20

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The current research explored the respondents' attitudes to oral performance in English classes. The data have been obtained from a survey on speaking activities and learners' self-reflections on their performance. The speaking activities include spontaneous speaking, short talks, participation in class discussions or debates, and delivering Power Point Presentations on professional issues. The majority of the respondents find PPPs easy or very easy (73% and 65%, respectively). The students are not certain of their competence in speaking spontaneously (36% and 52%, respectively). The SPSS student's t-test processing has been employed to compare the means of two samples. The computation results confirmed that the means are significantly meaningful and comparable. The key difficulties that students face in class include fear of making mistakes (68%), lack of confidence and fear of audience (39%), difficult topics (28% and 24%, respectively), and sometimes lack of ideas (35%). These factors influence students' participation in class: they never or rarely participate in class, they seldom ask questions. Such a situation may have negative effect on their learning.

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## TAKING A STAND: STANCE STRATEGIES IN L1 SERBIAN ENGLISH LEARNERS' EXPOSITORY ESSAYS

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**Abstract.** *An important part of undergraduate essay writing is the argumentative/persuasive essay genre, which has been described as one of the keys to academic success in higher education (Chandrasegaran and Kong, 2006). It requires not only grammatical fluency and appropriate cohesion, but also that the author be able to take a stand on a particular issue. In an attempt to understand what strategies Serbian L1 English learners at the tertiary level use to take a stand, we analyzed a corpus of their expository (argumentative and opinion) essays. The essays were analyzed and coded for various linguistic structures used to convey taking a stand. These include nouns which are preceded by a sentence initial deictic This as a structure which encapsulates previous propositions, reported speech used to assign a stance to and take a stand on the reported speaker and the event, the passive voice, demonstrative pronouns, and the like. The quantitative analysis of this material was carried out with the aim of presenting our findings in the light of possible implications for teaching expository/persuasive writing at the tertiary level to NNS of English, in an attempt to bridge the intercultural gap that any NNS faces when forced to express their opinions in a language other than their own.*

**Key words:** *stance, EFL writing, university-level NNS, teaching expository writing in an academic setting*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Learning to write at the undergraduate level is a challenging task for most Serbian L1 English learners. On the one hand, writing is a skill that requires grammatical fluency and appropriate cohesion (Chandrasegaran and Kong, 2006; Min et al., 2019). On the other, the rules of English L2 academic writing and those of Serbian academic writing do not overlap to a great extent. In their 2007 paper, Filipović et al. discussed education policy and planning as it pertained to all the languages studies in Serbian primary and secondary schools, and outlined some of their teaching methods. It was their conclusion that Serbian as the official L1 is still being taught in the tradition of structuralism, with a strong focus on 'deductive grammar rules', and not much focus being devoted to the 'sociolinguistic and pragmatic aspects of language use'. An outcome of implementing such a method on a national level is that prospective tertiary level students test low on communicative competence including writing for special purposes, writing term papers, delivering presentations and public speeches. This was indicated by some preliminary international

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PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) testing results obtained from a population of students from Serbia in 2003. Therefore, constructing a persuasive argument is a challenge in the tertiary academic setting. To this we add the intercultural gap that all NNSs face when they are asked to express their opinions in a language other than their own (Hyland, 2012), taking into consideration not only the rules of English L2 writing, but also the specific dictates of Anglophone academic discourse.

At the tertiary level of study of the English language in Serbia, students are regularly required to express their opinions in writing as part of their obligatory coursework. More often than not, assessment of their work is based primarily on their writing performance (see Chandrasegaran, 2008; Lee and Deakin, 2016). Their writing does not infrequently take the form of argumentative or opinion essays, in which L2 learners are asked to express and support their opinions and assessments. The expression of the writer's personal feelings/opinions, attitudes, assessments and value judgments by means of linguistic resources is known as stance. Considering the fact that speaker positionality is built into the very act of communication, the study of stance is inevitably required to improve (English) L2 writing skills. The case for such study is made even more strong considering that English is for all intents and purposes now considered the lingua franca of the academic world, and that the need to master these necessary L2 writing skills surpasses the boundaries of scientific fields or 'hard' and 'soft' disciplines, and even formal and informal discourse situations (Chandrasegaran, 2008). Some of the most influential work done on analyzing stance is based on Hyland's (2005) model of academic interaction. In it, the distinction is not drawn between whether an author of an academic paper is a NS or NNS, but is drawn in relation to the author's level of knowledge of academic norms. The inference is that the lack of publication of academic writing is the result not so much of inappropriate language use, but underdeveloped argumentation, lack of an effective authorial voice, lack of interaction with the readers, or in general, not adhering to the norms of academic writing of the environment in which the author aims to publish (see Swales, 1990).

A quantitative and qualitative analysis of stance requires adopting an operationalizable definition of it. Numerous accounts of stance have been provided over the years. Biber and Finegan (1989) termed stance as the 'lexical and grammatical' way of expressing the attitudes, the judgments, or even feelings and level of commitment regarding a proposition. Charles (2003) connected taking a particular stance as a representation of one's status as a knowledgeable member of a particular field. Hyland's (2005) comprehensive definition of stance takes into consideration the interaction between the author and the reader, and emphasizes authorial stance, which can also be referred to as 'writer identity', 'authorial voice' or 'authorial presence'. It includes numerous dimensions of stance, including personal/impersonal, present/absent, overt/covert, explicit/implicit, subjective/objective, involved/detached, or concrete/abstract. Englebretson (2007) maintained that the term 'stance' is sometimes used to denote what some scholars refer to as subjectivity, while other language researchers prefer the term 'evaluation'. Baratta (2009) further claimed that by giving this personal stamp, a (student) writer reveals him/herself as part of a personal identity seen within an otherwise academic essay. Hyland (2012) recently also stressed that establishing a connection with the audience, among other things by indicating our attitude to the content being put forward, is an important aspect of formal academic writing.

In this study we opted for the definition of stance-taking as of taking up a position with respect to the form or the content of one's utterance, in accordance with Jaffe's views on the issue (2009). The aim of the paper was to analyze stance-taking patterns in

English L2 academic writing for the purpose of providing information relevant for the L2 teaching process, with a view to improving the English L2 writers' further efforts.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The primary focus of research carried out to date was how the various lexico-syntactic features of linguistic structures interact with thematic content to express discourse stance; how they differ as a function of text type; how they depend on the age or literacy level of the writer, and also how they differ cross-linguistically, reflecting different rhetorical options favored by the speakers or writers of different languages, as outlined in Berman (2004). To sum up, research on stance involves not only developing an understanding of the full social and pragmatic nature of language, but also evaluating how it is used by actual speakers or writers to act and interact in the real world.

Based on the selected and sufficiently exhaustive parameters of development (referring to the age and level of education of the writers), genre (the type of essay being written, in particular whether it is a narrative or expository essay), modality (written or spoken) and finally the target language, Berman (*ibid.*) determined the emergence of certain shared trends across the sample. The devices for distancing of the speaker-writer from the contents of the text change both in terms of amount and cross-linguistically.

There is no shortage of the variety of lexico-grammatical resources that are used to convey stance which have been studied to date. Seminal research on the identification of stance styles in English is that of Biber and Finegan (1989). To provide an exhaustive and valid overview of overt markers of affect and evidentiality in English, they analyzed 500 spoken and written samples of language use which spanned 24 different genres. Their analysis yielded 12 stance categories, and a total of 6 stance styles, including: 'emphatic expression of affect', 'faceless stance', 'interactional evidentiality', 'expository expression of doubt', 'predictive persuasion', 'oral controversial persuasion'. They reached two significant conclusions: one, that the 'faceless stance' style was the dominant style in their analyzed sample, which indicates that L1 English writing seems to be marked by an absence of direct expression of affect or evidentiality. To quote:

"This overall pattern indicates that such expression of stance (affective or evidential) is a 'marked' choice in English, and that the prevailing norm is to leave stance lexically and grammatically unmarked, thus putting the burden on addressees to infer a speaker's stance" (1989, p. 108).

The second was that both lexical and grammatical features need to be taken into consideration in any analysis of stance, as one or the other type of feature may emerge as dominant in a particular piece of writing, at the expense of the other feature. To reach these conclusions, Biber and Finegan analyzed adverbial, adjectival, verbal and modal stance markers. These included affect markers (adverbs, verbs, and adjectives), certainty adverbs, certainty verbs, certainty adjectives, doubt adverbs, doubt verbs, doubt adjectives, hedges, emphatics, possibility modals, necessity modals, and predictive modals. Further lexico-grammatical stance features that were studied included hedges and boosters (Hyland, 1998; 1999; 2000) and the passive voice (Baratta, 2009). Min et al. (2019) paid special attention to hedges in Korean EFL learners' argumentative writing. In their study they distinguished between the formal quality and the content quality of this type of writing. Their conclusion was that the same stance devices used by the same student authors did not predict both types of quality at the same time.

In addition to essays written as part of the curriculum requirements, previous research on stance-taking and stance support in academic discourse included theses and scholarly articles. Such is the research carried out by Blagojević (2009), Charles (2007), and Silver (2003), to name but a few. Furthermore, formal settings were not the only ones to be considered as Chandrasegaran (2008) for example, compared the means of presenting arguments in both a formal and informal discourse setting. Different languages were also looked at in addition to English, either individually or in comparison to other languages. It is worth pointing out that Blagojević (2009) studied writing samples from Serbian and English authors, in an attempt to reveal their attitudes towards the content they are reporting in their academic research articles. She determined that the same linguistic forms were used in both languages. Van Hell et al. (2005) evaluated stance-taking and support in writing in only one language, Dutch, but also based their research on a variety of parameters including genre and modality. Ragnarsdottir and Stromqvist (2005) evaluated discourse stance in Icelandic and Swedish, while Chang (2009) evaluated stance uses in Mandarin LE. Lee and Deakin (2016) cited, as did Min et al. (2019), frequent occurrences of interactional metadiscourse, or how writers engage with readers (Hyland, 2005), in student academic writing, irrespective of the students' L1, the number of years they spent studying English, or even the level of success with which they completed the writing task. Their results recorded that all of the participants marked their stance in their writing.

The question of NS vs. NNS stance has also figured as a topic of research. Some of the questions that were raised in studies that compared NS (in these cases English language speakers) and NNS stance revolved around the following two points:

1. whether the speakers' different L1s may evoke English as a Foreign Language or EFL-specific patterns of stance-taking and
2. in EFL communication the speakers are focused on the expression of ideational meaning, including the handling of miscommunication. The linguistic construction of a particular speaker persona or speaker identity in their discourse and of acts of 'socializing' with their interlocutor, i.e. interpersonal meaning-making, appears comparatively less relevant (Baumgarten and House, 2010).

In their recent study, Baumgarten and House (ibid.) analyzed whether *I + verb* collocations (e.g. *I think, I hope, I guess*) are the most dominant expressions of stance in English L1 and English L2 communication. They found evidence of partially overlapping diversification:

1. L2 speakers use *I think*<sup>1</sup> when speaker stance towards the proposition is already implicated, so the collocation presents an additional, overt marker of the speaker's subjective perspective, and
2. the expression of subjectivity is seen as a potential trouble spot by the participants in the ELF conversations.

The analysis presented in this paper includes the following: (1) an overview of existing research to compile a list of grammatical/lexical markers of stance; (2) analysis of the selected sample of student writing to determine the frequency of occurrences of each individual marker in the sample; (3) a potential interpretation of the results identified in the sample and the ensuing implications.

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<sup>1</sup> For more details on using *I think* as a stance-taking and stance-indicating means, see Kärkkäinen (2003).



### 3. THE METHOD

In this particular research, we wanted to gain insight into the extent to which a group of college students from a NNS background (L1 Serbian) is capable of engaging in stance assertion in written form. This in turn would have implications for the teaching of expository/persuasive writing at the tertiary level, as the gathered data would enable us to see what strategies are evident in the students' writing and how they are relevant for university essay writing, which is in line with Chandrasegaran and Kong's beliefs (2006). Any changes that could be made to the students' style of writing in this sense would be a suitable preparation for their future academic career, as the adequate positioning of the speaker's self in the discourse is seen as a central task to be mastered if one is to be admitted to any professional or non-professional discourse community or other communities of practice, as indicated by Baumgarten and House (2010).

#### 3.1. The research material

To carry out the research, we compiled a corpus of expository texts written with a persuasive purpose by the seniors at the English Department of the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, which represents a homogenous L1 group. The course that the participants were enrolled in was a senior-year academic writing course, a part of a more general Contemporary English Language course, where the focus was on developing the students' grammar and vocabulary skills, overall level of L2 proficiency, developing their skills of organizing and presenting information clearly, achieving coherence, and to a small extent, the use of sources. The level of proficiency of the students taking part in the essay writing course was assessed to be advanced based on the level of academic study.

Special care was taken in terms of genre, as differences in stance-taking and support based upon it (written narrative vs. expository texts) were found by Reilly et al. (2005). We intentionally focused on seniors as the most proficient body of students at the department, who as Lee and Deakin (2016, p. 23) state, represent a far more appropriate target group than authors of published research articles. Moreover, the expository/argumentative essay genre was also purposefully selected, as it is considered the key to academic success in higher education (Chandrasegaran and Kang, 2006).

The students were provided with three possible topics for their essays, of which they selected one, with the addition that the topics had previously been discussed in class. Essays were written on topics including advertising, the relationship between technology and books, and relying on other people's opinions when making important decisions. The approximate text length of the essays was 300 words, and the assignment was to be completed in 75min, which is the standard allotted time at this particular department. Our corpus consisted of 50 texts, numbering approximately 17,500 words. In order to answer the question of which linguistic resources were most commonly employed by our students, the essays were analyzed and coded by two ESL writing teachers who provided the total number of interactional metadiscourse means within the essays.

The essays were coded for the following linguistic resources, based on the relevant work of other authors:

1. sentence initial deictic *this/that* (Charles, 2003) and demonstratives  
*We have commercials which promote different kind of courses, schools and universities, which is good. This will probably have a positive effect and a result on the young people. This type of advertising says to them that learning, reading and being a good student<sup>2</sup>....*
2. the passive (Baratta, 2009; van Hell et al., 2005) as a subtle way for writers to reveal themselves  
*We live in the world which is globally connected by mass media like TV, newspapers, etc. Although it is widely accepted that advertising...*
3. pronouns (Berman, 2004; Grigoriev and Sokolova, 2019)  
 the very personal (*I*) and the impersonal, generic (*we, you*)
4. reported speech (Niemelä, 2010; Vincent and Perrin, 1999) in its appreciative, support authority functions  
*While many consider advertisements harmless, and even beneficial to young person's lives, the opponents point out their disasterous effects.*
5. nouns followed by *that* and a complement clause (Charles, 2007; Jiang, 2017; Man and Chau, 2019)  
*...the fact that they are omnipotent.*
6. adverbials (Silver, 2003) as attitudinal markers (Kärkkäinen, 2003)  
*maybe, probably, apparently, etc.*
7. and impersonal structures in general  
*it is widely agreed, there are, etc.*

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results indicated the following, listed in a descending order in terms of frequency of occurrence and presented in a graphic form (Fig. 1.):

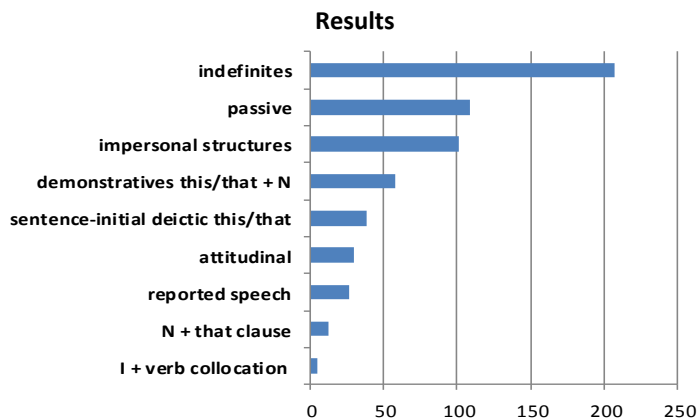


Fig. 1 Frequency of occurrence of the targeted linguistic resources in the corpus

<sup>2</sup> All of the examples given in this paper have been extracted from the reviewed student essays.

The results have indicated that the students primarily focused on distance and objectivity in their writing, as evidenced by the frequent use of indefinites/impersonal structures especially in combination with the passive voice. There were very few 'personal' comments in the form of *I + verb* collocations or attitudinal markers. In addition, the linguistic resources used in the texts were not directly related to the writer's skill level, which means that a higher level of proficiency in English was neither an indicator of a greater variety of linguistic resources used to indicate stance, nor of their greater number (compare Min et al., 2019). Thus, the stance that is expressed seems not to be dependent on foreign language knowledge, which means there are grounds to conclude that we could influence Serbian EFL learners' choice of used linguistic resources. In addition, our results suggest that the studied group of English L2 speakers consider the expression of stance as personal input of secondary importance in this form of communication. Our students seem to tend not to want to disrupt the overall objective tone of this type of academic essay and generally do not include their 'personal stamp' in it.

A question which imposes itself is how much of this is a reflection of what the students had been taught, as it is a well-known fact that certain approaches to teaching writing, such as the genre approach (Gee in Luchini, 2002), emphasize the use of 'scaffolding' or a framework, the model upon which learners base their texts and thus mimic other people's writings (Nunan, 1989; Harmer, 2004). Since this particular group of students has explicitly been taught that academic writing in English is formal and impersonal, and that they have, to our knowledge, received vague formal instruction in terms of writing standards in Serbian during their primary/secondary school education, it seems plausible that their production is the result primarily of modeling. As Reilly et al. (2005) pointed out in the introduction to their paper, the use of impersonal pronouns, passive constructions, and attitudinal markers in the written narrative and expository texts of English-speaking children, adolescents, and adults seems to be on the increase. They pointed out that this increase in the development of a more distanced, impersonal stance is now characteristic of the expository genre.

In their research, Biber and Finegan (1989) also found a prevalence of what they referred to as the 'faceless stance', or the absence of all stance features, in as many as 65% of the analyzed material. Their interpretations of the results make reference to several important features of writing in an Anglophone setting: that spoken language expresses more affect than written language, and that personal letters, including love letters, or personal interaction such as conversations between close friends, is the setting where direct markers of stance should be sought, and not in examples of academic writing. Furthermore, expository genres are considered formal, and the focus in this type of writing is on the content or proposition being conveyed, rather than on the stance of the author. To quote:

"the specialized styles are found in informational, often written, texts, which place strong emphasis on an exact presentation of information and thus require a more precise marking of evidential stance. This does not result in a more frequent marking of stance in these latter texts: rather, it results in a more specific marking of certainty or doubt (as opposed to a general emphatic indication of stance), using adjectival forms (which are more integrative)." (1989, p. 117)

And yet, the situation may not be that clear cut. Our empirical findings echo what Hyland (2012, p. 137) previously stated, and that is that our participants have perceived, or learned, that "academic writing in English is impersonal and faceless", even though his

own research findings have indicated that this is not entire the case. He goes so far as to say that L2 writers who do this are “relinquishing their personal authority by anonymizing their writing” (ibid, p. 145), and this is not their only recourse. As Kärkkäinen (2003) indicated, epistemic modality can be both personalized and impersonalized, which means that any group of L2 writers has a choice regarding how they wish to convey certain propositions. To quote:

“In my database, the most common type of occurrence of epistemic modality was a cognitive or perception or utterance verb (cf. Givón 1993 for P-C-U verbs) with a first-person subject, with no complementizer *that* following. Holmes (1982: 27, 1988: 43) proposes the following grammatical patterns expressing epistemic modality that may include a lexical verb:

- |  |                  |
|--|------------------|
| a. I (think/believe/guess etc.) that p                         | – personalized   |
| b. It (seems/appears) to me that p                             | – personalized   |
| c. It (seems/appears) that p                                   | – impersonalized |
| d. NP (argues/claims etc.) that p (NP is animate + 3rd person) | – depersonalized |

We can see in Table 2 that group (a) is by far the most frequent group of epistemic markers in the American English spoken discourse represented in my database. This group consists of personalized markers that clearly make reference to the speaker’s subjective stance, such as *I think, I guess, I know, I feel (like), I found* etc.” (2003, p. 38, original emphasis)

Furthermore, Min et al. (2019) in their study of Korean L1 English L2 writing noted, with a high level of statistical significance, that “advanced Korean EFL learners relied most heavily on the use of stance verbs in making their points” (ibid, p. 13), which included examples such as (ibid, p. 12; original emphasis):

*It is proven that secondhand smoking is dangerous.*

*I guess they don’t mind if I smoke.*

*For example, when I go to pc-rooms to use computers, I always smell smoke and it makes me feel awful.*

*Let us all hope to see a change in the law regarding public smoking.*

*However, such argument cannot be accepted as long as the right of a group of people requires sacrifice of others.*

*The doctors insisted that I should stop smoking.*

On the other hand, unlike in the case of the aforementioned examples, the ‘reluctance’ to present themselves as an authorial identity identified among our sample of participants also echoes the results obtained by Lee and Deakin (2016), who analyzed the argumentative essays of advanced L1 Chinese EFLs, where according to the authors, self-mentions were ‘the least frequently used category’. They also indicated the importance of intersubjectivity as a prerequisite for an effective rapport with the audience, and thus a more successful essay. To quote:

“The greater inclusion of particularly hedges in successful essays appears to lead to them being considered ultimately more persuasive than less-successful essays, as such devices are highly valued in Anglophone academic cultures [...] However, unlike L1 writers, the findings also reveal the overwhelming resistance of both ESL groups to demarcate their authorial presence within their texts. This reluctance may indicate Chinese ESL students’ discomfort with taking on a stronger writer identity, and instead preferring to maintain an impersonal and detached writing style that may be considered safe and familiar.” (ibid, p. 31)

Similar results were found in the writing of advanced L1 English L2 German writers, who opted for more subtle expressions of their opinions in their L2 writing (Ryshina-Pankova, 2011). Ryshina-Pankova states that in persuasive/argumentative writing the tendency is to back away from explicit markers of personal opinion, to engage the reader by anticipating their responses, and thus 'encourage' the audience to be persuaded by the authors' arguments (*ibid.*, p. 244). This translates into an increased number of reader references, rather than references to the author. She even cited a study (Coffin and Hewings, 2004) in which a comparison was made between beginner and final year undergraduate students. Following an analysis of their work, a trend was noted in which authorial stance conveyed by the use of pronouns over time was slowly but surely replaced by an avoidance of such explicit strategies, a process which is echoed in Ryshina-Pankova's own study.

Analyzing a corpus of personal experience narratives and expository discussions, Hell et al. (2005) also found impersonal pronouns to be the option of choice for Dutch speakers. Similar results were found by Reilly et al. (2005) during the course of a cross-linguistic study of English L1 writing. Based on these results, we might be tempted to say that it is precisely the ongoing process of the downplaying of the interpersonal while foregrounding complex content, which is characteristic of academic discourse, that creates the need to further analyze stance.

Thus, overall, it would seem that our students are actually following the trends of other L2 English language speakers. Compared to their writing samples, what we could conclude to be lacking is a variety in the range of linguistic devices used in conveying this particular impersonal style. As English teachers working in an academic environment, we could make use of this state of affairs to instruct and help our students use a wider, broader range of devices, thus aiding them to further develop their linguistic skills, but also increase their chances of writing more successful essays which the audience would be more receptive to, and thus the possibility of them publishing their work.

## 7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

As indicated, even the definition of the concept of stance can prove a challenge in the academic setting, since some, such as Englebretson (2007), maintain that the term stance is sometimes used to denote what some scholars refer to as subjectivity, while other language researchers prefer the term evaluation over that of stance. To properly understand and define stance, it is necessary to conceive of language in terms of the functions for which it is used, in conjunction with the contexts within which it occurs. To clarify, stance is the expression of the writer's personal feelings/opinions, attitudes, assessments and value judgments by means of linguistic resources. According to Charles (2003), in a particular piece of writing, the writer takes a particular stance as a knowledgeable member of the field. Baratta (2009) further claimed that by giving this personal stamp, a writer, or in our case a student, reveals him/herself as part of a personal identity seen within an otherwise academic essay. It is possible to further study how this personal voice contributes to an overall objective tone in academic writing (*ibid.*). Within the scope of this study we attempted to identify and outline how a group of L1 Serbian L2 English speakers use stance-taking or stance-indicating means on a sample of essays written on topics including advertising, the relationship between technology and books, and relying on other people's opinions when making important decisions, in order to shed some light on their current

abilities or willingness to overtly express stance in their L2 writing. Overall, it was determined that they assumed a more aloof, impersonal style when writing in an academic setting.

With the exception of the findings of Blagojević (2009), there is an unfortunate lack of additional research into the matter of stance in L1 Serbian L2 English academic writing. Therefore, we cannot compare our results with any other obtained at this level, which at the same time provides ample space for future investigations. To gain more conclusive evidence about the factors that may affect Serbian EFL learners' use of stance-taking devices, further research on this topic could include a comparative study of essays written by the same students in both their native and foreign language so that a parallel could be drawn between the two modes of expression and the similarities/differences between L1 and L2 writing styles might be explored. In addition, a further line of research might involve comparing the way our students use stance in their writing, but in different essay types, contrasting for instance the usage of the aforementioned linguistic resources in expository vs. persuasive essays, primarily opinion essays, or the use of these resources in narrative essays.

One of the pedagogical implications that can be drawn from these research results is that more direct instruction on interactional metadiscourse is needed (as proposed by Lee and Deakin, 2016, and further studied by Min et al., 2019), so that writing could be an interactional, dialogical activity, one that engages the reader. Min et al. (2019) stated that it is not always possible to find evidence of either conviction or uncertainty in L2 writing, as it is in NS writing, but also determined a confusing underuse or overuse of stance adjectives which they ascribed either to the participants' level of L2 proficiency or the discourse community in which the text was written. If performance is affected by level of proficiency, this is an aspect that can directly be influenced in the L2 classroom.

The study also has some limitations that need to be addressed. For one, the essays were all written as part of allotted time segments which may have a direct bearing on what the authors decide to include in their writing. Furthermore, due to the fact that students do not reference sources in these texts, it is unclear where the line should be drawn between their original contribution to the argument, and the ideas included in the referenced texts. Then, the category marked 'attitudinal' is unnecessarily vague, and does not indicate the precise nature of the evidentiality, whether it is certainty or doubt, which is relevant for formal writing in English (Biber and Finegan, 2016): it can indicate the difference between three styles of expository writing, a faceless style, an informational style presenting uncertain information requiring overt markers of doubt, and a 'challenged style' of assertions of questionable veracity, which requires overt markers of certainty.

In general, greater attention should be paid to the semantic features associated with stance taking in writing. Perhaps a separate study could focus on these markers in particular. In addition, a larger corpus of undergraduate students from other higher education institutions and with different L2 backgrounds and majors should further be analyzed. And finally, since the majority of the referenced studies focused on more advanced FL learners, it would be beneficial for further analysis to also focus on younger EFLs at lower levels of proficiency.

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**Book review**

**METAPHOR IN TIMES OF CRISIS:  
METAPHORICAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THE GLOBAL CRISIS  
IN THE FINANCIAL TIMES AND IL SOLE 24 ORE 2008**

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The role of metaphor and figurative language in specialized discourse has been a fast developing strand of inquiry, especially with the growing amalgam of theories and approaches coming to intersect with metaphor study since the turn of the century (cf. Musolff 2012, Semino 2008). Antonella Luporini's new book provides a fresh and engaging take on the topical and methodological synergies, whereby, specifically, she traces the developments of financial metaphor from the global financial crisis outbreak to the emergence of cryptocurrency. The book weds methodological rigour, theoretical innovativeness and clarity of presentation to discuss metaphorical language use in media contexts and two languages, English and Italian. True to its focus, the linguistic data present a set of insights potentially useful for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and language pedagogy, even if this is beyond the author's other ambitious aims within this work. Most notably, her biggest contribution lies in merging the perspective of conceptual metaphor in the cognitive linguistic tradition (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) and the grammatical metaphor as developed within Systemic Functional Linguistics (e.g. Halliday and Mathiesen 1999), on the grounds of their shared aspects of adding semantic tension in shifts towards the concrete. This is not only the first extensive analysis that pays attention to both forms of metaphor, but also the first empirical work that traces their interaction and potential reinforcement, opening important theoretical avenues for future research.

The book is divided into an Introduction, four chapters and a Conclusion. The Introduction (pp. 13-19) explains the author's own motivation and research path, but also sets the scene for the analysis by situating it within existing trajectories of research. The first two chapters present the theoretical and methodological framework, namely developments in the study of metaphor (Chapter 1, pp. 19-43) and in approaches to metaphor from the corpus perspective (Chapter 2, pp 43-69). The following two chapters present analyses and their respective findings in English and Italian contexts: an analysis of metaphors for the global crisis in newspaper data (Chapter 3, pp. 69-101) and an analysis of metaphors to do with cryptocurrency in social journalism data (pp. 101-141). The Conclusions section (pp. 141 - 143) sums up the overall findings and gives an outlook for the future.

Chapter 1 presents an account of developments in metaphor study, from the "ornamental to the cognitive view" (p. 19). While going back in time to sketch old understandings of metaphor as merely a figure of speech has become somewhat tiring in its repeated presence in contemporary accounts, the exhaustive presentation in relation to the

history of thought and emergence of the epistemic perspective on metaphor gives it a fresh gaze, and will serve as a fine introduction to the history of metaphor study for all those who are new to the field. The account then turns to the interest in metaphor that culminated in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. This includes an overview going from the cognitive view of metaphor and the Conceptual Metaphor Theory of Lakoff and Johnson, to the “grammatical side of metaphor” (p. 38) in Systemic Functional Linguistics. The latter, less explored aspect of metaphor is discussed with references to examples concerning nominalisation in particular, tracing the way nominalised processes and qualities are reified, or in Thompson’s (2014) words 2014, *thingified*, i.e. metaphorically portrayed as things, thus becoming atemporal, and de-personalized through agency deletion.

Chapter 2 turns to practical issues of combining metaphor study and corpus linguistic techniques. The author is well aware of the growing popularity of this methodological synergy over the past two decades, and she presents a comprehensive look into the developments in automatic extraction of metaphors from texts. At the same time, the description makes it clear that the complex nature of metaphor means there are no ideal solutions for computational metaphor extraction, as metaphor remains difficult to model and systematise. Challenges and options of manual analysis with the aid of corpus tools are subsequently presented in similar detail. Methods of metaphor identification, namely the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) and its successor MIPVU, are discussed with respect to the goals of the study; the discussion is also one of the yet scarce accounts of combining the MIPVU procedure and corpus analysis. Finally, a discussion of linking corpus linguistics and nominalisation studies is presented, described as much less developed to date, but not depriving the reader of relevant details needed to follow the analyses that follow.

Chapter 3 opens the core of the analysis itself, an investigation of the metaphors of the global financial crisis using two corpus sources: *The Financial Times* for English and *Il Sole 24 Ore* for Italian. The approach used is part-automatic and part-manual, as discussed in Chapter 2. The quantitative corpus analysis relies on common techniques, presenting wordlists, collocations and word sketches for the lemmas *crisis/crisi*; from these, a set of concordances are marked as metaphorical either containing conceptual metaphor or nominalisation. Manual concordance analysis reveals a range of source concepts that are mapped onto the target of CRISIS, such as HEALTH, JOURNEY, HUMAN BEING, MACHINE. The study generally finds great similarities between the English and Italian data, with just three source concepts discussed as potentially culturally specific for Italian. Importantly, patterns of synergy of conceptual metaphor and nominalisation are identified in this stage of analysis, clearly showing co-occurrence and complementary functions of use. The Discussion part of the Chapter then offers a more discourse-oriented analysis of the findings in context, illustrated with concrete examples. Those more interested in specialized language and terminology may also, on the whole, make use of the examples to implement them in ESP class methodologies along the lines of e.g. Rodriguez (2003), even if the author clearly does not have this practical purpose in mind in her discussions. Moving on, Chapter 4 applies a similar approach to the topic of cryptocurrency, going forward ten years in time. A fresh aspect of this analysis is that it looks at social journalism, i.e. articles published on the article platform *Medium*. A wordlist, a keywordlist, and a list of collocates for the lemmas *cryptocurrency* and *cryptocurrencies* are presented first, with further analysis of collocates and word sketches. The main source concepts for the target of CRYPTOCURRENCY again include a set of productive source concepts such as HUMAN BEING, CONTAINER, JOURNEY, HEALTH, WAR/CONFLICT OR BUILDING. The

Discussion segment zooms in on these in more contextual detail, while also taking into account the nominalisations when present. The findings overall point to the significance of metaphorical language in the discourse observed, and again highlight the synergistic co-occurrence of conceptual metaphor and nominalisation. The metaphorical nominalisation tendencies themselves provide an important avenue for understanding patterns in the specialized discourse of finance and economics - for teachers from the language use perspective, for analysts from the semantic-with-lexico-grammatical structure realignment perspective.

On the whole, the book certainly presents some insights into the language and lived experience of the 2008 crisis and its outcomes, as indicated at its outset. The detailed metaphorical examples themselves give a useful look into ESP figurative language and its metaphorical vocabulary, even if the author does not aim to distinguish specialised language metaphors. One thing the work may leave desired for the more discourse-oriented analyst is a broader discussion of the historical, political and economic implications of the findings, such as the e.g. briefly mentioned outlook that justifies the drastic austerity measures implemented in the following years. However, the lasting value of the book is likely to lie in breaking new ground on several levels, the most evident one being the treatment of lexical and grammatical metaphor on shared grounds. The methodology itself, secondly, while following the existing developments, highlights a range of insights, possibilities and technique combinations that can enrich applications of corpus approaches to metaphor in practice. Thirdly, the very data choice of news media and social journalism brings metaphor study another step further into the explorations of the increasing convergence of media content that is currently transforming the public sphere into yet unpredictable ways - from the micro plain of linguistic forms to the macro plains of language and communication. For each of these important directions of investigation, Luporini's book presents an example of a solid case study, which will be a valuable resource for students and experienced scholars alike.

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