

**IFTE 2017**  
**III International Forum on Teacher Education**

**ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC ACADEMIC PURPOSES AS NEED  
AND TOOL OF EFL PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS'  
COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCY FORMATION**

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***Abstract***

If we put compulsory education aside, people have always learned a language for a special purpose. This could be the need to communicate with someone who does not speak a shared language about something 'specific' (Kern, 2013). English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has a long history and has become increasingly popular since the 1960s. No investigations devoted to the problem of teaching English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) as a need and a tool of EFL pre-service teachers' communicative competency formation have been made so far. The authors of this paper pioneered to meet this challenge. For the solution of the goal of the research - compilation of the glossary and development of training and test exercises which were aimed at facilitating specific academic vocabulary in ESAP class for the formation of EFL pre-service teachers' communicative competency - a multi-staged experiment was conducted. At the initial stage, 42 EFL pre-service teachers who are Master's Degree students were interviewed. The research revealed that what EFL pre-service teachers need is to learn to use specific academic vocabulary and communicate proficiently. The practical output of the research consists in the possibility of using approbated materials of ESAP glossary in EFL pre-service teachers' training. The findings of the research can serve as general recommendations for university faculties and can be widely used in ESAP class and language training courses.

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**Keywords:** Academic vocabulary, communicative competency, EFL pre-service teachers, ESAP class, ESAP glossary, learners' needs.



## **1. Introduction**

Searching for innovative ways of modelling a new generational individual and a professional teacher suggests that pre-service teachers' trainers develop new teaching techniques and/ or materials. In this study, the authors attempted to meet this challenge considering "English for Specific Academic Purposes" as the subject which makes it possible to form EFL pre-service teachers' communicative competency, which is regarded by the authors of this paper to be priority number 1 in the hierarchy of professional EFL teachers' competencies.

The following questions "What do we mean exactly when we say English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP)?" and "What role does ESAP play as a need and a tool in EFL pre-service teachers' communicative competency formation?" are examined. The authors of this study support the standpoint of some scholars who describe ESP as the teaching of English for academical studies, or the teaching of English for vocational or professional purposes (Anthony, 1997). No studies distinguishing the role ESAP fulfils the communicative competency formation for EFL pre-service teachers' have been identified. Many great scholars (Mackay, & Mountford, 1978; Carver, 1983; Hutchinson, & Waters, 1987; Barber, 1988; Strevens, 1988; Swales, 1990; Johns, & Dudley-Evans, 1991; Anthony, 1997; Dudley-Evans, 1997; Dudley-Evans, & St. John, 1998; Nazarenko, 2000; Polyakov, 2003; Smoak, 2003; Foedorova, & Nikitaev, 2005; Army, Soler, & Rueda, 2006; Khomutova, 2008; Egorova, 2012; Army-Macia, 2012; Gillett, 2013; Kern, 2013) recognize the importance of introducing ESP as "a need to communicate with someone about something 'specific', for example, a tourist who needs to ask someone for directions, a hobbyist who wants to find out more about his favourite subject on the Internet, a business person who needs to attend meetings with international partners, or a technician who needs to order parts from a catalogue that is only available in one specific language" (Kern, 2013), though.

The interview and the diagnostic test with 60 EFL pre-service teachers displayed significant gaps in their knowledge of specific academic vocabulary and their inability to navigate in scientific concepts. To meet these challenges, the authors compiled a glossary, that comprises of nearly 200 units (words and word collocations), and developed training and test exercises with the aim to facilitate the knowledge of specific academic vocabulary.

To solve the goal of the research, the authors attempted to prove that teaching EFL pre-service teachers to assimilate specific academic vocabulary in ESAP class can become the basis for the formation of their communicative competency. The assessment of the in-put knowledge at the control stage of the multi-staged experiment and the EFL pre-service teachers' presentations at the annual student scientific conference in April 2017 (31 participants that amounted to 73,8 % of the total number - 42) of EFL pre-service teachers) give evidence to this finding.

The authors are sure that mastery of specific academic vocabulary will help EFL pre-service teachers further develop their communicative competency which can be applied to many and various kinds of projects they might encounter in their career.

The study materials are recommended to be used in ESAP classes both for the formation and the development of EFL pre-service teachers' communicative competency throughout the system of continuing teacher education.

## 2. Problem Statement

Literature review on the studied problem revealed that none of the scholars dealing with English for Specific Purposes (ESP)/ English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) have raised a problem on how ESAP can be utilized for EFL pre-service teachers' communicative competency formation in ESAP classes, although most of the researches in the field of linguistics since the mid-20th century have focused on the ways in which language is used in real communication. A great number of ESP researchers speculated on:

- how to accurately define what ESP is (Hutchinson, & Waters, 1987; Strevens, 1988; Dudley-Evans, 1997; Anthony, 1997; Dudley-Evans, & St John, 1998; Smoak, 2003);
- what the concepts of ESP are (Khomutova, 2008);
- what difference between ESP and general English is (Hutchinson, & Waters, 1987; Anthony, 1997; Smoak, 2003; Kern, 2013);
- what separate areas ESP is split into (Carver, 1983; Hutchinson, & Waters, 1987; Barber, 1988);
- what the focus of ESP is (Swales, 1990; Johns, & Dudley-Evans, 1991; Polyakov, 2003; Egorova, 2012; Gillett, 2013);
- what ESP learners' needs are (Mackay, & Mountford, 1978; Hutchinson, & Waters, 1987; Gillett, 2013);
- what skills for communication and mediation an EFL pre-service teacher should possess (Nazarenko, 2000; Foedorova, & Nikitaev, 2005; Yarmakeev, Pimenova, & Syunina, 2016; Yarmakeev, Abdrafikova, Pimenova, & Sharafieva, 2016);
- what role technology in teaching languages for specific purposes plays (Army, Soler, & Rueda, 2006; Army-Macia, 2012; Kern, 2013), and others.

It was Carver (1983) who identified English for Academic Purposes (EAP) as the second type of ESP but he never proposed EAP as a tool of communicative competency formation.

The authors of this study were determined to put forward and confirm the hypothesis that for the formation of EFL pre-service teachers' communicative competency, ESAP classes can be effectively realized provided regular activities based on training exercises with specific academic vocabulary are carried out.

## 3. Research Questions

A range of questions were defined to commence this study. The first question "What do we mean exactly when we say English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP)?" has always been debated, and different definitions have existed side by side (Smoak, 2003). The authors share the opinion that ESP and ESAP, is English used in academic studies, or English for professional purposes (Anthony, 1997).

▪ The second question raised in this study is "How can ESAP class play an important role in the formation of EFL pre-service teachers' communicative competency?" EFL pre-service teachers need to learn how to use specific academic vocabulary, for example, how to collocate words, how to comprehend authentic texts that contain those words and expressions, or how to communicate productively in typical situations inside and outside the classroom. The authors claim that because it predetermines its openness

to friendly studying specific academic vocabulary and general English vocabulary, which is crucial for learners' communicative competency formation, ESAP classes successfully meet this need.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

In this study, a few goals were set to confirm the hypothesis that EFL pre-service teachers' communicative competency can be formed in English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) classes:

◆ to compile a glossary of frequently used words and word collocations in academic studies specific academic (e.g. *The new approach to science education; These data do not contradict the preliminary assumption that ...; The approbation of the described model; To fit these criteria; We carried out/ performed these experiments in order to show ...; All further investigations contributed to our knowledge of ...; The above method has found a wide application nowadays, etc.*);

◆ to develop a set of copy-right training and test exercises aimed at facilitating specific academic vocabulary in ESAP classes;

◆ to conduct a multi-staged experiment on teaching specific academic vocabulary for EFL pre-service teachers' communicative competency formation in ESAP classes.

It was asserted that ESAP classes enable learners to structure effective communication skills that constitute their communicative competency inside and outside the classroom.

#### **5. Research Methods**

##### **5.1. Students' Background**

The experimental training was conducted among 42 pre-service teachers (1 control group A, 19 students and 1 experimental group B, 23 students) obtaining Master's degree at Leo Tolstoy Institute of Philology and Intercultural Communication of Kazan Federal University during two semesters: Fall 2016 and Spring 2017.

##### **5.2. Experiment**

Clearly, students need to develop their language proficiency sufficiently to enable them to undertake studies at the university level and to be able to function adequately in the language. This suggests that students need to practise listening to lectures, taking notes, writing continuously and taking part in discussions. In this study, we decided to focus on listening comprehension, note-taking and academic writing. The listening comprehension component occupies 25% of the course time, while the writing component occupies 12%. This was not to say that we excluded other language skills, simply that they were not emphasised to the same extent.

The experiment consisted of three stages:

1. Ascertaining experiment.
2. Forming experiment.
3. Control experiment.

At the ascertaining stage, a questionnaire was offered to the pre-service teachers to reveal their attitude and readiness to acquire knowledge in the sphere of ESAP. The questionnaire helped to point out

the most popular factors of ESAP inclusion into the learning process that served the base of the experiment:

- ESAP instruction focuses learners' attention on the genres used in target discourse communities, as these are seen to represent the typical forms of communication.
- ESAP teachers lead ESAP learners in the analysis of sample texts to identify conventional formats and the collective mind-set for the communication of the members of the communities they aspire to.
- ESAP has grown to become one of the most prominent areas of EFL teaching.

Overall, three major criteria were selected to evaluate pre-service teachers' knowledge and skills in the sphere of ESAP learning: subject-matter content, rhetoric of science, and accuracy.

The use of subject-matter content to support classroom L2 learning is recognized theoretically, empirically, and pedagogically for its contributions to global L2 proficiency and academic skills development across a broad spectrum of learners. However, concerns linger among L2 teachers and researchers about the effectiveness of a content focus for the development and mastery of L2 features whose limited saliency often requires attention to form. The present study was an attempt to address those concerns through the examination of classroom interaction involving subject-matter content in ESAP, particularly with respect to its role in providing the negotiation of meaning, form-focused intervention, and form-focused instruction. These interactions are known to ensure input, feedback, and learner production of the modified output that draw pre-service teachers' attention to develop in relation to content meaning.

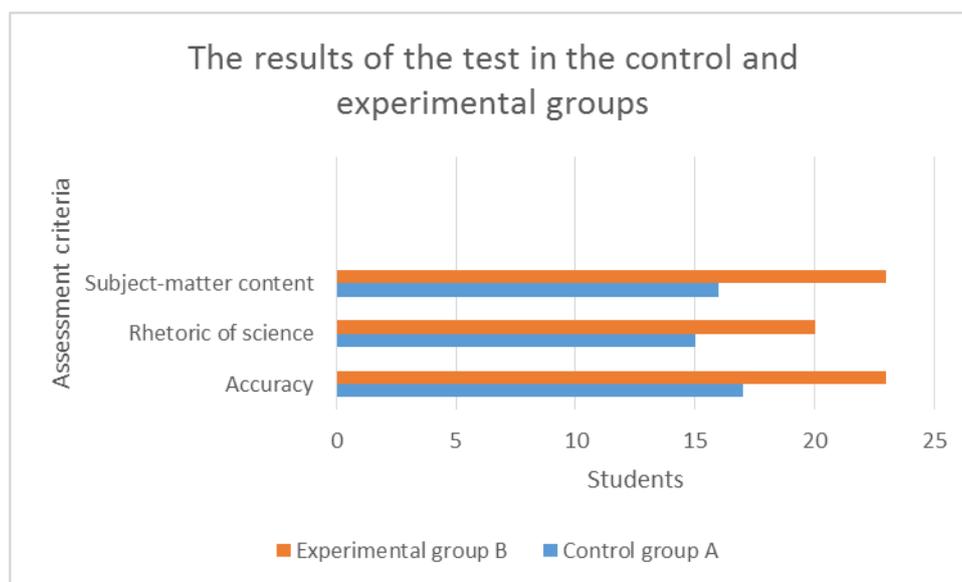
A key contention of rhetoric of science is that the practice of science is, to varying degrees, persuasive. The study of science from this viewpoint, as we believe, variously examines modes of inquiry, logic, argumentation, the ethos of scientific practitioners, the structures of scientific publications, and the character of scientific discourse and debates. And these issues were of great significance in designing ESAP lessons.

When using English for specific and academic purposes it is important to be accurate both in speaking and writing. It is, however, very difficult to produce language which is intelligent, appropriate and accurate at the same time. It is therefore important to work out and implement special tasks helping students cope with them effectively. And in this turn, we recommended pre-service teachers resort to the selected exercises developed by us.

The results of the initial diagnostic test revealing pre-service teachers' knowledge in managing specific vocabulary chunks proved to be poor. All these data were considered during the experiment in the organization of the educational process at the formative stage where various tasks proposed by the authors were implemented in ESAP classes. This stage was aimed at practicing intensive listening and dictation of specific terminological words with the help of the glossary compiled by us. Moreover, we suppose that perhaps the shortest route to minimum communicative adequacy is the way of notions, enabling a student to express his ideas within a framework of language appropriate to his academic subject. We looked at some study areas and noted that the frequent use was made of specific notions, such as describing, defining, exemplifying, classifying, interpretation of data, comparing, and contrasting. This glossary was of great support and a source of knowledge for pre-service teachers in ESAP classes.

A further investigation of the problem was carried on at the control stage of the experiment to assess the effectiveness of using the glossary in acquiring ESAP matter of the language as a need and a tool of EFL pre-service teachers' communicative competency formation. The control battery of tests was used to monitor and analyze the effectiveness and development of the subject-matter content, rhetoric of science, accuracy skills.

The results of the test in the control and experimental groups are shown in Fig. 1.



**Figure. 01** The results of the test in the control and experimental groups

Comparing the results of both groups we obtained rather discrepant results. Overall, they confirmed the positive trend in the change of pre-service teachers' knowledge in ESAP as a tool of communicative competency formation via the glossary usage. Significantly, the quality of students' knowledge of English language increased which to some respect, can prove the formation of educational abilities and skills. In addition, pre-service teachers showed great excellence in participating at various conferences that, undoubtedly, states their improvement in subject-matter content, rhetoric of science and accuracy.

## 6. Findings

The teacher is a resource that helps students identify their language learning problems and find solutions to them, find out the skills they need to focus on, and take responsibility for making choices which determine what and how to learn. The teacher serves as a source of information to students on how they are progressing in their language learning. ESAP is a learner-centered approach in which all teaching practices are governed by specific needs of specific learners. This process encompasses needs analysis, material development and its implementation, relevant assessment procedures which actively involve ESAP learners as well as ESAP teachers.

Research provided sufficient insights into the fact that it should not be only the linguistic needs that require the eclectic approach to be followed but non-linguistic that needs to also be taken care of through this dynamic approach. It was found out that ESAP teachers should consider ESAP learners'

individual learning factors such as their learning styles, attitudes, motivation, learning strategies as well as local culture and academic ecosystem to ensure effective learning. It may be summed up that as learners' personalities as well as learning contexts are diverse and peculiar, there is an unavoidable need to choose matching pedagogical methodologies. In our case, ESAP proved to impact pre-service teachers' communicative competency formation positively.

## 7. Conclusion

Since the end of World War II, educators and linguists have paid much attention to ESP. There are a lot of reasons to explain this phenomenon. Among the main ones are: teaching general English does not meet all learners' needs, therefore there has emerged ESP with its division into; English for Science and Technology (EST), English for Business and Economics (EBE), and English for Social Studies (ESS), and their sub-divisions into English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). In this study, the authors drew theoreticians and practicing teachers' attention to one more role ESP can fulfill - ESAP can be exploited as a tool of EFL pre-service teachers' communicative competency formation. The authors proved that it is possible to efficiently form EFL pre-service teachers' communicative competency in ESAP classes.

In ESAP classes, pre-service teachers learn and activate specific academic vocabulary so that to be able to navigate in scientific concepts and various scientific schools and directions; to explain the diversity of approaches to modeling methods and techniques with the aim of understanding the essence of phenomena and processes; to use general scientific principles and methods of cognition in the analysis of specific methodological problems; to express their own values and attitudes to established methodological systems; and to synthesize theoretical knowledge. All these, for sure, lead to the formation of a future productive EFL teacher and scholar.

The outputs of this research - a glossary of specific academic words and word collocations and a set of training and test exercises for assimilating specific academic vocabulary in ESAP class - can be widely used by university faculty in ESAP classes as well as in EFL classes, for the line between both is often blurred (Anthony, 1997).

In the following stages of testing program, we plan to increase the sample and included psychological questionnaires in the study, to measure parent-child relationship, trust and other parameters of interpersonal relations in order to realize the quantitative analysis of this program's effectiveness.

## Acknowledgments

The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University.

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