

Review – New to the LSP Classroom: A selection of monographs on successful practices

VRÁNOVÁ, M. (Ed.) (2023). *New to the LSP Classroom: A selection of monographs on successful practices*. Wilmington/Malaga: Vernon Press

As the title suggests, the volume *New to the LSP Classroom: A Selection of Monographs on Successful Practices* was published with the intention of giving the newcomer a map to navigate them through the complicated territory of Language for Specific Purposes. The metaphor of the map permeates most chapters and allows the authors to examine the different contexts in which LSP teachers work. The authors analyse the identities of LSP instructors, seeing them as a specific university community with demarcated territories somewhat hostile to occasional trespasses. The map metaphor is reinforced by the ethnographic approach that some authors in the volume adopted to uncover the unspoken assumptions of particular professional communities. In a way, the map metaphor refers to the classic ESP methodology book by Hutchinson and Waters (1987), where ESP teachers are compared to dwellers in a strange and uncharted land, in another way, however, it enables a shift from the traditional definition of LSP as a learner-centred approach towards the neglected agent – namely, the teacher. The marginalisation of the LSP teacher, a result of the prevailing emphasis on learners' needs in the past few decades, is another shared motive in the volume. As the authors emphasise, the teacher will always remain the key figure in the classroom and as such a careful analysis of the roles of LSP teachers, their identities and their private universes need to be mapped with a nearly ethnographic precision.

Mapping of the LSP territory starts with Kakoulli Constantinou and Papadima-Sophocleous in Chapter 1 where they focus on the professional education needs of LSP teachers. The results of their study concur with other researchers, highlighting the scarcity of opportunities for LSP education. The study also forms certain parameters on which LSP teacher education could be founded, some of which correspond to the findings of previous research studies (e. g., needs analysis or authenticity of materials and tasks).

The problem of insufficient training is confirmed by a survey conducted by Bereczky. In Chapter 2, Bereczky shows that students' expectations of the LSP teachers to be knowledge providers gives them a sense of inadequacy. Consequently, most LSP teachers are open to consulting subject teachers. That the contact, not to say collaboration, is often very difficult is revealed by Bereczky's respondents who describe the position of language teachers at university as "second class citizens" (p. 40). Bereczky thus speaks of an identity crisis where the role of the LSP practitioner as described in the literature clashes with real-life conditions.

What was described by Bereczky is fully exposed in Chapter 3, aptly called “Being a legal alien”, where Vránová describes professional communities in academia as being exclusive and secretive, denying, or at least complicating, access to outsiders. Employing an ethnography-inspired approach to make sense of the community of subject teachers, she finds a way in by turning not to the teachers but to the students. Drawing on her own experience, Vránová claims that students are more open to cooperation, thus seeing them as an unexpected ally in the secretive academic environment.

Like the other chapters, Chapter 4 by Lázár takes the teacher-centred approach to discuss the LSP methodology. Lázár deals with the problem of demotivation of students in LSP classes through research she conducted among teachers. She sees this as a logical step since a large number of studies have found that learners attribute their demotivation mostly to their teachers. Lázár discusses the topic through the identities of LSP teachers and concludes that it is authenticity that teachers value most in this regard – the ability to motivate students through their own genuine enthusiasm.

In Chapter 5, Rubio describes his own experience with designing a new language program in a business institution, where he enjoyed a certain curricular freedom. Although Rubio’s objective was to be innovative, he nonetheless felt the lack of a textbook that would have navigated him through the LSP territory. Consequently, he shares numerous activities that other LSP teachers will find useful in their classes.

The scarcity of methodological guidelines is also the concern addressed in the following chapter, where Rodríguez and López Risso describe their ESP course. When designing the course, the authors turned to sociolinguistics for methodological support. The result is a modern course with up-to-date activities based on three precepts – multilingualism, language change and language contact. In their course, they do not shun away the native language; rather they view students’ L1 as a scaffold for learning L2. Moreover, they encourage students to compare languages to observe how they changed and make students aware of lexical borrowings to demonstrate cultural contacts between societies. The authors are convinced that activities of this kind help students go beyond the classroom and to make links between the content of the classroom and the world beyond.

The two following chapters share techniques intended to inspire new LSP instructors. In Chapter 7, the activities are primarily focused on promoting students’ willingness to communicate. In Chapter 8, Abbate shares practical and easy-to-use activities based on lexical approach strategies. Her focus is on social reading in CLIL settings, offering an overview of online tools allowing students to share their notes and comments on a given text, facilitating the co-construction of meaning.

In Chapter 9, Bercuci and Chitez analyse the challenges Romanian students face in writing in English. Their analysis discusses the transition from the Soviet to the Anglo-American writing culture, and their results, on which they make their recommendations to ESP instructors teaching writing, are, of course, relevant for other countries from the former Eastern Bloc.

Chapter 10 also focuses on writing, in which Sloodmaekers describes the development of a writing program as part of a French for Specific Purposes course. Unlike many textbooks that concentrate on essay writing, Sloodmaekers offers strategies for writing reports, summarising texts, and interpreting graphs, which are genres that fit real-life purposes. The author's approach highlights individualised, process-oriented support in writing, emphasising constant revision as the path to the desired outcome.

In the final chapter, Kóris presents an online collaboration project between Hungarian and American universities aimed at developing students' intercultural competence, critical thinking, and communication skills. By following the concept of learning-by-doing, the author sees the biggest asset of the project in promoting learner autonomy and developing intercultural competence through the interaction with culturally different people and gaining insight into different perspectives and worldviews.

The international project described above shows that territory crossing should not be viewed as an undesirable thing. Throughout the volume, the map metaphor points to unknown territories hostile to outsiders although the LSP teachers would like to lower the barriers between their own community and that of subject teachers. It is in Kóris's chapter, where the boundaries are finally crossed. Though it might take some time to overcome other barriers, the volume aims to remove one barrier within the LSP community itself: by encouraging collaboration and networking, the volume envisions a strong LSP community, where more experienced educators will share their experiences with newcomers to the field. And the volume does exactly that – by sharing inspiring ideas and practical activities, barriers gradually disappear.

Author

Markéta Dudová, PhD, e-mail: dudova.marketa@sci.muni.cz, Masaryk University Language Centre
The author teaches English for Specific Purposes at the Faculty of Science. In her research, she deals with metaphors in science, visual thinking, and the use of literature in ESP.