

“Mosaic Landscape” of Teaching and Learning Professional Vocabulary at English for Specific Purposes Studies at University

Baiba Pušinska, Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies, Latvia

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Abstract

A university is a higher education institution where students acquire their professional and communication competences and develop 21st century skills. These skills are acquired through an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) study course designed for landscape architects. The University's curriculum includes learner-centred ESP study with the overarching goal of teaching and learning professional vocabulary in all undergraduate programmes. The ESP curriculum is based on self-regulated learning (SRL) in which students take an active role in their own learning process. Students construct their own personal understanding, which depends on each student's experiences and worldviews. They also understand their needs, reflect on their learning and monitor their progress. Through various teaching and learning activities, they continually learn how to use and extend subject-specific language. The aim of the study is to analyse students' opinions on teaching and learning activities and methods of expanding professional vocabulary in self-regulated undergraduate studies in the ESP programme “Landscape Architecture and Planning” at the Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies (LBTU). The results of the study were obtained in a survey in which 25 undergraduate students of landscape architecture at the university participated. The students evaluated 5 teaching/learning activities, 4 activity implementation methods, SRL and - the effectiveness of the expansion of professional vocabulary. The data obtained shows that students highly value giving realistic subject-specific profession related presentations where they can find relevant vocabulary and create new content. The task strongly encourages the use of professional vocabulary. SRL supports the expansion of professional vocabulary.

Keywords: Self-Regulated Learning (SRL), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Professional Vocabulary, Landscape Architects

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Introduction

The author describes the ESP study course at the university on the basis of the definition of landscape architecture, which defines a particular landscape in nature - landscape mosaic. A landscape mosaic is a heterogeneous area consisting of different communities or a collection of different ecosystems (Foreman, 1995; Meshram, 2020). This means that a landscape mosaic contains many aspects from different ecosystems that can coexist and interact with each other to form a unit.

The author of the article describes English for Specific Purposes (ESP) for landscape architects and planners at the Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies (LBTU) as a course of study in which the teaching and learning (teaching/learning) of professional vocabulary occurs by combining different elements to support the effective acquisition professional vocabulary. In addition, external factors should also be considered - society and the job market expect graduates to be critical thinkers, creative, have excellent communication and collaboration skills, be able to solve problems and be able to fit into the 21st century professional environment.

ESP for Landscape Architects is a compulsory part of the “Landscape Architecture and Planning” study programme. It is a learner-centred course developed in collaboration with practicing professionals to meet the professional needs of students. The acquisition of professional vocabulary is influenced by several factors – students' prior learning experience, motivation, behaviour, cognition, and metacognition. ESP is designed to facilitate understanding of professional content and promote engagement in academic and professional discourse.

The author analyses the professional vocabulary for landscape architects and focuses on the word categories. It is subject specific vocabulary which includes high- and low- frequency words, technical words and academic vocabulary. The teaching/learning of professional vocabulary is described as a process-oriented approach in which students expand vocabulary, create their own lists of professional vocabulary, read and analyse scientific texts, and create their own content. It is based on SRL.

“Purposefully managed self-directed university studies are highly important because they put a stress on each student’s higher responsibility, initiative, motivation, independence, collaboration and self-assessment ... to cope with a lot of requirements, tasks and aims....” (Briede, 2016)

Students main task is to design their own learning journey to extend professional vocabulary. Obtaining of professional and communicative competence through the implementation of effective teaching/learning activities is the highest learning outcome.

This article focuses on the analysis of teaching/learning activities of professional vocabulary for landscape architects and how self-directed learning can support the extension and use of subject-specific language in ESP.

The aim of the study is to analyse the students’ opinion regarding teaching/learning activities and activity implementation methods of expanding professional vocabulary in self-regulated undergraduate studies in the ESP study programme “Landscape Architecture and Planning” at the Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies.

Content of Professional Vocabulary for Landscape Architects

The general task of ESP at the Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies is to teach students to read scientific texts on topics relevant to their profession and to engage in academic oral and written discourse. In ESP classes, students must expand their knowledge of subject-specific vocabulary and relate the acquired vocabulary to their own content. It is known from theory that different words have different values for students. S. Webb and P. Nation (2024) analyse words classified according to their frequency of use in different types of discourse. The researchers distinguished the following categories of words: high- and low-frequency words, technical words and academic vocabulary. High-frequency and low-frequency words are learned during the language learning process. Students produce language with both types of words that are widely used in everyday life. Technical words can be low-frequency words in everyday language that occur frequently within a particular subject area but less frequently outside the subject area. It can be observed that technical words stand for specialised knowledge that is important for learning a certain topic. Technical words form a specialised vocabulary that occurs frequently in the literature and in various resources on a particular subject area. In addition, technical words convey meanings that are central to understanding topics in landscape architecture and urban planning. Academic words are needed to understand subject-related academic texts (Webb & Nation, 2024). It is mentioned that,

“... Academic words to be used to support the use of technical vocabulary.... Academic words pose challenges to learners because they are not well known, are typically not taught in content-based courses, and are less noticeable than technical vocabulary.” (Coxhead 2000; Webb & Nation, 2024, p. 16)

The current situation shows that students have to learn technical vocabulary and academic words as part of their studies in landscape architecture and planning. Learning professional and academic words has a positive effect on the comprehension of academic discourse (lectures and academic texts), because it has been shown that knowledge of vocabulary has a great influence on whether texts are understood or not. Academic texts will be difficult to understand if many words are unfamiliar (Laufen & Sim, 1985; Webb & Nation, 2024). The ESP curriculum foresees teaching/learning of subject-specific vocabulary or professional vocabulary. Professional vocabulary for landscape architects is a subject-specific vocabulary that includes technical and academic words, various subject-specific word lists for reading and discussing scientific texts and participating in professional and academic discourses on landscape architecture and planning. New technical and academic words should occur frequently when students use and produce English language on profession-related topics.

Professional vocabulary for landscape architects is closely linked to the tasks, responsibilities daily routine and professional environment of landscape architects and planners. The professional vocabulary of landscape architects should cover all aspects in which professionals operate. Their main task is to create and develop new designs for various private and public outdoor spaces. They also take part in landscape renewal projects where their main task is to create sustainable designs. Landscape architects have to evaluate sites from various aspects, taking into account the geography, the history of the site, the infrastructure and the general development plans of the wider area. They must work in accordance with local, national and international legislation and obtain the necessary permits from various state and local authorities. They work at local government agencies to plan new urban designs, prepare written reports on local government areas in the urban environment.

They participate as experts in various international projects for which they need foreign language skills. In addition, presentation skills and other 21st century skills are essential. To summarise landscape architects need to acquire a wide range of knowledge covering many profession-related topics where professional vocabulary is crucial. The teaching/learning of professional vocabulary is a long-term, process-oriented approach consisting of various teaching/learning activities and methods. The ESP course should provide a stable platform for the acquisition of professional vocabulary.

Students' Self-Regulated Learning

The ESP studies at LBTU are based on self-regulated learning (SRL), where students control and regulate their own learning. SRL involves students actively participating in their learning process by setting goals, planning, and choosing strategies to improve their performance. They learn at their own pace, monitor their progress, and adapt based on feedback.

SRL learners identify their language-related, learning-related, and emotional needs. Language-related needs include expanding vocabulary, improving reading and writing, and developing presentation skills.

Oxford University experts recommend starting courses by understanding successful learning, linking SRL with motivation. Motivation enhances self-regulation, leading to better academic performance (Reinders et al., 2023). SRL is also known as self-directed learning (SDL), focusing on adult learning. According to Latvian researcher B. Briede (2016), SDL involves maintaining cognition, emotions, and motivation to achieve personal goals, with time management and planning as key components.

SRL has four key phases:

- Defining tasks
- Setting goals and planning
- Enacting learning strategies
- Monitoring and reflecting

The acquisition of professional vocabulary is systematic and continuous, based on individual abilities. SRL emphasizes the student's inner activity, including perception, awareness, application, decision-making, action, and feedback. The lecturer's role is to guide students in self-regulated learning, challenging them with tasks and providing choices. The goal is for students to self-regulate all aspects of learning and design their unique learning paths. SRL involves cognition and metacognition, crucial for planning and controlling learning processes.

Metacognition includes three types of knowledge: knowing about oneself as a learner, knowing about the task, and knowing about learning strategies (Williams et al., 2019). It helps students understand their cognitive processes, choose effective learning activities, and expand their professional vocabulary in landscape architecture and planning. Metacognition is crucial in ESP studies as it encourages students to think and reflect about how they organize their learning and use professional vocabulary.

Researchers Williams, Mercer, and Ryan (2019) explored how language is learned and processed. SRL's constructive approach emphasizes students' active roles and cognitive development. Students construct personal understandings from their experiences, fitting new

information into existing knowledge or modifying what they know. This process helps them use information in new or complex situations.

SRL involves students actively creating new understandings, developing their perception of the world, and participating in various ESP activities. These aspects of SRL influence the acquisition and expansion of professional vocabulary. Students interpret information individually, which helps them understand how language works.

In ESP classes, students' experiences, beliefs, thoughts, feelings, and learning methods affect how they perceive and construct knowledge. They take responsibility for learning professional vocabulary, creating word lists based on their needs and interests. Teaching/learning activities should support their learning targets. Students' reflections on the learning process are crucial, showing how new vocabulary works within the language framework.

Learning ESP and acquiring professional vocabulary should be personally important, especially for students in the "Landscape Architecture and Planning" program. SRL helps students expand their professional vocabulary and relate it to their own contexts. It aids in dealing with scientific and professional texts, participating in academic and professional discourse, and expressing opinions about professional opportunities.

English for Specific Purposes at University

P. Kletzenbauer and A. Moser argue that ESP focuses on the language areas necessary to meet the professional and/or academic demands of a particular field and that learner-centeredness is paramount. An understanding of specific language needs, excellent pedagogical skills and knowledge of students' specific professional contexts are elements that form the foundation of ESP. Teachers often work with learners and experts in a particular field to consider the needs and goals of the learners and to ensure that the materials provided by the teacher are relevant to the learners and reflect the current reality in landscape architecture. Researchers Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) have characterised language professionals' approach to teaching/learning and ESP as follows: Practitioners often plan the course and provide the materials for it, as it is rarely possible to find and use a subject-specific course book. To design the tasks, teachers select and adapt suitable published materials. Sometimes they also write new materials if they cannot find suitable existing materials. When selecting or creating appropriate written or visual materials, the language level of the students should be considered (Schuman Fauster & Fürstenberg, 2022). This means that the ESP course for landscape architects at the university is based on the needs of the students and the suggestions of landscape professionals, with the planning of the course being process oriented.

Overall, the needs of the university are the teaching/learning of subject-specific vocabulary and the reading and analysing of scientific texts. In addition, the teaching/learning of content and language are intertwined; the ESP course takes a two-strand approach. On the one hand, the course consists of the teaching/learning of professional vocabulary related to landscape architecture and urban planning, which helps to expand professional vocabulary, relate it to one's own context and understand scientific and professional texts; on the other hand, the course includes the analysis of professional texts, their translation and the search for professional information for academic discourse. In addition, the ESP study course aims to develop students' communicative and professional competences, where communicative competence is the ability to use language at both receptive and productive levels, and

professional competence is the ability to use professional vocabulary in written form (when producing translations and academic papers) and orally (when participating in academic discourse, giving presentations, creating dialogues, etc.) when participating in professional and academic activities.

According to the new 21st century paradigm, students need to be taught 21st century skills, and in line with Oxford University,

“... Global skills can be understood in five broad clusters:

- Communication and collaboration.
- Creativity and critical thinking.
- Intercultural competence and citizenship.
- Emotional self-regulation and wellbeing.
- Digital literacies.

... They prepare students for success, not only academically and professionally but also personally.” (Mercer et al., 2019, p. 2)

ESP is particularly well suited to the development of global skills; 5 interconnected clusters of global skills are integrated into different ESP teaching/learning activities to acquire and extend professional vocabulary. Content-based language learning is the foundation of ESP. At the same time, the global skills are used and practised in the teaching/learning of subject-specific language.

In summary, the author’s observations show that the successful acquisition of professional vocabulary for landscape architects can be achieved through a process-oriented approach in ESP, where several elements are linked and connected to ensure the successful acquisition of professional vocabulary. First, the ESP is based on meaningful self-regulated teaching/learning activities that can be carried out with student involvement in individual, pair, group and project work. Second, 21st century global skills are incorporated into the teaching/learning of professional vocabulary. Global skills support the acquisition of professional vocabulary and can also be an outcome of the student teaching/learning process in the ESP to enhance the professional and social competences that landscape architects need to meet the demands of the profession.

Investigating Students’ Opinion on Expansion of Professional Vocabulary

The survey was conducted at the end of the academic year in May 2024 to find out students’ opinions on the expansion of professional vocabulary in the ESP course at the university. The questionnaire was distributed to 25 second year students on the “Landscape Architecture and Planning” course in their last ESP lesson before exams. The students were asked to evaluate 8 statements including 5 teaching/learning activities, 4 activity implementation methods, SRL and finally the students rated the effectiveness of increasing professional vocabulary.

1. I have learned new professional vocabulary by reading short texts and completing tasks under the guidance of a lecturer.
2. Reading of the EU Landscape Convention has helped me learn and understand the legal terminology in landscape architecture.
3. I have learned professional vocabulary by reading scientific articles on landscape architecture and urban planning in accordance with the given requirements and guidelines.

4. I have learned professional vocabulary by making a presentation and compiling an appropriate glossary about:
 - Garden styles in landscape architecture
 - Manor house surrounding
 - Attractive and ugly urban landscape / cityscape
5. I have learned professional vocabulary by creating a presentation on landscape architecture projects implemented in recent years in the world (Europe, the Baltic States, Latvia).
6. When learning professional vocabulary at ESP I prefer: 1. individual learning, 2. pair work, 3. group work, 4. project work.
7. I am able to set learning goals, plan and implement my own learning and I have reflected on how I have organized the acquisition of professional vocabulary.
8. I have expanded my professional vocabulary, that makes me easier to understand content.

A 4-point Likert-type scale was chosen to measure students' attitudes toward their teaching/learning activities, activity implementation methods, and the SRL. Students were asked to select a response on a point scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, 4=strongly agree), with normally no neutral points on the scale. This is to ensure that students indicate an attitude when expressing their agreement or disagreement with a particular statement. For the last statement of the questionnaire, a 10-point Likert scale (1 point=very low, 5=neither low nor high, 10=extremely high) was used, giving respondents 10 choices and allowing data to be obtained with greater precision (Kristapsone, 2014).

The results were analysed using descriptive statistics, which provide measures of central tendency, and Spearman's rank-order correlation method was used to test positive correlation which will be described in this section. SPSS 22—a software programme for the quantitative analysis of complex data - was used (O'Leary, 2010).

Firstly, the author analysed data of the Table 1, where five teaching/learning activities are indicated as statements (1-5), they were implemented to expand professional vocabulary in ESP study course.

Table 1: Students' Opinion About Teaching / Learning Activities (n=25)

Teaching / Learning Activities	Mean (\bar{X})	Median (Md)	Mode (Mo)	Standard Deviation (s)
Statement 1	3.56	2.	4	0.50
Statement 2	3.23	3	3	0.71
Statement 3	3.52	3.	4	0.51
Statement 4	3.64	1.	4	0.64
Statement 5	3.28	3	3	0.68

Further the description of each teaching/learning activity is given after each statement.

Statement 1: I have learned new professional vocabulary by *reading short texts and completing tasks under the guidance of a lecturer.*

The teaching / learning activity is based on the use of the course book, lists of words and phrases teach students key professional vocabulary. They focus on learning key words needed for professional communication, but this is not sufficient in all cases. The use of the course book shows that the key vocabulary is explained with each new topic to facilitate

understanding of the content. The meaning of new words and expressions is explained with definitions and translations, and examples are given to show how the words can be used in context. Various speaking and writing tasks are used to develop students' ability to use words correctly. Word search, multiple choice, matching exercises and crossword puzzles are used to reinforce knowledge of the professional vocabulary. This activity received a relatively high average score—the mean is 3.56, indicating that students generally find it effective for expanding vocabulary.

Statement 2: Reading of the EU Landscape Convention has helped me learn and understand the legal terminology in landscape architecture.

This activity is based on language skills, use of dictionary. Students are given information about the use of legal terminology and were asked to find technical words, definitions and explanations of legal and subject-specific words.

The mean score is 3.23, which is lower than the first activity and the other activities, indicating that students have mixed feelings about the effectiveness of the activity. The highest standard deviation is 0.71, indicating that students' experiences with this method vary widely.

Statement 3: I have learned professional vocabulary by reading scientific articles on landscape architecture and urban planning in accordance with the given requirements and guidelines.

This activity is based on reading scientific subject-specific articles. Students select a scientific article, read it, analyse it according to the given guidelines and then summarise the main ideas. Students should prepare presentations and consult the presentation guidelines. They should use both academic English and subject-specific vocabulary. They should present key findings and a pre-prepared list of professional vocabulary. The activities mentioned promote 21st century skills: creativity and critical thinking, emotional self-regulation and digital literacy. The mean scored of teaching/learning activity is 3.52, indicating students' positive attitude towards this activity for vocabulary expansion, it is quite an effective way of learning.

Statement 4: I have learned professional vocabulary by making a presentation and compiling an appropriate vocabulary list in accordance with the given requirements and guidelines.

Landscape architecture academic staff were approached and involved in the design of the course. The activity consists of the following three components. During the academic year students work out three separate projects (presentations + subject specific vocabulary) after exploring three sites of their choice:

- Garden style design in landscape architecture
- Manor house surrounding
- Attractive and ugly urban landscape

These projects are based on the students' practical observations and experiences. They use subject specific language, take the opportunity to find relevant vocabulary, use presentation phrases they already know, create a presentation and use the relevant professional vocabulary, and the final activity foresees to give realistic subject-specific presentation. The activities train students for presentations in real life. They visit sites of manor houses and gardens to

explore, observe and describe the surroundings, take photographs and collect evidence of architectural and landscape aspects. 21st century skills: communication and collaboration, creativity and critical thinking, citizenship, emotional self-regulation and digital literacy are developed. At the same time, these skills support the implementation of activities.

This activity scored the highest mean 3.64, showing that students strongly appreciate this approach to learning vocabulary indicating strong positive attitudes among students.

Statement 5: I have learned professional vocabulary by *working in a group to create a presentation on recent famous landscape architecture projects in the world (in Europe, the Baltic States, Latvia).*

This teaching/learning activity is a group work, 3 students form a small group and implement a project work based on a real-life situation and evidence, use relevant vocabulary, group work should be done from idea to presentation of work, focus on collaboration and communication with other group members. This activity scored the lowest mean score 3.28.

It can be concluded from the data obtained that students highly value individual realistic profession related project works in which they have the opportunity to find relevant vocabulary to create new contexts and to create realistic profession related presentations that strongly encourage the use of professional vocabulary. The results show that students support working with the course book to acquire important professional vocabulary, and finally – reading and analysing of profession related scientific articles. This proves that students support creative individual work and the practical application of vocabulary in different contexts.

Secondly, the author analysed the activity implementation methods favoured by students to improve the professional vocabulary (Table 2). The data listed in Table 2 provide a brief overview of each method and the SRL for the acquisition of professional vocabulary.

Table 2: Students' Opinion About the Activity Implementation Methods of Teaching/Learning (n=25)

Activity Implementation Methods	Mean (\bar{X})	Median (Md)	Mode (Mo)	Std. Deviation (S)
Individual learning	3.68	4	4	0.47
Pair work	3.28	3	4	0.84
Group work	3.08	3	4	0.95
Project work	3.36	3	4	0.70
Evaluation of SRL studies	3.44	4	4	0.71

The results show that *individual learning* has the highest mean score of 3.68 and is perceived by students as the most effective method. The data on *pair and group work* show that students value both methods of delivering activities, but the lower mean scores suggest that they are less popular and less effective compared to individual learning. The higher standard deviation in both cases suggests that students' experiences of the two methods are very different. The mean of 3.36 for project work suggests that it is quite an effective method of learning, but the standard deviation of 0.70 suggests that it can be effective but is not always preferred by students. There is a lack of consistent enthusiasm.

The mean score for *SRL* is 3.44, which indicates a generally positive perception of it in the ESP study course and *SRL* is effective for increasing professional vocabulary. Overall, the

results indicate that students rate the individual activity implementation methods highly and then support the project work. SRL supports vocabulary expansion.

Third, students were asked to rate their progress in teaching/learning professional vocabulary. A ten-point scale was used to measure students' progress in acquiring professional vocabulary. The students had to self-assess their performance, the mean score was 8.08, then the score of the students' performance at the end of the academic year was calculated, it was 7.76. This self-assessment score is only slightly higher than the teacher's score.

The results prove that the teaching/learning activities and activity implementation methods used to carry out the activities were effective in increasing subject vocabulary. The results of the survey show that students are able to use the acquired professional vocabulary in various new ways, relate it to their own content and participate in academic discourse.

Fourth, the Spearman's rank order correlation method was used to test whether there is a correlation between vocabulary expansion and each teaching/learning activity, each activity implementation method and students' SRL. The degree of correlation was determined according to U. Kuckartz (Kuckartz et al, 2013) between:

1. Each teaching/learning activity and expansion of professional vocabulary
2. Each activity implementation method and expansion of professional vocabulary
3. Students' SRL and expansion of professional vocabulary

Table 3: The Expansion of Professional Vocabulary

1. Teaching / Learning Activities to Expand Professional Vocabulary	r_s	Correlation degree
a. Work with the course book	0.59	Moderate
b. Reading of the European Landscape Convention	0.64	Strong
c. Reading of the Scientific Article	0.69	Strong
d. Giving realistic subject-specific presentations	0.72	Strong
e. Presenting of the international landscape project	0.62	Strong
2. Activity Implementation Methods to Expand Professional Vocabulary		
a. Individual learning	0.39	Weak
b. Pair work	0.56	Strong
c. Group work	0.32	Weak
d. Project work	0.61	Strong
3. Self-Regulated learning (SRL)	0.73	Strong

The data in Table 3 give evidence that the strongest correlation 0.73 is observed between students' SRL and professional vocabulary expansion, then a very strong correlation 0.72 is observed between project work and professional vocabulary expansion. A correlation (from moderate to strong) is observed between each teaching/learning activity and vocabulary expansion; a correlation (from weak to strong) is observed between each activity implementation method and vocabulary expansion.

It can be concluded that the acquisition of professional vocabulary is a long-term, process-oriented approach that includes effective teaching/learning activities and activity implementation methods. Currently, the data obtained is used to assess the outcomes of all activities that support and promote the expansion of professional vocabulary during the academic year.

Conclusions

- Students highly value giving realistic subject-specific profession related presentations where they have the opportunity to find relevant vocabulary and create new content. The task strongly encourages the use of professional vocabulary.
- The students support the work with the course book to acquire important professional vocabulary, and finally – reading and analysing the subject-specific scientific articles.
- Students support individual work and the practical application of the professional vocabulary in different contexts.
- The acquisition of professional vocabulary for landscape architects is a long-term, process-oriented approach that includes effective teaching/learning activities and activity implementation methods (most effective – individual project work).
- The mean value or average assessment of students' learning performance is 7.76, with the lowest value being 5 and the highest value - 10 demonstrating students' high ability to use professional vocabulary in various new ways, relate it to new contents, and participate in academic oral and written discourse.
- Self-regulated learning supports the expansion of professional vocabulary for landscape architects in the ESP studies at university, but there is room for improving certain aspects of teaching/learning activities and activity implementation methods (more group and pair work to develop communication and collaboration) to achieve better results in the expansion of professional vocabulary in the ESP study course at the university.

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Contact email: Baiba.pusinska@llu.lv