

**СРАВНИТЕЛЕН АНАЛИЗ НА ЕЗИКОВИТЕ ПОТРЕБНОСТИ ПРИ ПРОЕКТИРАНЕТО
НА КУРС ПО СПЕЦИАЛИЗИРАН АНГЛИЙСКИ ЕЗИК ЗА СТУДЕНТИ ПО
ВЕТЕРИНАРНА МЕДИЦИНА**

**Женя Гундашева, Любомира Спасова,
Олга Дворска, Моника Петрилова**

Тракийски университет, Стопански факултет,

Стара Загора, 6000, България- jenia.gundasheva@gmail.com, liubomira1975@abv.bg;

*Университет по Ветеринарна медицина и фармация, Кошице, Словакия-olga.dvorska@uvlf.sk,
monika.petrilova@uvlf.sk*

РЕЗЮМЕ

Изследването цели да представи и анализира в съпоставителен план потребностите за чуждоезиково обучение на студенти по ветеринарна медицина от два университета (Тракийски университет и Университет по Ветеринарна медицина и фармация, Кошице, Словакия) с оглед по-добрата им подготовка по специализиран академичен английски език. В количествения и качествен анализ на резултатите са изведени корелациите между критериите за предпочитание на професионална приложимост на знанията и уменията пред абстрактния характер на усвояването на чуждия език. Дискусията разглежда освен частнометодически проблеми, така и културните особености на всеки от университетите.

Ключови думи: *специализиран английски език, английски за ветеринарна медицина, съпоставително изследване.*

**COMPARATIVE NEEDS ANALYSIS FOR ESAP STUDENTS
IN VETERINARY MEDICINE**

**Zhenya Gundasheva, Lyubomira Spasova,
Olga Dvorska, Monika Petrillova**

ABSTRACT

The study aims to compare and analyze the needs for foreign language learning of students in Veterinary Medicine from two universities (Trakia University, and University of Veterinary Medicine and Pharmacy in Kosice, Slovakia) in view of improving their training in specialized English. In the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the results from a survey, we have determined the correlations between the criteria for choosing the professional applicability of knowledge and skills over the abstract character of foreign language learning. The discussion shows not only specific methodological issues, but also takes in mind the cultural aspects of the two universities.

Key words: *ESP, English for Veterinary Medicine, comparative study.*

INTRODUCTION

In the course of four successive years we have been working towards introducing the essence of English for Veterinary Medicine (EVM) in a two-semester course. We also envisioned our teaching to be as engaging and meaningful as some of the core courses in the field. When the first idea for a needs analysis survey came up during Erasmus exchange mobility in Kosice, we thought we could poll students' opinions about what they needed most in terms of language and content. When we analyzed the results, we found out that students were more interested in working independently, developing their

communicative skills through authentic experience of all skills engaged in context, situations and tasks and focusing mostly on their professional and practical training, and more rarely on research and academic genres.

The rationale behind the choice to compare the results of an identical survey performed on Bulgarian (BG) and Slovak (SK) students was to find out: a) which focal points are important for both groups; b) how do the students differ or where they resemble each other in their preferences; c) to help teachers from both universities use these data to write materials and documents for their English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) classes, and especially in EVM.

The present situation analysis of the two universities can be described briefly in the following way:

Trakia University, BG: During the 5-year-long course in Veterinary Medicine, students are offered 2 semesters of obligatory EVM, and 2 semesters of an elective in their second year. The first year includes basic terminology, grammar and transformation exercises, communication skills and reading comprehension. Teachers add their own materials according to the group level, abilities and needs. The second year is entirely tailor-made with a focus on communication and productive-receptive skills.

Language skills BG: Students enter the university with a general English level at B1-B2 (Intermediate level), previous language experience, other than English: German, French, Spanish or another language; BG students often travel and communicate online with friends and colleagues, their writing skills are generally poor, their reading, listening and speaking have been developed much better. They need extra practice in grammar and spelling. Students' communicative skills are in need of specific instruction on how to communicate with clients from other cultures. The computer and language lab is available but still not used to its full potential.

University of Pharmacy and Veterinary Medicine, SK: Students receive 2 mandatory years of English classes, 13 weeks each semester, 90 min periods, mainly lecturing, homework and extra exercises uploaded on a university online platform. Students can use computers at home or in a shared computer lab, no language lab, multimedia projectors in all rooms. The university offers an already established 6- year course in Veterinary Medicine in English and attracts lots of foreign students every year.

Language skills SK: Teachers focus mainly on translation and vocabulary skills, reading and note-taking. Students have good prior preparation, mostly at B1-B2 levels. Students interact respectfully in class and are generally quite assiduous. PhD students with excellent (C2) level, are trained and examined by the Language Department to write science reports and articles. Generally, the speaking skills of first and second year students are not so outstanding, but nevertheless they can communicate with ease and purpose; aural and oral skills are commendable, reading skills are passive. Slovaks have been brought up to appreciate cultural and general knowledge (similar to Bulgarians).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present situations at both universities are similar. The level of linguistic material in the present courses is aimed at B1-B2 of general English. The course comprises topics largely related to the medical vocabulary, and focuses on translation and reading skills. The studies are mostly conducted in the classroom and students are regularly tested on vocabulary, and speaking skills. When asked if they wish to participate in a survey that would improve the teaching style, methodology and contents of their English classes, 117 students from University of Pharmacy and Veterinary Medicine, Slovakia,

and 31 students from Trakia University, Bulgaria, agreed. The questions in the survey reflect in detail the preferences, motivation, language level, language skills and teaching forms which students selected from given options. The results of the electronic survey were then analyzed and used to develop a new model of ESAP course which will be run in Slovakia and Bulgaria from the upcoming semester (September, 2016).

The communication skills course aims to develop not only the four basic language skills, but also to create a set of mock communicative situations which match best the context of the specific professional activities performed outside the classroom. Since the classroom is a training environment, which can be managed, changed, and adapted, it can function as a contextual performance site with stakeholders bringing their best into the preparation and training of professionals in Veterinary sciences.

The distinction between training university students to use language and communication for professional purposes and training graduates with careers in Veterinary Medicine to develop their language skills is based on the objectives, needs and outcomes of the course. Since students are building not only a linguistic profile, but also a professional identity in a foreign language, the responsibility for the educator is to select and include such topics in the syllabus that would provoke and stimulate the most important, frequent and demanding situation training that is relevant to the profession. In this sense ESP and ESAP can only complement each other and can be valuable for the learners, teachers, university and the wider circle of consultants, colleagues and professional community and clients that benefit from the development of learners' language skills.

Language and communication for professional purposes as a term is based on the holistic approach of Huhta et al., for needs analysis and the development of language courses for professionals. Such approach allows instructors to locate and become sensitive to the specific needs of a work-place discourse and helps to “devise realistic, motivating, holistic activities usable in pre-service and in-service training.” (Huhta 2013:8). For the purposes of academic skills and professional identity formation, the holistic approach can also be complemented by ESAP, or English for Specific Academic Purposes. The latter adds an extra dimension to the academic side of the EVM course, and turns it into a complex of communicative situations varying from note-taking, making PPT presentations to writing Wikipedia articles.

The study was based on and evaluated mainly using the following criteria:

- Skills-specific training in class and independently
- Usefulness of communication skills for real life projects
- Authenticity of in-house materials
- Specificity of in-house materials
- Methodological focus (teacher/learner/learning-centred)

The survey employed these criteria in the multiple-choice form of the answers. This form gives students the opportunity to select options, some of which they have been exposed to and others which are unfamiliar. When the student marks his preference, that means that the option is reasonably given and it does not reflect only the judgment of the interviewer or course developer, it reflects the real interest, or necessity of the student. The multiple choices given for the 5 content questions comprise the most common and specific topics and forms of EVM. They reflect both the methodological, and content aspects of the course. They not only give the students the chance to compare what they already experienced, but also to decide if those options are relevant to their present experience, in other words if they would like to continue practicing English in the familiar way.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The survey used several options which were relevant to the systematic nature of the language, a few which followed the traditional order of language learning at schools and several which reflected the communication situations in which students are likely to use English.

The communicative aspects were included both in the section on preferences (Why do you want to study English?), and in language skills (Which language skills do need extra practice needs?), i.e. lacks and wants. Wherever possible, language has been connected to communication and students have opted for the combined use of skills and authentic type of situation training. The language level of students is another factor in their decisive capacity to choose the areas in need of practice.

The grammar section of the language skills questions gives a specific snapshot of what the tendencies in grammar lacks are in the two groups. First of all, students in Bulgaria relate grammar mainly to verbal and tense system, and to parts of speech. Their selections illustrate the emphasis they place on improving their knowledge of modal verbs, whereas Slovak students have chosen less modality and more of the other options (clauses, constructions, etc.) which require training in syntax rather than morphology. Since most students at B1-B2 level of English are still hesitant to use complex syntax (cleft-sentences, or verbal constructions, infinitives or participles after a verb, etc.), methodologically they can be introduced to the practical use of such concepts in live conversation, or in written documents. The course envisioned can contain just enough grammar to help translation and enforce better understanding of the more difficult genres of scientific writing.

Table 1. Grammar skills

Grammatical structures	BG		SK	
	choices	BG sts %	choices	SK sts %
Parts of Speech	9	29%	37	32%
Present, past and future tenses	6	19%	28	24%
How tenses are used in scientific/ medical research	9	29%	26	22%
Modal verbs	1	3%	25	21%
Aspect, mood and voice	5	16%	11	9%
Constructions	2	6%	13	11%
Word order	1	3%	16	14%
Clauses (principal and subordinate)	0	0%	10	9%

The lexis section has proven a relatively expected outcome for terminology biased education. ESP and ESAP both have been formed as branches of language use because of terminological specificity in a certain professional area. Naturally, students have realized the importance of learning the necessary vocabulary, not only as isolated items, but as building block of their professional expertise and knowledge of the subject. English in this sense serves both as a lingua franca between different language users, and as the language of scientific expression. Students often translate from English to help their understanding of core subjects in Bulgarian and Slovak, and both the syntactic structures and mostly vocabulary influences directly their oral and written expression. This is an interesting phenomenon, because it can determine how students' motivation to learn English is related to the amount of English language used in translation (direct or adapted) in their textbooks, manuals or

other sources for core subject study. Therefore, the scientific language in articles and reports has received a similar level of preferences - 26% (BG) to 23% (SK), because students already know that reports and articles from magazines and journals, digital or in print, can teach them scientific jargon, which is a specific branch of English.

Students in Bulgaria and Slovakia assume (correctly!) that Veterinary Medical terminology is a valuable area of expertise with BG students leading by 17% over Slovak students in their selections. This proves that terminology constitutes is the main factor in professional expertise and specific language learning according to students' needs selections. This is an arguable point because communication skills and all other language skills are contextually very important, and especially when translation is mastered and fluency is more needed for creating working relationships with present and future foreign colleagues.

The other aspects of lexis included in the survey focused more on human medical terminology, no doubt closer to Veterinary Medical terminology, especially as it is used in medicine. Students in both groups have almost even levels for this option: 29% (BG) to 27% (SK). Similar levels were found for Latin and Greek morphemes: 13% (BG), 16% (SK) which indicates that etymology of lexemes is considered relatively important, because it is within the scope of a different discipline. Some attention has been paid to collocations in scientific writing - a favorite topic of lexical and corpus research and closely related to the idiomatic use of English. For students coming from the general education stream where collocations are more or less not specifically addressed, this may become a lively and intellectually stimulating area of study, especially for students who are willing to improve their productive skills. Here Slovak students have opted 8%, whereas Bulgarian students' selections are 13%. Another choice which was given to check the amount of connectedness between European languages and the learning opportunities in students at university was to ask if lists of words in several different languages would be a sensible choice for an English class. Our expectations for the Slovak group was that students would be willing to keep such records of expressions and lexemes, because of their cultural and geographical closeness to other European countries and their respective upbringing and background, but needs analysis proved that Bulgarian students were more interested in studying comparative lists: 10% BG, 5% SK. The vocabulary and lexis studies are supported by various books and terminological databases (one such example is Romich 2009), and the course will benefit not only from English, but also French and German resources, which can strengthen the comprehensive nature of language and communication for professional purposes.

Table 2. Vocabulary and lexis

Lexis and Vocabulary building	№ choices	BG sts %	SK choices	SK sts %
Scientific language in articles and reports	8	26%	27	23%
Veterinary Medical Terminology	22	71%	62	53%
Human Medical Terminology	9	29%	32	27%
Latin and Greek morphemes	4	13%	19	16%
Foreign words in English	10	32%	26	22%
Collocations for academic writing	4	13%	9	8%
Linking words	0	0%	9	8%
Multilingual vocabulary lists (French and/or German)	3	10%	6	5%

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The listening portion of the needs analysis shows that the Slovak group is more interested in various forms of listening and aural skills. For the Bulgarian group, the highest percentage of choices were on audio/video recordings (13%, 16%), while the Slovak group reached 24% and 21% respectively. Videos are already used largely in classroom conditions, and perhaps the new course could involve more interactive exercises related to authentic recordings with pedagogically suitable means. Podcasts and webinars are becoming increasingly popular amongst students and professionals, and apparently the Slovak group are more interested in learning through this form of online activity (podcasts - 6% BG, 19% SK, webinars - 0%BG, 5% SK). Furthermore, students can train their listening comprehension outside the classroom as well, and instructors could focus on giving them the essential competences to structure their listening process. Learning what to expect from a video or an audio recording teaches strategic and intercultural skills as well.

Table 3. Listening skills

Listening skills	BG choices	BG sts %	SK choices	SK sts %
Listening to audio recordings	4	13%	28	24%
Watching video recordings	5	16%	24	21%
Listening to podcasts	2	6%	22	19%
Participating in/ Listening to Webinars	0	0%	6	5%
Using textbook materials – exercises for listening comprehension	1	3%	13	11%

Perhaps the profile of an average student in Veterinary Medicine of the latest years would include natural openness to technological advancement and better communication skills. We have found here that within the speaking spectrum of activities, role play is appreciated and sought after as an activity that can be used both by native and non-native speakers of English. For 38% of Slovak students role play is an exciting form of communication activity, while only 10% of BG students are keen to participate in it. This difference lies in language teaching traditions in both countries. As part of a general English course in high schools group work as opposed to teacher-led activity is not a novel concept. Students who come to study VM, however, need to rely on their imagination and background knowledge of interactions related to their future profession. The mastery of role play comes when students are stimulated and feel comfortable to participate and bring in their contexts and skills to learn from their peers and the university environment. The purpose of an English course is therefore to set the tone, provide materials and ask questions, offer help and guide the formation of the professional veterinarian. The last point is clearly illustrated in the option "Real world communication" where students can be assigned a project to contact foreign vets or other students online and conduct an interview with them, while trying to employ their available knowledge and skills and to learn from the native speaker more about Anglophone language and culture. 23% of Bulgarian students and 10% of Slovak students chose this option, which can be due to the higher degree of independence and confidence of Bulgarian students and the more academic orientation of Slovak students. For most students in Slovakia communication in English class can be enough and putting extra weight on activities outside the classroom can sometimes appear irrelevant or stressful. Bulgarian schools and universities run numerous projects every year which involve foreign schools and academic

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communities and allow students to creatively learn from their peers and their cultural background. In a way, Slovak students associate their studies at university with more lecture-type and teacher-centered learning and that is why they wish to practice non-traditional forms of communicative activities.

Table 4. Speaking and Oral Communication

Speaking and oral communication	BG choices	BG sts %	SK choices	SK sts %
Using software for pronunciation drills in the language lab	1	3%	6	5%
Making PPT presentations	1	3%	11	9%
Participating in discussions	2	6%	12	10%
Role play	3	10%	44	38%
Interviews and surveys	2	6%	14	12%
Real-world' communication - contacting native speakers for project work	7	23%	12	10%

The section on writing tried to investigate students' responses in two larger areas - writing for professional and academic purposes. There is an apparent prevalence towards writing for professional purposes, such as communicating with colleagues, clients and even publishers, writing a motivation letter and CV in English. Among the other options present in the survey, translation activities received considerable attention (16% BG, 20% SK), and summary writing (3% BG, 16% SK) was selected largely by Slovak students. The tasks which aimed to develop argumentative and expressive skills for academic purposes also showed that students in both groups consider their academic training should combine general critical thinking skills with more specific skills required in producing written genres regardless of the language, yet evident in English.

Table 5. Writing skills

Writing	BG choices	BG sts %	SK choices	SK sts %
Writing letters to clients	9	29%	33	28%
Writing letters to colleagues	10	32%	23	20%
Writing letters to publishers	9	29%	19	16%
Writing a motivation letter and CV	8	26%	22	19%
Recognizing moves in an article (Abstract, Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion, Conclusion)	2	6%	10	9%
Building writing skills from a sentence to a paragraph to an essay	4	13%	12	10%
Expressing arguments and opinions	6	19%	15	13%
Keeping diaries	0	0%	5	4%
Writing translations	5	16%	23	20%
Summary writing	1	3%	19	16%

When students are introduced to different genres of texts as reading assignments very early in their academic career, they tend to recognize differences and specifics, moves and linguistic discourse markers used in each. For instance, as part of their content-based learning, students can select their reading preferences and accompany the required reading and notes with additional materials available online. The interesting finding in this survey is that students are more willing to read from authentic sources, such as research articles (16% BG, 21% SK), scientific magazines (10% BG, 21%SK), and academic journals (16%BG, 13% SK), rather than from adapted texts for pedagogical purposes (3%BG, 4%SK). This means that students are confident in their language skills and can handle the types and genre specifics of scientific writing. Also, it may indicate their interest and motivation to develop their skills as independent readers of information which is provided at a professional level and presents unique data, analyzed and discussed for the professional education of veterinarians. Reading comprehension and translation skills are traditionally the preferred method of learning language of the profession. Instructors from Kosice usually upload the reading documents online and to recommend already existing materials in electronic and interactive form, because this individual learning gives better results. The flexibility of online learning is becoming more and more popular even in high schools, and students expect universities to follow or even lead this trend.

Table 6. Reading Skills

Reading	BG choices	BG sts %	SK choices	SK sts %
Reading research articles	5	16%	24	21%
Reading news from Science/ Nature magazines	3	10%	24	21%
Reading case studies	2	6%	18	15%
Reading textbooks and manuals (Colville, Clinical Veterinary Language, 2014; Romich, An Illustrated Guide to Veterinary Medical Terminology, 2007, etc.)	4	13%	15	13%
Reading continuing education articles	4	13%	5	4%
Reading articles from veterinary magazines such as AJVM	5	16%	15	13%
Reading short texts (up to 25 lines) with multiple-choice questions	1	3%	5	4%
Reading longer adapted texts (up to 2 pages) with questions	1	3%	9	8%

CONCLUSIONS

When the present and target situations are compared, much can be induced about the role of needs analysis in course design. Based on the findings from this survey we can rethink and start planning a new course that caters to students' real needs and to their motivating factors and incentives. As for the comparative aspect, people from two different universities have responded to the same questions in different ways that reflect the cultural, educational, and linguistic aspects of the needs, deficiencies and preferences. This proves that there are no universal truths about language teaching

isolated in only one environment. Teachers can always cooperate, students are comparing what they are taught through their perspective and we as colleagues can collaborate on writing materials that work both individually, and as a shared responsibility. Other than the dialect of English that is used in teaching, we also employ the translation of our cultures by means of dialogues and choice of topics that are included in the university curricula. The universities carry a substantial potential to educate, inform and support the growth of both students and teachers. When we share good practices, we not only improve the quality of teaching, we also help each other as professionals and form a network of professionals.

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