English for academics concept: Course principles in teaching EAP to researchers

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Abstract

This article aims at sharing the results of the British Council project *English for Academics* implemented in Russia in 2012-2015. The need for this project was identified in the Baseline Study having indicated the necessity to design a course for university staff in order to develop their foreign language communicative competence and to stimulate their participation in international projects. The concept of the course is based on the needs analysis conducted by the British Council; the methodological principles of the book are conducive for meeting the needs of the target group. The participants of this project describe the project stages, the concept of the book they have developed, and illustrate the principles with sample activities from the course. We demonstrate how the understanding of learners' needs and characteristics helps select appropriate pedagogical principles to meet these needs and to exploit the characteristics. Based on the results of a piloting stage we conclude that the course is an effective means of developing academics' language proficiency and, consequently, enables university instructors and researchers to participate in international projects.

Key words: materials development, language awareness, learner autonomy, collaboration

Introduction

In 2003 Russia entered the Bologna process, which significantly increased the academic mobility between the Russian Federation and European countries. Since then Russian universities have been continuously modernised and numerous links with higher educational institutions abroad have been established. Russia is steadily entering the European academic environment. However, the process is very slow due to several factors. Frumina & West (2012) make a conclusion that it is a low level of language proficiency that inhibits Russian academics from greater integration into the global research community (p. 31-50). The researchers stressed the necessity for a course for academics aimed at improving their language level.

In order to meet the demands of internationalisation of education and research, academics should be able to read about research in their field, to get published in international peer-reviewed journals, to participate in international conferences, to offer programmes and courses in English, and to set up exchanges of students and professors. Undoubtedly, academics should have a sufficient level of English to reach these goals. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (2014) and its descriptors, B1 level of language proficiency is a minimum requirement for learners to be able to communicate academic information successfully.

The British Council project *English for Academics* was a response to this Baseline Study, which gave a thorough analysis of the situation in education at a tertiary level in Russia (Frumina & West, 2012). The project, launched with the idea of creating a course book for researchers, university teachers, and administrators, provided a timely boost to increasing the level of international collaboration between Russian and European research and educational institutions.

The article contains the description of the British Council project and the results of the needs analysis survey. We also aim at sharing the results of the piloting stage of the project which helped to prove the effectiveness of several principles underlying the 'English for Academics' course. We invite readers to discuss efficient ways of teaching EAP to adult learners who are actively involved in international collaboration for various purposes, such as participation in academic events, grant searching, corresponding or preparing academic publications.

Project stages

The project was launched in March 2012. The preliminary stage of the project included an open competition for material writers and a consultant. Based on stringent selection criteria, twelve authors from different regions of Russia were chosen to participate in the project. The team of writers represented different universities. They brought in a variety of teaching contexts, their styles, and experience, which was beneficial for the project. Rod Bolitho, Academic Director, Norwich Institute for Language Education (NILE), became the project

consultant. Having had a lot of experience in international educational projects, he was a great team leader, facilitator, and inspirer. The tender for a publishing house was won by Cambridge University Press, one of the leading publishers.

The project underwent several stages: (1) needs analysis, (2) discussing the concept of the book, (3) drafting materials, (4) the consultant's and peer feedback, (5) editing materials, (6) piloting them, (7) finalising the materials to meet the standards of the publisher. The most important stages are described in more detail further.

Needs analysis survey

The first project stage was conducting a needs analysis survey in which 217 researchers and university lecturers participated. Needs analysis is a critical step in materials development, as 'the most effective materials are those which are based on thorough understanding of learners' needs, that is their language difficulties, their learning objectives, their style of learning, the stage of their conceptual development...' (Jolly & Bolitho, 2011, p. 128).

The needs analysis questionnaire was carried out online on *www.surveymonkey.com*. This survey substantiated the importance of skill-based approach towards materials development. The authors' decisions about language, texts, tasks, and strategies to focus on during the course were made in relation to the stated needs of future learners. The major needs include:

- searching for relevant information online (88%), reading academic journals (76%), reading calls for papers (73%), reading research reports (57%);
- listening to presentations (67%), listening to lectures (55%), listening to research discussions (54%);
- socialising with colleagues (67%), presenting research results at conferences (58%), negotiating (30%);
- writing emails (71%), application forms (66%), conference proceedings (47%), grant proposals (44%).

These survey results as well as our intention to provide flexibility to the course served as the rationale for materials design. The course is supported by two books. Book 1 (Bezzabotnova et al., 2014) is divided into four modules – Reading, Listening, Speaking, Writing – covering the language and topics relevant to the target audience. It was taken into consideration that the reading ability of Russian academics was more advanced compared to the other skills as the survey revealed. Book 2 (Bogolepova et al., 2015) is based

on skills integration; it is organised thematically and assists learners in developing their academic language skills.

Course description

The books are based on a modular principle, which gives the teacher certain freedom in using them, taking into account the profile and learning needs of the target group of learners. Each module is divided into topic-focused units which, in their turn, comprise several lessons. The structure of the lessons is quite conventional: from lead-in to follow-up activities meant to consolidate the knowledge gained in the lesson and to give extension in order to cater for individual needs of learners. The Student's book 1 comprises an academic word list, which provides a helpful reference to key vocabulary. The Student's book 2 contains an index to target vocabulary. In addition to the Student's books, there is free online audio support and online Teacher's Guides available on *www.cambridge.org/elt/english-for-academics*.

During the course, learners will

- work with a range of academic texts to develop their ability to read confidently and efficiently;
- listen to various formal and informal academic situations to improve the ability to listen effectively for different purposes;
- develop their presentation skills and meet some common social situations;
- write some academic texts to communicate with colleagues from other countries.

Although the books have a strong language skills orientation, they incorporate essential language systems elements, including a strong lexical dimension as well as wide coverage of communicative functions. Grammar is dealt with as a feature that enables communication rather than as an end in itself.

There is a range of samples of authentic language, both written and spoken, drawn from contexts relevant to the target learners' needs, each serving as a basis for analysis but also in some cases as models. Texts are drawn from both British and American English. The topics covered in the course vary from participating in academic events, e.g., planning a conference, giving a presentation or socialising during coffee breaks to applying for a grant or writing parts of an article. The choice of the topics was based on potential course users' interests and academic needs.

Academics' profile

The course is intended for a wide adult audience. The course potential users - academics - comprise a

heterogeneous group of people who teach various subjects at university and are likely to be engaged in research in one form or another. There is neither a specific age profile nor a particular discipline focus.

To picture such group of learners, taking into account principles of andragogy (Knowles, 1984, 1990), we made several assumptions, which assisted us in tailoring the course. These assumptions are the following:

1) Coming from different fields of study (they may be natural scientists, social science researchers or applied scientists), academics deal with a special type of discipline-oriented discourse (Swales, 1990). But no matter how diverse the group is, they all need general academic skills and core academic language as they all are united by an educational context of academia.

2) Academics have different experience of learning English and different learning styles, and their learning profile in English may be jagged, i.e., they may be more proficient in reading and may have difficulty in speaking or listening. This explains the need for the modular structure of the course.

3) Being researchers, they approach the learning process consciously. They bring reflective experience to learning, which means they have already formed some habits and learning routines, apply their critical thinking skills, and are 'able to learn through more sophisticated conscious learning strategies, such as finding and applying explanations, making their own lists of vocabulary to learn' (Ur, 2012, p. 268). This can be used as a resource by the teacher.

4) Adult learners are often characterised as practical and result-oriented (Harmer, 2007, p. 84). Having high expectations, they are likely to be selective and 'more critical and demanding' (Ur, 2012, p. 268). It implies the necessity to concentrate on real-life tasks in the classroom.

5) Academics are self-directed and quite autonomous; that means they are mature enough to take responsibility for their learning and can manage their progress themselves. This assumption focuses on the opportunity to apply participants' learning strategies in language teaching.

6) Academics are usually busy multi-taskers, and they wish to waste no time or effort to satisfy their needs. They are able to prioritise their activities. We assume that if they make a decision to take this course, they come 'motivated and willing to invest effort in both class- and homework' (ibid).

7) Adult learners are often resistant to change, rely on their personal experience, and 'worry that their intellectual powers may be diminishing with age' (Harmer, 2007, p. 85). That is why teaching EAP to adults should be needs-oriented, timesaving, and encouraging.

These assumptions lay foundations for the methodology the course is based on.

Methodological principles

The methodological principles of the EAP course for academics can be divided into three major groups. The principles are aimed at:

1) raising language awareness;
2) developing autonomy;
3) enhancing collaboration.

1. Raising language awareness

The concept of the language awareness approach was first introduced and developed in 1980s by R. Bolitho, P. Garrett, E. Hawkins, and C. James. The term *language awareness* is defined as 'the development in learners of an enhanced consciousness of and sensitivity to the forms and functions of language' (Carter, 2003, p. 64). The main features of the language awareness approach were summarised by Svalberg (2007) as follows: description (not prescription), exploration, languaging, engagement and reflection (p. 292).

The main reason why we chose the language awareness approach as one of the leading principles for organising the materials of the books was the type of audience that the book is intended for: academics are professionals who are used to dealing with ambiguity, investigating, and drawing conclusions. Their research skills can be exploited by the language teacher who does not provide ready-made answers about established facts, but rather encourages learners' language exploration, and allows for making a discovery.

The following example (Bezzabotnova, et al., 2014, p. 41) shows how the learners are prompted to investigate the role of *noun + noun combinations* in

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10 Work in pairs and follow the instructions.

1 Individually, scan the texts in this lesson for three minutes to find as many noun + noun combinations as possible. Write them down.
2 Compare your list with your partner's. Combine your lists.
3 Work with other pairs and take turns to show your combined lists. Whose list is longer? Share your results with the class.

11 Work in pairs. Put the noun + noun combination from Activity 10 in groups. Decide on your criteria for grouping. Compare your results with other pairs.

12 Which text in this lesson contains the least number of noun + noun combinations, and which contains the most? Why do think that is?

academic texts.

It is beneficial for learners not only to study language items, but also to talk about their nature. This helps to enhance the understanding of linguistic phenomena as well as to improve learners' communicative competence. For instance, answering the questions in the activity below (Bezzabotnova, et al., 2014, p. 160) the learners are 'languaging', i.e., interacting and sharing their views on the linguistic phenomenon in the target language. The term *languaging* was first employed by Swain (2006) for the

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4 Work in pairs. Tick the best response (a, b or c) in each situation. Sometimes, more than one answer may be correct.
1

During a coffee break Olaf Swenson sees his colleague from the Prague Business School.

Olaf: Hello, Harry. Remember me? I'm Olaf Swenson.
Harry: a I am glad to meet you too.
      b Oh! Yes, of course. How are you?
      c Hell, Olaf. Pleased to meet you.

2

At the conference participants' registration table Peter meets Val. Val and Peter have met befor at international conferences. Val wants to introduce Peter to his colleague Andrew.

Val: Peter, this is Andrew Painter, a colleague of mine from Ashcroft Business School.
Peter: a How are things?
      b Nice to meet you too. I'm Peter.
      c Hello, Andrew. Nice to meet you.

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8 Read the text in Activity 2 again and find sentences about the results of the project. Answer the questions below.

1.   What tenses are used in these sentences?
2.   Which tense expresses a promise?
3.   Which structure indicates that the author is not sure about the results?
4.   Which structure would you choose to present your expected results?

'use of language to mediate cognitive activity'.

The authors of the course develop language awareness in three major directions.

1. Linguistic awareness. The learners are encouraged to construct knowledge about some language items (e.g., tenses, grammar structures, vocabulary items). For instance, to develop the skill of deducing the meaning of unknown words the learners of the course *English for Academics* (Bezzabotnova, et al., 2014, p. 71) are often encouraged to explore the given input and develop an awareness of word formation patterns, functions of a word in a sentence, and other particular linguistic features by performing certain operations.

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9 ◎ 20 Listen to this extract from the conversation and do the tasks below.
1. Complete the phrase: *we _____ hitch*
2. What will happen after the action in *1*?
3. What type of word is *hitch*?
4. Choose the best meaning for *hitch* (a, b, c or d) in this situation.
    a   a device for a presentation
    b   a temporary difficulty that causes a short delay
    c   a small problem
    d   a complicated problem

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2. Register awareness. As it was noticed by Bourke (2008), most of the published examples of language awareness relate to grammatical and lexical problems, such as exploring the grammatical devices (p. 14). However, it goes beyond raising of grammatical consciousness to include all linguistic components. Any piece of language can be targeted for exploration. In our course, we encourage learners to analyse texts, transcripts and sets of examples in order to notice specific means that change their stylistic value (Bezzabotnova, et al., 2014, p. 95).

3. Text structure awareness. Since academics are involved in reading and writing different types of academic texts, we have designed a number of activities in which learners are to analyse the structure and components of different texts. This type of language awareness will help them to comprehend the texts they have to read as well as to produce logically structured written discourse (Bezzabotnova, et al., 2014, p. 46).

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2 Complete the table with the research report elements.

Abstract/Synopsis   Appendices   Conclusion Discussion Literature Review References or Bibliography   Results   Title of report

Parts	Sections
Preliminary material	[1] _____
	[2] Table of Contents (not always required)
	[3] _____
Body of report	[4] Introduction
	[5] _____
	[6] Methodology
	[7] _____
	[8] _____
	[9] _____
	[10] Recommendations (sometimes included in the Conclusion)
Supplementary material	[11] _____
	[12] _____

We assume that performing language awareness type of tasks allows academics to learn the language consciously through active engagement with the language. Thus they construct their own knowledge and become aware of grammatical, lexical, and stylistic means to organise their discourse, appropriate to the situation.

2. Developing autonomy

Another important principle on which the course has been designed is *learner autonomy* often referred

to as people's ability to 'take charge of [their] own learning' (Holec, 1981, p. 3). Several studies have indicated that learners' ability to regulate their learning process improves their language proficiency (Lee, 1998; Little, 2009; McClure, 2001).

There are several components included in the definition of learner autonomy. Holec (1981) suggests that 'autonomous learners assume responsibility for determining the purpose, content, rhythm and method of their learning, monitoring its progress and evaluating its outcomes (p. 3). Little (2009) considers that autonomy in language learning depends on the development and exercise of 'a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independent action' (p. 223).

Cotterall (2000) posits that 'language courses which aim to promote learner autonomy will incorporate means of transferring responsibility for aspects of the language learning process (such as setting goals, selecting learning strategies, and evaluating progress) from the teacher to the learner' (p. 110). She proposes five course design principles for language courses which seek to foster learner autonomy:

1. The course reflects learners' goals in its language, tasks, and strategies.
2. Course tasks are explicitly linked to a simplified model of the language learning process.
3. Course tasks either replicate real-world communicative tasks or provide rehearsal for such tasks.
4. The course incorporates discussion and practice with strategies known to facilitate task performance.
5. The course promotes reflection on learning.

Researchers distinguish between two contexts of learner autonomy application: 'beyond the classroom' and 'in the classroom' (Benson, 2007, p. 26–28). The first type of autonomy is fully addressed in the *English for Academics* course through inviting learners to individually explore certain language issues in the context of their own fields of study. All *Follow-up* activities encourage individual search, analysis and comparison, reflection and self-assessment.

Our attempts to integrate these principles into the *English for Academics* course design resulted in creating activities able to increase adult learners' self-confidence, motivation, and language proficiency. Firstly, the materials are designed to satisfy the learning needs identified in the survey both in terms of subskills and topics. Secondly, the tasks we have included replicate those in real life.

However, the problem with the target audience in our case is that they come from different subject and research areas ranging from humanities to pure

science and are likely to use different 'language'. To cater for the needs of such a diverse audience, we developed follow-up tasks in every unit so that learners would have guidance on what they might do in relation to their specialism. Here is an example from the Reading Module (Bezzabotnova, et al., 2014, p. 17):

Follow-up

10 Research online for a conference related to your subject or research area.

11 Present details of the conference to the class and explain your choice. Why does the conference or call for papers appeal to you (e.g. the topic, research or publication opportunities, keynote speakers)?

Such reference to learners' personal real-life needs provides an opportunity for self-direction and promotes autonomy.

On the other hand, some participants may not be as ready as others for independent language learning. In order to help them become autonomous, it would be more effective to provide learner training alongside the programme, and 'make it an integral part of the course' (Lee, 1998, p. 287). Developing learners' strategies enables them to feel confident and monitor their performance during their studies. Learning strategies 'empower students by allowing them to take control of the language learning process' (Cohen, 1998, p. 70). You may consider the following example on developing strategies from the Listening Module (Bezzabotnova, et al., 2014, p. 79):

Strategy focus

9 What helps you to identify key words when someone is speaking? Tick the correct options below. Give reasons.

1 sentence stress

2 repetition of the word

3 position of the word in the sentence

4 structure of the sentence

5 type of word (verb, noun, adjective, etc.)

6 context

7 the speaker's behaviour

As Jordan (1989) points out, the EAP context is a fertile ground for the development of critical thinking skills. We consider academics to be mature critical thinkers, therefore, our task is to appeal to their critical thinking skills and enable learners to apply them in L2 context. In the activity below (Bezzabotnova, et al., 2014, p. 50) learners are encouraged to use various thinking skills such as analysing information, evaluating it, and creating a new product.

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17 Combine all the parts of the executive summary you have written and finalise it, paying attention to its structure and style.

Have you…

- used formal language?
- given your project a title?
- given contact person information?
- presented the mission of your organisation?
- identified the main problem and your needs?
- described your project in brief?
- included expected results?
- stated the budget needed for your project?
- checked the grammar, spelling and punctuation?

Reflection promoted during autonomous classes is a crucial factor of conscious learning and teaching. There are various ways of organising reflection in a language class: from reflection questions at the end of a class to reflective practices along the learning process. By completing the 'I CAN' list for the CEFR (2014), for instance, learners may see what they have achieved and how much they have progressed. Learners' ability to evaluate their progress naturally comes from their reflection to what they were able to do and what they can do now. The example from the Writing Module (Bezzabotnova, et al., 2014, p. 162) illustrates how reflection may be organised with the help of guided questions.

Our experiential teaching proved that scaffolding materials in such a way encourages adult learners' autonomy in and out of class.

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3 Enhancing collaboration

Another group of principles closely related to the ones described above deals with collaboration and the constructivist approach to teaching. The constructivist approach is realised at two different levels: 1) personal and 2) social (Mvududu & Thiel-Burgess, 2012).

The constructivist approach states that new knowledge has to be built on the previous learning. Moreover, the existing knowledge is modified when confronted with new information, as the learner has to cope with the inconsistencies which he/she notices (Hoover, 1996). In this case, learners are involved in knowledge construction on a personal level.

Interacting with others in class, learners take responsibility for learning and contribute to the classroom atmosphere conducive to learning to make it successful (Weimer, 2002, p.118), which develops collaboration and negotiation through a foreign language. A great number of activities suggested in the *English for Academics* course encourage learners to collaborate, share their knowledge and experience, and come to a common product or conclusions based on this knowledge. While learners perform collaborative activities, they create the context in which language they may practise for subsequent use emerges as, for example, in the role play activities (Bezzabotnova, et al., 2014, p. 98).

Learning is thus based on creating meaning through dialogue, reflection, and experience (Raynolds et al., 2002, pp. 22-23). Learners construct their own

Role-play

8 Work in pairs. Role-play some conversations with a partner. Use the '3As' rule of communication and *How*-questions.

Learner A: look at page 123 and follow the instructions.

Learner B: look at page 126 and follow the instructions.

knowledge and effectively the emphasis centers on the learner and the dialogue with other learners rather than on the teacher who steps out of the central position. Peer work is crucial in teaching a foreign language to adults as it stimulates autonomy and provides an opportunity to demonstrate learners' ability to 'play' with the language and prove to themselves and others that they are progressing. We developed a number of activities where academics may work together and use each other's' materials for self-development (Bezzabotnova, et al., 2014, p. 13)

Follow-up

11 On the internet, find a short conference announcement, and save it. Delete all service words (articles, prepositions, etc.) from the text, as in Activity 4.

12 Work in pairs. Give each other you gapped texts and try to complete them. Was it difficult to do? Why/ Why not?

Learners are not only asked to create tasks for each other, but they also actively participate in peer assessment. Researchers claim that self- and peer-evaluation are the skills to be developed alongside other study skills as they do not develop automatically (Brookhart, 2008, p. 58; Weimer, 2002, p. 124). Learners are actively involved in peer assessment any time they create a product, either oral (as a presentation or its part) or written (a letter, a summary, an abstract, etc). In this case, learners not only add to their strategic resource, but also extend their knowledge and understanding by studying the works of others. Here is an example of an interactive assessment (Bezzabotnova, et al., 2014, p. 154).

In addition, the socio-cultural aspects of collaborative language learning facilitated increased

14 Work in pairs. Read your partner's abstract. Think about the questions below. Then give feedback.

1 Why did he/she do this study or project?

2 What did he/she do and how?

3 What did he/she find?

4 What do his/her findings mean?

5 If he/she suggested a new method, how well did it work?

6 Did he/she use formal vocabulary?

7 Did he/she use linking words to connect ideas?

Follow-up

15 Rewrite your abstract using your partner's suggestions.

progress and encouraged the development of autonomous learning habits. Therefore, the course based on constructivism and scaffolding of knowledge encourages the participants' development both on personal and social levels. As it has been demonstrated, all the principles work together to cater for better learning.

Piloting and research results

Following Tomlinson's idea that 'materials need to be monitored by the author(s), by other 'experts' not involved in the writing team and by typical users of the material' (2011, p. 174), the materials for the *English for Academics* course underwent rigorous cyclical evaluation within the team, the project consultant, and editors. Also, they were evaluated externally, in our case, piloted, that is, partly tried out in real classroom settings.

Amrani (2011) describes three methods usually used to evaluate materials: piloting, reviewing, and focus groups. He suggests several reasons why materials might be evaluated through piloting. Primarily, it is natural to test them in a genuine setting to ensure that the product is suitable for intended users. Piloting allows to develop and to adapt the materials to better suit their needs. What is important, it gives the

opportunity to start building up the client base and attract attention to the new product.

For the purpose of piloting, a booklet was published in 2013 which included sample units from each module. It was accompanied by the Teacher's Notes and supplied with audio recordings. Two questionnaires were developed, both for the teachers and the students who took part in the materials' evaluation. In these questionnaires, teachers and students were encouraged not only to grade the materials according to certain criteria, but also to comment on their decision.

The *English for Academics* course was piloted in 56 universities around Russia and abroad. Among 400 participants of the piloting stage, PhD students comprised 40%; university lecturers - 50%; and others - 10%. They all came from different areas of specialism: Economics (23,8%), Linguistics (13,2%), Psychology (8,8%), IT (8,2%), Physics (7,2%), Engineering (6,6%), Law (3%), History (2,7%), Sociology (2,5%), others (24%), and they constituted several mixed groups studying together.

The piloting results revealed several important issues. Firstly, they clearly demonstrated that there had really been a niche for such EAP materials to occupy. All the teachers involved in piloting (N=61) responded that the course was more relevant to their learners' needs than any General English textbooks. Most teachers (95%) contended the stated goals were met, and that they would recommend the course to a colleague working in a similar context. Secondly, the piloting proved that both teachers and learners (98,4% and 95,1% respectively) were motivated by the materials because they included valuable authentic content and encouraged active response from the learning group. We received several positive responses such as: '*The book provides a balance of activities that stimulates and motivates learners*'; '*It is one of the first books aimed specifically at educational context and at university teachers and staff. I've been long time looking for it*'.

However, some teachers (27%) noted that they needed more explanation of some methodological principles underlying the course as the objectives of some activities were unclear. In their comments some teachers suggested that language support was insufficient. As for the learners' comments, the necessity to introduce more language practice was also voiced.

We could infer that while the overall evaluation was positive there was still room for improvement. For this reason, after piloting a decision was made to explain methodological principles in the Teacher's Guide to assist teachers in comprehending the nature

and objectives of tasks and their sequences. We also added a glossary of relevant academic vocabulary and edited activities.

As for the results gained from the learners, 91,8% indicated that the materials were relevant to their professional area (14,2%) and helped to reach their educational objectives (95%). The learners mentioned that they learnt to:

- distinguish between formal and informal styles (16%);
- use new language structures (15,8%);
- write an abstract of a journal article (14,2%);
- make a good presentation on the topic of their research (11,3%).

The majority of the learners conceded the materials had educational value (95% of the respondents) commenting that they not only developed language skills and gained useful knowledge, but also broadened their scope in terms of academic norms, conventions and strategies used when communicating in the academic environment.

Conclusion

The implementation of the British Council academic project turned out to be very timely for and in demand among university teachers and researchers who need to share their findings and collaborate in an international academic community. The result of the project – the *English for Academics* course – is aimed both at developing language skills and encouraging international communication. As the topics are carefully chosen and the teaching methodology is appropriate for the target audience, the course proved to be an effective way to teach EAP to university staff working in various fields of study.

As the piloting demonstrated, the principles underlying the course showed their efficiency in teaching English for adults. Being pillars of the communicative approach, these principles work together to enhance learning and provide development.

Based on the language awareness approach the flow of each lesson goes from learners' affective or/and cognitive understanding of an input text (either oral or written) to their thorough language work at a discourse level. As soon as learners are aware of this kind of language analysis, they become able to work independently or in collaboration with their peers. Adult learners, especially academics, benefit from discussing controversial issues about the use of L2, which challenge them to seek answers on their own and of their own. As a result, they can gradually become competent speakers of the target language who are able to exploit the linguistic and other

resources at their disposal effectively and creatively.

Although academics are mature learners and are used to independent work they still seem to need certain guidance and well-structured types of tasks which can stimulate their autonomous learning of English. Guided individual work out of class appears to be the most effective means of achieving individual objectives as it allows learners to apply knowledge and strategies gained at lessons in order to satisfy their personal and professional needs. Invitation to set learning objectives, reflect on their achievement and monitor the progress places the emphasis on learners' responsibility for their own learning.

Collaborating with the teacher and peers, learners construct new knowledge together, internalising certain procedures and routines. Discussions and negotiations provide an opportunity for sharing ideas, learning from each other, and simulating real-life communication in class. It makes learning not only productive, but meaningful and engaging. Learners feel supported by each other, which in turn produces the conditions for taking risks in the learning process. Learners can share ideas and comment on peer's work in an environment of trust, empathy, collaboration, and enjoyment.

The pilot of the materials clearly showed that the course is long awaited by academics involved in international projects as it is tailored for this specific group of adults and addresses their immediate interests and needs. A modular design of the course allows for a certain flexibility of use and leaves space for creativity on the part of the teacher.

Acknowledgements

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