Confédération Européenne des Centres de Langues dans l'Enseignement Supérieur

European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education

Europäischer Verband der Hochschulsprachenzentren

**Secrétariat Général**

**Secretary General**

**Generalsekretariat**

Åbo Akademi University
Language Centre
Tehtaankatu 2
FI-20500 Turku
Finland
tel. +358 469 216 003
e-mail: generalsecretariat@cercles.org
website: http://www.cercles.org

# CercleS Focus Group Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP) White Paper

## 1. Introduction to the topic and relevance

LSP in Higher Education sits at the intersection of language learning and disciplinary expertise, aiming to equip students with the communication skills and other soft skills they will need in their future career. In 2018, in order to support LSP teachers and programme leaders with the specific issues they face, the CercleS LSP Focus Group was established to bring together this growing community of practice.

**The LSP Focus Group aims to:**

- Foster reflection that bridges theory and classroom practice.
- Support colleagues—particularly those new to LSP—in developing robust, transferable teaching skills.
- Share and disseminate best practices through events, publications, and some online activities.
- Build collaboration across borders by disseminating relevant calls for papers or projects, and providing opportunities for networking.

This white paper reflects on the challenges and opportunities facing Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP) teaching in Higher Education, and proposes concrete actions for teachers, programme leaders, and institutional decision-makers who want to ensure that LSP remains a dynamic and sustainable strand of European language education.

**Challenges in European Language Centers and Universities**

As this Focus Group looks to the future, we would like to focus on attention on two major areas that we feel will have a crucial impact on our field:

1. **Broadening skill integration**

   LSP programmes are uniquely positioned to develop not only language competencies but also essential soft skills (intercultural, interpersonal, and intersectoral communication) and to allow students to gain a better understanding of the societal challenges that lie ahead. This will enable students to achieve a greater degree of employability and world-readiness.



**Presidency**
Dr Julia Zabala Delgado | Centro de Lenguas | Universitat Politècnica de València |
Camí de Vera, s/n | Edificio 4P | 46022 Valencia, Spain
tel. +34 96 387 70 00 | e-mail: juzadel@upv.es
**General Secretariat**
Dr Mia Panisse | Åbo Akademi University | Language Centre |
Tehtaankatu 2 | FI-20500 Turku, Finland
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2. **Emergence of AI**

While generative AI and learning technologies offer powerful tools for both instructors and students, transforming content creation and allowing personalised learning pathways, they also prompt HE institutions to rethink assessment so as to address the questions around academic integrity and digital literacy[1].

## 2. Proposed Solutions and Actions

Informed by the above developments, and in line with the LSP FG *raison d'être*, we propose to focus on the following challenges and our corresponding responses in the coming years:

**1. Curricular Improvement**

LSP content must keep pace with rapidly evolving disciplinary knowledge, societal changes and technological shifts. In order to do so, it seems important to foster an inter-institutional network engaging all stakeholders and encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration.

**2. Continued Staff Training**

An LSP-dedicated component rarely features in initial language teacher training, leaving a gap that is left to be bridged. Although some isolated initiatives do exist[2], the need remains for a sustained effort in the area of LSP teaching methodologies, including the effective and reasoned uses of AI tools and their impact on language learning and teaching practices.

**3. Integration of Soft Skills**

Beyond specialised vocabulary and genre conventions, LSP classes are ideal for developing intercultural, interpersonal, and intersectoral communication. However, these outcomes typically sit at the periphery of course design, and current assessment models rarely capture or reward soft skill growth[3].

**4. Fostering an LSP Community of Practice**

Valuable knowledge and practices remain scattered across institutions, with individual teachers or small teams left to reinvent the wheel rather than build on each other's successes. International projects, while

[1] See https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/Eden-Centre/Assets-EC/Documents/PKU-LSE-Conf-April-2025/LSE-PKU-Student-Manifesto.pdf for an interesting student-led initiative on the topic.

[2] See https://catapult-project.eu/ and Chateaureynaud, M.-A., & John, P. (Eds.). (2023). *Champs didactiques plurilingues: Vol. 13. LSP teacher training summer school: The TRAILs project*. P.I.E. Peter Lang SA Éditions Scientifiques Internationales for two excellent initiatives in that area.

[3] For a relevant position paper on the topic (from an engineering education perspective) see https://www.sefi.be/2025/03/27/sefi-launches-2025-position-paper-on-engineering-skills/



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rich in potential, are often difficult to organise and coordinate due to lack of information, support or funding.

## 3. Intended Impact

We would like to encourage our members to address the challenges above by strengthening our community of practice through the following:

1. **Running a termly LSP webinar series (started in 2025)**

   Objective: run a minimum of 3 webinars a year.

2. **Organising in-person seminars or workshops (embedded in CercleS Conferences or LSPHE[4] events, or as stand-alone)**

   Objective: run 1 event a year.

3. **Recruiting more members on mailing list and reaching out to other existing LSP groups or networks**

   Objective: grow the number of members on our LSP mailing list and increase the amount information shared via this channel of communication (in particular in view to generate new inter-institutional collaborations, via Erasmus+ projects for example).

4. **In parallel to the above, establishing a LinkedIn presence to focus on some areas of expertise, in particular in the aforementioned areas (soft skills and AI)**

   Objective: setting up an active community of practitioners on LinkedIn.

## 4. References and Further Reading

Refer to the footnotes in the document.

**FG Coordinators:**

Benoît Guilbaud (B.Guilbaud@sussex.ac.uk)

David Tual (dhpt2@cam.ac.uk)

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[4] See https://lsphe.wordpress.com/about/ for more details about the LSPHE Conference series



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