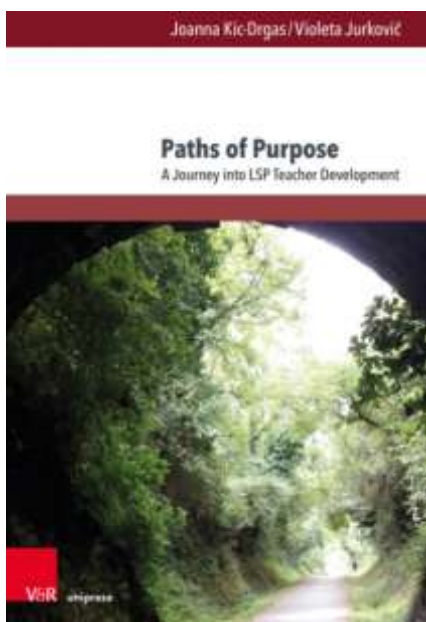


## BOOK REVIEW

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### PAVING THE WAY FOR LSP EDUCATORS: INSIGHTS INTO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CHALLENGES

**Joanna Kic-Drgas and Violeta Jurkovič.**  
**PATHS OF PURPOSE: A JOURNEY INTO  
LSP TEACHER DEVELOPMENT (2024),**  
V&R unipress. 150 pp., ISBN 978-3-8471-  
1690-5 (HBK); ISSN 2750-6169.

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Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) teachers specialize in teaching languages tailored to specific fields such as business, science, technology, law or healthcare. Their role is to provide learners with the language skills required for professional or academic success in these fields. The professional competence of LSP teachers is closely related to their diverse roles, including curriculum design, context-specific teaching materials development, collaboration, research, and assessment (Belcher, 2006; Woodrow, 2017), as well as applying pedagogical approaches tailored to the needs of learners (Basturkmen, 2010; Hall, 2013). Current literature emphasizes that LSP practitioners are simultaneously teachers, researchers, content creators, and evaluators (Basturkmen, 2010, 2014; Belcher, 2006; Hall, 2013). Although LSP teaching is increasingly recognized, the professional development of LSP teachers remains underresearched (Bocanegra-Valle & Basturkmen, 2019; Papadima-Sophocleous et al., 2019; Sowa, 2022). This neglect is largely attributed to the specific developmental needs of LSP teachers, which differ significantly from those of general language teachers and are often inadequately addressed in conventional teacher education (Bocanegra-Valle & Perea-Barberá, 2023). The recently published volume *Paths of purpose: A journey into LSP teacher development* by Joanna Kic-Drgas and Violeta Jurkovič addresses this underexplored field by offering theoretical insights, practical solutions and empirical research framed by a comparative study of LSP education in Poland and Slovenia. Aimed at educators,

researchers and policymakers, the book argues for greater support and recognition of LSP professionals and encourages further research in the field.

The book begins with an overview of LSP teaching in Poland and Slovenia, outlines the main challenges and teacher competences, then presents development initiatives and research findings, and concludes with a synthesis of the key insights.

The introductory chapter, titled “Context”, explores the research context (namely, Poland and Slovenia) and highlights the urgent need for robust pre-service and in-service professional development programmes tailored to LSP teachers. It draws attention to the European Commission’s (2017) report which highlights significant gaps in the training of LSP teachers across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and beyond, impacting on educational outcomes. LSP teaching presents a unique challenge as it requires a blend of linguistic competence and subject-specific knowledge. The chapter examines the different language policies and teacher training systems in both countries, which are characterized by their different demographics and histories. These differences have an impact on the preparation and qualification of LSP teachers. In addition, this chapter highlights the impact of the Bologna reform on LSP education, which led to a reduction in LSP teaching hours and raised concerns about the comprehensiveness of LSP education. Despite the challenges, LSP teachers in Poland and Slovenia have a similar status, with academic qualifications and continuous professional development being key to career growth.

The second chapter, “Introduction to LSP”, outlines the basic components of LSP teaching, which are based on Anthony’s (2018) four pillars: needs analysis, learning objectives, materials and methods, and evaluation. Particular attention is given to the role of needs analysis in designing effective LSP curricula, with a focus on subject-, learner-, and problem-centred design models (Basturkmen, 2010). The chapter also addresses the continuing challenges in developing appropriate LSP materials, particularly for less commonly taught languages as is the case here. It concludes with a discussion on LSP assessment, emphasizing the importance of context-sensitive evaluation criteria, including disciplinary knowledge and communicative relevance.

Chapter 3, “LSP Teachers”, dives deep into the multifaceted world of LSP teachers, highlighting their roles, competences and identities and the challenges they face, pointing to the urgent need for enhanced support, recognition and professional development, while emphasizing a wide range of skills required to meet the changing demands of their profession. Beyond simply teaching, they also act as facilitators, content experts and technology integrators, adapting to the rapid advances in information and communication technologies (ICTs) and artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, and the increasingly multicultural dynamics in the classroom. The authors argue for a specific, research-based competency framework tailored to LSP teachers, recognizing the progress made through initiatives such as the Erasmus+ CATAPULT project (CATAPULT, 2021) and the British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes (BALEAP, 2008). However, they

emphasize that these frameworks need to be further developed to ensure that they take into account different disciplines, levels of education and the growing importance of transversal skills. The chapter also explores the unique identity of LSP teachers and highlights long-standing global challenges that require enhanced training and professional development. It emphasizes the value of communities of practice as important support networks that enable LSP teachers to share knowledge and best practices through associations, conferences, and journals. Such collaboration is presented as essential for sustainable professional growth and strengthening the LSP teaching community.

Chapter 4, “LSP Teacher Professional Development Projects”, offers an overview of three Erasmus+ projects: TRAILS, CATAPULT, and LSP-TEOC.Pro, all of which have made a significant contribution to LSP community:

- The TRAILS project investigated the needs of LSP teachers and compared them with existing LSP teacher training programmes across Europe. The results showed a lack of standardization and gaps in professional development and teaching competences, which led to the creation of tailored training courses for LSP teachers (Chateaufreynaud & John, 2023).
- Similarly, the CATAPULT project explored the ICT competences needed for effective LSP teaching and developed a MOOC to address gaps between higher education ICT skills and LSP teaching requirements (CATAPULT, 2021).
- Building on the TRAILS project, LSP-TEOC.Pro focused on online professional development for LSP educators. It created a flexible, online, customizable course for in- and pre-service teachers, with modules on key areas of LSP teaching offering participants the flexibility to choose learning paths and earn badges (Bocanegra-Valle, 2023).

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Chapter 5, “LSP Teacher Education and Professional Development”, presents the results of a qualitative study conducted through semistructured interviews with foreign language teacher educators in Poland and Slovenia. The findings show that LSP teachers and foreign language educators share the same views on a few aspects of LSP teacher education and professional development, with a general language teaching methodology course providing a solid foundation for both LSP and LGP teachers. However, it is recognized that LSP teachers need additional skills, and it is suggested that separate courses could be established to address these specific needs. Furthermore, the importance of disciplinary knowledge and soft skills development for LSP educators is recognized and the role of policymakers is highlighted, as it has been shown that there is a lack of consistency in existing programmes across the EHEA. Finally, it advocates the integration of awareness-raising initiatives into pre-service training and highlights collaboration as a crucial element LSP teachers’ development, encouraging peer learning and participation in communities of practice. However, some studies suggest that not all LSP teachers prioritize professional development. This raises the question of whether the lack of

appropriate opportunities is due to a lack of interest or whether the lack of interest is due to there simply not being enough relevant opportunities – especially given the highly specialized and diverse fields in which LSP teachers work (Bocanegra-Valle & Perea-Barberá, 2023; Jurkovič et al., 2024). This underscores the challenge of meeting the diverse professional development needs within the LSP teaching community, and this chapter findings contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities in preparing and supporting LSP teachers.

In the final chapter of the book, “Results”, the authors reflect on the insights presented throughout the book. They encourage readers to personalize their understanding by relating the content to their own professional and personal contexts, thus enhancing the conceptual applicability of the book in different contexts.

Each chapter of the book begins with a summary of the key contributions from the previous chapters, highlighting the key findings and their implications. The discussion points to the significance of LSP teacher education and professional development at not only national but also international level, and recognizes the importance of understanding language policy and education systems for effective LSP teaching. The introductory chapters explore LSP concepts such as needs analysis, curriculum design and assessment, highlighting the differences between LSP and related areas such as EMI and CLIL and emphasizing the adaptability of knowledge transfer in different contexts. The focus on LSP teachers addresses their roles, competences, challenges and communities of practice and highlights the value of international networking and support, especially for teachers of less widely taught languages and niche disciplines. Professional development projects for LSP teachers such as TRAILS, CATAPULT and LSP-TEOC.Pro are highlighted for their role in fostering growth within the LSP community. These initiatives provide valuable resources for self-directed learning and promote international collaboration. In addition, the results of a qualitative study involving foreign language teacher educators underscore the importance of genre analysis skills in LSP teaching. The volume concludes with a call for further exploration of new directions in LSP education and professional development, particularly in areas such as the integration of AI, the development of LSP materials and cross-cultural collaboration between LSP practitioners.

This comprehensive volume offers a wealth of theoretical insights and practical guidance, making it a valuable resource for educators, policymakers and researchers. Its comparative analysis, combined with its detailed examination of professional development projects and qualitative research findings, provides a solid foundation for further research and innovation in the field of LSP teacher education and professional development. As an ESP practitioner myself, I believe that this publication can be of great benefit to LSP teachers beyond the two countries under study in improving their understanding of LSP teaching and contributing to the further development of the subject. While the book offers deep insights into LSP teacher education in Poland and Slovenia, expanding the scope to other national

contexts in future studies could enrich this understanding and further improve the relevance and applicability of the findings across diverse educational settings.

[Review submitted 16 Jun 2024]

[Revised version received 9 May 2025]

[Accepted for publication 12 May 2025]

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