ENGLISH FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
- A FUNCTIONAL APPROACH

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ABSTRACT: *This article is a study of the types of communication in English required in the area of Public Administration. Its purpose is to identify functional teaching and learning methods and materials that reconcile these demands with the real language needs of those employed in the public administration sector. The other aim of this article is to offer an outline of a practical English Course for Public Administration students based on the analysis of the actual needs of the public sector in terms of English communication skills.*

KEYWORDS: *English for Specific Purposes; public administration; curriculum development; productive skills; learners' needs*
JEL Code: *K00*

The purpose of this article is to identify key aspects that should be considered in the endeavor to design a practical and functional course on English for Public Administration. The necessity of such a specialized course is justified by the requirements of the job market which, apart from knowledge of the specific field, expects graduates to possess the 21st century skills (critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, information literacy, media literacy, technology literacy, flexibility, leadership, initiative, productivity and social skills), which are no longer skills expected to be learnt on the job, but a prerequisite for the potential employees. Therefore, the educational institutions are held accountable for the development of both the specialized knowledge and the above-mentioned skills, so as to render employable candidates that meet the demands of the labor market.

The question arising here is what could be the profile of a Public Administration graduate? What are the labor sectors where he/she stands greater chances of employability? When hearing the phrase "Public administration" the very first and total ly (Moldovan, 2017); (Moldovan, 2018) flawed picture is that of a person surrounded by dusty files, which suffocate all chances of demonstrating any of the 21st century skills. To give only one counterargument, the Internet was developed by governmental agencies, so imagination, innovation or creative thinking are not the privilege of the

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private sector. Public and private administration actually share a lot of similarities such as: common skills, techniques and procedures, the organization of the personnel, a similar type of hierarchy and management systems, continuous development of internal working and of the efficiency in service delivery to people or customers. Also, the so-called New Public Management has become prominent and comes to underline the similarity with the private sector as it promotes the application of managerial techniques in public administration for an efficient delivery of public services (Moldovan, 2018). According to Mark Robinson, "While cost containment was a key driver in the adoption of NPM approaches, injecting principles of competition and private sector management lay at the heart of the NPM approach." (Robinson, 2015)

Therefore, the profile of the Public Administration graduate should cover training in various fields, both public and private, and a course that aims to develop English communication skills matching such a profile needs to include the corresponding topics and the appropriate teaching methods and techniques. Public Administration graduates should be able to work both in central and local administration, in the profit and non-profit sector. They can be employed in the government ministries or agencies, in the presidential administration, in the city halls, prefectures, county councils, local councils, in institutions of the European Union, in national or international non-governmental organizations, or even in private companies (national or multinational). Consequently, we identify the Public Administration program at the crossroads of different fields of study that should include law (Moldovan, 2017), economy, political sciences, management, human resources, sociology, urban planning, environmental protection etc.

In our search for a unitary Public Administration curriculum that could have just transferred us the exact topics for an English course on Public Administration we realized that on the European level there is no single model of public administration, hence there is no single model of Public Administration teaching in Europe. This lack of uniformity is explained by Marleen Brans & Laurien Coenen as being conditioned by the national contexts because graduates need to be first employable in the national and local public administrations (Brans, 2016). Despite the growing Europeanization of the policy-administrative space due to the development of European regulations and directives in multiple policy domains, "the politico-administrative systems are traditionally divergent in Europe, owing to differences in cultures and historical legacies. Some administrative cultures are legalistic, others more managerialist, yet others more governance oriented. Even when there have been common pressures and administrative reform trends in the last 25 years pervading public administrations across Europe, divergence in the translation of these trends prevails over convergence." (Pollitt, 2011)

At the level of European institutions that include Public Administration higher education this divergence follows the above-mentioned directions: if we go to France we find Public Administration in Law Schools or, to a certain extent, in political sciences and sociology programs; in Netherlands Public Administration is mainly found in faculties of social sciences, while in the UK it is often part of business schools. Thus we identify three types of Public Administration teaching: the *legalistic* type dominated by law, the *public* type, focused on social and political sciences and the *corporate* type that concentrates on management and economic components. If we were to map the Public Administration education trends in Europe, according to Hajnal, "a number of Continental European countries are characterized by a broad and significant political

science component, typical of the public type. The Nordic countries put a stronger emphasis on business administration. Most Southern European countries, and a number of post-communist countries, had law predominate in their PA curricula." (Hajnal, 2003)

While it may be true that Bachelor programs on PA predominantly maintain the three trends, legal, governance and managerial models within their specific national contexts, at the level of Master programs one can notice a mix of contents that plead for convergence rather than divergence in Public Administration education. The findings of a study performed by Marleen Brans and Laurien Coenen on a sample of 18 Western European PA master programs in 5 countries (Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Switzerland) are also inspiring in our search for the English course syllabus components. The conclusion of this study is that "at the Master's level and in our EAPAA sample, the majority of programs show a mix of contents in which PA is taught in a broad sense, including management, administration, governance and public policy, flavored with some variation in response to particular client groups or faculty specializations." (Brans, 2016) This study analyzed the geographical spread, constitution and content of Master programs that had the status of EAPAA accreditation in 2016. In a nutshell, the trends are the followings: in half of the programs law is absent from the curriculum. Yet, many Master programs recruit students who studied law in their bachelor curricula. As to the Europeanization of content, in half of the programs there are courses on European institutions or policies. International institutions, policy and governance are present in nearly half of the programs. Only one Master program has an explicit comparative focus, with core components consisting of comparative public management, comparative public policy, and comparative public administration in Europe. One third of the current curricula make room for **e-**government and ICT courses. Another component, expected to arise due to the changes in the environment of public administration, is that of the management of crises (present in the Dutch programs and the one in Potsdam). Finally, internships, key-elements in PA training, are absent in half of the cases, yet alternative routes may be considered such as practitioner lecturers, guest sessions, or the introduction of simulation games in the teaching methods.

One of the reasons why uniformity is not a constant characteristic of PA teaching is that, at the level of higher education, the European Union does not have much legal authority. According to Heidbreder, "formally, national education systems are hardly affected through European regulations or directives, the so-called hierarchical mechanisms of Europeanization." (Heidbreder, 2011) Yet, it is equally true that the Europeanization of higher education is already a fact and it is the unavoidable effect of the free movement of European nationals, as well as of the transnational activities of universities and their staff. Under Erasmus networks on Public Administration - *European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students or* Socrates sponsored Thematic Network of Public Administration (1997-2006, included 122 main universities in the Public Administration discipline), universities have developed collaborative projects and consortia, which resulted into the development of joint curricula, joint conferences or joint programs [e.g. our university Master Program on Public Administration and European Policies, originating from the partnership with Salento" University of din Lecce, Italy, "Versailles-Saint-Quentin-en-Yveline" University, France and Miskolc University, Hungary]. Such activities have enabled the exchange of best practices, have developed common standards, and have brought about

efficient changes in the academic environments. These transnational activities have also led to the introduction of European content in PA curricula and they have generated mutual learning and common understanding of what is needed to offer high quality PA programs that are functional in both national and international contexts. According to Brans& Coenen, this Europeanization is not perceived as "a movement to creating identikit education in PA, but as a common understanding of the quality of a discipline that remains necessarily context bound by its national, local and international dimensions." (Brans, 2016) Hence, an English course for PA should follow these trends and incorporate teaching materials, methods and techniques that meet the quality standards of a discipline that cannot be perceived only within local or national boundaries.

The promotion of efficient European academic level PA programs is also the aim of the European Association for Public Administration Accreditation (EAPAA), which encourages PA curriculum development and innovation. According to EAPAA, the responsibility of the PA accredited programs is not just to teach technical proficiency, but also to teach PA according to academic standards based on positive and normative theory and on empirical research. Accredited programs should reflect *multidisciplinarity,* meaning that 'relevant core concepts and theories in the disciplines of economics, law, political science and sociology should be taught in the program with explicit focus on the interrelations between the disciplines (www.eapaa.eu).' The core curriculum should provide: a thorough teaching of the basic concepts, theories, methods and history (classics) of PA; research methods, concepts and theories from the disciplines of economics, law, political science and sociology, as well as the relationship between these fields; public finances, informatization; and public management." (Brans, 2016)

The question arising here is why should we consider these different trends in Public Administration teaching in the design of an English course for Public Administration students? The main argument is the aim of this article, namely the outline of a practical and functional English course, more specifically, the identification of converging topics, of teaching methods and techniques that basically produce learning outcomes – in this case, English communication skills - for the Public Administration students. Going beyond the diverging trends, an English course on Public Administration should aim at converging these trends in order to render graduates that are functional not only locally or nationally, but also on the European and international level.

The design of a syllabus for an English course on Public Administration in the selection of its content and methodologies should constantly aim at shaping this functional profile of a PA graduate. The choice of the type of syllabus needs to follow the same criterion. According to Wilkins, there are two main types of syllabus in a language course, synthetic and analytic: "in synthetic syllabuses, the content of instruction is organized in terms of the target language's grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary etc. This content is pre-selected and taught incrementally until the whole language is covered. The learner's task is to re-synthesize the language that has been broken down into a large number of small pieces with the aim of making this learning task easier (…); in contrast, analytic syllabuses are organized in terms of the purposes for which people are learning language and the kinds of language performance that are necessary to meet those purposes." (Wilkins, 1976)

The design of an ESP course syllabus seems to be closer to the analytical type because as many scholars - Hutchinson and Waters, Komorowska, and Rabbani - point out "the content should be derived through a process of consultation with the learners, the consideration being the communicative needs of the learners." (Nunan, 1988) The needs of the adult learners are quite different from those of secondary school students who study foreign language as part of their general education. Adults typically require intensive foreign language instruction that matches their specific professional and personal needs. This perspective that considers the learners' pragmatic language learning needs (Richterich, 1977) falls within the scope of the notional-functional syllabus (often called the communicative approach) proposed by the Council of Europe as part of the Modern Languages Project or "The Threshold Level." The notional-functional syllabus was one of the first syllabuses to be theoretically based on a learner–centered, communication–oriented approach to language instruction and, in the divide between synthetic and analytic syllabus, it is closer to the later one.

Therefore, a central tool in the design of a syllabus for an ESP course is the needs analysis because this identifies the learners' needs and the expectations of the user-institution which need, in turn, to be tailored to the elements of the actual teaching situation. In the case of Public Administration students, an English course can prove its efficiency only if the learning outcomes match the actual needs of the students, needs that can also be traceable by following the trends in PA teaching as presented in the previous part of this article. PA graduates have to be able to actively use the English language in the future professional settings, which, as seen before, prove to be quite various (government ministries or agencies, city halls, prefectures, county councils, local councils, institutions of the European Union, national or international non-governmental organizations, or even private companies-national or multinational). Therefore, the task of the course designer is quite difficult, more like "a mix of juggling and doing puzzles" (Dudley-Evans, 1998), yet the choice of a functional syllabus, together with a careful selection of materials and teaching methods and techniques based on students' needs, can secure the success of an English course for PA.

On the basis of the previously mentioned analysis of the trends in PA teaching on the European level, we suggest as follows, a list of topics that can be included in a syllabus for an English course for Public Administration. The major criterion in the selection of these topics was the profile of the Public Administration graduate that is expected to meet the demands of the labor market and thus to be functional within the working setting also as regards his communicational skills in a foreign language. ESP as such is derived from this need to use language in order to facilitate success in the professional life and reference to the situations where the learner will use the language is essential.

Thus, following the idea of converging the three major trends in PA teaching across Europe, namely the legalistic, corporate and public types, we propose a list of generic topics that is undeniably open to further suggestions coming both from specialists and from the students: Economics, Public Budgeting, Marketing, Statistics, Organizational and Management Studies, EU Studies, Legal Systems, Administrative and Public Sector legislation, State Organization, Human Rights and Administration, E-Government and ICT, Environmental and Agricultural Management, Poverty Reduction and Development, Human Development, Policy Development, Innovation, Quality

Management and Project Evaluation, Effective Communication, Intercultural Communication and Public Relations, Professions, Organizations and Citizens.

These topics should introduce the PA student to various social, democratic and economic concepts such as poverty reduction, development, the welfare state, social exclusion/inclusion, community, and individual/group identity; the PA graduate should also have knowledge of public management theory and its basic principles, such as public-private partnership, democratic norms and values. These concepts are essential for a PA graduate and also expand the scope of his/her profile that is no longer local or national context bound. Graduates of Public Administration have to be able to carry out literature and documentation reviews on various topics related to the public sector at local, national, European and international level. They are expected to be able to use existing databases (EUROSTAT, HFA, United Nations, and National Institute for Statistics) and should be familiar with problem analysis tools. Therefore, training to acquire specific foreign language competencies becomes essential for the PA student both in the documentation and research activity, as well as in the delivery of expected learning outcomes that should be validated not only within national, but also within international contexts.

As regards the choice of materials for teaching English for Public Administration, this should not be regarded as an activity leading to finished products. The selection, development and implementation of materials for most ESP courses is a very complex and lengthy process. The literature mentions four possible ways of materials application in ESP classes: published course materials, materials writing (tailor-made, in-house materials), authentic materials and materials adaptation (Hutchinson, 1987), (Barnard, 2003). The specificity of diverse courses or specializations cannot in most cases be completely covered by published course materials, thus they need to be supplemented by tailor-made, authentic or adapted materials. This requires time and can be de-motivating for the ESP instructor, yet the fact that students' language competence is developed along with the fact that their motivation is increased, pays off the effort.

According to Dumitrescu, there are two important factors in the selection and implementation of materials for ESP classes: one is applicability, meaning that ESP materials are easier understood and perceived by students if their content matches their vocational interests and professional reality; the other factor is adaptability, referring to the ease of the task design and the text manipulation which allows ESP materials to be effortlessly included in both oral and written communication courses. (Dumitrescu, 2000)

The later factor of adaptability brings into discussion also the different levels of language competence of students when they start the ESP course. This issue has become evident throughout my teaching experience and is based on the findings of the placement tests that I apply to the first year students. Even though this study will not develop on the results of these tests, one mention should be made, namely that at least half of the students are not at the B1 level according to the CEFRL (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), a level that would enable a smooth transition to learning and developing ESP skills. In this situation an ESP course should be organized with different level groups and thus progress could be achieved, as long as the materials are adapted to their language level. As Dudley-Evans, and St John pointed out, "ESP

assumes learners have basic knowledge of the language system, but it can be used for beginners." (Dudley-Evans, 1998)

The other aspect that not only the adaptability factor, but also the learners' needs bring into discussion is the share of language skills in the organization of the materials for ESP courses. The receptive skills are listening and reading, because learners do not need to produce language to do these, they receive and understand it. These skills are sometimes known as passive skills. They can be contrasted with the productive or active skills of speaking and writing. These skills are interrelated and condition each other. No doubt, also in the case of ESP language skills, they share equal status, yet, given the findings of the same placement tests, the learners of foreign languages tend to share the same difficulties when it comes to productive skills where their score was lower than in the case of receptive skills. Therefore, in the case of Public Administration, where communication is the driving force, an ESP course should focus on the development of productive skills. The PA graduates should become versatile in different forms of oral and written communication both in the public and private sector, they need to master strategic communication (public relations), presentation and negotiation techniques, they have to apply relevant IT tools for communication, including working creatively with personal communication, they need to manage difficult conversations and to incorporate intercultural perspectives in the production skills.

Another important aspect in the design of an ESP course for PA is the methodology employed. According to Dudley Evans and St. John, ESP teaching has its own methodology, by which they mean that all ESP teaching should reflect the methodology of the disciplines and professions it serves. ESP is centered on the language (grammar, lexis and register), skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities. Hyland also supports the idea of a specialized methodology for ESP indicating that students do not learn in a "vacuum: their disciplinary activities are a central part of their engagement with others in their disciplines and they communicate effectively only by using its particular conventions appropriately." (Hyland, 2002) This approach to the methodology of ESP teaching is also validating our choice of topics as part of a syllabus for an English course on PA, the selected topics bringing along with a careful selection of materials (be they tailor-made, authentic or adapted) the corresponding registers, skills, discourses and genres which will develop the skills that students need in order to participate in professional contexts in an active and efficient manner.

CONCLUSIONS

Our attempt to identify major aspects that should be considered in the design of a practical and functional course on English for Public Administration has resulted into several findings all converging into the profile of a PA graduate that needs to get on the labor market as an independent and assertive professional, one for whom analyzing problems, structuring information, working as part of a team (local, national or international), conducting and leading discussions and presenting ideas is second nature. The 21st century PA graduate should no longer be stuck into paperwork and bureaucratic hindrances; he/she should be permanently updated, flexible and able to deliver effective services to the citizens or customers, hence he/she can validate the very name of his/her profession: public servant. The 21st century PA graduate can choose to work in various

fields such as local and national administration, education, health sector, social policy issues, or work with citizens. The PA graduate can be found in city halls, prefectures, county councils, local councils, institutions of the European Union, in governmental or non-governmental organizations which deal with public services or in private companies (national or multinational). Regardless of the field of work, the PA graduate is expected to possess the 21st century skills critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, information literacy, media literacy, technology literacy, flexibility, leadership, initiative, productivity and social skills. This is because the PA graduate is part not only of the local or national community, but also of the global one and the only way he/she can be functional is to integrate these skills required in today's workplace.

This versatile profile calls for an expansion of the scope of Public Administration education and justifies our choice of combining the major European trends of PA teaching- legalistic, public and corporate- in the design of the syllabus for an English course on PA. Thus, the profile of the PA graduate should reach for the specificity of PA program that is at the crossroads of different fields of study, each bringing along the specific registers, genres, discourses and skills, which, in the case of an English course, are key elements in training professionals who need to effectively communicate in their working environments.

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