

# I. ARTICLES IN THE SPECIAL ISSUE

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## **An introduction to the LSP-TEOC.Pro project (Language for Specific Purposes Teacher Education Online Course for Professional Development) and its findings: Overview of the thematic issue**

**ABSTRACT.** The article introduces the LSP-TEOC.Pro project (Language for Specific Purposes Teacher Education Online Course for Professional Development, <https://lsp-teoc-pro.de/>), as presented in this post-conference issue of *Glottodidactica*. Its first part discusses the project, including its rationale, consortium, approach and project phases as well as the self-directed online course developed as its main result. In the second part, an overview of the different contributions collected in this special issue is given.

**KEYWORDS:** language for specific purposes, distance learning, self-directed learning, lifelong learning, learning management system, open educational resource, badges; micro-credentials.

### **1. CONTEXT**

Language skills are one of the basic skills needed to participate successfully in our knowledge-based society. Alongside the direct expression of culture, language skills are the basis for labour mobility, employability and growth, but also (personal) well-being. Therefore, a functioning education system is a necessary pre-requisite for the teaching and learning of languages and education in general. However, a communication from the European Commission (2017: 5) on a renewed EU agenda for higher education mentions the worrying fact that “[t]oo many higher education teachers have received little or no pedagogical training.” This is a concern for teachers and learners of languages in general, and for teachers and learners of languages for specific purposes (LSP<sup>1</sup>) in particular

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<sup>1</sup> “Language for special or specific purposes, *LSP*, is the traditional term for the various linguistic variants used in professional settings. The history of the field reveals an early theoretical interest

(European Commission 2017). In this context, emphasis should also be placed on vocational education and training, but especially to those higher education institutions across Europe (and beyond) that do not award language degrees, but for which LSP are nevertheless important in teaching and learning, as well as research, for example, in the maritime sector<sup>2</sup>. This aspect is also particularly worth mentioning, as LSP is directly linked to the world of work; the importance of language skills and language policy is addressed in various EU documents (for a summary see, for example, European Parliament 2023). There are lots more challenges and problems in terms of the importance of language proficiency in general that have to be recognised, appreciated and tackled in a systematic way (European Commission 2021, 2008a, 2008b). The LSP-TEOC.Pro project<sup>3</sup> and the self-learning course developed respectively address the aforementioned aspects and cater for these demands. This importance is also underlined by the fact that the command of languages (especially English) also enables participation and self-determination of people in general, (personal) well-being, gender equality, mobility of work forces on labour markets, multilingualism and multiculturalism, and forms the basis for social rights and Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations 2015). Moreover, language skills (mostly English as lingua franca) are absolutely necessary in a globalised world where people from different countries around the globe have to communicate with each other which could lead to severe risks for people and our environment, for example, in shipping (see above).

## 2. OBJECTIVES

The LSP-TEOC.Pro project was undertaken from September 2020 to August 2023 with the aim of tackling these shortcomings and improving teaching and learning in the field of LSP. The project was co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union (Reference Number: 2020-1-DE01-005687). The main objective of the project was to implement solutions which support competence development for both future and already fully trained and actively working LSP teachers (in higher education). The development of the course

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in the description of various *sublanguages*, which are assumed to exist within the general language system in response to specific professional needs. [...]” (Gunnarsson 1997: 105; emphasis in original).

<sup>2</sup> “AGCS analysis shows that 75% of shipping incidents involve human error” (Allianz Global Corporate & Specialty 2022: 55). This includes communication (miscommunication) as one (main) contributing factor (see, for example, Dominguez-Péry et al. 2021; Sánchez-Beaskoetxea et al. 2021).

<sup>3</sup> The consortium included the following higher education institutions (tertiary level) and one research institute/centre: Jade University of Applied Sciences (co-ordinator), University of Bergamo, University of Bordeaux, University of Cadiz, University of Cukurova, University of Ljubljana, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, University of Zagreb, Arcola Research.

itself constitutes an innovative aspect, as there is only a very limited number of such courses available. Within this context, the project builds on the results of the preceding project called TRAILS<sup>4</sup> which can be seen as a starting point. In addition, existing teaching and learning materials developed by project partners themselves were also considered. Moreover, the (few) existing LSP training courses were analysed and needs analyses were carried out with the aim of defining relevant competences of LSP teachers. Based on this, a multilingual learning platform was developed and a free self-study course was designed, implemented, tested and evaluated. With the completion of the project, the self-directed online course is ready for use, and it is available to the public as an Open Educational Resource – it is available as an asynchronous learning offer, and therefore all its learning instructions, teaching and learning materials (videos, presentations, further readings, activities, optional materials, model answers, etc.) and quizzes are accessible irrespective of time and place; the only pre-requisites are a computer or mobile device with an Internet browser, as well as an Internet connection. Even though it was planned from the beginning that the course would be available in distance learning mode<sup>5</sup> – simply in order to address potential participants not only from all countries of the consortium but across Europe in general (and beyond) – the Covid-19 pandemic and its consequences have clearly shown how important it is that such educational offers exist and are systematically designed and well planned.<sup>6</sup> The course is available in two ways: it can be accessed via the project's Learning Management System (LMS)<sup>7</sup> or it can be implemented into existing (universities') LMS. It is available in all the languages of the nine consortium members: Croatian, English, French, German, Italian, Polish, Slovenian, Spanish and Turkish. Thus, since September 2023, members of the LSP community worldwide have been able to acquire the

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<sup>4</sup> LSP Teacher Training Summer School, co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union, Reference Number: 2018-1-FR01-KA203-048085, <https://trails.hypotheses.org/>.

<sup>5</sup> Schlosser and Simonson (2010: 1) define distance education as “institution-based, formal education where the learning group is separated, and where interactive telecommunications systems are used to connect learners, resources, and instructors.”

<sup>6</sup> Hodges et al. (2020) developed the term of “Emergency Remote Teaching” in March 2020 for ad-hoc solutions and wrote: “Faculty might feel like instructional MacGyvers, having to improvise quick solutions in less-than-ideal circumstances [...] and] many instructors will understandably find this process stressful.” In general, Hodges et al. (2020) distinguish between “[w]ell-planned online learning experiences [that] are meaningfully different from courses offered online in response to a crisis or disaster.”

<sup>7</sup> Moodle is used in this project: “Moodle is a learning platform designed to provide educators, administrators and learners with a **single robust, secure and integrated system** to create personalised learning environments” (Moodle 2023; emphasis in original). It “is provided freely as Open Source software” (Moodle 2023). Furthermore, Moodle is the most used LMS in the university sector on a global level (Hill 2017).

skills and competences required for language teaching in a specific professional field at an advanced level, be it Business English, Technical English, Scientific English, Medical English, Hospitality English, Tourism English or Maritime English. In addition, the course developed can be used in the context of lifelong learning (see below) to refresh or extend existing skills and competences given the fact that the course addresses teachers at all levels – prospective teachers, teachers on junior level but also very experienced teachers on senior level.

### **3. LSP-TEOC.PRO COURSE**

The LSP-TEOC.Pro course consists of the following modules<sup>8</sup>:

- Module 0: Introduction to LSP,
- Module 1: Needs analysis,
- Module 2: LSP course and syllabus design,
- Module 3.1: LSP communities,
- Module 3.2: Disciplinary genres,
- Module 3.3: LSP corpora,
- Module 4: LSP Teaching skills,
- Module 5: LSP Materials evaluation and design,
- Module 6: Task- / Project- / Problem-based learning in LSP,
- Module 7: LSP Assessment.

The course has a clear structure, following a uniform instructional design, which means that several didactic elements re-appear throughout all learning modules (for further information on online learning design options, see, for example, Means et al. 2014; for further information on language teaching curriculum development, see, for example Richards 2001). The modules (and the course respectively), for example, start with an introduction including information on learning outcomes, content and estimated learning time in order to not only make learning visible (Hattie 2009) but also to activate prior knowledge and help users to plan their progression. Although the modules build onto each other to some extent (see Footnote 8), they can also be studied independently, for example, based on prior learning or professional experience. In line with that, participants can decide whether they prefer to study the whole course or instead study single learning modules only due to a special interest in single subjects or other reasons.

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<sup>8</sup> “A self-contained, formally structured learning experience. It should have a coherent and explicit set of learning outcomes, defined learning activities consistent with the time allocated within the curriculum, and appropriate assessment criteria” (European Union 2015: 68).

Upon successful completion of the course, or all eight modules respectively, participants should have achieved the following learning objectives, should be able to carry out the following tasks and should be able to do all the following in the context of LSP (see Internet pages of the project: <https://lsp-teoc-pro.de/> and course or LMS: <https://moodle.lsp-teoc-pro.de/>):

- explain the general principles including their challenges, opportunities and limitations,
- methodologically analyse the needs and requirements of learners,
- design, develop and evaluate curricula, courses, materials and examinations,
- collaborate with national and international language teachers, professionals and the industry, and
- plan and support task-, project- and problem-oriented teaching and learning as well as independent and self-directed learning.

From a learner's perspective, a required workload of 48 hours is assumed for completing the whole course. This value corresponds approximately to two credit points according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, which is one central element of the European higher education reform known as the Bologna Process (European Union 2015: 10). Furthermore, the course should be understood as a starting point or minimum standard that can be achieved with a manageable amount of time and is recognised accordingly. Further learning could be taken up independently by participants on the basis of the topics presented within the course.

Small-scale piloting and large-scale trialling phases were carried out as part of the project, in order to ensure the provision of a fully functioning and user-friendly course and to be able to collect and analyse data for the analysis of the learning paths taken by users. The results were taken into account in the revision and further development of the course, but were also analysed, presented and published (see articles in this issue as well as the project website). Thus, they are available for future potential course takers as lessons learned from course participants for future course participants. The results should also contribute to general discussions about teaching and learning languages in general and LSP in particular, but also for distance learning, self-directed learning and lifelong learning (see below). Moreover, the concept with its transnational and collaborative character and approach, as well as results achieved, too, could serve as a blueprint for other (international) courses, concepts and projects.

Some basic data and information on the piloting and trialling phases carried out as part of the project are presented here:

1. Small-scale piloting phase: The piloting phase took place from 17 October to 1 December 2022. A total of 21 people (six of whom were male) from nine countries (England, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Portugal,

Slovenia, Spain, Turkey) took part in the piloting phase; nine people successfully completed all eight modules (the entire course). The piloting phase focused in particular on the further development and improvement of the course itself in order to guarantee a very high level of usability and user-friendliness.

2. Large-scale trialling phase: Following the revision of the course based on feedback collected during the piloting phase, the trialling phase took place from 24 January to 14 March 2023. A total of 300 potential test takers declared interest in studying the course. Of these, 183 people (three of them non-binary / other, 36 of them male) from 17 countries (Argentina, Belgium, Chile, Croatia, England, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Poland, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, United States of America) and from different age groups, from under 20 to over 60 years of age (< 20 years:  $n = 7$ ; 21–30 years:  $n = 62$ ; 31–40 years:  $n = 40$ ; 41–50 years:  $n = 45$ ; 51–60 years:  $n = 27$ ; > 61 years:  $n = 2$ ) completed the first questionnaire (“Data on trialee and Privacy Notice as well as information on evaluation”) with questions on their demographic background, previous learning experiences and motivations for studying the course, among other background information. This step constituted active enrolment in the course from the project’s viewpoint. A total of 90 out of 300 subscribers completed at least four of the total of eight modules<sup>9</sup> (= passed<sup>10</sup>, 30%) which was regarded as successful completion of the self-learning online course. Upon successful completion of the course, a certificate was issued by the co-ordinating institution. A further 93 people (31%) started the course with varying levels of engagement and success. In all, 42 of these (= drop-outs) successfully completed one ( $n = 28$ ), two ( $n = 4$ ) or three ( $n = 10$ ) module(s); 51 of these (= draw-backs) completed at least one ‘pre-participation test’, which constituted the starting point of learning within each module or the course respectively, but did not afterwards complete any of the modules. The other 117 people (= non-starters, 39%) declared their basic willingness to participate in the course at an earlier stage (see above), but ultimately showed no activity at all.

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<sup>9</sup> During the piloting phase, many participants felt that the time allotted for completing the course was too short. The main reason for this is that most of them have other commitments to fulfil: in particular (full-time) jobs, studies and private life. The consortium therefore decided that at least four of the eight modules had to be completed in full for successful completion of the course, or receipt of the certificate during the trialling phase; the module choice was left to the participants.

<sup>10</sup> Participation in the piloting and trialling phase was evaluated on the basis of the definition according to Fritsch (1988), whereby a distinction was made in particular between the four groups of ‘passed’, ‘drop-outs’, ‘draw-backs’ and ‘non-starters’.



## 4. IMPLICATIONS

Lifelong learning (LLL) is “an organizing principle or ‘master plan’ for a potentially new approach to teaching and learning” (Slowey & Schuetze 2012: 3). The concept is based on two basic ideas: people learn 1) throughout their lives and 2) not only in formal educational institutions, but also in the workplace and in the social environment (non-formal and informal contexts). In line with this, the European Commission (2001: 9) defined LLL more than 20 years ago as “all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and / or employment-related perspective.” Further learning in the context of LLL is mainly voluntary and self-determined but not usually mandatory. Concepts of autodidactic learning come to the fore, which is reflected in different learning situations with regard to the dimensions of place, time, level of structure, intention, certification as well as the relationship between teachers and learners. All learning activities aim at improving personal development, acquiring new qualifications, skills and competencies, and the like. Considering social changes and (global) developments driven by mega trends (especially demographic developments, climate change, digitalisation and knowledge society) into account, it will no longer be enough to focus on a rigid education system from (pre-)school to higher education (Golowko 2021; Ehlers 2020). What is needed are concepts that enable people to continue their education in a field of changing conditions in a timely, appropriate and self-determined manner, and to acquire these qualifications needed throughout their life, in the sense of their own LLL, in order to deal with ambiguities, new situations and resulting challenges and requirements (Richards 2020). In other words: flexible training systems, or LLL, replace rigid training systems or ‘learning in advance’.

Taking all this into account, the LSP-TEOC.Pro course contributes to meeting the challenges outlined at the beginning of this article, and accordingly fills a gap in the context of LLL. However, the distance learning and self-study format of the course places high demands on the students’ self-organisation, motivation and time management. Moreover, it should be taken into account that this effect is further intensified by the fact that there is a shortage of (LSP) teachers (see above) in several European countries. This leads to more work, and simultaneously to less time for further education.

In the context of LLL, a typology with seven groups of so-called ‘lifelong learners’ was presented by Slowey and Schuetze (2012: 14-16). The group of so-called ‘refreshers’ is particularly important for the LSP-TEOC.Pro online course, and for this special issue respectively. The people who belong to this

group are typified by the fact that they have completed an under-graduate, or even a post-graduate degree in the past and have subsequently acquired professional experience. In line with the aforementioned demands, they take on further learning opportunities in order to 'refresh' or expand their knowledge in a special area of interest.

In addition to entire degree courses, smaller learning programmes are increasingly becoming more important, particularly due to dynamic developments. What is crucial for this is that universities and other educational institutions can respond quickly and specifically to current needs, such as key skills, future skills or transversal skills. The offer and certification of such programmes is subsumed and discussed under the keywords of certificates, badges<sup>11</sup> or micro-credentials<sup>12</sup> (European Commission 2020). Such smaller formats can also be used to address people who, for various reasons, have no interest in, or no time for studying (another) entire degree course, for example, for private or professional reasons, but also as a result of the effects of a labour shortage in various fields. Multiple commitments and reconciling the triad of duties from work, studies and private life is seen as the greatest challenge in distance education and co-operative programmes of work and study (International University of Applied Sciences 2023: 25). In the context of LLL, such people are referred to as 'recurrent learners' who return to universities to acquire a further qualification. According to the aforementioned typology, this generally means a second, and usually higher degree (master). In line with that, the LSP-TEOC.Pro course corresponds to level 7 (Master) according to the European Qualifications Framework (European Union, n.d.).

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In this special issue of *Glottodidactica*, five contributions focus on results achieved in the context of the LSP-TEOC.Pro project<sup>13</sup>. Although the project

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<sup>11</sup> Digital badges are "a representation of an accomplishment, interest or affiliation that is visual, available online, and contains metadata including links that help explain the context, meaning, process and result of an activity" (Gibson et al. 2015: 404).

<sup>12</sup> "Micro-credentials certify the learning outcomes of short-term learning experiences, for example, a short course or training. They offer a flexible, targeted way to help people develop the knowledge, skills and competences they need for their personal and professional development" (European Commission 2022).

<sup>13</sup> The LSP-TEOC.Pro project was divided into eight work packages (Intellectual Outputs). The main project results were achieved as part of the five work packages that are collected here, whereas the other three work packages were rather more of a supporting nature and are not included in this special edition.



results were presented during the final conference<sup>14</sup>, and single aspects of these texts are discussed as part of the final report (see Internet pages of the project), these discussions go further, and constitute an expansion of the aforementioned works. Moreover, the articles provide a summary that is appropriate to the project goal achieved. Based on the above introduction, a brief summary of the contributions collected in this special issue will be given. The order of the texts, but also the texts themselves define not only the structure of the articles and this issue, but also reflect the principal development and course of the entire project:

Snježana Kereković, Olinka Breka and Brankica Bošnjak Terzić present the results of the project's first stage: *The need for online LSP teacher development courses in higher education institutions*. The article presents the methodology of the data collection, analysis and synthesis of existing online teacher education, training and development programmes in the European higher education area. The main research question they focus on is: which (online) resources exist for acquiring the necessary skills to become a well-versed teacher of languages for specific purposes? The results show that very few such programmes exist and that there is a need for the LSP-TEOC.Pro course developed as part of the project. Thus, it tackles a gap in language teacher education. This result constitutes the basis for any further steps taken during the further course of the project which was followed by the conceptualisation and actual development, as well as piloting and trialling phases of the course.

Violeta Jurković and Saša Podgoršek present the results of the conceptualisation of the actual course content for the online LSP teacher education and development course: *Developing a module structure in an online course for LSP teacher professional development*. The development of the self-learning online course stems from Richards (2001) approach to curriculum development in language teaching. The development of course content of all modules is based on templates for the purpose of an efficient integration and in order to guarantee uniformity in terms of constant format with very little variation amongst the different modules and languages. Moreover, the article includes a qualitative analysis which discusses and evaluates notes and diaries which have been written by course participants during the trialling phase. Results of the analysis indicate the overall satisfaction of the users with the intra-module structure and the course respectively. On the

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<sup>14</sup> The final conference was held in Poznań on 5 July 2023 and presented the results of the project Language for Specific Purposes Teacher Education Online Course for Professional Development. Moreover, challenges, lessons learned and the outlook were discussed during a round table discussion. The international event gathered a total of 76 participants of the LSP community from 16 countries. It was supplemented by a conference on LSP teaching – Current research trends, desiderata, research perspectives which took place the following day.

other hand, it also shows potential for improvement, which has been considered before making the course available for the public.

The article *An investigation into Moodle quizzes as assessment practices in an online LSP teacher professional development course* by Yasemin Kırkgöz presents results of the large-scale trialling phase of the course. 183 external individuals used the online teacher training course and gave feedback on their experience (see above). This was a decisive step in the dissemination of the project, whilst at the same time gathering valuable empirical information of user needs and usage patterns. The user experience was analysed and is presented here. The data collection was supplemented by conducting 13 interviews to elicit the thoughts and opinions of course participants. This led to a deeper knowledge and understanding of practitioner needs, as well as the use of pedagogical and didactic elements. The discussion focusses on the use of quizzes with different question types, their distribution within the modules, and the rationale for their choice and design.

The article *Learning pathways of external and internal motivated learners in the teacher training self-study course LSP-TEOC.Pro* by Nicolas Nause and Joanna Woźniak puts the learners (course participants) in the foreground and refers to the analysis of the user data collected, and application of learning analytics. During the large-scale trialling phase of the project an extensive dataset of empirical data of user interaction with the online LSP teacher training course was gathered. The main research question is: Which typical pathway groups can be identified and classified based on the data collected? The approach taken is highly innovative as it uses actual user data (for example, logs of course activity) instead of relying on more subjective means of data collection (for example, surveys). The most important result of the retrospective analysis of the learning pathways taken is the presentation of differences and similarities in terms of user groups' learning in terms of their choice of the learning content (modules), the time devoted to different course content (mandatory and optional materials), the number of quiz attempts undertaken, as well as the quiz results achieved, to name but a few. A distinction can be made between intrinsically and extrinsically based decisions, which in turn entails superficial or in-depth engagement with the self-directed learning course. The analysis of the user groups and pathways taken also includes the reasoning behind the classification, and thus serves to improve the user experience of future course takers.

Joe Cullen and Greg Holloway present the results of the quality management and evaluation method and tool: *Evaluating LSP-TEOC.Pro: What we did and what we found out*. The article sets out the overall evaluation approach and design for the entire project, including the 'internal' evaluation of the project, process evaluation, formative and summative (outcomes) evaluation. Moreover,

it provides the data collection instruments and templates but also indicators for data collection and analysis, such as automated data capture (for example, website logfiles), self-administered questionnaires and interviews, diaries and logs as well as observation. The different elements altogether constitute a 'Theory of Change' journey which is used to describe how far the project leads to its desired or anticipated outcomes and impacts, namely tackling the skills gap in language teacher education by implementing the self-learning online course. These outputs have a very high impact for the project, by ensuring effective monitoring and robust evaluation of project outcomes.

In addition to the five above-mentioned contributions from consortium members of the LSP-TEOC.Pro project, this special issue includes also two further articles which address single key aspects in the context of teaching languages for special or specific purposes. These include:

The article *Advancing ESP instruction through DDL: A structured training framework* by Maria Ammari explores the need for advanced corpus-based instruction within LSP, with the focus on the English language. The use of corpora in classrooms is often limited as teachers lack sufficient pedagogical training (which was also the starting point for the LSP-TEOC.Pro project, see above). One way to enhance quality and extent of learner achievement is to improve teacher competence, sensitivity and motivation. Moreover, it is important to put the (unique linguistic needs of) learners in the foreground. Therefore, an integrated training framework to tackle this gap is proposed by extending existing concepts across the learning phases of introduction, illustration, interaction, induction, intervention and integration ('six Is'). The concept highlights the necessity of specialised training to empower teachers with the skills needed for the improvement of the overall educational language teaching experience in general and the implementation of 'data-driven learning' in language teaching concepts in particular.

The article *Academic writing skills in the eyes of university students of English and their teachers* by Agata Wolanin deals with the topic of academic writing from both perspectives, learners and teachers. The research questions emphasise the students' attitudes towards academic writing courses, their expectations, as well as teachers' perspectives and experiences. Answers to the questions are derived based on results from a questionnaire survey conducted at two universities among both study groups (students,  $n = 67$ ; lecturers,  $n = 15$ ). In general, teachers assess the topic more positively than learners. However, a vicious circle is described, which starts with negative experiences with academic writing courses from students, continues with a negative attitude and finishes with unsatisfactory academic results and little self-confidence. This also negatively affects teachers' attitudes towards teaching academic writing courses, although they previously associated a positive attitude with academic writing. The text

finishes with suggestions and measures which could positively impact the situation for students and lecturers.

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**Wprowadzenie do projektu LSP-TEOC.Pro (Kurs online – kształcenie nauczycieli języków specjalistycznych na potrzeby rozwoju zawodowego) i jego wyników:  
wprowadzenie do numeru tematycznego**

**ABSTRAKT.** Artykuł omawia główne założenia projektu LSP-TEOC.Pro (Language for Specific Purposes Teacher Education Online Course for Professional Development, <https://lsp-teoc-pro.de/>), któremu poświęcony jest niniejszy numer tematyczny czasopisma *Glottodidactica*. W pierwszej części przedstawiono cel i uzasadnienie projektu, skład konsorcjum wykonawczego, podejście oraz poszczególne fazy realizacji, a także opracowany w ramach projektu samokształceniowy kurs

online będący jego głównym rezultatem. W drugiej części zaprezentowano przegląd pozostałych artykułów skoncentrowanych wokół tematu dydaktyki języków specjalistycznych.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: języki specjalistyczne, nauczanie na odległość, samokształcenie, uczenie się przez całe życie, system zarządzania nauczaniem, otwarte zasoby edukacyjne, odznaki, mikropoświadczenia.

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