

22 - 24 October 2026

Oxford , United Kingdom

Designing a Progressive English for Specific Purposes Curriculum for Sociology Students

María Rau

University of Valparaíso, Chile

Abstract

This paper presents the design and implementation of a progressive English language curriculum for Sociology students at the University of Valparaíso, Chile. The curriculum was introduced as part of a new undergraduate program implemented in 2022 and consists of four compulsory English courses offered during the first four semesters of the Sociology degree. An additional elective course was introduced in 2024.

The proposal follows a progression from General English (GE) towards English for Specific Purposes (ESP). While the initial course focuses on developing foundational English language skills, subsequent courses progressively incorporate academic and disciplinary content related to Sociology and the Social Sciences. The curriculum aims to develop the four language skills while also fostering effective communication, collaborative work, critical thinking, and learner autonomy. Activities include debates, presentations, role-plays, academic writing, peer feedback, and the analysis of texts and social issues.

The design process considered students' heterogeneous levels of English as well as information about their educational and socioeconomic backgrounds. Student feedback and formative evaluations were also incorporated to identify learning outcomes and areas for improvement. Students reported learning related to grammar, vocabulary, oral and written communication, collaboration, and discipline-specific knowledge across the different courses. The implementation also identified challenges related to differences in students' English proficiency and the need to balance language development with disciplinary content.

The experience illustrates the ongoing development of an ESP curriculum within an undergraduate Sociology program and highlights the challenges and opportunities involved in progressively integrating disciplinary content into English language teaching.

Keywords: Academic English; English language teaching; Higher Education; language curriculum; Sociology