

MANUAL

Academic Language Programme



Equity in Gifted
Education



Co-funded by the
European Union

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Introduction

to the Equity in Gifted Education (EGE) Project

The Academic Language Programme described in this manual was developed within the Erasmus+ project Equity in Gifted Education (EGE), a collaborative partnership between educational institutions and experts from the Netherlands, Belgium, Ireland and Kosovo.

Project Information

Project title: Equity in Gifted Education (EGE)

Programme: Erasmus+ KA220-SCH Cooperation Partnership

Project number: KA220-SCH-000157819

Project duration: 2023–2026

Project partners

- Stichting Voortgezet Onderwijs Haaglanden (Netherlands)
- Bureau Talent (Netherlands)
- Thomas More University of Applied Sciences (Belgium)
- Dublin City University (Ireland)
- Kolegji Heimerer (Kosovo)

Project website:

<https://equityingiftededucation.eu>

This manual is one of the main outputs of the EGE project.

The EGE project was established in response to a persistent challenge in education: many cognitively able students from disadvantaged backgrounds remain unidentified and therefore do not receive the educational opportunities and level of challenge they need. Research has shown that gifted students from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to be recognised for their abilities than their more advantaged peers. As a result, their talents may remain hidden and underdeveloped.

One of the barriers these students often face is a limited command of academic language. Academic language consists of the words and expressions that are frequently used in educational settings across different subjects. Students need this language to understand instructions, participate in discussions, demonstrate their knowledge, and perform well on assessments. When students are unfamiliar with academic language, they may struggle to show what they know and can do, even when their cognitive abilities are high.

To address this challenge, the EGE project focused on three interconnected pillars:

1. Identification of cognitive potential

Using the CoVaT-CHC assessment, participating schools explored new ways of identifying cognitive abilities, particularly among students who might otherwise be overlooked.

2. Academic language development

Schools implemented Academic Language Programmes designed to strengthen students' understanding and use of academic vocabulary. The programme aimed to remove language barriers that may prevent students from demonstrating their true abilities.

3. Parent involvement

The project recognised the important role of parents in talent development and explored ways to strengthen collaboration between schools and families.

Between 2023 and 2026, schools in the four partner countries implemented and evaluated these approaches. Teachers received training, students participated in academic language lessons, and parents were involved in activities designed to support learning and talent development. Throughout the project, researchers and practitioners worked together to collect data, share experiences, and develop practical resources for schools.

This manual is one of the main outcomes of the project. It is intended for teachers, school leaders, and teacher trainers who want to strengthen academic language development as part of a broader commitment to equity in gifted education. The manual combines research-based principles with practical examples collected from schools that participated in the project.

By sharing these experiences and materials, we hope to support schools in recognising and developing the talents of all students, regardless of their socioeconomic, cultural, or linguistic background.

Lessons Learned from the EGE Project

The implementation of the Academic Language Programme across Belgium, Ireland, Kosovo and the Netherlands generated several important insights for schools and teachers.

First, teachers observed that many students already possessed the cognitive abilities needed to succeed in challenging learning environments, but did not always have the academic language required to demonstrate those abilities. Explicit instruction of academic vocabulary helped students participate more actively in classroom discussions, explain their thinking more clearly and engage with complex tasks more confidently.

Second, the project showed that academic language development is most effective when students actively use new vocabulary in meaningful contexts. Activities involving discussion, collaboration, visualisation, presentations and creative assignments consistently generated high levels of student engagement and participation. Third, teachers reported that academic language instruction encouraged students to reflect on their own learning processes. Students became more aware of how they learn new words, how language supports thinking and how they could apply new vocabulary across different subjects.

Finally, the project reinforced the idea that academic language is not merely a language issue, but an equity issue. When students are unfamiliar with the language of schooling, their talents may remain hidden. By making academic language explicit and accessible, schools can create more equitable opportunities for students to demonstrate and develop their abilities.

Although schools implemented the programme in different ways, the core principles proved applicable across diverse educational contexts. This suggests that academic language development can be an important component of equitable gifted education throughout Europe. Not all students have equal opportunities to acquire this type of language. Some students grow up in environments where academic vocabulary is frequently used and discussed. Others may have fewer opportunities to encounter and practise academic language outside school. As a result, students with similar cognitive abilities may perform differently in educational settings simply because one student is more familiar with the language of schooling than another.

Why Academic Language Matters in Equity in Gifted Education

One of the key questions within the Equity in Gifted Education (EGE) project is why some cognitively able students remain unnoticed in education. Research has shown that students from disadvantaged socioeconomic, cultural, or linguistic backgrounds are less likely to be identified as gifted than their peers from more advantaged backgrounds. As a result, many talented students do not receive the educational opportunities and level of challenge they need.

There are several possible explanations for this under-identification. One important factor is the role of academic language.

Schools largely communicate through language. Teachers explain concepts through language, textbooks present knowledge through language, and assessments require students to demonstrate their understanding through language. Consequently, students who have a strong command of academic language are often better able to show what they know and can do.

Academic language differs from everyday conversational language. It includes the vocabulary needed to understand instructions, analyse information, explain reasoning, compare ideas, formulate arguments, and participate in academic discussions. Examples of such words are analyse, compare, evaluate, interpret, justify, and conclude. These words occur across many school subjects and are frequently used in textbooks, classroom discussions, and examinations.

Not all students have equal opportunities to acquire this type of language. Some students grow up in environments where academic vocabulary is frequently used and discussed. Others may have fewer opportunities to encounter and practise academic language outside school. As a result, students with similar cognitive abilities may perform differently in educational settings simply because one student is more familiar with the language of schooling than another.

This situation is particularly relevant in gifted education. A student may have strong reasoning abilities, creativity, curiosity, and learning potential, yet struggle to demonstrate these qualities when confronted with unfamiliar academic vocabulary. In such cases, a lack of academic language may mask giftedness and contribute to underachievement or under-identification.

The EGE project therefore views academic language development not merely as a language intervention, but as an equity intervention. By explicitly teaching academic vocabulary and providing students with opportunities to practise using it, schools can help remove barriers that prevent students from demonstrating their true potential.

The Academic Language Programme described in this manual was developed with this goal in mind. It aims to support students in acquiring the language needed to participate successfully in education, while simultaneously helping schools create more equitable opportunities for talent recognition and development.

In this way, academic language becomes more than a collection of words. It becomes a tool that enables students to access learning, demonstrate their abilities, and realise their potential.

This manual consists of two parts. The first part of this manual is aimed at teachers who want to develop and teach lessons in academic language. It contains activities for teachers who want to develop an academic language programme for their own context. You will also find examples from the schools in the Netherlands, Belgium, Kosovo, and Ireland, and many suggestions that you can use as an inspiration for your academic lessons. The second part is aimed at teacher trainers with the scientific backgrounds and the teacher training programme we developed and performed during the EGE project.

Table of Contents

Part I: Teaching Academic Language	9
What is academic language?	9
How to select academic language from textbooks	11
From word list to lessons	17
Differentiated instruction	21
Lesson plan examples	22
 Part II: Teacher training	 26
Why?	26
How?	27
What?	29
 References	 33

Part I: Teaching Academic Language

1. What is academic language?

In educational settings, students need various types of language. In the playground, they need conversational language to communicate with their classmates. In educational settings, students need various types of language. In the playground, they need conversational language to communicate with their classmates. In lessons, they need both domain-specific and academic language. Domain-specific language is one component of academic language, but the Academic Language Programme described in this manual focuses primarily on general academic vocabulary that is used across subject areas. Words like ‘metaphor’, ‘equation’, and ‘pyramid’ are domain-specific vocabulary taught in respectively language/literature, maths, and maths or history lessons. The academic language that the current academic language programme is aimed at, contains non-domain-specific vocabulary, like ‘analyse’, ‘compare’, ‘discuss’. These are words that students need to understand in order to be able to do their homework and answer test questions. The first step in developing an academic language programme is therefore, analysing textbooks in search of academic language.

School Practice Example 1: Visualising Academic Vocabulary

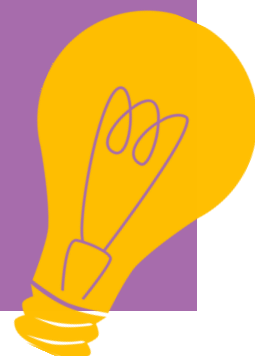
School: Het Lyceum Vos

Location: Vlaardingen, The Netherlands

Teacher: Monique Plugge

Project: Equity in Gifted Education (EGE)

Student group: Year 1 secondary education (14 students)



Context

During Week 2 of the Academic Language Programme, students worked with academic vocabulary related to investigating, discovering and processing information. The teacher wanted students not only to learn the definitions of the words, but also to develop a deeper understanding of their meaning and use.

Activity

The teacher introduced a set of picture cards. Students were asked to select the image they felt best matched a specific academic word and explain their choice to their classmates. Next, students worked together to visualise selected words by creating illustrations and discussing possible synonyms, word families, and example sentences.

What happened?

Students participated enthusiastically and were able to explain why particular images matched specific words. During the collaborative tasks, they discussed meanings, challenged each other's ideas, and refined their understanding of the vocabulary.

An important observation was that collaboration reduced uncertainty. Students who were usually quiet became more involved because they could contribute in different ways. For example, some students who were less confident verbally were able to participate by drawing and explaining visual representations. Two students who normally worked independently and rarely interacted with one another started discussing each other's work and exchanging ideas.

Why was this successful?

The visual approach helped students connect abstract academic vocabulary to concrete images and experiences. Collaboration encouraged students to verbalise their thinking and negotiate meaning together. Rather than memorising definitions, students actively constructed understanding.



Teacher reflection

"Students discuss how they want to visualise the words and in doing so develop a better understanding of the vocabulary. Through collaboration, uncertainty disappears and even quieter students find a voice within their group."

Key takeaway

Combining visualisation with collaborative discussion can significantly increase student engagement and deepen understanding of academic vocabulary. It also creates opportunities for participation for students who may be less confident in traditional language-based activities.

2. How to select academic language from textbooks

To grasp the idea of domain-specific versus academic language, check the two texts below. In Text 1, different words are in bold than in Text 2. In Text 1, the **bold** words are the domain-specific words; in text 2, the **bold** words are the academic words. The domain-specific words in Text 1 can be recognised as new words that students need to understand the contents of the subject. Characteristics of academic words are:

- ♦ They are not in the most frequent 2,000 words;
- ♦ They are formal (not technical) vocabulary cutting across a range of subject disciplines (*e.g. authority, define, assume, legislate, layer*)

Activities:

1. Check your own textbooks and make a division between domain-specific and academic language. Make a list of the academic words.
2. Now that you have selected the academic vocabulary in your textbooks, you will probably see that many words belong to word families, with a headword. For example: Headword '*access*' (family words – accessed, accessibility, accessing, accessible, inaccessible). Make the word families of your academic word list.

The mother of all flu pandemics

The flu virus is a survivor. It must continually evolve in order to evade its biggest threat - the immune system. Mammals, including humans, make antibodies, which recognise and target the virus. "So it has to keep mutating to escape being destroyed," explains David Morens from the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. Despite these tactics, most of the strains that make people ill during the eponymous "flu season" are sufficiently similar to infections most of us have been exposed to before. Our immune systems recognise common parts that these new strains share with their ancestors, and can launch an effective defence. Every so often, however, a different strain emerges and infects people - one that contains new genes from an animal virus. Its novelty is its most effective weapon against our immune defences. And if it is infectious enough to find its way easily into a new host - perhaps via an innocent sneeze - it can spread rapidly and cause a global epidemic - or pandemic.

Text 1 Domain-specific vocabulary

The mother of all flu pandemics

The flu virus is a survivor. It must continually evolve in order to evade its biggest threat - the immune system. Mammals, including humans, make antibodies, which recognise and target the virus. "So it has to keep mutating to escape being destroyed," explains David Morens from the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. Despite these tactics, most of the strains that make people ill during the eponymous "flu season" are sufficiently similar to infections most of us have been exposed to before. Our immune systems recognise common parts that these new strains share with their ancestors, and can launch an effective defence. Every so often, however, a different strain emerges and infects people - one that contains new genes from an animal virus. Its novelty is its most effective weapon against our immune defences. And if it is infectious enough to find its way easily into a new host - perhaps via an innocent sneeze - it can spread rapidly and cause a global epidemic - or pandemic.

Text 2 Academic vocabulary

School Practice Example 2: Developing Curiosity Through Academic Language

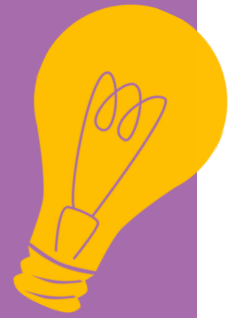
School: OLVC+

Location: Antwerp, Belgium

Teachers: Lotte van den Branden and Sander Schoepen

Project: Equity in Gifted Education (EGE)

Student group: Selected students from 12 first-year secondary classes (13 students)



Context

During the second week of the Academic Language Programme, students explored vocabulary related to investigating, discovering, and processing information. The lesson combined academic vocabulary instruction with explicit attention to language structure and word classes.

Activity

Students worked with academic vocabulary through a variety of activities, including a Pictionary game, self-correcting digital exercises, and a teacher-led discussion based on a video about word classes. The teacher deliberately introduced new linguistic concepts and encouraged students to ask questions and reflect on their own learning strategies.



What happened?

The teacher initially worried that the video explanation of word classes might not engage the students. However, the opposite proved true. Several students interrupted

the video to ask focused questions about linguistic concepts, such as the difference between adverbs and adjectives. For many students, this was new information, and it clearly stimulated their curiosity.

During a reflection activity, students discussed how they learn and remember new words. An interesting difference emerged between students who consciously applied vocabulary-learning strategies and those who had never really reflected on how they learn new words. This created valuable opportunities for metacognitive discussion.

Why was this successful?

The lesson went beyond teaching vocabulary alone. Students became curious about language itself and started asking analytical questions. By discussing learning strategies, they also developed greater awareness of their own learning processes. The combination of explicit instruction, reflection, and interactive activities helped students engage with academic language at a deeper level.

Teacher Reflection

"Several students raised their hands to stop the video and ask very focused questions about language concepts. Most of the word classes were new information and clearly stimulated their curiosity."

Key Takeaway

Academic language instruction can do more than teach vocabulary. When students are encouraged to ask questions, reflect on their learning strategies, and explore language structures, academic language becomes a vehicle for curiosity, metacognition, and deeper learning.



School Practice Example 3: Preparing for Future Studies and Careers

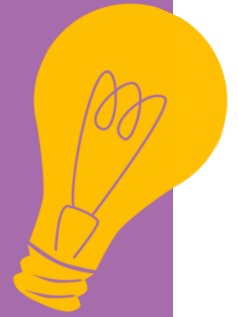
School: Ismail Qemali School

Location: Prishtina, Kosovo

Teachers: Vjollca Veliu and Asrije Azemi

Project: Equity in Gifted Education (EGE)

Student group: Grade 8–9 students participating in the Academic Language Programme



Context

As part of the Academic Language Programme, students explored academic and professional language related to future studies and careers. The teachers wanted students to develop not only new vocabulary, but also the confidence to use academic language when talking about themselves, their ambitions and their future educational pathways.

Activity

Students learned how to write a CV and motivation letter, practised presentation skills and discussed possible educational and career pathways. They worked individually and in groups, using newly acquired academic vocabulary to describe their strengths, interests and future goals. Students also presented their work to their peers and participated in discussions about higher education and professional opportunities.

What Happened?

The teachers observed high levels of engagement throughout the activities. Students were particularly enthusiastic when writing their own CVs and describing their personal strengths and achievements. During presentations, they demonstrated increasing confidence and used newly learned academic terminology accurately and purposefully.

Compared to the beginning of the programme, students showed greater fluency, richer vocabulary and more confidence in expressing their ideas. The teachers noted that students became increasingly willing to speak in front of others and were able to formulate their thoughts more clearly and precisely.

Why Was This Successful?

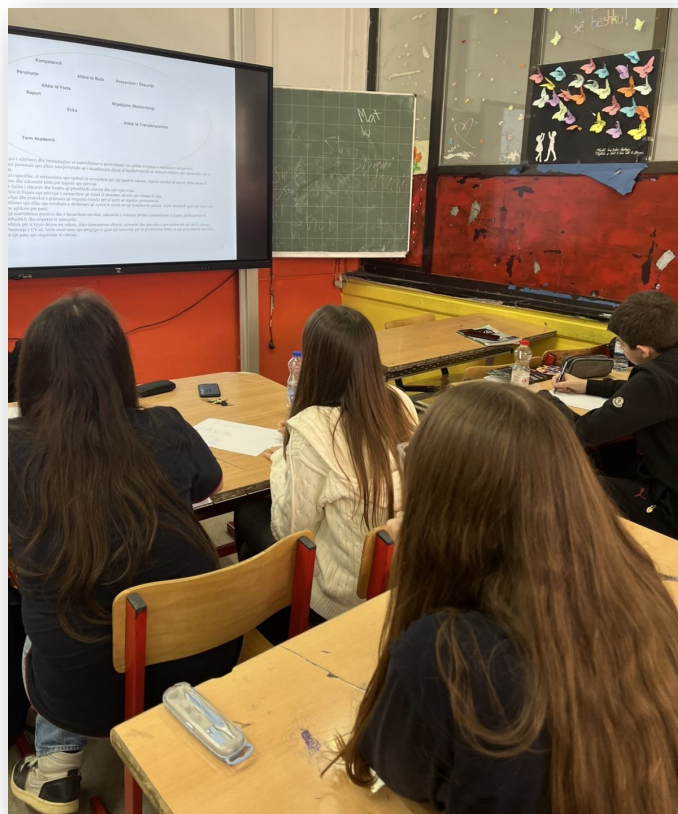
The activities connected academic language to topics that were personally meaningful for students. By discussing their future aspirations and presenting their own work, students had authentic opportunities to apply newly learned vocabulary. The combination of collaboration, presentation and reflection supported both language development and self-confidence.

Teacher Reflection

"Students showed a much greater sense of confidence when presenting their CVs and future plans. They enthusiastically used the new academic vocabulary and demonstrated a richer and more precise use of language than at the start of the programme."

Key Takeaway

When academic language is connected to students' future aspirations and real-life goals, engagement increases significantly. Activities such as CV writing, presentations and career planning help students develop both academic communication skills and confidence in their own potential.



3. From word list to lessons

3.1 Methodology

Learning vocabulary can be a tedious task for students, so it is important to make the learning process as efficient and fun as possible. To make the learning process efficient, it helps to use a methodology that has proven its worth. The Dutch *Viertakt* is such a methodology. It consists of four steps:

Step 1: Present

Activate prior knowledge in students and, if possible, present an object or role play to present the word.



School Practice Example from the EGE project (The Netherlands)

At Het Lyceum Vos, students were introduced to new academic vocabulary through picture cards. Before discussing the formal definitions, students selected images they felt matched particular academic words and explained their choices to their classmates. This activity activated prior knowledge, stimulated discussion and helped students connect abstract vocabulary to concrete images and experiences.

Step 2: Explain

Be explicit about what the correct meaning (or meanings) of the word is (are). Give examples of how to use the word. Do not have students guess the meaning of the word. The wrong meaning of the word may stick and prevent students from remembering the correct meaning.



School Practice Example from the EGE project (Belgium)

At OLVC+, students explored academic vocabulary related to investigating, discovering and processing information. The teacher explicitly explained the meanings of the words, introduced relevant language concepts such as word classes, and provided examples of how the words could be used in different contexts. Rather than guessing meanings, students discussed definitions, asked clarifying questions and reflected on how the words functioned in academic language. This explicit instruction helped students build a deeper understanding of both vocabulary and language structure.

Step 3: Consolidate

Have the students do exercises and practise in using the word correctly. The new word should become part of the students' own vocabulary.

School Practice Example from the EGE project (Kosovo)

At Ismail Qemali School, students consolidated their academic vocabulary through authentic communication tasks. They wrote CVs and motivation letters, prepared presentations and discussed future educational and career pathways. Throughout these activities, students were encouraged to use newly learned academic vocabulary to describe their strengths, ambitions and goals. By repeatedly applying the words in speaking and writing, students gradually moved from recognising vocabulary to actively using it in meaningful contexts.



Step 4: Check

Check if students really know the word, both passively (understand the meaning) and actively (know how to use it).

School Practice Example from the EGE project (Kosovo)

At Ismail Qemali School, students demonstrated their understanding of academic vocabulary through presentations about their future studies and careers. During these presentations, teachers could assess both passive and active vocabulary knowledge. Students showed that they understood the meanings of newly learned words and were increasingly able to use them accurately when describing their ambitions, strengths and future plans. The presentations provided authentic evidence that the vocabulary had become part of the students' active language repertoire.

3.2 Themes

Apart from teaching new vocabulary in an efficient way, try making it fun for students. One way to make learning more meaningful is to present the words in themes. These themes can also be helpful in giving students a broader common knowledge base. The themes should be appropriate for the society you live in and relevant to students' lives and future opportunities.

Examples of themes used in the Equity in Gifted Education (EGE) project include:

- ♦ Investigating, discovering and processing information
- ♦ Planning, organisation and project work
- ♦ Collaboration, participation and reflection
- ♦ Abstract concepts and academic thinking
- ♦ Learning strategies and communication
- ♦ Research skills and critical thinking
- ♦ Presentation skills and public speaking
- ♦ CV writing and motivation letters
- ♦ Future studies and career pathways
- ♦ Educational opportunities and professional development

Teachers may also choose themes such as public transport, art, government, law, media, science, sustainability, health, technology or citizenship, depending on the age and interests of their students.

Activities:

1. Brainstorm themes. Which themes are interesting for students, relate to their experiences and interests, and add to their broader common knowledge?
2. Add words from your word list to the various themes.
3. On the next pages you find a list of activities you can prepare for your students. Choose a variety of activities to make learning more fun. Also make sure you have students practise with passive and active command of the academic language.
4. Add more activities for academic language learning to the list on the next pages.

Activity	Targeted learning outcome
Text with high-lighted words. What do they mean?	Passive understanding in context
Link words with definitions	Passive understanding
Link words with synonyms	Passive understanding
Crossword puzzle	Passive understanding
Word search	Passive understanding
Make a poem	Active creative use
Write an instruction	Active creative use
Find a newspaper article with academic words of the week	Passive understanding in context
Watch a news programme, listening for academic words of the week	Passive understanding in context
Prepare a pitch using academic words	Active creative use
Text with blanks: fill in the correct academic word	Passive understanding in context
Explain three academic words to your family	Active creative use
Make a puzzle for your classmates	Active creative use
Write and play a role play using academic words	Active creative use
Choose the correct word in a sentence from two or more options	Passive understanding
Choose the correct sentences from two options	Passive understanding
Create a timeline of future educational goals	Active creative use
Write a personal profile using academic vocabulary	Active creative use
Complete a career planning worksheet	Active understanding and application
Prepare interview questions and conduct peer interviews	Active communication
Discuss a future career using target vocabulary	Active communication
Analyse a case study and present conclusions	Active academic reasoning
Reflect on personal strengths and learning goals	Metacognitive awareness

Activity	Targeted learning outcome
Create a vocabulary poster for a chosen profession	Active understanding
Participate in a panel discussion using academic vocabulary	Active communication
Peer-review a classmate's motivation letter	Active language use and feedback
Categorise academic words into themes	Conceptual understanding
Build word families and explain relationships between words	Vocabulary expansion
Create a glossary for a specific theme or profession	Vocabulary consolidation
Compare two educational or career pathways using academic language	Active analytical use
Present a solution to a real-world problem using academic vocabulary	Active creative use

4. Differentiated instruction

If you want your students to learn, it is crucial that you present them activities in the zone of proximal development. In other words: Students cannot learn what they already know. To be sure every student is learning, you have to differentiate your lessons by compacting and accelerating, if appropriate for a student. You can do that by starting your lesson with a pretest to make sure what the baseline knowledge of your students is. For example, if you have ten new words you want to teach, you can start by testing how many words the students already know. If students already know eight words or more, they can skip the activities aimed at passive understanding and start with the activities aimed at active use (which are the more creative ones).

Similarly, some students may need more time to have a passive understanding of the words than others. As soon as students show they can do one or two activities aimed at passive understanding, have them move on to the active use of the words. Be aware that students may go faster in one theme and slower in another one, depending on interest. So be sure that being in a faster/slower track is not forever.

An additional equity perspective is important here. Students may differ considerably in their prior exposure to academic language, even when their cognitive potential is similar. Some students enter school with extensive experience of academic vocabulary and formal language structures, while others have had fewer opportunities to develop these skills. As a result, differences in classroom performance do not always reflect differences in ability. Differentiated instruction helps bridge this gap by providing targeted support where needed, while continuing to challenge students who are ready to move ahead. By recognising differences in language exposure and adapting instruction accordingly, teachers create more equitable opportunities for students to demonstrate and develop their abilities.

5. Lesson plan examples

Below is an example of what an academic language lesson could look like.

Pretest: Students get the list of the ten words of this week. They mark the words they already know.

Step 1: Present—The ten words are presented through the word list, in a text or through a demonstration.

Step 2: Explain—The teacher and students go through the word list. The teacher explains the words, visualises them, teaches the students the correct pronunciation of the word. Together teacher and students come up with sentences and the proper use of the words in sentences.

Step 3: Consolidate—The students do activities. Differentiate between students who already know eight words or more and students who do not.

Step 4: Test—Test the students on their active and passive knowledge of the ten words. This can be done through an online quiz, written test, or conversation in which students have to use the academic words.

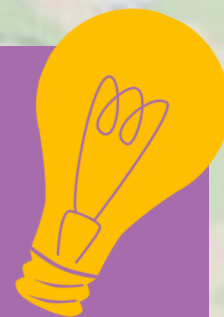
Reflect: Discuss the lesson with the students, asking questions like ‘Which word was easiest/most difficult for you to use and why?’ ‘Think of a situation in which you could use these words’. Discussing learning strategies is also a useful activity during the reflection phase of the lesson.

School Practice Example Lesson Plan 1 – The Netherlands / Belgium

Theme: Academic Vocabulary Through the Four-Step Method

Target group: Secondary students (ages 12–13)

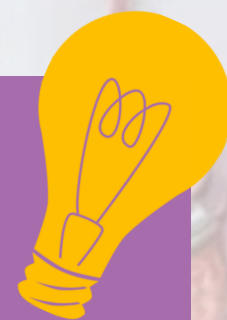
Focus words: recommendation, debate, experiment, finding, collection, quality, limit



Lesson structure

1. **Pretest:** Students indicate which words they already know.
2. **Present:** Teacher introduces the words using pictures, example sentences and word families.
3. **Explain:** Students discuss meanings, synonyms and word classes.
4. **Consolidate:** Activities such as matching exercises, synonym games, visualisation tasks and sentence building.
5. **Check:** Students use the words in short written or oral assignments.
6. **Reflect:** Which words were easiest or most difficult? Where might you encounter these words outside school?

Example from EGE: Students created visual representations of academic words and explored word families to deepen understanding. This approach was implemented in schools in the Netherlands and Belgium.



School Practice Example Lesson Plan 2 – Ireland

Theme: Research Skills, Note Taking and Digital Literacy

Target group: Transition Year students (ages 15–16)

Focus words: analyse, evaluate, credibility, source, evidence, perspective, summarise, justify, synthesise, plagiarism

Lesson structure

1. **Pretest:** Students identify familiar academic words.
2. **Present:** Teacher introduces vocabulary through examples related to online information and research.
3. **Explain:** Discussion of reliable sources and critical evaluation of information.
4. **Consolidate:** Students analyse websites, practise note-taking and complete vocabulary activities.
5. **Check:** Students summarise information from a source using target vocabulary.
6. **Reflect:** Which strategies helped you decide whether information was trustworthy?

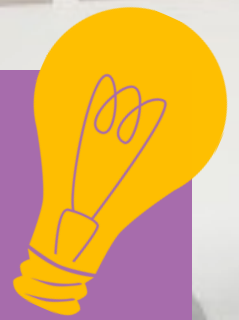
Example from EGE: In the Irish adaptation, academic vocabulary was integrated with transferable skills such as research, digital literacy and preparation for further education. Lessons were designed for Transition Year students and delivered through a structured 10-week programme.

School Practice Example Lesson Plan 3 – Kosovo

Theme: Career Planning and Educational Pathways

Target group: Secondary school students (ages 15–18)

Focus words: aspiration, responsibility, professionalism, collaboration, motivation, qualification, pathway, opportunity, achievement, goal



Lesson structure

1. **Pretest:** Students indicate which academic and career-related terms they already know.
2. **Present:** Teacher introduces vocabulary through examples connected to future studies and careers.
3. **Explain:** Discussion of educational pathways, professions and personal ambitions.
4. **Consolidate:** Students complete career-planning activities, write personal profiles or CVs, and discuss future goals.
5. **Check:** Students present a future study or career plan using target vocabulary.
6. **Reflect:** Which words are most useful for your future education or career?

Example from EGE: The Kosovo adaptation combined academic language learning with practical life skills, including CV writing, motivation letters, interview skills and career planning. Students connected new vocabulary directly to their future educational and professional aspirations.

Part II: Teacher Training

1. Why?

Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are at risk of not being recognized for their cognitive abilities (Warwick & Speakman, 2018). One of the reasons is that they lack academic language, needed to show comprehension of abstract knowledge in academic subjects. This leads to inequity in education, because students from disadvantaged backgrounds have fewer opportunities to enrol in the higher levels of secondary education and get the cognitive challenge that they need. Teachers need to be aware of these students' lack of academic language and learn how to teach them academic language. The main goals of this teacher training programme are:

- Teachers are aware of disadvantaged students' lack of academic languages and the consequences hereof.
- Teachers are skilled in teaching academic language lessons.
- Teachers can reflect on their own academic language lessons and those of others.

Within the Equity in Gifted Education project, teachers reported that students became increasingly confident in expressing their ideas, participating in discussions and using academic vocabulary in both oral and written tasks. Teachers also observed higher levels of engagement and collaboration as students became more

familiar with academic language. These experiences suggest that explicit academic language instruction can support both talent development and educational equity.

The rationale for this approach is further discussed in the EGE project article published in *Gifted and Talented International*, which highlights the role of academic language as a gateway to participation, achievement and talent development for students from underrepresented backgrounds (add reference). The EGE documentary we developed shows various perspectives on the programme: students, parents, teachers, and school leaders share their experiences. You can use the documentary as an introduction to a teacher training.

2. How?

An established method of vocabulary teaching is the Dutch *Viertakt* (Verhallen, 2009). Teacher will practise to use this method during the teacher training. This method consists of four stages:

Step 1: Present

Activate prior knowledge in students and, if possible, present an object or role play to present the word.

Step 2: Explain

Be explicit about what the correct meaning (or meanings) of the word is (are). Give examples of how to use the word. Do not have students guess the meaning of the word. The wrong meaning of the word may stick and prevent students from remembering the correct meaning.

Step 3: Consolidate

Have the students do exercises and practise in using the word correctly. The new word should become part of the students' own vocabulary.

Step 4: Check

Check if students really know the word, both passively (understand the meaning) and actively (know how to use it).

With various backgrounds, gifted students from disadvantaged backgrounds will differ in the amount of academic words that they know and can actively use. This asks for in-class differentiation (Reis et al., 2021), making sure students learn in the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). Methods of differentiation include: compacting, enriching and accelerating (VanTassel-Baska et al., 2020).

Further Resources

Read more about the rationale behind the Academic Language Programme

For a detailed discussion of equity, gifted education and academic language, see the EGE project article published in *Gifted and Talented International*. The scientific publication is currently under review and will be added to the EGE Resource Centre once it has been published.

Watch the EGE Documentary

Want to see how teachers and students experienced the Academic Language Programme in practice across the Netherlands, Belgium, Ireland and Kosovo? The EGE documentary is currently being finalised and will be available via the EGE Resource Centre soon.

Read the scientific sources these provide information about classroom differentiation for gifted learners

Reis, S. M., Renzulli, S. J., & Renzulli, J. S. (2021). Enrichment and gifted education pedagogy to develop talents, gifts, and creative productivity. *Education Sciences*, 11(10), 615. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11100615>

VanTassel-Baska, J., Fischer Hubbard, G., & Robbins, J. I. (2020). Differentiation of instruction for gifted learners: Collated evaluative studies of teacher classroom practices. *Roeper Review*, 42 (3), 153–164. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02783193.2020.1765919>

3. What?

Below the teacher training programme, developed during the Erasmus+ Equity in Gifted Education project, is described. The complete teacher training package includes:

- An invitation to the teacher training;
- PowerPoint presentations for day 1 and day 2, including all training modules;
- Trainer notes and supporting materials;
- The Academic Language Programme manual;
- Links to additional resources and dissemination materials.

All materials are available via the EGE resource folder:
https://equityingiftededucation.eu/resource_centre/

Teacher training programme – academic language

Target group: secondary school teachers who will teach the academic language programme

Time: 2 meetings of 1 day

Objective: Teachers are skilled in teaching academic language lessons

Sub-objectives:

- Teachers know the (scientific) backgrounds of the programme
- Teachers know how to practically implement the programme well.
- Teachers can reflect on their own academic language lessons and those of others.



Preparation day 1: Read the PISA report on equity in education for your country in preparation. You can find the report of 2022 [here](#). Write a few sentences on your thoughts on Equity in Gifted Education.

Day 1: [PPT Day 1]

Part 1: Equal opportunities & Academic language – 60 mins

- Teachers get to know each other and the programme
 - o Know each other's names and subjects
 - o Introduction to equal opportunities in gifted education
- Teachers know the (scientific) backgrounds of the programme
 - o Experience difference between subject language – academic language
- Test in unknown language
 - o Search own handbooks on subject language – academic language – make an academic word list

Part 2: Teaching method – 60 mins

- Teachers know the (scientific) backgrounds of the programme
 - o Get to know the teaching method *Viertakt*.
- Teachers know how to implement the programme in practice.
 - o Examples from other academic language programmes
 - o Browse and see what is available in your own language.

Part 3: Mini lessons – 90 mins

- Teachers know how to practically implement the programme well
 - o Prepare and teach mini lessons. Choose a theme, implement the *Viertakt* in your lesson plan. Teach your fellow trainees.
- Teachers can reflect on their own academic language lessons and those of others
 - o Discuss the power of [feedback](#) (follow the link to the Education Endowment Foundation). Provide peer feedback on the mini lessons.

Between day 1 and 2: Implement academic language lessons in practice + job shadowing + make a video recording of 3-5 minutes of a lesson

Preparation day 1: Read literature on feedback; bring the video recording of your lesson

Day 2: [PPT Day 2]

Part 5: Reflection & Consultation – 150 mins

Teachers can reflect on their own academic language lessons and those of others

Remind teachers of the discussion about feedback on day 1.

Reflect on academic language lessons by analysing videos

Teachers know how to practically implement the programme well

Consultation on experiences with academic language lessons

Part 6: Expanding the world of experience & Co-creation – 150 mins

- Teachers know how to practically implement the programme well
 - o Watch the webinar – discuss Expanding the world of experience of students
 - o Mini-lessons implementing techniques of expansion of the world of experience.
- Teachers can reflect on their own academic language lessons and those of others
 - o Provide feedback on mini-lessons, focussing on the expansion of students' world of experience.

Part 7: Evaluation & Completion – 60 mins

- Teachers reflect on the teacher training
- Small ceremony, handing out certificates to the teacher

Recommended Background Reading for Trainers

- Hamilton, R., Long, D., McCoach, D. B., Hemmler, V., Siegle, D., Newton, S. D., Gubbins, E. J., & Callahan, C. M. (2020). Proficiency and giftedness: The role of language comprehension in gifted identification and achievement. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 43(4), 370–404. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0162353220955225>
- Verhallen, M. (2009). Meer en beter woorden leren: Een brochure over de relatie tussen taalvaardigheid en schoolsucces [*Learning more words in a better way: A brochure about the relationship between language skills and school success*]. PO-Raad.
- Broekhoven et al. (2026) - *Gifted and Talented International*
 - EGE Project Booklet
 - EGE Documentary

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- Broekhoven, B., Griffiths, M., Hinch, L., Hoxha, A., Murati, G., Tierens, M., Van Tricht, L., & Woods, C. (submitted). Unlocking hidden talent among migrant and diverse learners: Evidence from the Dutch pilot of the Erasmus+ Equity in Gifted Education project. *Gifted and Talented International*.
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PO-Raad.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.

Warwick, I., & Speakman, R. (2018). *Redefining more able education: Key issues for schools*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351137300>



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Co-funded by
the European Union