

'Embedded with the troops'. Teaching academic writing from within subject modules: a short-lived luxury or the way forward?

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The presentation describes EAP input embedded into some MA Marketing modules in semester 1, 2012. No funding for the course next year... So, a 'short-lived luxury'?
'The fragility of ESP initiatives' (Swales et al. 2001, p455)

The Image: 'Embedded with the troops':

Access and being 'in on the action'
Limitations of being 'embedded'

Outline:

- The course: the immediate context; planned strategies to maximise effectiveness
- Constraints and limitations
- Feedback and reflection
- The wider context and the case for ESAP

The immediate context:

- Challenging MA Marketing programmes
- Drop in IELTS to 6.5 (now same as other programmes)
- Low attendance at In-session classes by weakest students
- Collaboration with Marketing lecturers already on credit modules

Other types of EAP course within the academic year:

- General 'open' In-session EAP classes
- 'Faculty-specific' In-session classes e.g. PG business students academic writing = Elements of CEM (contextualisation, embedded, mapping: Sloan and Porter 2010, p203), already:
Embedded:

- On students' timetables
- Presence at induction & diagnostic testing
- Cooperation with staff

Contextualised:

- Specific to business: topics / 'genres' / sample writing

- Credit-bearing ESAP modules = all CEM elements incl. 'mapping' against student assignments

'Embedded' courses?

Use term 'embedded' for 'special, commissioned' courses for particular programme cohorts e.g.

- For PG design For UG computing For UG politics For PG science (Dissertation) For UG Social Work

The EAP input into MA Marketing programme modules – in semester one

Aims:

- Foreground importance of academic writing for success
- Help before first assignments
- Identify the weakest students

Conflicting?

Identifying 'deficits' VERSUS Promoting writing skills for all

EAP input – strategies to increase effectiveness:

- To identify weaker students: diagnostic writing in induction week
- Within a range of modules: cover different skills
- Some input and background info on VLE
- Class time focused on tasks: practise skills & further identify weaker students
- Tasks use assignment reading / titles / cases as basis of activities

Most successful input: smaller classes / focused on specific assignments or writing genres / not just an hour within subject teacher's class / where had more time and control

Lessons learned:

1. Optionality

- Give students choice to attend – L1 students / Not taking up module time / Not feeling rushed

2. Timing

- Not at start of course – no perception of need / Near to assignment time

3. Focused on assignment / other useful tasks

- Specifics of assignment / specifics of useful 'genres'

4. Collaboration

- Don't assume teachers know what you need / Require total support throughout process / Should be on-going, dynamic process (see Barron, 2002)

5. Focus

- Follow one module?

Constraints: total hours / timing within year / faculty decisions / conflicting and unrealistic aims / collaboration issues

Reasons to have embedded courses:

Students' perception of relevance / Mutual understanding / Awareness-raising of our expertise and what offer / Highlighting of importance of communication skills for university and work / Vehicle to direct students towards other courses and tutorials / Informing of future EAP courses in disciplines / Increasing acceptance of ESAP / disciplinary variation perspective (Hyland, 2002; Nesi and Gardner, 2012; Coffin and Donohue, 2012) / Rare to have credit-bearing ESAP modules

The wider context and its impact on EAP provision:

[Argument for specificity and embedding'(...) the interface between EAP and the wider cultural context of higher education' (Turner, 2012, p19)

Influences on EAP provision: external providers / multiplicity of 'support' initiatives / funding issues / limited number of teachers / new academic frameworks i.e. with academic skills embedded into academic modules – subject teachers also teaching writing skills.

Embedding for success?:

- Specific to programmes / - Demonstrating our expertise in terms of:

a) understanding and teaching different discourses (developed through collaboration – but not content experts: see Belcher, 2006, p140)

b) and our expertise in **language** as a resource for communication in a variety of contexts (Turner, 2004)

Otherwise... what differentiates us?

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