The development of discipline-specific EAP materials

BALEAP – Saturday 20th April, 14:45

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Overview

- **Background and Rationale:** Changes in Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) funding affecting EAP courses. Change in focus of courses and demands from departments.

- **Project:** Developing Writing Materials. Moving towards a genre-based approach.

- **Evaluation and Feedback**: Students progress and response to course. Comments from tutors and course leaders.

- **Future Plans:** Future courses and potential implementation on other courses.

Insessional EAP at Westminster pre 2010

- Module Format of Courses. Credit Bearing.

- Pre 2010/2011 - HEFCE direct grants for teaching ensured large numbers on Academic English courses.

- Students from a variety of disciplines. Many courses used generic materials.

- **Advantages**: Could solve common issues. Student experience. Externally funded. Credit bearing.

- **Disadvantages**: Perceived by some as not immediately relevant. Remedial connotations.

Changes to funding in Higher Education

Recurrent HEFCE grants 2011-2014	Teaching funds	Research funds
University of Westminster 2011-2012	50,200,066	4,296,773
University of Westminster 2012-2013	34,662,066	4,036,960
University of Westminster 2013-2014	23,295,346	4,058,640

(Higher Education Funding Council for England (2013) *Recurrent grants and student numbers. Figures for 2011-14).*

Insessional EAP at Westminster post 2010

- HEFCE funding drastically reduced for teaching.

- Departments dissatisfied with generic content.

- Increased demand for discipline-specific content.

- Rigid module format less popular (dates/content).

- More flexible structured course with negotiable content and focus on key assignments.

Postgraduate Academic English for Life Sciences

- 10 sessions specifically tailored to Life Science Postgraduate students.

- Optional course with discipline-specific content focusing on academic writing assignments.

- Delivered in year long format for both native/non-native speakers.

- Possible since life sciences were prepared to supply texts and assignment details.

General EAP

- **Focus:** general linguistic & cognitive needs of non-native speakers (Benesch 2001, Leki & Carson 2004).

- **Aim:** what is taught & learnt helps ss with writing across the curriculum (Leki & Carson 1994).

- **Materials:** study skills.

- **Issue:** Pre-determined, non-discipline specific materials.

Academic Literacies

- **Focus:** diverse writing practices in HE (Lea & Street 1998).

- **Aim:** address literacy from cultural & social perspective and contemplate issue of identity & power relationships.

- **Materials:** Limited availability & time for preparation.

- **Issue:** No practical suggestions of integration (Wingate & Tribble 2012).

Writing in the Disciplines (WID)

- **Focus:** discipline-based writing instruction.

- **Aim:** writing embedded into degree programmes (Monroe 2003).

- **Materials:** authentic articles & text types.

- **Issues:** No in class time available.

Genre-based approaches

- **Focus:** Explore genres students are required to write. Awareness that variations exist in different contexts of writing.

- **Aim:** to provide a contextual framework.

- **Pedagogic approach:** Genre-informed pedagogic framework (Tribble & Wingate forthcoming).

- **Role of teacher:** guide & support the learners (Vygotskian scaffolding).

The Teaching – Learning Model
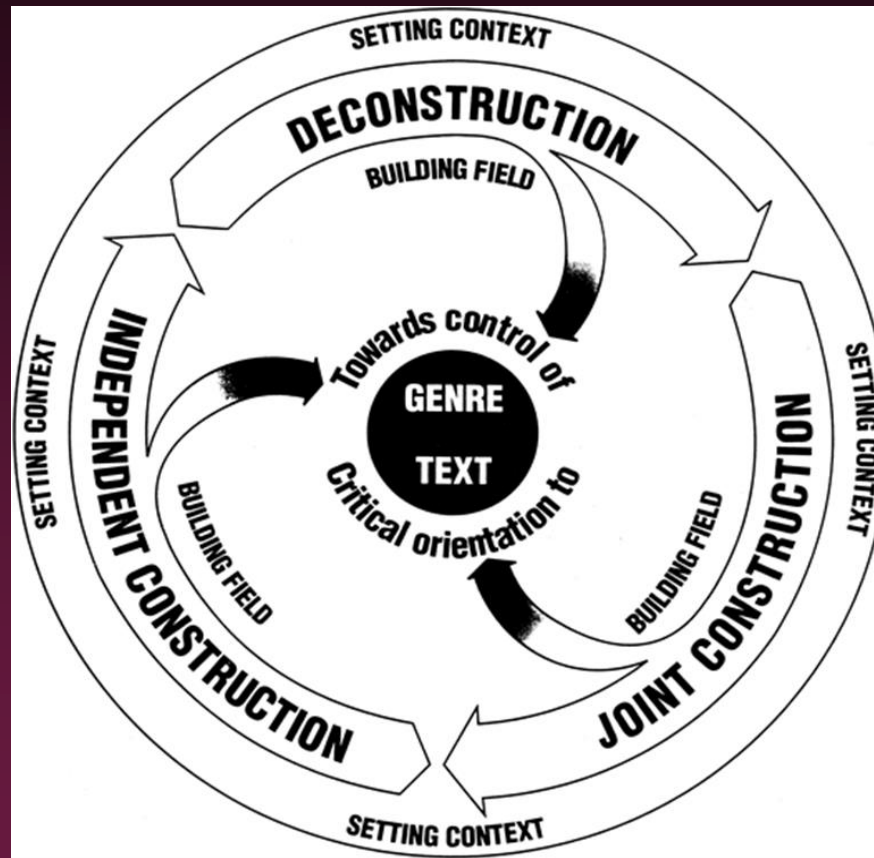
(Rothery and Stenglin 1994:8 cited in Martin 2000:19)

Stage 1 - Deconstruction

1. Contextual analysis (Critical Review)

a) What is the **communicative purpose** of this text?

b) What is the **role of the writer** in this type of text?

c) What is the **role of the reader** in this type of text?

d) What **knowledge of other texts** may be required of writers and readers of this type of text?

(A number of questions taken from the materials for Session 4)

2. Structural analysis (Critical Review)

Before reading

1. What would you expect to find in a 'Future prospects' section?
2. How long should it be?
3. What tenses should be used?

Read the following sections and answer the following questions:

1. How are they structured?
2. Pick out their positive and negative aspects. How could they be improved?

(Extract taken from materials for Session 4)

3. Linguistic analysis (i)

- High-scoring texts + Antconc (Concordance software programme)

- **Focus on:** most frequent <u>linking words</u> + <u>3 word clusters</u>

Collective student response	Linguistic analysis
1. However	1. However
2. Although	2. therefore
3. Nevertheless	3. however
4. Moreover	4. Although
5. Therefore	5. although
	6. Therefore
	7. Thus
	8. Since
	9. Whilst
	10. Furthermore

3. Linguistic analysis (ii)

Hit	KWIC
1	ir policies, ensuring that **although** women could study medicine
2	had class implications, as **although** women were accepted by lyi
3	ng, 1888; 273). Therefore, **although** the readership of adventur
4	rowth was generally steady **although** it slowed during the 1550s
5	rlier periods was resumed, **although** Elizabethan growth rates w
6	lation History. Similarly, **although** I have not focused greatly
7	tly behavioural approach – **although** behaviour modification can
8	is not reliable or valid, **although** these two terms have alway
9	e quantitative definitions **although** still ensuring quality and
10	ording to some historians, **although** the quality was similar, t
11	nt's policies happen. Thus **although** the government made new po

4. Examine the concordance lines given to you by your teacher and answer the following question for the linking words you do not commonly use.

Linking Word	What is the linking word typically proceeded by?	What is the linking word typically followed by?
However	*N/A as linking word starts the sentence*	*Comma + subject pronoun (I, it, etc)*
therefore		
however		

(Extract taken from materials for Session 5)

4. Theme & rheme (i)

Why important?

- ➢ Common problem among non-native users (Bloor & Bloor 1992).
- ➢ Carefully distributed information enhances cohesion & coherence (Witt & Faigley 1981).

Focus: how information distributed.

Typically, '**given**' information is presented in the theme and '**new'** information in the rheme (Eggins 2004).

4.   Theme & rheme (ii)

Rule 1: Often the theme of one sentence is the same as the theme of the next sentence (Eggins 2004).

<u>Patients</u> requesting cosmetic surgery are usually normal individuals, but with a heightened consciousness about their looks. <u>A proportion of them </u>may seek advice on what, to them, seems an unsatisfactory appearance. <u>They</u> deserve the same professional approach and empathy as patients seeking help for clinical disorders.

(Extract taken from Hoeyberghs 1999:514 & used in Session 6)

4. Theme & rheme (iii)

Rule 2: the rheme of one sentence becomes the theme of the next sentence (Eggins 2004).

Sagging eyebrows and forehead creases can be corrected through **<u>keyhole incisions in the scalp</u>**. **<u>This approach</u>** has become the standard for many surgeons…

(Extract taken from Hoeyberghs 1999: 514-515 & used in Session 6)

5. Reformulation (i)

- Mistake correction technique (Cohen 1983, Allwright et al 1988).

- Students reflect on their writing & 'notice the gap' between their current written output and that of a native speaker (Schmitt & Frota 1986).

5. Reformulation (ii)

Read both the original and the reformulated version and answer the questions.

Original version	Reformulated version
Some of the on-going methods are used to prevent the transmission of the mutant mitochondria; of these methods, the pre-implantation genetic diagnostic and the prenatal diagnostic tests, they are used to analyse cells obtained from the embryo but both techniques are inefficient in predicting the exact level of heteroplasmy in the whole embryo (Chiaratti *et al.*, 2011). With the use of maternal spindle transfer, the expected outcome is the delivery of off-springs that are genetically related to both of their parents, as	A number of methods are used to prevent the transmission of mitochondria. For example, the pre-implantation genetic diagnostic and the prenatal diagnostic test are used to analyse cells obtained from the embryo. Neither method, however, is able to predict the exact level of heteroplasmy in the embryo (Chiaratti et al 2011). By using the maternal spindle transfer, we can expect the delivery of off-springs that are genetically related to both of their parents.

(Extract taken from the materials for Session 10)

Evaluation- Attendance Figures

Course 2011/2012	Attendance 1st lesson	Attendance final lesson	Comments
Postgraduate Academic English 1	18	5	"Not sure why we are here"
Postgraduate Academic English 2	15	4	"Would be useful to look at coursework"

Course 2012/2013	Attendance 1st lesson	Attendance final lesson	Comments
Postgraduate Academic English for Life Sciences	22	17	" A necessary tool for success"

Evaluation- Student Comments

- *"I found the sessions extremely helpful. I have <u>gained so much confidence</u> especially with regards to academic language".*

- *"At first I thought it would be like a special class for students who couldn't write but I very quickly started <u>learning about the text types</u> and how to construct my essays".*

- *"Our (subject) lecturers sometimes forget that academic cultures are different. On a postgraduate course there is so much to learn at the start of the year and essays start immediately. This course helped me to get <u>good marks</u> from the beginning and also understand my tutor's feedback".*

Evaluation- Staff Comments

- *"Students seem to have a much <u>better understanding </u>of what we expect from them now and it is has really helped them to think about purposes and roles in writing assignments".*

- *" Students seem much more <u>motivated</u> in seminars/tutorials and less afraid to ask questions about key assignments".*

- *"Some of the concepts that students used were unknown to me. However, it was quite clear that by <u>applying these methods</u> they had a much better understanding of the set texts and how to incorporate them into their writing".*

Issues arising from the course

- Teaching subject specific courses is quite labour intensive. Requires familiarity with the set texts.

- The most motivated students are still often those who have the fewest issues.

- Some students are proactive and engaged fully from the beginning but some only really pay attention from semester 2 onwards.

- Some staff view subject specific EAP classes as an unfair advantage for certain students

Proposed Changes for the Future

- One semester format with added sessions before key submission dates.

- Transferability to other courses such as subject specific Pre-sessional courses.

- Requires access to key texts and tasks in departments and overcoming resistance to perception of student assistance.

- Embedded into course structure and timetabled to take place during class time.

- Presentation at University Teaching & Learning Days to raise inter-departmental awareness.

Conclusion

- Vitally important to be aware of the changes in Higher Education which will impact on Academic English courses.

- Courses will need to be constantly evolving and improving.

- Demand for discipline-specific materials from both students and staff from other departments is increasing.

- Insessional courses can be immediately relevant.

- Discipline-specific materials improves students ability and also confidence of staff in Academic English courses.

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