

Being specific, generally

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“...are there skills and features of language that are transferable across different disciplines and occupations, or should we focus on the texts, skills and language forms needed by particular learners?”

(Hyland 2002)

The Programme

International Foundation Programme

Centre for English Language & Foundation Studies, Univ of Bristol

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/english-language/ifp/routes.html>

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/english-language/ifp/routes.html#mathematics>

IFP changes - informed by annual programme review

- delivery → evaluation → review → development (course design, materials, etc.)
 - Ongoing analysis of needs/reqs of international Ss in H.E.
 - wider framework: interface with remit of other English units - EFL ↔ EAS ↔ ESP
- ∴ need to provide for range of coverage with heterogeneous cohort of Ss

The students

Planning on doing

Aidana (Kaz.)	Comp. Sci.
Arai (Kaz.)	Architecture
Haya (Kuw.)	TEFL

What they went on to do

- Computer Science (UG)
- Architecture (UG)
- Agriculture (UG)

English language proficiency measures

Aidana	ielts 6.5
Arai	ielts 6.0
Haya	ielts 7.5

Schooling

Aidana	High School (Kaz.)
Arai	High School (Kaz.)
Haya	local 6 th form college

The Group

IFP group is variously heterogeneous - in terms of:

- academic skills level
- language proficiency
- personal/cultural background
- future course/subject

∴ can't extrapolate from notional target situation to design/materials

EAP as an 'enabling' resource and a 'transitional pedagogy'

(Lockett, 1999)

What does this mean?

- Gradual transition to working with increasing autonomy (**how?**)
- Enabling them to mobilise skills to deal with reading/producing (**what?**)
- Extended academic texts relating to their future studies

Behind the Design

Background - debates on:

content - remit of ELT (EFL/EAP/ESP) on IFPs

(e.g. Perrin (2011))

contending orientations - paradigms of EAP

wide-angle (EGAP) v. **narrow angle** (ESAP)

(e.g. Hyland (2002))

methodology/materials – ‘**process**’ v. ‘**product**’ and
‘**skills**’ v. ‘**genre**’

(e.g. Swales (1990))

Behind the Design (II)

Teaching on IFPs goes on against a backdrop where certain **transition** issues are salient:

- (i) between secondary education and IFP, and
- (ii) between IFP and undergraduate programme

Informed by both **process** and **product** considerations

Process	focus on critical thinking and drafting/re-drafting
Product	concern for genre requirements in terms of features of language and discourse organisation

Behind the Design (III)

We decided on an approach that accommodated some aspects of **specificity**

within

a **general** orientation

Broadly...

(future) **specific** subject-driven needs [narrow angle]

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(present) **general** academic English skills [wide angle]

Course design

Features

Critical review of an article
Presentation



Part A

Following lectures / making notes
Leading a seminar
Taking part in seminars
Participating in discussion boards on topics
Comparative essay on lecture / seminar topics



Part B

What is a critical review?

- **writing task – summarising & evaluating**

“critical”

questioning the text

fair and reasonable

“evaluation”

content

purpose

audience

argument incl. assumptions / research

text

How do you construct it?

Introduction

Announce author; title

Explain topic

Present aim of text

Summarise key finding

Conclude with brief statement of evaluation of article

Summary

Present a summary of key findings

Briefly explain author's purpose / intentions in article

Describe text organisation

Evaluation

Balanced evaluation and discussion of strengths / weaknesses and any notable features

How did we deliver it?

T provides initial explicit knowledge / guided practice

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sharing responsibility for developing texts

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gradual withdrawing of support

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S can work alone

Key stages of the cycle

Setting the context

- Identify genre purposes and the settings
- Ask initial key questions

Modelling

- Analyse representative samples of the genre
- Identify linguistic features

Joint construction

- Practice (with teacher support) in the genre

Independent construction

- Independent production of a target text (with teacher monitoring)

Comparing

- Comparison to other genres and contexts

What did we teach?

Skills

Summarising

Paraphrasing

Synthesizing

Referring to other writers

Avoiding plagiarism

Library skills / Research skills

'Text Attack' skills

What did we teach?

Language

i) Adjectives, adverbs, nouns

classification; collocation; word class

ii) Attributive statements

reporting verbs and stance

iii) Structures

*clauses of concession; emphatic structures;
unreal conditions; modal perfect; hedging*

But

Product and process - fair and reasonable critical
evaluation through language development

Evaluation

First thoughts

- Articles
- More on research methodology
- Arguments
- Fair and reasonable criticism

Evaluation (II)

Advantages of genre-based writing instruction

Explicit	<i>Makes clear what is to be learnt to facilitate the acquisition of writing skills</i>	Did it? <i>Yes and no</i>
Systematic	<i>Provides a coherent framework for focusing on both language and contexts</i>	Did it? <i>Yes</i>
Needs-based	<i>Ensures that course objectives and content are derived from Ss' needs</i>	Did it? <i>Yes and no</i>
Supportive	<i>Gives teachers a central role in scaffolding students' learning and creativity</i>	Did it? <i>Yes</i>
Empowering	<i>Provides access to the patterns and possibilities of variation in valued texts</i>	Did it? <i>Yes (could be more targeted)</i>
Critical	<i>Gives students the resources to understand and challenge valued discourses</i>	Did it? <i>Yes and no</i>
Consciousness-	<i>Increases teachers' awareness of texts confidently to advise students on raising writing</i>	Did it? <i>Yes?</i>

Evaluation (III)

Teaching-learning returns

Stages – productive

- different **purpose**
- different **classroom activities**
- different types of **teacher-learner roles**
- **flexible in enabling**

Ss to enter at any stage according to existing knowledge of the genre

Ts further to develop the literacy skills gained

working through a new cycle at a more advanced level of expression

*and
by*

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