EAP or TEAP?

Abstract

Most previous work in EAP has focused more on the content of teaching than on the methodology. By examining reports of EAP teaching practice, this paper identifies six key approaches to the teaching of EAP: inductive learning, process syllabuses, learner autonomy, authenticity, technology,

and team teaching. Reasons for the emphasis on these approaches are given. The paper concludes by arguing that a greater emphasis needs to be placed on methodology in EAP.

Introduction

In the introductory article to the first issue of a new journal, Hyland and Hamp-Lyons (2002), the editors of the <u>Journal of English for Academic Purposes</u>, covered an impressive amount of ground in presenting the state of the art in EAP. Providing an overview of topics such as academic literacy, disciplinary specificity, the notion of an academic community, and critical approaches to EAP, the article is a valuable summary of the 'what' and the 'why' of EAP.

In this paper, however, I would like to focus on what I believe is a key area of EAP that Hyland and Hamp-Lyons overlooked. In concentrating on what needs to be taught/learnt in EAP situations and why EAP teaching exists, the article pays little attention to how EAP can be taught, an area I consider crucial to the successful achievement of the goals of our profession.

As professionals interested in EAP, understanding the nature of, say, thesis writing can help us to identify objectives for EAP courses, but we

must also consider how these objectives can best be taught or be learnt by the students. In fact, most work which aims to describe the nature of EAP communication, the 'what' of EAP, is subservient to the goal of conveying this nature to students, the 'how' of EAP. Since student learning is the end-goal, perhaps it makes more sense to talk about Teaching EAP, or TEAP, rather than just EAP.

The 'how' of EAP

Before I continue, I should perhaps explain more about what I mean by the 'how' of EAP. In another recent overview of the field, Flowerdew and Peacock (2001b) divide the TEAP process into three stages: design, implementation and evaluation.

The 'what' of EAP is usually the prime concern of EAP practitioners in the design of courses (except perhaps where a process syllabus is used), with the design being informed by needs analyses and research findings into the nature of academic communication. In implementing courses, on the other hand, the 'how' comes to the forefront. At this stage, typical questions asked include 'How can we help the students to achieve this objective?' and 'How can this information be most effectively presented to the students?'

There are several occasions on which questions like these could be asked, and the occasion will affect the type of answer. For example, asking such questions at the stage of syllabus design when global course objectives are being considered may lead to wide-ranging methodological decisions affecting the whole course to be made. Alternatively, if such questions are asked while planning a lesson, the answer may affect just one short classroom activity. These questions, then, can be answered at several different levels, and I will examine potential answers for EAP at three levels: method, approach and technique (Brown, 1994).

Methods are systematic sets of language teaching procedures based on certain theories of language learning. They include prescriptive methodologies, such as the Silent Way and Suggestopedia, as well as less coherent methods, such as teaching based around translation (see Larsen-Freeman 1986; Richards and Rodgers 1986). Approaches, which involve the application of sets of principles to guide teaching, allow more flexibility than methods. Techniques, on the other hand, are not concerned with the overall picture of teaching and learning. Rather, they are the micro-level specific classroom activities that may last from only five minutes to a couple of lessons.

It should be noted that these three pedagogic levels are derived from the literature on general English language teaching and their applicability to EAP is unclear. For example, Richards and Rodgers (2001) regard the whole of ESP, including EAP, as one of five possible approaches within content-based instruction (although their definitions of the three levels are slightly different from Brown's (1994) definitions used in this study). If this is the case, the application of the three levels to EAP would be fruitless, as, with EAP being just one example of the middle level of the hierarchy, we would only be able to examine techniques in EAP. In addition to perhaps devaluing the place of ESP and EAP, such a perspective also downplays aspects of teaching which EAP and other kinds of English teaching have in common. As we shall see, several general purpose English teaching practices originated in EAP. If such a transference of practices across different forms of English language teaching is possible, it makes sense to view both general English teaching and EAP as being above the three levels of method, approach and technique. Instead of EAP being an example of an approach, I will view it as a type of teaching within which the three levels may be manifested. In doing this, I hope to show that the application of the levels of method, approach and technique to EAP can generate useful insights into how we teach EAP.

The importance of methodology in EAP

Before I look at how these three levels are manifested in EAP teaching, I would like to consider why we should give a stronger emphasis to the 'how' of EAP.

The main goal of EAP is for students to communicate effectively in academic environments. One key factor in reaching this goal is knowing what the communicative requirements in these environments are. However, no matter how well we define these requirements, if we cannot help students attain them, the goal of EAP will not be reached. In other words, in teaching EAP we need to consider the process of reaching the goal at least as much as the content that needs to be covered.

A second reason for focusing on how to teach EAP is that, for those areas where EAP has explicitly considered how to teach, the methodology has frequently been innovative and has created directions for general purpose English teaching to follow (Flowerdew and Peacock 2001b). For example, the idea that students' learning needs (or how they should learn) should be elicited to inform course design as well as their language needs stems from work in EAP (Allwright, 1982; Hutchinson and Waters, 1987); and the seminal article on project work (Herbolich, 1979) concerns EAP teaching. Key factors behind the innovativeness of EAP

teaching are that EAP teachers, especially in core countries, are generally more experienced and qualified than general English teachers, and that in the university environments where many EAP teachers work, research and innovation are valued. Such factors have pushed EAP to the forefront of the English teaching field.

Thirdly, although EAP is usually considered distinct from general purpose English teaching in its content, it is not clear whether EAP methodology is also distinct. The use of EAP innovations in general English teaching suggests that the methodologies of the two are closely related, but the existence of some approaches, such as team teaching, which are unique to EAP implies a potentially distinct methodology. Whether EAP methodology is distinct or not, the implications would be interesting and could lead to greater understanding of the nature of teaching and learning in EAP. The lack of clarity concerning the potential distinctness of EAP methodology needs resolving, but further research into EAP methodology is needed before this can be done.

Lastly, understanding more about how EAP is taught and learnt would provide useful directions for EAP teacher training. While many EAP teachers in core-country universities are experienced teachers when they enter EAP, the same is not true in periphery countries. EAP teachers in

countries like Thailand are frequently recent graduates who have little idea of what or how to teach. Effective teacher training for such novice teachers needs to include informed methodological support.

Given the importance of and uncertainty about how to teach EAP, we might expect that most articles concerning EAP would be methodological. The influence of innovative EAP teaching on the methodology of general English language teaching discussed above might also lead us to this expectation.

This expectation, however, is not realised. Articles describing the nature of EAP communication probably greatly outnumber articles focusing on how to teach EAP. I am not claiming that what to teach is unimportant, but as long ago as 1983, Henry Widdowson argued that EAP teachers leave 'considerations of appropriate methodology out of account' (p. 100). Although, as we shall see when we look at approaches in EAP, this claim may be overstated, there does seem to be an imbalance in the literature with more attention paid to the 'what' of EAP. The less prominent literature focusing on the 'how' of EAP has, nevertheless, generated some interesting insights into the nature of teaching EAP which are worth examining in more detail.

Methods in EAP

Despite the fact that historically EAP emerged at about the same time as the search for the 'best' method of teaching English was at its height, it seems that the macro-level of method has had very little influence on the teaching of EAP. This may be due in part to the restrictive nature of most methods, which prescribe how teachers should teach, whereas most EAP teachers are professionals who feel confident about their own ability to make decisions concerning teaching. The only article explicitly investigating the application of prescriptive methods to EAP that I have been able to find is an attempt to compare the effectiveness of teaching EAP using a translation method, a reading method and a rhetorical method (Biria and Tahririan 1994). As with most attempts to compare teaching methods, this piece of research lacks validity because of the problems of controlling variables (Woods 1996). Looking at how to teach EAP at the macro-level of method, then, has not been very fruitful.

Approaches in EAP

In contrast to methods, there has been a substantial amount of work concerning approaches in teaching EAP. This work largely falls into two categories. On the one hand are lists of principles that guide EAP teaching. For example, in discussing the whole of ESP, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) list eight principles including: language learning is an

active process, language learning is an emotional experience, and language learning is not systematic. On the other hand are global teaching and learning practices from which principles can be drawn. In this section, I will focus on the latter, examining six sets of global practices, and attempt to identify the principles which underlie them.

The first set of global practices that seems widespread in teaching EAP involves inductive learning. There appears to be a preference for inductive learning over more teacher-centred deductive approaches, and this emphasis on induction in EAP is manifested in several ways. The widespread use of concordancing in EAP (e.g. Jordan 1997; Stevens 1991), the teaching of reading focusing on text analysis (e.g. Holme 1996; Paltridge 2001, 2002), and approaches where students are encouraged to act as researchers investigating academic communities (e.g. Johns 1997; Starfield 2001) all place a particular emphasis on induction.

A second prevalent approach to teaching EAP is the use of process syllabuses (Widdowson 1990) involving task-based and project-based learning. While both are becoming more widespread in English for general purposes, much of the initial impetus for task-based and project-based learning came from EAP teaching (e.g. Herbolich 1979; Hall and

Kenny 1988) where they are still frequently used (e.g. Robinson et al. 2001).

A third set of approaches includes the greater than usual emphasis on self-access learning in EAP (e.g. Jordan 1997; Lynch 2001), the use of negotiated syllabuses (e.g. Martyn 2000; Savage and Storer 2001), and an emphasis on self and peer assessment and feedback (e.g. Chan 1999; Ferris 2001). All of these aim to promote learner autonomy.

A desire to increase authenticity of EAP learning materials and tasks forms the focus of another set of global practices. This approach is perhaps best illustrated by the use of case studies in the teaching of EAP for business, law, medicine and engineering (e.g. Dudley-Evans and St. John 1998; Jackson 2002). Since the teaching of these subjects at tertiary level often uses case studies, to increase authenticity this teaching approach has been borrowed and applied in EAP teaching.

Technological changes provide the driving force behind a further set of practices. Since EAP situations are generally better resourced than other situations of English language teaching and because EAP course objectives may include technology-oriented goals, technology has played an important role in teaching EAP in the last few years. We have already

seen that computer concordancing is relatively common in EAP, and EAP teaching may also include the use of CD-ROMs and computer-mediated communication (e.g. Warschauer 2002).

While the first five sets of practices I have outlined above can also be found in English for general purposes, albeit with less of an emphasis than in EAP, the final approach is specific to EAP. Team teaching, or cooperating with content teachers, is an approach closely linked to the nature of EAP teaching (see Dudley-Evans 2001; Dudley-Evans and St. John 1998). Although most work in EAP has focused on the tertiary level, team teaching is an approach which has also received attention in secondary and even primary level EAP (e.g. Teemant et al. 1997).

The six approaches on which teaching EAP generally places a greater emphasis than other types of English teaching therefore are:

1. Focus on inductive learning

2. Using process syllabuses

3. Promoting learner autonomy

4. Using authentic materials and tasks

5. Integrating technology in teaching

6. Using team teaching

It should be noted that these six approaches are not mutually exclusive. For example, both Aston (1997) and Watson Todd (2001) suggest techniques where students use technology to make inductions from concordances in ways that are likely to promote learner autonomy.

The six approaches which are based on reported practice given here are very different from the principles guiding EAP teaching given in Hutchinson and Waters (1987). To some extent, the differences may be due to the different purposes of the lists, but it may also be due to the differing sources of the lists: the list of principles is based on theory, whereas the six approaches above are derived from reports of teaching and learning practice and are thus of more immediate use for teachers.

Techniques in EAP

Techniques are more specific than approaches and are often equated with activities (although techniques may also include such things as a specific way of giving an explanation which would not normally be categorised as an activity). As specific teaching/learning practices, techniques may be specific to a certain objective and thus lack generalisability. A few techniques such as brainstorming, however, can be applied to a wide range of objectives and situations. An example of a technique specific to EAP is asking students to create algorithms to show their understanding

of the process of using contents and indexes to search for information in books (Watson Todd 1999).

Techniques in teaching EAP have received very little attention. While there is a vast range of books specifically presenting innovative techniques for English for general purposes (such as the Longman Pilgrims Resource Books and the Cambridge Handbooks for Language Teachers) and several collections of techniques for English for business (e.g. Donna 2000; Ellis and Johnson 1994), for EAP the only text of techniques by a major publisher is Holme (1996), and even this book covers both EAP and English for occupational purposes. Textbooks for EAP also seem to show a lack of interest in techniques. A brief survey of three such textbooks (Seal, 1997; Swales and Feak, 1994; Zukowski/Faust and Johnston, 2002) shows them to be replete with lengthy explanations and closed-ended, almost mechanical, exercises. Although Swales and Feak, in their introduction, state that they expect EAP teachers to be experienced and capable of adapting the textbook, relying on the teacher, instead of including techniques which manifest the principles of EAP teaching (such as those suggested by Hutchinson and Waters, 1987) or the approaches discussed above, suggests that techniques are given a low priority in EAP. This lack of interest may be because of their frequent inherent non-generalisability, the lack of

academic cachet in writing about techniques, and an overall concern for more conceptual rather than procedural issues in teaching (see Pennington 1995).

Reasons underlying EAP teaching approaches

We have seen that most work on how to teach EAP has been focused at the level of approach, and that there are six approaches which are frequently emphasised in EAP. While I have given arguments about why methods and techniques have not received much attention in EAP, I have yet to suggest reasons why EAP has emphasised the six approaches it has.

It would be easy to argue that the six approaches facilitate learning. For example, the arguments about the benefits of experiential learning could be applied to the use of process syllabuses and authentic materials (Legutke and Thomas 1991; Tudor 2001), and there is a myriad of arguments in favour of using an approach which stresses autonomy in learning (see Tudor 1996). Such arguments, however, do not solely apply to EAP, but apply equally to English for general purposes. Nevertheless, much of the original work concerning these approaches was conducted in EAP and EAP still tends to emphasise them more than other areas of English language teaching do. For example, although the use of authentic materials can be found in much recent material for English for general

purposes, in EAP authentic materials are de rigueur. We are therefore still faced with the question of why EAP emphasises the six approaches more than other forms of English teaching. To answer this, we need to look at how EAP is different.

Perhaps the most obvious differentiating characteristic of EAP is the needs of the students and thus the content and goals of teaching. The raison d'être of English for Specific Purposes, including EAP, is that teaching is designed to meet the specific needs of the students (Strevens, 1988). In EAP, these needs, and thus the teaching, relate to a study purpose (Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998), and EAP is largely founded on the fact that the English used to fulfil these study needs stand in contrast to general English (Strevens, 1988). Among other potential differences, the distinct content of EAP may take the form of specific genres, such as the greater stress placed on lecture comprehension than on other genres of listening (see Flowerdew 1994), or it may reflect a need for a deeper understanding of the reasons underlying certain conventions of EAP language use (e.g. Canagarajah, 2002). These EAP-specific goals can have a large impact on the approaches used in teaching. For example, if we want students to gain an understanding of (as opposed to knowledge about) the conventions and values of academic communities, an inductive approach is likely to be more successful; and the needs of students to use

English for clear real-world purposes promotes the use of authentic materials and tasks.

A second characteristic of tertiary EAP (and nearly all the work I have cited concerns university-level teaching) that influences methodology is the nature of the students (Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001a). Generally, EAP students are more mature, more self-directed and more aware than students of English for general purposes. These student characteristics are, in fact, the characteristics which are most likely to lead to successful learner autonomy (Breen and Mann, 1997; Brundage, 1980), and it is therefore perhaps unsurprising that approaches emphasising learner autonomy are relatively frequent in EAP.

Thirdly, the practicalities of many EAP situations are frequently distinctive. For example, informants expert in the content of teaching are frequently available and cooperative enabling the use of team-teaching in EAP. In other English language teaching situations, this is not usually the case. For instance, English for business teachers might also wish to work with expert informants, but are usually unable to do so. From a more practical perspective, EAP situations frequently have more resources than other English language teaching situations. These greater resources facilitate several types of project learning, especially resourcing projects,

and the comparative abundance and modern nature of technological resources in many EAP situations enable EAP to be at the forefront of using technology for language teaching. The nature of EAP situations, then, often allows approaches to be used which other situations may wish to use but which are constrained by practical factors.

Design and methodology in EAP

I have argued that the 'how' of EAP is at least as important as the 'what', and I have outlined some approaches that are frequently used to teach EAP. If these approaches are important for learning, we need to consider how they can be implemented in course design.

There are a variety of ways in which methodology can be incorporated into programme design. At one extreme, methodology can be given precedence over content. This is frequently the case in process syllabuses such as the course-length project of Hall and Kenny (1988), and can also be seen in some more traditional syllabuses. For example, James (1983) gave a higher priority to the principles of controlled practice, communicative relevance, linguistic rationales and problem solving than to the specific objectives to be covered in designing an EAP speaking course.

At the other extreme, methodology can be dictated by content. For example, in an interesting comparison of published advice on thesis writing and actual practice, having identified certain course objectives, Paltridge (2002) then turns to the classroom implications of these objectives. In other words, in examining the teaching of thesis writing, he gives precedence to the content objectives and treats the methodology almost as an afterthought. Although viewing the article in this light may be somewhat unfair to the author since his purposes in writing are more content than methodology oriented, the pattern of firstly identifying objectives and then considering the classroom implications does seem more prevalent in EAP than in other forms of English language teaching.

A more balanced approach would be to give the 'what' and the 'how' of EAP equal weighting in course design. Although in practice the weightings will depend on the requirements of each situation, the teaching of EAP has perhaps suffered from too great an emphasis on content. As teachers, we need to remember the students' learning needs as well as their language needs. In the words of James (1983: 66) concerning his EAP speaking course, 'in the last analysis the teacher is not teaching speech. He [*sic*] is teaching people'.

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