

SQUARING THE CIRCLE: TEACHING EAP TO LARGE MIXED GROUPS

Alan Pulverness

Norwich Institute for Language Education

ABSTRACT

This paper highlights core considerations for managing and sustaining the interest of large mixed ability EAP classes . These include providing a variety of authentic and purposeful learning tasks and staging lessons with flexible timeframes. Other key factors like collaboration, open-endedness and enquiry are elaborated with examples for classroom application. The article recommends the selective use of methodologies from a continuum of approaches that range from sheltered to deep end strategies with different degrees of instructional scaffolding to be used throughout, according to learners' needs. The teaching of the five skills (Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking and Study Skills) is essential to progress in tandem with the profound dimensions of EAP since there is no consensus as to a single ESP/EAP approach. This ensures skill transference, disposition towards study, overall development of competence and ultimately, the students' academic success.

In a paper entitled "ESP and the curse of Caliban", Henry Widdowson invokes the teacher/student relationship between the magician Prospero and the savage Caliban in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. In the second scene of the play, in response to Caliban's complaints, Prospero regrets having taught him language:

Prospero: I pitied thee,
Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour
One thing or other: when thou didst not, savage,
Know thy own meaning, but wouldst gabble, like
A thing most brutish, I endow'd thy purposes
With words to make them known.
[...]

Caliban's reply has all the resentment of the colonised language learner:

Caliban: You taught me language; and my profit on't
Is I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
For learning me your language!

Widdowson notes that Prospero's educational programme had been a kind of ESP – "English for Slavery", if you like. However, not only had the programme failed to recognise the student's real needs – his learning purposes – but like many learners (including ESP students) Caliban had actually learnt (or acquired) something other than what his teacher thought he was teaching him. (Widdowson comments wryly that "one must assume that cursing did not figure as a function in Prospero's language course"!) Underlying this example is a serious point about needs analysis. The idea of designing a course to meet real needs by first identifying those needs seems thoroughly reasonable – especially when the needs seem to be so clearly definable. But the limitation of the Prospero approach lies in its being purely *goal-oriented* – the needs it analyses are based exclusively on the learner's eventual purposes in using the language – occupational purposes for Caliban, academic purposes for our students. By focusing only on the intended outcomes, it fails to acknowledge the importance of what the learner needs along the way – the language required to learn the language. A more *process-oriented* approach would go beyond the inventory of items identified in the initial needs analysis to take into account the ways in which the language is learnt. It would thus acquire a broader educational function than just language training.

Large Classes

If you are teaching large classes, you will be only too well aware of the challenges involved, and you will certainly have developed your own strategies for coping with these challenges. All classes, of whatever size, entail to some extent mixed levels of attainment. The larger the class, the more problematic this becomes. Demands on the teacher common to any teaching situation – in terms of classroom management, involving and motivating students, attending to individual learning styles – are magnified exponentially in the large class, and in the large language class the situation is complicated further, as the 'content' – i.e. the language – is also the medium of instruction. But if the problems are common ones writ large, so perhaps are the strategies for coping with them. It should be self-evident, but it is always worth reminding ourselves, that we need to make the most of planning strategies that will maximise student interest and involvement. Thus, the basic desiderata for any language class – *variety, pace, interest* – are particularly important in the larger class.

Variety

Variety of tasks is an effective means of engaging students with different levels of attainment, and in the large class, a way of maintaining involvement. A couple of examples:

- If the focus of a lesson is on vocabulary, some students can work with dictionaries, collecting and comparing definitions, examples, collocations; stronger students can work on occurrences of the items in reading texts, inferring meaning or building up componential analysis charts; while the most competent students can produce their own short texts to exemplify and demonstrate their understanding of the new items. Students can then be re-grouped to share and benefit from the outcomes of each other's work.
- It is not always necessary to set up differential tasks. For example, another kind of variety may be achieved, paradoxically, through a process of repetition: students can be asked to write outline notes as a basis for summaries of different texts – or different sections of the same text – and then, without referring back to the original text, to use their notes to report what they have read to a partner, then to another, and another, and so on. At each successive stage, the partner's questions and requests for clarification should enable students to revise and refine their oral summaries, so that they can eventually produce more reliable written versions.
- Variety also applies to modalities of classroom interaction: switching from individual work to pair work; switching from teacher-fronted, whole-class activity to group work; switching from what Halliwell in *Teaching English in the Primary Classroom* (1992) calls 'stirrers' to what she calls 'settlers' – i.e. from highly active tasks to more reflective phases.

Pace

Teachers know instinctively when a lesson has pace—or loses pace—though often this awareness only comes in retrospect. When planning lessons, therefore, it is important to try to predict the pace that will be appropriate for different stages of a lesson, and the moments in a lesson where a change of pace may be desirable. Setting strict time limits for activities such as brainstorming or gist reading will encourage students to adopt the appropriate cognitive and strategic approaches, whereas other more reflective activities, for example, a discussion or planning an outline for an essay, will benefit if they can be more open-ended.

Interest

It should be axiomatic that relevant content will automatically be of interest to EAP students, but if the class represents a range of different disciplines, the issue of relevance becomes more complex. I will return to the question of discipline specificity; but even assuming that you succeed in selecting a relevant topic, intrinsic interest alone will not necessarily ensure students' continuing engagement, and this is likely to be exacerbated by the dynamics of the large, mixed-level class. At each stage of the

lesson, students need to feel a sense of achievement, and interest needs to be sustained through a varied sequence of purposeful activities. Here we can appeal to communicative principles that apply to any general-purpose class: the importance of creating opportunities for:

- discovery learning
- genuine exchange of information
- using the language in problem-solving processes

To these three basic principles I should like to add three more, which seem to me to be key factors in the large, mixed-level EAP class: *collaboration*, *open-endedness* and *enquiry*.

Collaboration

Literally ‘working together’, collaboration entails the principle of co-operation, i.e. working together to achieve a common purpose. This implies activities in which each participant– both partners in a pair or each member of a group– has to make a distinctive and necessary contribution towards achieving that common goal. There are many ways in which this principle can be realised, for example:

- brainstorming activities, in which everyone’s ideas are important
- problem-solving activities, in which each member of the group has a piece of information that forms part of what the whole group needs to know in order to find a solution to the problem
- jigsaw activities, in which members of the group have each heard or read or researched complementary blocks of information, which they then have to collaborate to put together
- peer reviews, in which students read and comment on each other’s written work
- collaborative writing, in which members of the group have to make individual contributions to a joint written product
- more extended workshop activities, such as mini-research projects, surveys and poster presentations, where both the process and product are multiplex, and so accommodate differential contributions from different individuals

In large multi-level classes, where the extent to which the teacher can be involved in all the learning activities in the classroom is physically limited, collaborative ways of working are essential, in order to make the most of the available human resources – i.e. the students. The most practical way of converting this limitation into an opportunity for learning is to create opportunities for students to adopt some aspects of the teacher’s role, both for themselves and their peers. This shift of responsibility pays off not just in terms of efficiency, but should also help to make students better

learners, as they are placed in a position where they have to participate more, and develop learning skills, such as negotiation, self-monitoring and self-evaluation, which will be valuable in their specific disciplines as well as their language learning.

Open-endedness

Much of the work done in language classes, perhaps especially in the domain of EAP, is closed-ended, for example, transformation and slot-and filler exercises with single correct answers, or production tasks, apparently open, but in fact constrained by strict models or genre conventions. This unitary approach can produce a sense of frustration for many students in large mixed-level classes, often denied the opportunity of using the language available to them at their own different levels of competence. The virtue of open-ended language tasks is that they can give all the students in the class a sense of achievement, of being able to use the language effectively. Some examples might include:

- giving students a set of graded questions and allowing them to select the ones that they wish to answer
- adapting tasks which are traditionally closed-ended (e.g. categorising, matching, multiple choice) in such a way as to accommodate a number of acceptable answers. The process implied is one of justification, in which the emphasis is not so much on 'getting the right answer' as on explaining one's reasons for selecting a possible answer.
- students working in groups to compile their own entries to develop an ongoing lexicon. This also has a strong element of collaboration, as it avoids putting pressure on individuals to come up with 'the right answer' and gives everyone the opportunity to contribute towards formulating joint definitions

Enquiry

A concept that has gained increasing recognition in language learning theory comes from the Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotsky – the *Zone of Proximal Development*, or *ZPD*. Vygotsky defines the ZPD as “the distance between the actual developmental level... and the level of potential development through problem solving under adult guidance....” Put very simply, then, the ZPD refers to the potential area of language development just beyond a learner's current level of competence. Another way of encouraging students in the large multilevel class to become involved while operating in their Zone of Proximal Development is to foster a spirit of enquiry in the class through an open mode of questioning. This means asking – and getting students to ask – questions that do not have predictable, closed answers, i.e. questions that begin with *Why* rather than other interrogative pronouns, requests for clarification or

elaboration posed in frames such as *Could you explain how...?* or *Could you explain what you mean by...?* A good principle here is to focus on *referential questions*—genuine questions to which the teacher does not know the answer—rather than *display questions* whose main purpose is to allow the students to display their knowledge of the language. Nunan (1989) notes, “it is not inconceivable that the effort involved in answering referential questions prompts a greater effort and depth of processing on the part of the learner.”

Thornbury (1996) writing about teacher talk, adds this comment to Nunan’s rather speculative conclusion:

I would go further, and argue that the effort involved in asking referential questions prompts a greater effort and depth of processing on the part of the teacher. Try conducting a lesson in which every question is referential! For teachers brought up in the ‘elicit-standardize-drill’ school, it can be a salutary experience.

Since the language teacher is rarely, if ever, also a subject specialist, the EAP class would seem to be a highly natural environment for referential questioning, as the teacher can ask real questions to which students can give real answers. But asking genuine, enquiring questions should not only be the province of the teacher: it may also become something that students are encouraged to do, and the mixed-discipline EAP class should again offer a natural environment for what is often maintained as a principle in language classrooms, but perhaps not so often put into practice—the genuine exchange of information.

Mixed Disciplines: ESAP or EGAP?

EAP has been subdivided, by Blue (1993) and others, into two categories, producing two further acronyms: EGAP (English for General Academic Purposes) and ESAP (English for Specific Academic Purposes). But even if an EAP class consists of students from the same discipline, it is comparatively rare for all the students to be following exactly the same elective sub-disciplines. So the problem of specificity is one that to some extent confronts most EAP course designers and teachers. Research findings in this area are inconclusive – perhaps reassuringly so. In a survey paper published in 2001, Caroline Clapham of Lancaster University points out that the relationship between subject specificity and students’ comprehension is relatively unpredictable, as it may be difficult to know precisely what students have studied previously and difficult, if not impossible, to know what interests and previous knowledge they might have outside their subject disciplines. So while schema theory tends to suggest that comprehension will be more successful when bottom-up text processing is combined with the top-down advantages of contextual familiarity, this does not necessarily provide a strong case for an ESAP approach to selecting texts.

finding subject-specific texts or assessing their suitability, and suggests that genre rather than topic may be a more useful yardstick for text selection. Her conclusion is that “it seems sensible for EAP teachers to teach what Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) call ‘common core’ EAP”, exposing students to a range of EGAP academic texts, covering a range of transferable text functions such as introductions, literature surveys, reports of research methods and discussions of results, which are common to most disciplines. At certain points it will no doubt be necessary to diverge from this common core and give students the opportunity to deal with text functions which are more subject-specific, such as describing technical processes, for example. However, given the difficulty of identifying the right material, the best source for such texts may well be the students themselves, if they can provide examples, such as journal articles or recordings of lectures, which they have actually had to tackle—or will do so—in the course of their studies.

Approaches: Methodology

Although there is no consensus as to a single ESP/EAP approach, there is perhaps one controlling principle underlying most approaches and proceeding from descriptions obtained through needs analysis of eventual application – the principle of authentic and purposeful tasks. The ‘invention’ project at the University of Cali, Colombia, is a very good example of this principle in action. Students are required to invent a device related to their major field and to present a model or graph of the structure, function and characteristics of the device invented, including semantic maps with advantages and disadvantages according to the feasibility of the device, unknown vocabulary, and a short written text to accompany the presentation. Clearly, this concept could be elaborated with different genres, such as a report or a technical manual. The invention idea is particularly satisfying as it can conform, if undertaken in groups, to the desirable conditions of project work for mixed levels, creating opportunities for students to make significant contributions to the achievement of a common goal while being able to work at their own language level.

The variable factor in designing tasks for the ESP/EAP classroom is control, and it may be instructive to view the options available to the teacher/materials designer as a continuum of approaches exhibiting varying degrees of control. The more ‘sheltered’ end of the continuum is represented by Phillips (1981), whose approach is summarised in four key principles:

- *reality control*: the level of task difficulty should be controlled by simplifying the specific purpose of the task and not just simplifying the level of the language.
- *non-triviality*: the learner must perceive the learning task as meaningfully generated by the special purpose.

- *authenticity*: the language acquired by learners must be authentic.
- *tolerance of error*: errors should only be regarded as unacceptable if they compromise communicative adequacy

The other extreme of this methodological continuum is the ‘deep end’ strategy described by Hall & Kenny (1988). Working on a pre-sessional EAP course in a university in Thailand, they were concerned about preparing learners for the kind of activities that they would actually be faced with in their subsequent studies. The point of departure for their course was therefore to confront their learners with actual tasks that they would eventually have to deal with. The rationale for these ‘shock tactics’ was to encourage “initiative, the sharing of ideas and a focus on the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of investigation rather than on the ‘what’.”

In practice it seems unlikely that the methodology applied in any given situation will be fixed at any particular point along this continuum, but rather that it will tend to fluctuate at different times – perhaps even at different moments within the same lesson – for different purposes. One important implication at the task-based end of the continuum is a variation in the role of the teacher. The more authentic the task, the less likely it is that the language teacher will be in control of the content, and consequently the teacher’s role is bound to shift from being an omniscient repository of knowledge to enabling learning to take place by adopting the role of guide or advisor. Here the notion of *scaffolding* comes into play.

The concept of scaffolding is part of Vygotsky’s *ZPD* theory and referred originally to the need that the child has in first language acquisition for ‘social interactional frameworks’. Scaffolding is the term given to the kind of structured support that favours the child’s cognitive and language development, received from parents and other adults. This has been extended (in the work of Applebee & Langer 1983) to the notion of *instructional scaffolding*. In instructional scaffolding, a skilled language user supports the learner by modelling the language the learner needs for a given task. As with the child, a process of structured questioning that also provides scaffolding helps to extend or refine what the learner already knows. The teacher’s role is not to evaluate the learner’s answers, but through supportive questioning routines, to support, encourage and provide additional prompts. As the learner becomes increasingly competent, the scaffolding can gradually be removed until the point where the learner is able not only to carry out the particular task independently, but also to generalise and transfer his/her newly-gained competence to other comparable situations.

According to Applebee (1986) there are five criteria for effective scaffolding:

1. *Student ownership of the learning event.* The instructional task must allow students to make their own contribution to the activity as it evolves.
2. *Appropriateness of the instructional task.* This means that the tasks should build upon the knowledge and skills the student already possesses, but should be difficult enough to allow new learning to occur. (ZPD)
3. *A structured learning environment.* This will provide a natural sequence of thought and language, thus presenting the student with useful strategies and approaches to the task.
4. *Shared responsibility.* Tasks are solved jointly in the course of instructional interaction, so the role of the teacher is more collaborative than evaluative.
5. *Transfer of control.* As students internalise new procedures and routines, they should take a greater responsibility for controlling the progress of the task such that the amount of interaction may actually increase as the student becomes more competent.

Approaches: The Five Skills

I would now like to turn to some key issues in teaching the five skills (i.e. the four skills + study skills).

Reading

One major problem for EAP teachers—amplified in the mixed-level, mixed-discipline class—is the selection of appropriate texts. It may be difficult to maintain a strong position on authenticity if authentic texts are found to be too complex, while the content level of simpler texts may alienate students whose subject knowledge exceeds the level of the texts. If we go back to the principle that authenticity should reside in the *language* that students learn rather than in the texts themselves, one way out of this impasse might be to select articles on relevant topics in journal—even popular journal—written for informed, but not specialist, readerships.

Perhaps the defining contrast between reading skills for the general-purpose learner and the EAP learner is the issue of purpose. EAP students need to be able to read selectively for a specific purpose, to evaluate what they read, and to make use of it in some practical further application, for example, recording or transferring information, making notes to incorporate in a piece of writing, using the information to support an argument, and so on. The implications of this purposefulness are usually interpreted as a need to focus on macro reading skills:

- predicting,
- skimming and scanning,
- distinguishing primary from secondary information

and on micro reading skills :

- recognising text functions (such as generalisation, definition, explanation)

- recognising discourse relationships (such as condition, cause and effect, comparison and contrast)
- acquiring specialised vocabulary.

The emphasis in EAP reading programmes thus tends to be on specific aspects of intensive reading, which will equip learners to cope with the practical reading demands of their particular disciplines. What is perhaps less widely acknowledged is the value of extensive reading for students who need to gain the confidence to deal with substantial amounts of text in their future studies, confidence which can only come from experience. This point is made by Carrell & Carson (1997), and more forcefully by Day and Bamford. They claim that “extensive reading should be an integral, even major, part of preparing students for academic reading”. In addition to boosting confidence, engendering a positive attitude towards reading, and developing vocabulary and knowledge of the world, they suggest that “extensive reading may play a role in developing the capacity for critical thinking,” which is a key success factor in higher education. They cite Grabe (1986), discussing the teaching of reading in an EAP setting:

- recognising discourse relationships (such as condition, cause and effect, comparison and contrast)
- acquiring specialised vocabulary.

The emphasis in EAP reading programmes thus tends to be on specific aspects of intensive reading, which will equip learners to cope with the practical reading demands of their particular disciplines. What is perhaps less widely acknowledged is the value of extensive reading for students who need to gain the confidence to deal with substantial amounts of text in their future studies, confidence which can only come from experience. This point is made by Carrell & Carson (1997), and more forcefully by Day and Bamford. They claim that “extensive reading should be an integral, even major, part of preparing students for academic reading”. In addition to boosting confidence, engendering a positive attitude towards reading, and developing vocabulary and knowledge of the world, they suggest that “extensive reading may play a role in developing the capacity for critical thinking,” which is a key success factor in higher education. They cite Grabe (1986), discussing the teaching of reading in an EAP setting:

Discovery and creative thinking are emergent processes where the mind [...] makes Non obvious connections and relations between previously independent domains of knowledge[...]...second language students usually opt for 'safe' responses. While there are many causes for this phenomenon; a chief one is the lack of background knowledge assumptions which form a basis from which to begin more speculative thinking, and which form a basis for many English language assumptions. The point is that prior reading experiences are crucial for having the information base to make non obvious connections.

Day & Bamford (1998) cite an impressive range of research results from the 1980s and 1990s in EFL and ESL settings across several continents that show significant gains from extensive reading, not only in terms of students' reading proficiency, as might be expected, but across the board in general language proficiency, and specifically in terms of vocabulary, writing, listening and positive affect.

The success of these extensive reading programmes, in which students were encouraged to read widely for pleasure, suggests a possible reversal of the historical reaction against literary texts for EAP students. Recent research reported by Hirvela (2001) lends some support to the idea that EAP students may derive benefits from reading literary texts (in terms of exposure to different rhetorical styles) that might complement the more obvious value of their reading of non-literary texts. Hirvela's sample is small and his results are therefore somewhat inconclusive, but he suggests that "students can begin at one end of [Widdowson's] 'scale of specificity'—the broad end, involving literary texts and writing in response to them – and move toward the narrow end, where they focus on non-literary texts and write papers that use the texts in ways other than response."

Writing

I would like to focus on two ongoing debates about writing as an EAP skill. The first area of methodological controversy that I want to mention is a kind of mirror image of the debate about appropriate degrees of specificity for reading texts – that is to say whether EAP writing classes should aim to develop general academic writing skills, in the hope that skills and strategies will be transferable to subsequent special-purpose writing tasks, or whether they should be devoted to teaching students to analyse and reproduce the specific written genres that belong to their eventual fields of study. The arguments here are very similar to those we mentioned before in terms of reading, i.e. that specific varieties of academic written discourse are so diverse that it would be difficult for the EAP teacher to deal with them directly—or adequately.

The other, larger debate is about the competing claims of product-focused and process-focused approaches. A focus on product would typically involve:

- the identification of specific discourse features in a particular genre
- modelling by reading examples of texts in the appropriate genre
- noticing through tasks that draw students' attention to characteristic features of the genre
- genre analysis, where students identify major text features
- information transfer and text comparison
- controlled production (text completion, text reconstruction, text re-ordering)
- text production

The process approach, popularised by White and Arndt (1991), breaks down the stages of writing into brainstorming, drafting, revising, re-drafting, further revising and re-working, further evaluation, and writing a final draft. Here the stages of revision and re-drafting that in a product-focused approach might be indiscernible—or even elided—are privileged, and this implies a central role for the teacher and for peer editors in giving feedback and advice as the student's text evolves.

In fact, it seems quite possible to me to view the product/process debate as something of a false dichotomy, since it should be possible to adopt a process approach to 'explode' the final stage of the product-based writing cycle. In other words, to have a hybridised 'product via process' approach.

An issue associated with the implementation of a process approach is the effect of response to student writing. There has been a great deal of research into this question over the past decade, reported recently in a survey paper by Dana Ferris (2001). The conclusions she reports provide some interesting contrasts between students' responses to teacher feedback and their responses to peer feedback. It appears that students tend to value teacher feedback and try to make use of it at revision stages, though the changes they attempt do not always improve—or even weaken—their writing. Sometimes they actually avoid or ignore feedback from the teacher. Feedback from peers, on the other hand, is enjoyed and valued, though not to the exclusion of teacher feedback, and it is more likely to be considered if it is kept separate from teacher feedback; its effects also tend to vary, depending on the variable nature of the peer interactions involved.

There is surprisingly little research available on the effects of feedback on errors. The research that has been carried out in this area suggests that the best error feedback is carefully prioritised and selective, and indirect—in the sense that the location of errors is identified, rather than the errors being explicitly corrected. The conclusion drawn is that students should be encouraged to develop self-editing skills, and this in turn would seem to lend support to a process-writing approach.

Listening

With listening, as with reading and writing, one of the most contentious questions is the conflict between the ‘deep-end’ challenge of fully authentic materials (in this case the real lecture, a lengthy stretch of discourse heard only once) and materials that are simplified for learning purposes, perhaps heard more than once, and therefore more easily processable by learners. As anyone who teaches listening will attest, there are important issues of learner confidence at stake here. Learners can be more easily discouraged by the obstacles involved in authentic academic listening than by difficulties in any other domain of language learning. However, there are significant features of the spoken discourse of academic lectures that are absent from the recorded performances of written texts that are commonly available in published listening materials. These include the lecturer’s use of body language, a variety of interpersonal strategies used by the lecturer to establish and sustain contact with the audience and confirm that they are following the discourse, the use of rhetorical questions, and the use of visual aids, handouts and reading assignments. It also seems that this lecture is the exception rather than the rule, in that I prefer to rely on a written text rather than speaking spontaneously or (re)constructing my lecture from notes.

Authentic lectures also tend to exhibit features commonly associated with unplanned speech, such as hesitations, false starts, reformulations, redundancies, repetitions, fillers and discourse signposts. Most of these features are designed to make the content of a lecture more accessible, and paradoxically, the sanitised versions of lectures, ‘cleaned up’ for commercial recordings are actually rendered more difficult by their absence.

The solution would seem to lie in a combination of training students to deal with bottom-up elements of comprehending spoken discourse via published materials and exposing them to samples of authentic lectures, with all their useful untidiness. Flowerdew (1994) also suggests a practical measure that attacks the problem from the other side: training the lecturers who teach students to adjust their mode of lecturing, so as to improve their projection and style of delivery, incorporate more discourse signals, announce a ‘menu’ of main points, include regular summaries and plenty of repetition and reformulation.

Speaking

Speaking tends to be the neglected Cinderella among the skills. To some extent, speaking for EAP students bears a reciprocal relationship to listening in much the same way as writing does to reading. That is to say, the skills of structuring and delivery required to give an effective oral presentation are parallel to the features that we want students to be aware of when they are listening to lectures. However, there are other specific speaking

skills that can be identified in various academic settings. Jordan (1997) lists asking questions during lectures, seminars and tutorials, taking part in seminar discussions, interacting in collaborative situations, such the laboratory or workshop or project group, and describing data or experimental procedures.

Despite the fact that students tend to be judged most immediately by how well they can cope with the spoken language – and this judgement is often transferred to an informal evaluation of their overall language competence–EAP speaking skills remain somewhat neglected by researchers. Speaking in a seminar situation is complicated by a number of extra-linguistic factors. Lynch and Anderson (1991) mention:

- the publicness of the performance
- the need to think on your feet
- the requirement to be able to call up relevant subject knowledge
- the need to present logically ordered arguments
- the fact that speakers may be assessed on their contributions

Wilkins' (1976) distinction between *synthetic* and *analytic* approaches to syllabus design provides a useful frame of reference here:

A synthetic language teaching strategy is one in which the different parts of language are taught separately and step by step so that acquisition is a process of gradual accumulation of parts until the whole structure of language has been built up.

[analytic syllabuses] are organised in terms of the purposes for which people are learning language and the kinds of language performance that are necessary to meet those purposes.

The teaching of EAP speaking skills often tends to reflect the *synthetic* approach applied to the other skills: breaking up and focusing on the use of the spoken language in discrete elements, such as grammatical structures, language functions, and appropriate microskills. An *analytic* approach implies using the language holistically to carry out communicative activities, something more akin to the task-based model elaborated by Jane Willis (1996). The TBL(task-based learning) cycle involves preparation, task performance, analysis and reflection (based on recordings of students' own performance and/or native speakers' performance of the same or a similar task) and a follow-up repetition of the task–something like the re-drafting stage of the process writing cycle. This would seem to be an appropriate way of addressing some of those features of a seminar discussion that are so important, but often slip into the interstices of the EAP teaching programme.

Study Skills

Study skills subsume some of the language skills surveyed above, as they include operations such as listening and note-taking, reading skills for study purposes, oral presentations, seminar discussions, and essay/ report writing. They also extend to research skills, such as finding and using reference sources (these days including the Internet), presentation skills (in writing as well as speech) and processing skills (these days including word-processing). But in addition to these tangible study techniques, academic success is also dependent on a deeper level of affect and attitude and disposition towards study.

Waters and Waters (2001) suggest that a problem-solving methodology—where the ‘problems’ are related to the challenges of study itself, might be the most effective way to develop the level of study competence. By setting up tasks which make students consider study problems, directly and indirectly, the long-term object of effective study (the ‘what’) can also become its means (the ‘how’). Waters and Waters argue that a problem-solving approach can potentially:

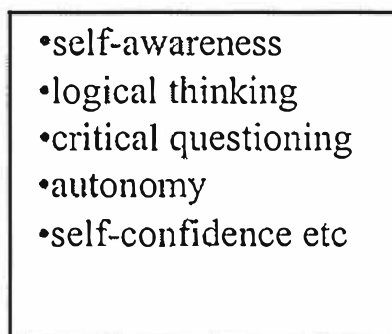
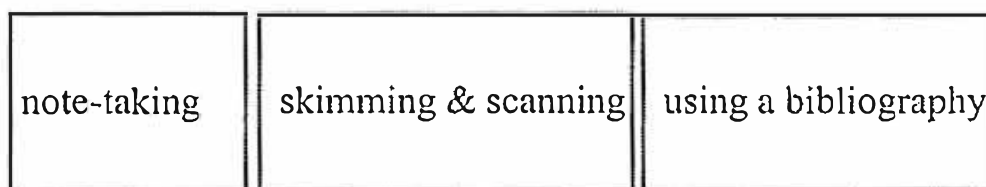
- encourage independence of mind
- foster self-awareness
- increase self-evaluation skills
- build up self-confidence
- develop flexibility and adaptability
- improve capacity for learning in general

Waters and Waters propose three types of problem-solving activities to raise awareness of study competence and its relationship to study skills – Direct Study Tasks, Indirect Study Tasks and Skills Transference Tasks. The Direct approach involves the student in tasks which quite explicitly develop particular competences; the Indirect approach ostensibly demands the application of study skills, with the potential for developing study competence remaining implicit; the Skills Transfer approach combines these two, getting students to employ study skills to carry out a task, and then explicitly to discuss the nature of the relevant competences.

It seems to me that Waters and Waters have identified quite a profound dimension of EAP that goes much deeper than the mechanics of technical language training for academic purposes. Their concluding statement, I think, provides EAP teachers with a challenging goal:

...learning to study effectively needs to be seen primarily as a process of making a certain turn of mind personally meaningful in relation to handling academic data, rather than as merely a matter of exposure to and practice of a repertoire of study techniques.

STUDY SKILLS (Techniques for Effective Study)



STUDY COMPETENCE

(cognitive and affective capacity for study)

(based on Waters & Waters (1992))

References

- Applebee, A. N. 1986. Problems in Process Approaches: Toward a reconceptualisation of Process instruction. In A. R. Petrosky & D. Bartholomae (eds). *The Teaching of Writing*. Eighty-fifth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Applebee, A.N. and Langer, J. A. 1983. Instructional scaffolding: reading and writing as natural activities. *Language Arts*, 60: 168-175.
- Blue, G. 1993. Nothing Succeeds like Linguistic Competence: The Role of language in academic success. In *Language, Learning and Success: Studying through English*. G. Blue (ed.) Hemel Hempstead: Phoenix ELT.
- Carrell, P. L. & Carson, J. G. 1997. Extensive and intensive reading in an EAP setting. *English for Specific Purposes*, 16 (1):47-60.
- Clapham, C. 2001. Discipline Specificity and EAP. In Flowerdew J. & M. Peacock (eds.) *Research Perspectives on English for Academic Purposes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cross, D. 1995. *Large Classes in Action*. London: Prentice Hall.
- Day, R. R. & Bamford, J. 1998. *Extensive Reading in the Second Language Classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dudley-Evans, T. & St. John, M. 1998. *Developments in English for Specific Purposes: A Multi-disciplinary Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ferris, D. R. 2001. Teaching writing for academic purposes. In J. Flowerdew & M. Peacock (eds.) *Research Perspectives on English for Academic Purposes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Flowerdew, J. 1994. Research of Relevance to Second Language Lecture Comprehension: an Overview. In J. Flowerdew (ed.) *Academic Listening: Research perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Flowerdew, J. & Peacock, M. 2001. The EAP Curriculum: Issues, Methods and challenges. In *Research Perspectives on English for Academic Purposes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Flowerdew, J. & Peacock, M. (eds). 2001. *Research Perspectives on English for Academic Purposes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Grabe, W. 1986. The Transition from Theory to Practice in Teaching Reading. In F. Dubin, D. E. Eskey & W. Grabe (eds.) *Teaching Second Language Reading for Academic Purposes*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley.
- Hall, D. An Approach to a Truly Communicative Methodology: the AIT pre-sessional course. *English for Specific Purposes*, 7 (1): 19-32.
- Halliwell, S. 1992. *Teaching English in the Primary Classroom* Harlow: Longman.
- Hess, N. 2001. *Teaching Large Multilevel Classes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hirvela, A. 2001. Incorporating Reading into EAP Writing Courses. In J. Flowerdew & M. Peacock (eds.) *Research Perspectives on English for Academic Purposes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hutchinson, T. & Waters, A. 1987. *English for Specific Purposes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jordan, R. R. 1997. *English for Academic Purposes: A Guide and Resource Book for Teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lynch, T. & Anderson, K. 1991. Do You Mind if I Come in Here? – A Comparison of EAP Seminar/Discussion Materials and the Characteristics of Real Academic Interaction. In P. Adams, B. Heaton & P. Howarth (eds.) *Socio-Cultural Issues in English for Academic Purposes: Developments in ELT*. Hemel Hempstead: Phoenix ELT.
- Nunan, D. 1989. *Understanding Language Classrooms*. Hemel Hempstead: Phoenix ELT.
- Phillips, M. K. 1981. Toward a Theory of LSP Methodology. In *Language for Specific Purposes: Program Design and Evaluation*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Prodromou, L. 1992. *Mixed Ability Classes*. London: Macmillan.
- Thornbury, S. 1996. Teachers Research Teacher Talk. *ELT Journal*, 50 (4): 279-289.

- Vygotsky, L. 1978. *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Waters, A. & Waters, M. 2001. Designing Tasks for Developing Study Competence and Study Skills in English. In J. Flowerdew & M. Peacock (eds.) *Research Perspectives on English for Academic Purposes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- White, R. & Arndt, V. 1991. *Process Writing*. Harlow: Longman.
- Widdowson, H. G. 1984. *Explorations in Applied Linguistics* 2. Chps. 13 & 14. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wilkins, D. 1976. *Notional Syllabuses*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Willis, J. 1996. *A Framework for Task-Based Learning*. Harlow: Longman.