

# Going Forward



# Going Forward:

## *Recent Developments in Higher Education*

Edited by

Nataša Bakić-Mirić

and Davronzhon Erkinovich Gaipov

Cambridge  
Scholars  
Publishing



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This book first published 2016

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-4438-9483-4

ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-9483-8

*To raise new questions, new possibilities, to regard old problems from a new angle, requires creative imagination and marks real advance in science.*

*Albert Einstein (1879-1955)*



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Just as the previous two years, this year again our profound gratitude goes to Prof. Dr. Mesut Akgul, Rector at Suleyman Demirel University in Almaty, who has wholeheartedly supported this publication and, thus, made it possible for our work to be carried out and accomplished successfully. We are happy to know that our work is appreciated and we believe that our mission gives us purpose to endure.

In particular, we also want to express our deep appreciation and gratitude to our colleagues from around the world. Without your commitment, we doubt we would have been able to complete this book. We value the knowledge and insight you share with us and the rest of the world, and we credit you for the success of this project.

Finally, we are extremely indebted to our families whose patience and support was invaluable whilst we were busy with this book.

The Editors.



## INTRODUCTION

NATAŠA BAKIĆ-MIRIĆ  
AND DAVRONZHON ERKINOVICH GAIPOV

This book is the third collection of papers written by scholars gathered around an international conference “Building Cultural Bridges” which takes place annually each April at Suleyman Demirel University in Almaty. Following the last two successful publications, “Building Cultural Bridges in Education” and “Current Trends and Issues in Higher Education” (both published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing), this year’s book takes another step in the same direction. This volume again comprises a collection of double-blind peer-reviewed papers from active researchers and practitioners from around the world who came together in their shared interest to discuss recent developments in higher education. This year’s book will be a valuable contribution to the fields of English for Academic Purposes (ESAP), linguistics, English Language Teaching (ELT), English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and intercultural business communication. Dealing with the challenges educators face today such as changing perceptions in higher education as a result of new instructional practices and current research investigations, the co-editors believe that this volume will be useful for those involved in education to stay current in all areas relating to higher education.

The book opens with an article written by Sophia Butt from the University of Birmingham (UK) who meticulously discusses designing English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) programs, illustrating the three-pronged approach to course design which was taken to develop an authentic pre-sessional English course for business students.

Brent Davis from Suleyman Demirel University in Almaty (Kazakhstan) addresses the problem of situating language forms in relevant social contexts by using the global sociological concepts of institution and interaction. The author introduces a series of communicative functions, each set in the appropriate institution, which then supplies roles and relevant expectations for interactions in that institution. Additionally, the

author uses a task-based approach for the actual structuring of each unit and discusses examples of units.

Eleni Griva from the University of Western Macedonia (Greece) and Dora Chostelidou from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Greece) discuss implications for language pedagogy, identifying the need for a coherent design and implementation of pluri-lingual education at the tertiary level.

Giada Gorracci and Sara Corizzato from the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at the University of Verona (Italy), discuss gamification as a new motivating approach in English Language Teaching (ELT). The authors analyze the positive aspects of gamification in English Language Teaching and how educational technology can provide a framework to reinforce students' engagement in learning English.

Sladjana Zivković from the University of Nis (Serbia) argues in favour of developing a constructivist model in the ESP digital learning environment and offers suggestions regarding rapid changes in the traditional educational system in order to improve and transform it into a more efficient, effective, and constructivist one. In her pilot study, the author uses a conceptual framework to illustrate her starting point and examines how students perceive a constructivist model in the ESP technology-based learning environment.

David Landis from KIMEP University in Almaty and Sapargul Mirseitova from the Kazakhstan Reading Association in Almaty (Kazakhstan) describe an investigation of the Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking Project and its influences upon higher education in Kazakhstan since 1997. This investigation provides important insights into the impacts of globalization, liberalization and internationalization in the development of higher education in Kazakhstan during the past 14 years.

In their comparative study, Aliya Aimoldina and Sholpan Zharkynbekova from L.N.Gumilyov Eurasian National University in Astana (Kazakhstan) examine the existing values in the Kazakh and English language business discourse with a focus on business cultures.

Juldyz Smagulova and Zauresh Yernazarova from KIMEP University in Almaty (Kazakhstan) address the need and value of teaching Kazakh literature in the Kazakh language to Russian native speaker/learners of Kazakh as L2. The paper also draws upon analysis of the State curriculum and survey data of 400 high-school students in Russian schools in Almaty.

Azamat Akbarov from the International Burch University in Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina) argues that language used in the modern media for the purpose of propaganda proves how a democratic society can be used for undemocratic purposes through advertising, media ownership and



governmental factors. Simultaneously, the author postulates that the advancement of technology increases control by the government and diverse limitations of the society related to media.

In her overview of a current topic, Mirjana Lončar-Vujnović from the University of Mitrovica (Serbia) discusses the role of intercultural communication in teaching ESP, how this different innovative teaching approach enhances student motivation, influences learning outcomes and student performance.

Finally, Natasa Bakić-Mirić from the Foreign Languages Training Center in Bologna completes the volume with a book review “People and Cultures in Contact”, an international monograph edited by Prof Mirjana Lončar-Vujnović, in which scholars from around the world promote an understanding of and an appreciation for the rich and varied theoretical and practical assumptions surrounding the concepts of nation and culture.

Ultimately, the editors of this volume hope to have provided an insight into the ways in which higher education continuously evolves and how it has risen to face constant challenges such as changing perceptions in higher education as a result of new instructional practices and current research investigations.



# CHAPTER ONE

## AUTHENTICITY IN ESAP COURSE DESIGN: MANAGING DEPARTMENTAL AND STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

SOPHIA BUTT

### Outline

Designing English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) programmes, which could help practitioners deliver an authentic experience to students preparing for degree courses is undeniably challenging. However, with careful planning, close cooperation with receiving departments and feedback from students both before and after they embark on their departmental studies, it is a challenge that can be successfully met<sup>1</sup>. This chapter illustrates the three-pronged approach to course design which I undertook at the University of Birmingham from 2008 to 2014 to develop a pre-sessional<sup>2</sup> English course created specifically for business students. The key to the approach lies in attempting to design a curriculum which mirrors departmental studies in terms of the pedagogical methods employed, the materials and assessment techniques used, and the seminar tasks set. It is also about understanding and managing both departmental and student expectations to create a rewarding, learning experience.

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<sup>1</sup> **Note:** the three-pronged approach herein can be used to design an ESAP course for any discipline.

<sup>2</sup> An intensive academic English and study skills course taken immediately prior to departmental studies.

## **EAP Across the Disciplines**

In the mid-1970s, the British Council commissioned a number of studies to investigate English for *Specific* Purposes (ESP). The aim was to take a closer look at English for Academic Purposes (EAP) across various disciplines. In the early 1980s at the University of Birmingham (UK), Tony Dudley-Evans, Tim Johns and Maggie Jo St John examined the importance of collaboration and team-teaching in creating materials for overseas students of EAP/ESP. Two decades later, among others, Swales and Feak (2001) continued to reinforce the need for collaborative synergies that would benefit the stakeholders in ESP.

A book which has maintained currency today is *ESP: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, by Dudley-Evans and St John (1998). It highlights the importance of using authentic *carrier content* to teach *real content* when looking at specificity in ESP; for example: the statistics in an annual report could constitute the carrier content in a lesson, while the real content might be to teach students the language of trends and comparisons through the annual reports.

The motivational aspect of creating course materials which meet the needs and expectations of international students has been explored by many authors (see, for example, Robinson, 1980; Kennedy & Bolitho, 1984; Jordan 1984, 1993 & 1996; Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998; Ushioda, 1998; Dörnyei, 2001). Unsurprisingly, studies have revealed that where students feel that the course they have opted to study meets their needs and expectations, they are more likely to be motivated to achieve success (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991).

## **The Challenges of Creating Authentic E(S)AP Course Design**

There are a number of obstacles that can hinder authentic course design in respect of a preparatory English or pre-sessional course for future degree students: often, there is limited access to academics in the receiving departments who are willing and/or able to give up their time to share thoughts and course materials, or indeed authenticate the validity of subject-specific content created for the English course. This is, in part, attributable to the somewhat low status that English courses have historically had in many Higher Education Institutions (HEI), as they were often perceived as merely offering remedial English to non-native speakers of the language, rather than crucially equipping them with the

academic skills and language needed to enhance their chances of success when studying a degree in a second or third language.

Jordan (2002) highlights that there are several forms of co-operation between ESAP course developers and subject specialists that could prove valuable where the latter are willing to cooperate, for instance, "...the provision of text specimens and reading lists, recording short talks for...language practice, giving guest lectures, and even co-operating in the writing of practice material" (p.74). However, such collaborations are rare and usually only occur after considerable efforts to network have resulted in securing the trust and respect of individuals in target departments. The departure of one or more of these personnel with a collegial attitude means having to start afresh in attempting to build meaningful professional relationships which may then lead to new, productive partnerships.

Irrespective of any fruitful dialogues that may have taken place with receiving departments and/or students, and any creative ideas which may also have been generated within the materials-writing teams, the time and number of staff required to design a high quality course which mirrors the needs of its learners often restricts what can be feasibly produced in the time available or accorded. Another difficulty is meeting both departmental and student expectations of what the pre-session course will deliver, as often neither of these stakeholders have a broader understanding of external constraints (for example, governmental stipulations) which may impinge on course design.

As has been widely recognized, (see Munby, 1978; Holliday & Cooke, 1982; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Berwick, 1989; Brindley, 1989; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Hamp-Lyons, 2000; Lowe, 2009), it is essential that the EAP course convener or practitioner establishes the needs of the students before designing a course. But among the challenges in striving for authentic EAP course design where pre-session programmes are concerned, is that it is not feasible to try to gain access to the students prior to the start of the course, aside from which it is virtually impossible for a multi-disciplinary pre-session to cater for all (or even most) of its students: consider trying to meet the subject-specific needs and expectations of engineering, law, education, computing, business, medicine –and other students, all studying English together, before they proceed to different departments upon successful completion of the pre-session. On the other hand, discipline-specific pre-session offers significantly more opportunities to build an entire ESAP course around the future discipline of its students. Nevertheless, this also has its challenges.

## **The BME: A Discipline-Specific Pre-sessional**

The Business Management English (BME) Programme is a discipline-specific pre-sessional course which was founded at the University of Birmingham (UoB) in 2001. Initially, it accepted undergraduates (UG) and postgraduates (PG) with conditional and unconditional offers to study at any UK-based university. However, as the popularity of the programme grew and numbers began to increase exponentially, it became necessary to limit this pre-sessional to students with offers to study at the Birmingham Business School (BBS) only. Additionally, as it became clear that the needs of the UG learner differed significantly from that of the PG student, a separate English course was created for these two levels of students in 2012.

The BME programme is offered in four course lengths: 20-, 15-, 10- and 6-weeks, depending on the level of English of the incoming student, as evidenced by their score in a UK government-approved Secure English Language Test (SELT). Naturally, the higher their English results, the shorter the course students can be accepted onto (see UoB website for entry scores and SELTs accepted).

What follows is the three-pronged approach to course design that was implemented on the BME during the period November 2008 to November 2014: this was done with the support of the then Management Team<sup>3</sup> who, in addition to having other responsibilities, were in charge of curriculum and materials design.

### **Collaboration with Subject Specialists**

It has already been established that understanding the needs and expectations of the key stakeholders is a crucial step when striving to create an authentic course. Thus, it is beneficial to consult receiving departments early in the course design process. It would not be unusual at this stage, however, for course conveners to discover that Programme Leads (i.e. the subject specialists) know very little (if anything) about the aims and objectives of the E(S)AP course which has been/is being designed specifically to act as a preparatory/pathway programme for students holding conditional offers. In fact, some academics may not even be aware of the existence of pre-sessional pathways programmes within their institutions. This was the case with the BME in relation to some staff at the BBS. A starting point, therefore, was to deliver a short presentation

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<sup>3</sup> BME Director, Sophia Butt; Senior Coordinators, Jennifer Metcalfe & Mike Loughlin; the iVLE/IT Coordinator, Hasan Shikoh.

to personnel in the receiving school to share an overview of the existing ESAP curriculum and assessments, and the academic/linguistic skills taught to students prior to their departmental studies. It is worth stating here that approaching the Programme Leads without specific ideas or only a provisional plan may be counter-productive as the subject specialists are likely to feel pressured to contribute a considerable amount of information at the initial course-writing stage, thus resulting in some being reluctant to enter into collaborations.

Even in cases where an introductory presentation is kept to under 15-20-minutes, it should be anticipated that this will not be attended by all subject specialists, as was true at the BBS. Hence, soon after the scheduled presentations, one-to-one meetings were arranged with the Programme Leads who were responsible for the most popular post-BME courses. In 2008, these were: the Masters in Business Administration (MBA) programmes, and MSc courses in Marketing, International Business, Accounting & Finance, Investments, and Human Resource Management (HRM). These meetings, which were a crucial step in networking and fostering mutually-beneficial long-term professional relationships and on-going dialogue, not only enabled the English for International Students Unit (EISU) at the UoB to communicate information about the discipline-specific pre-sessional to the receiving departments for students post-BME, but it also helped to identify the expectations of BBS staff. Additionally, the Leads were asked for any information that they would be willing to share in order to help inform BME course design, for instance: reading lists, examples of assessment questions and sample case studies.

It is entirely possible that in addition to being unable to attend the presentation, some subject specialists will also be unavailable for (or possibly uninterested in) a one-to-one meeting with pre-sessional course designers. In these cases, a short questionnaire could be issued instead. This was done for BBS staff; the questionnaire covered a range of areas including: the writing genres with which students are expected to demonstrate familiarity during their degree course; the tools/models/theories it was anticipated that students would be exposed to during their departmental studies; common academic weaknesses displayed by PG/UG students; and requests for suggestions about items which could be woven into ESAP course design. For all-round convenience, including the time-consuming task of data-mining, the questionnaire was rendered into an e-form using Google Docs which also conveniently collates responses into a spreadsheet, after which they must be configured into a readable format. Figure 1 illustrates the questionnaire issued to BBS staff:

**Questionnaire for BBS Lecturers**

Dear BBS Lecturer,

The BME Team are currently in the process of making incremental changes to the programme for future conditional BBS students. I would be grateful if you would take 10 minutes to complete this questionnaire which will inform BME course design and help to better prepare our students for their departmental studies at your School.

Many thanks,

Sophia Butt: Director, Business Management English (BME) Pre-sessional

---

**Name**

**Please state your academic programme:**

**WRITING**

**Which genres of writing do you require your students to produce?**

Please tick all that apply.

☐

Essay

☐

Report

☐

Proposal

☐

Reflective Diary Writing/Personal Development Portfolio

☐

Literature Review

**Other:**

**Do you expect student essays to have...**

Please tick all that apply.



- ☐ Introduction
- ☐ Literature Review
- ☐ Conclusion
- ☐ Reference List (Harvard Referencing System)
- ☐ Bibliography

**...and between paragraphs and sections...**

- ☐ Section headings
- ☐ Discursive transition signals
- ☐ Both of the above

**In relation to the previous question, please explain what your choice(s) depend(s) on:**

**What are the typical function words used in essays set on your course?**

Please tick all that apply.

- ☐ Compare and contrast...
- ☐ Evaluate...
- ☐ Discuss...
- ☐ To what extent...
- ☐ Analyse...
- ☐ Describe

**Other:**

**In the space below, please type one or two sample essay titles from your course.**

Note: These will ONLY be used by the BME Management Team to inform the design of the questions on its curriculum.

**BUSINESS TOOLS**

**Which of the following theories/tools are relevant to/referred to on your course?**

- ☐ Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
- ☐ Herzberg/McGregor
- ☐ Porter's 5 Forces
- ☐ PESTEL
- ☐ SWOT
- ☐ BCG Matrix

**Other:**

**CASE STUDIES**

**Which of the following types of case studies are relevant to your course?**

- ☐ Problem-Solution
- ☐ Good Practice
- ☐ Answering Set Questions

**Which types of case studies are used the most?**

- ☒ Problem-Solution
- ☒ Answering Set Questions
- ☒ Good Practice

**Other:****What case study output are your students expected to produce?**

- ☐ Written reports
- ☐ Individual or Group Presentations
- ☐ Seminar discussions
- ☐ All of the above

**Other:****GROUP WORK & SPEAKING****What type of group work activities do you set your students?**

- ☐ Delivering team presentations
- ☐ Seminar discussions/tasks
- ☐ Case study analysis
- ☐ All of the above

**Other:**

**If presentations, do you assess the group or each individual within the presenting group?**

- ☐ Individual
- ☐ Group
- ☐ Both of the above

**Additional Information (Optional)****Thank you for your time**

Figure 1: Sample questionnaire for discipline-specific staff

Following the presentation to academic staff, one-to-one meetings and receipt of completed questionnaires, ESAP course designers can embark on planning meetings to decide on any necessary revisions to the curriculum. Once the changes have been made, or possibly new materials (including assessments) have been created, it is advised that brief follow-up meetings are held with subject-specific teams so that the specialists can be asked to comment on the authenticity of the [revised] curriculum, allowing further revisions to be made, if needed. One such follow-up meeting on the BME which was particularly beneficial concerned the largest assessed component of the course, the Feasibility Report (FR); a 3,000-word assignment worth 30% of the students' final mark. A team of six Accounting & Finance professors at the BBS agreed to review this assignment task and its accompanying 50-page FR Guide produced by the then FR Facilitator<sup>4</sup> complete with sample reports. In addition to confirming the authenticity of the FR task that was produced (in which students were being asked to submit a report incorporating both marketing and financial data to present the feasibility of launching a new product or service in a country of their choice) the subject-specialists also revealed that the quality and specificity of the task and the expectations of what students should produce for their FR Report was so sophisticated that it was

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<sup>4</sup> Lorraine Mighty

in fact akin to what BBS staff would expect of their students at dissertation level on the Master's programmes: this insightful feedback was instrumental in prompting the simplification of the FR task so as to more closely align it with a pre-sessional course, that is, the programme that the students would be undertaking prior to embarking on their Master's degree.

The next step in the three-pronged approach to authentic course design was to gain first-hand experience of term-time interactions between the subject specialists and the PG students: the latter included both former pre-sessional students, and their direct entrant counterparts, i.e. students who had unconditional offers and chose not to opt for the pre-sessional course prior to the start of their degree studies.

## **1. Observations of In-Sessional Degree Classes**

Where Step One of the three-pronged approach referred to above leads to the formation of strong professional relationships with Programme Leads in the post-ESAP course department, there is likely to be more willingness on the part of the academics to be receptive towards requests to observe a series of their lessons: ideally, these observations would be conducted in term one of the degree programme (particularly on one-year Master's courses), as this is when most students undertake intensive study on compulsory modules—that is, modules which they are required to pass.

In Step Two, the aim is to ascertain the following: the types of tasks set in class and the pace and level of difficulty of the lessons; the background reading/knowledge expected of PG/UG students; the nature, quantity and frequency of homework assigned and any feedback given on the same in subsequent lessons; the complexity of the assignments set for formal assessment; the nature of interactions between staff and students, and among students in class; and, the level of independence and autonomy expected of the learners. This step facilitates the creation of *more* authentic course content on a pre-sessional course which would resemble the ESAP students' future studies.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, most observations are likely to reveal that there is no standard blueprint for each of the above-listed areas, in fact, in some cases, they may vary considerably from one degree programme to another. Also, the personal style of individual lecturers will influence the delivery of the lessons and how different components of the module are managed. However, as a general rule, it could be fair to assume that staff who are responsible for courses in which students are required to have a higher level of English at the point of entry would inevitably have higher

expectations of their students: at the BBS, these courses<sup>5</sup> were the MBA programmes, the MSc in HRM and two of the four MSc degrees in Marketing, namely Strategic Marketing & Consulting, and Marketing Communications.

Observations of the in-session classes revealed that the number of assessed essays set in the Accounting & Finance group degrees, and the length of these assignments was noticeably different to the Marketing and Management degree programmes. However, those studying the former were expected to demonstrate greater expertise in statistics and written genres pertaining to this area; for instance: statistical reports; feasibility studies and financial analyses. It quickly became clear that these were areas that required attention on the BME, as they were being neglected in the curriculum at the time. The importance of linguistic accuracy and knowledge of the relevant referencing system was emphasised more in the non-finance subjects, although all students were required to reference their work appropriately using the Harvard Style. The average length of assignments in the Accounting & Finance group was 2,000 words, compared with 4,000 words (with the longest essay being 5,000 words) for the MBA, HRM and two aforementioned Marketing courses. This reinforced course design on the BME where students were expected to produce oral presentations and multiple fully-referenced assignments, with the longest being 3,000 words.

Based on the assumption that the classes observed during in-session term time were representative of the general standard and expectations of BBS lecturers across the degree programmes, the BME Management Team were able to assess whether or not the curriculum was suitably aligned with the future needs of their students and the expectations of the receiving staff. Where necessary, adjustments were made to achieve a greater degree of authenticity.

## **2. The Arrival Questionnaire, Student Reunion & Talking Heads**

The final step in the three-pronged approach to authentic course design is to communicate with the main stakeholders—the students. This is when an arrival questionnaire,<sup>6</sup> designed to elicit what students are expecting to

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<sup>5</sup> Up to 2014.

<sup>6</sup> The data collected through this is for the purpose of making modifications for future students enrolling onto the course, as there would be insufficient time to alter course design once the programme is underway.