
Originally published in Arts and Humanities in Higher Education, 4(3); 283-303

Available from:
http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1474022205056171

Copyright © 2005 SAGE.

This is the author’s version of the work. It is posted here in accordance with the copyright policy of the publisher for your personal use. No further distribution is permitted.

Accessed from Swinburne Research Bank: http://hdl.handle.net/1959.3/42300
Credit-Based Discipline Specific English for Academic Purposes Programmes in Higher Education: Revitalizing the profession

Gavine Melles, Geoff Millar, Janne Morton and Suzanne Fegan

Abstract
In the UK, North America and Australia, credit-bearing discipline specific English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses are seen as a challenge to remedial views of English as a Second Language and a key element in revitalizing a profession on the periphery of the institution. However, the EAP field has to confront not only institutional challenges to its acceptability as a discipline but also tensions within the field. In this article we examine the tensions which underpin current and future directions in the field, review the development of credit-based EAP courses in the US, UK and Australia, and illustrate our discussion with a case study from the University of Melbourne. We conclude by arguing that discipline specific credit-based EAP offers promising hope for the future of the EAP discipline in higher education, but that to achieve this end the field and practitioners need to find a position between critique of and accommodation to discipline specific content.

Keywords: content, credit, EAP, language, pragmatism

Introduction: Pragmatic tensions with EAP

The positioning of English as a Second Language (ESL) on the periphery of the university curriculum is a conventional response to the need to separate the language of instruction – English – from disciplinary content.

However, increasing international student enrolments, moves to internationalize the university, as well as the diversification of the traditional university sector into vocational domains, have produced a climate in which innovative responses to need, such as credit-based English for Academic Purposes (EAP), have emerged. While EAP courses find a ‘natural’ place within university curricula in countries where English is not the first language, such as Hong Kong (Bruce, 2002; Chapple and Curtis, 2000) and Israel (Kirschner and Wexler, 2002), in English-speaking countries such as Australia, the UK and North America the elevation of ESL to disciplinary (credit-based) status remains problematic. Bolton (1990), for example, claims that institutions view ESL/EAP as ‘pre-college’ instruction; they also believe it favourably skews grade point averages for foreign students, and is not comparable to foreign language study. Van Meter (1990) adds that these and other arguments raise questions about the credit-based potential of EAP in North American colleges and universities. The pre-tertiary status of EAP specifically is in fact consistent with the use of the term as a broad designation for pre-university and university teaching of all kinds (e.g. Hyland and Hamp-Lyons, 2002; Jordan, 1997). Such a broad umbrella definition of EAP makes arguments about professional legitimacy and a consistent pedagogy extremely difficult to sustain.

As Turner (1999: 61) also notes, ESL/EAP faces an institutionally dominant metaphor of language as ‘conduit’ for content, so that ‘all sorts of problems are simply written off as language problems and therefore technically solvable with attendance at a (any!) language class’. In this conduit metaphor, language
is seen as ‘a tool that in itself is devoid of any intellectual value’ (Kramsch, 1993: 3–4), a view which lends support to a discourse of student deficiency in technical skills. According to Benesch, this is an approach ‘which presents language as a set of discrete bits of knowledge such as “the sentence”, “the paragraph”, and “-ed endings” . . . which views students as patients who are deficient in “basic skills” and must be cured’ (Benesch, 1988a: 1).

The EAP field also faces tensions within its own community of practitioners as to the most appropriate forms of pedagogy consistent with humanistic and pragmatic commitments. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and EAP were ‘innovative’ moves away from grammatically-based, structural ESL (Robinson, 1980) to closer consideration of the linguistic demands of specific vocational and academic content domains. According to Strevens (1977), the move challenged existing assumptions about the ‘humanistic’ aims of English teaching, which were underpinned by the humanities backgrounds of teachers, the location of units in faculties of Arts or departments of English (Bolton, 1987) and the association of ESL with general (arts/humanities) composition aims. Claims are still made that the ‘English composition course is and should be a humanities course’ (Spack, 1988: 46), a position which appears to underpin the idea that ESL teachers inherently dislike scientific discourses (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987; Strevens, 1988: 42). Such a belief may lie behind the claim that content-based EAP has led to a ‘service’ conception of ESL, ‘from being a subject in its own right to a service industry for other specialisms’ (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987: 163–4, emphasis added). In fact Robinson (1980) suggests that ESP and EAP arose out of the desire of ESL teachers to confront an inferiority complex and show that they were ‘intellectually capable’ of coping with science.

Intersecting this humanities and science discourse tension are two forms of pragmatism in EAP, especially within the university sector: pragmatism as both a ‘vulgar’ and a critical matter (Hyland and Hamp-Lyons, 2002; Pennycook, 1997). Cherryholmes (1988: 51) defines vulgar pragmatism as ‘pragmatism premised on unreflective acceptance of explicit and implicit standards, conventions, rules, and discourse-practices that we find around us’. Benesch (1998: 101), for example, has argued that (vulgar) pragmatism in ESL accepts conventional linguistic objectives for EAP: ‘English language teaching should provide students with the grammar, vocabulary, and rhetorical forms of particular settings’. Pennycook (1994a) has suggested that such ‘utilitarian’ conceptions neglect opportunities to explore with students ways in which English is embedded in social, cultural and political relationships, including how the teaching of English trades on discourses of colonialism (Pennycook, 1994b, 1998; J.M. Swales, 1997).

Both Pennycook (2001) and Benesch (2001) have developed critical pedagogies to address these questions. Pennycook (1997) has suggested how various ‘discourses of neutrality’, including those of applied linguistics research, are common in EAP. Benesch (1993) also suggests that the ideological neutrality of the ESL field – its classroom pragmatics – contributes to the marginalization of ESL curriculum work. Benesch (1996) believes that EAP courses are opportunities for practitioners to act as agents of change through, for example, feminist interventions allowing students to explore patriarchal silences on gender in psychology (Benesch, 1998), and ‘professorial power’ (Benesch, 1999).
These criticisms have not gone unchallenged. Allison (1996), for example, argues that vulgar pragmatism is not a unified discourse among EAP practitioners and is not the product of ignorance of institutional ideologies of dominance. Bruce (1995) also notes some contradiction in EAP practitioners preaching ‘ideological’ sensitivity while taking up conventional adversarial discourses in their own peer-directed writing. Embedding ideology critique in practice is a choice practitioners may be able take up in locating their practice ‘between critique and accommodation’ (J.M. Swales et al., 2001).

Thus, Bruce (2002), for example, sees discipline specific EAP as accommodation to the existing rhetorical structures of law. Thompson (2000), on the other hand, takes up critical discourses in her inclusion of indigenous texts in course materials. At Adelaide, Cadman (2002) proposes that critical pragmatism is required to help ESL students understand the way supervisors respond to their work. Paltridge (1997), meanwhile, adopts an ‘accommodationist’ response to workshopping research proposal writing with ESL students. Binary distinctions such as these (language–content, humanities–science, critique–accommodation) can ‘draw rigid boundaries between what is acceptable and what is not’ (Eagleton, 1983: 133). Critical pragmatists acknowledge, however, that binaries are often mutually dependent constructs (Cherryholmes, 1999; Usher and Edwards, 1994) that ‘require evaluation and reappraisal’ (Cherryholmes, 1988: 151). The different positions espoused are, therefore, anticipated and necessary to debate in the field. We suggest that the EAP field is rife with arguments about purportedly antagonistic discourses of practice which in fact are complementary.

**Common core language skills versus specific disciplinary content?**

Content-based instruction is not limited to EAP (Krueger and Ryan, 1993; Mohan et al., 2001; Wiesen, 2001; Wu, 1996) and, as a result, definitions are broad (e.g. Brinton and Master, 1997; Snow and Brinton, 1997). Brinton et al. (1989: 2) define postsecondary content-based instruction as ‘the concurrent teaching of academic subject matter and second language skills’. The term ‘skills’ is used widely in EAP to refer to both linguistic and general academic abilities, including specific techniques and strategies in managing academic texts (e.g. Glendinning and Holmström, 1992). It has replaced reference to the four skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking), a conception seen as inadequate to the ‘integrated’ tasks required of university students (Gaffield-Vile, 1996; Stoller, 1999), although Swales (1988: 8) notes that ‘we still have difficulty in identifying those skills that are widely utilizable within an academic milieu from those that may be subject-area, discipline- or even coursespecific’. Ideologically, skills has also been seen as a poor ‘training’, that is, a vocationally oriented substitute for the socially situated practices referred to as academic literacies (Bizzell, 1992; Geisler, 1994; Street et al., 1999; Zamel and Spack, 1998).

Content-based teaching in ESL purports to move the field beyond traditional linguistic approaches and challenge its remedial status (Benesch, 1988b). In the secondary sector, content-based ESL programmes have a long history (e.g. Evans, 1986; Mohan, 1986; Mohan et al., 2001; Wu, 1996). Brinton and Master’s (1997) three content-based models – theme-based, sheltered, and adjunct – do not do justice to the range of models and purposes included under the rubric of content-based instruction in tertiary settings. These include concurrent tutorial groups (Hirsch, 1988), workshopped ‘sheltered’ teaching of academic skills (Adamson, 1990),
sheltered (immersion) creditbearing ESL courses (Camacho, 1995), genre-oriented theme-based programmes (Meyer, 1996), credit-bearing non-discipline specific courses (Muro and Wise, 1988), and adjunct programmes aimed at ESL students (Carro, 1999).

The content dependence or independence of ESL teaching is an issue that occurs early in discussions of English for Specific Purposes, or ESP (e.g. Hawkey, 1978), a discipline widely regarded as the 'mother' discipline of EAP. Swales (1988) notes an early ‘split’ in the ESP field between those who followed Widdowson (1983) in seeing ESP as fundamentally dependent in content and pedagogy on the target domain, and those who follow Hutchinson and Waters (1987) in thinking learner purpose should replace any identifiable ESP methodology and content. Shih (1986: 624), for example, sets apart content-based writing instruction from other models of writing in the focus on writing from ‘authentic’ sources, attention to rhetorical structure, integrated skills, and extended study of a topic. Graham and Beardsley (1986: 228) suggest how in a credit-bearing sheltered pharmacy course for nonnative speakers (NNS) of English ‘learners focus on messages and not on language form’, and identify content-based ESP as not just about ‘linguistic competence’ but discipline and context specific skills.

Some writers reject moves into content, preferring ‘generalist’ EAP approaches. Spack (1988: 30) wants EAPers to leave discipline specific conventions to the experts and let practitioners focus ‘rather on general academic English’. She argues that coming to know a second discipline is too time consuming and that scientific writing, in any case, does not model good writing practices. Robinson (1991) also argues for ‘common core’ EAP, in other words, generalist courses which eschew discipline specific training; this ‘common core’ argument remains key to British EAP approaches (e.g. Jordan, 1997). In consequence, she and others also reject any special teacher education for EAP practitioners. Others have taken issue with this position (Hess and Ghawi, 1997; Holden, 1998), and Hyland (2002), specifically, points out that this ‘generalist’ assumption maintains EAP on the periphery of professionalism. The need for a specific pedagogy (e.g. Hess and Ghawi, 1997) and a particular focus for EAP (e.g. McDonough, 1986; Peacock and Flowerdew, 2001) could encourage recognition of its professional nature. Such credibility could also be enhanced by practitioners submitting to peer-reviewed pathways of academic training, for example PhDs and publication.

The teaching of critical analysis and knowledge transformation skills to EAP students and the transferability of such non-linguistic skills to discipline work are key areas in content-based teaching (Dong, 1998, but see Hansen, 2000). Critical thinking and analysis is also seen as within the scope of ‘sustained’ content-based EAP (Pally, 1997; Woodward-Kron, 2002). Snow and Brinton (1988: 555), for example, describing a sheltered EAP foundation programme, note that ‘a focus on critical writing and thinking skills appears to be a top . . . priority’. Currie (1993) notes how ‘conceptual activities’ in an EAP business course helped NNS students identify strategies and transferable skills for entering disciplinary communities (also see McKenna, 1987). Currie (1999) further develops this theme of the effective transfer of EAP-taught research skills to other content classes. The case study at Melbourne University included later in this article illustrates how EAP practitioners are attempting to create opportunities for students to develop transferable skills while simultaneously engaging with academic conventions.
Credit – ability or support: North America and the UK

Content-based EAP may or may not include credit-bearing courses for matriculated students, while discipline specific courses imply a particular curriculum dependency in teaching and assessment. Discipline specific credit-bearing EAP courses that incorporate collaboration with faculty, and scope for awareness-raising and perhaps critique of existing academic genres, constitute a minority among course offerings. Credit-based EAP has emerged against other forms of non-credit ESL support such as individual tutorials and workshops, and to some extent challenges remediation.

While ESL non-credit common core support remains the mainstay of higher education provision, credit-bearing and content-based ESL courses in North America are common within the (two year) community college, although appear less common in older more established institutions. Descriptions of credit ESL have a long and robust history (e.g. Dogger, 1981; Kessler, 1974) dating back to the same period in which ESP was emerging as innovative in the UK. The US community college appears to have been one of the main contexts for the development of content-based instruction, and this is the context for the examples in Benesch (1988b). Kasper (1995, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c, 1998), in particular, has described a range of discipline-based courses in the context of the two year US college. Community Colleges have invested a lot of time and energy in investigating the feasibility of credit ESL, measuring its growth (Mery, 1999) and success (Cohen, 1991; Mery, 1995), and the articulation of credit ESL with mainstream offerings in four year universities (Mellissinos, 1993). Nonetheless, giving credit for ESL courses in the US college sector remains a contentious issue (Kuo, 2000).

In older US universities, credit-bearing EAP subjects are often ESL composition courses, which parallel general composition. The University of Michigan, for example, offers over 30 credit-bearing ESL subjects linked to ‘generalist’ written composition at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. In other universities (e.g. University of Iowa ESL programme), credits are distributed to specific ESL focused classes, such as in reading and conversation skills. Sometimes credits are ‘weighted’ as at the University of Chicago, which offers quarter rather than full hours of credit for ESL programmes. Williams (1995) surveyed 78 four-year colleges and universities offering ESL composition courses alongside standard composition classes for matriculated students. Importantly, he notes that the ‘credit issue can be misleading, since at many institutions there are different types of credit’ (Williams, 1995: 159), including administrative credit which is valid for financial aid and immigration regulations. Williams found that 64 per cent of the respondents said the courses received graduation credit. On the other hand, although separate composition classes are preferred by ESL students and perhaps are more successful (Braine, 1996), this potential ‘ghettoization’ of ESL students may work against an ‘end to remediation’ (Benesch, 1988b). Williams suggests that mixing native and non-native speaking students could be beneficial and in keeping with language acquisition theory; a successful programme in New Zealand combining both groups is described by De Luca (1992). Overall, it seems that the establishment of credit-based discipline specific EAP programmes in the US remains uncertain.

Among UK institutions, credit-bearing EAP programmes appear to be in a minority according to BALEAP (British Association of Lecturers in EAP), whose Professional Issues Meeting reports document discussions about creditbearing and integrated courses from the mid-1990s. However, ESL centres that are accredited BALEAP EAP providers do not constitute the only source of programmes directed at NNS. The
Sussex Language Institute, University of Sussex, for example, offers a range of EAP courses for credit, noting, however, that they may form only a small part of the credit total for graduation. Two key developmental areas are the offering of 'British Culture/language' studies to EEC students (e.g. BA English Language and British Culture at Middlesex University), and also teacher training programmes specifically directed at NNS (e.g. MA in TESOL at the University of Buckingham). Some faculties and universities have been very pro-active. For example, at Middlesex University 16 discipline or profession specific credit-bearing units are offered within the Faculty of Business. At the University of Exeter a graduate certificate in English and Management is offered also with the guarantee of a place in the Masters programme.

Langley (1997: 1) undertook a survey of ESL units on ‘validated’ courses in the UK; the term ‘validated’ referring to ‘units that contribute to the final award of the qualification’. In her survey, however, qualifications do not necessarily refer to degree level programmes and include transition and foundation programmes; the latter are compulsory entry level programmes at preundergraduate (foundation) and pre-postgraduate (transition) level, which while accredited or validated are a form of institutionalized EAP remediation not considered here. Langley notes 18 universities offering undergraduate and three offering postgraduate EAP. Seven institutions offer ESP (i.e. discipline specific) and 18 offer general EAP courses. The Business School within her own institution, South Bank University, offers 16 credit-based EAP courses. More recently, converted Polytechnics (e.g. Anglia Polytechnic University) appear to offer more credit-bearing units and programmes to ESL speakers than older universities. The development of EAP credit-bearing courses within Faculties of Business parallels successful developments in Australia, and high enrolments by foreign students and the expansion of such offerings offshore seem to have given impetus to the development of such courses. It seems that the further development of credit-bearing EAP will come from specific faculties rather than from centralized ESL units.

Fanning (1999: 29) has noted that the climate in the UK is propitious for the development of fully integrated EAP courses although this will not be achieved ‘until they become a full substitute for an established degree course component or module, rather than just a “tacked on” addition’. This argument also raises the purported parallelism between foreign language learning and English as a Second Language, an issue debated in the field (e.g. Bolton, 1990; Greis, 1983; Van Meter, 1990) and an argument that is far from won. In general, therefore, the situation in the UK is somewhat uncertain although, like the two year college sector in the US, the newer generation universities and specific faculties appear to have responded more enthusiastically to the development of accredited discipline specific EAP courses. To some extent this is reflected in the Australian university sector.
EAP in Australia and the University of Melbourne

The numbers of international students at Australian universities has continued to rise throughout the 1990s and into the new decade. Most Australian universities with a significant international student cohort now offer a range of language and academic support programmes for those students. In most cases this comprises a suite of ESL or EAP offerings including pre-entry courses and ongoing concurrent support in the form of workshops in a range of academic subjects, individual consultations with students, lectures and dropin sessions. Many universities offer programmes that are prerequisite for entry to the university degree programmes, such as foundation, transition and bridging programmes (e.g. Felix and Michael, 1994), which do not ‘count’ as part of a student’s degree. Of Australia’s 40 universities around half offer some form of ESL courses for credit to international students. Based on information obtained from university websites, professional lists and personal communication, we provide an overview of these courses in Table 1. Most of them do not appear to be discipline specific although they may be content-based.

Bretag (2001) describes the development at the University of South Australia of an ‘integrated’ international business course that she identifies with the content-based tradition. She describes the benefits of the model developed and its extension to other courses with high international enrolments. Malcolm (1993) provides examples from Edith Cowan University (Western Australia) highlighting how a special purposes curriculum (LSP), including credit-based EAP and degree studies, are compatible. De Courcy (1994) describes the development of a ‘sheltered’ EAP programme for undergraduate Music students at Griffith University. Griffith is again the focus in the discussion by Farquhar (1999) of the development of two postgraduate credit-bearing subjects for Masters students, called English for Research Purposes, taking University of Melbourne courses as models. Finally, Elliott (1997) discusses input by language skills staff to a first-year Bachelor of Education unit at RMIT, in a move towards content/language specialist collaboration.

Thus, it seems that Australia has taken some substantial steps in according ESL subjects degree status. In all of these programmes common core language skills, content, and some discipline specific genres are referred to. The University of Melbourne has arguably been the most prolific source of credit-based discipline specific programmes, a view shared by Farquhar (1999). A case study follows on the history of one such course, which traces some of the discourses and practices that influenced its development. (See Melles, 2002, for a further case study.)

University of Melbourne credit-based EAP: History and Tensions

The Centre for Communication Skills and ESL (CCS&ESL) at the University of Melbourne was founded in 1994, but the history of credit-bearing, content-based EAP instruction at the University begins some years earlier with the establishment of two EAP courses, ‘Advanced ESL 1’ (AESL1) and ‘Advanced ESL 2’ (AESL2). Designed for students of respectively lower and
### Table 1: Examples of credit-bearing EAP in Australia (2002–3 data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Credit courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Adelaide</td>
<td>Faculty of Engineering, four ESL subjects parallel to NS Communication subjects at years 2 and 3. Three English for Professional Purposes courses for Humanities and one for Performing Arts students. Two ESL subjects for Maths/Computer Science students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia National University</td>
<td>Two courses, Advanced English in Academic Contexts (ACEN1001, 1002).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Catholic University</td>
<td>Postgraduate certificate in TESL in NS and NNS versions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The University of Ballarat</td>
<td>ESL for credit subject, ‘English and Academic Culture’, an interdisciplinary, one-semester subject for NNS counts toward the degree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curtin University</td>
<td>Four dual NS/NNS communication skills subjects and two credit-bearing ESL subjects for NNS (Intercultural Communication 141/142) valid in a range of programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griffith University</td>
<td>Two generic ESL courses for credit, for international business students (1201LAL and 1202LAL).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Trobe University</td>
<td>Two credit subjects – EDU11/12 ESL subject, EDU24 ESL UG/PG subject – at different levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macquarie University</td>
<td>Two general credit courses, EAP 100 and 101.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Melbourne</td>
<td>Three general ESL UG credit courses and three specific focus ESL UG courses – spoken interaction, effective communication for engineers, and project-based communication skills. Also, three discipline specific ESL courses for Economics/Commerce, IT and Architecture. Three streams (Engineering, Health, General) of a PG credit course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monash University</td>
<td>Law Faculty, an elective subject ‘Legal Research and Communication’ to international PGs, taught collaboratively with Faculty and Language and Learning Services staff. English Department, a major (seven courses) in English in Use for UG NNS (EIU 1010, 1020, 2110, 2120, 3110, 3210, 3320).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Northern Territory</td>
<td>Three core communication skills units to NS and NNS Academic English, Study Skills and Computers for Tertiary Study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University (NTU)</td>
<td>A one-year, full-time subject for international students: ‘English Language Studies’, counts toward the Bachelor of Arts and requires students to have first completed a six-week preparatory EAP course at RMIT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT)</td>
<td>Four ESL credit subjects (Language 1018 Levels 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of South Australia</td>
<td>School of International Business, communication skills subjects for NNS UG and PG.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Sydney</td>
<td>Two subjects: professional Communication for Chemical Engineers (PG); Faculty of Business, Communication and Critical Analysis (UG), dual NS/NNS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Technology Sydney</td>
<td>‘Engineering for Sustainability’, and a second-year subject ‘Engineering Communication’. Also the ELSSA Centre, two full-time credit programmes for international students: ‘Advanced Diploma in Australian Language and Culture’ and ‘Australian English Language and Culture’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNSW@ADFA</td>
<td>One PG credit course, ‘Academic Discourse: Analysis and Writing’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The University of Western Sydney</td>
<td>Two for-credit subjects to ESL students: ‘Academic Discourse’ and ‘Analysis and Writing’. Also, a range of inter-faculty collaborative teaching, mostly in the form of adjunct tutorials in academic writing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
higher English language proficiency levels, these courses were listed as first-year Arts subjects but were open as electives to students from other years and faculties. They offered instruction in generic language and academic literacy skills through the study of the history of Australia as an immigrant society (AESL1), and of the institutional basis (political/legal/economic) of Australian society (AESL2). In each course, content input centred on a series of ‘guest’ lectures from scholars in appropriate faculties and departments across (and occasionally outside) the university, together with readings supplied or recommended by those scholars. This input served as the basis for a range of exercises in knowledge transformation, literacy skills, grammatical instruction and editing skills. While the immediate textual models were drawn from the Humanities, students from other areas were admitted on the assumption that the skills practised were in essence generic, and capable of transfer to other disciplines. The content-based nature of these courses may be contrasted with the specific focus on language in two early additions to this suite of EAP courses: ‘Spoken Interaction’, which uses a variety of techniques to promote both fluency and accuracy in oral English, and AESL3 (since renamed ‘Exploring Style and Meaning in Language’) in which students with relatively high English proficiency explore the effects of stylistic choices of wording and structure in a range of academic and non-academic texts.

Originally constructed as full-year courses with five contact hours per week, AESL1 and AESL2 have been reduced by institutional change across the decade to one-semester (12-week) courses with four contact hours a week. While this has inevitably put strains on the balance between content, academic literacy, and language instruction, the Centre’s EAP offerings have not only survived, but proliferated. In 1998 the Faculty of Engineering offered one of its first-year subjects as the shell for an EAP/Communication Skills course designed and staffed by the CCS&ESL in consultation with Engineering staff. This course was subsequently taken over by the CCS&ESL as its own. The following year a special stream of AESL1 was instituted for Economics students, incorporating lectures and texts in elementary macroeconomics. This has since been approved as a separate subject within the ESL suite.

**Case study: Architecture EAP**

Increasing international student enrolments in the Faculty of Architecture had by the mid-1990s translated into a growing number of requests to CCS&ESL for assignment-specific workshops. By the late 1990s the Faculty recognized a need to provide something less piecemeal to address the academic language requirements of their international students. The move from non-credit to credit came in 2000 with the first content-based, discipline specific course being developed and taught by CCS&ESL. The course was named ‘Introduction to Architectural Studies’ – reflecting its disciplinary focus – and covered introductory studies in the fields of architectural history/theory, design, and construction technology. This title also reflected Faculty concern about a possible perception of the subject as ‘remedial’. The subject includes three modules mirroring the three core subjects in the first year of the architecture degree. Each module consists of several lectures with architectural content, and a language/communication focus based on an analysis of the genres and assessment tasks specific to that field. The Design module, for example, covers lateral and creative thinking, oral presentation and group discussion skills in studio contexts, peer criticism, and the integration of visual and verbal forms of communication.

‘Introduction to Architectural Studies’ is based on a different model from
that of other discipline specific credit subjects taught by the ESL Centre. It was established as a subject within the Architecture Faculty, rather than as an ESL subject within the Faculty of Arts. From the Centre’s perspective, it was hoped that this would encourage the Architecture Faculty to take a greater role and responsibility in ensuring students at risk were enrolled, and that the subject itself was viable in terms of enrolments. For the first three years, however, numbers fluctuated between 12 and 15 students, and the responsibility for identifying at-risk students and encouraging them to enrol at times fell between the Faculty and CCS&ESL. In 2003, following a subject review in which support was received from both students and staff, the Faculty made several changes. Firstly, the subject was extended to international students across the four programmes of the Faculty (Landscape Architecture, Urban Planning, Property and Construction, as well as Architecture). Secondly, the Faculty decided that all first-year international students would automatically be enrolled into the subject, with exemptions granted only to those who could demonstrate a certain standard of language proficiency. The new subject, renamed ‘Introduction to Built Environment Studies’ to recognize its wider audience, began the year with 46 students, an additional 18 having been exempted on the basis of language test results.

Content-based discipline specific EAP courses taught within the Faculties are by their very nature ‘fragile’ (Swales et al., 2001); they are both dependent on ongoing collaboration between content and EAP staff, and their curricula need to be responsive to changes in the broader disciplinary context. In our case, there was a sudden need to accommodate students from a wider range of disciplines, although still within the one Faculty. It will take time to establish links with staff from the disciplines of Urban Planning, Landscape Architecture, and Property and Construction, and to develop an understanding of the discourses in these fields. Meanwhile, the content base of the curriculum suddenly seemed too narrowly focused on architectural discourse. Faced with a wider range of students, we have responded with a shift to a relatively more generic language and communication skills focus, one that is informed by commonalities we have identified in the four disciplines. This change in turn allows us to set tasks in which the students research and compare genres across the four disciplines. Such a move does, on the other hand, compromise our attempts to revitalize our own profession.

Close collaboration between Faculty and ESL staff has been a key to the success of this subject. The commitment shown by a number of Architecture lecturers has been in part a consequence of the subject being Faculty-owned. One issue that has engaged both Faculty and ESL staff is that of critical pedagogy. Like Swales et al. (2001), we have responded to this challenge by, for example introducing lectures and readings on the position of Asian architecture in what has traditionally, particularly at a first-year level, been the history of western architecture; and encouraging students to use their experiences and the local architecture of their country to inform their design work.

Just as important are the ongoing discussions we have with Faculty staff in an attempt to encourage reflection on their pedagogical practices. These discussions range from the roles of language and content, the importance of making disciplinary discourse conventions explicit for students, to internationalization of the curriculum. One practice that has developed out of these discussions is providing lecturers with feedback on their lecturing styles. Each semester a number of Faculty staff’s lectures are video-taped and the lecturing staff are provided with a copy of the video together with written feedback on aspects of their lecturing style that promote or hinder comprehension by international students. This feedback is
based on comments from EAP staff and students. We consider this an opportunity for EAP as a discipline, with its strong theoretical base in teaching and learning practices, to provoke reflection and even action in another discipline. In other words, this is an example of critical pragmatism. Collaborative research projects investigating the role of language and content in various architectural genres have also emerged from these discussions and are now in progress.

In spite of demonstrated support, it is by no means universally accepted in the Faculty that an ESL subject such as ‘Introduction to Built Environment Studies’ should continue to be offered. Concerns about the subject have been voiced at various times in terms of equity issues for local native-speaker students, the compromising of Faculty standards, the status of the subject as a core versus an elective, and epistemological issues relating to whether language and communication skills are valued sufficiently in the Faculty to warrant a subject. Ongoing collaboration with staff and the flexibility to adjust the curriculum to respond to changes will help to ensure the subject’s continued existence.

Discussion and conclusions

This case study demonstrates the accommodation of EAP practitioners to existing disciplinary conventions, and the tension between generic and discipline specific teaching within faculties which resist the efforts of EAP staff to embed academic literacies in the curriculum (see also Melles, 2002). At the level of University structure an analogous tension is evident in the indeterminate status of staff providing EAP and learning skills support. In some 16 Australian universities they are employed as academics, in 11 others as general (i.e. non-academic) staff, while in a further 8 they are academic staff in some faculties and general staff in other units. The ‘handmaiden’ perception of EAP programmes is evident in the recent demise of the academic CCS&ESL and its incorporation into a restructured and enlarged Language and Learning Skills Unit within the Academic Services Division. Ironically, owing to the non-academic status of this unit, the former Centre’s credit-based subjects, identified by Farquhar (1999: 126) as exemplary, have had to be transferred to an academic department – Linguistics and Applied Linguistics – not otherwise associated with student support.

At a more general level, some have argued that without an adequate theoretical grounding in applied linguistics (O’dlin, 1994) and clear methodological commitments, for example to genre theory (J. Swales, 1990), the EAP field cannot achieve pedagogical coherence. Perhaps it is true that institutional marginalization is more likely where no consistent pedagogical platform exists. In a review of the history of ESP, Swales notes how ESP practitioners seem to work in isolation from each other (J. Swales, 1988: 13). This lack of communication and a common disciplinary paradigm across a ‘protean’ professional community (Robinson, 1991: 1) has not fostered a credible view of the discipline. However, institutional scepticism regarding the value of EAP
as a mainstream subject seems at least as important, and Murphy et al. (1995) argue that objective evaluations of discipline specific EAP are essential to resist the perceived lack of academic credibility of many ESL units. Bolton (1990) suggests that credit for ESL courses is important for academic revitalization of the ESL profession, is required for cross-institutional comparability, and is warranted on the basis of course content, which is not manifestly remedial. Bolton also argues that course credit benefits students by increasing motivation through positive reinforcement; and credit is vital in order to fulfil the institutional mission and to remain competitive.

Turner (1999: 59) questions ‘the conceptualisation of language in the institutional discourse in which EAP is located’, and prefers a metalanguage that excludes ‘support’, ‘remediation’, ‘service’, and ‘language training’. Although such a metalanguage is being used in ‘in-group’ conversations, we suggest that the EAP field needs to take up the critical challenge of engaging with the disciplines through interdisciplinary collaboration. Only by attempting genuinely to understand the disciplines can EAP practitioners critically compare the value of their humanistic discourses to those of others, and their application and merit in teaching; discipline specific credit-based EAP programmes offer such a platform. EAP continues to search for a ‘third place’ between critique and accommodation in the university curriculum, a place which remains dependent on the willingness of institutions to reconsider the premises of the language–content split that currently determines the future scope for EAP.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Gail Langley, HOD English Language Section, Faculty of Business Computing and Information Management at London South Bank University for posting her survey and responding to our queries. Thanks are also due to Katina Krasnichkin, School of Languages and Linguistics, Griffith University, for her information. Acknowledgement also should go to two anonymous reviewers whose suggestions greatly improved the substance of this article.

References


English for Specific Purposes 17(4): 369–90.
Kasper, L.F. (1997a) 'The Impact of Content-Based Instructional Programs on the
Melbourne: Victorian Language and Learning Network.