

The EAP Practitioner in the Academy: A Watershed Moment?

Saturday 20 May 2017

Joachim Room, School of Education, Durham University

This one-day symposium will explore the changing nature of the EAP practitioner's roles and responsibilities in the reality of today's marketised higher education. In the words of our first guest speaker, Dr Gregory Hadley (Niigata/Oxford), EAP professionals "...are being reshaped and resocialised through discourse and practices that derive from the corporate world". We will explore the effects of these macro-level global influences on policies at the meso-level (institutions) and on the micro-level of practice in EAP units and classrooms. As our second speaker, Dr Alex Ding (Leeds) will then explore, however, the EAP profession may be partly complicit in the precariousness that many of us experience. Practitioners tend to operate "at the margins of academia"; however, most of us "...are also only, at best, marginally academic". It is an understanding of individual and collective agency that can offer a way forwards. This capacity for academic and professional agency provides both a cause for optimism and a basis for action.

In an afternoon of discussion, we pick up the themes of the morning to explore the ways in which EAP professionals working in university settings might act to shape stronger academic identities, to steer a course through professional liminality, to exploit our hybridity and to forge the cultural capital needed to effect change in higher education.

Guest Speakers



Dr Gregory Hadley
(Niigata University / University of Oxford)



Dr Alex Ding
(University of Leeds)

Talk Abstracts & Bios

Please see below.

How the Game is Played: Focusing on Blended EAP Professionals in Corporatized Universities

Dr Gregory Hadley
(Niigata University / University of Oxford)

Talk 1 Abstract

Since the late 1980s, educators in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) have witnessed a steady change in the way they are often viewed by their universities. While before many were seen as culturally aware English language educators, often today they are viewed as linguistic service technicians tasked with repairing the broken language of international students, in order for them to be successfully 'processed' by the institution. Situated today within precarious work environments and saddled with heavy teaching loads, EAP educators have experienced not only a decline in agency, many are being reshaped and resocialized through discourse and practices that derive from the corporate world.

In an effort to raise awareness and stimulate discussion on the role that EAP educators might have in reclaiming their identity and role within today's universities, this seminar presents some of the findings of a six-year Critical Grounded Theory of EAP units at eleven universities in the UK, USA and Japan undergoing the process of corporatization, which is when the organizational culture and practices of universities are transformed to emulate aspects of the service and manufacturing industries (Castree & Sparke 2000 ; Jarvis 2001 ; Silvey 2002 ; Steck 2003 ; McKenzie & Scheurich 2004 ; Yamamoto 2004 ; Washburn 2005 ; Woolgar 2007 ; Donoghue 2008 ; Tuchman 2009). I will focus specifically on the emergence of Blended EAP Professionals (BLEAPS) – those who are not quite teachers, not quite managers, and not quite administrators, but who are responsible for a wide variety of initiatives and issues that affect EAP teachers in corporatized universities.

Three strategy sets of Blended EAP Professionals will be explained, together with some of the social processes – both successful and unsuccessful – that people in these positions practice in an attempt to keep EAP teachers under control and to survive the perils of being held responsible for maintaining the flow of international students into the university. This presentation will be of interest to those who wish to have deeper insight into social processes and issues affecting their careers in educational environments that have been affected by some of the neoliberal aspects of globalization.

CASTREE, N. & SPARKE, M. (2000). 'Professional Geography and the Corporatization of the University: Experiences, Evaluations, and Engagements', *Antipode*, 32 (3), pp. 222-229.

DONOGHUE, F. (2008). *The Last Professors: The Corporate University and the Fate of the Humanities*, Fordham University Press, New York.

JARVIS, P. (2001). *Universities and Corporate Universities: The Higher Learning Industry in Global Society*, Routledge, London.

MCKENZIE, K. & SCHEURICH, J. (2004). 'The Corporatization and Privatization of Schooling: A Call for Grounded Critical Praxis', *Educational Theory*, 54 (4), pp. 431-443.

SILVEY, R. (2002). 'Sweatshops and the Corporatization of the University', *Gender, Place & Culture*, 9 (2), pp. 201-207.

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TUCHMAN, G. (2009). *Wannabe U: Inside the Corporate University*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

WASHBURN, J. (2005). *University, Inc.: The Corporate Corruption of American Higher Education*, Basic Books, New York.

WOOLGAR, L. (2007). 'New Institutional Policies for University-Industry Links in Japan', *Research Policy*, 36 (8), pp. 1261-1274.

YAMAMOTO, K. (2004). 'Corporatization of National Universities in Japan: Revolution for Governance or Rhetoric for Downsizing?', *Financial Accountability & Management*, 20 (2), pp. 153-181.

Speaker Bio

Dr Gregory Hadley is a Professor of Applied Linguistics and Cultural Studies in the Department of Humanities at Niigata University, Japan, and a Visiting Fellow at Kellogg College, University of Oxford. He is author of *English for Academic Purposes in Neoliberal Universities: A Critical Grounded Theory* (2015, Springer) and, more recently, *Grounded Theory for Applied Linguists: A Practical Guide* (2017, Routledge). Gregory's website can be found at <http://www2.human.niigata-u.ac.jp/~ghadley/main/>

EAP at a Watershed: Rethinking Practitioners' Identity and Agency in Neoliberal Times

Dr Alex Ding
(University of Leeds)

Talk 2 Abstract

Enduring tropes in discourse about the EAP practitioner are as follows: firstly, we know little about EAP Practitioners who have been largely erased from and ignored in EAP research and literature; secondly, a persistent trope (and reality) is that practitioners are particularly vulnerable to service status designation and consigned to increasing the profitability of avaricious universities and, thirdly, that practitioners operate not only at the margins of academia but are also only, at best, marginally academic.

The purpose of this paper is, initially, to explore these tropes, seeking explanations for their endurance, and seeking to explain their existence within an ideology of neoliberalism and managerialism. Particular attention is paid to exploring how these explanations have helped shape a disenfranchised and liminal identity for EAP practitioners. However, whilst structural and ideological forces have largely worked against practitioners, in terms of their identity and agency, it would be misleading to suggest that there are not also a number of self-inflicted wounds – ones, that as EAP practitioners and as a profession, we have to take some responsibility for.

The central part of this paper explores agency and how we, collectively and individually, can begin to redress the notion that we are 'subacademics', liminal and of primarily of value only in terms of income generation. This agency is framed and explored within the critical realist understanding of reflexivity and then used to present ideas and strategies to take practical measures to begin to redefine who we are and begin to exert an appropriate measure of control over our professional lives. Particular attention is given to exploring how we can accrue sufficient cultural capital within academia - capital through scholarship and research - to develop sufficient collective and individual agency to begin to shape structures (and cultures). In addition to arguing for accumulating cultural capital the thorny and complex issue of (professional) socialisation is also raised. In effect, many of us, unlike most professionals (especially traditional academics), are socialised into the nascent profession of EAP in situ and post hoc. Therefore our socialisation is precarious as it depends on context, colleagues, local practices, policies and opportunities. It is also precarious because the knowledge base for practitioners whilst rich and developing is contested which raises epistemological, ideological and existential questions as to our purposes and roles in academia.

This paper is, above all, an invitation to reflect on our current situation and to seriously consider whether we are at a crucial, watershed moment in our history.

Speaker Bio

Dr Alex Ding is Lecturer in EAP and Director of the Centre for Excellence in Language Teaching at the University of Leeds. He is co-author with Dr Ian Bruce of *'The English for Academic Purposes Practitioner: Operating on the Edge of Academia'* (2017, Palgrave Macmillan). His research interests relate to practitioner identity and agency, and how they relate to knowledge and structure. Alex blogs at <https://teachingeap.wordpress.com/>