



Expectations and experiences of speaking in undergraduate content and EAP courses

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English for Academic Purposes

EAP 'is the study of English for the purpose of participating in higher education [...] centred on the texts (spoken and written) [...] and include the discourses and practices that surround and give rise to such texts' (Bruce, 2011: 6).

EAP's aim is to facilitate learners' study or research in English (Hyland and Hamp-Lyons, 2002)

EAP course design:

- identifies the educational 'gap' between the learners' present and the target situation (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987)
- assists in bridging the gap
- How much do we know about our students' target situation in terms of speaking?

Spoken academic practices and discourses

Jordan (1997: 193)

- Asking questions in lectures
- Participating in group discussions, e.g. seeking and giving information, giving opinion, clarifying, elaborating, disagreeing, giving an example
- Making oral presentations and responding to questions/comments
- Verbalising data, giving oral instructions, e.g. in seminars/laboratories or workshops

Ferris and Tagg (1996): class participation, small group work, oral presentations, leading discussions, debates, working with peers and group assignments

Academic English and Skills for International Undergraduates 1 & 2

- Open to all in-coming international undergraduate students on their Study Abroad/ Year Abroad/Exchange programmes
- Level 1 (EAP 1) Introductory course and Advanced course (EAP 2) – both credit-bearing (20 UG)
- Approximately 150 students per year
- Share two ILOs related to the spoken academic skills:
 1. contribute to seminar discussion by analysing and evaluating concepts and arguments with reference to a range of academic sources;
 2. apply a range of interactional skills to negotiate meaning effectively in intercultural group discussions
- Share the same type of spoken assessment: seminar discussion with focus on the use of sources to support ideas (50%) and interaction (50%)

Seminars and NNS students

Challenges for NNS (e.g. Lynch and Anderson, 1992):

- public performance (high visibility/high risk)
- thinking on your feet
- relevant subject knowledge
- logically ordered arguments

Basturkmen (2002) added the need for interlocutor skills and co-construction and negotiation of meaning.

How do EAP 1 & 2 help:

- Subject knowledge linked to written assessments (recycled)
- Sessions to 'demystify' seminars as academic practice
- Task repetition (Bygate, 2001) and formative feedback (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006)
- Explicit expectations (e.g. Full/abridged feedback form)

Measure of success?

- EAP 1 & 2 receive strong feedback (formal and informal):

- Quality of teaching
- Development of written academic skills
- Usefulness of feedback

BUT ALSO

- Rare opportunity for speaking
- Interactivity (higher than content courses)
- Opportunity to learn with and from other international students
- Space where cultural differences could be discussed

Did I/we get the target situation wrong?

Expectations and experiences of developing speaking skills

Project details:

- January to May 2019
- 4 international undergraduate students in SA Programme
- EAP 1 and EAP 2
- College of Arts, Social Sciences and Science and Engineering
- 2 questionnaires and 2 interviews each (start + end of term)

Questions:

- 1) Expectations
- 2) Experience while in Glasgow
- 3) Role of EAP

Expectations and experiences of developing speaking skills

Expectations and Motivations

1. Developing speaking skills - the top priority

BUT expectations limited to EAP class and social interactions
Not content classes :

2. Strong willingness to be a language user (Blaj-Ward, 2017)
to participate and be active in academic and social spaces

Expectations and experiences of developing speaking skills

Experience: (selected themes)

- Interactions with home students:

They are very friendly and helpful. But then it stops there. it's difficult to go further. There is wall. ... other international students noticed that too (Student B).

- Friendships and socializing with co-nationals or other internationals (not home students):

'I'd say I have a group of friends. I've met them at the beginning plus the flatmates. A few of them from the EAP (student C)

I made a friend. She is French speaker but she wants to learn English too so both tried to speak English. (Student A)

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Experience: content classes (selected themes)

1) Seminar contact hours and lecturers

2) Low Interactivity

very little happens [...] it is more receiving information.... 'more like a lecture on our questions' (Student C Science and Engineering)

And you don't have to, you can't talk or you can't interact with the teacher. It's like a review of three lectures we had You can say your point of view, but you can't have a debate, conversation (Student B Soc-Si).

Also I don't really talk is because, I prepare, but I realized that the others don't. And so the teacher asks questions, and she lead the students to kind of the right answers, and so the others keep guessing. And so I feel like I know the answer (Student A, CoA)

Expectations and experiences of developing speaking skills

3) reliance on Initiation-response-feedback (IRF) – questions to check understanding (Walsh, 2011)

Students are shy because if you say something, if you're correct it's impressive, but you can very easily be very, very wrong. I'd say that's why there's not a lot of discussion. The teacher asks questions and everyone is usually quiet, really not sure. They really don't want to look stupid in front of everyone' (Student S)

And the tutor, just show some PowerPoints on the main topic. And he just does questions. 10 students but just half participate. [they] just give a simple answer, one sentence two sentences and the tutor said 'okay' (Student B Soc-Si)

4) Insufficient clarity of expectations

Expectations and experiences of developing speaking skills

5) speaking to learn as learning to speak – students' understanding discourse/practice?

We read the text, answered questions. We didn't talk. (Student B)

'we spoke more before the reading week and after we mainly read, paraphrased or summarised. I don't really feel like we had many opportunities to speak' (Student A)

6. Understanding home students

I feel huge difference between the lecturer or tutors language and the students language. when the teachers speak [...] they try to make it clear. But when I talked to students, everything changed. They speak faster, they don't use standard sentence. Yes. it's hard to keep up. especially in the tutorial, (Student D Soc-Si)

7. Multisource student-led discussion not predominant practice at UG

EAP UG Speaking: Reflections

- EAP at an undergraduate level is 'complex and elusive' (Johns, 2009) and differs from PG level, e.g.
 - a) role of seminar - examination = measurement of material assimilation? Academic socialisation? Different types
 - b) role of lecturer – beliefs, teaching experience, institutional commitment?
 - c) discourse practice: speaking to learn not visible?
- Research on EAP and HE Pedagogy predominantly based on PG level, more needed on UG (Storch, Morton & Thompson, 2016:486):

EAP UG Speaking: Reflections

- Bias in EAP towards writing (reading-writing nexus) YET speaking skills are very important for the SA students (Users AND learners)
- Listening and speaking are the skills international students need (present situation = little previous practice in L/S) but target situation not always conducive to development
- Safe environment for language learning, intercultural learning/sharing and aculturation with the local culture (social and academic) highly valued
- Speaking in 'student engagement' 'active learning' 'participation', dialogic teaching and (often feedback), technology assisted learning, oracy in education and social justice, so...

Role for EAP? Value of scholarship into UG provision? Collaboration?
Embedded EAP? Communication champions(Graduate attributes)?

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