

## InForm 2018

# From IFY to FY with Home Students: Challenges & Strategies- An EAP Tutor's Experience



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## **Talk Overview:**

- Role at University of Sussex
- The Academic Development FY module
- Transition NNS → NS teaching- research
- My research at UoS
- Questions

# University of Sussex, Brighton

Teaching Fellow in ELT (2016- present):

- MSc Business Communication Skills
  - Pre-sessional course; EAP workshops
  - General ELT
  - Academic Development for FY with Home Sts (NS)\*
- International Sts  
(NNS)



\*For this presentation:  
International sts = NNS  
Home sts = NS

# Key EAP/ IFY Teaching Experience

**2013-15:** University of Nottingham (UNNC) (Ningbo, China)

- FY programme : Semester 1 (EGAP) & Semester 2 (ESAP)

**2015-16:** Arts University, Bournemouth

- IFY for Art & Design + English

- Tutorials with 'international' sts including NS e.g. Irish, American



## Academic Development for FY

AD= Academic Skills module for FY (since 2015)

Core module (30 credits) across 2 terms

- Year 1: Personal & Academic Development Skills (PADS)
- Year 2: AD (mixed discipline)
- Year 3: AD (subject specific groups)

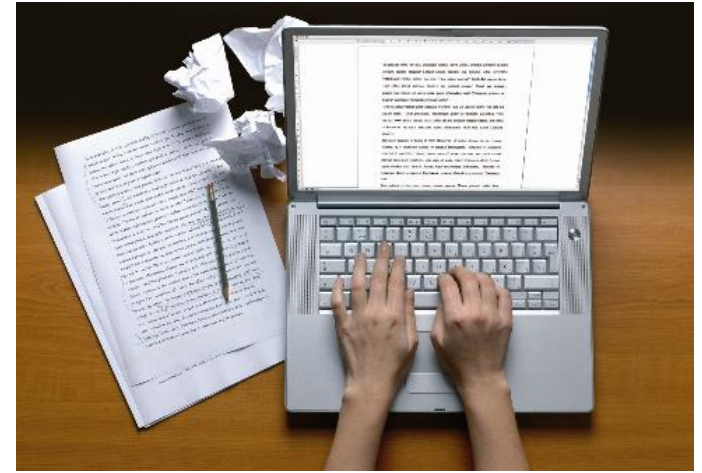
Cohort of approx. 700 sts (mostly NS)

- 4 strands: Arts & Humanities, Business, Social Sciences, Psy
- Diverse student profile e.g. range of levels; personal & learning needs; motivation & attendance issues

# Academic Development for FY

## Topics include:

- effective literature searching
- the process of academic writing
- presentation skills



**Assessment:** 2500 word essay + self-study tasks,  
10-15 min presentation, 2x reflective writing tasks

*Content similar to other EAP/IFY modules, but cohort are 'home' sts*

# Transition in Teaching Experience

## Initial feelings towards AD teaching vs other teaching experiences

Lack of confidence

Previous NS experience

Language input?

## Reflections on my own teaching (& teacher identity)

EAP/ ELT

Language & Culture

Loss/ gain value?

## Research: Transition from NNS→ NS teaching

### **Mick Kavanagh (Uni. of Essex) BALEAP 2017**

- “Teaching Home Students: Teachers’ Attitudes to a New Challenge”
- Difficulties & worries for tutors- confirmed the challenges
- e.g. attendance, motivation, academic literacy

### **Michelle Munn (Uni. of Brighton I.C.) (2017-ongoing)**

- (Ed.D) paper- Cultural Practices within EAP and Study Skills/  
Academic Development
- Diversification in the EAP role- teaching culture may be changing



## Research at University of Sussex

Tutor questionnaires- 7 participants (June 2018)

All tutors:

- minimum of 5 years teaching experience
- majority of experience in ELT + EAP with NNS

Identified as:

EAP/ELT/ESP  
Practitioner  
(T1-T4, T6)

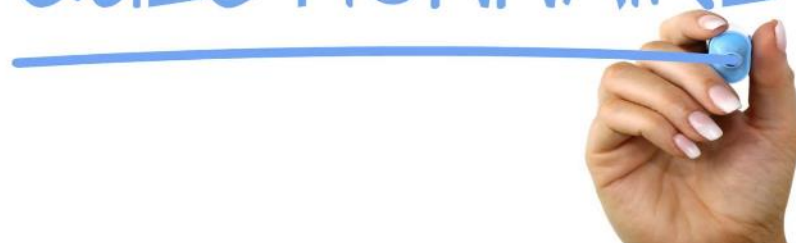
'teacher of  
communication'  
(T5)

'languages &  
communication  
specialist' (T7)

# Questions Asked

- a) **Feelings** about teaching on the AD module
- b) Main teaching **challenges** of the AD module
- c) **Transferrable skills/ experience** from ELT/ EAP background
- d) Teaching **approach & methodology** with AD students (NS) compared to (NNS) cohort
- e) **Most/ least effective** ways of teaching on the AD module
- f) Importance of **links** between AD module & FY subjects  
(Arts & Humanities/ Business/ Social Sciences /Psychology)
- g) **Advice** for ELT/ EAP practitioner teaching AD for the first time

QUESTIONNAIRE



## Findings- Feelings about AD

### a) Feelings about teaching in AD context

#### Theme: Feeling uncomfortable/ lacking in confidence

*“I don't enjoy teaching AD as much as EFL. It's **not** something I **trained to do...**”*  
(T5)

*“I feel **less confident...**”* (T1)

*“...**out of my depth...damaged my confidence..**”*  
(T3)

*“...initially...an **uncomfortable experience...** more **self-conscious and exposed as a teacher**”* (T4)

## Findings- Feelings about AD

### Theme: Positive experiences

*“...quite rewarding...I have been able to use my EAP experience to good effect...” (T2)*

*“I gain **huge satisfaction** from working with this cohort... different challenges...” (T6)*

*Overall, I am **extremely motivated** as I can see how I could **help individuals** develop their skills... (T7)*

## Theme: 'Language' in the student-teacher dynamic

Shift in 'language **power** dynamic' when teaching NS vs NNS... *"made the **content more critical**"* (T4)

*"...language work was **not successful**. In ELT classes students understand the **metalanguage**. However, home students do not...."* (T3)

*"... **fallen completely flat**...unsure how to approach language activities...there are some **language needs** to be addressed."* (T1)

No need to **grade** language or **scaffold** lexis (T4, T5, T7)

# Findings- Tutor Identity

## Theme: The role/ identity of the tutor

*“my **validity** as a language teacher in delivering a non-language course... **imposter issue**” (T2)*

*“ Being their **teacher** (in a school like way) and taking a much more **disciplined** approach...” (T5)*

*“my **role** seems to be **different**...the need to ...**let go** of some of my [ELT] habits” (T7)*

# Findings- Tutor Identity

## Theme: 'Transition' period for tutor

"I had not taught home students before, and **the learning curve was steep**" (T5)

*"...**process of adjustment to AD teaching... a readjustment of my view of self as teacher...**"* (T6)



The teaching experience would be **easier next time** (T2, T3)

# Findings- Challenges

## b) Main challenges of AD module as a teacher

**Theme 1: Student motivation/ attendance (T1,T2, T3, T4,T5)**

**Theme 2: Sts seeing AD as irrelevant/patronising (T1, T7, T4, T7) e.g.**

*“...**patronised** with the teaching of skills they considered (often quite **erroneously**) they **already possessed**” (T4)*

*“accusations of being **patronising** have resulted from focusing on...**language** issues.” (T1)*

*“some students... **feel they have little to learn from the AD module**” (T7)*

CHALLENGE





# Findings- Challenges

## Theme 3: Student 'attitude' - confidence/ anxiety issues

*"...retaining complete **composure** during the **process of transition**...**'difficult'** behaviours on the students' part." (T6)*

*"...the transition... is an **overwhelming experience** for some students, in terms of **anxiety** and **self-consciousness** ..." (T4)*

*"...there is a lot of **bravado** amongst the students, with many of them **anxious** ..." (T3)*

*"... **low confidence** levels and are **sensitive** to critique and feedback." (T7)*

CHALLENGE



# Findings-Transferrable Teaching Experience

c) Skills/ experience from ELT/ EAP useful for teaching AD

- **Classroom management** (T3, T4, T6)

- **Materials & approaches from EAP (esp. Academic writing skills)**

(T1, T2, T3, T5, T7) e.g.

“...there is a lot of **overlap** in terms of skills...” (T7)

“...the **same difficulties** in giving **presentations**, or with... **essay writing**” (T5)

# Findings- Approach & Methodology

## d) Teaching approach & methodology with AD sts (NS) vs (NNS)

Theme: Student-centered class/ CLT approach (+ / - )

Student-led/ group/ communicative activities work well (T4, T6, T7)

*“...tried to encourage greater interaction...mixed success... prefer to work **on their own**” (T2)*

*“...communicative strategies... **do not transfer very well.**” (T1)*

## Findings: Most/ Least effective teaching

### **e) Most effective ways of teaching on the AD module**

**Student focused/ Pair or Group work (T4, T6, T7)**

**One to one tutorials/ feedback sessions (T1, T2, T3)**

**A variety of tasks (T1, T4, T6)**

### **e) Least effective ways of teaching on the AD module**

**Extended whole class discussions (T3, T5, T7)**

# Findings: Importance of Links to Subjects

## f) Importance of links between AD & FY subjects (Arts & Humanities/ Business/ Social Sciences /Psychology)

**Very important (T1, T3, T5, T6, T7)**

*“...helped students to see the **relevance** of academic skills to their subject area” (T1)*

*“...this is the **best** way to get the students **engaged** with AD” (T3)*

*“[these links are] in line with EAP theory... This is **good practice**” (T5)*

## Findings: Advice for Other Practitioners

### **g) Advice for ELT/ EAP practitioner teaching AD for the first time**

Use your EAP skills & materials **(T1, T2, T5)**

Expect AD to be different from ELT context **(T3, T4, T6)**

Remember sts are anxious/ nervous **(T2, T4, T7)**

Remember 'transition'- sts need scaffolding & guidance **(T2, T3, T5)**



# Findings: Advice for Other Practitioners

*“Don’t be afraid to use [EAP] materials and approaches ...However...they will complete activities **far more quickly**” (T5)*

*“Be **thick-skinned... teach it anyway**, because chances are they don’t [know it]!” (T3)*

*“Focus more on the **individuals** than on the syllabus/ curriculum” (T6)*

*“...seminars can be quite a **face-threatening** environment... students [have] mixed feelings...” (T7)*



*“View it as a **positive experience** in terms of self-reflection on current ELT/EAP practice...” (T4)*

# Discussion & Implications

## Teacher Identity & Transition

- 'Identity trajectory'- develops over time through collective/ individual practice within a particular context (Wenger, 1998 cited in Ashwin, 2015, p. 5)
- Negative student feedback → despondency// enhancing teaching (Ashwin, 2015, p. 9)
- Reassurance in reflecting & sharing T experience in transition process

## Student Needs

- Needs of FY home st can be similar to IFY st e.g. training for academic writing (Jones, 2017, p.935)
- Avoid making assumptions about sts (Ashwin, 2015, p.18)

## Transferrable Skills

- ESAP course design skills e.g. liaising with subject specialists & material development (Basturkmen, 2010)
- IFY/ EAP practitioner- broad range of transferrable skills (also English language specialism)... but need to modify our approach





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