

AN INTEGRATED VIEW OF EOP AND EAP

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Abstract. *This paper is concerned with some issues of English for Occupational Purposes and English for Academic Purposes. The main objective of the paper is to describe possible approaches to integrating EOP and EAP on the basis of the pilot English for Specific Academic Purposes course introduced at National Research University – Higher School of Economics, Saint-Petersburg, Russia.*

Key words: *EAP, EOP, course design, English for Economics*

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2010, National Research University – Higher School of Economics (HSE), Russia, adopted its English Teaching Strategic Framework, whose main goal is to promote excellence in a wide range of competences such as linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic. To avoid the ambiguity usually associated with the term "communicative competence", the National Research University Commission for Teaching English develops a clear definition of this term which is used throughout the Strategic Framework. Communicative competence in English is referred to as the ability of students to use the language to accomplish various communicative goals in their academic and professional life.

The introduction of this definition has two implications for the teaching and learning process at the University. First, it revolutionizes the process of teaching English. Second, it sets new goals for both language instructors and students. Revolutionizing the teaching process actually involves transition from a long-rooted tradition of teaching the English language solely for occupational purposes such as English for Economics, English for Law, English for Management and some other occupation-specific English courses to a new cutting-edge approach of teaching English for Specific Academic Purposes. That means that generic academic language specific to no-one has been abandoned in favour of specific academic language specific to students of Economics or Management and their academic needs. That also means that generic EAP (English for Academic Purposes) and EOP (English for Occupational Purposes) courses have been abandoned in favour of narrow-focused ESAP (English for Specific Academic Purposes) courses.

In terms of new tasks for language instructors, that means designing and implementing a new syllabus which in its turn entails the analysis of students' needs, the identification of main objectives, and the selection of teaching materials and evaluation tools. The task is made more challenging by the regulation of the National Research University Commission for Teaching English to use IELTS as the main assessment tool at the end of a two-year ESAP course. In other words, the University's language instructors

have to create an entirely new ESAP course that combines elements of former EGP, EOP, and EAP courses. In terms of new tasks for students, that means adapting to new forms and structures of learning and assessment.

Having set the background, I now formulate the goal of my paper and define its structure. The purpose is many-fold: first, to describe the approaches to teaching EOP and EAP within Higher School of Economics; second, to evaluate the existing approaches to integrating EOP and EAP within the context of the English Teaching Strategic Framework adopted at HSE; third, to describe the process of an integrated ESAP course design; fourth, to discuss further implications. This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 introduces terminology used throughout the paper and details the framework for teaching EOP and EAP at Higher School of Economics. Section 3 discusses how it is possible to design an integrated ESAP course within the light of the existing approaches to take into account specific needs of Higher School of Economics. Finally, Section 4 presents conclusions and final remarks.

2. KEY NOTIONS ABOUT EOP AND EAP COURSES AT HIGHER SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

In this section I review some key terminology about the two main focus areas of this paper, EOP and EAP and then describe the English language teaching framework at the Department of Economics, Higher School of Economics.

Both EOP and EAP emerge as two separate strands within an umbrella notion of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). David Carter (1983) first identifies three types of ESP as English as a restricted language, English for Academic and Occupational Purposes, English with specific topics. Restricted English is the language used in very restricted work setting, for example, by air traffic controllers or by waiters, similar to professional jargon. EOP is the language in a broad variety of work-related settings, such as Business English, English for Economics, English for Law, and other types. EAP is the language tailored to the needs of those who study in an English-medium environment at the level of higher education. English with specific topics is the language used in very specific communicative situations, such as conferences, working in foreign institutions, postgraduate studies and others.

Although this classification is often quoted in a number of papers on EAP and EOP, there is another point of view, for example, by Hutchinson and Waters (1987). They do not draw a clear borderline between EOP and EAP arguing that "people can work and study simultaneously; it is also likely that in many cases the language learnt for immediate use in a study environment will be used later when the student takes up, or returns to, a job" (Hutchinson and Waters 1987: 16). Apparently, the rationale for Hutchinson and Water's point of view is the end purpose, which is the same for EOP and EAP. While the rationale for Carter's classification is the means to achieve a purpose.

For a number of years, the teaching framework for EOP and EAP at Higher School of Economics has been based on the notion that EOP and EAP are two different types. The EOP course at the CEFR B2 level is designed to teach students a range of vocabulary items and grammar structures to communicate in a limited number of professionally relevant situations. The EOP course at the CEFR C1 level is designed to teach students to communicate in a broad variety of professionally relevant situations. Professional vocabulary knowledge is the main focus of the course. The main skills developed within

the course are reading professionally relevant texts and expressing a point of view on a professionally relevant topic. The approach to syllabus design is eclectic, with elements of a task-based syllabus and a text-based syllabus.

Before 2012 the EAP course at Higher School of Economics was taught only at the CEFR C1 level. The course focused on the development of all key language skills and was tailored to the needs of students planning to continue their education in an English-medium environment. The approach to syllabus design was also eclectic as in the case with the EOP course. The main feature of this course was that it taught very general academic English skills irrespective of the needs of students of Economics with primary focus on reading and speaking skills. Students were mainly engaged in reading academic texts of various length offered by the key course books, such as Cambridge Academic English and Headway Academic Skills. Students were also trained in giving an oral presentation and a persuasive talk in which they were supposed to support or oppose a particular point of view previously expressed in a written text. Very little attention was given to listening and writing skills.

This teaching framework was found ineffective both by students and instructors for a number of reasons. In their questionnaires students of Higher School of Economics indicated that the main reason for dissatisfaction was a very general character of their EAP course. The second reason for dissatisfaction was a lack of training in writing and listening skills.

In their turn, English language instructors noted that the material within each of the course inevitably overlapped with the material in the other course. For instance, the instructors had to use professionally related texts on Economics in the EAP course.

The results of the students' questionnaires and the instructors' observations brought about the decision to restructure the English language teaching programme at the Department of Economics starting from 2012.

3. INTEGRATING EOP AND EAP

3.1. Theoretical basis

In this section I evaluate the existing approaches to integrating EOP and EAP course within the context of the needs of the Department of Economics, Higher School of Economics and describe the design process of the pilot English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) course that was introduced at the Department of Economics in September, 2012.

There were two reasons, internal and external, that determined the necessity to restructure the English teaching programme (ELT), in general, and to introduce a new ESAP course, in particular. The dissatisfaction with the existing ELT programme expressed both by students and instructors of the Department of Economics is an internal reason. The decision of the English Teaching Strategic Framework adopted at HSE in 2010 is an external reason.

The Strategic Framework developed by the Commission for English Teaching states that the main objective ELT at the University is to train students to use the language to accomplish various communicative goals in their academic and professional life. To achieve this objective, the Commission for English Teaching developed some guidelines

that should assist language instructors to restructure their ELT programmes. The Commission for English Teaching performed needs analysis, identified objectives and core components of the syllabus, and agreed upon the assessment procedure. However, the main responsibility to design new courses remained with the University's language instructors.

In the next few paragraphs below, I describe the process of ELT restructuring that took place at the Department of Economics, Higher School of Economics, as the author of this paper is affiliated with this particular department.

At the first stage of the restructuring process, the key stakeholders (instructors and administration) took a unanimous decision to introduce at the department an integrated ESAP course because it combines English academic and professional elements and corresponds to the main objective of the Strategic Framework and students' wishes. At the second stage, the instructors evaluated the existing approaches to integrating EOP and EAP. There are three main perspectives here, a task-based (Ellis 2003), a text-based (Feez 2002) and a CBI-based approach (Brinton, Snow, and Wesche 1989). Within a task-based approach, an emphasis is put on types of tasks that learners might be engaged with (Ellis 2003). Within a text-based approach, a text is the main element of course content (Feez 2002), and students learn by mastering key texts typical of various communicative situations. Within a CBI-based approach, there are three models, thematic, sheltered and adjunct. They differ in their target output. The thematic model is oriented towards developing language competence, the sheltered model – towards mastering the content, and the adjunct model – developing academically transferrable skills irrespective of any particular content (Brinton, Snow, and Wesche 1989).

The faculty members, engaged in the process of a course design, were in a general agreement that an integrated syllabus based on these three approaches would be the best option. Previously taught EOP and EAP courses were mainly text-based with elements of a task-based approach. Both courses failed to provide adequate training for students (see Section 2). The rationale behind the decision to blend the three approaches was the opportunity to cover a broad range of target outcomes, professional, academic and linguistic.

3.2. An integrated syllabus design

It is well-known that an ESAP course design includes the following elements: needs analysis, objectives, means, syllabus, methodology, and assessment (Jordan 1997: 57). Unfortunately, in our case some of these components have been already detailed.

The needs are determined by the main goal of the English teaching process, which is to achieve excellence in a range of competences to accomplish communicative goals in academic and professional life. As the focus is on a range of *academic* skills in students' *subject area* - Economics, the core components of the syllabus are English for Academic Purposes, English for Occupational Purposes, General English and Business English.

The Commission has also developed a list of general teaching objectives regarding each of the competences. These objectives provide general guidelines as to what level of skill development should be achieved within each of the competences. The Commission states that that by the end of their second year, students of Economics will have achieved at least the CEFR B2 level, and by the end of their fourth year they will have achieved at least the CEFR C1 level. Another important requirement set by the Commission is to use the IELTS test as the main assessment tool at the end of the second year.

Thus, the faculty members responsible for a course design are partly limited by the Commission in their decisions about objectives, syllabus and assessment, whereas they are independent in their decisions about means and methodology. However, these are the most critical decisions as they determine most of the outcome.

The first decision has to be made about the balance between EAP, EOP, EGP, and Business English. As Jordan suggests (Jordan 1997: 71), the level of language knowledge is a determining factor. Contrary to the balanced approach with a gradual shift from an EGP component to an EAP component as the level of proficiency increases, it has been decided by the course designers to utilize the "needs response" approach. This approach is considered more reasonable by most of the course designers as the level of language expertise is traditionally quite high at the Department of Economics, and students do not generally need any extra practice in an EGP component. If necessary, extra training in General English is organized in class as a response to the needs of some particular students or even groups or after classes during language instructors' office hours. Business English is taught 2 hours per week for four modules throughout the academic year. An integrated ESAP course is taught 4 hours per week. In the next few paragraphs, I focus particularly on major aspects of the ESAP course design.

The most crucial decision to be made is about the balance between EAP and EOP elements within a new integrated ESAP course. It is very important to get the right balance as it determines the choice of teaching materials and methodologies, outcomes and exam results. There are numerous approaches to this issue, none of which offers a definite solution. Most studies argue for a needs response approach (Benesch 2001: 130). In our case, the decisive factor is the IELTS test at the end of the second year. IELTS tests English proficiency of those who want to study in an English-medium academic environment. At the same time, it is stated in the English Teaching Strategic Framework that the IELTS test is an assessment tool, not a teaching objective. In the given circumstances, it is necessary to observe a very careful balance between EAP and EOP elements to produce a good ESAP course.

The choice of a core textbook is also an important decision as textbooks remain the most popular teaching aid in most language courses. There are a wide range of EAP textbooks available from the big publishers such as Cambridge University Press and Oxford University Press for various levels and groups of students. The main criterion against which all textbooks are assessed is the balance between EAP and EOP elements. The only coursebook that meets the criterion is *English for Economics in Higher Education* by Mark Roberts from Garnet Education (Roberts 2012). As all other coursebooks within the Garnet English for Specific Academic Purposes series, this course develops all four skills on the basis of subject area audio and printed texts. A brief overview of the coursebook is provided in the next few paragraphs to justify the choice of the coursebook.

First, *English for Economics* is an English for Academic Purposes course and provides graded practice in essential academic skills such as making lecture notes, summarizing subject specific academic texts, listening to lectures, preparing seminar talks, reporting research findings, paraphrasing, building an argument in a seminar, recognizing the writer's stance, understanding complex sentences and others. There are 12 units in the coursebook with the focus on a particular skill that is trained across four lessons. The first lesson in any unit is an introduction to vocabulary specific topic of a particular unit, i.e. economics in the modern world or economics and technology. The

topic specific vocabulary is further developed and recycled in either audio or printed texts (every odd unit is based on an audio text, every even unit is based on a printed text). The second lesson places the focus on a particular academic skill which is further developed and extended in the third and fourth lessons on the basis of subject specific academic tasks. The tasks range from quite simple such as "look at the pictures and say how they illustrate aspects of economic risk" to more difficult such as "listen to the lecture introductions and make your outline on a separate sheet of paper". The tasks are characterized by a high degree of authenticity as they are similar to those academic tasks that students of Economics have to accomplish in an English-medium academic environment.

Second, *English for Economics* is English for Occupational Purposes course and focuses on key vocabulary for the subject area. Students are expected to work with a number of input subject specific texts and produce output texts in speech and writing in the discipline. That is why the first lesson of every unit is a vocabulary lesson which introduces vocabulary for the discipline. Not only does it introduce the vocabulary but also focuses on vocabulary skills such as word-building to develop advanced skills necessary for proficient reading of subject specific texts.

Thus, *English for Economics* has been unanimously voted by the course designers as the ideal coursebook for the pilot ESAP course as it is characterized by a systematic and balanced approach to developing academic skills through vocabulary relevant content. However, the general assumption of the coursebook's writer is that prior to using the book students have already completed a general EAP course and have passed the IELTS test. In our case, the situation is different; students are taking the IELTS test after using the book for two years. Given the situation, it is obvious that *English for Economics* should be accompanied by a range of supplementary materials to provide further training in the IELTS format tasks. One solution may be a special syllabus design whose aim is to practice general academic skills in the IELTS format. The following paragraphs give further details.

It has been already mentioned, the pilot ESAP course is taught four hours per week. First two hours are taught on the basis of the *English for Economics* coursebook. The other two hours provide extra practice in the academic skills that correspond to the target academic skills of every unit of the core textbook. For example, the first unit of the coursebook focuses on making lecture notes. The same skill is practiced further during the other two-hour session. For this purpose the generic note-making skill is broken down to a number of micro-skills that are seen as a lead-in or a link-with other productive and receptive skills that are practiced on the basis of a wide range of tasks in the IELTS format. Each of the generic academic skills from the core coursebook has been broken down into a number of micro-skills and carefully matched with an IELTS-related skill.

4. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This paper has described the process of an ESAP course design with a careful balance between EOP and EAP elements. The efficiency of the ESAP course will be seen in June, 2014 when the first group of students take their IELTS mock test. However, at this moment there are preliminary results that seem to have implications in two areas: confirmation of the established syllabus and directions for change.

In terms of confirmation of the established syllabus, a deeper look seems to be necessary to explore the efficiency of using *English for Economics* as the core coursebook. Some

language instructors express doubts about its efficiency as it is specifically designed for students who plan to study Economics in an English-medium academic environment and does not take into account some culturally specific traditions of teaching and learning in Russia, for instance, teacher-centered learning. There are views arguing for using a general EAP coursebook as the core material for the ESAP course.

In terms of directions for change, the current ESAP syllabus may need to be refocused to place a great deal of importance on either an EOP component or an EAP component. In addition to these immediate implications, some further questions and implications may arise after the results of the IELTS mock exam are announced in June, 2014.

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