

The University of Nottingham

**'The learning never ends'
Investigating teachers' experiences of
moving from English for General
Purposes to English for Academic
Purposes in the UK context;
What are the main challenges
associated with beginning to teach
EAP, and how can these challenges be
overcome?**

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Dissertation submitted to the University of Nottingham in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts – TESOL, September 2012.

Abstract

English for General Purposes (EGP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) are seen as two distinct branches of English Language Teaching, and much is made in the literature of the differences between the two fields. Despite this, experience of EGP is officially recognised as appropriate experience for teaching EAP, but no stipulations are made about how EGP teachers should be trained or supported when making such a large transition. Whilst there are a number of different EAP-specific teacher training courses on offer, at present the status of such courses remains somewhat unclear. This study attempts to investigate teachers' experiences of making the transfer from EGP to EAP, particularly focusing on the challenges they experienced and how teachers feel those challenges can best be overcome. The study also seeks to gain teachers' thoughts about the role and value of EAP-specific teacher training. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six EAP teachers who have varying degrees of experience. The results reveal that teachers feel the greatest differences between teaching EGP and EAP concern the development of the specialised *knowledge* needed to teach EAP, whilst relative confidence is experienced in terms of teachers' existing teaching *skills*. The results also reveal the range of activities that teachers feel help them to overcome the challenges, and recommendations are made for how institutions can do more to facilitate this type of development. EAP-specific teacher training courses are deemed potentially valuable in a number of ways, but teachers do not feel that such training would be most usefully used as a pre-requisite of entry to the profession. The results suggest that what is perhaps needed is a change in emphasis which would see pre-service EAP-specific training as an initial step in a much larger, on-going framework of EAP teacher development.

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Introduction

English Language Teaching (ELT hereafter) can be seen to consist of two distinct strands; English for General Purposes (EGP hereafter) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP hereafter) (Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001: 177).

Whilst EGP is a fuzzier and somewhat contentious 'category'¹, it will be used here as a short-hand for those myriad forms of ELT which cannot be classed as part of the branch of ESP.

ESP on the other hand is more clearly, if somewhat variously defined. Dudley-Evans and St John (1998), reviewing a number of definitions, conclude that ESP is 'a separate activity' to EGP and 'is designed to meet the specific needs of the learner' and 'makes use of underlying methodology and activities of the disciplines it serves' (p.4). ESP is then further divided up into English for Academic Purposes (EAP hereafter) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP).

EAP has dominated ESP (Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001: 177) and continues to be a 'growth area of language teaching' (Alexander, 2012: 99), and as such, tends to rely on EGP to a large extent to form 'the next generation of EAP professionals' (King, 2012). However, much is made throughout the literature of the *differences* between EGP and EAP (Alexander et al., 2008; Bruce, 2011; Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001; Hamp-Lyons, 2001; Jordan, 1997), and more recently some writers have also drawn attention to a sense of a growing 'divide' between them (see for example Hannam, 2012; King, 2012). Whilst there is a lack of specific research concerning the challenges that teachers face when making the transition from EGP to EAP, where it does exist it presents a picture of a difficult transfer (see Alexander, 2007; Ewer, 1983; Krzanowski, 2001), with teachers reportedly experiencing a loss

¹ Alexander et al. (2008: 2) for example argue that 'In a sense, there is no such thing as general English language teaching [in so far] every English language teacher is operating in a specific situation'.

of confidence or feeling de-skilled (Ding, Jones and King, 2004, cited in Alexander, 2012: 100).

So how do teachers cope when they make 'the leap into TEAP' (Alexander, 2010)? As an English teacher considering a future move into EAP I have a personal interest in discovering how it is that teachers cope with the apparently very different demands of teaching EAP. Given the apparent concern regarding a lack of EAP-specific qualifications (Alexander, 2007; BALEAP, 2008; King, 2012), is it that teachers would benefit from undergoing some EAP-specific training course prior to commencing work in the field?

The following study investigates teachers' experiences of the transition from EGP to EAP, particularly focusing on the challenges, and which sources of support or training are felt to be the most helpful. The study also attempts to investigate teachers' views regarding EAP-specific teacher training, in order to make some inferences about what its value might be both for individual teachers and the profession as a whole.

Literature Review

1. Introduction

The literature review begins with a consideration of the field of EAP and its relationship, differences and similarities to EGP, which provides grounding for a greater understanding of the types of challenges that teachers face when transferring between the fields.

The review then goes on to reflect on the roles and responsibilities of the EAP teacher, before considering what insights the literature has been able to offer about the specific difficulties that may be associated with the transfer from EGP to EAP.

The review finishes with a discussion of EAP-specific teacher training; its forms, and its strengths and weaknesses as a potential way forward for both individual teachers and the profession as a whole.

2. What is EAP?

In the first issue of the Journal of English for Academic Purposes (JEAP), EAP was defined 'quite simply' as 'teaching English with the aim of facilitating learners' study or research in that language' (Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001: 8; Jordan 1997: 1, cited in Hyland and Hamp-Lyons, 2002: 2).

In order to understand its context, it is necessary to briefly consider its development out of the wider field of English Language Teaching (ELT). Whilst theoretical linguists traditionally saw language as an abstract system, applied linguists started to consider language as a tool of communication, which varied in its application, according to *context* (Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001). With a concern for an approach to language teaching based on

descriptions of language as it was used in specific target situations (Ibid.), came the emergence of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in the 1960s (Johns and Price-Machado, 2001: 44).

A further sub-branch, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) was first characterised by Strevens in 1977 (Hamp-Lyons, 2001: 126), although the original SELMOUS (Special English Language Materials for Overseas University Students) did not change its name to include the term EAP until it became BALEAP (British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes) in 1989 (Hamp-Lyons, 2001: 126; Jordan, 1997: 1).

Since these beginnings, EAP has 'grown rapidly' (Hamp-Lyons, 2001: 126) and continues to be characterised as a 'growth area of language teaching' (Alexander, 2012: 99) which has become a 'multi-million dollar enterprise' (Hamp-Lyons, 2001: 126), complete with a journal devoted specifically to the field. The context is far-reaching, and can occur in a variety of settings, from entirely English-speaking contexts, to students' own countries, with native or non-native speaker teachers (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998; Jordan, 1997).

Like ESP, EAP is driven by a concern for context-specificity and the meeting of learner needs (see for example Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001: 13; Strevens, 1977 cited in Hamp-Lyons, 2001: 127).

In attempting to provide further characterisation of the field, a recurrent trend appears to be a way of defining EAP by pointing out where and how it is *different* to 'general' English language teaching. Whilst the latter is variously termed throughout the literature as for example 'General English' (Bruce, 2011; Ewer 1983; Johns and Price-Machado, 2001), 'general CLT' (Alexander, 2012), 'English for General Purposes' (Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001; Jin-Yu et al. 2011), here the simple 'English for General Purposes' (EGP hereafter) will be used. The distinction, whilst useful, also connotes a

number of tensions and misconceptions, and a more detailed examination is required to begin to understand the various points of convergence and divergence between the fields.

3. EGP and EAP: Some differences

Since one of the earliest attempts by Strevens (1977, cited in Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001: 13), many efforts to define, characterise, or set the parameters of the area of EAP, have begun with the assertion that it is *different* to EGP (Alexander, 2012, 2007; Bruce, 2011; Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001; Hamp-Lyons, 2001; Jin-Yu et al., 2011).

Whilst the differences between the fields are numerous and operate on various different levels, due to limitations of space here, only those which appear to receive the most attention in the literature have been selected for discussion.

The concern for *learner needs* is prominently cited throughout the literature as a key way in which the ESP/EAP field differs from EGP (Alexander, 2012; Bruce, 2011; Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998; Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001; Hamp-Lyons, 2001; Jordan 1997).

In order to meet the '*unique* challenges, problems, opportunities, failings and successes' [my italics] of EAP, Flowerdew and Peacock (2001) say that 'a vital step' concerns 'producing a comprehensive description of the unique needs and wishes of EAP students' (p.177). Hamp-Lyons (2001: 126) similarly argues that whilst EGP begins with the language, EAP begins with the learner and the situation. In this way, EAP can be understood to have a much more *restricted* focus, which concerns a particular group of learners in a highly *specified context*.

In line with these assertions, it is possible to find many references in the literature to the notion of general language ability versus the meeting of specific needs; Bruce (2011: 116) for example argues that 'whilst general ELT is concerned with a learner's overall proficiency (communicative competence) EAP is the study of language in academic contexts'. Jin-Yu et al. (2011: 271) similarly assert that whilst 'EGP courses aim to enhance students' general language competence [...] ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learners' reason for learning'.

These arguments appear to promote the view that needs are somehow unimportant in EGP, but Alexander et al. (2008: 2) have pointed out that 'every English language teacher is operating in a specific situation and has to understand as much as possible about the context'. From my personal experience, the concept of 'needs analysis' does appear to be important in EGP², even if compromises inevitably have to be made. It is perhaps not so much then that needs are *more important* in EAP courses, but rather that they are more *easily specified*. This is supported by research done by Jin-Yu et al. (2011) into the needs of students on EGP courses and EAP courses; when comparing responses particularly regarding skills, they found that whilst there was variation amongst students' expressions of their needs in EGP courses, the results from students on ESP/EAP courses were generally more consistent.

The specification of needs in EAP has important implications for teachers, and those who are new to the field may need to adjust to different roles; Jin-Yu et al. (2011) for example suggest that 'EAP specialists are often needs assessors first and foremost'. Furthermore, whilst EGP is largely 'level-driven', employing a 'proportional syllabus' which gradually increases in complexity, EAP course design follows a 'deep end strategy' in which even

² The assessment criterion for the Cambridge Certificate of English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA) includes 'Sensitivity to the needs and interests of the students' as one of its components.

students at lower levels are expected to interact with authentic texts from their disciplines (Alexander, 2012: 102). Teachers who are new to the field therefore, may need to acquire new skills such as 'scaffolding' (Alexander et al., 2008) in order to support their students.

Moving beyond learner needs and context specificity, another issue in the literature is the focus on skills. In 2008, Alexander et al. identified a 'recent trend' towards seeing EAP mainly in terms of study skills (as opposed to language), a consequence of which is that teachers can be left feeling 'de-skilled' (p.26). Whilst skills are important, even if this is a matter of helping students to transfer skills that they already have into English (Jordan, 1997: 5), there are those who argue that language should also occupy a central place and not be neglected (Alexander et al., 2008; Hyland, 2006). When a balance of skills and language is achieved, EGP and EAP are perhaps more similar, although in EAP the language is restricted to that required in an academic context, and whilst EGP may place more emphasis on speaking and listening skills, in EAP the greater focus is on reading and writing (Hamp-Lyons, 2001: 126).

EAP may also require a different orientation on the part of both teachers and learners. Whereas a 'lack of urgency' may exist at times in EGP (Ewer, 1983: 13), the stakes are very high in EAP, with limited time and funding (Alexander, 2012: 99), and a student's success or failure may have huge personal consequences for both themselves and their families. Therefore, a high level of efficiency can be seen to be required of EAP teachers, as courses seek to use 'the quickest, most efficient and effective ways' of equipping students to perform in their academic setting' (Ibid.).

It is also possible to identify a change in the student-teacher relationship between EGP and EAP. An important first step for new teachers is to 'realise and acknowledge that students know more than they do' (Adams-Smith, 1983: 237); whilst students bring expertise in their subject discipline,

teachers are expected to bring linguistic expertise and knowledge of language teaching methodology (Alexander et al., 2008: 7). Teaching in EAP can therefore be seen as much more of a collaborative exercise (Ibid.) which differs from a more traditional expert-novice relationship which usually exists in EGP.

Learner needs, context specificity, language and skills foci, the high-stakes nature of EAP, and student and teacher roles, are all areas in which it is possible to identify key ways in which EAP can be seen to differ in varying degrees to EGP.

As stated above, much is made in the literature of the distinction between these fields, and an unfortunate consequence of this is that in some cases the differences have been over-emphasised, resulting in a number of myths which unfortunately exist about EAP³. It is worth briefly examining some of these, particularly as the subsequent research concerns teachers' *perceptions* of the EGP/EAP divide.

4. EGP and EAP: Some myths

Arguably one of the most widely held myths about EAP is that it is dry, serious and dull (de Chazal, 2012; King, 2012) especially in comparison to its more 'fun' other half, EGP. Whilst it is true that the centrality of texts in EAP may lead to slower-paced lessons with less variety of activities, there are arguably unique intellectual challenges associated with EAP such as the 'important role [that teachers have to play] in relating to numerous different academic communities as language experts (Alexander et al., 2008: 89).

³ For an interesting discussion see <http://teachingeap.wordpress.com/2012/05/22/20-myths-about-eap> and <http://oupglobalblog.com/tag/edward-de-chazal/>

Related criticisms include a loss of creativity following the transfer from EGP, and an over-concern for research over practice in EAP. The loss of creativity criticism is difficult to maintain given the quantity of 'locally-produced materials' that EAP teachers generate in favour of relying on commercially-produced materials which may not meet the specific needs of the learners (King, personal communication). The misconception about the roles of research and practice can be seen to be another myth, which may at least in part be perpetuated by educational institutions which play on an action versus thinking divide in the marketing of Masters and DELTA programmes (Hannam 2012). In reality EGP and EAP can be seen to be very close here, in so far as 'research and practice' are two sides of a single coin which both fields need and use.

According to King (2012), EAP has had to draw out the differences and distinctions between themselves and EGP in order 'to define who we are and what we do', but an unwelcome consequence appears to be a growing distance between the disciplines. Aside from this distance being damaging to the language teaching profession as a whole, it can, as already mentioned above, create problems for EAP which relies on EGP to provide 'the next generation of EAP professionals' (King 2012).

EAP has recently been identified as occupying something of a 'liminal' (Bhaba, 1994, cited in Hannam 2012) or 'third' space in so far as it is ostracised and misunderstood by the field of EGP on the one hand, and unsure of its relationship to the academy on the other. King (2012) suggests that EAP practitioners need to continue to 'explore the relationships' they have with the wider ELT community, commenting that 'a paucity of EAP-specific qualifications and EAP trained staff' may undermine their claim that what they do is rather different to EGP. It is perhaps questionable however, how far EAP can go in this endeavour before it has to choose between the 'rock' and 'the hard place' (Hannam, 2012); continuing to proclaim 'Academic' status, and seeking to gate-keep via the stipulation of specialist

qualifications may do much to move EAP closer to the academy, but an inevitable consequence may be a widening of the gap between itself and EGP.

5. EGP vs. EAP: Some similarities

Literature regarding teachers' transition from EGP to EAP appears to be rare, and although somewhat removed from the present UK context in terms of both time and place, it is worth considering articles from a special edition of the ESP Journal on teacher training (1983) because of how they *specifically* relate to the focus of the research here.

Initially Ewer (1983), in reporting on his experiences of providing a teacher training course for EST (English for Science and Technology), provides a taxonomy of teacher difficulties, giving a very negative view of the EGP teacher who he sees as lacking the attitudes, skills and qualities necessary to teach English at university level. This appears to be because, for Ewer, the 'practices and assumptions of the general English system [are] quite different, even diametrically opposed to those of EST' (p.13).

His report is quickly followed however by numerous commentaries warning against overstating the differences. Jarvis (1983), in attempting to re-dress the balance cites a number of examples of classroom-oriented abilities which overlap with general teaching abilities.

Kennedy (1983) similarly questions the extent of the differences between the fields; he applies the components of Ewer's teacher training course to a rough hierarchy of levels of teaching, from very general to more specific, and finds many of them to be relevant to the most general level, concluding that 'many *principles* of ESP teacher training may in fact be derived from educational, language teaching and ELT domains' (p.52).

Others draw attention to the dangers of creating too greater division (Akermark, 1983; Kennedy, 1983). Kennedy (1983) makes for particularly interesting reading as his list of potential dangers resonate with much of what is being discussed currently (see references above) about the 'damage to the language profession' which can result from the 'creation of unnecessary divisions' (p.51).

Although the articles quoted here are quite old, the idea of a similarity between the fields in terms of *teaching skills* can also be found much more recently in Alexander et al. (2008) who argue that the capabilities required of a teacher are basically the same between EGP and EAP; namely 'a sound grasp of how to promote language learning and manage all aspects of the classroom' (p.5).

Alexander (2012) has also drawn attention to the ways in which EGP and EAP are united by a common Communicative philosophy; in particular the 'shift of focus from language form to language function' and 'the centrality of the learner' (p.101).

It seems therefore that basic principles or philosophies of teaching practice may be quite similar between EGP and EAP, which supports BALEAP's (2008) view that 'ELT teaching experience' is considered 'appropriate experience' for EAP in the UK context (see 'Competence Framework for Teachers of English for Academic Purposes' p.11). Todd (2003) however, argues that teaching methodology in EAP remains an under-researched area and that whilst it has been established that there are significant differences between EGP and EAP, it is not clear whether EAP methodology is also distinct. He argues that whilst there has been an emphasis on 'what' (content) in literature about EAP, the 'how' (methods) has been somewhat neglected, yet both are equally important if teaching is to be effective.

Therefore, whilst EGP experience may provide an important grounding in certain aspects of language teaching, it is not necessarily possible to draw any simple conclusions about the transferability of teaching methodology.

6. What are the roles and responsibilities of an EAP teacher?

In recognition of 'a gap which exists in EAP-specific teacher qualifications' (p.1) BALEAP (2008) established the 'Competency Framework for Teachers of English for Academic Purposes' in order to 'provide teachers new to the field, and those responsible for training them, with clear goals and understanding of the role of an EAP teacher' (p.2). The Framework, which consists of summary statements in four broad areas, will be drawn upon here as an organising principle for the following discussion.

The first group of statements concern 'academic practice' and include information about required skills, knowledge and capabilities, specifically related to the academic context and its discourse practices. Parallels can be drawn here with early attempts by Carver (1983) and Strevens (1988) (cited in Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001: 181) to define the role of the EAP teacher primarily in terms of 'taking an interest and acquiring knowledge of the students' world'.

Jones (2012) draws attention to the fact that BALEAP stipulate that part of this role involves being able to 'recognise and explore disciplinary differences' (BALEAP 2008: 3). The debate about whether to teach EGAP (English for General Academic Purposes) or ESAP (English for Specific Academic Purposes) is another key consideration for practitioners in the field, and has long been a point of debate (see for example Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001; Hyland, 2006; Jones, 2012) with various arguments made on either side.

When 'faced with a plethora of academic literacies', teaching EGAP perhaps represents a more manageable task for less-experienced teachers (Sharpling, 2002: 88), especially given arguments concerning the 'impracticality' of teaching ESAP (see Sobjecko, 2012: Spack, 1988); whilst traditionally the 'common core hypothesis' (Bloor and Bloor, 1986 cited in Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001:16) argues that there is a set of language forms or skills that are found in nearly all disciplines, others have argued that due to the *degree* of the differences between the disciplines, non-experts will always struggle to deal adequately with teaching them (Spack, 1988).

However, whilst ESAP may be more challenging, the benefits for teachers may be that it 'makes teaching more effective' (Hyland, 2006: 117) and, as 'the idea of specificity has particularly encouraged EAP to adopt a strong research orientation' (Ibid.: 15), the benefits may also include a greater contribution to the current drive to establish the academic status of EAP; Giminez (2012) for example suggests that informing EAP pedagogic practices with disciplinary epistemology 'could be a window of opportunity for us to be seen as more central to the disciplines [...] as main contributors to the literacy experiences of university students, rather than as English language problem fixers'.

Whilst the importance of EAP teachers' engagement in research has long been advocated (see for example, Bruce, 2011; Dudley-Evans, 1998), more recently the idea of the value of this activity, for asserting a more professional, academic identity for EAP has been discussed (see for example Hamp-Lyons, 2011; Hannam, 2012; King, 2012); according to Hamp-Lyons (2011: 4) greater engagement by EAP professionals in research may involve a concomitant shift closer to the academy; a move which will 'show that [EAP] has a capital A in the middle'.

There are problems however with translating this ideal into practice. Writers point to the low response to professional development opportunities, perhaps

due to the lack of incentives for teachers who feel marginalised by the academy (see King, 2012; Hannam, 2012; Sharpling, 2002). EAP therefore appears to find itself in something of a catch twenty-two position at present, and it seems that there is work to be done in discovering how teachers can be encouraged to take a more active role in research, both for its own sake and also to contribute to the on-going development of the profession.

Also related to the sub-skill concerning 'Personal learning, development and autonomy' (BALEAP Competency Framework, 2008: 5) are references in the literature to the importance of 'reflection' on the part of the EAP practitioner (see Alexander et al., 2008; Bruce, 2011; Hyland, 2012).

Whilst reflection is arguably an important part of practice for teachers in all fields, particular emphasis is placed on the mirroring of teacher and student practices in relation to the development of autonomy, as part of the practice of EAP. Alexander et al. (2008: 295) assert that, in developing autonomous students, 'the most important role for an EAP teacher is in developing reflexive capacity, in both herself and her students through reflective dialogue'.

Hyland (2012) goes further in his consideration of reflection, suggesting that EAP teachers have a key responsibility for making certain ethical decisions. Hyland bases his discussion of EAP around several key questions which relate to beliefs about how it should be practised, including issues of specificity in EAP, and pragmatism versus criticality. According to Hyland, '[EAP] teachers are responsible professionals, not simply technicians applying procedures. They constantly search for ethical ways of responding to increasingly difficult political and commercial pressures, and reflect on the learning experiences of their students' (p.35).

The debate concerning pragmatism versus critique is another key feature of EAP, which goes to the heart of beliefs about how it should best be practised.

The literature concerning critical pedagogy alone is extensive⁴, but for Benesch (2001) both approaches can be understood as equally political; whilst pragmatism seeks to maintain the status quo, a critical stance 'interrogates existing demands and assumptions' (p.137).

There are those however who feel that when polarized, such simple binaries can become quite meaningless, failing to recognise the complexity and plurality of EAP in practice (Bruce, 2011; Hyland, 2006). Alternative perspectives suggest that effective EAP courses are both accommodationist and critical at the same time, encouraging students to examine what knowledge means in their discipline and how this knowledge is transmitted (Bruce, 2011; King, personal communication).

The second BALEAP Competency Statement refers to 'EAP students'; specifically 'needs', 'critical thinking' and 'autonomy'.

Space limitations here prevent a full discussion of these areas, but the emphasis placed on needs in EAP and the implications for teachers as 'needs assessors' has been discussed above, as has the importance of reflective dialogue as one of a number of ways of helping students to develop autonomy. With regards to critical thinking, despite its centrality and the ubiquity of the term in EAP, significant contention remains about exactly how it is defined (see for example, Beaumont, 2010). This therefore represents an on-going challenge for *all* teachers of EAP in deciding how critical thinking should be approached in the classroom. This is just one example then of where EAP teachers should seek to 'sustain interest in their own professional development, and current issues that affect their practice' (BALEAP, 2008: 3).

⁴ See for example Benesch, S. (2001) *Critical English for Academic Purposes*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, Benson, P. (2001) *Teaching and Researching Autonomy in Language Learning*. Harlow: Longman, Pennycook, A. (1997). 'Vulgar pragmatism, critical pragmatism, and EAP.' *English for Specific Purposes*, 16 (4), 253-69.

The third group of BALEAP Competency Statements refers to 'Curriculum Development'.

From the very beginnings to the present day, ESP has recognised that a key requirement of teachers in the field is that they should 'be able to design specialist courses, to design new materials or adapt existing ones' (Carver, 1983 and Strevens 1988, cited in Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001: 181; more recently Alexander et al., 2008; Bruce, 2011; Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998).

Whilst some teachers have experience of selecting and adapting materials in EGP, a frequently cited challenge for those who are new to EAP regards the ability to identify specific materials relating to students' disciplines, as well as how to use authentic materials with students of relatively low levels of proficiency (Alexander et al., 2008: 19). One would expect therefore that the roles and responsibilities grouped under BALEAP's (2008) 'Syllabus and Programme Development' (p.7) to be areas of particular challenge for new teachers.

The fourth group of BALEAP Competency Statements refers to 'Programme Implementation'. Another 'myth', omitted from the discussion above but relevant here, is the idea that EAP is somehow not communicative, which may relate to the difference in emphasis placed on texts and on speaking activities between EAP and EGP respectively. This group of BALEAP statements indicates that experience of CLT *is* important; teachers should be 'familiar with the methods, practices and techniques of Communicative Language Teaching', but should be able to relate these to the *academic context* (p.3).

EGP teachers therefore, begin from a strong position in terms of an assumed familiarity with the principles and practice of CLT, but what they must be able to do is recognise the particular demands of the academic context and *adapt*

accordingly. This may involve recognition on the part of the teacher of how ideas are communicated in academic settings, and the development of specialist knowledge about academic genre conventions. It is perhaps not surprising therefore to see the extent to which *flexibility* is referred to in the literature, as a key attribute of the EAP teacher (see Adams-Smith, 1983; Alexander et al., 2008; Carver 1983 and Strevens 1988, cited in Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001: 181; Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998).

The fourth group of Competency statements also includes points about assessment. Whilst many EGP courses do not seek to prepare students for specific exams, assessment 'lies at the heart of teaching and learning on EAP courses' (Alexander et al. 2008: 303).

There are therefore a whole host of qualities, skills and knowledge bases that are required of the EAP teacher. Whilst it is possible to identify ways in which the EGP teacher may be well-placed to take on these challenges, it is also possible to identify various new skills and areas of knowledge that will need to be developed.

Given the roles and responsibilities identified above, which areas represent the greatest challenges to teachers when making the transition from EGP to EAP?

7. Implications for teachers who transfer from EGP to EAP

Research into the challenges that teachers perceive in EAP is rare (Alexander et al. 2008: 19) and especially regarding the transfer from EGP to EAP. The research that is available, perhaps partly by virtue of the fact that it is concentrated upon challenges, tends to present a deficiency view of EGP teachers, who are found to lack the skills and knowledge which are necessary for teaching EAP.

Ewer's 1983 article about teacher training for EST identified five particular areas of difficulties for teachers making the transition from EGP to EST: attitudinal (teachers could be antipathetic to science), conceptual (teachers may lack an understanding of science), linguistic (problems with meaning and function of key vocabulary), methodological (difficulties with basic classroom methods), and organisational (teachers may not be prepared for the administrative demands of EST). Ewer's taxonomy is based however, on the premise that EGP is 'aimless, inchoate and teacher 'centred' (p.10), an assertion which is difficult to maintain in the current era, given the widespread adoption of learner-centred CLT.

Whilst Ewer's article can therefore be seen as quite outdated, it is interesting to note that more recent literature concerning the UK context also foregrounds some similar areas of difficulty. Hamp-Lyons (2001: 127) for example points to conceptual problems, arguing that EGP teachers may not be prepared for the 'more complex and potentially problematic' nature of EAP. Others point to the need for EAP teachers to 'go well beyond' (Bruce, 2011: 105) or 'transcend' (Sharpling, 2002: 82) the limited areas of knowledge and skills needed for EGP. The experience of teachers initially feeling 'de-skilled' is also cited in the literature as being a key feature of the experience of transferring from EGP to EAP (Alexander 2007; King 2012).

Research done by (Alexander, 2007), which specifically concerns the transfer from EGP to EAP, provides a more detailed insight, allowing teachers themselves to pinpoint precise areas of difficulty.

Alexander's survey of 175 EAP teachers found that the main challenges associated with learning to teach EAP were reported as being related to 'knowledge or materials related to student needs and their disciplines', and 'understanding what EAP involves' (p.6). This led to conclude that the greatest challenge for teachers who make the transition from EGP to EAP lies

in the shift from the focus on 'delivery' to 'content'; 'ELT prioritises delivery over content because anything counts as content, and in fact teachers pride themselves on being able to create lessons from nothing. Teachers feel deskilled when they move to teaching EAP because it is content that is the priority.' (p.8). She asserts that due to the substantial difference between the fields 'teachers need a thorough induction and on-going support if they are to teach effectively in university contexts' (p.7).

The above therefore leads to the question of EAP-specific teacher training. Due to the degree of difference between EGP and EAP, and the extent of the challenges for teachers, are 'on the job' inductions enough? At a time when EAP teachers are still struggling to be seen by other academics as being fully professional (Jordan, 1998 cited in Alexander, 2007; King, 2012) would standardised professional qualifications also provide greater validation for the EAP profession as a whole?

8. EAP-specific teacher training

In the current era there appears to be a lack of EAP-specific qualifications available (King, 2012). In the Alexander (2007) survey mentioned above, less than 20% of EAP teachers stated that they had had any formal training, which supported the observation that 'routes into teaching EAP remain ad hoc and informal' (p.1), and in 2008 BALEAP developed the 'Competency Framework for Teachers of English for Academic Purposes' 'in recognition of a gap which exists in EAP-specific teacher qualifications' (p.1).

According to Bruce (2011: 105) the situation is beginning to change; 'higher institutions are beginning to acknowledge' that EAP teaching requires specialist skills and knowledge, and that increasingly 'specialised training courses and qualifications are being developed'. However, at present only a handful of courses are available in the UK. These include two, three and

eight week courses at SOAS, The University of Southampton and LSE respectively. Sheffield Hallam offer a one year distance PGCert in TEAP and The University of Nottingham is planning to launch an MA programme in TEAP from September 2012. Although other universities have started similar courses in the past, many have not stood the test of time.⁵

There is an optional EAP component to the Cambridge Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults (DELTA), but this has been criticised by those in the EAP field for reasons including its unrealistic means of assessment⁶ (King, 2012). The qualification has also been criticised more generically for providing insufficient preparation for teaching EAP, for reasons including its 'activities driven, teacher-centred approach' which only 'pays lip-service to learning theory' (Roberts, 2011).

It does seem that there is a need for some kind of preparatory course, particularly as those who fail to understand the different approach required to teach EAP 'may create barriers to effective learning for their students' (Alexander, 2012: 100). However, if BALEAP were to make EAP-specific qualifications a prerequisite for entry into the profession, this may also create significant barriers for many aspiring EAP teachers.

In discussing such qualifications Sharpling (2002) suggests that some may see them as yet another 'expensive hurdle in an already qualification-driven profession' (p.92), and interestingly, in Alexander's (2007) survey, only 2% of respondents cited 'lack of formal training' as one of the 'main challenges in learning to teach EAP'.

Sharpling (2002) goes on to point to the limitations of what training courses can offer to inexperienced EAP teachers; with regards to the unpredictability

⁵ Universities which started PgCTEAP courses in the past but are no longer running include The University of Plymouth and Oxford Brookes University (Douglas Bell, personal communication).

⁶ Students who take the EAP module are required to design a whole syllabus for EAP, a task which it is unlikely they would be asked to perform, particularly in the early stages of their EAP career.

and highly specific nature of EAP contexts between different universities, he suggests that elements such as 'environmental knowledge' may be more likely acquired through 'hard experience and a process of continual reflection' (p.86).

Therefore, whilst the position taken here is that due to the degree of the differences between EGP and EAP, some form of training is needed, a number of questions remain about EAP-specific qualifications. It seems that this has been an issue of on-going concern in EAP (Sharpling, 2002) and opportunities for more research in this area may have been missed. The task remains therefore to increase professional dialogue about the role of these qualifications, and to ascertain their value for helping teachers to tackle the many challenges associated with learning to teach EAP.

Research

1. Research aims

To investigate teachers' experiences of the transition from teaching in an EGP context to teaching in an EAP context, particularly focusing on the challenges and the ways in which these difficulties can be overcome.

1.1. Research sub-aims

1. To investigate teachers' perceptions of the EGP – EAP 'divide' by asking them about both their experiences of the main *perceived* challenges regarding the transition from EGP to EAP, and their *actual* experiences of the challenges upon entry to EAP.
2. To investigate how teachers feel these challenges can best be overcome, by asking them about their views of any training / education / support that they received initially, and whether there are any other forms of training / education / support that they did not receive, but that they feel may have helped them.
3. To investigate teachers' opinions about EAP-specific training, in order to make some inferences about what form it could most usefully take, and its potential value, both to individual teachers making the transition from EGP to EAP, and for the profession in its quest to establish a greater professional identity.

2. Methodology

2.1. Qualitative methods

In response to the purposes of the research, qualitative methodology has been chosen for a number of reasons.

Qualitative research is rooted in a social constructivist perspective which, rather than trying to find an absolute truth, has the goal of understanding the complex world of lived experience (Richards, 2003: 38), and particularly how participants *experience* and interact with *phenomena* (Croker, 2009: 7) [my italics]. This method of inquiry is therefore particularly appropriate to an investigation of teachers' experiences of the transfer from one field of ELT to another.

Furthermore, qualitative research is particularly suited to my goal of *exploring* an area about which little prior research exists; 'when existing research is limited, qualitative research is a very useful methodology because it is *exploratory* – its purpose is to discover new ideas and insights' (Ibid.). This perspective is also associated with the ability to make sense of complexity and broaden our understanding (Dornyei, 2007:14).

However, the other side of the strengths associated with providing rich data, is the frequent criticism which concerns generalisability; the insights it generates may concern specific conditions which may not apply broadly to others (Dornyei, 2007: 41). There are also concerns about the role of the researcher and their potential to bias the data that is gathered (Dornyei, 2007; Richards et al, 2012).

Triangulation, which involves obtaining different perspectives on a phenomenon by gathering data using a variety of methods, can help to reduce researcher bias or subjectivity (Croker, 2009: 11). Unfortunately

here there is not enough space to gather data beyond the use of just one method, but as a researcher with no personal experience of the phenomenon under investigation, I feel that I am approaching the investigation with very few expectations or personal biases.

2.2. Semi-Structured Interviews

Just as it is possible to understand methodology on a cline from quantitative through to qualitative methods (Dornyei, 2007; Perry, 2011) it is also possible to understand various types of interviews as existing along a continuum ranging from more to less structured (Borg, 2006).

Semi-structured interviews have been selected here as they are chiefly associated with a potential for gathering data from small samples (Perry, 2011; Richards et al., 2012), which is elaborate and qualitatively richer than that generated by closed or fixed sets of questions (Borg, 2006; McDonough and McDonough, 1997). Semi-structured interviews are also a tried and tested method, having had 'a long and successful tradition in researching teacher thinking dating back two decades' (Borg, 2006: 204).

Semi-structured interviews are generally characterised as including some kind of interview schedule which identifies key topics (Borg, 2006; Richards, 2009) but with space for the interviewee to elaborate on the issues raised in an exploratory manner (Dornyei, 2007). Semi-structured interviews also allow for reflexivity (Borg, 2006; Hood, 2009) in the form of a responsive and flexible capacity, which is relevant to an investigation of the subjective experiences. In this way, semi-structured interviews can also be seen as 'true to the subject of the research' (Borg, 2006: 203); giving a voice to the participants rather than the researcher.

Whilst question 'types' are classified in various ways, the structure usually follows a pattern of 'warm up question / questions' followed by focused

questions regarding the particular areas of investigation, before ending with a final closing question which often gives open space for the interviewee to make any further comments that they feel are relevant (see for example, Dornyei: 2007; Richards: 2009).

The interview schedule can be found in the appendix, p. 69.

2.3. Case studies

Case studies are not a type of methodology but rather can be understood as a research *approach* (Hood, 2009), which has been defined as 'the in-depth study of instances of a phenomenon in its natural context and from the perspective of the participants involved' (Perry, 2011: 81). Their ability to facilitate the discovery and portrayal of multiple views of a phenomenon makes them ideally suited to the purposes of the investigation here, and are similarly suited to interviews as a choice of methodology (Stake, 1995 cited in McDonough and McDonough, 1997: 209).

In categorising case studies, most of the literature cites Stake (1995). My interest will lie in what Stake terms the 'multiple or collective case study' which is essentially an extended 'instrumental case study' where cases are studied 'with the goal of illuminating a particular issue' which 'may lay the groundwork for future studies by providing basic information about the realms in which little research has been conducted' (Hood, 2009: 70).

Further advantages of case studies include the fact that they are strong in reality, can give rich and complex insights, and can provide 'a step to action' (Dornyei, 2007; McDonough and McDonough, 1997).

There is however, as with qualitative research, a 'generalisability' issue (Dornyei, 2007; McDonough and McDonough, 1997) with case study research due to the size of the sample. Although this can be partly overcome by using

'multiple case studies' (Dornyei, 2007) as here, it will be important to recognise this particular limitation when the wider implications of the results of the research are discussed below.

3. Participants

Whilst there are various methods of sampling⁷, the method used here can be considered 'typical sampling' (Dornyei, 2007:128) in so far as participants have been chosen with regard to the research focus: a balance has been purposefully sought between experienced practitioners and those who are newer to the profession.

Participants were approached initially by me or my research supervisor and asked if they would be willing to take part. They were then supplied with the relevant information, and standard University ethical procedures were followed throughout the process. Examples of the ethics forms are included in the appendices, pp.71-2.

The participants remain anonymous, but some details regarding their level of experience can be found in the appendix under 'Information about participants' p.70.

⁷ See for example, Dornyei, 2002, and Richards, 2003, for full discussions of different methods of sampling.

Results

The initial question asked for background about the participants' English language teaching careers to date, the results of which can be found in the appendix under 'Information about participants'.

The following results are organised around the questions that were asked. The numbers quoted in brackets refer to the participant numbers (found in the appendix). Direct quotations are included where appropriate.

2. What were your impressions of teaching EAP before you worked in the field? What did you think would be the greatest challenges for you in commencing an EAP teaching post?

A number of participants (1, 2, 5) here identified EAP as a branch of ESP and felt the greatest challenges would be around gaining the *specialised* knowledge needed to teach in this field, particularly regarding the linguistic and academic conventions.

Interestingly, some of the less-experienced EAP teachers (3, 4) stated that they entered the profession somewhat blindly; saying that they did not know what EAP was prior to beginning their first jobs in the field. They therefore entered the profession with very few expectations of which aspects might be the most challenging.

Other responses included an impression of EAP as being '*much more intensive*' (5) and '*high stakes*' (1), with students who have a higher level of motivation than those on EGP courses (1).

One respondent commented on her awareness of needing to be prepared for a different teacher-student relationship; one in which the traditional expert-novice dynamic would be largely displaced:

'I knew I'd be dealing with incredibly intelligent students who were well-respected in their own country and that that would need a different approach from me' (1).

Two participants, one more-experienced (2), one less-experienced (6), commented on feeling somewhat daunted by the demands of teaching writing; participant 6 felt that EGP left him ill-prepared for teaching this skill, commenting that:

'I think writing is far and away the most neglected skill in General English [...] it seems we hardly ever teach it'.

whilst participant 2 talked about the 'challenge' of having to 'become a writing expert' and worried about the prospect of 'teaching writing at this level'.

3. When you began your first job in EAP, what did you actually find were the greatest challenges? Did you find you'd had any misconceptions about what it would be like to work in EAP?

Responses here were largely unified and related to their earlier perceptions about the *specialised* nature of EAP; all participants (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) cited 'knowing the academic conventions' as the greatest challenge, together with struggling to gain a sense of differing expectations across the disciplines. One participant (4) commented on the 'double challenge' of having classes of students who had come from such a wide range of backgrounds, and in turn having to prepare them to progress to a number of different academic schools.

Three of the less-experienced teachers (1, 3, 6) referred to what they feel are generic misconceptions of EAP, but which since commencing work in the field they have found to not be true. For two of them this involved a perception of EAP as existing in something of an ivory tower:

'people think that EAP is some big scary thing' (3)

and

'a lot of people think we're just a group of up-our-own-arses English teachers who think we're better than everyone else' (1)

But both report their experiences confirmed otherwise:

'I didn't find it like that at all' (3),

and

'We're not like that, but we need to be recognised as being a proper subject' (1).

The other teacher (6) also commented on having experienced the common misconception that EAP would be less enjoyable; he said he was prepared for it to be *'not as much fun, much drier, more serious'* which he thought would be due to the high stakes nature of EAP and the focus on writing as opposed to speaking. However, with experience he now says *'I realise that it can be as enjoyable but that it takes greater preparation on my part'*.

4. What do you think helped you to overcome these challenges?

The impression from the responses here seems to be that teachers found their education and prior teaching experience to have been of far more value than any initial training or induction period in the EAP context.

Experience of having studied at university level was perceived as incredibly valuable for giving teachers direct experience of what is expected of students at this level (2, 3, 4, 6).

Prior teaching experience was cited as useful, both by an experienced teacher (5), and one less-experienced EAP teacher (6) who commented that he feels *'the teaching skills are basically the same [between EGP and EAP]'*. Another participant (3) appears to feel that she faced greater challenges due to a lack of generic teaching experience prior to entering the EAP field:

'I was still trying to get my head around the whole thing of being in the classroom at the beginning, I was still trying to get used to teaching'.

Comments regarding induction periods were mixed but generally negative. For one teacher (1) the two-day induction period at the beginning of her first period of employment in EAP was described as *'overload'*, whereas for a teacher (3) who received the same training some two years into her first post, the training was described as *'inadequate'*; focusing on aspects which she felt she already had lots of experience of, such as *'turning on the PC'* and *'planning a lesson'*.

The *'inadequacy'* complaint was also echoed by another participant (2) who recalled experiences of inductions that *'focused primarily on administrative aspects, with [only] some information about general pedagogic principals'*.

Staff development sessions were also discussed. They were largely perceived as *'very useful'* in theory, but participants (3, 4) felt that in reality they were unable to participate because of time constraints:

'Things like peer observation, sharing practice, things like that ideally I would love to do all of that, but, realistically, even taking the time to set it up, just isn't really there' (4).

One participant (5) argued that due to the intensity of the courses *'teachers are exhausted'*.

Learning by experience, or *'picking things up over time'*, was also cited by a number of participants (1, 2, 4, 5) as a key way in which they have overcome initial difficulties, this may include:

'learning by doing' (2), 'looking things up' (2), reading (1, 4), talking to other teachers (1, 6), talking to subject specialists (2, 5).

Related to the above point about talking to subject specialists, are comments that some participants made about the value of collaboration more widely, both in terms of collaboration with other teachers:

'teaching is a team effort, you learn by talking to other teachers and asking questions'
(1)

to collaboration with the students themselves, as *'experts'* in their particular field:

'realising that you bring the writing expertise but it's the student who supplies the content [...] it's much more collaborative [than EGP]' (2).

Some participants (4, 6) also mentioned however, that time constraints often interfere with opportunities for this type of collaboration.

Another source of support during the transitional period was cited as materials by one participant (6);

'all the materials were pretty much written for you, so you don't have to go away and research and plan lessons [...] that's not always the case in EAP, other places I've

worked don't always have materials written for you [...] and that can be incredibly challenging when you don't have much of a background in EAP'.

5. What else may have helped? Is there any form of training / education / support or anything else that you feel may have helped you during your initial entry into EAP?

Related to the point cited above regarding the challenge of becoming familiar with academic conventions, are comments which were made about the potential value of greater access to information from different departments (1, 4, 5). However, as with comments made about opportunities for staff development, participants suggest that there may be a gap between what is ideal, and what might be practical in reality, both in terms of teachers not having the time to take on a lot of extra work (4), and also simply in terms of the capabilities of the human mind to take on such vast quantities of information:

'the more you learn about different disciplines the more you become aware of where the differences are, but how can you possibly know about every area?' (5).

The development of more subject-specific materials was suggested by one participant (5) as a key way in which these problems could be overcome; the materials would be more useful for the students and also ease the burden on teachers, particularly those new to the profession who may be at an early phase in the development of their knowledge about academic conventions across the disciplines:

'many more subject-specific materials would help, certainly if you're a new teacher [...] but also for the students, you know'.

This is supported by comments cited earlier from another participant (6) concerning the value of pre-prepared materials when teaching EAP for the first time (see above).

Induction periods could be improved by having a greater focus on teaching and learning, for example:

'[It would have been better to have] more about EAP competencies and more detailed information about learning outcomes' (2).

And by giving information in smaller chunks where possible:

'they just try and give too much [information] at once [...] but it would be better if they could try and give it in more manageable chunks' (3).

A number of participants (2, 3, 4, 6) emphasised the value of having a Masters level qualification, some of whom only gained this recently whilst working in an EAP context. Participants were more reticent however about whether or not it would have helped them to have already had this qualification prior to the shift to EAP:

'the danger of relying on an MA qualification is that the experience is missing' (4)

and

'I think there's a limit on what a qualification can give [...] something like an MA TEAP would have been helpful, but most teachers come with a lot of prior knowledge so I don't think it's essential' (2).

One participant (6) who did a one week EAP course prior to working in the field said he feels that *'it was ok'* but that *'I definitely think it would be more useful now [now that he is actually working in EAP] than it was then'.*

6. What are your views on EAP-specific teacher training? Do we need it? Have you had any experience of it? If not, do you think you would have benefited from it? Why / why not?

All the participants who have undertaken a Masters degree related to English Language Teaching or Applied Linguistics spoke very highly of the experience, stating that it has been incredibly useful for a number of reasons:

it gives teachers first hand experience of what is expected of students at that level (2, 3, 4, 6);

'If you've been to uni. yourself, you know what the students need and this is what you need to teach them' (3)

it can be directly useful:

'stuff from my MA has gone straight into the classroom [...] things like using a corpus' (4)

and it gives teachers a greater awareness of the theory which underpins their classroom practice (1, 2).

Furthermore, there is also the sense that qualifications at this level can help to empower teachers; a number of participants (1, 2, 4) commented on the fact that a Masters gives teachers knowledge of the necessary 'terminology' which helps them to participate in their own discourse community, for example:

'I was aware of certain things, I knew some stuff but I didn't always have the confidence to say because I didn't know the terminology [prior to doing a Masters]' (4)

and

'Certain aspects [of EAP] can be taught, particularly terminology, which as a teacher you need, you need to be able to explain yourself' (1).

As mentioned above, views about EAP-specific qualifications are more mixed. One participant (3) who has completed a PgCTEAP commented that *'it wasn't that helpful really'* but says that this may be because the course was undertaken as *'distance learning'* which she felt did not suit her personally. The Masters that she has since undertaken was face to face, and she commented that she *'got a lot more out of it'*. The participant (6) who undertook the one week EAP course felt that it was *'ok'* but that he lacked the necessary practical experience:

'I didn't really feel I had very much to bring to it [at that time]'.

Whilst most participants (1, 2, 4, 5) generally thought EAP-specific training might be useful, most qualified this with the assertion that it cannot serve as a replacement for experience (1, 2, 5). This is also supported by comments from participant 6 about the one week EAP course he studied at a time when he had no experience of working in the field;

'It was ok [but] I definitely think it would be more useful now, than it was then'.

At this point some participants pointed to similarities which they feel exist between EGP and EAP, arguing that they feel that the basic principles are very similar, therefore pointing to the value of EGP experience:

'general English and EAP are otherwise not that different; the focus on reading skills, listening skills, developing cognitive and metacognitive strategies, we still teach grammar depending on the level' (2)

'EFL is not all that different; it is still purpose oriented, think about an FCE class or CAE⁸' (5)

'I think the teaching skills are basically the same [between EGP and EAP]' (6)

*'The danger of relying on a qualification is that the experience is missing' and
'I think you learn a lot from any kind of teaching' (4)*

'If you're an experienced teacher you can learn what you need to do [in an EAP context]' (5)

All (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) were therefore clear that an EAP-specific qualification should not be seen as a pre-requisite for entry into the profession.

One participant (1) suggested that such qualifications may be helpful in the drive to establish EAP as *'a proper linguistic science [and] a properly recognised subject'*, but acknowledged that as these qualifications are in a stage of relative infancy, there may be an inevitable period of trial and error before they reach their potential:

'these courses are still quite new and they may have to be taught before they can be improved upon'.

⁸ FCE refers to the Cambridge First Certificate of English, and CAE refers to the Cambridge Certificate of Advanced English, exams which are very popular with students of EFL.

7. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

This question received few responses, but during the course of the interviews certain issues arose which are somewhat peripheral to the main focus of the research. These issues concern *on-going* challenges that EAP teachers feel they face in the course of their everyday work, and are worth mentioning here in so far as they are relevant to both new and experienced teachers alike.

Three participants (2, 4, 5) expressed concerns about teaching EGAP. One of the less-experienced EAP teachers commented that:

'You have to try and manage students' expectations. All we can do is to raise their awareness of general academic conventions and make them realize that the specific stuff will have to come from their departments' (4).

The more experienced teachers however went further in questioning the efficacy of EGAP:

'Is generic EGAP best? It may be that we're teaching things that aren't really that useful' and

'Students tend to be more motivated on ESAP programmes' (2)

'It makes you question how helpful is EGAP, because the academic conventions are often very different between disciplines' (5).

A further and related issue raised by a number of participants was frustration with materials. Some teachers reported feeling that the materials are often not appropriate for the particular group of students, either because they are

irrelevant: *'how can we sit there and expect these students to discuss topics like 'extreme sports?'* (4)⁹, or too general (3, 5).

Two participants (3, 4) commented that they feel the situation is now changing, but participant 5 still feels that there is a long way to go in the *'need to design more subject specific materials'*, a consequence of which is that EAP teachers would need to collaborate far more with subject specialists.

⁹ These comments were not made about EAP courses but rather in relation to one of the 'General English' courses that are run by an English Language Centre at a university; courses which are described as 'General English but with an academic slant' (4).

Discussion and Implications

1. Introduction

Although literature is quite rare concerning EAP teachers' perceptions of the challenges that they face (Alexander et al. 2008: 19), the following discussion makes reference to relevant literature, and the BALEAP Competency Framework (2008), where possible.

The discussion begins with teachers' perceptions of the main initial challenges associated with teaching EAP, before progressing to a consideration of the various ways in which these challenges may be overcome, and the associated implications. Finally, the participants' perceptions of on-going challenges are considered.

2. The main challenges

Whilst a number of challenges were mentioned by individual participants, the greatest challenge most consistently cited as being associated with beginning to teach EAP concerns gaining the necessary *specialised* knowledge; the linguistic and academic conventions, and particularly the knowledge required to teach writing at this level. These aspects would appear to correspond quite closely to the BALEAP competency statements regarding knowledge of 'academic contexts' and 'academic discourse'.

These results appear to be similar to Alexander (2007), who found that the largest number of responses in relation to 'the main challenge in learning to teach EAP' was reported as being '*knowledge* or materials related to student needs in their disciplines' [my italics] (p.6), and more generally her findings about the difficulty of adapting to the emphasis on 'content' (as opposed to 'delivery') in EAP (see also King 2004, cited in Alexander, 2007: 7).

Participants' comments about the particular difficulty of understanding conventions *across* disciplines also resonate with Alexander's findings.

The data from the present study would also appear to provide support for Bruce's (2011: 116) claim that 'teacher knowledge of academic contexts and their influence on language use [...] are among the key characteristics of EAP that distinguish it from ELT'.

Whilst some teachers appeared to have held some misconceptions about EAP prior to entering the field, these do not appear to have had any significant impact on the teachers' experiences, and as with findings from post- EAP-specific training course feedback, these misconceptions were soon corrected with the attainment of a greater understanding about what EAP really involves (see Alexander, 2007: 10).

3. Overcoming the challenges

3.1. Inductions

Whilst in response to her findings, (Alexander, 2007: 7) recommends that 'teachers need a thorough *induction* and *on-going support* if they are to teach effectively in university contexts [my italics]', the present study has found that, as Sharpling (2002) has observed, institutions unfortunately tend to neglect training.

Teachers' experiences of inductions are generally quite negative; inductions are criticised at both ends of the spectrum, either for being too general or superficial, or for supplying 'information overload'.

Teachers' suggestions for how inductions could be improved include: lessening the intensity with which information is delivered, perhaps giving

'little and often' rather than attempting to condense everything into a day or two, and to give more specific and useful information such as that regarding learning outcomes and EAP competencies.

The problem with the inductions that the participants of the present study have experienced appears to be that they only take place in the summer months, and understandably at this time, universities have to take quite a pragmatic approach in quickly bringing large numbers of new teachers up to speed. The problem with this however, is that the needs of teachers who are new to EAP are never really met because more thorough or focused inductions are not provided at any other time.

3.2. Formal on-going development opportunities

Whilst inductions are largely reported as being inadequate in some way, information about on-going support and teacher development indicates that whilst the quality of the provision may be higher here, teachers are not able to take full advantage of the opportunities. 'Peer observation' or 'sharing practice' are viewed very positively as useful and worthwhile activities, but teachers report that they are not able to utilise these opportunities due to time constraints. Rather than teachers feeling a reluctance to engage in development opportunities due to 'a lack of incentives' (King, 2012; Hannam 2012; Sharpling, 2002) as discussed above, here it seems that the problem is that EAP teachers have a very heavy workload and feel that the demands of their teaching responsibilities leave little time for anything else.

There is clearly then much that can be done on the part of institutions to improve this situation; teachers appear willing and express enthusiasm for opportunities for greater development, and it seems the uptake would be much higher if they had more time. The onus is therefore on institutions to rectify the problem by for example, building time into teachers' timetables specifically for involvement in development activities. The present study

indicates that teachers feel that this would be time well-spent, and particularly valuable for those who are in the early stages 'learning to teach' EAP.

3.3. Opportunities to speak to subject specialists

A number of participants cited the opportunity to talk to subject specialists as a further factor that has been important in helping them to meet the challenge of developing the necessary specialised knowledge concerning different academic conventions, and particularly the teaching of writing. However, it is reported that such activity is unfortunately often limited, again due to time constraints.

3.4. Informal development activities

In the face of a lack of adequate formal support, the data gathered here presents a very positive picture of the resourcefulness of teachers, and their ability to use their own initiative in order to meet the challenges of teaching EAP.

In the early stages of their EAP careers, teachers report having learned a lot from activities such as reading, looking things up, talking to other EAP teachers and talking to subject specialists.

These findings support those of Alexander (2007) who found that only 20% of respondents reported using formal routes for professional development. More than half reported that formal routes were not available to them and that instead they found value in informal routes such as 'sharing ideas with colleagues, using EAP coursebooks, reading books or journals and attending meetings' (p.4).

However, the present study also revealed that time constraints can again come into play, as one less-experienced EAP teacher reports feeling unable to approach more experienced teachers informally for help, because they are too busy. As argued above, it may therefore make sense to formally build space into teacher's timetables, particularly for those who are new to the profession, which is dedicated to teacher development activities. Here EAP could take its model from the PgCE (Post-Graduate Certificate in Education) programme where, during their first year of employment, new teachers are allocated a larger number of 'free' periods, both in order to pursue development opportunities, and in recognition of the extra work that teachers have to put in at the early stages of their career. Although the situation in EAP is different in so far as teachers, in the UK context at least¹⁰, usually have (sometimes considerable) prior teaching experience, there are nevertheless significant 'new' challenges associated with beginning to teach EAP. The present study reveals that teachers feel they would greatly benefit from more opportunities to pursue their own professional development, whether by formal or informal means.

3.5. Previous teaching experience

As mentioned above, EAP teachers in the UK context usually have at least some prior teaching experience, and they seem to find this helps considerably when making the transition to EAP.

Whilst the literature reviewed above asserts the differences between EGP and EAP, the results of the present study seem to indicate that teachers *perceive* a significant degree of *similarity* between the two fields. Most teachers reported finding their previous teaching experience to be a very useful resource on which to draw, and similarly, two teachers cited a lack of teaching experience as a distinct disadvantage when beginning to teach EAP;

¹⁰ Whilst teachers entering EAP in the UK context are usually experienced, in other countries such as those in Asia, teachers are often recent graduates with little idea of what or how to teach (Todd, 2003: 149-50), and their needs may therefore be different in many respects to those discussed here.

for one teacher this concerned a lack of experience of teaching EGP, and for another a lack of experience of teaching writing, arguing that it is a neglected skill in EGP.

Areas where teachers seem to feel there is the greatest similarity between EGP and EAP are reported as being concerned with skills; both teaching skills (associated with delivery of material, classroom management and so on) and the business of teaching language skills. These comments, together with views given about the challenge of assimilating *knowledge* about linguistic and academic conventions, support Alexander's (2007) assertion that one of the fundamental differences between EGP and EAP is that the former 'prioritises delivery' whereas the latter 'prioritises content' (p.8); teachers feel relatively confident in the area of 'delivery' of lessons, but much less confident about their knowledge regarding the *content*.

The data seems to indicate therefore that teachers are best placed to enter the EAP field when they have some prior EGP experience, and also the flexibility to be able to adapt their practices to the academic context. This lends support to the views expressed by BALEAP in both their competency statement regarding 'teaching practices'; 'an EAP teacher will be – familiar with the methods, practices and techniques of Communicative Language Teaching and be able to locate these within an academic context and relate them to teaching the language and skills required by academic tasks and processes' (p.1), and their list of 'Examples of appropriate qualifications and experience for the UK context' which includes 'ELT experience' (pp.11-12).

3.6. Masters degrees

Above all, the most useful experience that teachers say they have drawn on during teaching EAP, is their own experiences of having studied at university level. Masters degrees were singled out as being an excellent source of 'direct experience' of what university students have to go through. Other

positive comments concerned finding a Masters degree 'directly useful', and increasing a teacher's enthusiasm for her work.

However, as with the discussion of EAP-specific qualifications below, teachers were more reticent about whether a Masters degree should be a pre-requisite of entry into the EAP profession. Many pointed to the concomitant importance of *experience*, suggesting that what is needed is a combined view of education *and* practical experience, which is cyclical rather than sequential. Further support for this can be found in later assertions made by the participants that learning is an on-going process in EAP (and perhaps teaching in general) and that although confidence grows with time, learning never ends. Whilst Alexander (2007) found that less-experienced teachers reported feeling it had taken them less time to feel confident (one year or less) and more experienced teachers reported having taken longer or were still in the process of learning, most teachers in the present study, both experienced and inexperienced, reported feeling that learning is a process which will continue over the whole course of their careers.

3.7. EAP-specific qualifications

Experiences of EAP-specific qualifications were limited to two participants, and although neither found their course particularly useful, in one case this may simply have been due to the fact that the style of course delivery (distance learning) did not suit her personally, and in the other due to the fact that the participant had no practical experience at that time of teaching EAP. This latter point echoes the frequent view given by the participants involved in the present study, that any type of qualification are not sufficient without an accompanying amount of *experience*. As discussed above, whilst teachers praised Masters degrees and thought EAP-specific qualifications were a good idea, they also emphasised the practical value of experience.

These views support Sharpling's (2002) arguments about the relative importance of training and experience, for EAP teachers.

The views expressed also resonate with Alexander's (2007) findings, where only 2% of EAP teachers felt that lack of formal training was a problem for them (p.6), and similarly, only one participant in the present study felt that no formal qualifications were needed to teach EAP, providing the teacher had 'experience and flexibility'.

It may be then that EAP-specific training should ideally come at a time when teachers already have experience of teaching EGP *and* EAP, to use as a kind of reference point for reflection and further development. This goes beyond the recommendations made by BALEAP in their 'English for Academic Purposes Teacher Training Course (draft proposal) (2011), Errey and Ansell (2011) in the comments they make regarding the design of an MA in EAP & ESP at Oxford Brookes University, and information regarding the entry requirements for the MA in TEAP at The University of Nottingham; all of which only stipulate prior experience of teaching English Language.

In terms of the *focus* of EAP-specific training, according to the data collected here, it seems it would best meet less-experienced teachers' needs when it focuses on issues of *content*, and the development of context-specific *knowledge* of academic and linguistic conventions. However, more experienced practitioners in the field, and particularly those who have experience of managing teams of EAP teachers, appear to feel that awareness about *delivery* in EAP may be also be an area of weakness for less-experienced EAP teachers (Bell, 2012; King, personal communication). In a presentation concerning 'Benchmarking Practitioner Expertise in the Teaching of EAP' Bell (2012) cites Flowerdew and Peacock (2001: 177) 'a critical step in designing the EAP curriculum is accepting that the *methodologies and approaches* valid in any other area of ESL are not necessarily the most appropriate for EAP' [my italics], before going on to

argue that one of the improvements he would like to see is pre-service training for EAP with a more *practical* focus.

The lack of clarity about teachers' needs concerning content versus delivery, very much lends support to Todd's (2003) argument that 'the lack of clarity about the potential distinctness of EAP methodology needs resolving' (p.149). It seems that more research needs to be done in this area before it is possible to ascertain with any certainty what areas of practice EAP-specific training could most usefully target. The present study also reveals an on-going lack of clarity about the status of such qualifications, and the need for more systematic evaluation.

The issue of the role EAP-specific qualifications could play in helping to assert the professional, or 'Academic with a capital A' (Hamp-Lyons, 2011) status of EAP was also raised by one participant. Similarly to King (2012), she questions whether EAP-specific qualifications may help to gain greater recognition of what it is that EAP practitioners do. However, whilst it may be tempting for the profession to seek 'a universally recognised entry-level industry standard' (Bell, 2012), the findings of the present study indicate that such a qualification may do little on its own in actually helping new teachers in the challenge of learning to teach EAP.

3.8. Materials

The value of materials was cited, both as a support for teachers who are new to the profession, and particularly for helping teachers to deal with disciplinary differences. Given Alexander's (2007) findings about the challenge teachers reported concerning 'materials related to student needs in their disciplines' (p.6) it is perhaps not surprising that here, some teachers reported finding it particularly helpful to have materials chosen for them in the initial stages of their EAP career. The development of more subject-specific materials was cited as a valuable area requiring further research.

Teachers also reported some on-going frustrations with materials, feeling that improvements still need to continue being made in order to make them more appropriate for purpose. Whilst Murby (2009) found that novice teachers in EAP tended to fail to identify shortfalls in materials, in the present study one less-experienced teacher revealed that she did have reservations about some of the materials from the very beginning of her EAP career, but it was not until later when she had studied for a Masters degree, that she felt she had the confidence to voice those concerns.

4. On-going challenges

The data also incidentally reveals information about EAP teachers' perceptions of *on-going* (as opposed to initial) challenges associated with teaching EAP; a significant issue emerging as the debate about English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) versus English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP).

The more experienced EAP teachers questioned the usefulness of teaching EGAP, wondering to what extent it benefits the students, with one participant also commenting that in his experience, motivation tends to be higher on ESAP courses. The less-experienced teachers seemed more accepting of EGAP but one alluded to its limitations in terms of how far it can prepare students for their future courses of study.

However, whilst it was suggested above that 'a more general, all-encompassing approach' may be less daunting for teachers in the early stages of their EAP careers (Sharpling, 2002: 88), the present study has also raised the question of how EAP teachers can ever really know in depth about differences across the disciplines.

One way forward may be to begin by letting go of dichotomous views of the teaching of generic versus specific skills, and instead consider them more as existing along a cline (Giminez, 2012). A 'weak' ESAP response to the problem identified above might be to simply seek to raise students' awareness of disciplinary differences within the context of teaching generic skills; how the same genre can mean different things in different disciplines for example (Jones, 2012). A stronger response can be seen in one of the participant's suggestions that EAP teachers use more subject specific materials. The benefit of relying on materials in this way is that it would also lessen the burden on teachers who are new to teaching EAP (as indicated by one of the less-experienced EAP teachers in the present study), and help to compensate for deficiencies in content knowledge. Jones (2012) points to the value of using corpora for non-experts to develop subject-specific materials. The development of subject-specific materials in EAP still has a long way to go according to participant 5, but it would be interesting to open up the debate with EAP teachers more widely to find out if views expressed here are consistent with others throughout the profession.

5. Conclusion

According to the results of the study, the main challenge associated with the transfer from EGP to EAP concerns the acquisition of specialised knowledge of linguistic and academic conventions. Whilst teachers perceive certain similarities between the two fields, these mostly concern the 'mechanics' of teaching, with the most significant challenge concerning the development of context-specific knowledge. Whilst this latter process by participants' own assertions may be potentially endless, the data reveals important insights into ways in which new teachers can be better supported in the initial stages of their EAP careers.

The main implication of the discussion above appears to be that first and foremost, the challenges teachers face when moving into EAP need to be more fully *acknowledged*, as a necessary precursor to action. Following this, a number of recommendations can be made.

Firstly, it appears that institutions could be doing much more to support teachers through this transition. Inductions for year-round teachers could be developed to provide greater focus and detail than the types of inductions which take place in summer, which perhaps more necessarily have to be concerned with the more pragmatic aspects of inducting large numbers of new teachers.

The overwhelming message is that formal on-going teacher development opportunities are incredibly useful, not only for less-experienced teachers but for teachers throughout their careers. Teachers clearly feel that they need more time however, in order to be able to fully take advantage of these opportunities. The same principal also applies to teachers' engagement with informal development activities, which teachers cited as being particularly valuable in helping them to overcome challenges initially.

Qualifications are also deemed useful for a number of reasons, whether in ELT or EAP-specific, providing that they are combined with practical experience. This led to the conclusion that training and experience should be viewed as a cyclical rather than sequential process, which makes sense considering the centrality of *reflection* in the practice of teaching EAP. Due to the various ways in which experience is deemed to be important, the data reveals that teachers do not feel that it would make sense to make an EAP-specific qualification a pre-requisite for entry to the field. These conclusions are supported by Sharpling (2002) who calls for a more long-term view of teacher education, arguing that pre-service training needs to be supplemented with on-going support by both formal and informal means.

It may be inevitable therefore that teachers have to undergo a certain amount of being 'thrown in at the deep end' in order to gain some of the experience that they will need to draw on in the course of further periods of training or study. The results of the present study therefore lend support to Alexander's (2010) suggestion that 'the next phase of development' of the BALEAP competency statements could be to expand the framework to include 'range statements which indicate how a novice or experienced teacher might demonstrate each competency, together with examples of practice' (p.6). This would be instrumental in *acknowledging* the challenges that teachers face when beginning to teach EAP (as mentioned above) as a necessary precursor to institutions and the wider profession looking at steps they can take to better support teachers during this phase of development.

Whilst the data provided an indication of teachers' perceptions about the *role* of EAP-specific training, the exact *form* that it should take remains less clear. Whilst teachers perceive (due to the experience of teaching EGP) a relative confidence in terms of their ability to *deliver* lessons in EAP even in the early stages, and feel that their main need is for context-specific knowledge, it may be that more experienced practitioners have a different view. It would be interesting therefore to research this point further by gaining multiple viewpoints on the challenges that new EAP teachers face. What also appears to be needed is more systematic research regarding EAP-specific qualifications in order to evaluate their efficacy, and a greater effort to clarify the situation regarding EAP methodology.

Finally, issues were raised about the teaching of generic versus subject specific skills, and whilst it was acknowledged that ESAP may represent significant challenges for teachers in terms of content, a number of suggestions were made for how these challenges could be overcome, and recommendations made for more research into the development of subject-specific materials.

Strengths and limitations of the present study, and suggestions for future research

The present study has value as a qualitative exploration of teachers' perceptions of the challenges of entering EAP; providing some valuable insights and also highlighting areas for future research.

In relation to the first research sub-aim, which intended to investigate teachers' perceptions of the EGP/EAP 'divide', the study has revealed detailed information about where and how teachers feel the two fields are similar and where they are different. This is valuable because it can help to pinpoint the areas in which teachers feel they need further training and education.

The first sub-aim of the research also involved gaining insights into teachers' perceptions of EAP *prior to entry*, and then their perceptions of EAP *upon entry*. Here the data perhaps has less to offer. The difficulty with trying to access this information retrospectively was that participants seemed to find it difficult to recall what their perceptions were. The study seemed to reveal that 'myths' played very little part in shaping their perceptions of EAP prior to entry, but it is difficult to draw any conclusions about this due to the apparent lack of data.

Whilst the main aim of the study was to investigate teachers' *experiences*, the sub-aim concerning perceptions of EAP prior to entry appears to be more concerned with teachers' *beliefs*, and here the design of the present study was perhaps not as appropriate; 'teacher beliefs about teaching and learning [...] are not fixed but form part of a complex, interconnected and dynamic system, in which existing and emergent beliefs may be in tension' (Alexander, 2012: 101). This type of information could be better accessed therefore by research involving teachers who are actually *in the process* of making the transfer from EGP to EAP. Ideally this would involve a

longitudinal study which could interview teachers at certain points throughout the transfer, in order to gain greater insights into where and how their perceptions change.

The second sub-aim of the research was to investigate teachers' perceptions of what training / education / support they had received, and what else they feel may have helped them during the initial stages of entry to EAP, as part of a larger intention to discover how the challenges can best be overcome. The data revealed a considerable number of insights here about what types of specific activities teachers find useful, which has also allowed for certain recommendations to be made about where and how support and training for teachers might be improved.

The third sub-aim of the research concerned investigating teachers' views of EAP-specific qualifications. The data here provided significant information, particularly about what role teachers feel these qualifications should play, and how they feel such training should be used. This is important because it has given teachers a voice in the debate about EAP-specific qualifications, particularly at a time when the profession is looking at pre-entry qualifications as one way in which it could seek to further establish its professional status.

The information given about teachers' needs is interesting because of its implications for EAP-specific training courses, and for how teachers' views may compare to the views of others in the field. This raised the issue of the subjectivity of the participants and thus the limitations of the data in its capacity to inform practice. However, what this data does supply is a foundation from which future research could be generated. The present study presents a fairly unified picture of teachers' needs, and it would be interesting to investigate how far these findings can be generalised, by extending this line of inquiry to a larger number of participants, and to see

how the data compares to existing research such as Alexander (2007), which sought to gain similar information but through more quantitative means.

The results also lend support to Todd's (2003) call for a greater clarification of EAP methodology.

Future research could also aim to develop the insights into *teachers' perceptions* of their needs more objectively and in greater depth, as a step towards informing practice in the area of teacher training. This could involve conducting a needs analysis of teachers who are new to EAP, perhaps adapting Hutchinson and Waters (1987) concepts of 'wants, needs and lacks' in order to explore more fully the complex nature of needs.

This could then be combined with classroom observations, and more qualitative data from further interviews or focus groups, once key issues had been identified. Employing a triangulation of methods in this way would give 'multiple perspectives' (Richards, 2003: 15) on the issue of teachers' needs and increase the validity (McDonough and McDonough, 1997: 71) of the findings. This could then provide a strong rationale for making recommendations about how EAP teacher education can best be designed.

The present study could have probed participants further about their experiences of EAP-specific teacher training, and attempted to gain more detailed evaluation from them. However, the participants with this experience in the present study were limited to just two, and so again, future research could be designed to focus more exclusively on this area. This could ideally be conducted by the institutions that provide this type of training, but it needs to go beyond a simple end-of-course questionnaire. If, as one of the participants notes 'these courses may have to be taught before they can be improved upon' (1) it seems essential that opportunities for rigorous evaluation of such courses are fully exploited.

It would also be interesting to conduct further research into informal development opportunities, given the information gathered here about the importance teachers attach to such experiences. It seems that what is needed is a more holistic view of teacher education, which keeps an open mind about the *range* of training and development opportunities that teachers can find helpful.

The data from the present study has also incidentally provided insights into some of the *on-going* challenges that EAP teachers feel they face, and again there is considerable scope here for future research, both in terms of a more focused study concerning teachers' perceptions of those challenges, and also in terms of teachers' feelings about generic versus subject-specific instruction, and further research into the development of subject-specific materials.

Conclusion

Of all the differences between EGP and EAP, it seems that the context specificity of EAP represents the greatest challenge for teachers who transfer to the field. Operating within a branch of ESP, teachers have to develop *specialised* knowledge of language in academic contexts, with all the added disciplinary variations that this may entail.

It is perhaps not surprising then that the present study reveals that teachers feel that the development of this knowledge takes time, and that meeting the challenge requires a combination of training *and* experience, both by formal and informal means, which is most effective when it occurs in cycles. Whilst EAP-specific teacher training is perceived as potentially valuable, the view was that this should be used as a means of teacher development rather than as a stipulation of entry to the profession.

What these findings perhaps suggest is that the profession needs to take a more long-term view of teacher 'training'. EAP is 'is an educational approach and a set of beliefs about TESOL that is unlike that in general English courses' (Hamp-Lyons, 2001: 126) and 'the practitioner's role is a highly complex one, for which no preparation seems to be wholly adequate' (Sharpling, 2002: 82). Whilst beginning to teach EAP represents significant challenges, for which new teachers could clearly benefit from some kind of preparation, this would most usefully be seen as an initial part of a much longer process, which will involve on-going development through a number of formal and informal means. The term *training* could perhaps therefore be more usefully replaced by the term *development*, to reflect its on-going, as opposed to exclusively initial nature.

Adopting this view however, would shift responsibility from the individual, in terms of having to undergo the necessary training course prior to commencing work, to the institution, requiring it to take much greater

responsibility for the on-going development of its staff. As the present study reveals, there may be a lot of work to do here, but it is worth pursuing, as with greater investment (in both time, money and effort) would arguably come greater benefits; not only would EAP practitioners get what they actually need, but there would also be the opportunity for the profession to assert itself as a more autonomous entity.

A greater emphasis on the on-going nature of teacher development, together with greater recognition of some of the informal activities which teachers find valuable, may mean that formal pre-service EAP-specific courses become devalued in favour of more systematised 'hands-on' preparation programmes. Borg (2006: 40) reveals that whilst research into the impact of teacher education on teacher cognition in language teaching is still evolving, it has traditionally suggested that *teacher education* is a 'weak intervention', whereas '*classroom action* has shown to be a powerful influence on teachers' practical knowledge' [my italics]. What may be required is the adoption of a more Vgotskyan view of education as exploration, which occurs through negotiation and collaboration (Sharpling, 2002). In line with this, more research could be done into methods such as 'critical friendships' (Farrell, 2001) between practitioners, or formal mentoring for newer teachers.

However, it is not possible to make any conclusive recommendations given the size and exclusivity of the sample involved in the present study. Whilst inferences above are drawn from teachers' perspectives, what is now needed is a consideration of the subject from *multiple* perspectives, beyond that of just teachers. This would allow for a more objective assessment of teachers' needs when transferring from EGP to EAP, and thus allow for firmer recommendations to be made about how teachers can best be supported through the transition. Given the findings of the present study, the areas of lesson delivery and methodology between EGP and EAP particularly warrant further investigation. What is also needed is more rigorous evaluation of the EAP training courses which are currently available, in order to ascertain if and

how they are effectively meeting specific needs. This information could then be compared with more detailed research about what role more 'informal' development opportunities play in helping teachers to overcome challenges.

Whilst the study has proved limited in some areas, namely in its ability to access information retrospectively concerning the development of teachers' beliefs about EGP and EAP, it is hoped that in its line of qualitative enquiry, it has achieved the larger aim of providing some valuable 'new ideas and insights' and contributed to a broadening of understanding about the topic (Dornyei, 2007). The main hope is that the future will see a greater contribution to research in this area, filling the gap that currently seems to exist, so that ultimately teachers will be better placed, and better supported, to begin their journey of learning to teach EAP.

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Appendix

1. Interview Schedule

Topic

Teachers' experiences of the transition from EGP to EAP, particularly the greatest challenges that they faced, and their opinions about how these challenges can best be overcome.

Sub-topics

Teacher's routes into EAP, perceptions of EAP prior to entering the field, initial difficulties / challenges on entering the field, their opinions about initial and on-going training / education / support, and their opinions about EAP-specific qualifications.

Key Questions

1. Could you begin by talking me through your career so far?
(Prompt where necessary) Where did it begin? What experience did you have prior to taking your first position in EAP? Where was your first position in EAP? What has happened in your career since then?
2. What were your impressions of EAP prior to working in the field? What did you think would be the greatest challenges for you in commencing an EAP teaching post?
3. When you began your first job in EAP, what did you actually find were the greatest challenges? Were there any differences between your perceptions and the reality of teaching in an EAP context?
4. What do you think helped you to overcome these challenges?
5. What else may have helped? Is there any form of training / education / support, or anything else that you feel may have helped you during your initial entry into EAP?
6. What do you think of EAP-specific teacher training? The PGCTeap for example or the Masters programmes in TEAP? Do we need them?
(Prompt where necessary) Have you had any experience of them? If not, do you think you would have benefited from them? Why / why not?
7. Is there anything else you would like to add?

2. Information about participants

A balance of more- and less-experienced teachers was sought, in order to gain information about a *range* of different experiences. In order to protect the identity of the participants, they are referred to here by number only.

Participant one

Participant one has been teaching in an EAP context for three years. She has PGCE and a Trinity Certificate in TESOL. She taught in an EFL context abroad before returning to the UK and commencing work in the EAP field, initially on a summer programme.

Participant two

Participant two has worked in an EAP context for a number of years. After gaining an initial CELTA qualification, he worked in EFL before going on to do a Masters degree. He first worked in EAP on a summer programme before gaining a permanent position.

Participant three

Participant three has worked in an EAP context for two years. Prior to this she worked abroad in EFL for two years. She has a CELTA certificate, a PgCTEAP and is currently studying for a Masters degree.

Participant four

Participant four has worked in EAP for a few years. Prior to this she taught EFL abroad. She has a CELTA certificate and is studying for a Masters degree. Her first experience of teaching EAP was on a summer programme.

Participant five

Participant five has extensive experience of working within the education sector as both a teacher and a teacher trainer, in a number of roles both in the UK and abroad. She has been in her present position teaching EAP for five years.

Participant six

Participant six taught General English for fifteen years and is also a teacher trainer. Six years ago he took a one week EAP course in Edinburgh (run by Olwyn Alexander) and two years ago he gained a Masters in ELT. He has only recently begun to teach EAP.

3. Ethics form: Description of research study

Project aims:

- To investigate teachers' experiences of transferring from English for General Purposes (EGP) to English for Academic Purposes (EAP).
- To particularly focus on perceived areas of difficulty, and to consider ways forward.
- To gather information about teachers' attitudes towards EAP-specific training courses / qualifications.
- To make some suggestions for how teachers can be best supported through the transition.

What is required of you:

- A semi-structured interview with the researcher, which will last around 30 minutes. Questions will be asked about your teaching career, your perceptions of EGP vs. EAP, areas of difficulty when entering EAP, ways forward from these difficulties, your opinions of EAP-specific training / qualifications.
- The interview will be audiotaped.

Confidentiality and security:

- The recordings will be stored on the researcher's laptop, with a back-up copy on an external hard drive. Only the researcher will have access to the material.
- The data will be referred to in the study. Any personal or company names or information will be changed. Participants will not be identifiable in any published material.
- The information recorded will be used solely for the purposes of this research project.

Your rights are not affected:

- Participation in the research is completely voluntary.
- Participants are at liberty to withdraw at any time without prejudice or negative consequences.
- Non-participation will not affect your rights/access to other services from The University of Nottingham.

There are no further potential risks or harm to participants.

Should you require further information, please contact the researcher:

Gemma Champion
ttxgc10@nottingham.ac.uk

Should you wish to make a complaint on ethical grounds, please contact the Research Ethics Coordinators at the Nottingham University School of Education:

educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

Many thanks for your support with this research project

4. Ethics form: Participant Consent

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Project title: Investigating teachers' experiences of transferring from English for General Purposes (EGP) to English for Academic Purposes (EAP).

Researcher's name: Gemma Campion

Supervisor's name: Martha Jones

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.
- I understand that I will be audiotaped /videotaped during the lesson.
- I understand that data will be stored on the researcher's laptop and external hard drive, and that only the researcher and the trainer will have access to the recording.
- I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the research.

Signed (research participant)

Print name **Date**

Contact details

Researcher: Gemma Campion
txgc10@nottingham.ac.uk

Supervisor: Martha Jones
Martha.Jones@nottingham.ac.uk

School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator:
educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk