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Chapter

Perspective Chapter: English for Academic Purposes Teacher Education – Prerequisites, Predicaments, and Perquisites

Seyyed Hossein Kashef and Abdolreza Khalili

Abstract

A scrutiny of the factors which sway language instruction in the context of the classroom has made the researchers cognizant of the fact that teachers perform a pivotal role in the process of instructed Second Language Acquisition (SLA). The apprehension of this issue has prompted a large number of researchers to use *teacher education* as a surrogate for the traditional term *teacher training* in order to illustrate the multi-layered nature of the prospective teachers' preparation period. Meanwhile, SLA researchers have taken cognizance of the fact that even the state-of-the-art teacher education courses may not empower the language instructors, who teach English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses, to fulfill their potential in the pertinent courses. Considering the above-mentioned issues, this chapter strives to review the recent research in order to: (a) expound on the essential prerequisites for the development of EAP teacher education courses; (b) determine the probable major hurdles in the teaching of these courses; and (c) extol the virtues of the relevant courses in different academic settings.

Keywords: EAP, general english courses, language teachers, teacher education, teacher educators

1. Introduction

In light of multitudinous studies [1–14] teacher education has attracted considerable attention in the field of SLA. This term has been used as a surrogate for the traditional term teacher training in recent decades in order to characterize the multi-layered nature of the language teachers' knowledge in the context of the classroom [15]. That is, it has been introduced into the field of instructed SLA to accentuate the fact that the traditional teacher training courses, which focused on the practical issues of language instruction, are not able to empower the teachers to deal with the multitudinous intervening factors which thwart the process of language instruction [16].

Furthermore, teacher education has substituted teacher training to draw attention to the complicated nature of language teaching and learning in academic settings [12]. More specifically, it intends to make teacher educators and teachers cognizant of the fact that the teachers' knowledge about the underlying principles of SLA enables them to take account of the diverse variables which are likely to mediate the impact of instructional approaches on the language learners' acquisition of the various aspects of the target language [17]. Considering these issues, language teacher education can be defined as the process in which the pre-service and in-service language teachers are provided with adequate information on the theoretical discussions and practical concerns in the field of SLA and are prompted to put the theory of SLA into practice by taking account of innumerable factors including the learners' individual differences, contextual variables, and cultural issues among others [18].

A close scrutiny of the relevant literature [19–21] indicates that teacher education has become a recurrent line of research in the field of EAP in second and foreign language learning contexts. EAP constitutes a sub-branch of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) which characterizes the courses that provide the language learners with information on certain vocabulary items, grammatical structures, discourse feature, and genre-based issues and empower them to perform particular functions which are prerequisite to their occupation [22, 23]. Considering this definition, ESP comprises a wide range of courses such as Business English, Aviation English, and Functional English among others [24]. Ha and Hyland [25] pointed out that EAP has emerged as a sub-branch of ESP in order to empower the higher-education students, who major in diverse subjects, to continue their studies in second language contexts in an effective way. Likewise, Hyland [26] stated that EAP courses strive to facilitate the students' development of language skills which are considered to be the sine qua non of their pertinent subject areas. As he explained, these courses apprise the students of the most frequent vocabulary items of their fields and inform them about the grammatical structures which are preferred in their pertinent disciplines. Moreover, they make the learners cognizant of the discourse-based and genre-based aspects of their majors and assist them to perform their educational tasks.

Notwithstanding, various issues are likely to complicate the teaching of EAP courses in the academic settings [3]. These issues encompass a wide range of problems which stem from the conceptualization of this sub-branch of ESP [23, 27, 28]. Bell [29] stated that a large number of EAP courses are developed in complete disregard of the theoretical foundations of this field and equate EAP with general English knowledge. He noted that, most of the aforementioned courses shrug off the peculiarities of EAP and use the Grammar-Translation Method to provide the EAP learners with their pertinent instruction. Likewise, Collins and Holliday [30] pointed out that EAP program developers do not take heed of the underlying principles of this field of study and assume that the learners' knowledge about the various aspects of the language of their major is a by-product of the teaching of various technical texts in their EAP classes. Considering these issues, Tardy [21] averred that there is a need to redress the EAP teacher education courses in order to empower the EAP instructors to deal with the thorny issues of instruction in these courses and to ensure their continuous professional development. On the basis of the above-mentioned discussions, this chapter intends to shed light on the current issues of EAP teacher education. To this end, first, it expounds on the prerequisites of EAP teacher education in various contexts. Second, it highlights the predicaments that complicate the education of EAP teachers. Finally, it elucidates the perks of EAP teachers' education in the academic settings.

2. Prerequisites of EAP teacher education

Parsons et al. [17] argued that the prospective teachers' knowledge of the theoretical discussions of the target language is the desideratum of effective language instruction in the context of the classroom. Likewise, Zou and Hyland [31] accentuated the fact that the EAP teachers need to form a clear conception of EAP in order to expedite their learners' development of their requisite skills. These issues highlight the fact that the first prerequisite of EAP teacher education is EAP course developers, teacher educators, and teachers' cognizance of the fact that EAP constitutes an independent field of study which has been developed based on a scientifically sound theory. The theory of EAP is formulated in light of the needs-based structure of its courses [21].

Moreover, as Paltridge et al. [19] pointed out, EAP constitutes a field of study which takes advantage of the results of research in the other disciplines and strives to utilize their efficacious research methods. Similarly, Zhao et al. [15] noted that this field draws on the underlying educational principles of various fields of knowledge due mainly to its multidisciplinary nature. Given this characteristic of EAP, it can be stated that the second prerequisite of EAP teacher education is EAP teacher educators and program developers' knowledge about the prominent research methods and techniques which extend its boundaries in the different academic settings.

Furthermore, Luzón and Pérez-Llantada [32] noted that EAP education has always been concerned with practical issues. According to them, these courses intend to facilitate their learners' development of their necessary skills and evaluate the degree to which the learners are able to use their skills in order to perform their tasks in academic settings. In a similar way, Luo and Hyland [33] stated that the distinguishing factor between EAP courses and general English courses is their focus on the learners' outcomes. They explained that, the performance of bone fide tasks such as writing technical reports and memos is the demarcation line between the EAP courses and the general English courses which mostly involve the educational tasks which are developed for language teaching purposes. Therefore, it can be averred that, EAP teacher educators, program developers, and teachers' awareness of the outcome-oriented nature of EAP courses constitutes the third prerequisite of EAP teacher education.

In addition, Johns [34] pointed out that EAP courses have to be developed on the basis of the language learners' academic needs. He explained that the efficacy of these courses depends on the degree to which they take account of the reasons behind the learners' language studies. Similarly, Liao et al. [35] noted that the language teacher education courses have to apprise the in-service and pre-service teachers of the fact that the congruence between the course objectives and learner needs deeply affects the effectiveness of EAP courses. Therefore, the fourth prerequisite of efficient EAP teacher education is EAP program developers, teacher educators, and teachers' knowledge about the consequential role of the needs analysis in the development of EAP courses. That is, they need to take heed of the fact that the EAP courses are not able to serve a different function from the general English courses unless they target their learners' academic language learning needs.

Additionally, Anthony [36] stated that EAP courses may not be uniform in terms of their content and methodology. As he explained, this issue stems from the fact that these courses strive to empower the learners to perform their major-specific tasks. That is, the difference between the academic requirements of the learners' majors is accompanied by the difference between the structures of the EAP courses. In a similar way, Basturkmen [37] noted that the EAP course developers must take heed

of the various skills and aspects of the language which are deemed essential in various disciplines. This issue underscores the fact that the fifth perquisite of EAP teacher instruction is EAP syllabus designers, teacher educators, and instructors' understanding of the significance of the disparities among the different academic disciples in the development and teaching of efficacious EAP courses.

Moreover, as Bocanegra-Valle [38] noted, EAP courses make an attempt to deal with the needs of the adult language learners during their secondary or tertiary education. As he noted, the language learners' age may preclude the use of specific teaching techniques and strategies which are implemented in the general English courses. In a similar way, Basturkmen, and Bocanegra-Valle [39] argued that EAP instructors should be able to deal with the affective factors which impede the adult EAP learners' language learning in the context of the classroom. Based on this issue, it can be argued that the sixth prerequisite of EAP teacher education is EAP syllabus designers, teacher educators, and instructors' recognition of the potential incongruity between the teaching strategies in the EAP courses and the general English courses and the role of the adult EAP learners' affective factors in the process of their language acquisition.

Furthermore, Guillén-Galve and Bocanegra-Valle [40] stated that EAP courses target intermediate-level or advanced-level language learners. That is, the learners' knowledge of fundamental aspects of the target language is a necessary precondition of their participation in these courses. Similarly, Ding and Evans [30] noted that the language content of the EAP courses has to build on the learners' language knowledge in order to ameliorate their development of the required skills of their majors. These issues foreground the pivotal role of appropriate learner placement in the EAP courses. Therefore, it can be stated that the seventh prerequisite of EAP teacher education in different academic settings is EAP program developers, teacher educators and teachers' understanding of the significance of learner placement in these courses.

Additionally, Freeman et al. [41] stated that the language teacher education courses have to exhort the prospective teachers to take advantage of the assistance of experts in the other disciples to expedite the learners' language acquisition in the context of the classroom. In a similar way, Hyland [42] argued that EAP teachers have to acquaint themselves with the methodological features of the EAP learners' fields of study in order to ameliorate their language skill development. Likewise, Hyland and Jiang [43] pointed out that EAP teachers' collaboration with the experts of the learners' academic disciplines provides them with a better understanding of the underlying principles of the pertinent fields and empowers them to use their methodology in an efficacious way. These issues draw attention to the fact that the eighth prerequisite of effective EAP teacher education is the EAP syllabus designers, teacher educators, and teachers' cognizance of the utility of cooperation between the EAP teachers and field experts for teaching EAP courses in different academic settings.

Lastly, Pérez-Llantada and Swales [44] stated that redressing EAP teacher education courses depends on the education of the EAP teacher educators. According to them, the teacher educators' lack of knowledge regarding the theoretical and practical issues in EAP precludes them from providing the prospective teachers with viable solutions to the potential instructional problems which arise in the context of the classroom. Likewise, Woodrow [45] stated that there is a need to re-educate the EAP teacher educators in order to make them cognizant of the utility of theoretical considerations of this field along with its practical implications. Therefore, it can be noted that the ninth prerequisite of EAP teacher education is the EAP program developers' recognition of the need for redressed education courses to educate the EAP teacher educators. The above-mentioned prerequisites of the development of EAP teacher

education courses indicate that EAP teacher education course developers encounter various problems in the process of running these courses.

3. Predicaments in EAP teacher education

Tavakoli and Tavakol [46] pointed out that, EAP teacher educators are not able to provide the prospective EAP teachers with satisfactory education due largely to financial problems. According to them, the preponderance of the EAP courses is not funded by governmental grant in university settings. Moreover, the language institutes are not capable to fund appropriate EAP teacher education courses. Moreover, Taherkhani [47] pointed out that the current EAP teacher education courses are not able to furnish the pre-service and in-service EAP teachers with useful manuals which apprise them of the ways of putting the theory of EAP into practice in the context of the classroom.

Furthermore, Soodmand Afshar and Donyaie [48] noted that the lack of effective teacher education courses in second and foreign language learning contexts stems from the lack of access to erudite EAP teacher educators in these contexts. As they explained, most of the current EAP teacher educators are self-taught and have not attended specific education courses. According to them, this issue precludes them from providing the prospective EAP teachers with effective education regarding the theoretical and practical issues of this field of study.

Finally, Wichadee [49] argued that the EAP teacher education program developers and EAP teacher educators' reluctance to seek assistance from the field experts constitutes one of the major impediments to the development of effective EAP teacher education courses. He noted that, in most of these courses, program developers and teacher educators presume that their understanding of the technical jargon of the various fields of study ensures the sufficiency of their knowledge of the pertinent fields. Notwithstanding, as he pointed out, the collaboration between the EAP program developers and teacher educators and the experts of the relevant disciples is the sine qua non of their acquaintance with the methodological features of the relevant fields. As he concluded, the development of efficacious EAP teacher education courses offers several advantages over the traditional EAP teacher training courses in second and foreign language learning contexts.

4. Perquisites of EAP teacher education

Tardy [21] argued that EAP teacher education is likely to have certain theoretical implications in various academic settings. As he explained, effective EAP teacher education courses heighten the pre-service and in-service EAP teachers' awareness of the research methodology of this field and exhort them to conduct action research on the various aspects of EAP in their classes. Likewise, Pérez-Llantada and Swales [44] pointed out that the EAP teachers' cognizance of the consequential role of research in their field is likely to prompt them to extend its boundaries by developing effective EAP instruments. As they explained, EAP teachers may focus on their peers and develop instruments for assessing their individual factors including their motivation, attitudes, and beliefs among others. Moreover, they can focus on different disciples and develop certain instruments such as objective grading frameworks to evaluate the EAP learners' skills in the language tasks of their pertinent disciples.

Moreover, Iranmehr et al. [50] stated that effective teacher education courses might have specific practical implications in both second and foreign language learning contexts. According to them, the preponderance of EAP teachers teach both EAP and EFL courses and are not able to focus on their EAP classes in a satisfactory way. As they explained, effective EAP teacher education courses are likely to encourage these teachers to develop critical expertise in the teaching of EAP courses and to perform the role of EAP teacher educators over the course of time. Finally, as Basturkmen, and Bocanegra-Valle [39] noted, effective EAP teachers education courses make the EAP teachers cognizant of the consequential role of EAP materials and exhort them to evaluate the current martials based on the pertinent criteria in this field of study. According to them, EAP program developers can take advantage of the EAP teachers' feedback to ameliorate the instructional materials of the EAP courses in different language learning contexts.

5. Conclusion

This chapter strived to expound on the prerequisites, predicaments, and perquisites of EAP teacher education by reviewing the recent studies of this field of study. It appears that a number of provisional conclusions can be drawn based on the above-mentioned discussions of the EAP teacher education courses. First, EAP teacher education program developers need to set up public funds in order to develop satisfactory EAP teacher education courses in both university and language institute settings. Second, they need to seek assistance from international EAP teacher educators in order to re-educate their EAP teacher educators and to provide them with state-of-the-art theoretical perspectives on the various aspects of this field of study. Third, they have to include certain modules in the EAP teacher education courses which provide the in-service and pre-service teachers with sufficient information on the theoretical discussions, research methodology, nature, objectives, and needs-analysis of EAP courses. Fourth, it is recommended that they make the EAP teachers cognizant of the EAP learners' characteristics and apprise them of the disparities between various EAP courses in terms of their content and methodology. Fifth, they should take advantage of the field experts' knowledge and expertise by asking them to collaborate with the EAP teacher educators in the EAP teacher education courses. Sixth, they have to furnish the in-service and pre-service EAP teachers with useful manuals in order to empower them to deal with the various instructional issues in their classes. Seventh, they should encourage the EAP teachers to conduct research on various aspects of EAP in their academic settings. Finally, they need to take advantage of the EAP teachers' feedback to ameliorate the current EAP teacher education courses in their relevant language learning contexts.

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