



THE UNIVERSITY  
OF AUCKLAND  
FACULTY OF ARTS  
Te Wānanga Kura Tāngata

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# Today's talk

## An EAP/ESP Teacher Education Project



# Conference - theme

ESP in Asia 2016: Frontier and Advancement

This talk:

Argues we should reconsider frontiers traditionally explored in ESP

Advancement: ESP beyond traditional frontiers

Focus:

ESP teachers/teaching

Research: study 1 led to study 2

English for Specific Academic Purposes, ESAP  
(e.g. English for engineering studies, English for nursing students)

English for General Academic Purposes, EGAP

# Specificity

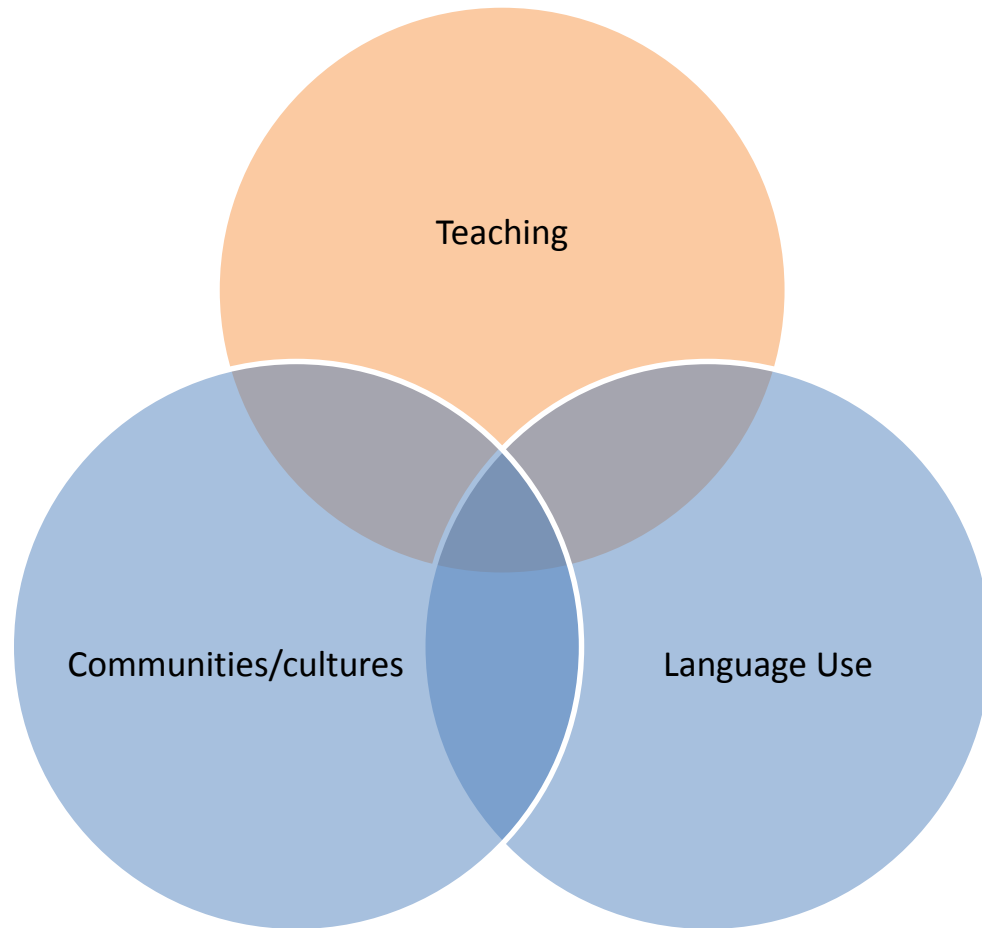
Specificity: cornerstone of ESP (Hyland, 2016)

- English for occupational and professional purposes always specific
- EAP

Recent years: increasing realisation EGAP alone may be insufficient

Recognition (in principle) of importance of ESAP

# ESP an interface discipline: Focus today on teaching



# Overview

- Conventional areas of enquiry in teaching
- New frontiers/advancements, emerging areas of enquiry:
  - Processes of developing courses
  - Teacher education/learning

# Teaching





# Teaching

Conventional ESP focus on PRODUCTS of teaching

Findings from a needs analysis or description of a course or materials developed

Examples

Syllabus for intensive workplace courses a Japanese company (Cowling, 2007)

Analysis of linguistic needs internationally educated nurses in US (Staples, 2015)

Importance to field:

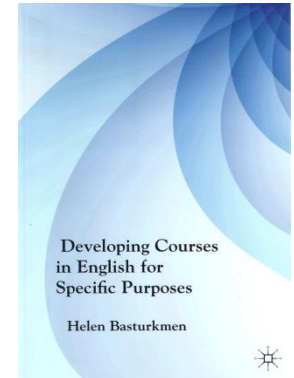
- Often practitioner-led

- Quality practice

- Innovative/creative solutions can be adapted other contexts

# New frontier

Processes involved in developing courses  
& materials (not products)



Emerging but limited literature (Kuzborska, 2011; Basturkmen, 2010)

Why focus on processes in course & materials development?

“ESP specialists are often needs analysts first and foremost, then designers and implementers of specialised curricula” (Belcher, 2006, p. 135).

Implications ESP teacher education.

# Study 1 investigated

How expert ESP teachers' developed a particular course:

Processes

Considerations

Difficulties/constraints

4 teachers in New Zealand

# ESP cases in NZ: work & study-related

ESP

Medical doctors (doctor/patient encounters)

Police recruits

EAP: for students

Art history

Thesis writing (across disciplines)

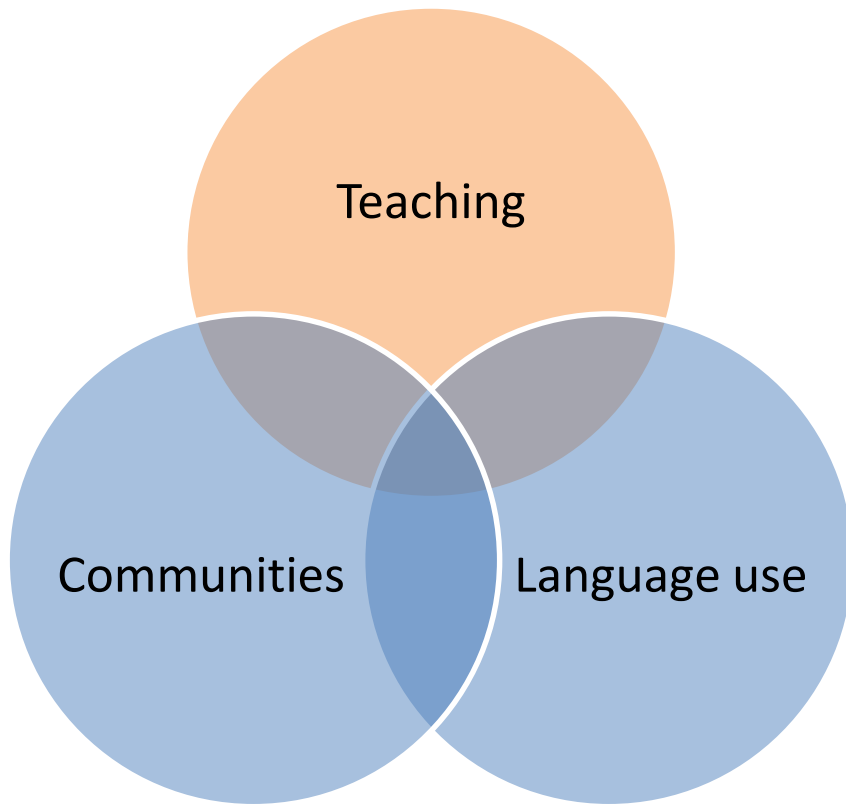
# Approach

Cross-case study

**Aim:** How experienced ESP teachers set about developing courses & materials

**Focus:** Study of expertise – procedures experts use when faced with a real world situation

**Methods:** interviews, document analysis & teachers' reflections



Example interview prompt

In developing your course:

*How did you investigate/describe specialist language use (discourse)?*

# Investigating specialist language use: Selected findings

Process involved:

collecting data/language samples

analysing language samples

and/or

finding existing descriptions

In some situations: teachers able to locate & use existing data & but further process – to work out if really relevant

Locating sources of existing data/descriptions difficult especially at outset

Collecting language samples & investigating specialist discourse was time consuming – as was searching for available descriptions

# One research project led to another

- Study 1 revealed high level of knowledge & skills needed by EAP/ESP teachers



# Range of tasks involved in EAP/ESP teaching

- Classroom instruction in specialist English
- Course development
- Identify learners' needs
- Devise pedagogic descriptions of specialist English
- Investigate disciplinary, workplace or professional discourses or locate existing linguistic descriptions
- Analyse discourse, using concepts/techniques from corpus analysis, genre analysis, pragmatics
- Develop subject-specific materials (commercially available materials limited)
- Assess learning of specialist English

# Led to research study 2

- But how do EAP/ESP teachers develop these areas of knowledge & skills?
- Does it always have to be 'over time' & 'by experience' – a short cut method via teacher education?
- Are there any residual needs (that may not develop over time/with experience)?
- What would be in the teacher education programme? What knowledge/skills do EAP/ESP teachers need?

# Themes in the literature

Literature on ESP teaching/teachers not extensive

Some discussion:

- Kinds of knowledge teachers need (Campion, 2016; Bruce, 2011; Basturkmen, 2014; Ferguson; Hall, 2013; Master, 2005)
- Views on importance of teachers having subject/content knowledge
- Specialised vs specialist knowledge (Ferguson, 1997)
- Teaching strategies compensating gaps in subject knowledge (Wu & Badger, 2009)
- Teacher beliefs (Alexander, 2012)
- Surveys of teacher education programmes (Basturkmen, 2014; Master, 2005; Richards, 1997) - find limited provision
- Topics suggested for ESP teacher education program (Basturkmen, 2014; Master, 2005; Hüttner et al. 2009) (not based on empirical research)
- Transitioning from general English to teaching EAP (Alexander, 2007; Champion, 2016)

# Who can/should teach ESP?

“Given the breath of areas covered by ESP instruction, it is reasonable to ask who can teach ESP and how much content knowledge ESP professionals needs” (Starfield, 2016: 157).

Should English be taught by “content-area informed” language instructors (Belcher, 2009) or subject specialists

Solutions:

- EOP courses often delivered by discipline-based practitioners (Flowerdew, 2013)
- ESAP early examples: team teaching & linked content/language courses (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Kotecha et al., 1990)
- Highly specialised fields: equal & close relationship between ESP teacher & legal specialist (Northcott, 2009), Master (2005) suggests although ESP courses generally better taught by ESP/language teachers, for fields such as air traffic control, a subject specialist (Master, 2005)
- Changing? Corpus studies making professional discourse more available for use by ESP practitioners (Starfield, 2016)

# Competencies relating to:

## EAP teacher competencies

New frontier:

What skills & knowledge do EAP teachers require?

Bruce, I. (2011)

*Draws on Competency framework for teachers of EAP (BALEAP)*

Goal/end product but not how teachers acquire these competencies

Using terms from needs analysis:

Analysis of target situation but not a present situation analysis or analysis of learning needs

- Academic practice

e.g.

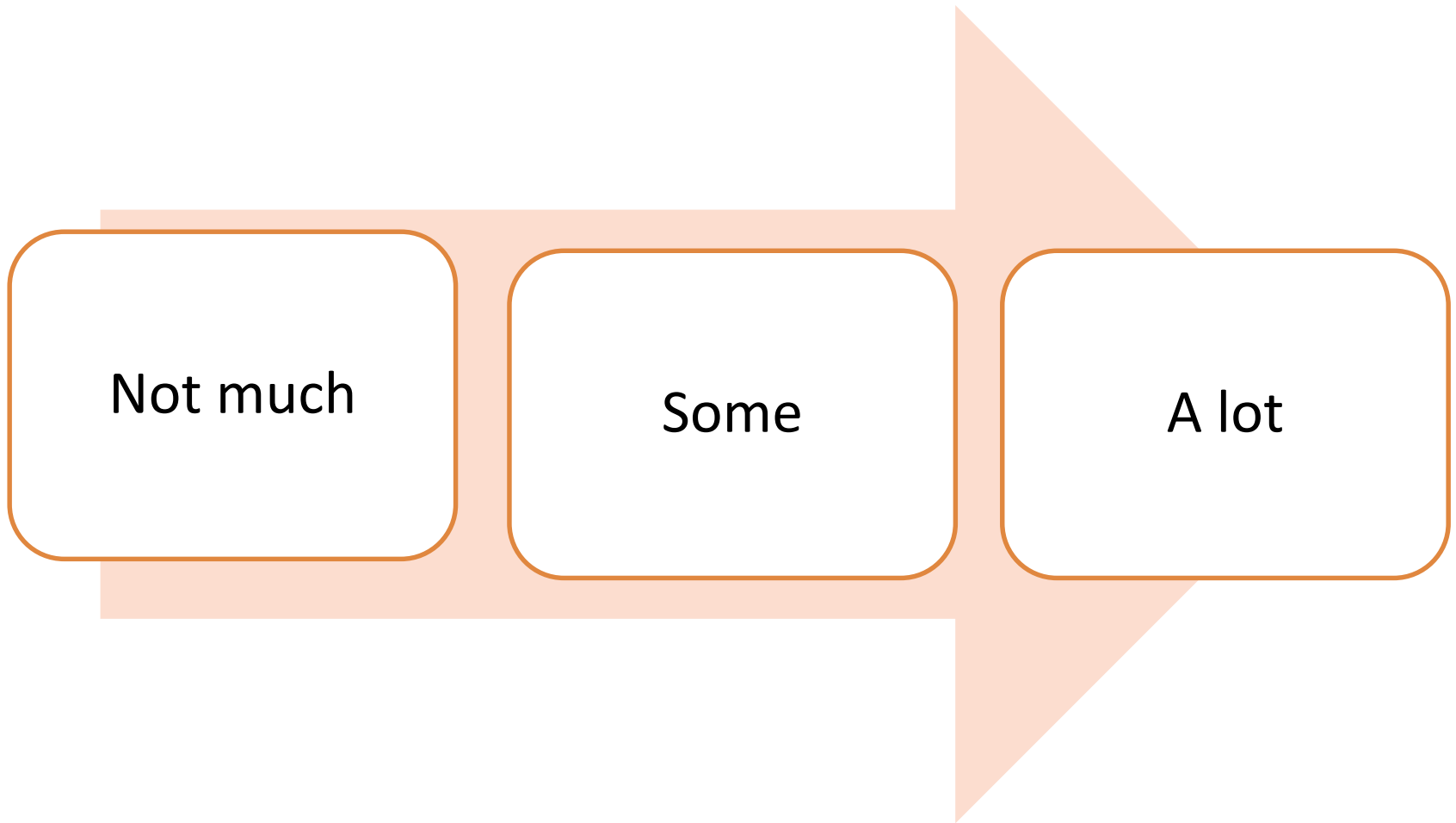
academic discourse - high level of language knowledge including knowledge of discourse analysis  
disciplinary differences - able to recognise & explore disciplinary differences

- EAP students
- Curriculum development
- Programme implementation

# Views: ESP teacher subject/content knowledge needs

- a) The teacher needs good ELT experience, and a good attitude and interest in the subject matter, not content knowledge
- b) Subject matter knowledge can be an obstacle to what the role of the ESP teacher should be. The teacher should stop teaching a particular area after a while because he/she may not be able to resist teaching content.
- c) Some ESP projects prefer to hire a teacher of science who also happens to have some ELT experience or training.

# Subject/content knowledge of ESP teachers



# Not much      Some      A lot

- d) If we try to teach ESP without knowing the subject matter we are fooling ourselves or short changing our students.
- e) In many settings the ESP teacher is better prepared to deal with the needs of the ESP student than a content instructor. However, in highly technical contexts (such as, air traffic control) a trained subject-matter specialist is essential, especially when lives are at stake.
- f) The ESP teacher should be prepared to acquire a basic layman's understanding of the subject area that the students are studying. He or she needs to seek or know some basic facts about the subject. A few hours reading or consulting a colleague in the Science Department should do.
- g) Comprehension of a subject text is facilitated by specialist knowledge and hindered by its absence. Text comprehension is essential if the teacher wishes to use the text in the ESP class.
- h) The ESP teacher does not need specialised knowledge in terms of knowledge of content but does need specialised knowledge (knowledge of disciplinary culture & genres)
- i) Language teachers lack the expertise and confidence to teach subject specific English and this should be left to subject specialists who know best
- j) Helping learners express themselves in a subject area is easier for an outsider than a subject expert who usually takes linguistic and content knowledge for granted and finds it difficult to see the discipline/subject area from the non-English speaking students' point of view.



# EAP/ESP teacher education project

## Study 2

Co researcher:  
Ana Bocanegra- Valle



# Study 2

## **Context**

Experienced ESP teachers in universities in Spain

## **Aims**

How teachers acquired expertise in ESP teaching? What kinds of knowledge ESP teachers require (teachers' perceptions)? What residual needs/lacks teacher report?

## **Method**

Interviews & recall

- How they learned to develop instructional materials
- Kinds of skills & knowledge needed for teaching ESP
- Principles & practices in ESP teaching

# 2 universities/3 campuses in Spain



# Context

- 19 experienced teachers: 15 female & 4 male
- 3 Spanish university/campus settings
- Teaching wide range ESP/EAP courses
- In this context: end of university study – focus on ESP/English for workplace/industry (number of Ls doing internships)

# Context: Teaching

	Teaching ESP experience	Teaching branch of ESP experience	Branches examples	Learners
	13-40	2-32	<p>EAP Writing for academic publication</p> <p>Industries: tourism, logistics &amp; ports, wine industry</p> <p>Medicine, physiotherapy, nursing</p> <p>Business, administration</p> <p>Electronics &amp; computing</p> <p>Engineering: agricultural, aeronautical</p> <p>Naval architecture Ship-building &amp; marine engineering</p> <p>EOP: shop workers, hotel receptionists</p>	<p>Undergrads Postgrads Academics</p> <p>Professionals e.g. in-service naval architects</p> <p>Workplace learners</p>

# Interview

# Part 1: Materials Development

## Part One: Materials Design

*Example questions:*

1. To what extent do you design materials from scratch, or adapt from previously existing material?
2. How did you manage to start designing/developing your own materials – did you receive training?
3. Please tell us about a satisfactory sample teaching material you brought to the interview.

# Part 2: Teacher needs

Example questions:

1. Did you know about ESP/EAP teaching when you started? How did you learn?
2. What skills/knowledge do you think are needed by ESP/EAP teachers? Are they the same/different from those needed by the general English teacher?
3. In which areas of ESP teaching do you feel particularly competent (and not confident)? How did you develop this competence?
4. What would be a good form of support/teacher education for  
Novice ESP/EAP teachers?  
Experienced ESP/EAP teachers?



# Interview excerpts



# Teaching nursing students

*How did you learn to develop/adapt materials?*

*When I started working my friend Maria, my colleague, she had been a pupil of [...] and she taught me. Well, I don't really design that much material, I usually adapt especially like check on the internet, in text books and I find many activities that I like and usually what I do is to make things easier for the students because everything, the texts is too high level for them, at least for my students*

*Texts? Authentic texts?*

*Yes that's right, that's too difficult so I usually read it and make it shorter and change the difficult words, that type of thing, that's what usually do.*

# Teaching tourism students

*How did you learn to develop materials?*

*Well from just observing*

*Where did you observe?*

*From colleagues doing the teaching materials or from books as well books like English for tourism we have lots of materials in the library good books for tourism. So trying just to do the same. I mean I haven't had any training course or any training at all in materials development no, so I just to try to observe what other people do and try to do it the best I can*

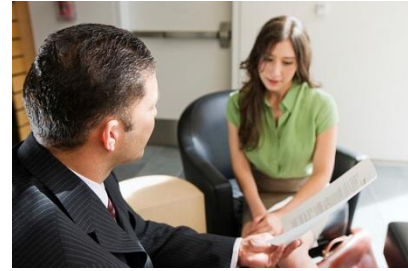
# Residual concerns about teaching ESP

*And any areas you don't feel you're so confident in/good at?*



What is his concern?

What tension does he describe?



\* Residual need

How to assess effectiveness of instruction in terms of learning outcomes -  
beyond *enjoyed it, fun, everyone speaking/participating in class*

Conflicting beliefs: wanted enjoyable lessons but how relevant are these to  
learning needs

Tension: concerned with 'delivery' but how to combine exciting delivery with  
focus on language 'content'

This difficulty noted by Campion (2016) as teachers transition ELT to EAP

Not novice ESP teachers in this case

# Findings: Materials development

- Almost no direct training
- General high level confidence, lots of practice
- Many excellent ideas for activities
- Felt competent in devising speaking/interaction, production & (except 1) technology-based materials/teaching
- Unlike NZ context, they ‘prepared materials’ (adapted) rather than designing from scratch  
*“preparing the material. I don’t design a lot”*

# Learnt to teach ESP

- By observation, mentoring, from existing ESP materials, conferences



# Reported difficulties (residual needs)

- Groups with range linguistic levels
- Groups including learners not motivated towards subject
- Felt less competent/confident in teaching/developing materials for reading & listening
- Using authentic texts for linguistic level of the learners (\*other than simplification by the teacher *“what I do is make things easier for students”*)
- Teaching disciplinary uses of grammar/discourse e.g. use of conditionals in law *“I don’t know how to explain the grammar if it’s not in the traditional way.”*
- \* Limited examples of form-focused materials (noticing discourse or grammar features in language use in specialist domain)
- Social: Need to share/talk to colleagues but often worked alone *“that is something I miss, I used to talk to colleagues everyday what are you doing right now, I have found this on the internet..”* *“Sharing everyday problems, not only big problems.”*

# Their suggested topics for teacher education

- Assessing: How to assess ESP learners' competencies & measure learning outcomes
- Developing specific purposes materials/instruction - especially for teaching reading & grammar/discourse
- Acquiring information about subject area - *'immersion in the area'*
- Supporting learner autonomy in ESP learning
- Gearing instruction to learners' needs AFTER course has begun (not theoretical NA as in literature)

# Teachers' views on subject/content knowledge needs

- Very important: *'You have to have knowledge of the subject'*
- Easier to acquire in some areas: (Tourism easy) *It is something everyone can do, everyone has been to a travel agent, been on a flight. (Law not easy) You need to know the language of the law, the situations that language is used in, the way a court works, the different types of crimes.*
- How the teachers had acquired subject knowledge: Internet sources, TV shows, friends working in that branch e.g. a law lecturer, books about tourism: Initially *"I had to learn how the tourism/engineering industry is". "I would recommend to watch videos about civil engineering because in that way you can see how civil engineers work, how they think"*
- \*Limited reference to acquiring knowledge from the materials (e.g. law textbooks) the students use

# Concluding comments

- ESP field - new frontiers
- Conventional topics of enquiry into ESP teaching continue to be important
- Further advancements in understanding ESP teachers

nature of their expertise  
teacher education needs



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