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Ahazeej Abdellateef

Abdelkareem Ali

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Ahazeej Abdellateef Abdelkareem Ali

Department of English Language, Faculty of Education, University of Khartoum, Khartoum, Sudan.

*Corresponding author E-mail: ahazeej85@gmail.com

Abstract

Teaching EFL learners EAP productive skills at university are important because most of institutions recently are using English language as a medium of instruction in Sudan, moreover it is the medium of research that has been adopted and acknowledged worldwide. Teachers at University of Khartoum face challenges while teaching these skills. This paper discusses the problems facing teachers of academic English in teaching speaking and writing skills. It investigates the obstacles they face and their attitudes towards teaching these skills. The researcher designed an interview to collect data. The population of the study are the teachers of English for Academic Purposes at the University of Khartoum faculty of Education and Faculty of Arts. They teach students of the first and the second year in all the faculties of university. The sample is seven teachers. The results show that teachers encounter many problems when teaching EAP productive skills. These are the lack of unified syllabus, large and unequipped classes and different academic standard and levels of English language in one class, in addition to the absence of training to the teachers. However, most of the teachers have positive attitudes toward teaching the subject. The study recommends providing a unified syllabus for EAP courses including the productive skills and should be based on the students' needs as well as well-equipped classes that suit language teaching. More attention should also be given to EAP productive skills courses and teaching hours should be increased. In addition to that study recommends dividing students to small groups according to their levels and to give in-service training to the EAP teachers in order to update their knowledge of the field.

Keywords: EAP, Productive Skills, EFL

Background

English for Academic Purposes EAP is important for every learner. It is one of three courses of English language which are taught at all Sudanese universities. These courses are taught in different years and the hours of them are not less than ninety in public universities. Teachers who teach EAP face several challenges when teaching productive skills. The study aims at finding out these challenges as well as identifying the attitudes of the teachers towards teaching them. The study suggests solutions to promote the process of teaching and learning of these two important skills.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the challenges that faced by EFL teachers of Academic English when teaching productive skills.
2. To identify the attitudes of the EAP teachers towards teaching productive skills to EFL learners at university level.

Problem of the Study

Although teaching EFL learners EAP productive skills at university level is important for all students, teachers of EAP at University of Khartoum struggle while teaching them. According to the experience of the researcher in this field which is about more than twelve years, she faced some challenges of teaching productive skills and noticed

that most of the teachers of EAP at university of Khartoum don't teach them. The paper investigates the obstacles they face when teaching the productive skills and their attitudes towards teaching them.

Questions of the Study

1. What are the challenges that face EFL teachers of Academic English when teaching productive skills?
2. What are the attitudes of the EAP teachers towards teaching productive skills to EFL learners at university level?

Hypotheses of the Study

1. EFL teachers of Academic English face different challenges when teaching productive skills.
2. EAP teachers have positive attitudes towards teaching of the productive skills to EFL learners at university level.

Significance of the Study

This study is important for teachers of EAP at universities and their students because it reveals the problems which make them struggle when teaching speaking and writing and hinder the process of learning and teaching. The study is also beneficial to stakeholders. It shows them the attitudes of the teachers towards teaching speaking and writing at university level and challenges they face when teaching these skills in addition to suggestions for solutions to them.

Methodology of the Study

The study uses the descriptive approach. It is a qualitative study. Interview was used as a tool for data collection. The interview consists of ten questions about the challenges that face EAP teachers when teaching speaking and writing and their attitude towards teaching them. The population of the study is the university teachers of EAP at the University of Khartoum. The sample was seven teachers.

Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to the university teachers of English as university requirement at the University of Khartoum, more specifically the EAP courses teachers. It is limited to seven teachers in 2021.

Literature Review and Theoretical framework

Definition of EAP

Gillett (2011) said: English for Academic Purposes, EAP refers to the language and associated practices that people need in order to undertake study or work in English higher education. The objective of an EAP course, then, is to help these people learn some of the linguistic and cultural mainly institutional and disciplinary practices involved in studying or working through the medium of English.

Momtazur, (2009) said: "EAP is a branch of ESP which emerged in the 1970s, refers to the specific English language teaching related to academic purposes", While Dudley-Evans & St. John, (1998) has defined it by saying that: "EAP refers to any English teaching that relates to a study purpose".

Teaching EAP Productive Skills:

The productive skills are speaking and writing, because learners doing these need to produce language. They are also known as active skills. Productive skills, speaking and writing, are defined by Jaramillo and Medina (2011) as an important form of expression used to persuade or convince other people as well as to share ideas and feelings.

Most of the previous studies in EAP has focused more on the content of teaching than on the methodology. Todd (2003) has identified six main approaches to EAP:

1. Inductive learning
2. Process syllabuses
3. Learner autonomy
4. Authenticity
5. Technology
6. Team teaching.

Hosogoshi and Takahashi (2015) discussed the importance of integrated tasks on developing learners' productive skills in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course. Integrated tasks are those that elicit productive output (speaking or writing) while involving input (listening, reading, or both). In an academic setting, university students are required to combine information from textbooks and lectures to develop their own arguments. Aiming at enhancing participants' speaking and

writing skills, they implemented four listen-and-read-to write/speak tasks.

Integrated tasks have also gained much attention in language assessment, as well as classroom practice, because learners can demonstrate language comprehension and integration of source materials in an authentic EAP context (Cumming, 2013; Plakans & Gebril, 2013).

The Importance of Productive Skills in Language Teaching

Productive language skills, speaking, and writing, are important because they are the observable evidence of language acquisition. The more the speaker or the writer produces appropriate and coherent language the more teachers have proof of the progress in the learner's language system.

Teaching productive skills is important because written and spoken communication are basic life skills. In real life, people generally may need to inform, convince, or share ideas. They are also sometimes required to take notes, fill in forms, and write emails, letters, reports, or stories. Rhalmi(2020)

Factors Causing Difficulties to Productive Skills Among Foreign Languages Learners

Most of EFL students face difficulties throughout their learning process. Many different factors affect the learning of productive skills among foreign languages students.

Alvarad Rico (2014) stated six factors that cause difficulties to productive skills among EFL learners. (Internal and external factors) two of them were identified as the most relevant factors that affecting (unwillingness to use the target language and the teachers' methodology), and four of them were generally seen as causing a certain degree of difficulty which are lack of knowledge, insecurity, language transfer and time allocation. According to Jaramillo and Medina's (2011) mentioned that, the written skill is perceived as an art in which willingness and motivation are important whereas Urrutia and Vega(2010) said that: "speaking is a skill which is mostly affected by causes such as lack of vocabulary, shyness, and fear of being humiliated"

Whether the intended skill is speaking or writing, an EAP teacher needs to have different skills. These are: Selecting and using of the appropriate teaching approach, methods and techniques. In addition to skills of choosing/designing different types of material based on the needs and the level of students. Besides using different ways of assessment.

Analysis and Results of the Interview

The interview consists of ten questions about the challenging that face EAP university teachers when teaching speaking and writing skills. The following is the analysis of these questions. The experience of all the participants is between 7 to 30 years of teaching in this field.

All the participants 100% agreed that teachers face many problems when teaching EAP productive skills. These problems related to syllabus, classes, students, training and assessment of the courses.

All the participants mentioned that the university in which they teach **haven't a unified syllabus that satisfy the needs of their students**. A.A said "teachers design their own materials and not all of them are so professional " D. said " it is not easy task but it adds experience to me, it is better to be prepared by the faculties and the department. S. stated:" I design it by myself, but the content of the course has been given to me by the faculty administration.so I have been directed to teach specific content in each level. AB mentioned" No, we don't have such syllabus. We design our own courses. We use our own efforts to provide material and it takes a lot of time, efforts, money.

All participants face **problem of individual differences** in their classes and said they have students with high level most of them are IGs English language was the medium of instruction when they were at school, while other students are either from public school or private school and they studied English as a subject. Some students come from schools where it is difficult to find an English language teacher. All these make it challenging for teachers to deal with such kind of classes. A.S said " We have brilliant students and we have weak ones, and we have those who are in the middle of, and again we need to be able to deal with all of them in so large groups." D said: This is one of the essential problems I face, some learners have high level and

other are completely in a lower stage. He said: " I give them different tasks. A.A said " Ohhh, yes I think all the teachers in department face this as a chronic problem because students are mixed ability classes

All participants face problem of **big number of students in their classes**. They said this **affect their teaching** and make the process of teaching difficult because it is hard to teach the productive skills in classes where students are a lot and have different levels of English language. A.M said " The smallest class I teach usually is about one hundred students." S. said " At the faculty of medicine s.s are about 360 whereas the students of the faculty of pharmacy are around 140 students." While A.A mentioned: " in some of the colleges students are above one hundred, some are above 200 and 400, for example in the faculty of engineering the number of students exceeds 600, while in the faculty of law the students are around 100, so variation again."

All Participants face problems when assessing EAP productive skills. Teachers said it is difficult to assess the EAP productive skills, because of the big number of students, varying levels, bad facilities and the limited time. This is why some of them don't teach the speaking and ignore the alternative assessments and focuses on the assessment at the end of the courses. Some of them use peer correction and group work to face some of the challenges. A. stated: " Of course they are problems, as I said the classes are huge, so it is difficult to assess speaking, writing. It is difficult to take hundreds of pages from one campus to go to another campus, to do the marking is also it takes a lot of time." S. " The problem only I face concern classroom facilities, the microphone, loud speakers and so on. I face difficulties assessing each task in writing. for this reason, I usually assess them only at the end of the course because it is difficult for me to check all work. D. said: I tried to give them a chance to speak but unfortunately, we ran out of time because of the large number. So there is no focus on this skill at all, While A.A said " Yes we do , it is impossible to assess the productive skills, most of the time I focus on listening and reading ,I ignore speaking and writing because the time is not enough.

No one of the participants **received a training on how to teach EAP courses**. Only one teacher received training on how to teach and assess EAP courses, the rest have different courses about teaching in general which can be useful, but it was not from the university and not about how to teach EAP courses. A. A said " From the university no, but I have been working as a teacher for more than 15 years so I developed the skills for teaching, but I haven't taken any formal training in.

Participants **haven't received any training on how to assess EAP productive skills**.

M.I said: "I haven't received any training or courses on how to assess Reproductive skills. D. mentioned: "No I haven't, I hope so." A.A "No, I haven't taken any course related to it, but I have taken other courses related to assessment.

All participants agreed **that the time allocated for EAP courses is not sufficient**.

A.A said "90 hours for the students are not enough; at least they need 90 hours every year. A.S said "Two hours a week are not enough for a large group. We need at least for hours." While I.E said "just two hours and three hours a week are not enough for language classes.

All teachers of EAP at university of Khartoum agreed that **the classes in which they teach are not suitable for teaching English language productive skills**. Most of them mentioned that the classes are not designed for teaching a language, the seats are fixed and no screens, laptops, speakers or good microphone. Some large classes have not got even microphone and good board. Teachers use their own devices which it is hard to carry them from campus to another because there is no university bus for teachers and they don't have private cars. A. S Said: " we need speakers and good microphones. I sometime speak but the students in the back don't hear me." A. mentioned: "The way that the classes are designed is not suitable for teaching a language. For example, if you want to do something like discussion or to divide students into group, it will not be practical, because the seats are fixed. The students also can't not move freely because of the way the classes are

designed. It takes time for students to go to sit from place to another and we do not have time. We have only two hours".

Participants have practical solutions to these problems. All participants agreed that a unified teaching material for the faculties should be provided, students need to be divided according to their level, a well-equipped class is needed at each college with movable seats. Teachers should receive a formal continuous training on how to use different techniques of teaching and assessing EAP productive skills to large classes in order to update their knowledge. Only one of the participants D. said "Every teacher should go back to his home college this is the best solution" he prefers teaching students who specialized in English. The rest provided suggestions AS mentioned " Practical solutions are unified teaching materials for the faculties. Second, we need extra hours for students in order to be able to use and practice productive skills well. We need time to practice the language outside the classrooms like discussions. A said " In staid of studying two semesters ,90 hours, it would be very useful if we specify for the EUR courses as UPP, preparatory courses, intensive two semesters will be enough and what is needed is a unified curriculum from the university.". A. Asaid " before they take these courses students should take examinations in order to classify the students according to their levels, this will help us to solve the problem of mix abilities, and also students should be divided into small groups in order to help the teachers to teach and assess them properly . He added "if we want a real change for the students the courses should be taken from the first year to the last year in order to ensure that students developed the skills that they needed in the place of work after graduation.

Discussion According to the Hypotheses

There are many challenges that face Sudanese EFL university teachers in teaching EAP productive skills specifically, those who teach at the University of Khartoum. The interview which consists of ten questions revealed that all teachers face different problems when teaching speaking and writing. These problems are related to classes, students, teacher's training and the curriculum. Al participants agreed that they don't have a unified syllabus. This makes them struggle to find material for

classes where the levels of students are different and their number is big too. The materials sometimes don't satisfy the needs of students. Moreover, all participants haven't received any formal training on how to teach and assess EAP for large classrooms, specifically the productive skills except one. They had different training about teaching English language in general This information achieved the first hypotheses which is: EFL teachers of Academic English face different challenges when teaching productive skills. Moreover, only one participant doesn't prefer teaching EAP because of the way administrators and students think of EAP teachers. He mentioned that they don't care about them like the subject teachers and students don't think the courses are important. This is why he prefers teaching students who specialized in English language. The rest of the participants like their job as EAP teachers and think EAP is important for them, for their students and society. They added that they learned a lot when teaching students from different discipline and their students like to learn EAP productive skills too. The EAP teachers at university of Khartoum provided useful solutions based on their long experience of teaching. They suggest a unified syllabus for EAP that integrates the four skills, well equipped classes or language laboratories at each college and to divide students to small groups according to their levels of English language in order to make the teaching of the productive skills more effective and useful. More over teachers mentioned that more courses and hours should be added regarding EAP in order to get more chance to practice the productive skills which are totally ignored. In addition to that teachers should receive training on how to teach EAP courses to large classrooms in order to update their knowledge. All these achieve the last hypothesis which is: EAP teachers have positive attitudes towards teaching of the productive skills to Learners at university level.

Findings

1. There are many challenges that face Sudanese EFL university teachers when teaching writing and speaking specifically, those who teach at the university of Khartoum. These problems are related to classes, students, teachers' training and the curriculum.

2.EAP teachers at U of K don't have a unified syllabus. This makes them struggle to find material for teaching speaking and writing for classes where the levels of students are different and their number is big too.

3. Teachers of EAP at the University of Khartoum haven't received any formal training on how to teach and assess writing and speaking to large classrooms except only one teacher. They had different training about teaching English language in general.

4. Most of the EAP teachers like their job as EUR teachers, (English as University Requirement), they have positive attitudes towards teaching the courses more specifically teaching the writing and speaking skills. They think that teaching these skills is important for them, for students and society. They added that they learned a lot when teaching students from different discipline and their students like to learn writing and speaking too.

5. They EAP teachers at university of Khartoum provided useful solutions to improve the learning and teaching of the productive skills based on their long experience of teaching. They agreed all about the importance of providing a unified syllabus for EAP productive skills based on students' needs, well equipped classes and to divide students to small groups according to their levels of English language. More over teachers mentioned that more courses and hours should be added regarding EAP skills in general and speaking and writing skills in specific. In addition to that teachers should receive a continuous training on how to teach EAP productive skills in order to update their knowledge.

Conclusion

English language is important. This study shed the lights about the problems facing Sudanese EFL university teachers of Academic English in teaching productive skills. The sample of the study is the teachers of EAP at the university of Khartoum. The interview was used as a tool for data collection. The collected data showed that teachers encounter many problems when teaching productive skills. These problems are the lack of unified syllabus, the big number of students who have different levels in a large zero-resource classroom., in addition to the absence of training to the teachers. However, most of the

teachers have positive attitudes toward the importance of teaching speaking and writing to students at university level. They recommend adopting a unified syllabus and grouping students based on their levels.

Recommendations

The study recommends the following:

1. A unified syllabus for EAP that includes the writing and speaking should be provided by the university.
2. well-equipped classes or language laboratories are required at each college.
3. Students of EAP should be divided to small groups according to their levels of English language when studying the productive skills.
4. More courses and teaching hours should be added regarding EAP in order to satisfy the needs of students for EAP productive skills.
5. Teachers of EAP should receive training on how to teach and test speaking and writing skills to large classrooms in order to update their knowledge.
6. This study should be implemented by the English language departments because it revealed not only the causes of the challenges of teaching and learning of speaking and writing at university level ,but also it provides suggestions for solutions to them which can be applied in order to achieve the best results .

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