
Integrating Meditative Ethics into English Language Teaching for Academic Purposes: A Design-Based Pedagogical Model in Buddhist Higher Education.

Dr. Le Hong Linh

Research Scholar, Department of English, Acharya Nagarjuna University, Nagarjuna Nagar, Guntur

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Abstract:

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) teaching is situated more and more in multilingual, non-Western higher education spaces where students' disciplinary epistemologies and ethical positions are at odds with the values frequently taken for granted in traditional academic English pedagogy. While the research in EAP has been replete with work on genre, stance, and academic literacy, there is an important lacuna in understanding how ethically grounded traditions can be utilized as systematic pedagogical resources of academic discourse. This paper introduces a design-based pedagogical model integrating the bases of contemplative ethics—namely mindfulness, compassion, non-separation and ethical academic speech - into EAP classes in Buddhist HEI.

Based on a mixed design-based research in two case studies in Vietnam and India, it maps these ethical constructs with existing EAP frameworks, such as genre-based pedagogy, task-based language teaching, CEFR mediation descriptors and intercultural pragmatics. These data are classroom observations, CEFR-matching assessment rubrics, learner reflective journals and discourse-pragmatic analyses of seminar interaction. The results reveal that learners' academic mediation accuracy, stance-taking and hedging functions, pragmatic sensitivity in argumentation, and speaking anxiety during oral academic tasks were all significantly improved from pre- to post-tests.

This paper contributes to EAP research by demonstrating that contextually bound ethical resources may function as scaffolding for the pedagogy of academic discourse development and, simultaneously, maintaining disciplinary rigor. The article considers implications for EAP curriculum, assessment, and teacher education in a multilingual HE context.

Keywords: English for Academic Purposes; design-based research; academic mediation; task-based language teaching; intercultural pragmatics; contemplative pedagogy

1. Introduction

1.1 English for Academic Purposes (EAP) in an internationalised Higher Education

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) has grown to become a key feature of higher education internationally, not least in settings where English functions as a lingua franca for academic publication, international networking and the transmission of disciplinary knowledge. In the last three decades, EAP research has produced a wealth of empirical study on academic genres, disciplinary discourse, textual organisation and stance-taking practices (Hyland, 2004; Swales, 1990). These research traditions have greatly deepened our knowledge about how students are socialized into communities of practice.

However, when spread to the wider world through EAP around the globe, a tension is emerging between normative assumptions of mainstream academic English pedagogy and the diverse epistemological, cultural and ethical world-views of students from non-Western backgrounds. Although genre-based and discourse-analytic approaches have been concerned primarily with how effective academic communication is defined, they do not specify enough about the learner communicative values developing in a learners' pre-existing experience of talking in their community and classroom activities.

1.2 The Ethical Realms of Academic Discourse in EAP

Academic talk is essentially an evaluative, relationally-based phenomenon. Such practices as commentary, peer review, argumentation and stance-taking require a great deal of grammatical and textual knowledge – but they also rely on sophisticated moral judgment about what is right, what is fair and how one's words/actions connect with others. Yet while the importance of ethics cannot be doubted, it is an under-theorized and frequently marginalized aspect within the mainstream pedagogy of EAP where it has a tendency to be handled either tacitly or else reduced to broad-brush categories such as politeness/intercultural awareness.

Academic argument as perceived by learners in these Asian settings may be conceived as confrontational or even morally wrong, especially when it also involves an overt expression of dissent from authority figures or peers. This discoordination may be experienced in different forms, such as an aversion to participate in oral academic exchange, an undue emphasis on strategies of framing and deflection to make criticisms less abrasive or (in some cases) outright refusal of challenging exchange. In order to address this urgent challenge there is a need for pedagogical frameworks that directly attend to the ethical dimension of academic communication, arming students with strategies and insight into how best to manage these challenging relational dynamics in respectful ways and with intellectual rigor.

1.3 Buddhist Higher Education as a Pedagogical Setting

The Buddhist higher education institutions are a particularly fertile and a representative milieu to study in-depth the complex implications of these challenges on student experiences. Students at these prestigious institutions tend to have sophisticated and

nuanced familiarity with disciplinary knowledge based upon complex Buddhist philosophies, ethical frameworks, and centuries-old textual traditions. These are very naturally-learned words, but there is a chasm between them and being able to express yourself in the hallowed halls of English academic discourse (which can feel quite foreign and scary for students!) Rather than setting up the Baroque and luscious ethical landscape of Buddhism as being inherently incompatible with the reigning assumptions of academic practice, this is a study that sees these traditions in quite another manner: as resources for teaching. These sort of resources can serve to successfully scaffold and guide learners in the process they are engaged with, developing necessary academic communication skills over time as they negotiate the challenging terrain of scholarly voice more knowingly and capably.

1.4 Purpose and Research Contribution

Underpinned and informed by a design-based research approach, this article poses the following central question: How can ethically situated frameworks developed very locally be transformed into pedagogical tools that support EAP instruction across the complex, multilingual landscapes of higher education? This study contributes significantly to the current EAP literature by:

Expanding developments in EAP pedagogy to not only consider the traditional linguistic and structural features of language, but discourse also contains ethical considerations and affective qualities;

Demonstrating the applicability of CEFR mediation descriptors - and therefore their potential usefulness - in specialized, discipline-specific EAP contexts;

Developing a flexible and scalable design-based pedagogical model that can be incorporated into EAP programs in subject-specific/branch campuses in non-Western higher education contexts to offer a more egalitarian, global approach to language teaching.

2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2.1 Genre, Disciplinary Literacy, and Stance in EAP

Genre-based approaches theorize the polysemic worlds of academic writing and speaking as social activities rooted in a multitude of disciplinary conventions, entrenched epistemological beliefs, and divergent audiences (Hyland, 2004; Swales, 1990). From this nuanced view, achieving academic English proficiency comprises not just superficially toying with the language system per se but rather learning how 'strategically' one can involve oneself in relation to knowledge claims, the supporting evidence and different disciplinary communities through taking stands and using evaluative language effectually. As a result, academic communication is more than simply about providing information; it is also about complex processes of negotiating credibility and authority, ensuring that the work fits into an accepted structure of values within different disciplines.

Rigorous research has convincingly shown that novice writers and speakers in the academy often have less of a problem achieving grammatical accuracy than managing their epistemic commitments, skillfully using hedges, and finding their authorial voice. What we

have also found is that students struggle with the complex notion of hedging where they need to negotiate just how certain, or uncertain, they want to sound in their academic arguments. This can result in two competing risks: On the one hand, they could overclaim and thus be seen as face-threatening; on the other hand, they could also mitigate to excess and consequently soften the rhetorical force of their claims. A place where this tension is particularly marked is in spoken academic genres, where the appearance and maintenance of stance are a dynamic ongoing process undertaken on the fly as part of the interpersonal engagement with interlocutors.

Such challenges are even more pronounced in multilingual and non-Western higher education contexts, as learners frequently confront tensions between local communicative practices and global academic norms. In many educational systems, knowledge is traditionally expressed in a mode of respecting authority and preserving the harmony between relationship subjects. In contrast, Anglophone institutional discussion often values explicit positioning, critical engagement and dialogic interchange. As a result, learners could perceive the practice of academic argumentation as culturally and ethically alienating which discourages active participation in discussions or overt authorial positioning reflecting one's viewpoint.

In such a complex and difficult to define environment genre-based pedagogy has more and more been urged to go beyond the restricted dimensions of a formal feature-oriented approach. But we must also deal with the epistemic and interpersonal issues embedded in academic language use. Thus, the explicit focus on voice, evaluation, and the subtle stance-taking within disciplinary contexts is necessary to facilitate students' building of academically valid and contextually accurate voices in ESL.

2.2 Academic Mediation and CEFR Perspectives

The CEFR Companion Volume redefines language proficiency by placing mediation at the core of communicative action and by redirecting the focus away from discrete skills to socially embedded meaning-making (Council of Europe, 2020). Mediation comprises a wide spectrum of activities by which people facilitate others' access to knowledge, through (re)contextualising, conceptualising and translating between content and languages, disciplines or cultures. From this view, as language users people are not just producers or consumers of texts but active agents who enable understanding among the webs of communication found in complex ecologies.

It is in EAP contexts specifically that mediation gains importance. Students are often confronted with making disciplinary knowledge developed in local epistemologies meaningful, by way of re-articulating it into an English which is in some cases quite different from what original context expectations may have been. These mediating jobs require not only language skills, but also genre knowledge, discipline-specific literacy, and awareness of epistemic and interpersonal norms. The instructors' mediation that leads to these

developments entails management considerations concerning what information must be foregrounded, how claims should structure, and definitions brought into consonance with the audience's recognition.

Recent EAP studies increasingly have treated mediation as a key academic skill associated with genre-based pedagogy and disciplinary discourse practices. Mediation-task, such as literature review, seminar summarization, and oral explanation of difficult material have been found to support students in their becoming a member of an academic community. A great deal of this work, however, has been focused more on the cognitive and linguistic aspects of mediation, far less so in terms of ethical and affective difficulties from learners as they mediate across-epistemological-boundaries.

There is thus little empirical work on how ethical/affective pedagogical resources can be scaffolded in mediation. In particular, the impact of learners' communicative confidence, sense of responsibility for their interlocutors in communication, and ethical orientations to knowledge representation on mediation practice must be addressed. Filling this need is crucial to inform development of EAP pedagogies that support not only academically beneficial but also contextually and ethically sound mediation.

2.3 Intercultural Pragmatics and Ethical Academic Communication

Intercultural competence has linguistic, pragmatic and ethical elements to communication, focusing on the interconnectedness of language practice to social action and value-informed judgment (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2006). This model does not consider communication as simple transmission of truth-value bearing propositions (Sato 2009) but is rather seen as a network of culturally constructed practices reflecting power relations and ethical dilemmas. It is in academic settings that the relevance of intercultural competence has most salient implications, with respect to peaking into heterogeneous epistemological realms and in regard to adhering to discipline specific-functional rationality standards.

Pragmatic competence also plays an important role on this path. In academic settings, a number of face-threatening acts such as criticism or argumentation may be involved in interactions among participants. Hence a successful participation depends on the learners' ability to use pragmatic means—namely, hedging, mitigation and stance-marking—that balance critical engagement with interpersonal delicateness. And yet, when such pragmatic strategies clash with contextual expectations, academic exchanges can lead to misunderstanding, perceived impoliteness or unwelcome confrontations. In a multilingual academic environment, it is such misalignment that may also lead to students' disengagement in participation and the imbalanced access to academic discourse.

These pragmatic values are navigated through ethico-communication as mediating framings. Focusing on relevance, truth and human impact of communication provides learners with reflexive categories to think about when they should speak critically and how

much posture-taking critical stances would be appropriate. Rather than limit the range of argumentation, such an ethical approach to academic discourse can facilitate a more deliberative and context-sensitive engagement by making explicit the interpersonal aims of academic discourses.

While intercultural and ethical aspects of academic communication are significant, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) pedagogy has tended to treat pragmatics mainly as useful strategies for instruction, neglecting the need for ethical consideration. This void suggests a pedagogical model that explicitly relates pragmatic competence and ethical sensitivity, enabling learners to handle academic interactions in ways that are academically appropriate as well as interculturally viable.

2.4 Contemplative Ethics as Pedagogical Resources

For one, constructs in the area of mindfulness have been found to be particularly relevant factors in driving learners' sense of self-regulation, emotional awareness, and self-assurance when making various forms of expressive behavior (Baer et al., 2006; Keng et al., 2011). Self-regulation, in particular, is considered crucial for effectively controlling cognitive load, maintaining focused attention and engaging in persistent monitoring of performance when undertaking complex and often difficult learning tasks. Within the domain of L2 learning, these abilities become particularly salient, as learners are required to dynamically process complex linguistic input and generate fluent output while also responding appropriately to interactional stimuli that unfold during communicative exchanges.

Within the domain of applied linguistics, several affective dimensions such as anxiety, emotional involvement and general confidence have been found to exert a robust impact on learners' communicative reluctance in addition to scholastic success (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). Higher anxiety levels can also discourage participation in the discussions, lower the desire to take risks which will, in turn, undermine the development of a strong authoritative voice. However, pedagogical conditions promoting "emotional mindfulness" and reflection can play a crucial role in terms of boosting involvement as well as sustained interaction—especially in spoken-centric EAP settings.

Contemplative ethics, as it is approached here in the scope and focus of this study, is not conceived as religious education or belief-based practice only; rather, they are reflective pedagogical orientations where communication takes preference. These orientations privilege intentionality to create meaning, a heightened sensitivity to one's communicative choices and a deep sense of relationship responsibility for the other as interlocutor in discourse. Framed in this way, contemplative ethics converge with the ethical demands of academic interaction that involve speakers or writers maintaining a fine line between epistemic commitment and relativism—with an openness to new perspectives—as well as critically engaging others in light of nuanced differences.

Building on existing paradigms in EAP, the study attempts to incorporate contemplative ethics as useful pedagogical tools that help bridge academic discourse with affective state regulation. This is prompting learners to communicate with more confidence and think more critically in academic discourses, but maintaining the critical and dialogic nature as an essential constituent of scholarly communication.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design: Design-Based Research

To design and evaluate the effectiveness of IMS, this study follows a robust DBR methodology that "aims to create significant pedagogical innovation through systematic development for an iterative process in a real world context," which is characterised by four cyclical steps: (i) analysis, (ii) design, (iii) use or implementation, and (iv) evaluation" as proposed by the Design-Based Research Collective in 2003. This is where DBR is especially pervasive: such fragile context of English for Academic Purposes makes it easy to see how the cultural texture of EAP in education becomes more and more complex, and demands at every moment flexibility (Flexible Pedagogy) and a responsive pedagogical strategy.

3.2 Research Sites and Participants

It was clearly an exhaustive investigation painstakingly conducted in the sacred domains of two distinguished Buddhist academies, one in the culturally-rich country of Vietnam and other in the historically profound region of India. These rationales came from a very varied group of stakeholders engaged in the study: undergraduate and postgraduate students who were actually taking courses that implemented English for Academic Purposes (EAP), as well as hardworking educators involved in various stages of planning or teaching EAP curriculum design. The student groups were characterized by a high level of multilingualism, with levels ranging from the lower intermediate to near native competence; this is ascribable to their diverse linguistic skills and educational histories.

3.3 Data Collection

Data collection included a variety of methods that were carefully selected to obtain an understanding of the instructional context in its entirety. These were in-depth, intensive classroom observations during long cycles of instruction that offered detailed examination of teaching practices and learner participation. There were also very detailed performance criteria calibrated to the CEFR, notably focusing on mediation and interaction, which helped in eliciting a full picture of communicative competence. In addition, the method of data collection involved learner reflective journals, which were priceless documents that recorded students' own perceptions and insights about their experiences in academic communication. Finally, the use of audio-recordings of seminar discussions recorded idea-rich authentic dialogues which served to further shed light on sociocultural processes and zones of proximal development and interaction in a learning context.

3.4 Data Analysis

Close attention was paid throughout qualitative analysis to the complex task of identifying and interpreting patterns within learners' academic discourse. This examination paid particular attention to the subtle ways that mediation strategies, stance-taking, hedging,

and pragmatic negotiation of disagreement unfolded in communicative interactions. Further to this, reflective journals were analysed using a fine-grained thematic analysis in order to investigate and compare the complex affective and ethical aspects that support learning interactions, in turn unveiling emotional and moral dimensions that traverse their sense of what is appropriate when engaged with academic work.

4. Pedagogical Design

4.1 Curriculum Architecture

The EAP course was designed to be synthesized around three closely knitted and integrated threads: academic literacy, discipline discourse competence, and ethical communication. All of the strands were designed to reinforce and supplement each other by developing a complete educational foundation. Learning objectives were carefully related to (a) CEFR mediation descriptors and (b) those fundamental core competences needed in EAP. This intentional alignment was intended to guarantee a deep congruence between pedagogical tools embedded within the curriculum and the numerous modes of assessment used for tracking student progress and understanding.

4.2 Task-Based Instruction

Instructional tasks were designed carefully based on the underlying principles of TBLT's concern for meaning-driven interaction and learning-for-action in, as has been advocated by Long (2015). These are well-thought of tasks that covered a wide range of activities such as the complex process of academic summarization, debating task which involved higher order thinking, joint literature review which promoted team work and knowledge building among other learners though there will always be a room for any additional elements from other courses that instructors will implement when teaching reading and writing (FERREIRA & KEMPELING, 2013).

4.3 Ethical Scaffolding of Academic Tasks

Ethical thinking was thought to be thoroughly integrated into the pedagogical design in a way that worked as a complex form of metacognitive scaffolding, rather than merely being considered an instructional goal. For example, the seminar discussions were carefully scaffolded through reflective prompts that systematically invited students to reflect on clarity, relevance and interpersonal dimensions of their critique in articulating their stance. This approach successfully placed ethics not as an inhibiting fetter to critical engagement but rather a firm base that strengthens academic efficacy and promotes continuous intellectual inquiry.

5. Practice-Based Findings

Classroom interaction analysis exposed some pedagogically relevant tendencies that demand further investigation and reflection. Firstly, students showed a greater use and preference of mediation strategies, which consisted of summarizing and reformulating the ideas from their peers during the dynamic discussions in seminars. It is this cultivated experience working within and among, a way to understand what we are doing together, that enabled more coherent and inclusive academic interaction worked out by all members of the group.

Second, students engaged in more complex and sophisticated stance-taking as reflected in their greater and more noticeable reference to hedging devices a epistemic markers that signal varying degrees of certainty faith. This noticeable change indicated that the students were finding a way to reconcile critical questioning with almost requisite softness needed in academic argumentation (Hyland, 2004). And this kind of evolution points towards a more sophisticated role-based dialogue from them.

Third, the reflective journal data provided compelling evidence of a decrease in speaking anxiety and an increase in the willingness to become actively engaged in academic conversations. Students often described how moral reflections helped them to greatly reframe academic critique as collaborative and not adversarial conflict. These findings are enlightening as they dovetail with extant evidence on the impact of mindfulness-related awareness on improved emotion regulation and increased communicative selfconfidence, thus reinforcing the relevancy of such aspects in building positive classroom relations (Keng et al., 2011; Zoogman et al., 2015).

6. Discussion

The results of the present corpus-informed study echo strongly with findings from earlier studies in English for Academic Purposes (EAP), which have long emphasized the central role played by genre awareness, stance and mediation as key aspects that are constituent to academic discourse development (Hyland, 2004; Council of Europe, 2020). However, this particular study considerably contributes to the existing literature by demonstrating how ethical reflection can become an important pedagogical structure that supports these core competencies.

The emphasis on a thoughtful approach to contemplative ethics has demonstrated timely and pedagogically sound support for student participation in academic discourse, not only by minimizing affective barriers to entry that so frequently encumber students, but also through making explicit the web of nuanced intra/interpersonal work done through embodied communicative practices rooted in academic genres. The process of conducting ethical reflection, instead of discouraging critical engagement, seems to enable a more self-assured and accountable attitude towards participation in academic life.

It should be noted as well that the pedagogical model suggested in this paper is not limited to merely Buddhist contexts. The moral attitudinal orientations presented in terms of the awareness, responsibility and relational sensitivity in this model are sufficiently generalisable to be usefully instantiated to EAP contexts across various cultural backgrounds.

7. Implications for EAP Pedagogy

The study has wide pedagogical implications for teaching EAP. First, it suggests that EAP syllabuses could be significantly enhanced by a conscious and overt integration of the moral considerations which are an integral aspect of academic communication, to run

parallel with, but not in competition to or conflict with, the indispensable linguistic and rhetorical training which underlies effective academic discourse. In addition, CEFR mediation descriptors provide a valuable framework that can help to bridge the gap between disciplinary knowledge and communication skills students need to be able to master. Finally, it will be crucial that teacher education programs are developed that prepare teachers well to talk in thoughtful and meaningful ways with their students about ethical concerns and affective stances as they participate in the challenges of academic discourse.

8. Limitations and Future Research

As an inductive, constructivist study, the results of this design-based research are necessarily context-bound and exploratory. These findings could be attributed to the special situation and factors in a specific locality of this study. Future research may also want to consider the use of longitudinal or mixed method designs in light of these results. These could facilitate more thorough inquiries into the lasting effects ethics-informed use of EAP pedagogy might play in academic success and publication-related outcomes. This could offer a richer description of the dynamic interrelationships between ethics in schools and academic performance over years.

9. Conclusion

This paper has presented an - Ethically Informed - Century English for Academic Purposes (EAP) model of language instruction rooted in contemplative pedagogical principles and practice. Through a careful re-conceptualisation of ethical traditions as a resource rather than content formed within belief systems this is an important contribution towards a truly inclusive and context-sensitive EAP for global higher education. The evidence from this study suggests that, when the EAP pedagogy is shot through with ethical reflection, it begins to operate as a strong scaffolding system enabling academic discourse. It is a support scaffolding for learners in mediation, and enables them to take effective stance as well as increases pragmatic sensitivity of the learner when they are communicative.

It is crucial to clarify that the model developed does not offer ethics as an alternative to established definitions of EAP but situates it, instead as an adjunctual, supplementary consideration that enhances both genre and task-based approaches. By directing our attention to the affective and interpersonal dimensions of academic communication, this model effectively caters to the specific requirements of learners situated at the complex junction between local epistemologies and global academic conventions. While this model has been formulated in the particular context of Buddhist higher education, the pedagogical principles described in this article exhibit strong potential for dissemination across many multilingual and cross-cultural EAP domains. In the context of this, the study calls for future research on ethics-informed approaches to academic language teaching that are centered not just on communicative competence but also on responsible and sustainable textual practices in academia.

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