STARLIGHT NAVIGATION

STARLIGHT NAVIGATION: PLOTTING A COURSE FOR EAP TEACHING IN A DISCIPLINARY CONTEXT

- Introduce my context
- Establish the situation as it was
- Summarize the goals
- Describe the actions taken
- Outline some of the results
- Outline where it is leading

STAR MAN

Robert Holmes

English Tutor at XJTLU since September 2015

Teaching EAP to electronics engineering and and computer science students

Taurus

STAR CHART

Teachers on my module

Planet XJTLU

EAP Syllabus

Familiar professors

Professors

My Lessons

EAP Assessments

Degree Assessments and Lectures

The students

University Mission Statement

Educating technical and managerial professionals with international perspectives and competitive capabilities;
Integrating into global economic and social development with its **expertise in business and technology**;
With its unique focuses and features, conducting research in areas where humanity faces severe challenges;
Exploring **new models for higher education** that will exert a strong influence on the development of education in China and the world.

Critical Thinking
Leadership
Professionalism

The Uncertain Future

Student expectations

Study at Liverpool
Study at XJTLU
Study abroad
Master's degree

GROUND CONTROL TO MAJOR ROB

Things people have said to me:

"Students want to know the right answer, but there isn't only one right answer." – *a telecommunications professor*

"Students really struggle with writing lab reports." – *an electronic engineering professor*

"Teacher, can you recommend some books for learning how to write lab reports?" – *an industrial design student*

"Feedback from Liverpool university says that XJTLU students aren't good at communicating with their project groups. They are also bad at writing emails." – *a module leader*

"Lab work takes a long time because the instructions are all in English" – *an electronics student*

"What is the difference between a report and a lab report?" *an EAP teacher*

"Our group project presentations are so difficult because the lecturer chooses the order we will speak and asks lots of questions" – *an industrial design student*

PLOTTING A COURSE

- Encourage more open discourse with EAP tutors, degree professors and students
- Examine the genres and communicative contexts of the students
- Talk to year 1 tutors about the relative weaknesses of the students
- Create assessments informed by these
- Revisit the learning outcomes

COURSE PLOTTED

Discourse with professors and students:

- Acquired feedback through formal channels like departmental and student liaison committees *(DLTC - SSLC)*
  - Followed up by informal discussions – what was done, what is needed, what could be done?

The communicative contexts of the students:

- Attended spoken assessments, observed lab experiments, consulted on written assessments, looked at text books and lecture slides, etc.

Genres and texts students need to produce or comprehend

- Professors and students frequently discussed writing reports and lack of knowledge and skills
- The technical report – ubiquitous in engineering field, comes in many variations

COURSE PLOTTED

Talk to tutors on the EAP modules in year 1 (*year zero*):

- Informed by feedback from students and professors
    - Focused on finding and filling gaps in student knowledge (i.e. significance of understanding report writing)

Create new assessments:

- Previous assessments were reconsidered in light of feedback
    - New coursework based on discipline relevant genre, small project to establish context and purpose

Revisit learning outcomes

- Currently in the process of proposing changes to the module specifications and updating learning outcomes

COURSE CORRECTION

First major change came from a review the coursework task

- A *problem – solution – evaluation* essay, reformatted to resemble a report (i.e. subheadings and use of diagrams or tables *encouraged*)
- Served assessment needs to check learning outcomes had been achieved

write critical evaluations – describe technology – explain technical processes

- Feedback highlighted the inauthentic nature of the text (abstract, exists in a vacuum)

It was a contrivance aimed at fulfilling the need to assess specific skills or knowledge in the most direct way

EAP – 111

Learning Outcomes

- Write critical evaluations
- Independently research and evaluate source material
- Integrate information from sources into own writing
- Use references in engineering format
- Describe Technology and explain processes
- Structure texts according to genre conventions

TURN THE SHIP AROUND

New written coursework assessment: technical report

- Reports written for a purpose – purpose defines structure
- Lab Reports: what was investigated and how, what data was collected, what it means.

This requires and experiment!

Difficult for English tutors to carry out worthwhile electronics experiments

Needs special knowledge, equipment, logistics, cooperation with up to six different programme leaders

TURN THE SHIP AROUND

The technical report – many flavours

- Feasibility reports
- Informational reports
- Process description reports
- Project proposal reports
- Research reports
- Recommendation reports

TURN THE SHIP AROUND

The technical report – recommendation

- Recommendation reports – very closely resembled some degree assessments
- Involve describing available techniques or components, evaluating them, recommending one
- Learning outcomes: critical evaluation / describing components

Used for assessment to check student knowledge of these things

Used in industry to choose how companies should spend money (*e.g. on new equipment*)

Authentic – Learning Outcomes – No need for special prerequisites

ASTEROIDS

Authenticity invokes useful elements

Tangible purpose – real world context – concrete outcome – situated text

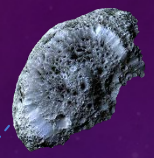
Direct path between EAP assessment and degree assessment + real world use

Writing exemplars form beyond the EAP context

Foundation for related activities to further establish context, stimulate discussion and provide basis for tasks practicing a range of skills

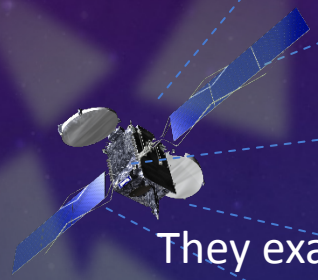
ALIGNMENT

Students worked in teams:
Roleplaying engineers

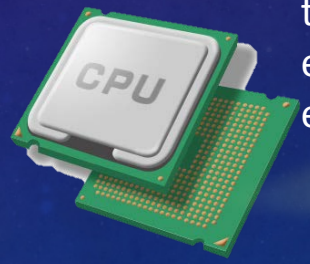


Auxiliary language practice tasks
Framed within the context of the project

Key parts are selected and analyzed



They examine and discuss the tech.



Students describe the tech. and evaluate real examples

This is reported on to provide a basis for making Recommendations

TREASURE ISLAND….. *IN SPACE*

Benefits so far:

- Student engagement is up – not just quantity but quality

  Questions raised by students are targeted and more specific

  Answers to questions bear significance beyond just this coursework

- Simpler topic – more direct language – used in less abstract structures – more concrete purpose

  Easier to address and assess the challenges students must overcome transitioning from year 1 EAP

- Attendance is up

  Roughly speaking average number of absences is several points lower than this time last year (7 vs estimated 4-5)

THE FANTASTIC VOYAGE

The instinct to pursue these changes is vindicated by recent feedback

From XJTLU: analysis of student English needs in the departments

From Liverpool: findings form surveys, focus groups and observations

Indicate this is a positive directing to head in – provide a higher degree of of confidence to future adjustment – emphasize the language and skills valued in the disciplines

DESTINATION – DEEP SPACE

Plotting a new course:

- Already planning changes to the module's assessment structure
  - Creating more space and flexibility
  - Introduce more formative assessment integrated with discipline specific support
- Advocating for more use of authentic texts for assessment
  - Situated in contexts relevant to students wider study goals
  - Elaboration of projects to promote autonomy and engagement of students
- Explore application of Deep teaching and learning strategies
  - Inquiry based learning
  - Problem based projects
- Re-emphasize language and study skills focus
  - Metacognitive tasks
  - Computer aided language learning

Robert's CraZy Space Adventure!

Robert's CraZy Space Adventure 2!