English language teachers in higher education:

A different tribe?

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Abstract

Recent years have witnessed a heightening of interest in the role of teachers working in EAP (English for Academic Purposes), particularly with regard to defining and debating their professional identity. However, it must be said that most authors have painted a rather dismal picture, when comparing the status and professional standing of English language teachers in Higher Education with that of academics working in other disciplines. Drawing on concepts and sociological models developed by the educationalists Tony Becher, Basil Bernstein and Pierre Bourdieu, this reflective paper proposes a theoretical framework to account for why these differences in status might be so. The paper concludes that EAP as an academic discipline currently faces some significant threats. However, the paper also argues that if EAP practitioners are to gain the professional recognition they desire, then they themselves must strive to trade more explicitly on the forms of capital valued by the academy.

Keywords:
English Language Teaching; EAP; professional status; academic identity;
academic tribes; symbolic capital; private providers; Becher; Bernstein; Bourdieu

English for Academic Purposes: a necessary, but contested field?

Since its emergence in the 1970s, the field of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) has enjoyed steady growth and expansion (Hadley 2015; Hyland and Hamp-Lyons 2002; Jordan 2002). Most UK universities these days are likely to include EAP courses, whether these are delivered on a pre-sessional basis as a means of preparing incoming students, or offered as in-sessional support for those already enrolled on academic programmes. Given the worldwide boom in international student mobility and recruitment witnessed in recent decades (de Wit 2015; Maringe 2010), this need for English language teaching professionals and the accompanying growth of EAP is hardly surprising; students for whom English is not their first language would often not be able to cope with the linguistic demands of their studies without the intervention and support of English language specialists. It is therefore generally accepted that EAP occupies an important and highly necessary niche in the global higher education landscape (Bell 2018; Pilcher and Richards 2018; Hadley 2015; Blaj-Ward 2014; de Chazel 2013; Bruce 2011; Gillet 2004).

And yet. As a surprising juxtaposition to this very clear demand and *raison d'être* for EAP provision, rather than feeling valued as important members of academia, many English language teachers in higher education instead tend to see themselves as the poor relations when compared to academics from other disciplines. The international EAP literature is replete with

accounts of the vulnerability, marginalised status and comparatively poor working conditions of those involved in EAP (Ding and Bruce 2017; Hadley 2015; Vazquez, Guzmán and Roux 2013; Hamp-Lyons 2011; Hyland and Hamp-Lyons 2002; Johns 1981), while Special Interest Groups, blogs, conferences and symposia have continued to debate the professional identity and status of the EAP practitioner (BALEAP 2017a; BALEAP 2017b; Bell 2016a; Ding 2016; BALEAP 2016; Ding 2015; Williams 2014; McDonough 1995). This is the stuff that coffee-break conversations are made of: a sense of unity in adversity; a weariness of occupying the so-called Butler's Stance (Raimes 1991); a common plea for EAP to be taken more seriously.

A Previous Study

Between 2013 and 2014, I carried out a series of in-depth qualitative interviews with 15 high-profile academics, who were either still working, or pre-retirement had previously been working, as English language teachers in higher educational contexts. My sample was international in nature, covering individuals based in seven different countries (the UK, New Zealand, Australia, the United States, Austria, Thailand, and Hong Kong). The research aimed to chart the experiences they had gained from careers in English language teaching covering six different decades of involvement: the 1960s to the 1970s; the 1970s to the 1980s; the 1980s to the 1990s, and the 1990s to the present day. All interview participants were widely recognised names with international reputations for expertise in English for Academic Purposes. Each had made significant contributions to the development of the field, either through their sustained publication of influential papers, their positions of authority in professional EAP organisations, or their participation in landmark EAP projects. As it was clear that such individuals had had considerable agency in shaping the discipline of EAP as we now know it, I was interested in learning about their life histories and career trajectories: why they had become English language teachers in the first place; how they had developed their knowledge and skills; the different challenges they had faced; their sense of professional identity and status, and where they felt the field of EAP might be heading in the future. Although it is now some six years on from that particular research project, many of the views that the interviewees then shared with me concerning their professional identity and status remain highly relevant today. I would therefore like to re-visit some of those earlier findings, as I believe they can provide useful background for my proposals in this current paper. To protect the privacy of the individuals who took part in the original study, in the discussions that follow, all names have been anonymised.

Voices from the academic margins?

When asked whether they had ever experienced any sense of being marginalised as academics, many of my respondents had opined that as English language teaching professionals, they were rarely afforded the same status or respect as academics in other disciplines. Given their global reputations and high academic rankings (most of my respondents were either full Professors or Associate Professors) this admission was surprising. It can be revealing to consider some of their comments:

"In the disciplines, they seem to think that you're just the grammar guy."

'Jack': a Professor based at a university in Hong Kong.

"I think that teachers of EAP and language teachers within the institute were seen as lower down the pecking order… and I think that is definitely still a widespread problem. I think it [EAP teaching] never was seen as being on a par with degree level teaching, or that EAP teachers were ever seen as full academics in the same way as other colleagues were."

'Adam': a retired Associate Professor formerly based at a university in the UK.

"In a lot of UK institutions, there's still a massive gap between the sort of academic members of a Faculty and the sort of EAP tutors… who are not very well supported, who are working often on different contracts and who have, umm, very different working conditions. And I don't think the situation's getting any better. A lot of EAP practitioners are not given enough recognition within the academy… you're always having to establish the fact that teaching is a legitimate area to be interested in. Certainly within universities in the UK, there is a real problem with status and people just being treated differently in terms of pay and conditions and nobody could argue that that's not the case. "

'Simon': an Associate Professor based at a university in the UK.

"It's not the same kind of subject in terms of its respectability as others. I think that's a pity… not having *any* acknowledgment that you were doing something that was academically respectable; being treated as just 'skills' providers…"

'Sandra': a now retired Senior Lecturer, previously based at a university in the UK.

"I think it's very insecure. It's an insecure profession… Also, there's a low status with who they [the EAP professionals] are in the university. If you think about a research-based university…you've got the superstars who do all the research, and are world-famous for this, that and the other, but where are the EAP teachers? They're at the bottom of the heap, aren't they? I mean, they're not even in the middle; they're right at the bottom. So, as I said, there's a very low status, I think, associated with EAP."

'Maria': a Professor based at a university in the UK

"You can get promoted to being a full professor in other parts of the university, but never in the language centre… I think we need alternative pathways, so that people can be recognised in their institutions."

'Colin': a Professor based at a university in Australia

"I think there's a tendency towards de-skilling of English teaching… and within university hierarchies there's this same tendency to perhaps look down on the language teachers. I think we need to strive to overcome those tendencies…My view of EAP is that we should try to make it become a bona fide discipline, rather than just being a service, because err, you know, service departments in a way *are* second-class citizens, particularly if they don't have PhDs. Salaries are lower, there's no career structure, they're not supposed to do

research. I'd like to see EAP teachers perceived in a more positive way. That would be something which would be good."

'Jennifer': a Professor based at a university in Hong Kong

Commentaries like these do indeed seem to confirm that those involved in English language teaching in Higher Education are often ascribed lower status than academics in other disciplines. On the face of it though, such a finding might seem counterintuitive. One could argue that with its close links to the recruitment of international students and all the benefits that bringing money into a university normally entails, EAP should be seen as a jewel in the Higher Education crown, its practitioners as a group to be nurtured and cherished. However, drawing such a conclusion would be over-simplistic, as it overlooks some of the more powerful epistemological and ontological undercurrents which prevail in academia, and which collectively determine how academic status and benefits are assigned. In gaining a deeper understanding of how these forces operate, it can be instructive to consider the status and positioning of EAP through the lens of theoretical constructs developed by educationalists such as Tony Becher (1989), Basil Bernstein (1971) and Pierre Bourdieu (1977).

The Metaphor of the Academic Tribe

Extending some of the earlier work carried out by Biglan (1973) and Kolb (1981), which had sought to investigate classifications of academic knowledge in different subject disciplines, Tony Becher (1989; 1994) presented four domains under which he claimed academic disciplines may be categorized and grouped: 'Hard Pure', 'Soft Pure', 'Hard Applied' and 'Soft Applied'. Some illustrative examples of what Becher meant by this categorization are detailed in the table below:

Hard Pure	**Soft Pure**	**Hard Applied**	**Soft Applied**
Sciences Physics Biology Chemistry	*Humanities* History *Social Sciences* Anthropology	*Technologies* Mechanical Engineering	*Applied Social Sciences* Education Law

A Categorisation of Academic Disciplines Following Biglan (1973) and Becher (1989; 1994)

Becher's most novel contribution, however, was his metaphorical notion that different academic disciplines behave as distinct 'tribes', each applying their own rules of conduct, and each possessing different ways of approaching, defining and disseminating knowledge. Like tribes in the most literal sense of the word, Becher (1994) argued that academic disciplines

place boundaries around their own territory, build necessary alliances, occasionally go to war with others and have their own specific modes of communication.

If we consider EAP using Becher's tribal metaphor, the first thing to be said is that one immediately encounters some difficulty in deciding under which of his four categories it should be placed. Should EAP be considered as a member of a 'soft pure' Humanities tribe, such as Modern Languages, or is it a closer match with the 'soft applied' Social Science tribes, such as Education or Applied Linguistics? The grounded validity of these considerations becomes apparent by examining how EAP units are treated within British universities. Throughout my own university career, for example, the various EAP 'sections', 'teaching units', 'divisions', 'centres', or 'schools' (the nomenclature has always differed) that I have been involved with, have been placed within university tribal structures as varied as 'Education'; 'English Language and Literature'; 'Modern Languages'; 'Business', and in one notable case, even the markedly non-teaching tribe of 'Library Services'. However, this matter of deciding under which tribal structure EAP should sit soon becomes much more than just a parlour game. Within the academy, strategic decision-making of this nature is closely connected to a series of other key considerations such as allocation of resources, employment terms and conditions, the perceived benefit to the institution, and finally, the conferral (or non-conferral) of academic status. In making sense of these wider concerns, it can be helpful to draw on the theorising of Basil Bernstein (1971).

Applying a Bernsteinian Analysis to EAP

As Becher later acknowledged (Becher and Trowler 2001), when considering the ways in which different academic tribes operate in terms of their respective power relations, it can be instructive to consider matters from a sociological standpoint. The Bernsteinian constructs of classification, framing, and pedagogic code (1971a) are all particularly useful in this regard. With his term 'classification', Bernstein (ibid) focussed attention on the extent to which the content base of a given discipline is kept distinct and insulated from other academic subject areas. Some disciplines, for instance, can be considered to have 'strong' classification. In the case of say French and Biology, there is self-evidently very little overlap or shared knowledge linking either subject. For others though, the knowledge boundaries are generally much looser, as in the case of Sociology and History. Disciplines such as these could be described as having 'weak' classification.

Running parallel to his notion of classification, Bernstein (op cit) also proposed that when comparing academic disciplines, it is important to consider what he called 'framing'. In Bernsteinian terms, this refers to the extent to which a given subject area has an agreed and specified content for teaching to students; it also refers to the level of control that academics are then likely to have over such teaching. As with classification, framing can be conceptualized as being either strong or weak. 'Strong' framing generally results in the creation of rigid syllabi, with certain topic areas needing to be completed in a particular order. 'Weak' framing, on the other hand, allows much more freedom for both teachers and learners in choosing what should be studied and when. Bernstein also drew attention to a specific form of

academic knowledge, which he termed 'the pedagogic code' (Singh 2002). This code itself could be further divided into two sub-categories: a *'collection code'* and an *'integrated code'*. Under the collection code, it was argued that subjects have very clear boundaries, are kept well insulated from one another, and the knowledge that is generated tends to be cumulative. This can be contrasted with the integrated code, under which different areas are likely to overlap, and the resulting knowledge that is generated will be more agglomerative. Strong classification is thus a characteristic of the collection code, while weak classification is a characteristic of the integrated code. As Becher and Trowler (2001, 37) have pointed out, when a given academic discipline has *strong* classification, *strong* framing and a *strong* collection code, its members will feel empowered. If these conditions are reversed, however, then the opposite will apply. Based on this way of thinking, it follows that the way in which an academic tribe is categorized will have a very important effect on the way it constitutes its disciplinary knowledge and on the extent of the institutional power and respect it might then wield. As Bernstein (1971b) explained:

> … principles of power and social control are realized through educational knowledge codes and through the codes they enter into, and shape, consciousness… [A] change of code involves fundamental changes in the classification and framing of knowledge and so changes in the structure and distribution of power and in principles of control. It is no wonder that deep-felt resistances are called out by the issue of educational codes.
>
> (Bernstein 1971, 54 and 1971, 63 quoted in Becher and Trowler 2001, 37)

I believe that these Bernsteinian constructs of classification, framing and pedagogic codes are particularly useful in building our understanding of how academics conceptualize not only their own, but also others' professional identities. In the case of the collection code, for example, Bernstein (1971a) argued that strong educational identities become established very early on, because strong classification in turn allows for a strong system of grading. In other words, people know exactly where they are supposed to sit within academic hierarchies, and because of this, they develop a strong sense of professional identity and strong subject loyalty. By comparison, owing to its weaker classification, when following an integrated code, practitioners' professional identity is likely to be much more uncertain and may have to be negotiated with others. These latter points seem particularly relevant to the specific case of EAP, given its *weak classification*, its tendency to rely on an *integrated code* and its *poor insulation* from other academic subject areas. In evidencing this final point, one only needs to consider the wide variety of possible entry routes to EAP as a profession (Alexander 2004), and the fact that in terms of qualifications at least, the field itself remains comparatively easy to join. While almost all other disciplines in the academy require their practitioners to hold doctoral qualifications, in the case of EAP, a Masters' degree is usually sufficient to gain employment. The practical outcomes that this difference can have, and the poor insulation it then gives EAP from other academic disciplines as a result, were highlighted some years ago by Martha Pennington (1992):

> Like other professional areas, ELT [English Language Teaching] must be perceived within academia and by the public at large as an educational specialisation with unique

requirements for the preparation and evaluation of its practitioners… We can go a long way toward making this goal a reality if we insist that those without the proper qualifications are not, in fact, properly qualified to teach ESL [English as a Second Language], nor to evaluate the efforts of its practitioners. ELT has a history of being lenient in this regard, much more so than other tertiary level fields. Can you imagine, for instance, someone being hired for a tenured position in a History department who had a degree in TESL [Teaching English as a Second Language]? Yet there are many with degrees in History who are teaching ESL.

(Pennington 1992, 15)

As a Bernsteinian analysis thus reveals, owing to its *weak* classification, *weak* framing, and a tendency to follow an *integrated* rather than a collective code, it should come as no great surprise that when compared to academics from other subject disciplines, EAP practitioners will find themselves lower down the academic pecking order. There are, however, as I will go on to argue, several other important reasons to account for EAP's poor professional status. In exploring these, my analysis will now draw on the sociological theorising of Pierre Bourdieu (1977).

EAP from a Bourdieusian Perspective

As Grenfell (2012, 2) has stated, the writings of Pierre Bourdieu offer relevance for researchers across a variety of subject areas. One reason for this has been the clear links that Bourdieu's work makes between theory and practice. A further reason is the broad applicability of Bourdieu's 'thinking tools', which as Grenfell (ibid) points out, 'embody a dynamic epistemology which makes them active tools for deployment in the social sciences' (ibid, 3). In considering the further reasons for EAP practitioners' lower academic status, I will now draw on one specific Bourdieusian thinking tool, his notion of capital.

Though the term 'capital' is perhaps most often used in the economic sense of the word, as Moore (2012, 99) has explained, for Bourdieu, the meaning was extended to cover 'a wider system of exchanges, whereby assets of different kinds are transformed and exchanged within complex networks or circuits within and across different fields'. From a Bourdieusian standpoint, 'capital' therefore equates to much more than just money and can be related to 'a wider anthropology of cultural exchanges and valuations of which the economic is only one (though the most fundamental) type' (Moore 2012, 99). Bourdieu in fact identified three different- though inter-related- varieties of capital: the economic kind, but then also what he termed 'social' and 'cultural' capital. As an umbrella term linking everything together, he also introduced the concept of 'symbolic capital', which as English and Bolton (2016, 55) have described, essentially relates to 'anything that is recognized as being capital by a particular field or social group'.

In academia, perhaps the most obvious manifestation of symbolic capital, as I have already touched on above, are those forms of capital linked with formally recognised academic achievement. These are most typically represented by higher level qualifications and credentials. On this point, I believe there is no escaping from the issue that if EAP practitioners

can gain employment with Masters' degrees, while academics in other disciplines require doctorates, then as far as the academy is concerned, EAP will probably *always* be classed as a lower status activity. As indeed Pennington (1992) commented:

> We must… face up to the fact that as long as are a Masters' rather than a Doctoral level specialisation, we will have problems being recognised within tertiary institutions. The importance of the PhD, or for that matter, of any kind of specialised on-paper qualification, cannot be overestimated. There is a yawning chasm between the A.B.D. ('all but dissertation' doctoral student) and the person who holds a PhD… Although people who have a Masters' level qualification in ESL *have* specialised skills and are appropriately qualified for teaching English at tertiary level, we must work to bring the qualification of the ELT professional up to a PhD level, or else settle for being second-class citizens in a society of PhDs.
>
> (Pennington 1992, 15-16, original italicized emphasis)

For most academics, certainly, the key indicator of an individual's professional credibility is the PhD. Until such a time that EAP as a discipline actively engages with this issue, it is very difficult for me to disagree with Pennington's conclusion. Given that we are now almost three decades on from when her paper was first published, it is also sobering to consider that the situation she was drawing attention to has remained largely unchanged. While some individuals working in EAP evidently *do* go on to complete PhD qualifications, the fact remains that most still do not. On the other hand, EAP does require its practitioners to hold pre- and post-service teaching qualifications such as internationally recognised Certificates and Diplomas (Lowton 2020; Campion 2015), something that is not yet the case in other academic subject areas. Indeed, one of the great ironies of Higher Education, particularly when compared with the Primary and Secondary sectors, is that it remains possible for someone to be appointed as a lecturer with no formal *teaching* credentials whatsoever, as long as they hold a doctorate. One might argue that it was in attempting to deal with this self-evident paradox that in recent years, the UK Higher Education context has witnessed the introduction of the PGCHE (Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education), successful completion of which is now becoming a key requirement for all newly recruited academics. It is noteworthy that those involved in EAP are usually exempted from having to complete the PGCHE, because they already hold sufficient teaching qualifications.

Running a close second behind the doctorate, a further form of cultural, and to some extent economic capital in the academy, is the status that accrues from the peer recognition of scholarly activity and research. The importance of research outputs in academia has long been recognised and most people are almost certainly aware that in the more prestigious Higher Education institutions, research is usually much more highly prized than prowess in teaching. Even five decades ago, van den Berghe (1970) had explained that of the two, teaching was most definitely considered the poorer relation:

> …. a top prestige symbol in academia, is how little one teaches. The higher one's rank and the more exalted one's reputation, the fewer defiling "contact hours" one has with students…

(van den Berghe 1970, 14)

Although in fairness, [1]some institutions *have* made moves in recent years to award more recognition and kudos to expertise in teaching, most academics would probably agree that when it comes to things like promotion committees and pay rises, the scales are still more likely to be tipped in favour of those able to highlight their research outputs. This is undeniably problematic for EAP practitioners, most of whom are excluded from the strong cultural and economic capital, which might be gained from winning research grants and producing recognised research outputs, simply by dint of their contractual terms and conditions. For example, while mainstream academics in other disciplines typically have expectations around research included in their annual performance indicators, with their contact teaching hours suitably adjusted to take account of this, all but a very select handful of EAP practitioners typically find themselves facing very high teaching loads (18-25 hours per week is not uncommon), working at times of the year such as during the summer months when most other academics are either doing their research or are on annual leave, and employed on contracts which are emphatically defined as 'teaching only'. This means that even for those individuals who have the interest and academic wherewithal to carry out formal research, such activity will neither be encouraged nor formally recognised by their institutions. The net result is that EAP as a discipline remains unable to trade using the same cultural, economic, and symbolic capital as others in the academy. This automatically serves to consign EAP practitioners to a position of significantly lower professional and academic status.

Any discussion of symbolic capital in the academy must also make mention of the exit awards that a given discipline confers. In most cases, the higher the category of the award, then the greater the prestige and cultural capital that a subject area is likely to be awarded. Based on this stratification, disciplines awarding Bachelors' degrees are seen as being much more prestigious than those only offering Certificates and Diplomas, while subjects offering Masters' degrees and PhDs are in turn afforded much greater prestige than those only offering Bachelors'. In the case of EAP, which usually confers no exit awards at all, access to this form of capital is therefore automatically denied.

A particularly damaging consequence of this lack of substantive exit awards in EAP is that it leaves the subject itself perceived as an ancillary or preparatory activity, rather than as a freestanding academic discipline. In the academy's eyes, this immediately puts it into the category of 'service' rather than 'academic'. Given that in the hierarchy of most universities, there is a very clear distinction drawn between the functions classed as administration and support (service), and those classed as central to the mission of the institution (academic), when it is judged based on this positioning, EAP is always going to be afforded less professional status and respect. Until such a time that EAP can overcome its weak classification in the Bernsteinian sense and do more to enhance its cultural capital in the Bourdieusian sense, I believe that these wider perceptions of its 'service provider' status will remain very difficult to change.

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[1] My own institution now has a range of annual staff awards to celebrate teaching excellence.

In the examples of capital considered up to now, I have mainly been examining EAP's capital-related impact and positioning in relation to other academic fields and the role it plays within the wider academy. It is also necessary, however, to consider how the notion of capital has functioned within the discipline of EAP itself. An important consideration here is that of economic capital, particularly in the sense already mentioned that EAP now finds itself closely linked to wider internationalisation agendas and the recruitment of large numbers of international students. For the EAP profession in general, one of the less-than-positive outcomes of this boom in international student recruitment is that it has precipitated the market entry of private educational providers such as Kaplan, INTO and Navitas. I have deliberately chosen to frame this development as less-than-positive because I believe that it has essentially divided EAP into two different communities, each of whom is now trading on quite different forms of capital and following different agendas. In the case of the first EAP community, the 'traditional' university based EAP units, one goal of their senior leadership in recent years has generally been to work towards elevating the status of the EAP practitioner. This is evidenced by the ongoing activity of professional organisations such as the British Association for Lecturers in EAP (BALEAP) and their efforts to raise the academic status of EAP via initiatives such as the BALEAP Accreditation Scheme (2021), the BALEAP TEAP Fellowship Scheme (2014) and the BALEAP Competency Framework for Teachers of EAP (2008). A key merit of such work and the work of similar groups worldwide is that it has helped to differentiate EAP from more general forms of English Language teaching. In so doing, it has strengthened the identity and specificity of the discipline. As far as raising EAP's wider professional academic standing goes, such initiatives can only be for the greater good. As Michael Eraut (1994) has pointed out:

> The power and status of professional workers depend to a significant extent on their claims to unique forms of expertise, which are not shared with other occupational groups, and the value placed on that expertise.

(Eraut 1994, 14)

All of this speaks to the pursuit of symbolic, cultural, and social capital. In the case of the second EAP community, however, the private providers, the main form of capital pursued by their senior leadership up to now has been markedly economic. While I must stress that it is NOT my intention here to attack the individual teaching staff, who find themselves working in the private sector, nor in any way denigrate their personal levels of professionalism, when considering the positioning of EAP in Higher Education more holistically, the recent influx of private providers is undoubtedly doing far more harm than good to EAP's status in the academy. While 'traditional' EAP has been striving to legitimize the academic nature of its work by identifying discipline-specific genres and teaching more finely nuanced forms of ESAP (English for Specific Academic Purposes), as most, if not all of the private provider operations are positioned as outsiders from the academy, their approach to EAP teaching has typically been much more generic in nature. One of the consequences of this, particularly when the teaching itself is offered at significantly cheaper rates than what the university pay scales would ordinarily be for EAP staff, is that it helps to blur and confound the boundaries between EAP and more generic varieties of English Language Teaching. The problem with this is that

historically speaking, a large part of EAP's drive for greater recognition and academic respectability has rested on its claims that it is a higher order activity and a more specialized form of English language teaching (Campion 2015; Bell 2013; Argent and Alexander 2012; Elsted 2012; Post 2010; Bell 2007; Scott 2001). If the powerbrokers in the academy are now unable (or for economic reasons unwilling) to acknowledge this distinction, and therefore choose to treat EAP as being not so very different from General English language teaching (as my Hong Kong-based interviewee 'Jack' had remarked, *'In the disciplines, they seem to think that you're just the grammar guy'*), and something that basically anybody can do, then the future status of EAP in academia begins to look even more precarious.

In the current neo-liberal climate, of course, where educational provision of any description is largely viewed as a business, it is perfectly understandable that the offers of cheaper English language teaching alternatives from private providers are going to appear highly attractive. As well as providing lower-priced teaching, many of the private providers are also able to offer those willing to go into partnership with them further incentives such as access to well-established global recruitment networks and powerful marketing resources. When compared with such financial enticements, protestations from EAP leaders about the need to maintain the academic integrity of their discipline must seem churlish and a very minor consideration. It is interesting to consider how other academic disciplines might react though, if *they* were faced with the same situation. Just imagine the scandal and academic uproar that would ensue if the teaching in university Business Schools, Medical Faculties, Law Schools and Philosophy departments suddenly became outsourced to private companies and university-based academic staff were either made redundant or offered re-employment under significantly less attractive terms and conditions. The fact that such practices have been allowed to happen in EAP, and have largely gone unchallenged within the academy, speaks volumes about the impoverished academic status of English language teaching in UK Higher Education.

Whatever one's stance on this issue, the evidence to date does strongly suggest that the proliferation of private providers represents a very clear threat to the future of in-house EAP provision. Writing in 2008, for example, Mary Ann Ansell had identified 18 cases of private-provider partnerships at UK-based universities. By 2016, less than a decade later, my own research (Bell 2016b) revealed that this figure had increased to 61. In a more recent study (Lowton 2020) it was uncovered that depending on [2]how they are counted, the number of such partnerships now stands between 63 and 69. When one considers that each of those baseline 63 cases were previously EAP operations run on an in-house basis, the threat to university based EAP posed by privatization seems indisputable. As private providers of EAP do not need to be involved in the research and wider academic scholarship valued by the university sector, it also seems clear that their continued proliferation will only serve to diminish EAP's status and stability within the academy further. If it is permitted to continue, outsourcing will also

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[2] As Lowton (2020) has charted, as of December 2020, there were 63 chartered UK universities with an openly declared private pathway/foundation provision. However, some universities also operate a second campus; if these involve a private partnership too, then the number rises to 66. There is also one further refinement, whereby some language centres now involve more than one private provider. If these cases are also included in the tally, then the final figure becomes 69.

only strengthen those wider perceptions of EAP as being nothing more than a 'service industry', which the field itself has been trying so hard in recent years to shake off.

Conclusion

As I hope to have shown, the constructs of Becher (1989), Bernstein (1971) and Bourdieu (1977) can be useful thinking tools in providing a theoretical framework to account for English language teachers' marginalised status in Higher Education. Of course, providing a theoretical explanation for a problem does not necessarily improve matters, nor does it make the problem itself go away. Readers may therefore justifiably retort that the theorising outlined in this paper is all well and good, but then demand to know what should happen next. As one of my former line managers used to be fond of saying, 'Don't bring me problems, bring me solutions!' In this regard, I would probably now be remiss, if I did not at least attempt to take things a step further. In this closing section of the paper, I will therefore briefly share some personal thoughts on how I believe EAP teachers working in Higher Education may start to raise their academic status and move themselves from the edges to a more central position within academia.

Learning to Play by the Tribal Rules

As this paper has argued, the tribal domains of academia are largely governed by a range of hidden epistemological and ontological forces. In order to be awarded status and become fully accepted members of an academic tribe, individuals must first conform to the prevailing tribal rules. The starting point of this requirement is grounded in recognising what constitutes accepted forms of capital for trade. As I hope to have already demonstrated, the most immediate source of symbolic capital in academia is that bestowed by holding a doctorate. Teachers of English language in Higher Education can therefore do a lot for their professional status simply by upgrading their qualifications from Master to PhD level. As Pennington (1992) had originally cautioned, *not* doing this will almost certainly leave such practitioners to continue as second-class citizens in a society of PhDs. Of course, some EAP teachers may not be concerned by this and that is a matter of individual preference. For those who aspire to move beyond the fringes of academia however, upgrading their qualifications, so that they can better meet tribal expectations, is no longer just 'nice to have', it has become a necessity.

Closely related to the capital linked to qualifications, as already discussed, members of the recognised academic tribes are assigned status and prestige based on their research outputs and scholarly activity. As this paper has already made clear, in the case of EAP practitioners, there are undeniably some significant logistical barriers to be overcome in this regard. However, this is not to say that the situation is insurmountable. Whether research expectations are stated explicitly in their contracts or not, if EAP practitioners *genuinely* wish to raise their status in the eyes of their academic peers, then they must make whatever personal sacrifices are necessary and do everything possible to find ways of engaging more proactively with research and scholarly activity. As indeed one of my original 2014 interview respondents had commented:

In the academic context people get kudos, people get respect, when they do research and when they do publications, so if the people who are teaching EAP engage in those sorts of academic activities that are expected in other disciplinary areas such as engineering or medicine or whatever, then I think they *will* have the kudos, but I think that if you *don't* engage in those activities, then you are probably not likely to get the same respect. Because those are really hard things to do, as you know, err, respect is very hard won in an academic community for *anybody*, and it doesn't really come from teaching wonderful lessons; it comes from teaching wonderful lessons *plus* doing the more academic things as well.

'Judy': an Associate Professor based at a university in New Zealand

Making more of a *concerted* effort to engage in scholarly activity thus links closely with my third recommendation, which is for EAP practitioners to build stronger ties with academics in other subject areas. The work of EAP as a discipline has much to offer other subjects in the university and there are many potential areas for scholarly collaboration. After all, exploring how discipline-specific language works and how students can be guided in becoming more effective members of these different discourse communities should be of interest and relevance to both EAP specialists and content specialists alike. When EAP practitioners *actively* seek out such academics from other subject areas and find ways to work on collaborative projects together, they stand to improve their status considerably. Aside from the links into the research community and the enhancement of professional credibility on individual levels, the additional benefits of such collaboration are that they can help to inform a wider audience of the work that EAP units do in fact do. From a strategic public relations perspective, this promotion of EAP is crucial in building a greater institutional awareness of its role in the academy. As several of my original interview respondents had lamented, one of the inherent problems with EAP's fragmented identity is that institutionally, it often ends up becoming far too low profile. As two of my original interviewees, 'James' and 'David' readily acknowledged:

Every time there is a change in the higher administration of this university, the EAP programme suffers, because very rarely does anyone come in, who *really* knows about it…there is an increase in ignorance every time there is a change in the senior administration. No sooner have you got one Vice Rector, or whatever it is, trained up to appreciate what you do, when he or she disappears and somebody else comes in with a different agenda.

'James': a now retired Chair Professor formerly based at a university in the USA

It's always a struggle. And it often depends on individuals. When you're interacting with Faculties, you can meet someone who's very very supportive and recognises the value of it and you know, you can do joint courses, and it's all very exciting and professionally fulfilling, and then that person finds another job and you have to start again.

'David': a Professor based at a university in Hong Kong

Charting New Territories

My final recommendation- and I should stress that in some institutions [3]worldwide, this is already happening- is for the leaders of EAP units in Higher Education to look for opportunities to broaden the scope of those areas in which EAP is currently involved. In the UK context at least, EAP provision traditionally remains limited to international students, those for whom English is not their first language. Given that much of what EAP is about goes much deeper than simply linguistic concerns- learning to write a convincing academic paper, or give an effective oral presentation each involve considerably more than just language after all- there is clearly an argument for introducing EAP to a much wider audience. In many cases, native-speaker students of English are just as likely to benefit from EAP instruction as the non-native-speakers. EAP professionals can also play a role in assisting academics from other disciplines become better academic writers. In this regard, the field of academic literacies may offer EAP an opportunity for meaningful collaboration and partnership (Turner 2012). If EAP can capitalize more on its existing expertise in this area and in so doing strive to be seen as a value-add to *everyone* involved in Higher Education, not only the international students, I believe that both the academic status and future stability of the discipline will be on a much firmer footing.

The primary purpose of this reflective paper was to present a theoretical framework, which can account for the poor academic status of English language teaching in UK Higher Education. As I hope to have demonstrated in my analysis, the issues that EAP faces around status and professional recognition have not occurred by chance, they are woven into the very fabric of academia. While the ongoing threats to EAP's positioning in the academy are all too real, I remain convinced that its practitioners can still significantly improve their lot by taking some personal agency and learning to trade more explicitly on those forms of capital most valued by the other academic tribes.

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[3] While working in Australian Higher Education some years ago, I was pleasantly surprised to find that EAP units there are often part of a much wider provision in developing academic language and literacy. This is typically offered to *all* students, not just those for whom English is a Second or Foreign Language (Bell 2018).

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