

Evaluating an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) pre-sessional course: how effectively does it prepare students for their Masters programmes?

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ELTAL is a four-week, full-time pre-sessional EAP course for international students preparing for entry to language-teaching related postgraduate degree programmes within Moray House School of Education, University of Edinburgh

Course aims

1. research & write an 1800 word source-based critical review of a journal article relevant to their specialist area; revise in response to formative feedback
2. research, prepare & effectively deliver a 10-minute individual oral presentation & respond appropriately to questions
3. work successfully with partner(s) to research, prepare & present a conference paper, responding effectively to questions
4. make notes on & critically respond in discussion to live lectures & written texts on a range of topics
5. progress on to Edinburgh degree programmes with confidence in EAP skills

End-of-course assessment

Students must attain the required score on all components (standardised & moderated appropriately):

- Listening test (lecture listening & note-taking)
- Written assessment: (a critical review)
- Oral assessment: a presentation based on the critical review, including Q & A

Purpose of study

The course has been running for over 20 years and with increasingly large student numbers in line with expansion of numbers on the UoE degree programmes. Student satisfaction has been uniformly high according to end-of-course evaluations.

However, we want to know to what extent this perception of the usefulness of the course persists as students experience the rigours of their Masters programmes.

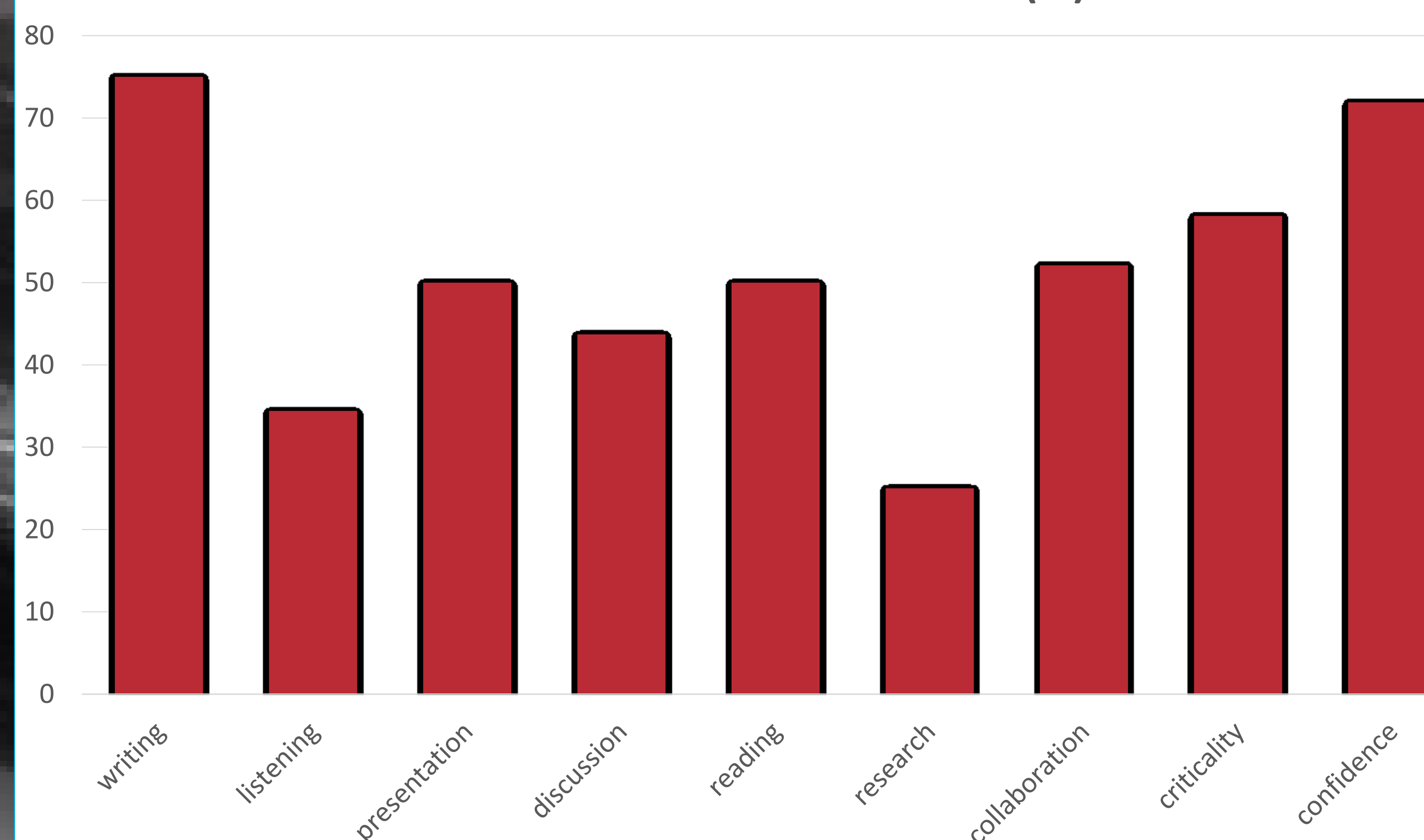
Methodology

Small-scale tracking project:

- questionnaires: 32 responses – distributed January 2019
- interviews (x 9) & focus group (4 students): 13 participants in total – conducted April/May 2019

Questionnaire findings

Usefulness of course elements (%)



Student voices

Teachers respected my thoughts, really considering what I was saying & they treated all the students equally. They always gave feedbacks like suggestions or advice instead of instructions. These made me feel like I am a real academic or something

[ELTAL] students are more willing to ask & answer questions...they know the format

All my collaborating skills are learned from the pre-sessional

Lectures not helpful to listening, but helped get familiar with environment, I got more relaxed, compared to students who didn't do EAP

You learn from your study, you learn from your writing, you learn from your reading, you learn from your thinking

It's interesting, cool, makes me feel good to express my own opinions, I learned from my own experience

It gave me time to adjust [...] from UG to PG

Was like a "bridge" to the Masters programme

It's an incredible journey

Stepping stone in order to enter Masters level

Implementations

Course design

- providing more explicit explanations of rationale for elements of the course, e.g. of conference (collaborative research) & lectures (listening/familiarisation with academic culture)
- providing help for students in finding articles (library introduction)
- continuing to include topics featuring in MSc; ensure/continue collaboration with MHSE staff to remain current

Tutor induction / briefing

- emphasising value of group discussion in class as preparation for Masters & for students to feel their voice is valued
- reminding class of listening strategies before lectures
- reminding/eliciting/giving students explicit help with reading strategies (for longer articles)
- ensuring tutors include explicit basic introduction to research in class
- encouraging tutors to give specific individual feedback in writing classes (space on printed book to facilitate this)

Future possibilities

social & cultural programme | use of L1 at certain lesson stages |

retaining small classes to facilitate discussion & allowing students to gain

confidence in voicing their opinions & maintaining social aspect of course

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